SONG AND THE SOLITARY SELF: EURIPIDEAN WOMEN WHO RESIST COMFORT

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All Greek tragedies explore the human response to misfortune. The people of myth whom Euripides selects as the focus of his plays repeatedly face the death of loved ones and suffer abandonment, exile, and betrayal. The Euripidean heroine initially responds to these situations by claiming an ownership of grief, stating that the death of her father or the abandonment by her lover or her exile in a foreign land or her imminent death are all that she can think about. She also demands that others recognize her sufferings as real and legitimate. This ownership of suffering is expressed by a refusal to accept the sympathy or take the advice of others (often a chorus that responds to grief with platitudes) and is sung in lyrics. There is a paradox in this: the fictional woman is in a state of utter powerlessness, which is expressed not by silence, but by communication, since she nonetheless has the power to sing. The lyrical voicing of her powerlessness gives her a strange kind of control, in that Euripides' heroines act with authority when they resist the predominant expectations of how they should behave—whether that means giving in to someone else's understanding of an event, or giving up lamentation and moving forward with their lives.

I have chosen to examine four of Euripides' female characters who, while singing lyrics in an exchange (*amoibaion*) with an interlocutor, express resistance to being comforted: Electra from her name play, as well as Hypsipyle, Alcestis, and Hermione in *Andromache*. Refusal to be comforted is not the only reaction that a tragic woman can have to potential comforters, but it is one which Euripides chose to convey in song. A character in Greek tragedy does not sing when she can give orders instead (for which iambic trimeters would be more appropriate), and Electra, Hypsipyle, Alcestis, and Hermione each finds herself in a situation where she is least able to give orders: slavery, exile, and near-death experiences. Yet despite the help that her interlocutors might bring, each woman refuses to connect with them, thus remaining isolated in her own private world. I have argued elsewhere that the persuasive and truth-telling songs of Euripidean women in recognition duets form an independent verbal genre characteristic of female communication in tragedy.[1] Likewise, Euripidean women's songs of resistance should be read as an independent tragic verbal genre, or at the very least, a

[1] Chong-Gossard forthcoming. Laura McClure's excellent study (1999: 32–69) of verbal genres in Greek drama follows Sherzer's definition of "verbal genres" as "culturally recognized, routinized, and sometimes though not necessarily overtly marked and formalized forms and categories of discourse in use in particular communities and societies" (Sherzer 1987: 98). McClure's discussion of verbal genres focuses on lamentation, *aischrologia*, ritual song, gossip, and seductive persuasion, all of which she connects from the theater to ancient daily life. For example, she argues that Athenian

PHOENIX, VOL. 57 (2003) 3–4.

sub-genre of women's song. After some introductory comments on lyrics and a brief overview of these four cases, I will draw some general conclusions about the usefulness of this pattern, the appropriateness of lyrics for it, and what this might demonstrate about Euripides' project for his representation of women.

WHY LYRICS?

The very existence of the tragic convention of different meters of delivery—iambic trimeters, anapests, trochaic tetrameters, lyrics—implies that Euripides desired a specific effect when he assigned lyrics to any of his characters, male or female. It is easy to forget that it was not uncommon for Euripides to compose large sung portions for his actors (i.e., not choruses), amounting to as much as a third or even half of all the lyrics in any given tragedy. A study done by Eric Csapo (2000: 413) of the musically accompanied lines of actors in Euripides has shown that, of the total number of lyric lines (including choruses, but excluding recitative anapests) in any play, the number of actors' musical lines totals between roughly a quarter (in *Hippolytus* and *Suppliants*) to nearly half *(Andromache, Ion, Hecabe, Phoenissae)* to as much as 68 per cent (*Orestes.*)[2] Scholars usually correlate actors' song with heightened emotion, not least because most song incorporates pathetic language, and lyric meter is used for dirges.[3] This emotional quality of song renders it extremely suitable for a variety of dramatic purposes.

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women had approval to communicate in public in some verbal genres (usually religious contexts, such as lamentations or prayers), and in other genres they were believed to disrupt patriarchal society (lamentations and gossip); and that these contexts overlapped. I, however, use the term "verbal genre" to describe a convention of communication peculiar to Greek tragedy, without searching for parallels or implications in real life.

[2] Csapo's figures do *not*, however, indicate a quantitative pattern in the amount of actors' lyrics from the early to late plays. Although the plays after 415 contain more experimental contexts for actor's song (recognition scenes, the *teichoscopia* of *Phoenissae*, the Phrygian's song in *Orestes*, the lyric anapests in the prologue of *Iphigenia in Aulis*), the actual ratio of actors' sung lines to the total lyric content of any play is extremely variable. For example, plays in which the actors' lyrics total less than 20 per cent of the total lines of song include the *Alcestis* and *Medea* of the 430s, the presumably pre-415 *Heracles* and the posthumous *Bacchae;* 21 to 30 per cent include the early *Hippolytus, Suppliants* (420s?), and the posthumous *Iphigenia in Aulis* (excluding the first prologue); 31 to 40 per cent include *Troades, Iphigenia in Tauris, Helen,* and *Electra;* 41 to 50 per cent include *Andromache* and *Ion;* and over 51 per cent include *Hecuba, Phoenissae,* and *Orestes* (the Byzantine triad, interestingly enough). *Heracleidae* contains no actors' song.

By way of comparison, Csapo also compiled figures for Sophocles. The results are equally variable. Plays in which the actors' lyrics total less than 25 per cent of the total lines of song include *Ajax, Oedipus Tyrannus,* and *Trachiniae;* the posthumous *Oedipus at Colonus* scores 29.2 per cent, *Antigone* 32.8 per cent, *Philoctetes* 34.9 per cent, and *Electra* 49.1 per cent. Notice that a play with no women (*Philoctetes)* has a slightly larger (but nearly the same) proportion of actors' lyrics as *Antigone.* All these figures come from Csapo 2000.

[3] Hall in her study on actors' song indicates that "song versus speech was both an emotionally and ideologically laden distinction" (1999: 120). McClure (1995) tallies pathetic expressions in Euripides. She argues not only for female-specific pathetic expressions, but also suggests that extreme emotionalism was appropriate for tragic female characterization, based on the fact that the majority of choral lyrics and lyric monodies were given to female characters.

In modern indoor theater, we highlight an actor with a spotlight; in cinema or television, a camera zooms in on the character who is meant to catch our attention. Song performed a similar function in the ancient outdoor theater, for whenever an actor began to sing, he and his role became the aural focus of the scene. There were stark audible differences between sung lyrics and normal spoken iambic trimeters, not only in the fact that lyric was accompanied by musical instruments, but also in lyric's poetic vocabulary and often riddling syntax sung in a Doric dialect, and in the elaborate metrical variation that surely was correlated to the music. This naturally resulted in an audience paying more attention to a singer, thus allowing the playwright to invite that audience to sympathize with the singing character's experience and view the world through that character's eyes. Actors' song, therefore, can be read as a specialized type of tragic communication; we must therefore attempt to understand what precisely it expressed.

