CHAPTER 1

Introduction
The chorus in the middle

Renaud Gagné and Marianne Govers Hopman

There is something distinctive about choral mimesis in Greek tragedy. The tragic chorus is never just a group of old men or captive women, never just a ring of ships or dolphins or the circle of stars of its imagery, or masked citizens dancing in the theater – never just one chorus. It will rarely be entirely circumscribed by its fictional character, narrative, or performance at any one moment. In a genre defined by impersonation, it can push the referential limits of embodiment and enactment beyond any strict equivalence. Its boundaries, like its movement, are always shifting. If the central characters are simultaneously here and there, on stage and in the play, the chorus can simultaneously be here, there, and elsewhere, now and then, this and that, meld one into the other, and pass freely between these different levels through the semantics of word, sound, and movement. Its well-known ability to reference itself and its own dance in performance, or to 'project' itself on other, distant choruses, is part of a much wider pattern of mimetic transfer set in motion by the choral song.[1] Without ever breaking the dramatic illusion, the chorus can radically shift the focus from one level of reference to another and create greater depth through a superimposition of semantic layers.

The choral odes of tragedy deal in dense interweavings of correspondences and highly integrated parallel meanings. Most choral songs paint an intricate tableau of multiple embedded messages; their verses typically follow many different paths at the same time and the richness of their

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[1] For 'choral self-referentiality' and 'choral projection' in drama, see Henrichs 1994/5 and below p. 25.

allusions quickly leads the spectator to a state of cognitive overload. They revel in abrupt transitions and oblique side glances, the lure of roads not taken and the overabundance of possible interpretations. Dionysos is their true 'nominal audience'. Behind every simple level of meaning hides another one, and every level comments on the next. The referential complexity of the average ode is staggering, the stimulus overwhelming; it communicates information at a greater entropy rate than any other part of drama. Although every chorus ultimately shapes a specific voice for itself, no two spectators will hear or see the exact same ode, and no audience member will be able to seize all the possible layers of thought and imagery, the nuances of connotation, the implications, the indices and citations, and the contradictions of the temporary world opened by the song in the rapid cut and thrust of sound and movement, the total spectacle of theatrical performance. But most will notice the remarkable multiplicity of dimensions at play in the choral song, the exuberant richness of correspondences between them, something of the common direction they take, bridges with the other odes of the play, continuities and discontinuities, and echoes that span over the rest of the drama. The choral song sets up a vast range of correspondences between realities.

Choral poetry carves its own unique register of representation in tragedy. It does not just adapt the forms and grammar of older and contemporary choral lyric, or reflect ritual, or echo performance, and it obviously does not just act or comment on characters 'in character'. The referential shifts of the chorus are not necessarily a reflection of ritual, and they often enough have nothing to do with Dionysos, at least on a surface level; the ability of the ode to link different realities cannot be reduced to its Dionysiac or cultic dimensions, as important as they might be, or to the putative legacy of its origins. Whatever its deep cause, the special communicative power of the tragic ode is grounded in its ability to freely link and combine, to serve as a direct intermediary between various levels of reference, and incorporate all strands into the rest of the choral narrative and the whole of the play. This is what we would like to call 'choral mediation'. Choral mediation is an umbrella term encompassing all the mimetic transfers that allow different levels of reference to interact and complete each other. The dramatic chorus can mediate between actors and audience. It can mediate between words, rhythm, music, and dance. It can mediate between genres. It can mediate between authorities. It can mediate between the conventions of drama and ritual. It can mediate between the many spaces and temporalities of story, tradition, and performance. All these levels of reference are intertwined with one another, and their integration into one poem makes for language

of remarkable density. The extent of this figurative flexibility is a distinctive characteristic of the chorus in drama.

Euripides, *Electra* 699–746

It seems appropriate to begin with a concrete example. Let us take the second stasimon of Euripides' *Electra* to illustrate the process of choral mediation.[2]

ἀταλὰν[3] ὑπὸ †ματέρος Ἀργείων†
ὀρέων ποτὲ κληδὼν[4] 700
ἐν πολιαῖσι μένει φήμαις
εὐαρμόστοις ἐν καλάμοις
Πᾶνα μοῦσαν ἡδύθροον
πνέοντ', ἀγρῶν ταμίαν,
χρυσέαν ἄρνα καλλίποκον 705
πορεῦσαι. πετρίνοις δ' ἐπι-
 στὰς κᾶρυξ ἰαχεῖ βάθροις·
Ἀγορὰν ἀγοράν, Μυκη-
 ναῖοι, στείχετε μακαρίων
ὀψόμενοι τυράννων 710
φάσματα †δείματα.[5]
χοροὶ δ'† Ἀτρειδᾶν ἐγέραιρον οἴκους.

θυμέλαι δ' ἐπίτναντο χρυσήλατοι,
σελαγεῖτο δ' ἀν' ἄστυ
πῦρ ἐπιβώμιον Ἀργείων· 715
λωτὸς δὲ φθόγγον κελάδει
κάλλιστον, Μουσᾶν θεράπων,
μολπαὶ δ' ηὔξοντ' ἐραταὶ[6]
χρυσέας ἀρνὸς †ἐπίλογοι†
Θυέστου· κρυφίαις γὰρ εὐ- 720
 ναῖς πείσας ἄλοχον φίλαν
Ἀτρέως, τέρας ἐκκομί-

[2] The text reproduced here is that of Diggle's *OCT* with some modifications. Although it is obviously corrupt at places, the basic meaning of all lines is relatively secure; see the recent discussion of the main textual problems in Willink 2005.

[3] For ἀταλὰν instead of ἀταλᾶς, see Denniston 1939: 137–38; Willink 2005: 12.

[4] The (debatable) fact that κληδὼν and φήμη are 'virtually synonymous and interchangeable' is not a compelling reason to follow Willink's intervention in the text (2005: 13). The transmitted meaning is indeed intelligible as it stands.

[5] Although the metre is problematic in this line and the next, it seems preferable to keep the transmitted δείματα instead of the emendations δείγματα or δεινὰ, and χοροὶ instead of χοροῖ<σιν> or the more radical κῶμοι; see Denniston 1939: 138–9; Cropp 1988: 150; Willink 2005: 14–15.

[6] Although the ἐπίλογοι of the next line is certainly corrupt, the transmitted text of that line is clear enough without the 'rival songs' suggested by Murray's ἕτεραι (adopted by Kovacs); cf. Cropp 1988: 150–1; Willink 2005: 16.

ζει πρὸς δώματα· νεόμενος δ'
εἰς ἀγόρους ἀυτεῖ
τὰν κερόεσσαν ἔχειν 725
χρυσεόμαλλον κατὰ δῶμα ποίμναν.

τότε δὴ τότε <τὰς> φαεν-
νὰς ἄστρων μετέβασ' ὁδοὺς
Ζεὺς καὶ φέγγος ἀελίου
λευκόν τε πρόσωπον ἀοῦς, 730
τὰ δ' ἕσπερα νῶτ' ἐλαύνει
θερμᾷ φλογὶ θεοπύρῳ,
νεφέλαι δ' ἔνυδροι πρὸς ἄρκτον,
ξηραί τ' Ἀμμωνίδες ἕδραι
φθίνουσ' ἀπειρόδροσοι, 735
καλλίστων ὄμβρων Διόθεν στερεῖσαι.

λέγεται <τάδε>, τὰν δὲ πί-
στιν σμικρὰν παρ' ἔμοιγ' ἔχει,
στρέψαι θερμὰν ἀέλιον
χρυσωπὸν ἕδραν ἀλλάξαν- 740
τα δυστυχίᾳ βροτείῳ
θνατᾶς ἕνεκεν δίκας.
φοβεροὶ δὲ βροτοῖσι μῦθοι
κέρδος πρὸς θεῶν θεραπείαν.
ὧν οὐ μνασθεῖσα πόσιν 745
κτείνεις, κλεινῶν συγγενέτειρ' ἀδελφῶν.

Eur. *El.* 699–746

Once on a time a tender lamb taken from its mother
in the Argive mountains
(so runs the tale in our age-old legends)
did Pan, warder of the fields,
breathing sweet-voiced music
on well-joined reeds,
bring forth, a lamb with lovely fleece of gold.
And standing on a platform
of stone a herald shouted,
'to assembly, to assembly,
men of Mycenae,
to see the august portent
of your blessed rulers!'
And choruses hailed the house of the Atridae.

The altars[7] of wrought gold were strewn,
and in Argos fire gleamed

[7] It is difficult to see how θυμέλαι can be read as 'temples' (so Kovacs) rather than 'altars'; see Denniston 1939: 139; Cropp 1988: 150; Willink 2005: 16.

on many an altar.
The pipe, servant of the Muses,
gave forth its fair melody.
And lovely were the songs that swelled in praise
of the golden lamb because of the words of
Thyestes: for with illicit love
he won over the dear wife
of Atreus and removed
this portent to his own house, and then coming
into the assembly he cried out
that he had in his house
the horned lamb with fleece of gold.

Then, then it was that Zeus changed the bright courses of the stars,
the light of the sun
and the pale visage of the dawn
and made it march to the West's expanse
with its divine and burning heat.
The clouds heavy with rain went toward the Bear,
and the dwelling place of Ammon wasted away
dry and bereft of water,
robbed of the lovely rain that falls from Zeus.

That is the story men tell, but the credit
it receives from me is but slight,
that the gold-visaged sun should turn,
altering its torrid station
to cause mortals grief
for the punishment of their wrongdoing.
But tales fearful for mortals are a benefit
for the worship of the gods,
the gods you forgot, kinswoman of glorious brothers,
when you murdered your husband. (trans. Kovacs, modified)

On one level, the poem is fully integrated to the narrative progression of the play. As Orestes sets out to kill Aegisthus and Electra prepares the trap for her mother, the chorus sings of the mythical background that prepared the present calamity in the previous generation. The group of young Argive girls presents a distinctive perspective on the events. It condemns Clytemnestra and shows a direct engagement on the side of the two siblings. Its tone and motivation are perfectly adapted to its fictional identity. The chorus, here as elsewhere, participates in the action of the drama and functions, up to a certain point, as a character in the play.

