CHORAL VOICE AND NARRATIVE IN THE FIRST STASIMON
OF AESCHYLUS *AGAMEMNON*

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W HOSE VOICE DO WE HEAR in a choral ode? For many it is the "voice of the poet," and if we define the poet as the speaker of truth and ultimate narrative authority, we can indeed hear the chorus making authorial-sounding comments.[1] But does the chorus always speak the truth? The chorus is in the drama, and has a well-defined persona which often reveals a limited understanding of dramatic events.[2] Does this mean then that everything it says derives from its role as a character in the drama, that it has no privileged insight into events? The answer, of course, lies somewhere in between: the chorus speaks sometimes as a character, sometimes on behalf of the poet, that invisible, controlling force who creates the drama. Still, it is not always evident whether the chorus is speaking as a unified personality at a given point in a choral ode, or whether it articulates the views of the poet himself.[3] Indeed, can we talk about the chorus as a single character, when in fact it is a collective entity? And what exactly are the signals that the poet is using the chorus as his mouthpiece? As Goldhill (1992: 20) so aptly puts

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[1] For the chorus as the voice of the poet, see Kranz 1933: 225, although the idea is implicit in more contemporary discussions on the role of the chorus (see below, n. 15). By "the voice of the poet" I mean statements which conform to the prevailing norms of the play and which allow the poet to identify certain key themes of the drama. Although the use of consistent imagery throughout a play is certainly one aspect of this authorial voice, I am more interested in moral and ethical concerns. An example of a choral utterance which might be considered "the voice of the poet" occurs in Aes. *Persae*. The Persian elders, having described the departure of the Persian fleet, then ask: "What mortal will escape the deception of the god?" (94–98). Although they naturally exhibit pro-Persian sympathies, they also articulate a typically tragic point of view: that Xerxes is hubristic and subject to punishment.

[2] Several scholars treat the topic of choral character. Podlecki (1972) investigates the persona of Aeschylean choruses; Kirkwood (1958: 181–214) was one of the first to recognize that Sophoclean choruses have personalities; Gardiner (1987) devotes a book to the topic. For a useful summary of the scholarship on the character and role of the chorus, see Bacon 1994: esp. 21, n. 3.

[3] Rosenmeyer (1977: 39–40) argues that when a chorus refers to itself in the first person, we hear the voice of the author of the drama speaking through the chorus; or that whenever the chorus articulates an idea that seems inconsistent with its persona, then the poet has inserted his own voice. Yet there are numerous instances when the use of the first person seems entirely consistent with the character of the chorus (the repeated use of "I" in the first stasimon of *Agamemnon*, for instance). The question of choral inconsistency is another matter; but in most cases where one scholar detects inconsistency, another is able to defend the unity of choral character. The first stasimon of *Agamemnon* is a prime example of this so-called inconsistency and, as the remainder of this article will demonstrate, many readers of the ode are confident that it reveals a unified character. For the purposes of this article I argue that we can at times detect the voice of the poet in choral odes, but this does not necessarily mean that the creation of choral character has been temporarily abandoned.

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it, one of the functions of the tragic chorus is to provoke the audience "to engage
in constant renegotiation of where the authoritative voice does lie."[4]

Consider for example the first stasimon of Aeschylus' *Supplices*. The Danaids
offer the myth of Io as a paradigm of Zeus' protective concern for afflicted
females. Since Zeus "rescued" Io from Hera's gadfly in Egypt, he ought to
protect Io's descendants from their unwelcome suitors, the Aegyptids. Such is
the Danaids' point of view; but the audience realizes that Zeus' succour of Io
involved sexual intercourse, the very thing that the Danaids wish to avoid. The
paradigm of Io, from our perspective, suggests that the Aegyptids (much to
their regret) will prevail in their attempt to wed the Danaids. We evaluate the
narrative differently from the way in which the narrators themselves do, and so
understand that the chorus is deluded.[5] Such techniques suggest that even when
the chorus-narrator seems to be controlling the narrative, the poet is speaking
through it, although the chorus may not be aware of the full implications of what
it says. This type of irony illustrates how a single and apparently discrete utterance
can issue from two separate sources, a relatively common phenomenon in tragic
lyric. Thus it appears that a choral ode can be double-voiced; that we can hear
both the voice of the poet and the voice of the chorus as a character within the
drama.[6]

Students of choral voice tend to focus on the distinction between the authorial
and characterological voices of the chorus; but there are other possible voices in a
choral ode. What happens when a chorus telling a story represents the speech of
a character within its narrative? Does the chorus now relinquish its persona and
act as a mouthpiece for the characters in its story, or is it still in control of the
narrative? In the parodos of *Agamemnon*, for instance, the chorus repeats Calchas'
prophecy at Aulis which includes an oblique reference to Clytemnestra's revenge:

μίμνει γὰρ φοβερὰ παλίνορτος
οἰκονόμος δολία, μνάμων Μῆνις τεκνόποινος.   (*Ag.* 154–155)

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[4] Rosenmeyer (1982: 145–146) suggests that the chorus is both internal to the drama in its
capacity as a character, yet external in that: "The audience recognizes in the chorus an institutionalized
part of itself, a delegate, within the body of the action, of the community, connecting the two worlds
without removing the barrier necessary to maintain psychic distance." In his essay on "Irony and
Tragic Choruses," Rosenmeyer (1977: 37) warns against the risks involved in expecting the chorus to
behave as a unified personality, yet concedes that "some of the statements made by a chorus can be
gathered together in a semblance of psychological consistency."

[5] Murray (1958: 52) remarks that: "a consistent characteristic of the Danaids is their ability to
understand partially, but failure to comprehend fully the significance of human and divine motives
in past and present." He suggests that if we are to grasp the full significance of the myth we must
go beyond the immediate action of the drama to read Hypermestra as the true analog of Io: both
bear sons who will be kings and dynasts. Also see Gantz's (1978) analysis of the tension between the
surface meanings of the Danaids' bid for sanctuary and and the ironies undercutting their situation.

[6] Another example of a double-voiced choral ode is the second stasimon of Soph. *Trach.* The
chorus imagines Heracles melting with desire, when in fact he will be melting literally from the poison
in Deianira's robe.

For there awaits a terrible treacherous housekeeper, rising up again, unforgetting child-avenging Wrath.[7]

Although the elders repeat the words of Calchas, they never seem to be able to apply his prophecy to the dramatic action. Gantz, in his perceptive analysis of the character of this chorus, observes that one of its most striking personality traits is a consistent inability to face the truth about Agamemnon's inevitable death.[8] The gnomic reflections at the end of the first and second stasimon seem to lead towards this realization, but the chorus stops short of saying that Agamemnon is culpable. The return of Agamemnon and his entrance into the house send the elders into the confusion of the third stasimon. They refuse to confront the possibility of Agamemnon's impending murder when Cassandra presents it to them; and even when they hear the death cries of their king, they declare that the sound alone is not sufficient evidence of his demise (1366–67).[9] Calchas' divination is so allusive and obscure that the Argive elders, who do not share the audience's knowledge of the entire myth, cannot be faulted for failing to understand its meaning; yet they provide the medium for these intimations of Agamemnon's death. The embedded narrative of Troy's destruction and its consequences testifies to the heterogeneity of choral voice. The chorus can reproduce Calchas' words, but essentially it has given up the floor, so to speak, to the prophet himself. We can perhaps go further than this to suggest that 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.[10] Of course, few examples of direct discourse in a

[7] I refer to Page's Oxford text (1972), unless I indicate otherwise. The translation for 154–155 is that of Denniston and Page (1957: 82–83), who note that the prediction implies that Clytemnestra will await Agamemnon's return and exact "a terrible and treacherous revenge for her daughter's death." Although it may be argued that Calchas refers in general to the Erinys, or the curse on the house of Atreus, it is nonetheless true that Clytemnestra is the embodiment and agent of that curse in this play.