First of all, with a depth not expressible in ordinary iambic trimeter speech, song unlocks or reveals the fictional inner self of the singer, a self connected to a traumatic past that is dictated by myth. With this in mind, Edith Hall (1999: 116) argues that:

> certain female characters seem almost pre-programmed to sing (Electra, Hecuba, Iphigenia, Cassandra). With others there is no consistency, and the choice of speech or song may partly depend on the extent of the "interiorization" of a woman's character in an individual play.

In a similar vein, Mark Damen has described Euripidean singers (1990: 134) as "notoriously self-absorbed. In their songs they mention themselves and their direful situations repeatedly." In a series of charts, Damen tallied the proportion of first-person references in Euripidean passages of solo lyrics, lyric exchanges with choruses, choral stasima, and Aristophanic parodies of Euripidean monody. For monodists, "on average, every 3.3 lines they make direct reference to themselves in the first person" (1990: 134).[4]

Second, and along the same lines, song can often provide a connection to what is absent, invisible, or intangible. It can communicate what is beyond simple explanation, and thus outside the scope of iambic trimeter dialogue. Choruses and actors alike call upon gods or spirits in song, especially when they want a particular god or spirit to answer. For example, Cassandra in *Troades* invokes Hymen, and the *kommos* of Aeschylus' *Choephori* is a seance-like ritual to contact the dead spirit of Agamemnon. Interestingly, tragic characters do not sing when addressing a *deus ex machina*, because the *deus* is perceptible.[5] Actors also sing of

[4] Damen used these figures to prove that *Or.* 960–1012, which survives as Electra's monody, was originally a choral ode, given that the singer of this passage "uses the first person only seven times in 53 lines or once every 7.6 lines, less than half as often as the average monodist" (1990: 135).

[5] Notice, for instance, that although the wounded Hippolytus begins with spoken anapests (*Hipp.* 1348–53), builds to lyric anapests (1354–69), and finally breaks into lyric iambics (1370–88) to describe his pain, he nonetheless switches to spoken iambic trimeters when he perceives that Artemis is present *ex machina* (1391). In Euripides' *Electra*, brother and sister sing a duet of lyric iambics after

things which cannot be seen or touched, but are part of their personal experience; by insisting that one knows or perceives what is imperceptible or intangible to others, the singer's words become authoritative. Sometimes actors sing about events that have not yet happened, both real and unreal. Hermione in *Andromache* sings of her fantasies of escaping her husband, who she is certain will kill her; Alcestis sings of Death approaching her, which is a real event that only she can see. More often the invisible consists of memories, and song becomes the medium of contact with memory when one *relives* what one sings. Hypsipyle sings of past happy times in Lemnos, and Iphigenia in *Iphigenia in Tauris* remembers in lyrics her sacrifice at Aulis. Sometimes these memories involve divine or supernatural events that are incomprehensible and, therefore, best articulated in lyrics. Helen in her name play, for instance, narrates her abduction by Hermes in song, and the Phrygian slave in *Orestes* sings of Helen's mysterious apotheosis. At others times, personal memories are linked to communal memories of famous stories of the past, so that singers very often transport themselves outside of time by recalling mythological exempla and comparing their own disastrous sufferings to those of well-known heroes or heroines. This exercise is almost always a futile one; despite similarities of typology, no tragic character thinks his or her experience is exactly like another's.

Third, the personae whose inner selves and connections to the intangible are uncovered by song are usually women. Singing is very much a female prerogative, and most monodies in extant tragedy are sung by female characters. This is surely tied to the cultural form of lament, usually the domain of women; but as Hall (1999: 113) points out, the ancient world already had "a tendency to gender song as feminine," starting with the myth of the Muses. Nonetheless, there appears to be something significantly different in what monodies sung by tragic women express by contrast to male monodies, so much so that song deserves to be analyzed as a form of "women's speech" in Euripidean tragedy.[6] Specifically, women's lyrics signal knowledge and experience. Euripides' *Ion* is a good test case,

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they murder their mother (1177–1231), but use spoken anapests to converse with the Dioscuri *ex machina* (1295–1341).

[6] A *communis opinio* has been reached that there does exist in male-authored Greek literature (but more specifically in Greek drama) a definable something that can be termed "women's speech." This takes several subtle forms, including (and this is by no means exhaustive): a) female language at the level of the linguistic marker, such as oaths and obscenities (Sommerstein 1995), interjections and pathetic expressions (McClure 1995), and forms of address (Dickey 1996), which are sex-specific in drama; b) "verbal genres" (such as gossip, lamentations, seductive persuasion) associated with and manipulated by women in drama (McClure 1999; I would add song to this category); c) contextual differences between the sexes in the handling of language, such as noticeable shifts in behavior and rhetorical technique when tragic women address single-sex or mixed-sex groups (Mossman 2001), tragic women's use of silence for conniving and Sophoclean women's silent exits to signal suicide (Montiglio 2000: 238–245, 252–256), and tragic women's tendering and manipulation of oaths, engaging with male anxieties about female solidarity and agency (Fletcher 2003). I agree wholeheartedly with Mossman's optimism when she states that, "It should be reassuring that both a 'verbal genres' approach and a rhetorical

since both a male and a female role (Ion and Creusa) each sing their own monody, recounting opposite experiences of the god Apollo and the violence associated with him. In the interpretation of Stanley Hoffer (1996), Ion's song indicates the boy's unreflective participation in the ritualized control of violence, whereas Creusa's expresses the uncontrolled physical endurance of violence. In Hoffer's words (1996: 289, 291):

> Ion's monody (82–183) ends with the emblematic action of his threatening to shoot the birds who would soil the temple; in short, he protects purity through violence and death .... Finally, lurking behind the natural setting and the stage actions is Ion's ambiguous presentation of his status as a temple slave, an attitude that combines naive contentment with wistful longing, and that elegantly prepares us for his disturbing, moving encounter with Creusa.

Ion's daily routine consists of aiming his bow at birds which, in his opinion, would foul the temple of Apollo with their droppings (*Ion* 154–180). One of these aviary intruders is a mother bird searching to build a nest for its young (170–172), which Ion drives away with arrows, but does not kill (173–176)—a pathetic parallel to the story of Creusa and her inability to rear the infant Ion. Ion's lyrics exude a naive ignorance of the violence he commits, but this is not surprising for a boy who has lived in a temple all his life and been deprived of a supervised childhood in the *polis*, not to mention secure knowledge of his paternity. In contrast, Creusa's lyrics divulge a personal history of suffering sexual violence. Her songs unveil a hidden secret (her rape) of which only she and Apollo have secure knowledge, in sharp distinction to the lyrics of Ion, whose innocence is part and parcel of his lack of knowledge—even a lack of awareness, as Hoffer would argue—of the innate violence in his day-to-day activities.

The life experiences of Euripidean women are repeatedly represented as essentially unlike those of men, and often grounded in violence or submission. As Hoffer (1996: 306) comments on Creusa's speech at *Ion* 252:

> In Creusa's riddle, women's "suffering" (252 τλήμονες) and gods' "daring" (τολμήματα) are the same events seen from opposite sides, as the play on words suggests .... Creusa's outburst displays the tension of suppression and resistance, of "enduring" and "daring," on both social and psychological levels.