Up to a certain point, then. For the limit of the analogy between chorus and character is of course very quickly reached. Beyond such superficial correspondence of action, no member of the audience would ever confuse

the choral ensemble and the cast of characters.[8] Visually, the chorus dominates the tragic spectacle, with its fifteen members forming a persistent background for the evolution of the three actors. Able to speak in unison, in sequence, or in discordant tones, it embodies the voice of a group, a collective, in contrast to the emphatically individual voice of the characters. The presence of the group on stage when all the characters have left evolves in a different space than the rest of the play, one no longer entirely bound to the dramatic fiction. There is no deixis of immediate location in the choral ode, the chorus doesn't mention the fictional space of the action, and its words at first are seemingly not addressed to any internal audience within the play. Yet the chorus is right there in the space of performance. As it sings of other times and places, it forfeits all reference to its immediate surroundings, as if it were no longer contained by any one location.

The choral ode is entirely danced, a choreography that further separates the group from the characters, the immediate narrative sequence from the dramatic space. Its words are accompanied by the music of the *aulos*, and the *aulētēs* stands in the orchestra, in plain sight of the audience, dressed in bright, colourful robes that make him stand out from the chorus – the 'unsung hero of the genre', in the words of Peter Wilson.[9] It is a song that the music and the dance modulate. Its lyric metre, melody, and rhythm completely distinguish it from the regular iambic speech of the characters. The Doricising dialect of the verses also contrasts with the purely Attic language of the trimetres. There is a deep formal difference between the choral ode and the character speeches that frame it. The ode weaves its words in a complex web of song, music, and dance. Word echoes song and step. In contrast to the naked simplicity of the characters' acted speech, its aesthetics are based on a multiplicity of correspondences between media – or intermediality, a distinctive form of choral mediation.[10]

The semantics of the ode follows a similar principle of multiple references. The song's expression of space, for instance, simultaneously points in different directions. The ode relates the tale of the golden lamb given to the Atreids a generation ago. In its narrative of the event, it describes a movement from the mountains of Argos, where the beast is given by Pan, to the heart of the city. It is on the 'platform' (βάθρα) that the herald proclaims the presence of the golden lamb, conveying the entire city to witness it in

[8] See Baur 1997. [9] See Wilson 2005: 186.

[10] The use of the term 'intermediality' in this volume follows the definition of Wolf 2005. It is strictly limited to the dialogues between media – what Wolf calls 'semiotic complexes' – set in motion by choral odes. The intermediality of the chorus, in this perspective, is a type of choral mediation.

the agora.[11] The open, public space of the agora is followed by a reference to the altars of the city, gleaming with gold for the celebration of the event as the city rejoices. The golden lamb is a *phasma* (711), a 'vision' of kingship, or rather tyrannies, to come.[12] The gold of the sacrificial animal is echoed in the gold of the altars, and the vision of the divine gift paraded for all to see.

But what does it all mean? The public spectacle of the *phasma* is interpreted in the light of the songs that are sung at the altars throughout the city, and these songs present the lamb as a sign of Thyestes' rule. These songs of joy are utterly wrong. For the animal has been stolen, the ode tells us, in secret. Thyestes has seduced the wife of Atreus κρυφίαις εὐναῖς and brought the golden animal in his own house. Going back to the agora, he proclaims that the lamb is in his house (723–6). That δῶμα is obviously distinct from the *oikos* mentioned earlier as the object of public praise and celebration performed by people in the agora. Ἀτρειδᾶν is not an inaccuracy, an attention slip from the poet, as commentators puzzled with the reference to the sons of Atreus at this moment in the poem have struggled to explain, but a link to the palace of Atreus as the seat of a different line, opposed to the line of Thyestes. The poem articulates a clear tension between *oikos* and agora, and between the houses of Atreus and Thyestes.

A first movement brings the lamb from the mountain to the city. A god, Pan, leads the animal from the wilds, and a herald introduces it to the agora. The great rejoicing of this spectacle is presented in terms of altars bedecked with gold throughout the city – the gift is to serve as an affirmation of power and an occasion for communication with the gods. The result is a disaster. The hidden seduction that took place within the *oikos* has corrupted the gift of the gods. Possession of the beast has passed from one house to another because of the adultery of a man and a woman. The secret deception of what took place behind closed doors completely denatures the meaning of the spectacle presented for all to see in the agora, on the altars, in song. The agora is inside the city, but outside the house. This is the pivotal space in which the contest for power is played out for all to see. But the determining event takes place behind closed doors. Beast and adultery are intrinsically linked in that tale. The entry of the animal from the savage outside inside the civilised space of the city is directly paralleled in the intrusion of the closed space of the *oikos* on the open

[11] See Roisman and Luschnig 2011: 183–4.

[12] On the golden lamb in the play, see Rosivach 1978. The second stasimon is no 'escape ode', *pace* Csapo 2009: 98–9. The first strophe begins with the separation of the tender lamb from its mother and it continues with misunderstanding and terror. The ode is ominous from the first to the last.

space of the agora. The outcome is a public lie. The songs of the civic choruses sing a premature, misdirected joy. The adultery of Thyestes with the wife of his brother is in fact an affront against the communal bonds that hold the world together. The hidden crime of the household will have cosmic dimensions. What started out as a gift from the gods will lead to divine punishment.

Zeus reacts immediately (τότε δὴ τότε . . .) to Thyestes' proclamation on the agora by changing the very course of the universe. The direction of the stars, the winds, and the sun is reversed.[13] What used to go east now goes west, what was south now is north, what was humid now becomes dry, the sun now rises in the east. This state is a calamity, an enduring sanction for the infortune of all mankind. The transgression of one man in the hidden space of a house has consequences for the whole of the cosmos and all that live in it. The fundamental categories set in place by the golden lamb have been overthrown by one crime.

In fewer than fifty lines, then, the second stasimon of the *Electra* is able to bring the audience from the mountains of Argos to the agora, from the recesses of the household to the movement of the stars and the four corners of the world. The ode contains no reference to the immediate surroundings of the action in the play. Rather, it relates a narrative set elsewhere, and quickly brings the tale from place to place in an abrupt succession of locations. Contrary to the song of the first stasimon (452–3), the story is not subordinated to any perspective; it can evolve anywhere, and transport the audience with it.

A striking feature of the ode's expression of space is the chorus' ability to ground all of these locations in the here and now of performance. When it sings of Pan blowing sweet music in his harmonious pipes, a direct link is established between the sound of the poetic reeds and the sound of the *aulos* in the orchestra. The celebrations that sweep through the city following the introduction of the golden lamb are also accompanied by the sound of the reed: 'the λωτός flute, servant of the Muses, was singing its most beautiful song'. As the scene changes from the wild mountains of Pan to the public space of the city, the wind instrument continues to be heard, and both reeds of song are embodied by the *aulos* of performance. The λωτός of city celebrations accompanies the songs of joy of the Argives at the news of the prodigy. These songs are referred to as μολπαί, the specific

[13] For the early traditions of the feud between Atreus and Thyestes, see West 1987: 254–5; Cropp 1988: 151; Gantz 1993: 545–50.

dance and song combination of choral performance.[14] The ode emphasises that these μολπαί are indeed sung by choruses. The rejoicing in the city, furthermore, takes place around the golden altars 'spread out' for the event, and these altars are described as θυμέλαι.[15] Θυμέλη is a remarkable word for the occasion, as its main association is with the theatrical space of the orchestra, most probably with the altar that stood right in the middle of it.[16] The choral dance of drama, in particular, is often described as a movement around the altar, with strophe turning one way, antistrophe turning the other, and epode sung without movement.[17] Again, the space of the song finds a direct correspondence in the space of performance. The words χοροί and θυμέλαι are placed at the end and the beginning of two strophes, right when the μολπή of the chorus changes direction. As the ode relates the image of choruses singing and dancing their μολπαί at the sound of the flute around the θυμέλη, the sound and movement on stage function as an embodiment for the tale. The dominant usage of the imperfect in these lines allows for a closer identification between the unfolding narrative and its enactment by the chorus. As the fictional location of the dramatic space disappears from view, the ode establishes a strong connection between the presence of the chorus in the orchestra and the distant events it depicts.

As the story moves from place to place, the ode marks a certain continuity. The gold of the animal is reflected in the gold of the altar, reflected in turn in the gleam of the fires that shine on the βωμοί of the city, and the gleam of the stars and the sun that shine in the sky.[18] The sound of the rustic flute of Pan echoes the sound of the flutes that rhythm the sacrificial celebrations in the city, and the chorus of civic festivities is followed by the chorus of the stars. As the ode sings of the civic choruses in the first antistrophe, its circular dance turns in one direction around the altar.[19] As it sings of the new 'roads' of the stars in the second strophe, it reverses that

[14] The effect of the musical references in the text would have been particularly striking if the ode is indeed a distinctive example of the New Music style, as Csapo 2009 argues. The contrast between the emphatically modern sound of the *aulos* in the orchestra, the rustic flutes of Pan, and the ancient sounds of the *aulos* in mythical Mycenae would make for an interesting effect.

[15] Attempts to identify the specific type of θυμέλαι evoked in the image (e.g. Denniston 1939: 139) as portable altars of a certain sort impose a precision that the text does not demand; cf. Willink 2005: 16. The basic image of the line is that of altars bedecked in gold throughout the city.

[16] See still Gow 1912: 233–7; Park Poe 1989.