[8] See also Scott 1984: 195, n. 38, arguing that this chorus is more than the poet's mouthpiece and detecting a "consistent development of the thought of the chorus."

[9] No-one of course believes Cassandra's oracles, but as Gantz (1983: 82) observes, the chorus understands her "regarding matters not directly connected to their own uncertainties .... What they do not understand, despite all her warnings, is merely what they have been unable to understand throughout the play: the logical ἀνάγκη of Agamemnon's death." Winnington-Ingram (1983: 27) notes an "ingenious economy" in the confrontation between a prophet who cannot be understood and the chorus who cannot understand. For a discussion of the circularity and confusion of the chorus's thinking in the third stasimon, see Sienkewicz 1980: 141.

[10] There are diverse opinions on the status of represented speech in narrative fiction. Bal (1991: 81) theorizes that with the transition to reported speech "the narrator yields the floor to someone else—to the character who speaks. That speech is thereby a virtual 'metanarrative,' a narrative within the narrative." For Bakhtin (1981: 263), the author is responsible for all utterances in a narrative, including direct discourse which is one of many strands of the variegated voices subsumed under the overriding concept of artistic unity. His distinction between the voice of the narrator and the voice of the author is germane to our investigation of the chorus in its role as narrator. Bakhtin is investigating the permutations of voice in the novel, but his observations have implications for other literary genres. As he suggests (1981: 315–316), a narrative reveals a multiplicity of voices which allow authorial

choral ode are as complex, and none is as lengthy, as the speech of Calchas; many specimens simply add dramatic verisimilitude to a narrative ode.[11] Nevertheless, as the preceding example suggests, represented discourse in tragic choral lyric provides an opportunity to investigate the diverse nature of choral voice from a different perspective. I have chosen the first stasimon of *Agamemnon* for special attention in this article because it illustrates the complexities of choral voice and persona so well. There are several different voices in this ode: the voice of the poet, the chorus in its persona as Argive elders who narrate events connected with the Trojan expedition, and the words of characters in the chorus's narrative. These multiple voices blend and separate at various points throughout the ode to create an intricate polyphony; yet despite this multi-voicedness, the stasimon is unified by an overriding concept of choral character.

The chorus sings the first stasimon after hearing from Clytemnestra that the Greeks have conquered Troy. In their anapestic preamble they reflect on the efficacy and justice of Zeus' punishment of the Trojans, particularly Paris. The first strophic system treats the folly and hubris of Paris; system β first describes the departure of Helen and its effects on Menelaus, but then proceeds to contemplate all the suffering and sacrifice which the Argive people endured for this victory. Strophe γ deals with the sorrow and discontent of the Argives; and in the final antistrophe a premonition of Agamemnon's imminent doom breaks to the surface of the elders' thoughts: the citizens of Argos have cursed the Atreidae; the chorus has anxiety about the future. In the epode, the elders express skepticism about the beacon's report, a surprising change of mind. Some regard this merely as a

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intentions "to be realized in such a way that we can acutely sense their presence at every point in the work." Thus character speech "may also refract authorial intentions and consequently may to a certain degree constitute a second language for the author." Lotman (1974: 343) discusses the "truth value" of direct speech. Since it gives the impression of verisimilitude, it functions as evidence that the speaker has not invented the tale.

[11] *Agamemnon* contains the most numerous, lengthy, and vivid examples of *oratio recta* in tragic choral lyric. These are: the prophecy of Calchas (126–155); Agamemnon's decision speech (206–217); the words of the δόμων προφῆται at 410 (end of quotation indeterminate). Other cases in Aeschylus are a short exclamation attributed to τις: *Eum.* 510–512; the shout of χθών at the birth of Epaphus: *Supp.* 585 (end of quotation indeterminate). There are no occurrences in Sophocles. In Euripides: the shout of the soldier at the invasion of Troy: *Hec.* 930–932 (and although not in lyrics, the report of the Greek assembly in the anapestic parodos: *Hec.* 113–140); the shout of the Trojans exhorting each other to pull in the wooden horse: *Tr.* 524–527; the cry of the Trojan children: *Tr.* 1091–99; (the words of Theonoe in an anapestic passage: *Hel.* 517–527); Zeus' command to the Graces and Muses: *Hel.* 1341–45; Galene's exhortation to the sailors: *Hel.* 1459–64; the herald summoning the Myceneans to the agora: *El.* 709–711; the roof of the house to Clytemnestra as she kills Agamemnon: *El.* 1151–54; Clytemnestra to Orestes at her death: *Or.* 827–830; the leader's exhortation to the maenads: *Bacchae* 152 (end of quotation indeterminate); Zeus to Dionysus at his birth: *Bacchae* 526–529; Agave as she sees Pentheus: *Bacchae* 985–990; the Lydian and Phrygian wives who wonder who their captors will be: *IA* 790 (end of quotation indeterminate); and the centaurs who repeat Cheiron's prophecy about Achilles: *IA* 1061–75; and, although not strictly speaking tragic lyric, the wayfarer passing the tomb of Alcestis: *Alc.* 1002–04. Unfortunately Bers 1997 appeared too late for me to use in this article.

device to let the herald tell the news again in the second episode, while others argue more persuasively that it is entirely consistent with the chorus's persona.[12] Thus the stasimon moves from credulity to disbelief, with the second strophic system mediating between the chorus's initial optimistic sense that justice has been dealt to the guilty and its final dark pessimism and growing recognition that Agamemnon, too, must be called to book. In effect, the chorus changes its point of view: at the beginning it presents events from the vantage point of the royal household, for whom the abduction of Helen is an offence punished by Zeus; at the end from the vantage point of the common populace, who resent the war fought for another man's wife. Or to look at it another way: the chorus first presents the war in epic terms, then in more realistic terms.[13]

I am not suggesting that these two points of view undermine the unity of choral character; nor do I agree with Kaimio's (1970: 241) assertion that such a variety of perspectives "makes it possible to represent different reactions in succession, sometimes slightly disregarding psychological probability." Rather the chorus engages in an internal dialogue, as it were, between an earlier and a later self: first praising the Atreidae for exacting Zeus' penalty against the Trojans, then expressing concern for the consequences of the success of the Atreidae. Both points of view are compatible within the psychology of the chorus, whose members, like many real individuals, experience mood swings and second thoughts. Yet although critics comment on the antiphonal structure of this ode, no-one really explains how this initially confident aristocratic perspective dissolves into such angry pessimism.[14] It is my contention that the actual narrative mechanism which permits this dramatic change of mood is the use of various character voices.

The chorus sounds so sure of itself at the beginning of the ode that several scholars accept this epic perspective as the unequivocal authority on the divine plan for the Atreidae.[15] "I revere Zeus Xenius who accomplished the punishment

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[12] Proponents of the inconsistency theory include: Dawe 1968: 21–62; Fraenkel 1950: 20; Lloyd-Jones 1970: 42; Denniston and Page 1957: 114, suggesting that "a momentary dramatic advantage, for those who look forward, is allowed to outweigh a serious flaw in the structure, for those who look back." See also Dover (1973: 68–69), who discusses the ode in terms of ancient concepts of psychology. Conversely many critics regard the chorus's retraction to be consistent with its personality. See Winnington-Ingram 1983: 25; Gantz 1983, arguing that the elders' confusion derives from a conflict between what they want to believe and the reality that unfolds before them; Scott 1984: 47–48 and Thiel 1993: 145–163.