Tragic women's songs which are expressive of this power differential might be said to have resistance built into them, inasmuch as the singing subject can define herself against her overwhelming troubles (of which only she has explicit knowledge), and can in desperation argue with a person who tries to comfort or distract her. As William Allan (2000: 194–195) writes of tragic women:

> Their marginal status, often compounded by foreignness and slavery, enhances the impact of their moral and intellectual challenge to "the dominant orderings of patriarchal society"

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analysis confirm the complex nature of the role of female characters in tragedy" (Mossman 2001: 374, n. 3).

[quoting Goldhill 1986: 115]. If there is one feature which Euripides' work may be said to communicate most penetratingly in this area, it is to stress the distinctive tragic potential of women's constrained experience. However, our appreciation of such distinctiveness needs to be carried through to the level of individual characters. In the *Troades*, for example, Cassandra, Hecuba, and Andromache all face the same bleak backdrop of Troy in ruins, but each of them interprets her situation and reacts to it in a unique way.

Allan offers a useful caveat against generalization: not all Euripidean women sing for the same reasons. To use Creusa as a test model again: she sings of her rape twice, but her motivation for sharing her experience differs in each lyric scene. In the one instance (the monody at *Ion* 859–922), her motivation is anger at the god; in the other (her duet with her son, 1437–1509), it is desire to prove to her long-lost son his divine paternity. Creusa sings the same information twice, but in completely different modes to different audiences and for opposite ends. Therefore, one further way that Euripides creates a contrast between masculine and feminine modes of singing, and indeed of handling language, is his dramatization of women's capacity, when they deem it necessary, to shift between and within verbal genres, of which song is one.[7]

Finally, in tragic lyric, the question of gender is inseparable from class. Paul Maas (1962: 53–54) once argued that tragic characters of lower status (except the Phrygian in Euripides' *Orestes*) do not have sung verses, although some (like the nurse in *Hippolytus*) may have anapests. Hall has expanded upon this, arguing that "lyric meters are a marker of birth status: slaves in Greek tragedy can sing—indeed they sing often—provided that they were freeborn" (1999: 109). All four of the female characters I will examine below are nobly born women, and in fact, for three of them—Electra, Hypsipyle, and Hermione—the loss or maintenance of this noble status is very much the issue in their songs.

ELECTRA

In the *parodos* of *Electra*, Electra is in a situation far removed from former, happier days. She stands in front of the hut where she, once a princess, now lives with her poor farmer husband, and she laments the day when her father was murdered by her adulterous mother. The visiting country women who form the chorus interrupt Electra in the fifty-fifth line of her long lament and invite her to attend a festival of Hera (167–174). Electra refuses to go, insisting that her sorrow prevents her from participating in the festal choruses, and that her face, shorn head, and the rags she now wears are unfit for the princess she is (175–189). The women offer her a dress to wear (191–193) and give her specific advice about her lamentations:

[7]This slipperiness in regard to verbal genre is not limited to Euripides: compare, for instance, McClure's discussion (1999: 73–80) of what she calls "Clytemnestra's shifting verbal genres" in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.

δοκεῖς τοῖσι σοῖς δακρύοις
μὴ τιμῶσα θεοὺς κρατή-
σειν ἐχθρῶν; οὕτοι στοναχαῖς
ἀλλ' εὐχαῖσι θεοὺς σεβί-
ζουσ' ἔξεις εὐαμερίαν, ὦ παῖ.

Chorus Do you think that with your tears,
instead of honoring the gods, you can defeat
your enemies? By worshipping the gods
not with wails, but with prayers
shall you know brighter days, child. (Eur. *El.* 193–197)[8]

Even with such sympathy, Electra refuses to be distracted from her song of complaint. One might have expected her to respond that her tears *do* honor the gods, but instead she insists that the gods do not listen to her voice (οὐδεὶς θεῶν ἐνοπᾶς κλύει, 198) despite her constant wailing for her father and for the wandering Orestes (198–206). She doubly refuses the women's advice; not only does she not borrow a dress, but she denies the efficacy of attending the festival at all. The chorus women suggest that prayers to the gods (e.g., Hera) could bring Electra brighter days; but Electra implies that the gods have already forsaken her, so what would be the point of joining the festival? Electra uses song to persuade the chorus of her view of the world and her understanding of herself: that she is past change, past reliance on the gods.

Why is the Euripidean Electra so reluctant to be comforted? Or rather, what does her act of resistance indicate about her past, her present troubles, and her expectations for the future? To formulate an answer to these questions, it is worth comparing this Electra to the title character of Sophocles' *Electra*, who also rejects—in song—the advice and comfort of a chorus of women. Bernard Knox (1964: 15, 19) argued that rejection of advice was a pattern common in Sophoclean drama and its construction of the tragic hero:

> ... what the [Sophoclean] hero is really asked to do, the demand behind the appeal to reason and emotion, the advice to reflect and be persuaded is—to yield, εἴκειν .... The hero will not listen, but he hears enough to know that he is under attack. And his reaction is violent and swift. The role of those who try to advise him is not easy.

Like the heroine of Euripides' play, the Sophoclean Electra is advised by her chorus to moderate her lamentations for Agamemnon. She, too, argues that she is past change, exemplified by her invocation of the nightingale who cries for Itys and of Niobe the rock face (Soph. *El.* 147–152), two women who through metamorphosis (oddly enough, an act of change) have become unchanging and eternal symbols of mourning. In Knox's words (1964: 27), "time

[8]Throughout this article, all quotations from the Greek come from the OCT texts edited by J. Diggle (1981, 1984, and 1998).

and its imperative of change are in fact precisely what the Sophoclean hero defies." But what distinguishes the Sophoclean Electra from Euripides' heroine in these respects is that the Sophoclean Electra's inability to change exhibits a certain nobility. She is a victim of terrible circumstances not of her own making, and her life-long lamentations are her painful way of remaining true to her father's memory rather than yielding to those in power, as her sister Chrysothemis does. When the chorus women rebuke Electra for showing no moderation in her mourning for her father, she asks rhetorically what measure, μέτρον, exists for her misery (Soph. *El.* 236), or as Anne Carson (2001: 48) has rendered it, "And at what point does the evil level off in my life, tell me that!" Carson also brilliantly reminds us that "nobody answers her."

The Euripidean Electra, on the other hand, resists comfort in a manner so indignant that it alienates both the chorus of women and the audience; it is very difficult for anyone to feel sorry for her. Her miseries are self-imposed, part of her own strange and skewed vision of the world, requiring an audience to consider carefully everything which occurs in the play with (in Arnott's terms) "double the vision" (Arnott 1981: 179). On the surface, Electra's devotion to absent family in the form of a lament seems a noble thing; her earlier comparison of herself to a stranded swan rasping its calls to its beloved father that has been caught in a net (Eur. *El.* 151–155) is certainly intended for such an effect. But Electra's song is just as informative of her own obsessions as it is poetic. She is connected to something absent or unseen, which includes not only her memories of Agamemnon, but also what she presumes the chorus is unwilling to see and acknowledge, so that her song highlights her self-serving perception of her own misfortune.