[17] See Färber 1936: 14–18; D'Alfonso 1994: 20; Csapo 2008: 280–1.

[18] χρυσέαν 705; χρυσήλατοι 713; σελαγεῖτο 714; χρυσέας 719; χρυσεόμαλλον 726; φέγγος 729; χρυσωπὸν 740.

[19] For the possibility of circular choral dancing in tragedy and comedy, see Ferri 1932/3; Davidson 1986; Csapo 2008: 282–4; Meineck in this volume: n. 12.

direction. The change is emphatically marked by the reduplicated τότε at the beginning of the strophe (726). The song tells of the reversal of direction imposed by Zeus on the sun and the stars. While they previously went one way, they now go the other way. That change of direction is formally mirrored by the change of direction of the choral dance, and the location of the story, again, embodied in the space of performance. The ability of the chorus to freely project location outside the space of the drama and ground it here and now by recurrent reference to its own movement and the space of the theater is one of its most distinctive characteristics. The chorus constantly moves between levels of reference. It can evolve in different spaces simultaneously.

It also has the ability to juxtapose different temporalities. The tale it tells is set in the past, removed in time from the moment of the dramatic action. It is not now within the play. The narrative follows a sequence, with the different stages of the story clearly demarcated. The entire tale of the ode, more remarkably, is framed as a rumour of the past, a distant riddle.[20] The story of the golden lamb is something that 'remains' (μένει) in 'grey-haired legends', says the beginning of the song. If it is old from the perspective of the Argive chorus, it is truly ancient from the perspective of the Athenian chorus. The persistence and stability of this hoary legend contrasts with the movement of the hoary Pan and the hoary beast and the energetic dance of the chorus. The last antistrophe of the song questions the veracity of the tale it has just related, the stars' change of course. As the chorus reverses direction once again at the beginning of a new stanza, it brings attention to the illusion of tradition and its function. The reversal of direction of the strophe echoes the στρέψαι of the sun.

The tale whose truth is denied is told anonymously, without any agent: λέγεται (737). It offers only little credence to the chorus, a πίστις σμικρά. The singular παρ' ἔμοιγε contrasts the voice of the individual chorus with the nameless tradition. The plural βροτοῖσι follows in the gnomic statement of the next sentence, expanding the significance of the chorus' statement to all mortals. Fearful stories, the φοβεροὶ μῦθοι (743), are a profit for the service of the gods.[21] They are old, they have no witnesses, no πίστις. These myths are not true. But they are useful. Their narrative

[20] See Moreau 1991 on the rich meaning of κληδών as an enigmatic code.

[21] Cf. the δείματα of line 711. It is interesting in that regard to note that there is not even the hint of a mention of the unholy meal of Thyestes in the ode, surely one of the most striking elements of the tradition, and the most frightful. It simply does not belong to the perspective of the chorus and its focus on adultery; see Roisman and Luschnig 2011: 181.

of punishment serves the purpose of divinity. The universe has been turned upside down for a crime. Zeus has inflicted a disaster on all mortals (βροτείῳ) because of a mortal fault (θνατᾶς). That is the warning that Clytemnestra should have remembered. In not heeding these *mythoi*, in not heeding the gods, in killing her husband, Clytemnestra has committed an affront against the gods, even though she is the sister of the Dioscuri (745–6).

The second antistrophe ends with a direct address to Clytemnestra. The entire tale is presented as a warning she should have heeded, and an illustration of the paradigmatic moral she has broken. What stands out of this final address is the fact that Clytemnestra is nowhere near the action at this point, and that the song is framed by episodes that focus all attention on Aegisthus, not Clytemnestra.[22] Orestes is sent off to murder Aegisthus at the end of the episode that precedes the ode, and the episode that follows relates the killing in detail. The entire song is about the story of Atreus and Thyestes, the uncle and the father of Aegisthus, whose past actions have nothing to do with Clytemnestra *per se*. The address to Clytemnestra stands out; it gives an unexpected light to the text. One of the things that the chorus does by bringing attention to the agency of Clytemnestra, rather than Aegisthus, is to assert the gendered nature of its voice. It is a group of young Argive girls that sings and dances, and their concern with the actions of a married woman takes precedence over all the other aspects of the story. The song is built on a contrast between the hidden crime of the house and the public spectacle of its consequences. By pointing so emphatically to Clytemnestra at the end of the ode, it highlights adultery as the true object of its execration. The address to Clytemnestra leads us to return to the earlier verses of the ode and recall the hidden beds of adultery, the anonymous 'dear wife' (ἄλοχον φίλαν 721) of Atreus, who has been 'convinced' (πείσας) by Thyestes.[23] It is, in the end, that passive crime of seduction that is the cause for the cosmic upheaval of the story, just as Clytemnestra's seduction is the cause for the murder of Agamemnon.

By channelling the meaning of the tale on Clytemnestra, the chorus of young Argive girls is pointing back in time to earlier moments in the play, namely the first stasimon, which also ends with a direct address to Clytemnestra. After a reference to the ships of the Greek army sailing to Troy with Achilles and Agamemnon and a rich choral ekphrasis of Achilles' first shield, the ode abruptly turns to an accusation:

[22] See Papadimitropoulos 2008.
[23] For the emphasis placed on Thyestes by the enjambment, see Cropp 1988: 151.

τοιῶνδ᾽ ἄνακτα δοριπόνων
ἔκανεν ἀνδρῶν, Τυνδαρί,
σὰ λέχεα, κακόφρον κόρα.
τοιγάρ σοί ποτ᾽ οὐρανίδαι
πέμψουσιν θανάτου δίκαν.
ἔτ᾽ ἔτι φόνιον ὑπὸ δέραν
ὄψομαι αἷμα χυθὲν σιδάρῳ.
Eur. *El.* 479–86

The lord of warriors like these,
Tyndarid, girl of evil thoughts,
your adultery has slain.
For this the gods will send upon you
the judgment of death.
One day, one day beneath your neck
I shall see blood spilled upon the ground by the sword.
(trans. Kovacs)

The ambiguity of Τυνδαρί invites a fleeting reference to Helen, but the passage is clearly addressed to Clytemnestra.[24] The martial glory of the expedition, the life promise of divine-born Achilles, the strength of the supreme commander Agamemnon, have all been rent asunder by the power of a soiled bed. The λέχεα of the adulteress literally kill. Answering the image of the female monsters vanquished by males that are depicted on the shield (Gorgon, Sphinx, Chimaera), a woman has destroyed the might of men.[25] It is remarkable in this light to notice that in the midst (ἐν . . . μέσῳ) of the female monsters on the shield are depicted the circle of the sun (κύκλος ἁλίοιο) and a chorus of stars (ἄστρων . . . αἰθέριοι χοροί) at the beginning of the second antistrophe.[26] The association between the course of the astral bodies and the primordial danger of females that will come back to the fore in the second stasimon is powerfully prepared by this choral imagery in the words and movement of the first stasimon.[27]

Just as in the second stasimon, Clytemnestra, the *Tyndaris*, is defined by her original kinship ties – that is, not by her marriage(s).[28] More strikingly, she is called a *kora* by the chorus of young girls (481), as if she were one of their coevals. The mother of Electra is a monstrous model of anti-marriage

[24] See O'Brien 1964: 16–17; for the idea that the Τυνδαρί of line 480 is in fact Helen, see Jouanna 1998; for 'ambiguity as part of the design', see Csapo 2009: 105.
[25] See Morwood 1981; Cropp 1988: 129; Morin 2004; Csapo 2009: 100.
[26] See Csapo 2008: 275–80. The chorus of stars follows the image of a chorus of Nereids and dolphins earlier in the ode (432–7).
[27] On the complementary relationship between the 'dithyrambic' first stasimon and the second stasimon, see Walsh 1977; Csapo 2003; 2008: 275–80; 2009.
[28] See Burkert 1990: 67.

for the Argive girls. It was in fact in order to announce the festival of Hera to Electra that the chorus first appears in the play, a festival celebrated by choruses of νύμφαι παρθενικαί with dance and sacrifice for the wife of Zeus, and patron goddess of the city.[29] Electra had refused to join in the dance and lead the chorus (178: οὐδ' ἱστᾶσα χορούς) in the lyric exchange that serves as a *parodos*, just as she will still refuse to dance after the murder of Aegisthus (859–79).[30] The lawful, ordered world of ritual marriage and sacrifice represented by the festival of Hera is denied to Electra. A *kora*, she has remained a virgin after her forced union with the peasant.[31] She cannot belong to the group of her maiden friends. Just like her mother, Electra is both married and not married, and her anomalous status highlighted by contrast with the maiden chorus. Her situation reflects the profound upheaval brought upon the world by the adultery of that house.