[13] See Leahy (1974: 15), who makes this distinction between the epic perspective, which highlights the role of the gods in the expedition, and the realistic perspective, which focuses on the gritty details of the war. These two conflicting aspects of the war are counterpointed throughout the drama.

[14] Lebeck (1971: 42–45) notices a series of correspondences between the treatment of Paris and Agamemnon in this ode—for example, Zeus first shoots a bolt at Alexander (362–364), then at Agamemnon (469–470). Parry (1966: 95) analyzes the ring structure of the ode in which the guilt of Paris and Agamemnon enclose the theme of Menelaus' sorrow and the grief of the Argives. Also see the discussion in Bollack and de La Combe 1981–82: 387, 419–420.

[15] Thus Fontenrose (1971: 73–75) gives the highest priority to the elders' statement that Zeus has authorized the enterprise of the Atreidae. But he minimizes their apparent concern for Agamemnon

of Alexander" (362, my paraphrase), say the Argive elders; and: "They can speak of the stroke of Zeus" (367). Such declarations raise the motives for war above the purely personal desire of the Atreidae to retrieve Helen. Paris' seduction of Helen is more than a social misdemeanor; it is a sin against Zeus Xenius. The chorus, at this point, assumes a posture of great authority and will let no other voices speak: it denounces anyone who denies (οὐκ ἔφα, 369) that the gods do not bother about mortals who trample on what should not be touched (370–372). From this unilateral point of view, hubris and impiety are the faults of Paris and the Trojans exclusively, while the Atreidae are the agents of the gods who mete out punishment.[16]

In the second strophic system, however, other voices do intrude into the narrative; and the chorus's hitherto singular, aristocratic point of view begins to dissolve. The elders, having described the departure of Helen, report the words of the δόμων προφῆται, through whose voice self-righteous indignation gives way to sorrow. This passage has exercised commentators for two reasons: the identity of the speakers is unclear; and the closure of their discourse is not marked. Yet, as I shall argue, it is this very ambiguity which facilitates the transition from the exultant mood of the first half of the ode to the war-weary realism of the second.

Let us begin by examining the possible identity of speakers. The basic meaning of προφήτης is "interpreter"; and Wecklein, Housman, Denniston and Page, and Bollack argue—correctly, I believe—for the translation "speakers for the house." However, the scholiast interprets προφῆται as μαντεῖς and many modern scholars and translators do likewise.[17] While it is true that Aeschylus uses προφήτης in

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at the end of the stasimon by arguing that the statements of the third antistrophe are gnomic and in fact are more pertinent to Paris than Agamemnon: "He (Paris) is the fortunate man without justice ... whom the black Erinyes punish" (Fontenrose 1971: 77). This interpretation goes against the grain of the latter part of the ode, especially since the chorus ends the antistrophe by wishing never to be a city-sacker (which surely must refer to Agamemnon).

The idea of the authority of choral voice is implicit in the works of a number of scholars. Lloyd-Jones (1962: 194–195) suggests that this chorus speaks with authority when he accepts its word (*Ag.* 56–62) that Zeus Xenius sanctioned the mission of the Atreidae to retrieve Helen. Peradotto (1969a: 251), on the other hand, views such comments as "a religious interpretation not an empirical description." (But for a response, see Fontenrose 1971: 72, n. 3.)

[16] Several readers of this passage detect an authorial voice speaking through the chorus; for everything it says about the dangers of excessive wealth fits perfectly with Agamemnon's situation. Lebeck (1971: 38) is too extreme in her contention that the reflections have "little to do with Troy and Paris, everything to do with the destiny of Agamemnon." While it is true that references to trampling things inviolable (369–372) and kicking the altar of Justice (381–384) presage the tapestry scene, spectators would not be aware of this yet. At any rate, as Denniston and Page (1957: 102) demonstrate, the passage does indeed pertain to Paris who has violated Justice by seducing Helen. Conacher (1987: 20) rightly sees the applicability of the passage to Paris, but remarks that "the destruction of Paris and Troy is but the anticipatory analogue of the destruction of Agamemnon." There may indeed be some unintentional irony on the part of the chorus, but it has only Paris in mind when it makes these moralistic comments—as its summation at the end of the antistrophe indicates (οἷος καὶ Πάρις, 399).

[17] See *ad loc.* Thomson 1966; Fraenkel 1950; Lloyd-Jones 1979; Rose 1957–58; Athanassaki 1994: esp. 149–150, n. 2.

three other cases to denote "seer," he does so by qualifying it with some form of the word μάντις.[18] There is certainly no such contextual reference to the mantic ability of the δόμων προφῆται, nor can their utterance be considered prophetic in any way. Surely it does not require supernatural insight to observe that Menelaus misses his wife when she goes to Troy.[19]

A προφήτης is a μάντις because he or she speaks for a god, or interprets a god's portents. Apollo is the spokesman or prophet of Zeus (*Eum.* 19); that is, he speaks for Zeus. The chorus of *Bacchae* describes itself as the προφῆται of Dionysus, or his spokeswomen (Eur. *Bacchae* 551). This is precisely the meaning which best suits the δόμων προφῆται, who speak for the house. As Denniston and Page (1957: 106) observe: "Menelaus is silent (412), but the matter cannot pass without comment; somebody must speak on behalf of the house."[20] This is good as far as it goes, but why does Aeschylus decide to make someone other than the chorus do the talking at this point? Why does he put the story in a different voice, and a rather shadowy one at that?[21] The speech of the δόμων

[18]Later in this play, the chorus tells Cassandra that it has heard of her κλέος μαντικόν, but seeks no προφήτας (1098–99). Likewise at *Eum.* 18–19 the Pythia calls Apollo Διὸς προφήτης "the spokesman/prophet of Zeus" after she has said that Zeus established Apollo as τέταρτον τοῖσδε μάντιν ἐν θρόνοις. Aeschylus uses the word again to describe the seer Amphiaraus at *Septem* 611: οὕτως δ' ὁ μάντις ... μέγας προφήτης. This qualification is evident elsewhere in tragedy. In *Orestes*, Glaucus is μάντις and Νηρέως προφήτης (Eur. *Or.* 363–364). At Eur. *Ion* 42, the Pythia is προφῆτις, but also μάντις. Similarily Pindar describes Tiresias as ὀρθόμαντιν and Διὸς ... προφάταν (*Nem.* 1.60).

[19]The speakers (assuming that they are still speaking) do use a future verb here: "a phantom will seem (δόξει, 415) to rule the house." Yet this is a fairly easy prediction which even a layperson could make. Housman (1888: 258) suggests that this is a "conjectural future" (as in "he will be crossing the Channel by now"); while Bollack and de La Combe (1981–82: 432) interpret the future as having a progressive sense. Supportors of the translation "prophets of the house" (Fraenkel 1950: 214; Thomson 1966: 40; Lloyd-Jones 1979: 51) point out that the chorus of *Choephori* refers to the δόμων ὀνειρόμαντις (32–33) and κριταὶ ... ὀνειράτων (38) who interpret Clytemnestra's dream; but although there is a mention of dreams at *Ag.* 420–426, they are simply descriptions of dreams, not interpretations.