Before the chorus arrived, Electra sang for the audience her view of her present situation. She waits for her wandering brother Orestes to come and rescue her from her misfortunes which include being called "poor Electra" (ἀθλίαν Ἠλέκτραν, 118–119) by the citizens, spending day after day weeping, tearing her cheeks with her fingernails, and holding her shorn head in grief (145–159). Yet when the chorus women arrive, they address her as "daughter of Agamemnon" (167) and make no mention of pitying her. Later, the chorus women say they have never even heard the full details of Electra's story, since they live far away from the city (298–299). Furthermore, they do not think Electra's appearance in any way prevents her from participating in Hera's festival, and when she insists that she *is* prevented by her appearance, they even offer to help remedy the situation with a dress. By repeatedly refusing help, Electra crescendoes towards what is truly troubling her. Her final lyric response to the chorus—her finale—culminates in what she considers the worst aspect of her misfortune: not that she cannot avenge her father because Orestes has not returned, but:

> αὐτὰ δ' ἐν χερνῆσι δόμοις
> ναίω ψυχὰν τακομένα

δωμάτων φυγὰς πατρίων,
οὐρείας ἀν' ἐρίπνας.
μάτηρ δ' ἐν λέκτροις φονίοις
ἄλλῳ σύγγαμος οἰκεῖ.

Electra And I must live in a poor man's house,
my spirit wearing thin,
exiled from parental home
to mountain crags,
while my mother in her murder-bloodied bed
lives married to a new man. (Eur. *El.* 207–212)

It is her mother's marriage to Aegisthus and Electra's own lack of sexual fulfilment in her non-marriage to the farmer—her loss of noble status—that are the source of her misfortune and need for lamentation. It is this twisted self-perception that renders her unwilling to follow the chorus's advice to participate in public festivals. As Ruth Scodel puts it, "Electra's refusal seems to be merely an expression of her resentful nostalgia" (1997: 92).

Because of its emotional associations, song is a practical medium for conveying an act of resistance which has as its source protracted feelings of resentment and disenchantment, erupting before a group of women who claim to know nothing about them. Yet song is also practical here because of its conventional structures of delivery. Anne Carson has noted that the *parodos* of Sophocles' *Electra* is arranged in a dramatic way metrically, in that the two interlocutors (Electra and chorus) respond antiphonally only to their own words, and not to each other's. As Carson puts it (2001: 48):

> If Electra and the chorus had sung strophe and antistrophe respectively, the effect would have been one of shared thought or interwoven emotion. But Sophocles has chosen to further subdivide each strophe and antistrophe, so that each six lines of Electra respond with another six lines of Electra, and each six lines of the chorus respond with another six lines of the chorus. They are each talking to themselves. Musically, it is an anti-dialogue.

Euripides' *Electra* follows the same principle, although the "anti-dialogue" is much shorter, consisting of only one round of strophe and antistrophe for Electra against chorus—Sophocles' *parodos* has three responsive pairs, plus an epode—and in both plays, Electra has the last lyric word of the exchange. But Euripides adds another element that Sophocles' structure lacks. In both plays, the chorus women enter to find Electra singing; but it is Euripides who gives Electra a structured monody consisting of two strophic pairs separated by mesodes, and this for a woman who has already been on stage once in the prologue. Euripides' Electra not only has a non-conversation with the chorus women, she has a long structured talk in responsion with herself before they even arrive. Euripides certainly was capable of writing a *parodos* in which a chorus sang the antistrophe of an actor's

strophe (the surviving example of which is *Hel.* 167–228).[9] If Carson is correct that singing in responsion to one's own words is a significant structure, then Euripides' Electra is even more self-absorbed than Sophocles' heroine, for in Euripides' play her participation in the *parodos* consists *entirely* of talking to and answering herself.

For all that her refusals construct the appearance of a woman who cannot change, Electra does, of course, change quite dramatically as the play proceeds, often into the opposite of the persona she had created for herself in the *parodos*. Froma Zeitlin (1970: 656–657) reminds us that in the latter part of the play, "Electra, who had earlier refused to participate in the choral dance (178–180) willingly joins in the celebration with the members of the chorus. She raises up a victory song for her brother, the triumphant hero, and would crown his head (872, 883; cf. 887)." Though Electra had professed to the chorus that it was useless to pray to the gods since they do not hear her, she nonetheless joins Orestes and the Old Man in a prayer at 671–683, which begins with Orestes calling upon Zeus. Electra herself calls on Gaia (677), and may be the speaker who at 674 invokes Hera (the very goddess whose festival she refused to attend).[10] But at the finale of the drama, after the matricide, Electra's original persona—a woman who refused to join the Argive community by attending Hera's festival—is chillingly brought back to her. In Zeitlin's words (1970: 659), "Electra can truly ask in what choral dance she can participate (1198). The dance she refused of her own free will is now closed to her; the self-imposed exile from Argos has become a reality (1311–15)."

HYPSIPYLE

In the fragmentary *parodos* of *Hypsipyle*, the heroine refuses the advice of female friends in the same metrical structure as in *Electra*: the woman does not sing the antistrophe to the chorus's strophe, but rather responds to her own earlier strophe. This is in the context of a musical exchange whose very topic is the efficacy of singing. Hypsipyle and the chorus seem to be asking why a woman might sing, and imply that the point of singing is to find just the right kind of song to relieve suffering. Hypsipyle begins with a lullaby to her charge, the infant Opheltes:

αὔξημα τὸ σὸν
[. . .]μνήσωμαι, τέκνον, εὐ-
ωποῖς ἢ θεραπείαις.
ἰδοὺ κτύπος ὅδε κορτάλων

your growing up . . .
I may woo ([προ]μνήσωμαι) you, child,
with smiles or with service.
Look here, the sound of the rattle . . . Eur. (*Hyps.* 22–25)

[9] For the varied structures of *parodoi* in extant tragedy, see Schmidt 1971: 11–18.

[10] Of the two OCT editors, Murray assigned line 674 to Electra, Diggle to Orestes.