Yet when the chorus channels its attention on Clytemnestra at the end of the second stasimon, it is not only pointing back to the earlier parts of the play, of course, but also preparing the way for later developments. It allows the play to keep a larger perspective open and a clear focus on Clytemnestra, even as the whole movement of the action is then pointing specifically to Aegisthus. The reference to her noble siblings, in particular, prefigures the epiphany of the two brothers *ex machina* at the end of the play (1238–1356).[32] The Dioscuri appear after the murder of their sister and impose a settlement on all the characters. They distribute lots and trace the future of the action beyond the end of the play. It is no coincidence that the marriage of Electra and Pylades plays a very prominent role in the resolution of the gods in the final scene, as the consecration of the apparent return to order that follows the breakdown of war and adultery. While it began with Electra's enduring virginity and her refusal to celebrate the nuptial dances of Hera's festival, and Clytemnestra was lured to her death at the false news that she had borne a child, the play ends with the announcement of her γάμος and the unveiling of Zeus's plan. There was no place in the sacred festivals and the choruses for Electra, and she had been promised as a wife to Castor (310–13). Now, with the announcement of her marriage, the Dioscuri fulfil the order of Zeus and the world is set aright. The two brothers answer for the actions of their two sisters, and their protection of purity and piety contrasts with the actions of Atreus and Thyestes and the despair of Orestes and Electra. It is this fundamental role played by

[29] See the fundamental contribution of Zeitlin 1970 on the question.
[30] See Henrichs 1994/5: 86–90.
[31] See the discussion of Electra's 'social displacement' in Papadimitropoulos 2008.
[32] Compare the opposing views of Marshall 1999/2000 and Gärtner 2005, with bibliography.

the two gods that the chorus prepares for the audience by contrasting Clytemnestra with her brothers in line 746. By naming Clytemnestra as κλεινῶν συγγενέτειρ᾽ ἀδελφῶν, the young Argive maidens set the stage for the intervention of the two brother gods. Just as the direct address to the mother of Electra links the ode to earlier scenes and the beginning of the play, it also points ahead to later developments. Placed right in the middle of the tragedy, the second stasimon simultaneously looks back and forward to earlier and later narrative time.

Its immediate environment in the play, however, is even more prominently reflected. At a moment when the dramatic action revolves around the imminent murder of Aegisthus, the ode narrates the tale of Atreus' and Thyestes' animosity, and sets up the generational background that explains the hatred that pits Aegisthus against Agamemnon, and Orestes and Electra against Aegisthus. The seduction of Atreus' wife is presented as an antecedent to the seduction of Clytemnestra, and the events of today as a reenactment of the events of the past.[33] The ode creates a direct resonance between the generations. The theme of the sacrifice is a case in point.[34] The initial song of the chorus had already presented the festival of Hera as an occasion for θυσία (172), and it is on the occasion of the sacrifice of a bull that Aegisthus' murder is plotted right before the stasimon. The sacrificial imagery of the ode, with its θυμέλαι and βωμοί bedecked in gold, and the golden lamb brought between mountain, house, and agora, directly echoes this theme, and the association between sacrifice, marriage, and order deepened and strengthened. The adultery of Thyestes has thoroughly corrupted the sacrifices of the premature, ominous celebrations depicted by the chorus in the ode. The disruption of the privileged moment of contact with the gods is presented as a continuation with the past in the song, something that later scenes will recurrently reflect. The famous messenger speech that follows the stasimon, in particular, will relate the sacrificial slaying of Aegisthus at length, a murder on the altar that will meticulously be described as the horrible travesty of a proper sacrifice (810–43).[35] The collapse of boundaries expressed in the story of the golden lamb provides a background and a commentary for all the sacrifices of the play, and an immediate preparation for the murder of Thyestes' son.

Another degree of temporal reference staged by the ode is suggested by the framing of the tale. The chorus presents the song as an old φήμη, a μῦθος handed down from the past to inspire fear.[36] The young girls deny

[33] See Mulryne 1977; Eisner 1979; Goff 1999. [34] Zeitlin 1970; Mirto 1980.
[35] See Henrichs 2000: 187–90.
[36] Denniston 1939: 142; Stinton 1976: 79–81; Cropp 1988: 152; Roisman and Luschnig 2011: 185.

its truth, saying it has no πίστις. The tale of the previous generation, the temporal background of the play's action, is depicted as a useful fiction. The supernatural elements of the tale rob it of all credence. This recalls the reaction of Electra to the suggestions of the old man, the idea that she could recognise her brother by his lock of hair, the imprint of his foot, or a piece of cloth that she wove for him when he was a child. It is, of course, the tradition embodied by the *Choephoroi* of Aeschylus that is explicitly rejected by Electra.[37] It is not plausible to imagine that the hair of brother and sister can be identical, that imprints can be left on the rock and a brother's foot shape point to that of his sister, or that the cape of a child still be worn by a man. Just before the second stasimon, then, Electra is shown as a critic of credulity, and her refusal to believe is directly continued by the similar sentiments expressed by the chorus in the ode. A clear link is made between her deduction talents and the doubts of the chorus. A fact that stands out in this is that Electra's doubts were in the end not founded. Tradition, and the interpretation of the old man, were actually correct – those *are* the tokens of Orestes. Could it be that the chorus is also expressing doubts that are not founded? That its dismissal of the πίστις of the old μῦθοι is as mistaken as Electra's reasoning? The apparition of the Dioscuri *ex machina*, and their revelation that what happened has indeed been caused by the events of the past (1305–7), points back to this issue at the end of the play. The last scene returns to the question, then, and it shows that the crimes of the earlier generation are directly tied to punishment and the present situation. The doubt of the chorus, like that of Electra, was not founded in the end. The incredulity of the young Argive girls about the past is corrected by the direct intervention of the gods and their intimations of the future. It sets the stage for a resolution.

But nothing is as it seems in the world of the play. The understanding of mortals is based on illusion. Helen, Clytemnestra's sister, was in fact never at Troy (1278–83).[38] The accusations of the chorus against her (213–14) are groundless, just as the accusations of the entire tradition of choral invective against Helen it echoes were, such as the famous passage of *Agamemnon* 681–98. The songs of joy of the old Argive choruses celebrated a lie. What do the songs of the Athenian chorus reflect? If the chorus' doubt about the veracity of the old μῦθοι tells us something about the group of young girls as characters in the play, it also indicates something about the nature of μῦθος itself. As the chorus sings of the lack of πίστις of the old μῦθοι,

[37] See e.g. Jouanna 1997; cf. Halporn 1983. For echoes of the *Odyssey*, see Dingel 1969.
[38] See Papadimitropoulos 2008.

of the great age of the grey φῆμαι that have come down from the past, it is commenting on its own song, and on the very nature of dramatic truth. The old φῆμαι are implicitly associated with the sound of the flute that is depicted in the story and enacted here and now in performance.[39] The ode opens a level of meaning that functions beyond the simple declaration of the chorus as a character and addresses the audience directly. The statement of the ode on the credence of the old rumours is a statement about its own status as a receptacle of tradition and about the mythical material of tragedy in general.[40] In this, again, the chorus deploys a rich web of intertwined, distinctive meanings, simultaneously juxtaposing and combining different layers of reference in the same message.

The crime that takes place in the hidden recesses of the *oikos* determines the speech of the herald in the agora and the celebrations of the people at the public altars. It affects the very nature of the universe. As the stars change direction, the choruses of the story turn and counter-turn over the joyful songs of a lie. Their praises of the house of Atreus become μολπαί for Thyestes when the criminal adulterer reveals in the agora that he now has the lamb. The first strophe gives honour to the *oikos* of the Atreids, while the first antistrophe revolves around the songs that glorify Thyestes and the claims of his δῶμα. There is a chiastic structure agora-chorus-chorus-agora in the episode, where the first pair expresses a close link between the proclamation of the herald in the agora and the choral celebrations that follow, and the second pair expresses a close link between the 'songs of the lamb' and the proclamations of Thyestes in the agora. The movement of the chorus from one side to another, mirrored in the changed movement of the stars, perfectly captures the reversal of choral praise in the narrative, and the crime it embodies for the public stage. While the old choruses of the story were wrong, the chorus of the play sings an old tale it does not believe. Its song tells a story that is not true. Just as the error of the old choruses serves as a warning for the dangers of deception and premature celebration, then, the false song of the ode serves a purpose and exemplifies the role of tradition and narrative in instilling the fear of the gods, and the thin authority on which it rests.

The terrifying lesson of crime and punishment is addressed directly to Clytemnestra by the Argive chorus within the play. But it is also meant as a statement for the audience outside the play. The Athenian chorus is staging a story about the nature of civic power at that point in the

[39] Lines 701–2: ἐν πολιαῖσι μένει φήμαις / εὐαρμόστοις ἐν καλάμοις.

[40] Do the 'songs of the lamb', the μολπαί . . . ἀρνὸς (718–19), become a reflection of the 'goat-song', τραγῳδία itself? For ἀρνὸς being governed by μολπαί, see Willink 2005: 16.

drama. The lamb, a gift from the gods, functions as the channel of political authority in the city. Its role is defined both by who possesses it in the *oikos*, and by who proclaims it in the agora. It is a *phasma*, a sign or portent 'of the blessed rulers' (μακαρίων . . . τυράννων 709–10).[41] The *phasma* is meant to be seen (ὀψόμενοι 710) by the body politic, the assembled citizens (Μυκηναῖοι) gathered in the agora. Yet it is also hidden in the *oikos*. The public spectacle of speech that takes place in the agora, the declamation (ἰαχεῖ 707) of the herald or the proclamation of Thyestes (ἀυτεῖ 724), proceeds from the custody of the lamb by a house. Power in the city derives from the possession of the divine sign and its manipulation. The public proclamation and the acclamation of the people are a direct result of adultery in the hidden bed. Power in the city is based on a crime in the home, the corruption of marriage, the rending of the kinship group, and the strife of brother against brother. If the *phasma* can be manipulated to turn in one direction and then the next, it immediately provokes a response from the gods. The clear alteration of the universe performed in the sky for all to see contrasts with the manipulation of the *phasma* in the agora. Yet that is precisely the part of the story that the chorus refuses to believe. The narrative illusion of this chorus, in the end, is as tenuous as the old choruses of the story were wrong – a vertiginous thought. Until the intervention of the Dioscuri, the power struggle that is ripping apart household and city unfolds in the darkness of human doubt and limitations and the ἀπιστία of myth. Words come and go in the house, in the agora, on stage. It is impossible to know where true justice lies. The agora of the old Argive kingdom is as distant as it is near for the audience. The exercise of power and the teaching of tradition lock house, agora and heaven in a constant conflict of clashing perspectives. If the message fulfils a topical role within the drama, it also addresses the Athenian citizen here and now.