[20]See also Bollack and de La Combe 1981–82: 423: "Puisque Ménélas est silencieux, il faut des intermédiaires." Several commentators remember the Watchman's words in the prologue: the house would speak if only it had a voice (36–37). Housman (1888: 257) notes the watchman's wish that the house could speak and suggests that these "purveyors of gossip" are the second best thing. Wecklein (1888: 60) thinks that since the chorus cannot know what happens in the palace, it needs to present this information through speakers who can. Devereux, although he translates "prophets," also regards the speakers as "spokemen for the court and advisers in situations of stress" (1976: 66). He draws attention (1976: 81) to the fact that "they lament what *is*" rather than prophesy. The verbs which introduce their utterance are ἀνέστενον ... ἐννέποντες (408–409): "they groaned and they spoke." Calchas' prophecy, on the other hand, is introduced by εἶπε τεράζων (125): "he spoke interpreting the portents."

[21]Obviously the discourse of the "speakers for the house" differs from conventional represented discourse in that it issues from a group speaking in unison. For an appeal for a more extensive typology of represented discourse, see Herman 1993. One category which he suggests is particularly suitable for this passage: "Indefinite Direct Discourse," which represents discourse attributed to a collective or to a group of voices.

προφῆται, almost a chorus within a chorus, accomplishes several related effects. Most importantly it introduces a new point of view, a shift from public concerns to private sorrows. The speakers, whoever they may be, provide a more intimate portrait of the misery of Menelaus than the chorus itself can. We are permitted a glimpse of the mute anguish of a man bereft of his wife; from there we are led through the misty halls of fantasy and dreams; and when the mist clears, we are somewhere else entirely—in the households of the common people with their personal woes. The emphasis on Menelaus' lack of voice (σιγᾶς, 412) contributes to this overall shift.[22] The προφῆται speak for Menelaus, but his concerns gradually melt into the larger concerns of other households; and once the aristocratic perspective has been silenced, the perspective of the ordinary citizens takes over. Thus the προφῆται, who are not clearly identifiable characters, seem to fade away, and their voice blends with the grief-stricken voice of the second half of the ode. This, of course, is the voice of the chorus-narrator; but it has gone through some important modifications in terms of its outlook on the Trojan war.

This brings us to the question of the demarcation of the discourse of the προφῆται. There is no explicit indication of closure, for instance a capping clause like "thus they spoke," or even a more implicit signal to indicate that the speech is over.[23] This lack of definite closure is a powerful and deliberate narrative technique which elides the voice of the chorus-narrator and the voice of the internal characters (the προφῆται) to create what Bakhtin (1981: 305) calls a "hybrid utterance": a speech which seems to issue from two separate sources (in most cases the narrator and the speaking character). In other words, at least part of the second antistrophe is double-voiced. Before we explore this device more fully, we must establish that none of the suggested positions of closure is completely unambiguous. Wilamowitz and Devereux put the quotation end at 411, thus giving the speakers a short cry of grief; but then how do we account for the present tense in the following description of Menelaus' condition immediately after Helen left (i.e., in the past)? Murray, Thomson, and Lattimore's closure at 415 seems entirely arbitrary; since the remainder of the strophe apparently continues the train of thought contained within the suggested quotation. Lewis Campbell's termination at the end of the strophe conforms to several other examples of

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[22] West (1990) seems to me to be over-confident in removing the daggers at 412–413. The passage is a *locus desperatus*, although Young (1964) attempts to defend the paradosis by translating: "Menelaus is here silent without honour, without reproaches, pleasantest to behold of men who have let their wives go away." The passage has been emended in various ways (see, for example, Saunders 1966); all, however, retain the aspect of Menelaus' silence.

[23] In extant tragedy, only the speech of Calchas is closed by attributive discourse (i.e., a capping clause; but see the epigrammatic remarks of the wayfarer passing Alcestis' tomb: τοίαί νιν προσεροῦσι φάμαι, Eur. *Alc.* 1005). In most other cases of direct discourse closure is implicitly marked by a clearly discernible change of context. In the speech of Agamemnon at *Ag.* 206–217, for example, a reference to Agamemnon in the third person at the beginning of the next strophe indicates that his speech is over. The speech of the δόμων προφῆται is one of four instances where closure is ambiguous (see above, n. 11).

direct discourse in choral odes; indeed there is only one clearly marked example of character speech, the prediction of Calchas, developing beyond the end of a strophe. But since the following lines elaborate the preceding ideas (although in more general terms), the majority of editors (Verrall, Fraenkel, Page, Rose, Lloyd-Jones, and West) follow Wecklein and put concluding quotation marks at 426. Fraenkel argues that the quotation ends at the position in the antistrophe corresponding to the position in the strophe where it began; but as I shall demonstrate, we need not assume that the couplet at 427–428 is not an integral part of the preceding idea.

Most recently Athanassaki has gone even further by determining that the quotation ends at 455, the end of strophe γ. Arguing that the speakers are indeed clairvoyant prophets, she contends that everything from 410–455 is a prognostication delivered, for the most part, in the oracular present. I have several objections to this ingenious hypothesis.[24] As an example of the oracular present Athanassaki offers the prophecy of Calchas at Aulis: χρόνῳ μὲν ἀγρεῖ Πριάμου πόλιν ἅδε κέλευθος (126): "In time does this expedition capture Priam's city" (tr. Lloyd-Jones). Notice that the futurity of the present verb ἀγρεῖ is suggested by χρόνῳ, and then reinforced immediately by the future λαπάξει (130). Furthermore, there can be no doubt that the references to the Trojan war are in the future, since Calchas' speech is specifically identified as a prophecy (εἶπε τεράζων, 125).

In the speech of the προφῆται, on the other hand, there is nothing either in the attributive discourse or the actual speech itself to suggest that it is a prophecy. It is more natural to assume that the speakers are describing the condition of Menelaus at a time contemporaneous with their own discourse; thus the presents are exactly that, simple presents (πάρεστι, 412; ἔχθεται, 417; ἔρρει, 419). Athanassaki argues that at the time of Helen's departure the prophets also use the oracular present to foretell the future sorrow of the Argive people; but it is more likely that here the present tense denotes action contemporaneous with the dramatic

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[24] Athanassaki (1994: 154) argues that since the speakers lament for the "chiefs of the house" (410), a plural noun, they are thinking of both Atreidae, and consequently must be envisioning the future woes of Agamemnon and Menelaus, which include the anger of the citizens described at 448–451 (which she regards as part of the prophecy). There are other ways of accounting for the plural πρόμοι, however. The abduction of Helen is an insult to the entire Atreid household, and thus affects both Agamemnon and Menelaus (see Denniston and Page 1957: 106). Devereux (1976: 81–83), however, is probably correct to view πρόμοι as a generic plural, since only Menelaus has a legitimate interest in Helen's bed. Athanassaki also remarks (1994: 161) that the ambiguous closure of this passage allows the chorus "to join imperceptibly their own voice to the voice of the prophets." Yet she and I differ substantially over when this blending of voices occurs and what exactly it entails. She suggests that "the prophesied woes of the Atreids are directly related to the sufferings of the citizens whom the Chorus on the whole represent. In other words, the Chorus report a prophecy which includes their own experiences and feelings." I perceive that the blending of voices occurs much earlier than this, and I disagree with her contention that the chorus is describing its own feelings when it reports the grief and anger of the citizens.

present. The *communis opinio* is that after 426 the chorus uses the present tense
in a historic sense, and of course we understand that the Argives grieved from the
earliest days of the expedition.[25] But surely this grief has been unrelenting and
persists right up to the dramatic present. War has been waged for ten years and
has only very recently ended: misery shows (πρέπει, 431) in the house of each
person; Argives lament (στένουσι, 445) and complain (βαΰζει, 449–450). It is
obvious that the populace would feel sorrow and discontent in the final days of the
war, especially considering that the Greek victory has only just been announced,
and that presumably the ashes of the dead continue to arrive. Even the news of
Troy's conquest and the retrieval of Helen would do little to assuage the misery of
the bereaved Argives. The most obvious reason for the present tense, then, is that
it describes the situation at hand, a situation which has existed for many years.