But this song which clearly begins as a lullaby addressed to the infant expands into a complaint. Instead of a Lemnian song (Λήμνια Μοῦσα, 27–28), for comfort beside her weaving (κερκίδος ἱστοτόνου παραμύθια, 26–27), she has a different song:

ὅ τι δ' εἰς ὕπνον
ἢ χάριν ἢ θεραπεύματα πρόσφορα
π]αιδὶ πρέπει νεαρῷ
τάδε μελῳδὸς αὐδῶ.

that which for sleep
or joy or suitable comfort
suits a little child—
this I sing. (Eur. *Hyps.* 28–31)

It is at this point that the chorus women enter, full of curiosity about Hypsipyle's activities at the doorway of the palace. They ask what she—a slave—is up to, whether sweeping the floor or sprinkling water on it, neither of which Hypsipyle is actually doing. Then they inquire whether she is still singing about the past, implying that she has a reputation for song-making on a specific subject:

ἢ τὰν Ἀργὼ τὰν διὰ σοῦ
στόματος αἰεὶ κλῃζομέναν
πεντηκόντερον ἅ[δ]εις
ἢ τὸ χρυσεόμαλλον
ἱρὸν δέρος ὃ περὶ δρυὸς
ὄζοις ὄμμα δράκοντος
φρουρεῖ, μναμοσύνα δέ σοι
τᾶς ἀγχιάλοιο Λήμνου,
τὰν Αἰγαῖος ἑλί[σ]σων
κυμοκτύπος ἀχεῖ;

Chorus Or are you singing
of the fifty-oared Argo,
forever celebrated by your mouth,
or the sacred golden-wooled fleece
which on the oak tree's boughs
the dragon's eye guards,
or are you remembering
the island of Lemnos,
around which the Aegean roars
as the circling waves thunder? (Eur. *Hyps.* 36–45)

According to the chorus, Hypsipyle's habitual preoccupations are not her present misfortunes (her slavery in the palace of Nemea), but memories of a happier time gone by, including Jason, his adventures, and her life on Lemnos. But the chorus women urge her to leave off her singing and come to the Nemean meadow to watch the Argive soldiers prepare for their war against Thebes. This is surely

an important event in Nemea, and worth observing; but Hypsipyle rejects their advice and prefers to remember the sad song Orpheus sang by the mast of the Argo:

ὀρούσας
ἐπ' οἶδμα γαλανείας
πρυμνήσι' ἀνάψαι,
τὸν ἁ τοῦ ποταμοῦ παρ-
θένος Αἴγιν' ἐτέκνωσεν
Πηλέα, μέσῳ δὲ παρ' ἱστοῖ
Ἀσιάδ' ἔλεγον ἰήιον
Θρῆισσ' ἐβόα κίθαρις
μακροπόλων πιτύλων
ἐρέταισι κελεύσματα μελπομένα,
τότε μὲν ταχύπλουν,
τότε δ' εἰλατίνας ἀνάπαυμα πλάτα[ς].
τ[ά]δε μοι τάδε θυμὸς ἰδεῖν ἵεται,
Δαναῶν δὲ πόνους
ἕτερος ἀναβοάτω.

rushing
over the swell of the calm sea
to fasten the cables,
him whom the river's daughter,
Aegina, bore: Peleus; and
in the middle by the mast
the Thracian lyre cried out
an Asian mournful lament,
singing the orders for the rowers
for the long sweeps of their oars, now a swift
stroke, now a rest for the pinewood blade.
This, this my spirit longs to see,
but the labors of the Greeks
let someone else cry out. (Eur. *Hyps.* 60–74)

Scodel (1997: 93) has remarked that Hypsipyle's refusal "is a priamel of the type that shades into recusatio." By invoking "someone else" to sing about the Argives, she makes the memory of the Argo the only subject she can sing about. Events taking place in the real world are of no interest to her; all that matter to her are the memories of her own internal world. The chorus women reply that Hypsipyle is not the only woman to suffer as she has, and they recall the stories of Europa and Io, who were also driven from their homes. Then they try to comfort her with typical platitudes, suggesting that moderation would be best and that her divine grandfather Dionysus will surely come to her aid. Hypsipyle, however, refuses to be comforted and adroitly responds with her own mythological exemplum:

κυναγόν τε Πρόκριν τὰν πόσις ἔκτα
κατεθρήνησεν ἀοιδαῖς [. . .
θάνατος ἔλαχε· τὰ δ' ἐμὰ πάθε[α
τίς ἂν ἢ γόος ἢ μέλος ἢ κιθάρας
ἐπὶ δάκρυσι μοῦσ' ἀνοδυρομένα
μετὰ Καλλιόπας
ἐπὶ πόνους ἂν ἔλθοι:

Hypsipyle . . . sang a lament for the huntress Procris,
whom her husband slew . . .
Death was her portion. But as for my woes,
what wailing or song or lyre's
music that breaks into wailing with tears
(even though Calliope assists)
could approach my pains? (Eur. *Hyps.* 105–111)

Despite the chorus's attempts at friendly sympathy, Hypsipyle refuses to be distracted from her own vision of the world and from her song. Lamentations might have brought comfort, she says, to those who mourned Procris, who was killed accidentally by her husband Cephalus; but for herself, one not dead but still living with her misfortunes, there is no lamentation that comes close to comforting her. This would imply that the purpose of singing itself is to discover the correct lyric genre that will provide relief from one's misfortunes. She complained earlier that she had no Lemnian song to comfort her beside her weaving; the lullaby for Opheltes brought no solace, either. When the chorus suggested that some other activity (watching the army) would be more helpful, Hypsipyle returned to the song she is known for, her fixation on a past which itself centers on a song of Orpheus which doubled as a chant for the rowers and as an Asian lament. Scodel (1997: 93) remarks: "Although for most singers, surely, the Argo is as much a heroic topic as the expedition of Adrastus would be, for Hypsipyle it belongs to a different genre, the erotic lament, and Hypsipyle insists on selecting her own genre." But I would argue that even these sad memories are not the appropriate thing, for the lamentation which they inspire is not at all comforting. What Hypsipyle wants and needs, apparently, is a Lemnian song filled with happy memories—but finding such a song is an impossibility, which is the point of the present song itself. Thus Hypsipyle, like Electra, doubly rejects the advice of her chorus: not only does she refuse to watch the army and thus harmonize her song's topic with theirs, she also rejects the notion that song will bring relief, not even if the Muse were to join her. She sings herself into a paradox, exploring the ineffectuality of song while saying so in a song itself. Like Electra, Hypsipyle is past change. If more of the play survived, we might be able to tell whether Hypsipyle's resistance has the same skewed and resentful vision as Euripides' Electra, or whether her insistence on the impotence of comfort is akin to the nobility of

Sophocles' Electra. As it stands with the fragments we have, we can at least assert that Hypsipyle's duet with the chorus women ends with her miserable longing unrelieved.

ALCESTIS

The *epirrhematic amoibaion* from *Alcestis* (lines 244–279) can also be read as a scene of female self-assertion and resistance to comfort. Having agreed to die in place of her husband Admetus, Alcestis is rolled out of the house to say her farewells. While Alcestis describes her imminent death in lyrics, Admetus tries to share her experience in spoken trimeters, not so much by showing sympathy as by protesting how her death affects him. In this particular scene, the characterization of singer and speaker is matched perfectly with the conventional metrical pattern of the duet. In *Electra* and *Hypsipyle*, the strophic structure of the *parodos* was significant in constructing a "musical anti-dialogue" (to use Carson's term) between heroine and chorus. Similarly, the *epirrhematic amoibaion* of *Alcestis* is a meaningful structure which, by pitting a singer against a speaker, gives the dramatic impression that the speaker (Admetus) is unable to persuade the singer (Alcestis) to leave off lyrics and speak rationally; instead, the speaker at last resorts to imitating (but not joining in) the singer's mode by changing to anapests. Furthermore, the singer's lyrics are strophic, so that Alcestis—like Electra and Hypsipyle—speaks and replies only to herself.