The second stasimon of Euripides' *Electra* is a poem of forty-seven lines. Fully incorporated in the immediate course of the drama and integrated to the larger body of the text, it says something about a specific moment in the play as well as about its entire plot. It simultaneously evolves in the past of the dramatic time, in the more distant time of an earlier generation, and in the contemporary time of performance. It enmeshes the sound of the *aulos* with the direction of the dance step and the meaning of its words. It embodies the space of the dramatic location together with other spaces within and outside the city, the movement of the stars in the sky

[41] Cf. the conflicting usages of *tyrannos* at lines 93 and 877, and the similarly ironical usage of *makar* and *makarios* in lines 994 and 1006.

and the four corners of the world, and the tangible, physical presence of the orchestra. It reflects itself and other songs. It negotiates the conflicting meanings of kinship, power, and punishment for the characters and the audience; it opens a perspective of interpretation that can be applied within the drama to enrich character and focalise a certain position in contrast with others, or rather serve as a bridge for the audience outside looking into the play. The chorus combines all of these levels of reference in the same breath. Every level reflects every other level in one coherent whole, allowing the chorus to establish multiple correspondences between these different layers of meaning. Placed at the centre of a complex network of parallel messages, it merges them all into one poem. This is what we mean by the umbrella term 'choral mediations'.

Tragedy as a choral genre

The approach to dramatic choruses exemplified above draws on several related assumptions about the nature and function of Athenian drama that have progressively emerged over the past thirty years or so. Perhaps at the most fundamental level is the now well established but once radical idea that the written words transmitted under the names of Athenian dramatists should not only be approached as autonomous texts, as formalist critics advocated, but that they take on a rich significance when viewed as traces of singular *events*, which it is the critic's role to recreate in their richest possible complexity. A dramatic event happens in a certain space, in the presence of a given audience, and in a distinctive social, political, and cultural context. In addition to the words spoken by the performers, it involves a wide range of stimuli, visual and auditory alike, which fundamentally inform the spectators' experience. The scholarly recreation of a dramatic event is thus a resolutely historicist project requiring a double focus on socio-political context and staging.[42] In addition, such an approach raises questions about the pragmatics of the performance – its cognitive and emotional effects upon the audience – which studies more strictly focused on authors and their intentions tend to leave aside. As such, the appreciation of plays as events is directly related to the application of the wide-ranging notion of *performance* to drama studies.[43]

In recent years, our understanding of classical Athenian drama has been reinvigorated by studies that explored non-verbal aspects of dramatic

[42] Goldhill 1999: 15–16.
[43] On modern performance theory in relation to classical Athens, see Goldhill 1999; Bierl 2009 [2001]: 1–82.

communication such as space, sound, music, and dance;[44] the inclusion of the theatrical contests among ritual celebrations for the god Dionysos involving a specific sequence of events before and after the plays;[45] the complex relation between Athenian drama and democracy, with its distinctive agenda of balancing the claims of individual aristocrats and the demands of the *dēmos*;[46] and the composition of the Athenian audience, among other aspects.[47] For Anglophone audiences especially, the turn to an emphatically contextualised approach to Athenian drama may be epitomised by the essays grouped in the collective volume *Nothing to Do with Dionysos?*, significantly subtitled *Athenian Drama and Its Social Context*.[48]

Among other important contributions, contextualised studies of Athenian drama have led to a radical reevaluation of the plays as largely *choral* events, thus putting the chorus (back) in the interpretive centre of the dramatic texts. That insight marks a sharp departure from a long tradition of scholarship informed by Aristotle's *Poetics* and shaped by the idea that Athenian drama reached its full level when it broke away from its choral origins (*Poet.* 1449a10–15); that tragedy is the 'representation of an action' whose most important parts are plot and character, while lyric poetry and spectacle come last (*Poet.* 1450a–b); that the chorus should be regarded as one of the actors (*Poet.* 1456a25); and that, starting with Agathon, choral odes were treated as ἐμβόλιμα, 'interludes' detached from the plot (*Poet.* 1456a30).[49] By contrast, the contemporary emphasis of scholarship in looking at tragedy, comedy, and satyr-play as choral genres is in great part the product of a new interest in chorality, largely inaugurated by the 1977 publication of Claude Calame's *Les Choeurs de jeunes filles en Grèce archaïque*, and which has since spread from the archaic choruses of Sparta and Lesbos to Pindar and Bacchylides' odes, paeans, dithyrambs, and dirges, and the more elusive choral performances of fifth-century Athens.[50]

The idea that the chorus stood at the conceptual centre of Athenian drama relies on evidence of various kinds, including first the nature of

[44] See for instance Taplin 1977, Edmunds 1996, Wiles 1997, and Rehm 2002 on the spatiality of Athenian drama; Ley 2007 on dance; Wilson 2005 on music.

[45] Pickard-Cambridge 1968: 57–70; Goldhill 1990.

[46] Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1988 [1972]; Griffith 1995. For a different view, which downplays the democratic setting of the plays, see Rhodes 2003.

[47] On the thorny issue of the presence of women at the Athenian dramatic festivals, see Henderson 1991; Goldhill 1994; Hughes 2008.

[48] Winkler and Zeitlin 1990.

[49] See Scattolin 2011. On the idea that the confusions in the modern debate about the tragic chorus partly at least are a legacy of Aristotle, see Halliwell 1998 [1986]: 251–2.

[50] See e.g. Zimmermann 1992 on the dithyramb; Rutherford 2001 on paeans; Kowalzig 2007b, etc. That is of course not to say that there was no interest in dramatic choruses before the performative turn of the 1990s (see e.g. Kaimio 1970, Burton 1980), but that these earlier works study the odes from a literary viewpoint, independently from other choral genres.

the theatrical space in Athens. According to the ninth-century CE lexicon of Photios of Constantinople, before the city performances of dithyramb and tragedies were moved to the precinct of Dionysos, they took place in a part of the *agora* called the *orchēstra*.[51] The term, which literally means 'dancing space', indicates that accommodating a chorus was the defining criterion for the area.[52] Furthermore, the archaeological evidence suggests that after the translation to the south slope of the Acropolis, the theatre of Dionysos continued to be centred on the *orchēstra*, now complemented with a banked *theatron* and a wooden stage-building or *skēnē*.[53] No physical remains of a separate acting stage for the actors have been found, and most scholars now agree that the once popular idea (mainly derived from Pollux 4.123) of a wooden stage rising above the orchestra level in front of the *skēnē* applies to Neronian rather than classical theatre. In fifth-century Athens, actors evolved in the same performing space as the dancing chorus. Drama physically happened as an extension of a choral dance.

Approaches sensitive to the staging of Athenian drama have further emphasised the sheer theatrical power of the chorus performance, with its distinctive intermedial combination of music, singing, and dancing. The specifics of choral dancing are irretrievably lost to us. Whether the chorus danced in a circular or rectilinear formation, or perhaps more probably a fluid combination of both, is still fiercely debated.[54] 'Hand gestures' (χειρονομία) and 'poses' (σχήματα) seem to have played an important role, suggesting that choral dancing included a wide variety of figures and possibly mimicked the actions evoked in the lyrics, but the details of those movements are unknown.[55] Yet the comparative evidence offered by some contemporary productions of Greek drama as well as other performance traditions gives us at least an idea of the radical impact that a collective of *choreutai* singing and dancing together may have had upon their audiences.[56]

Further evidence for the importance of choruses in Athenian drama comes from the economics of the contests and especially the practice of *chorēgia*, the institution whereby prominent members of the community

[51] Photius s.v. ὀρχήστρα.
[52] Pickard-Cambridge 1988: 37–8; Camp 1992 46; Rehm 2002: 43.
[53] Scullion 1994; Rehm 2002: 38; Ley 2007: 8.
[54] See Lech 2009 for a recent treatment and Foley 2003: 9–11 for a good summary of the evidence on both sides. For the hypothesis that the rectangular formation may have been emphasised in the late fifth and fourth century, see Wiles 1997: 96 and 2000: 134.
[55] See Lawler 1964 and Naerebout 1997 on choral dancing. A good survey of modern approaches to Greek dancing can be found in Ley 2003.
[56] Macintosh 1997.

were appointed by the leading civic officer, the Eponymous Archon, to fund a dramatic chorus.[57] A poet who was hoping to compete 'asked for a chorus' (χορὸν αἰτεῖν, cf. Ar. *Knights* 513) from the city represented by the Archon, who 'gave it' (χορὸν διδόναι, cf. Arist. *Poet.* 1449b; Kratinos fr. 17 K–A; Pl. *Rep.* 383c). Thus a playwright's opportunity to put on a play was synonymous with and depended on his ability to secure a chorus from the polis. Furthermore, the language of comedy suggests that the chorus was conceptually at the centre of the victory, even though it is unclear whether the judges inscribed the poet's or the *chorēgos'* name on their tablets: the chorus of Aristophanes' *Clouds* enumerates the benefits that the panel of judges will receive 'if they help this *choros*, as is just' (1115–16).[58] Unlike actor-driven contemporary shows, the logistics of Athenian drama emphasised the chorus' role in a given production and largely credited it for its eventual success.