The use of the present tense to describe both Menelaus' grief at the time of
Helen's departure and the grief of the Argives at the end of the war suggests that
the verbs are contemporaneous with two different periods of time. But how can
we distinguish between these two time-frames? Commentators end the quotation
at 426 on the grounds that 427–428 are transitional remarks which move from
the speakers' description of Menelaus' woes to the general affairs of all Hellas;
yet, as Denniston and Page admit, the transition is abrupt. The present tense (τὰ
μὲν ... τάδ' ἐστί) outside the quotation marks (i.e., in the narrator discourse) to
summarize the past grief of Menelaus described within the quotation marks (i.e.,
in the character discourse) is curious. Even if we accept the following presents
as historic (for example, θιγγάνει, 432), the present tense for a summation of
Menelaus' sorrows at a much earlier point in time than these historic presents still
seems infelicitous. Just what is the temporal relationship between these various
present tenses? Denniston and Page (1957: 108) comment that ἐστί at 428 is
used of the past time when Helen departed, while the following presents refer to
a much later time. This seems terribly inept; and of course if we accept that the
presents from 426 describe the contemporary situation, ἐστί becomes even more
confusing.[26]

[25] Nowhere else does this chorus use the historic present. As Athanassaki (1994: 155) notes, the
elders regularly use the past tense to narrate past events.

[26] Verrall (1904: 54–55) sees this problem too, and attempts to remedy any "ill-marked transition
of time from the past to the present" by accepting Halm's emendation τὰ δ' ἔστι (this is also the
recourse of other early editors including Wecklein and Schneidewin). Even so, Verrall's interpretation
of the couplet does nothing to obviate the confusion: "It [τὰ δ' ἔστι] marks the true present time ...
as opposed to the 'historic time'." Lattimore translates the present as historic: "Such have the sorrows
been in the house by the hearthside: such have there been ..."; but the preceding presents are simple
presents, and even if we regard the succeeding presents as historic, they refer to a much later time
than Menelaus' grief at home. Bollack and de La Combe (1981–82: 443) answer Denniston and
Page's remark on the inconcinnity of the present tense at 427 by suggesting that the series of present
verbs does not represent a temporal development but rather a progression of separate fragmented
autonomous scenes. Even so the present at 427 is incongruous in relation to the present tenses in the
remainder of the antistrophe, regardless of whether we take these as historical or simple presents.

This temporal anomaly supports my contention that 420–428 is double-voiced. To be more precise: the dream sequence (420–426) can apply both to the past grief of Menelaus and the present grief of the Argives, and thus issues from both the προφῆται who speak in the past and the chorus-narrator who speaks in the present. Let us examine this device more carefully. Strophe β describes the unsatisfying effects of various substitutes for Helen: the imprints of her body left on her bed (if we take this as the meaning of στίβοι, 411); memories of her which rule the house like a phantom presence (415); and statues of her. The strophe concludes by relating the disconsolate yearning of Menelaus for whom these statues have no charm (χάρις).[27] The antistrophe picks up the idea of a χάρις which is not reciprocated; this is the empty charm of dreams and we think now of another substitute for Helen, a dream, which like the real woman has gone (βεβάκει, 407, of Helen; βέβακεν, 425, of the dream). But although references to unfulfilled yearning and χάρις link strophe and antistrophe, the sequence of thought is moving from the particular to the general. When the speakers begin their lament they do not mention Menelaus by name, although it is obvious that this is whom they mean by ἀνδρί (417). In the antistrophe this indeterminacy becomes even more pronounced: the dreamer is a generalized and ungendered τις, "someone," and the object of desire is no longer a single woman, but ἐσθλά. Fraenkel and West are right to preserve the anacolouthon of δοκῶν ὁρᾶν: "For vainly, when someone seeming to see what is dear—slipping through their hands the vision is gone on the paths of sleep" (422–426). The sentence seems to evaporate syntactically as the dream disappears.

As Fraenkel realizes, a subtle transition occurs in this passage. We move from Menelaus' specific woes immediately after Helen's departure in the strophe to a set of generalized circumstances in the antistrophe shared by Menelaus and all the Argives who yearn for loved ones across the sea. There is an overlap of referents and thus a blending of past and present sorrow. Yet to read 427–428 as a transition from Menelaus specifically to all the Argives is to ignore the ambiguity of the preceding lines which have already started to generalize Menelaus' situation, and of course it leaves us with the enigma of the present tense. Commentators invariably understand τὰ μὲν κατ' οἴκους ἐφ' ἑστίας ἄχη τάδ' ἐστί ("these are the sorrows throughout the house at the hearth") as a specific remark about the royal household and Menelaus' sorrows. According to this view, the "woes exceeding these" (τῶνδ' ὑπερβατώτερα) which the succeeding lines articulate are the generalized sorrows of the Argives as opposed to the particular sorrows

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[27] See Devereux's extensive comments on the psychological significance of these similacra (1976: 86–121). It should be noted that the meaning of στίβοι (411) is vague. Denniston and Page (1957: 106) suggest a path or footsteps (i.e., places where Helen used to walk). Nor do all commentators interpret κολοσσῶν (416) in reference to Helen; although, as Denniston and Page (107) note, it seems natural to supply her name from the preceding sentence. Stieber (1994: 104–108) argues persuasively that Aeschylus' κολοσσοί are late archaic *korai*, an early form of portraiture (in this case of Helen). For a discussion of the significance of erotic *charis* in these lines, see MacLachlan 1993: 66–67.

of Menelaus; but there is an alternative interpretation.[28] Let us suppose for a moment that the sorrows (τὰ μέν) in the households refer to the melancholy experienced by the Argives who miss their absent loved ones. The greater sorrows, then, are those of the Argives who mourn the dead, a grief which has touched the entire Greek people, and which is a more grievous woe (ὑπερβατώτερα) than missing a spouse or son who has left for war. Accordingly τὸ πᾶν, which Fraenkel and others interpret as indicating a movement from the specific to the general ("in general"), indicates that every Argive household ("entirely") mourns someone dear who died in the war.[29] Thus:

> τὰ μὲν κατ' οἴκους ἐφ' ἑστίας ἄχη
> τάδ' ἐστί, καὶ τῶνδ' ὑπερβατώτερα.
> τὸ πᾶν δ' ἀφ' Ἕλλανος αἴας συνορμένοισι πέν-
> 430   θεια τλησικάρδιος
> δόμῳ 'ν ἑκάστου πρέπει,
> πολλὰ γοῦν θιγγάνει πρὸς ἧπαρ·

These are the woes throughout the homes at the hearth, these and worse than these. On the whole, a heart-wrenching sorrow for those who left Hellas appears in the house of each; certainly many griefs touch the heart.

That the πένθεια in the home of each Argive refers to the sorrow caused by death, is reinforced by the following lines which describe the arrival of the funerary urns εἰς ἑκάστου δόμους (435–436), in the home of each Argive.