Alcestis' song falls into three basic parts: first, she addresses what is familiar: the sun, sky, and clouds (244–245) and the land and marriage chambers she will leave behind (248–249). Second, she describes what is new and strange, images of the underworld: the approach of Charon, who speaks to her (252–256), and winged Death, which has taken hold of her (259–263). Thirdly she returns to the present moment: she instructs her attendants to let her lie flat, then addresses her children as darkness creeps over her eyes, presumably an indication that she faints (273–299). Alcestis does not include her husband as a participant in her visions, except for the brief parenthetical "οὐχ ὁρᾷς;" ("Don't you see?") at 259–260 when she feels herself being carried away by a force which she soon identifies as winged Death. Except for this one instance, Alcestis' ecstatic song excludes mention of her husband, and ends instead with an address to her children. Through it all, Alcestis is connected with the invisible and supernatural—Death—but it is invisible to everyone *except* her.

Meanwhile, Admetus' interspersed trimeter responses attempt to include himself in Alcestis' suffering:

ΑΛ Ἅλιε καὶ φάος ἁμέρας
οὐράνιαί τε δῖ-
ναι νεφέλας δρομαίου.
ΑΔ ὁρᾷ σὲ κἀμέ, δύο κακῶς πεπραγότας,
οὐδὲν θεοὺς δράσαντας ἀνθ' ὅτου θανῇ.

Alcestis Oh Helios, and light of day,
and in the sky
eddies of whirling cloud!
Admetus Helios sees you and me, two unfortunates,
who have done nothing to the gods for which you should die.
(Eur. *Alc.* 244–247)

This exchange which begins the duet sets the dynamic that follows: the man takes up a theme which the woman invokes in song (here, the sun) and applies it to himself and his perspective (that as far as he is concerned, he and his wife have offended no gods). He begs his wife to raise herself up and not to leave him (250); she does not respond in kind. When Alcestis says she can see Charon, Admetus says she is describing a journey πικράν μοι ("bitter to *me*," 258). The road to death which Alcestis must travel is again referred to by Admetus as sorrowful for *him* most of all (264). After the last stanza of his wife's song, Admetus shifts to anapests, suggesting that he is trying to imitate (or at least approximate) her musical mode of expression, but he does not participate in lyric meters.

The *amoibaion* is the perfect scene to begin a play that continues to explore just what sort of man would allow his wife to die in his place. Many have interpreted the duet's difference in meter as indicative of Admetus' inability to appreciate fully or identify with what his wife suffers on his behalf, making this a classic passage in discussions of the varying emotional levels of singer and speaker in *amoibaia*. Shirley Barlow, for example, describes Admetus as "wrapped up in his own platitudes and concern for his own grief" (1971: 57). But what if we focus not on Admetus, but on Alcestis, and interpret her song not just as emotion, but also as communication? In her song she asserts an element of control. She resists Admetus' interruptions of her song and is not distracted from relating the images of the underworld—Charon and Death—that she sees. Lyrics, the aural focalizer, invite us to look at the world through Alcestis' eyes, while Admetus' trimeters only reinforce his own detachment from Alcestis' spiritual experience in which we share. It is as though husband and wife are existing in two different planes of reality. Alcestis hears Admetus speak as if he were the one dying, and he glosses over any mention of himself being the source of his wife's death. His admonition to her to resist death and fight it (ἀλλ' ἄνα, τόλμα, 277) is a grotesquely insensitive gesture that reminds the audience that he knows his life is dependent on her immediate demise. But this same admonition is the key to this scene: Alcestis does not resist death; she resists Admetus' ingenuous interruptions. Her refusal to leave her ecstatic state, or to share it with anyone, signifies her acceptance of the images of death for exactly what they are—the end of *her* life, not her husband's, despite what Admetus might think. Her persistence in song is an attempt to impose her vision of the world on the uncomprehending Admetus. The immediate tragedy of the situation is

that Admetus, simply because he will survive and she will not, possesses the greater power. His anapests at the end of the *amoibaion* might be read as the sudden realization on his part that Alcestis is actually dying; but her influence on Admetus' reality is short-lived, and the rest of the play explores just how faithful Admetus is to that influence.

HERMIONE

Similarly, the *epirrhematic amoibaion* between Hermione and her Nurse in *Andromache* is an attempt by Hermione to impose her perception of reality on the uncomprehending Nurse. Having failed in her attempt to kill her husband's concubine, Hermione rages onto the stage, convinced that her husband will kill her. She sings of her fears of what her husband will do to her, and how she might escape—all unreal and invisible things that cannot be communicated in mere trimeters. She cares nothing for her reputation, which in this scene is the one thing her Nurse tries to protect. Knowing that everyone will learn of the murder she had planned, Hermione feels so exposed in the metaphorical sense that she has no concern for exposing herself literally by casting off her veil and baring and beating her breasts (Eur. *Andr.* 830–835). For the first section of this *epirrhematic amoibaion*, Hermione's lines are strophic, so that, like the other women examined so far, she responds musically to herself. The Nurse interjects spoken iambic trimeters which are reassuring in tone, whether or not they are sincere or realistic.

Those interested in pointing out lyric's emotion would highlight that the Nurse's apparently rational statement that Neoptolemus will surely forgive Hermione for her misdeeds (840) and her observation that Hermione is not the first person to suffer misfortune (851) intensify, by contrast, Hermione's irrational state. Hermione refuses her advice:

> ποῦ μοι πυρὸς φίλα φλόξ;
> ποῦ δ' ἐκ πέτρας ἀερθῶ,
> <ἢ> κατὰ πόντον ἢ καθ' ὕλαν ὀρέων,
> ἵνα θανοῦσα νερτέροισιν μέλω;
>
> ἔλιπες ἔλιπες, ὦ πάτερ, ἐπακτίαν
> μονάδ' ἔρημον οὖσαν ἐνάλου κώπας.
> ὀλεῖ μ' ὀλεῖ με δηλαδὴ
> πόσις· οὐκέτι τᾷδ' ἐνοικήσω
> νυμφιδίῳ στέγαι.
> τίνος ἄγαλμα θεῶν ἱκέτις ὁρμαθῶ;
> ἢ δούλα δούλας γόνασι προσπέσω;
> Φθιάδος ἐκ γᾶς
> κυανόπτερος ὄρνις εἴθ' εἴην,
> πευκᾶεν σκάφος ᾇ διὰ κυανέ-
> ας ἐπέρασεν ἀκτάς,
> πρωτόπλοος πλάτα.

Where is the dear flame of fire?
Where might I leap from a cliff,
either along the sea or in the woods of the mountains,
so I may die and be a care to those below?