Genetic arguments about the origins of Athenian drama occupy a distinctive position in the scholarly reevaluation of tragedy and comedy as choral genres. Aristotle famously says in the *Poetics* that tragedy originated from the leaders of the dithyramb and comedy from the leaders of the satyr-play; that Aeschylus first increased the number of actors from one to two, reduced the choral parts, and gave speech the leading role; and that the third actor came with Sophocles (Arist. *Poet.* 1449a10–15). In the Aristotelian context, these statements support an argument that deflates rather than emphasises the importance of the dramatic chorus. Operating on a teleological rather than genetic logic, Aristotle identifies as the 'proper nature' (φύσιν) of tragedy the state that it reached after a number of developments rather than its original features. Yet Aristotle still tells us a story according to which tragedy and comedy originated in choral dances to which actors were gradually added. His statement is corroborated by the extant scripts: most of Aeschylus' plays seem to require only two actors, but his last extant production, the *Oresteia*, requires three. In addition, the chorus drives the plot of several of our earliest extant plays, including Aeschylus' *Persians*, *Supplices*, and *Choephoroi*, but seems to play a lesser role in the action of most of Sophocles' tragedies. Such observations form the basis of an evolutionary view of the development of Athenian drama through the gradual amplification of a choral performance.[59]

The hypothesis that tragedy and comedy originated from choral performances offers additional support for, but is not necessary to the argument

[57] Wilson 2000. [58] Wilson 2000: 102–3. [59] See for instance Ley 2007: 7.

emphasising the centrality of choruses in Athenian drama. Origins do not necessarily explain or foreshadow later developments. Furthermore, as critics have pointed out, the historicity of Aristotle's statement is questionable. Aristotle's ideas about the development of poetic genres are based on theoretical considerations rather than empirical information.[60] Yet read against the grain, as it were, the *Poetics* may tell us something about fourth-century popular ideas about drama. The idea of choral origins that has been so influential is mentioned only in passing. It departs from, rather than reinforces, Aristotle's notions that tragedy is the 'representation of an action', whose most important parts are plot and character (*Poet.* 1450a–b), and that Homer, understood as the author of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Margites*, revealed the possibility of both tragedy and comedy (*Poet.* 1448b35). Overall, Aristotle minimises the role of choruses in his description of the most dignified type of tragedy (*Poet.* 1449a10–25). The brief mention of the choral origins of tragedy and comedy thus occupies a complex position in Aristotle's argument. It does not support his demonstration and thus may rather be a concession to conceptions commonly held among Aristotle's readers, thus suggesting how much attention fourth-century audiences paid to the choral component of Athenian drama.

That last point is supported by the structure of Plato's *Laws*, which discusses whether dramatic poets and performances should be allowed in the Platonic city in the context of a larger section about the role of χορεία (817e). A small dose of comedy and other forms of dancing representing the ignoble movements of ugly bodies (814e) is allowed on the ground that it is impossible to learn the serious without some awareness of the comic, but with the provision that those dances be performed by slaves and foreign hires and not paid much attention (816d–e). The presence of tragic poets is addressed last, a position that perhaps reflects the anxiety of legislating on an immensely popular cultural form (817a–d). Significantly, the Athenian speaker appropriates rather than dismisses tragic poetry by metaphorically redefining the citizens as tragic poets, whose city is a mimesis of the best life. Thus tragic poets are viewed as the citizens' rivals, whose presence needs to be authorised by magistrates upon careful comparison of the formers' and the latters' songs (ᾠδάς). The section on chorality ends on provisions for comic and tragic poets to be granted a chorus. Even in the fourth century BCE, Plato still conceptualised tragedy and comedy as fundamentally choral events.

[60] Halliwell 1987: 78–84. See also Scullion 2002 about the possibility that Aristotle's reconstruction of the origins of tragedy and comedy in relation to the more ostensibly Dionysiac dithyramb and satyr-play is an aetiology for their performance during the festival of the wine god.

A multi-layered medium

Scholars of Greek drama have long been aware of the fact that the odes of Athenian tragedy formally resemble the songs of melic poetry.[61] Yet the reappreciation of drama as choral performances parallel to the melic events not only in form but also in social context, has opened up new avenues in our understanding of Athenian drama. Our (admittedly complex and fragmentary) extant sources suggest that the choruses performing for Dionysos in Athens functionally took over at least some of the social, religious, and civic roles fulfilled by melic choruses in other city-states.[62] While dithyrambic and dramatic choruses performed regularly and on a huge scale at the City Dionysia and the Lenaia, the Athenian record of non-Dionysiac forms of choral activity is sparse. Evidence for male choruses include a few epinician poems by Pindar and Bacchylides; testimonia about paeans composed by Phrynichus (Ath. 6.250b = *TrGF* i.3) and Sophocles (*Suda* 815 = iv.401.24 Adler); suggestions that men and boys performed paeans at the Thargelia;[63] and evidence that Athenian choruses performed paeans on pilgrimages to Panhellenic sanctuaries (Pind. *Paian* 5 S–M). Performances of female choruses in Athenian public life are even more poorly attested. The festival for Artemis at Brauron may have been a medium for female choral training, for instance. We know that the 'bears' (ἄρκτοι) took part in various activities including dance, which makes it reasonable to suppose that their service to Artemis would have culminated in some kind of public performance.[64] Even so, non-Dionysiac choruses seem to have played a much lesser role in Athens than in other classical city-states. From an evolutionary viewpoint, the dramatic and dithyrambic choruses of Athens take over the performance position that melic choruses occupy in other cultural contexts.

The idea that Athenian audiences experienced the dramatic contests as choral performances has played an important role in recent discussions of tragic and comic choruses. Among other consequences, it raises the possibility that some features of melic choruses that have recently come to light in the scholarship may be applicable (but to what extent?) to dramatic choruses as well. Starting with Calame's *Choeurs de jeunes filles*, a number of studies informed by anthropology and pragmatic linguistics have shown that in archaic and classical Greece, song-and-dance ensembles of maidens, men, or women were fundamentally social and civic events integral to an

[61] See e.g. Parry 1978. [62] Nagy 1994/5b; Calame 1999; Kowalzig 2004.
[63] Rutherford 2001: 33; Parker 2005: 182. [64] Parker 2005: 183, 243, and 230–1.

elaborated system of self-presentation and communication centred on the polis. Work on the phenomenon of deixis, whereby a song refers to its extra-linguistic circumstances of performance, has shown that the songs of Alcman, Pindar, and other lyric poets point at a wide range of social institutions and practices.[65] The linguistic signs take on their full meaning in relation to other, non-linguistic signs that notably include religious and civic rituals.

Many if not most melic performances were offerings to the gods: the hymns, paeans, dithyrambs, and sacred chants of Pindar, Bacchylides, and Simonides are cultic songs that often include aetiological myths about their cultic context of performance.[66] Victory odes arguably belong to the category of religious songs since they were often staged in the context of public festivals and shared many formal features with the songs addressed solely to the gods.[67] Like the divine choruses led by Apollo on Olympos in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (186–206), human choruses notionally include the gods among their addressees. Their song unfolds both in the specific time of the performance and in the cyclical temporality of ritual.

In addition, melic choruses are closely connected to the community for and on the behalf of which they perform. According to Plato, choruses represent the lawgiver's strategy for impressing on all the idea that just behavior is equated with happiness (*Leg.* 664c–d). This idea of choruses as both reflection and model for the community has been thoroughly explored by Eva Stehle, who showed its relevance to songs as wide-ranging as Alcman's Louvre partheneion (1 *PMGF* = 3 C), a Rhodian swallow-song (Athenaios 8.360c–d = *PMG* 848), and Pindar's paean 9 for the Thebans (52k S–M).[68] A melic chorus is not just the medium for an artistic performance; it also, and crucially, contributes to a religious ritual and stands as a representative of the civic community.

Hence the analogy between dramatic and non-dramatic choruses has led to a more acute sensibility for the multiple layers of meaning at work in the choruses of tragedy, both within and without the fiction. First, it supported a new scholarly emphasis on the ritual context of the dramatic contests that put the old question of the relation between drama and ritual, formally explored by the Cambridge Ritualists at the turn of the twentieth century, on an entirely different level of understanding. Just as other choral performances were offerings to the gods, the tragic and comic contests were performed in the context of festivals dedicated to the god

[65] See for instance the collection of articles in Felson 2004.
[66] Kowalzig 2007b: 1–55 and passim. [67] Kowalzig 2007b: 3, with bibliography. [68] Stehle 1997.

Dionysos. The performance of the masked *choreutai* singing and dancing in the orchestra may thus signify both within the dramatic fiction, and in relation to the festival of the wine god. This idea that the context of the festival of Dionysos potentially infuses the choral utterances with a ritual significance is a premise of Albert Henrichs' influential argument that all instances when the chorus refers to its own dancing in extant tragedy may be interpreted in terms of its extra-dramatic identity as a performer of the ritual dance.[69] In a subsequent article, Henrichs further developed the influential concept of 'choral projection', referring to the chorus' ability to depict other distant dances and dancers as an extension of its own performance in the here and now. For Henrichs, the ritual dimension of the theatrical experience, both diachronically, as a memory of its origins in choral cult celebration, and synchronically, as a direct dialogue with contemporary ritual practices and imagination, lies behind the complementary capacity of the dramatic chorus for projection and self-reflexivity, and the elusive figure of Dionysos looms large as a common denominator of this heightened play with ritual and illusion. This research has opened the way for a much greater appreciation of the specificity of tragic choral mimesis. It has taken the chorus out of the strict confines of the dramatic illusion, placed it between projection and performance, and shown how the chorus of drama is able to evolve in different levels of reference simultaneously.

Chorus and audience

If the chorus simultaneously partakes in a ritual for Dionysos and performs in a work of fiction, it also stands as a collective impersonated by Athenian citizens and thus entertains a special relation with the Athenian audience. In an article originally published in 1969 and reprinted in the 1972 *Mythe et tragédie en Grèce ancienne*, co-authored with Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Jean-Pierre Vernant suggested that the chorus stands as a representative of the city on stage. Working with an idea of tragedy as the staging of the tensions and limitations of the democratic ideal, Vernant argued that the contrast between the collective chorus and the individual actors reflects on democratic anxieties about the respective roles of the group and the individual.[70] His highly influential model was later taken up notably by Oddone Longo, who speaks of the chorus as a representative for the collective citizen body,

[69] Henrichs 1994/5. Other important works that rely on the double identity, ritual and fictional, of dramatic choruses include Calame 1999 and Bierl 2009 [2001].