This reading has the advantage of explaining the present tense throughout the passage, and providing τὸ πᾶν with its conventional meaning; however, it may dismay those looking for a definite closure of the quotation. Instead, I suggest that the dream sequence blurs the boundaries between past and present: thus we go into the dream with Menelaus in mind and come out on the other side, with the present sorrow of the Argives. The generalizing vocabulary of the dream allows it to do double duty, past and present meld (as they so often do in dreams); and this of course means that there is a blending of voices. The description of the dream seems at first to issue from the προφῆται; but when it is over, we realize that it could also issue from the chorus, who now narrates the war's effects on the anguished Argive citizens. Since Menelaus has not been at home by his hearthside for many years, the present tense (τάδ' ἐστί) more accurately describes the torment of those who still are. The sustained

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[28] Fraenkel (1950: ad loc.), despite his perceptive remarks on the applicability of the dreams to the Argives, still understands the woes in the house to be those of Menelaus exclusively. See also Denniston and Page (1957: 108). Thomson (1966: 43) notes that lines 429–431 move from the private grief of Menelaus to "the feelings of the common people as they mourn for all those who have given their lives in a war for one woman."

[29] As Denniston and Page (1957: 108) note, "in general" is an abnormal usage for τὸ πᾶν, which more properly means "on the whole" or "entirely." See Aes. Supp. 781 and Soph. El. 1009. Lattimore's translations accurately retain the normal usage: "In all Hellas, for those who swarmed to the host, the heartbreaking misery shows in the house of each."

present tense to narrate the more serious consequences of the Trojan expedition creates the impression that τάδ' ἐστί and πρέπει, θιγγάνει, etc. are more or less simultaneous.

While the motif of substitution links the dream passage to the preceding description of Menelaus' frustrated longing, there is also a thematic continuity between the dream and the following account of Argive sorrows. The dream fancies are an imperfect replacement for a loved one, but even more poignant are the urns and ashes which come home instead of men (ἀντὶ δὲ φωτῶν, 434), yet another type of substitution. It could be argued that the substitution motif in the funerary context parallels and thus criticizes Menelaus' fantasies, but there are other reasons for applying the dreams to the Argives. The dreams are πενθήμονες (420), "mournful," a word not entirely appropriate to Helen, and which has been emended or explained in a variety of imaginative ways; but it would be an apt term for the dreams of the Argives whose visions of departed loved ones appear sorrowful.[30] A dream slipping through one's fingers recalls Achilles' attempt to touch the ghost of Patroclus, another Greek victim of the Trojan war, who appeared to him in a dream (Homer *Il.* 23.99–100)—a mournful allusion which goes beyond Menelaus' erotic yearning to presage the real mourning (πένθεια, 430) in Argive homes. Thus imagery and vocabulary make the dream passage just as applicable to the Argive situation as to Menelaus.

As readers of a text, especially readers trained in modern editorial conventions, we look for an appropriate place to insert quotation marks in this passage; but an audience hearing these lines would only be aware that somehow a subtle shift of reference has moved the narrative from the past to the present. The passage from 420–428 has blended the past sorrow of Menelaus with the present sorrow of the Argives, and helps to move from the vantage point of the Atreidae to that of common people. When they first give their narrative over to a different voice, the voice of the chorus, in a manner of speaking, disappears for a moment. The

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[30] Housman (1888: 259–260) understands the dreams to be Menelaus' visions of Helen; consequently he cannot tolerate πενθήμονες if it means "of sorrowful aspect" (which would indeed describe the Argive dreams of their departed beloved). Denniston and Page (1957: 107) defend this meaning on the grounds that Menelaus is envisioning a repentant Helen, but this is a desperate measure. Nor is Housman prepared to accept the meaning "causing sorrow," although Fraenkel (1950: 221) suggests that it means "fancies and visions which appear in the mourner's dreams." Housman argues that if the dreams bring χάρις, albeit an empty one, they cannot be mournful. But as MacLachlan (1993) shows, χάρις properly connotes reciprocity, not simply joy or pleasure. In this case, I would argue, χάρις is vain because there can be no real interaction with a dream. Housman's emendation (anticipated by Karsten), πειθήμονες, persuaded several generations of editors (see, e.g., Murray 1955) and is still preferred by Thomson (1966: 42) and Lloyd-Jones (1979). Thus the dreams are "persuasive" because they convincingly represent the departed Helen. I maintain that πενθήμονες does not specifically pertain to Helen, but to dreams of absent loved ones in general. Fraenkel's suggestion is possible, but "mournful fantasies" is open to interpretation and contributes to the generalizing tone of the passage. Bollack and de La Combe (1981–82: 445) rightly note an echo of πενθήμονες in πένθεια, apparently a hapax which may mean "female mourner" (see Denniston and Page 1957: 108–109), although simply "grief" seems more appropriate in this context.

purpose of the words of those who speak on behalf of the house is to present the consciousness of Menelaus, and thus to give the narrative a more personal, melancholic quality. This perspective emphasizes Menelaus' stunned silence, but since he is silent, the narrative can expand to include the perspective of the bereaved populace of Argos. It is never precisely clear when the προφῆται cease to speak, since the dream sequence provides a timeless quality to the narrative. In effect the very structure of this account of the Trojan war replicates how the past sorrow of Menelaus is transmuted into the present sorrow of the Argives. We cannot say for sure when the chorus resumes its role as narrator, but its revised perspective on events seems absolutely natural.

Other examples of open-ended direct discourse in tragic choral lyric achieve comparable effects.[31] The second stasimon of *Iphigenia at Aulis* also features a hybrid utterance of sorts. Here the chorus of Greek women imagines the future conquest of Troy, and expresses the wish never to experience the hardship which will afflict the Trojan women. The Greek women represent the speech of the Λυδαὶ καὶ Φρυγῶν ἄλοχοι who wonder who their captors will be (790–792), but it is not clear if they are the ones who go on to criticize Helen for starting the war, or even if they continue speaking at the end of the ode.

> διὰ σέ, τὰν κύκνου δολιχαύχενος γόνον,
> 795   εἰ δὴ φάτις ἔτυμος ὡς
> ἔτεκεν Λήδα σ' ὄρνιθι πταμένῳ
> Διὸς ὅτ' ἠλλάχθη δέμας, εἴτ'
> ἐν δέλτοις Πιερίσιν
> μῦθοι τάδ' ἐς ἀνθρώπους
> 800   ἤνεγκαν παρὰ καιρὸν ἄλλως.[32]

Because of you, child of the long necked swan, if indeed the story is true that Leda bore you when Zeus changed into a winged bird, or are these just stories brought to mortals on the tablets of the Muses without point or truth?

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[31] At *Supp.* 584–585 the Danaids highlight Zeus' role as the father of their ancestor, Epaphus, by claiming "the entire earth (χθών) cries, 'This is truly the offspring (γένος) of life-producing Zeus'." It is as if not only the Danaids themselves are announcing this fact, but now also a much larger chorus of voices: the world at large ... "everyone." But it seems that the Danaids co-opt the voice of "the entire earth" to press their claim to Zeus' patronage further; for there is no sign where the utterance of χθών actually ends. Thus it is not precisely clear who says "and if you say that this offspring (τόδ' ... γένος) is descended from Epaphus, you would hit the mark." "This offspring" is of course the Danaids themselves and so it seems that they have slipped their genealogical claim under the door, so to speak. Because the verb which introduces this speech, βοᾷ (583), is in the present, it is not entirely clear when this reported discourse is supposed to have occurred; the boundaries between past and present have been blurred, making it seem possible that the "entire earth" is proclaiming the Danaids' genealogy. At Eur. *Bacchae* 151, the chorus of Bacchants represents the exhortations of the leader of their band; but, as Dodds (1960: *ad loc.*) notes, it is not clear how far his speech extends. This ambiguity heightens the sense of communion between the maenads and their leader (who of course is Dionysus himself).

[32] This is Stockert's 1992 text based on a papyrus of the third century b.c. (*P.Leid.* inv. 510) with musical notation.