You abandoned, abandoned me, father, on the shore
alone, without a sea-dipped oar.
He'll kill me! Of course my husband will kill me!
No more shall I dwell in this
bridal house!
To which statue of the gods shall I run as suppliant?
Or shall I fall as a slave before the knees of my slave?
O that I were a dark-winged bird
(leaving) the land of Phthia
to the place where the ship of pine
passed through the dark rocks—
the first ship that ever sailed! (Eur. *Andr.* 847–850, 856–865)

Hermione has tried to kill herself within the house and now looks for a grander means of suicide—being struck by lightning, or jumping to her death—to avoid facing her husband's wrath. These means of death that Hermione invokes are notably traditional in extant tragedy. The wish to be struck by lightning (πυρὸς φλόξ, *Andr.* 847) is made by Medea (*Med.* 144), Adrastus (*Supp.* 831), and Io *PV* 852). Suicide by falling from a cliff is what happens to Ino (recounted by the Corinthian women of *Medea* at 1282–89), and to Evadne (*Supp.* 1071, where she lands in her husband's funeral pyre). Nicole Loraux has demonstrated the equation between "leaping" and "hanging," wrapped up in the derivatives of the Greek verb ἀείρω. In Loraux's words (1987: 18–19):

The same word, *aeirô*, which means elevation and suspension, applies to these two flights in opposite directions, upward and downward, as though height had its own depth: as though the place below—whether it be the ground, or the world under that—could be reached only by first rising up .... Falling from the heights of a rock or held in the noose, it makes no difference.

It is therefore no accident that the Nurse's description of Hermione trying to hang herself within the house (811–813) is followed by Hermione's fantasies of flight and metamorphosis into a bird; the imagery of "elevation and suspension" is invoked from one death wish to the other. The desire to be transformed into a bird and thus escape by flight through the air is common to both choruses and actors in tragedy, and it is always articulated in lyrics.[11] This phenomenon, which Ruth Padel (1974: 241) has coined the "imagery of the elsewhere" is one which,

[11] The women of Troezen at *Hipp.* 732–734, the chorus of slave women at *Hel.* 1478–94, another chorus of slave women at *Ion* 1238–39, and the chorus of men of Colonus at Sophocles' *OC* 1081 express the desire for wings and flight. The chorus women of the fragmentary *Phaethon* wish to set their winged feet into heaven at 270–273. Creusa at *Ion* 796–798 also wishes she could fly away, and says so in lyrics. Polymestor asks for wings at *Hec.* 1099–1105, also in lyrics. Sophocles'

sung during the enactment off-stage of a crisis in the drama, creates mythological and pictorial associations that lead to a lyric vision of the appropriate action, and reassembles motifs of the play in a new mode, as a dream regroups the thoughts and events of the waking day.

Hermione significantly invokes the ship Argo—not that she wants to become the Argo, but a bird who could fly to where the Argo first sailed.[12] But why the Argo? On the one hand, the Argo was renowned for sailing to the ends of the earth, to Colchis, even farther than the voyage Hermione's father Menelaus took to Troy. Michael Lloyd (1994: 147, *ad* 863) suggests that her longing to travel the distance of the legendary ship repeats the imagery of her abandonment by her father ἔρημον οὖσαν ἐνάλου κώπας, "without a sea-dipped oar," meaning that she is essentially without a ship of her own to sail away in. But there is a further level to the mythological element. In Hypsipyle's songs, as we have seen, the Argo at least formed a part of her personal history, so that it became her favorite topic. By contrast, the events of Euripides' *Andromache* are, chronologically speaking, at the very end of the mythological narrative of extant tragedy, and thus as far removed from the age of the Argonauts as possible. Hermione wants to be far elsewhere from her present crisis not only physically, but also temporally. Furthermore, Hermione wishes to fly to the Dark Rocks (Cyaneae), often identified with the Wandering Rocks (Planctae) and Clashing Rocks (Symplegades). But are these the Cyaneae of her own time, or of mythical time? We do not know whether Euripides was aware of the myth that the Cyaneae/Symplegades fused together after the Argo passed through them; but even were he aware, he would not have been obliged to adopt that myth.[13] A couple of possible readings emerge: if the Cyaneae are fused in Hermione's narrative time, then what she longs for is to fly away temporally—escape by time-travel—by invoking a passage through the rocks which cannot, in her own time, be achieved because the rocks are fused. But if the Cyaneae are still clashing, then perhaps what Hermione yearns for with

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fragment 476 (presumably from *Oenomaus*), also lyrical, reads: <εἰ γὰρ> γενοίμαν αἰετὸς ὑψιπέτας / ὡς ἀμποταθείην ὑπὲρ ἀτρυγέτου / γλαυκᾶς ἐπ' οἶδμα λίμνας ("If only I could become a lofty-flying eagle, so I could fly beyond the barrenness, over the wave of the gleaming sea"). Kock inserted αἰθέρος after ὑπὲρ, "beyond the barren aether."

[12] This reading is based on Boethe's suggestion of ᾗ for the ἅ of the MSS, line 863. In Lloyd's words, this "supplies an indication of the direction of the flight, usual in these wishes, and avoids the absurdity offered by MSS of Herm[ione] wishing to be the Argo" (Lloyd 1994: 147, *ad* 863).

[13] On the confusion in the ancient world between the Cyaneae, Planctae, and Symplegades, see Page 1938: 62, *ad* 2. At *Od.* 12.61–72, the Planctae (where Scylla and Charybdis live) are described as still in motion, even though in the past, the Argo did go through them with the help of Hera. These Planctae do crash into each other. Euripides' contemporary Herodotus mentions at 4.85 the Cyaneae which the Greeks believed had once floated (*planctas*), the implication being that they no longer floated in Herodotus' day; these Cyaneae are located at the Bosporus. Two centuries after Euripides, Apollonius of Rhodes described the fusing of the Symplegades at *Argonautica* 2.604–606, brought about by Athene, but makes a distinction between the Symplegades at the entrance to the Bosporus, and the Planctae which form the Straits of Messina.

her dark-winged bird image of the elsewhere is a more unconventional kind of suicide: death by crushing, like the tremulous doves at *Odyssey* 12.63–65 who fly past the Planctae to bring ambrosia to Zeus, though the rocks kill one of them each time, so that the number of doves has to be replaced by Zeus himself.