[70] Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1972: 27.

promoting through its unity the community cohesion constantly at risk in the highly differentiated and stratified society of fifth-century Athens.[71]

The notion of a special connection between chorus and polis is further supported by the fact that the choruses of Athenian drama were made of non-professional citizens. Even though the exact numbers are unknown and varied over the course of the fifth century, the Dionysiac festivals clearly involved massive numbers of *choreutai*. At the Great Dionysia, each of the city's ten tribes produced a chorus of fifty boys and a chorus of fifty men for the dithyrambic contest;[72] the *choreutai* involved in the tragic contests probably varied between thirty-six to forty-five (depending on whether the chorus included twelve or fifteen performers); and the comic contests introduced in 486 BCE seem to have involved five (and then three) choruses of twenty-four.[73] It is thus likely that a large proportion of the citizens sitting among the audience of a play would themselves have previously been part of a Dionysiac (dithyrambic, if not dramatic) chorus, an experience that opens up the possibility of a privileged tie between chorus and audience. The chorus is not only a group of performers, but also, and crucially, a group of Athenian citizens.[74]

Yet for all its appeal, the appreciation of dramatic choruses as representatives of the polis tells only part of the story. Among other problems, it glosses over the fact that unlike the *choreutai* singing dithyrambs or other types of melic songs, tragic *choreutai* are masked, and that the mask introduces a fundamental distance between stage and audience.[75] Not surprisingly, then, what came to be called the Vernant model (a term perhaps more suited to the simplified versions offered by followers than to Vernant's original formulation) was later challenged by John Gould and others who, looking at the chorus from the perspective of the represented action rather than the external context of performance, stressed that the chorus speaks in non-Attic dialect and often impersonates marginal figures such as women or slaves.[76] Subsequently, Gould insisted that the dramatic chorus be analysed primarily in terms of its dramatic identity. For Gould the *choreutai* introduce into the fiction a particular voice, that of collective wisdom, that contextualises the tragic action performed by the actors.

[71] Longo 1990: 16–19.

[72] *IG* II^2 2318.320–4; *Hesperia* 37 (1968) no. 51, frr. a–b, col. 2, 1–24. Cf. Csapo and Slater 1994: 115–17; Swift 2010: 36–9.

[73] Pickard-Cambridge 1968: 234–6.

[74] For the controversial idea that performing in a chorus was part of the military training and social integration that define ephebeia, see Winkler 1990. On the chorus' authority as an object of tension and negotiation among the individual actors, see Hawthorne 2009.

[75] Calame 2005a: 118–31.

[76] Gould 2001 [1996]; Foley 2003.

At the core of the Vernant vs Gould debate are fundamental questions about the authority of the choral voice and the possibility that the Athenian audience identified with the collective on stage. Yet as Simon Goldhill has stressed, one position does not need to be emphasised to the expense of the other.[77] Rather, the chorus of a given play may have the potential to shift in register between its privileged function of *choros* as a ritual and civic institution, and the specific character that the group embodies in the play. It may precisely be that capacity to shift that defines the specificity of the choral voice. Accordingly, Donald Mastronarde has offered a multi-layered model of the various factors that favour or impede the authority of the choral voice. Mastronarde argued for a diachronic evolution whereby Euripides goes beyond Aeschylus and Sophocles in weakening factors that favor audience identification and exploiting opposing factors, but also showed how the chorus of a single Euripidean play (Euripides' *Andromache*) can display a mixture of involvement and aloofness, authority and error.[78] On the basis of a comparison between the roles of male and female choruses in the extant tragedies, Helene Foley has further argued that although old men are often more firmly linked with political concerns, and female choruses with domestic or religious ones, gender does not clearly correlate with inactivity or lack of assertiveness, and that the chorus' fictional identity may fade progressively or intermittently in the course of a single drama.[79]

Thus scholars working concomitantly with different models and methodologies have concurred to stress the instability of the choral part. Two concepts, 'identity' and 'voice', have mostly and sometimes interchangeably been used to describe that proteiform nature. From a mimetic perspective, the chorus oscillates between two identities, an intra-dramatic identity as a fictional group of slaves, soldiers, or captive women, and an extra-dramatic identity as a ritual, civic, and institutionalised collective performing in the festival of Dionysos.[80] From an enunciative viewpoint emphasising the dramatic communication between a sender and a receiver, the chorus combines the voices of the poet and that (or those) of the spectators.[81] According to a classification based on the functions of language, the choral voice seamlessly fuses three functions – ritual and performative, hermeneutic, and emotional.[82] Changes in stylistic intensity (defined as density of imagery, rhythmic play, and other creative surprises) offer yet another ground for variation in the choral parts.[83] If, as Jean-Pierre

[77] Goldhill 1996. [78] Mastronarde 1998; Mastronarde 1999.

[79] Foley 2003. For other studies discussing possible correlations between the fictional identity of the chorus and its role in the action, see Dhuga 2005 and especially 2010, and Hawthorne 2009.

[80] Henrichs 1994/5. [81] Calame 1999. [82] Calame 1994/5. [83] Silk 1998.

Vernant has suggested, the language of tragedy itself is notable for its polysemic ability to refer to several codes, religious, juridical, and political, the chorus epitomises that polyvalence perhaps more clearly than any other part of tragedy.[84] The same choral variability that so often used to be seen as a problematic inconsistency to be explained and justified, offers in fact an important window into the nature and function of Athenian drama.

From Athens to the American stage

This volume represents a collective attempt to explore the multiformity and polyvalence of tragic choruses through a wide range of perspectives and methodological practices. The contributions refrain from offering a general theory on the tragic chorus but rather view it as a medium whose rich potential is handled differently from one play to another. The collection opens with a theoretical paper by CLAUDE CALAME, 'Choral polyphony and the ritual functions of tragic songs', which reflects on the various tools and methods previously used in the scholarship to conceptualise the variability of the choral voice. Calame revisits his own earlier distinction between the three semantic levels (performative, hermeneutic, emotive) at work in what he calls choral polyphony, and the distinction between the fictional and ritual identities of the chorus; he argues that the performative voice corresponds to the chorus' identity as a character, the interpretive voice to its identity as a ritual agent, and the emotive voice to its position as an intermediary between character and audience. Taking as his main examples the binding song of Aeschylus' *Eumenides* and the final *thrēnos* of *Persians*, Calame looks at how the chorus' performance of ritual draws attention to its embedded, double identity as character and institution.

Picking up on the example of *Persians* discussed by Calame but exploring it through a different set of analytical tools, MARIANNE GOVERS HOPMAN argues in 'Chorus, conflict, and closure in Aeschylus' *Persians*' that the performance of the Persian chorus challenged the conceptual opposition between Greeks and barbarians in at least two respects. Focusing first on the chorus as a narrator, she shows how its perspective on the war markedly differs from the actors' in its capacity to focus on a wide variety of objects and to consider the viewpoint of various constituencies, Athenian included. Turning to a discussion of the chorus as a character, she suggests that it partakes in a plot culminating in a sequence of opposition to and reconciliation with the protagonist, Xerxes. Through a survey

[84] Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1972: 35.

of comparable sequences in Athenian tragedy and comedy, she highlights the closural effects of *Persians*' final *kommos* and the possibility that some spectators may have been drawn into the lament sung by the performers.

Through a series of close readings of the *Oresteia*, Jonas Grethlein explores a number of tropes that interweave temporal layers in Aeschylus' choral odes. As he shows, similes, parables, and other instances of metaphorical speech create a temporal panopticon whereby the past, present, and future of the mythical action are integrated with each other; maxims (*gnōmai*) claim to a timeless validity and thus tie events from the vagueness of heroic times to the democratic present; mythical paradigms evoke a mythical plu-past hermeneutically connected to the mythical past and hence call attention to the potential relevance of the mythical past to the present of the performance; finally, the ritual staged at the end of *Eumenides* integrates the audience into the performance and blends the internal and external communication systems. Grethlein thus concludes that the Great Dionysia as a whole provides a time-out whereby the democratic present enters in a dialogue with mythical time.

Turning from Aeschylus to Sophocles, Simon Goldhill argues in 'Choreography: the lyric voice of Sophoclean tragedy' that metre, especially the transition and juxtaposition between lyric voices and iambic voices, evidences the emotional, intellectual, and physical transitions enacted by the chorus in the course of a single drama. Through a reconstruction of the vocal score and soundscape of passages from *Ajax*, *Electra*, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, and *Trachiniae*, Goldhill shows how variations in the choral voice amount to a narrative that organises the interaction between chorus and actors: moving along constantly shifting lines, it oscillates between sympathy and distance, proximity and alienation, authoritative generalisation and character-led specificity. The chapter reacts against monolithic views of the chorus and stresses the experimental nature of Sophocles' handling of it.

The next four papers highlight some aspects of Euripides' distinctively self-conscious use of the multi-referentiality of the chorus. In 'Conflicting identities in the Euripidean chorus', Laura Swift shows how Euripides uses the multi-dimensional identity of the chorus to promote a reflection on group identity. As she argues, the plot of the *Medea* depends on the chorus' prioritising gender over local identity so that the Theban women remain silent while Medea destroys the royal house of Corinth, yet double-entendres and self-contradictions in the chorus' position encourage the audience to question the validity of this type of prioritisation. Conversely, in the *Ion*, Euripides explores the problems that result from

the chorus' confusion of its double identity as members of the Athenian polis and the Erechtheid household. The chorus' inability to differentiate between the two underscores the troubling risk that national identity could be used to support personal interests.