This ambiguity has the effect of blending the voices of the chorus-narrator and the characters in their narrative; and like the προφῆται the Asian women are a group, a chorus within a choral ode. In this particular case it gives the illusion that the women of the chorus and their Asian counterparts share a voice, an effect which underscores the Greek wives' sympathy for the women of Troy and their growing sense of alienation from the Greek military culture at Aulis. The chorus's skepticism has other interesting implications in terms of choral voice. This stasimon is noteworthy for its pronounced Homeric allusions (epic topics and epithets); it is thus paradoxical that the chorus questions the validity of poets' tales in its conclusion. Since the entire play is an ironic treatment of literary traditions, including some obvious allusions to the *Iliad* and *Agamemnon*, we might be tempted to read this expression of skepticism as the voice of the poet who invites us to question the validity of such traditional literature.[33] The final portion of the ode is an convoluted specimen of polyphony: we hear the voice of the poet, the voice of the chorus-narrator, and the voice of women who will be a subject of poets' songs, but who suggest that those songs may not be true.

Thus Euripides uses represented speech within choral narrative to articulate some of the major concerns of his drama. The obscure delineation of this discourse permits a confluence of voices including the poet's. Can we hear the poet's voice in the fusion of voices in the speech of the προφῆται? Perhaps not as distinctly or directly, but it does facilitate the shift to the perspective of the common people, which leads to the authorial remarks of the third antistrophe. The narrative in the final strophic system represents the point of view of the grief-stricken and dissatisfied Argives, whose voices we now hear. There is yet another important

[33] Like many of Euripides' plays, particularly his later plays, *Iphigenia at Aulis* reveals the poet's fascination with textuality and intertextuality. The drama begins with Agamemnon rewriting the letter to his wife which summoned her to Aulis with the lie of Iphigenia's betrothal to Achilles written on δέλτου πτυχαῖς (98). When he decides to send a second letter to cancel out the first, Agamemnon performs a programmatic and symbolic act. As Foley (1985: 94) recognizes, the description of Agamemnon writing and rewriting his letter is metatheatrical. Agamemnon becomes the analog of the poet writing and rewriting his play, for in this play Euripides is also creating a text which will try to "correct" earlier texts, the *Iliad*, possibly the *Cypria*, and *Agamemnon*. These texts can never be far from our thoughts as the drama progresses, for there are multiple references to them all. The parodos alludes to the Iliadic catalogue of ships; and there are allusions to the first two books of the *Iliad* in the first episode. The *Iliad* began with Agamemnon and Achilles arguing over a young woman; now the contenders are Agamemnon and Menelaus, the woman Iphigenia.

The entire first episode is remarkable for the complementary change of minds of the Atreidae, and for a moment it seems that Euripides, as he has done before, is going to rewrite literary history: perhaps Agamemnon will not sacrifice his daughter. Yet the relentless allusions to the *Iliad* suggest otherwise, for Iphigenia's death is a necessary prerequisite for the Trojan War. The second episode alludes to another text contingent on Iphigenia's sacrifice. The arrival of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia in a chariot and Agamemnon's efforts to get his victim into the skene allude to the arrival of Agamemnon and Cassandra and the tapestry scene of *Agamemnon*.

The second stasimon, a proleptic vision of the sack of Troy, contains multiple Homeric allusions: epithets such as ἀργυροειδεῖς (cf. *Il.* 2.753); allusions to the Teichoscopia (*Il.* 6.369–502), etc. All these accentuate the irony of the chorus's skepticism about poets' songs: see Foley 1985: 81.

change of mood in this song—from sorrow back to anger again; and reported discourse helps to bring this about. The chorus tells how the Argive citizens eulogize one fallen soldier by saying how skilled he was in battle, how well another died in the war—for another man's wife (445–449). Many editors and translators enclose ἀλλοτρίας διαὶ γυναικός within quotation marks (although once again such a convention is designed for readers), since the phrase seems to replicate the actual words of the angry citizens.[34] These speakers are never explicitly identified, but their voices create a dull hum of discontent which grows ever more ominous. We catch snatches of conversation which, to borrow an eloquent Bakhtinian phrase, allow the narrative flow to disperse "into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia" (Bakhtin 1981: 263). The sibilant staccato of τάδε σῖγά τις βαΰζει (449–450) captures the essence of such anonymous and furtive recriminations. Now sorrow has turned to anger; and from this perspective the Trojan war has little to do with divine justice, nor is the theft of Helen a crime against the gods. Many brave men have died honorably "for another man's wife," a sacrifice which causes great bitterness amongst the Argives.

The elders are speaking in their capacity as narrators at this point: this is what people are saying. The chorus can report the complaints of the townspeople without necessarily agreeing or disagreeing with these complaints, because represented discourse allows it to hand the narrative over to different voices.[35] It observes that the "speech of the townspeople is heavy with anger," and suggests that their rancour has the force of a curse (456–457). This acrimony causes the chorus such great anxiety that it confesses to a feeling of foreboding:

<div align="center">

μένει δ' ἀκοῦσαί τί μου
μέριμνα νυκτηρεφές.   (459–460)

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My anxious thought waits to hear something cloaked in night.

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[34] Bollack and de La Combe (1981–82: 453–454) provide a good discussion of the ambiguity of this reported discourse. How closely we take ἀλλοτρίας διαὶ γυναικός with the preceding eulogy depends on whether we understand these remarks to be part of a public funeral or a more private occasion. In either case the ambiguity reveals how skilfully Aeschylus uses reported discourse in this ode to create a change of mood—here within a single sentence.

[35] This, I believe, is a fundamental weakness in the argument of Athanassaki, who takes it for granted that the chorus is part of the general populace. Thus she argues (1994: 156–157) that the record of this Argive hostility must be part of the prediction of the prophets, since it contradicts the present pro-Atreid sentiments of the chorus. Yet the chorus is not describing its own feelings at this point, but the resentment of the Argive populace in general. Thomson (1966: 45) notes: "The consequences of discontent at home during the Trojan war formed the subject of well-known stories referred to by Plato in *Legg.* 682d." As Leahy (1974: 14–15) shows, any attempt to argue that these discontented Argives are fomenting revolt or that they support Aegisthus is a documentary fallacy. The people are not planning revolt against their leaders but cursing them. I agree with Bollack and de La Combe (1981–82: 461) that we do not have to assume that an official public curse has been pronounced: "Agamemnon se trouve être l'objet d'une malédiction prononcée régulièrement contre tout ennemi de la cité par le peuple." Thomson (1966: 45) cites Dem. 10.130 and 19.70 as evidence that "popular indignation is as effectual as a curse officially pronounced."

This is the first time since the very beginning of the ode that the chorus has referred to itself in the first person. There can be little doubt that the chorus is relating how it feels at this specific moment, nor can there be any question that the angry words of the citizens cause the chorus to feel so apprehensive about hearing "something cloaked in night."[36] Obviously then the resentment of the Argives is still very much alive—another indication that the situation described from 427–458 is contemporaneous with the dramatic present. It is quite clear that the chorus sees itself as distinct from the general Argive population and is concerned about the possible consequences of their imprecations against the Atreidae. It has related the public's attitude concerning the war, and now, in its capacity as narrator and commentator, expresses anxiety about that attitude. Leahy (1974: 14) is quite right to see a connection between the people's curse and the chorus's apprehensive thoughts about the Erinyes, who are the agents and embodiment of the curse.