All of this lyrical imagery of escape and suicide might appear to signify a feminine lack of control. Yet in the midst of this apparent absence of control, Hermione can be read as showing resistance by her very refusal to act rationally. Rather than being simply an hysterical woman, Hermione deliberately subverts the dominant expectation of her. She is certain of how events stand for her, a reality that she alone can perceive in detail, thereby demanding communication in lyrics. She is convinced that her husband will kill her when he arrives home, and she therefore wants to die like a woman in tragedy, a death which has a status she would lose if she were to be murdered by Neoptolemus. She grabs a noose and sings of lightning and leaping from cliffs and of flying away on wings—all typically associated with female death in tragedy. She even grabs a sword within the house (813), another means of female suicide, familiar from Jocasta in *Phoenissae* and Sophocles' Deianeira. In contrast to such suicides, the murder of a wife by her husband is, in extant tragedy at least, not a plot device commonly employed; even when it does happen, the wife dies willingly (*Alcestis*), or is killed in a fit of divinely-inspired madness (Megara in *Heracles*), or is killed by accident (the death of Procris invoked in the *parodos* of *Hypsipyle*). The scenario that Hermione fears—that her husband will kill her out of anger at her plotting—does not occur in extant tragedy, and may even have been avoided. That is, Hermione finds herself in a situation very similar to that of her own mother, Helen, who—more than any other woman—notoriously deserved death at the hands of her husband, though he himself was equally notorious for having spared her when captivated once again by her exposed breasts (*Andr.* 627–631). When Hermione exposes her own breasts at 832, the analogy to her mother cannot be lost on the audience. Public nudity in itself, by violating the conventional norms of tragic female behavior, is suggestive of Helen, who in this play is the ultimate violator of female norms. But whereas Helen's nudity was successful in saving her from the point of her husband's sword, there is no suggestion that Hermione's beauty will have the power to persuade Neoptolemus to spare her. Instead she wants to kill herself, embrace the tragic genre by dying as women in tragedy do, and deflect the alternative: the undignified murder of a scheming wife by her husband. What the Nurse considers unseemly female behavior—exposing her breasts, displaying herself in front of the house (876), and grabbing a sword to commit suicide (812, 844)—are the actions Hermione embraces as an expression and illustration of her new reality of impending doom.

RESISTANCE

It is useful to describe the dynamic expressed by Electra, Hypsipyle, Alcestis, and Hermione with their interlocutors as one of resistance and authority. These women insist that they see what they see, know what they know, and believe what they believe. Resistance becomes an empowering gesture, in the sense that "power" has been redefined by feminist Susan Gal (1995: 178):

> the strongest form of power may well be the ability to define social reality, to impose visions of the world. And such visions are inscribed in language and, most importantly, enacted in interaction. Although women's everyday talk and women's voice or consciousness have been studied separately, I have argued that both can be understood as strategic responses, often of resistance, to dominant hegemonic cultural forms.

Euripides' heroines offer resistance in this very way, as an attempt to hold to their visions of the world against the dominant opinion. But this is a dynamic very different from other authoritative uses of tragic women's language, such as is found in laments. As Gail Holst-Warhaft (1992) and Helene Foley (1993) have shown, lamentations in the voices of women (such as Antigone or the chorus of Euripides' *Suppliants*) are politically dangerous and can incite an audience of men to action. Theirs is a voice of "resistance" geared to effecting change. Electra, Hypsipyle, Alcestis, and Hermione, however, do not change their status through their songs, nor is their potential audience (women, a petulant husband, a nurse) in any position to offer assistance to the woman's condition. Lamentation is not absent from these songs, but it is a lamentation of the self; even Electra, whom one would expect to mourn a murdered father, is less focused on Agamemnon than on what she considers her own personal mistreatment. Though geared towards convincing others to recognize and validate the woman's individual pain, these songs of resistance serve a less pro-active purpose, in that the women's interlocutors are not moved to action; in fact, quite the opposite, for the interlocutors' help and advice are rejected. This is significant, since Euripides was clearly capable of creating heroines who, in other situations, were comfortable with taking choruses of women into their confidence (e.g., Creusa, Phaedra, Medea, Helen in her name play).

A typical "resistance" pattern emerges.[14] To begin with Electra and Hypsipyle, both heroines open their plays by speaking with choruses of female friends who try to offer comfort with platitudes. The friends try to persuade each heroine to cease her lamentations because grief comes to everyone and she is not the first to suffer; moderation is best, and help will come from the gods. Yet these heroines reject their friends' advice and define their own experiences as isolating. This pattern is unusually engaging because of the dramatic expectations it sets up. In

[14] It is important to note that this is not solely a Euripidean pattern. Compare the *parodoi* of Sophocles' *Electra* (also written as a lyric exchange) and *Trachiniae*, in which a chorus of women tries to comfort the heroine, but with no success and much rejection.

domestic plays, female neighbors (always in the form of choruses) constitute the chief community to which a heroine belongs. For example, Medea greets the women of Corinth by asking them not to be indignant with her, for people who live quietly—as she does—often earn a bad reputation (*Medea* 217–218). This seems paradoxical—one would expect the ideally quiet woman to earn a *good* reputation in Greece. But Medea reveals that, in the fictional heroic world of tragedy, women are expected to participate in intimate female friendships with neighbors. It has also long been observed that no intrigue can be successful in tragedy without the complicity of the chorus; therefore heroines and choruses of neighbors must from the outset earn each other's trust. Songs of resistance complicate these expectations: by refusing to take advice and thereby potentially alienating the friends on whom she might later need to rely, Electra and Hypsipyle each create an immediate dramatic tension that toys with an audience's guesses on how their isolation might be resolved.

Also, by refusing to be distracted from her thoughts (and this applies to all the heroines above), the singing female character places herself in a role that separates her from a collective experience and individualizes her for the theater audience.[15] Her insistence that her actions are appropriate is an assertion of power—an attempt to impose visions of the world on others, as Susan Gal has redefined it—in situations where power is conspicuously absent. The singers will not be subsumed by others; theirs are not songs of submission, but songs of insistence, even when their status does not change except for the intervention of a male figure/relative.

The authoritative voice of the fictional female is a crucial element in Euripides' dramatic project. He evidently wanted his audience to care about a woman's particular world view, even if her singing about it does not change her status. If Froma Zeitlin (1996) and others are correct that the ancient male spectator needed to undergo a female experience—to embrace the "other" by viewing or performing it in the public arena that was the theater—in order to re-assess and understand his own maleness, that could only operate if a fictional female experience or point of view was concretized by insistence through the self-revealing and authoritative power of song. By allowing an audience to glimpse the interior world of a heroine through song—the aural focalizer—replete with connections to the unseen and the absent, to which only she has access, Euripides sets in motion a series of dramatic premises: that these women need help, that they believe they are past change, that they cannot help themselves. These women could communicate just by speech and make a play; instead, more effectively, their powerlessness is expressed not through speech or silence, but through song, in which the focus is always on the women's answers, and less on their interlocutor's questions.

[15] The case of Alcestis is somewhat special, inasmuch as her isolation and insistence on her vision of the world have real implications for how one interprets the character of Admetus later in the play. Thus Alcestis not only individualizes herself, but reflects on others.

If there is a lesson to be learned from these songs, it is that tragic women have to face their grief alone. Despite the initial reaction of most modern readers of Greek tragedy, the ownership of grief is not pointless whining. Whether grief is real or imaginary, it is not all the same; it cannot be explained away as something that happens to everyone, but must be faced and dealt with on the individual level.[16] As much as an understanding chorus or nurse or husband might talk about moving forward, songs of resistance communicate that the ownership of grief can be empowering, even when circumstances are the least stable.

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[16] I am reminded of Ralph Rackstraw's recitative from W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore* (first performed in 1878): "I know the value of a kindly chorus, / but choruses give little consolation / when we have pain—and sorrow, too—before us."

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