In 'The choral plot of Euripides' *Helen*', Sheila Murnaghan explores the double status of the chorus as musical form and experience in the *Helen* and other plays. Tragic plots self-consciously exploit the formal status of actors and choruses as displaced participants in a festive choral performance, and the experience of chorus leaders in myth provides a pattern for the struggles of the tragic protagonists. Numerous plays recast the successful ritual passage from maidenhood to marriage (facilitated in real life by participation in a chorus) as an unsuccessful transition where the woman is supported by a sympathetic female chorus. The *Helen* casts the eponymous character as a dislocated chorus leader but envisages in choral projections a few brighter situations when Helen hypothetically reassumes her leading position in the choral group.

In 'Transcultural chorality: *Iphigenia in Tauris* and Athenian imperial economics in a polytheistic world', Barbara Kowalzig is interested in Euripides' use of the tragic chorus as a space for mediating between the religious cultures of different Mediterranean polytheisms. Using the *Iphigenia in Tauris* as a test case, she shows how the chorus functions as a tool of religious thought for expressing the meeting of distinct cultic traditions and their transformation into a new hybrid transcultural religious imaginary. She explores the myriad ways through which this religious conceptualisation of the transfer of Taurian Artemis from the Crimea to Attica reflects the 'transnational economic encounter' of imperial Athens, and discusses the special ability of the chorus to embody the cultural exploration of identities that results from it.

As Anton Bierl argues in 'Maenadism as self-referential chorality in Euripides' *Bacchae*', finally, the *Bacchae* presents a unique case where the ritual identity of the chorus as worshippers of Dionysos at the Great Dionysia and their fictional identity as Asian bacchants newly arrived to Thebes virtually coincide. Euripides' multiplication of choral references and projections, whereby the chorus simultaneously impersonates a group of Dionysos' followers *and* Theban women who previously resisted the god, both demonstrates and enacts the presence of the proteiform god Dionysos. The medium of the performance coincides with its message.

Put together, these case studies suggest among other things that choral polyvalence provides tragedy with a means to reflect upon Athenian practices and concepts. The multi-layering of the choral voice may bridge

over traditional dichotomies or conversely expose internal contradictions within important civic concepts. Furthermore, tragic plots often put the multi-layered identity of the chorus to various uses by casting the protagonist as a displaced chorus leader who may alternatively be separated from or reintegrated into the choral group or even fully take on the role of *chorēgos*.

The specificity of *tragic* choral mediation can be understood much more sharply against the background of other non-tragic forms of choral mediation, both diachronically and synchronically. The lyric antecedents of the tragic chorus present us with particularly significant elements of comparison, contrast, and insights about the genesis of tragic chorality. The parallel, often radically different experiments of comedy with the dramatic chorus offer indispensable points of reference for considering the distinctive nature of the tragic experience. The great narrative shifts of the *parabasis* and the generic commentaries of paratragedy stand out in that regard. Another important point of reference is Plato's *Laws*, which contains a uniquely sustained reflection on the role of the chorus in the city, and its use in mediating emotions and the teachings of tradition for the population of the 'second best city'. The only classical discussion of any length on the function of the chorus in the polis, the ideal of the tragic chorus, and the effect of its spectacle on the audience, it opens a fascinating window on the question from a completely different perspective. Although other ancient points of reference could have been considered, of course, most notably the choruses of satyr-plays, this volume will limit itself to looking at some particularly relevant aspects of lyric antecedents, the *Laws*, and Old Comedy. Four chapters are concerned with that wider background of choral mediation.

In 'The Delian Maidens and their relevance to choral mimesis in classical drama', Gregory Nagy examines the cultural conditions that made possible the transformation of choral lyric into the three composite genres of Athenian drama. As Nagy argues, the fact that tragedy, comedy, and the satyr-play combine solo performances with a wide variety of chorals songs is a function of choral mimesis as a form of reenactment. The interaction between the chorus of the Delian Maidens and the blind singer of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* shows that a chorus can reenact a solo performance and that a soloist can reenact a choral performance. Furthermore, the mutual empathy between chorus and audience involved in the process of choral mimesis accounts for the fact that dramatic choruses can bridge the gap between the archetypal there-and-then of the actors and the here-and-now of the audience.

In 'Choral persuasions in Plato's *Laws*', a view on related questions from a synchronic perspective, LUCIA PRAUSCELLO looks at the civic dimension of choral mimesis in Plato's *Laws*, the earliest and most extensive discussion of chorality from the classical period, and considers anew what it means for Plato to describe Magnesia as a mimesis of 'the best', 'most beautiful', and 'truest tragedy'. She discusses the roles ascribed to the rhythm and order of choral song and dance in Plato's city, charting the chorus' ability to bring together emotion, perception, and reason through 'vocal and kinetic activity', and its effect, both as performance and as representation, on the education and socialisation of the citizens – a double mediation between individual and collective, on the one hand, and human and divine, on the other. She further shows how the specific image of tragedy that emerges out of Plato's appropriation of dramatic chorality for his philosophical project can only be understood against the wider background of civic chorality painted by the text.

Turning to another contemporary witness, JEFFREY HENDERSON considers how the concept of mediation can be useful for comedy in 'The comic chorus and the demagogue'. He follows distinctively comic forms of choral mediation in some of the early plays of Aristophanes, most notably *Banqueters*, *Babylonians*, *Acharnians*, *Knights*, and *Wasps*. Particular attention is paid to the comic chorus' ability to mention contemporary political figures in the play, in and out of the *parabasis*, as well as to its capacity for embodying affiliations and viewpoints current in the city, and integrating these views from the world of the poet and the audience in the fictional world of the story. Henderson shows how vast is the range of choral identities that comedy could accommodate, and how exceptionally flexible.

In 'Dancing letters: the *Alphabetic Tragedy* of Kallias', RENAUD GAGNÉ looks at the unique play of media interaction between word, movement and image at work in a fragmentary comedy of the later fifth century. The play, he argues, orchestrated an elaborate reflection on the nature of dramatic sound in its relation to writing, and opened a humorous perspective on the metrical syllabification of the choral ode – a literal deconstruction of the dramatic text, possibly one of the most radical experiments of paratragedy imagined in the classical period. The chapter looks at the specific role of the chorus as an instrument of poetic retrospection in the play, the various strategies deployed by the chorus of the parodic comedy to represent its tragic counterpart, and the spectacular staging of intermedial correspondences it set in motion.

Following these four essays on the ancient parallels of tragic choral mediation, the last chapters of this volume are devoted to aspects of its modern conceptualisation and experience. It goes without saying that the modern reception of the ancient chorus is an inexhaustibly rich topic; giving it any kind of justice would require a book-length study, and this is not the aim of this collection. Yet, if only in order to better situate the ideas of this collection by contrast, it seems necessary to take some space to reflect on how choral mediation has been imagined at different moments – not in terms of reconstructing the teleological stages of an evolution that leads to a precise destination, but as examples of how the experimentations of different periods with the idea of the chorus as a mediator answered the different imperatives of their time. The three following chapters explore facets of three particularly significant moments in this respect: German Idealism, Victorian choreography, and contemporary American performance arts.

In 'Choral dialectics: Hölderlin and Hegel', Joshua Billings looks at how German thinkers from the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth completely transformed the modern understanding of the ancient Greek chorus, laying the foundations for all further reflection on the specificity of the chorus and its ability to mediate between different levels of reference. After discussing the relationship of their work to Aristotle and the influential ideas of Schiller and Schlegel, he proceeds to investigate the choral theories of Hölderlin and Hegel as a privileged space for the deployment of tragic dialectic, especially in their readings of the *Antigone*, and how their interpretation of the chorus as an expression of the 'collective in societal transition' reflected, in great part, their understanding of the French Revolution.

In 'Enter and exit the chorus: dance in Britain 1880–1914', Fiona Macintosh looks at the profound interest in the revival of ancient Greek dance that took hold in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. She traces the development of the entirely unprecedented and short-lived enthusiasm for the experience of ancient chorality in the period, and its many correspondences with the radical corporeality explored by theatre of the time. The chapter investigates the moral and political dimensions of the new fascination for ancient choral performance of those years, and the original perspectives it opened on the tragic chorus as a three-dimensional experience. It also considers the conditions that led to the abandonment of this dynamic view of the chorus at the time of the First World War.

In '"The thorniest problem and the greatest opportunity": directors on directing the Greek chorus', Peter Meineck moves ahead yet one more century and looks at the experiments of four prominent American directors in staging the Greek chorus at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first: Richard Schechner, Anne Bogart, Will Power, and Mark Adamo, all of whom have been interviewed for the essay. In a discussion that combines the reflections of the four creative artists on the adaptation of the Greek material to the modern stage, and recent advances of classical scholarship on ancient choral performance, Meineck looks at how the chorus has been used to mediate dramatic territory and cultural lines in the present period, and how these modern experiments can help illuminate the ancient material.

Taken as a whole, the volume emphasises the variety of discourses and media mobilised by tragic choruses. The chapters analyse choruses as fictional, religious, and civic performers; as combinations of text, song, and dance; and in relation and contrast to the choruses of comedy and melic poetry. As a result, the volume offers both a synthesis of previous studies and directions for further work. The chapters fully integrate the implications of earlier analyses of the social context of Greek drama, the non-textual dimensions of Athenian tragedy, and the relations between choral genres. In addition, they show how new analytic tools, including attention to the physicality of choruses, their musical interactions with the actors, or the treatment of time and space in the odes, allow us to better capture the specificity of tragic choruses. As a result, the volume offers a wide range of original contributions looking together at the tragic chorus as a highly specific, complex, and metamorphic medium.

Apart from the last three chapters, all dates are BCE unless otherwise indicated. All Greek is translated. Proper names are mostly spelled following standard English practice, and transliterations are internally coherent within each chapter. Abbreviations follow the standard conventions of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* and the *Année philologique*.