The remainder of the final antistrophe returns to the idea of crime and punishment. In view of what precedes these gnomic remarks, that is recrimination of the Atreidae, it is obvious that these ideas apply to Agamemnon: the gods are aware of those who cause many deaths and the Erinyes stalk the man who has prospered without justice. The chorus says that it prefers a prosperity without envy (κρίνω δ' ἄφθονον ὄλβον, 471) and wishes neither to be a city-sacker nor a victim. The frame of first-person references enclosing the gnomic remarks about the consequences of excessive prosperity makes it seem that the chorus now speaks *in persona*. Kaimio (1970: 92–93) notes that although this type of transitional reflective passage is common in Aeschylean choral songs, the first person singular is not often used. He observes that in this passage "the mimetic element of emotion ... keeps the reflective elements within the range of the choral personality, even if the sentiments uttered are at the same time compatible with those felt by the poet."

Once again, then, a voice from a different narrative level blends with choral discourse. It is indeed possible to detect the voice of the poet, who uses the chorus to articulate the prevailing norms of the play: wanton violence and prosperity without justice will be punished by the gods. Agamemnon's murder will attest to this ineluctable truth and his guilt is many-faceted: he suffers from the congenital curse on the house of Atreus; he sacrificed his daughter at Aulis; and as Clytemnestra suggests in her second beacon speech (341–347), he lets his army behave with impropriety during the sack of Troy. The chorus has added one more facet of Agamemnon's guilt: he bears responsibility for the deaths of countless Argive citizens (as we know, more will die in the passage home). And, as the

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[36] This is essentially the position of Leahy (1974: 14). Likewise Thiel (1993: 163) writes that the Argive complaints are the concrete reason for the chorus's meditations on the danger to Agamemnon expressed in the third antistrophe. Lebeck (1971: 43) notes that although the statement could literally mean that the chorus waits to hear news of Troy's capture at night, the following lines clearly mean something more ominous.

chorus is compelled to acknowledge, the eye of Zeus strikes down the man who
has prospered without justice (469–470). These sentiments seem at odds with the
ideas expressed earlier in the ode. How can Zeus send Agamemnon to Troy and
then punish him for executing his will? Fontenrose (1971: 77) finds these two
ideas so inconsonant that he decides the elders must now be thinking of Paris once
again. He is responsible for making the citizens condemn their king, and he is the
man who has prospered without justice. While it is true that the chorus refrains
from mentioning Agamemnon by name when they make these statements, such
reticence stems from their deep-rooted anxiety and natural inclination to avoid
the obvious conclusion that Agamemnon is as culpable as Paris.

There is nothing in the third antistrophe to suggest that the elders have returned
to the subject of Paris, although the pattern of his crime shows similarities to
Agamemnon's situation. Agamemnon is indeed the agent of Zeus' justice, but he
is caught in the web of justice himself.[37] This is the realization towards which the
entire stasimon has been flowing in a movement that seems at times to be almost
out of the chorus's control. The voice of the δόμων προφῆται opens up the story
to a different point of view which reveals the views of the common people. The
chorus is compelled, it seems, to record the citizens' bitterness and to realize its
implications for Agamemnon. This leads logically to a statement on the nature of
crime and punishment; now the poet obliges the chorus to state the major theme
of the play and the reality of Agamemnon's situation.

When we identify the different narrative levels of the song—the voice of the
poet who speaks from beyond the limited perspective of the elders; the narrator
voice of the chorus with only a partial comprehension of events; and the character
voices embedded within the discourse of the chorus-narrator—we appreciate
what a mutable and flexible instrument choral voice can be. The intersection
of these different levels of discourse creates a narrative focused through multiple

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[37] As Leahy (1974: 19) observes: "the Trojan War is not only Zeus' means of punishing Trojan
hybris: it is also the starting point for his punishment of the other guilty community, the House of
Atreus. And the process here follows the same pattern. Agamemnon, conditioned like Paris by past
hybris, makes his own sinful and disastrous choice: he chooses to kill his daughter and to wage a war
involving misery and death for his people and sacrilege against the gods. . . . "

While Agamemnon is forced to sacrifice Iphigenia in order to effect Zeus' punishment of the
Trojans, he does so in a manner which is impious. In the parodos the chorus says that once he made
his decision:

> "his mind changed to a temper of utter ruthlessness.
> For mortals are made reckless by the evil counsels
> of merciless Infatuation, beginner of disaster."
>
>   (221–223, tr. Lloyd-Jones)

This ruthlessness no doubt includes his behaviour at Troy. Both Clytemnestra (338–347) and the
herald (527) allude to the desecration of Trojan altars, which according to tradition incurred the gods'
wrath and caused the destruction of Greek ships on the way home. In view of the well-established
epic tradition concerning the blighted Greek homecoming, I see no reason for Fontenrose's (1971:
78) skepticism about the validity of Clytemnestra's prediction. I concur with Denniston-Page (1957:
120) that 527 is not an interpolation, and with Goldhill (1986: 7) that the messenger's repetition of
Clytemnestra's words "expresses the fulfillment of the queen's fear."

perspectives rather than a single point of view. As Lotman (1974: 351) observes in his analysis of such techniques: "The literary model re-creates that most important aspect of reality—the impossibility of any one definitive and exhaustive interpretation." But the chorus is not a detached narrator telling the story from the outside—it both tells a story and is in that story. Aeschylus uses the voice of the chorus to describe events, and he exploits some very sophisticated narrative devices to do so; but he does not let us forget that the members of this chorus are concerned, elderly citizens who want very much to believe that all will turn out well. The manifold voices and perspectives which seep into this ode shatter the initial authoritative confidence of the elders; but in the epode the chorus reasserts itself and takes control of the narrative once again. Its vision suddenly narrows and it now speaks entirely in character as anxious, confused, and skeptical old men who have decided not to believe the beacon's report. Their thoughts have almost led them to the realization that Agamemnon is a doomed man, but they cannot face this conclusion.[38]

The epode is a response to Clytemnestra's interpretation of the beacon and that report includes an intimation of Agamemnon's hubris at Troy. It is interesting that the elders refer to other voices in these final lines of their song, and how desperately they try to shut them out.[39] A rumour (βάξις, 477) from the message beacon rushes through the city, but is it true? Only a child, a fool, or a woman would believe so. The chorus has been pulled towards the truth through the agency of other voices; ultimately it recoils from that truth by shutting them out.[40]

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[38] Arnoldt (1881: 41) argues that the epode is more naturally connected with the preceding episode; and likewise Thiel (1993: 151–153), while maintaining that the retraction is compatible with choral character, suggests that the chorus is now responding directly to Clytemnestra's interpretation of the beacon. I concur with Scott (1984: 47), who remarks: "In effect, the old men's thoughts have led to conclusions that are so disturbing that they do not want the message from Troy to be true. Every step in the development of this lyric flows quite reasonably and consistently from the previous ideas. The justice of Zeus is seen to have such horrible immediate consequences that the chorus must seek refuge in the hope that the cause of its thoughts is untrue—that the torch is unreliable and can be dismissed as the kind of thing a woman would believe in."

[39] Some argue that the epode is divided between two or more groups of *choreutae* (see Scott 1984: 150), although there is no textual indication of such a distribution, nor is it necessary. Yet a division would be entirely consonant with the polyphonous nature of the preceding part of the stasimon. There are no conflicting voices in the epode; but if it were divided into separate voices, this would enhance the impression that the conviction of the chorus is not as unequivocal or unified as its actual words now suggest.

[40] This article develops an idea contained in my Bryn Mawr doctoral dissertation (1995). I am grateful to my dissertation directors, Gregory Dickerson and Richard Hamilton, for their guidance. Special thanks are due to Douglas Gerber and the *Phoenix* referees. I presented an earlier version of this article at the meeting of the American Philological Association at Atlanta, Georgia in December 1994.

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