

CHORAL IDENTITY IN GREEK TRAGEDY

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GEORGE WALSH, IN WHOSE HONOR I presented this lecture in February 2001, has written memorably on the Greek chorus, above all in his 1984 book *The Varieties of Enchantment*. Walsh's eloquent discussion of worldly and enchanting choral poetry in Euripides is a hard act to follow, but at least I can feel assured that he would have been sympathetic to later attempts to pursue this complex topic further.

In the early nineteenth century (1808–9), August Wilhelm Schlegel famously described the chorus of Greek tragedy as the ideal spectator.¹ Many have undertaken to qualify or reassess his nevertheless valuable views since.² Among important objections, critics raise the problem of dramatic irony. The actual spectators to the plays often know considerably more than the chorus, whose ignorance, lack of comprehension, or conventionality can lead them into errors of judgment. Second, as John Gould in particular has emphasized, the core tragic audience consisted of male citizens of Athens, despite the presence of others ranging from foreigners and children to (possibly) slaves or women.³ By contrast, the tragic chorus itself is predominantly made up of women, slaves, foreigners, or old men; men of military age far more rarely compose such choruses (all extant cases are soldiers and none are Athenian, unless we include the chorus of Salaminian soldiers from Sophocles' *Ajax*).⁴ If these marginal groups do not appear to represent the external audience and its politico-religious community directly within the plays, why are they there and what role do they play within the dramas?

1. Schlegel 1846, 76–77 (trans. [1846] 1973, 69–70). On the role of the Greek chorus more generally, see esp. Bacon 1994–95, 8–9, 17–18; Bierl 2001, esp. 18–20, 38, 44; Burton 1980, 1–4; Davidson 1986a, 75; Easterling 1997, 163, 165; Gardiner 1987, 3, 5, 183; Goldhill 1996, 254–55; Gould 1996, 219, 232, and 245; Griffith 1998, p. 42 and n. 74; Henrichs 1996, 48–49; Kirkwood 1958, esp. 196; Mastronarde 1998, 57, 71–72, and 1999, 89; Rosenmeyer 1977, esp. 36, 38–39, and 42; 1982, 145–87; and 1993, esp. 559, 561 and 571; and Silk 1998b, 197–202, on nineteenth-century views.

2. See, e.g., Kirkwood 1958, 184; Kaimio 1970, 99; Gould 1996, p. 219 and n. 2, p. 232; Goldhill 1996, 245; Hose 1990–91, 1:32–37; Mastronarde 1998, 59; and 1999, 90; and Fletcher 1999, 30. See Rosenmeyer 1977 on irony and the tragic chorus.

3. On the question of women in the audience, see Podlecki 1990; Henderson 1991; and Goldhill 1994.

4. Gould 1996, 220, with the critical responses by Goldhill 1996; Silk 1998a; Griffith 1998, p. 42, n. 74; and Mastronarde 1998, 56. Goldhill (1996, 255) stresses that the chorus remained a group voice despite its individual character; Silk (1998a, 13) remarks on the lack of contingent background for choruses in comparison with characters, the chorus of *Eumenides* excepted, and their earlier history as anonymous groups (16). Calame 1999 redefines the ideal spectator as virtual and thus reappropriates Schlegel's insights in a new form. Calame's essay attempts to show how a marginal chorus can, through ritual and performance, lead the audience "to be active at the side of the virtual author" (153).

Does the chorus' identity as a particular, and often partial and limited, constituency compromise its tragic authority within the plays and for the core audience?

Recent work on the tragic chorus has begun to look more seriously at these questions about choral identity.⁵ In this paper I would like both to accord recognition to the state of the discussion and to raise an additional set of considerations. I shall not touch on the question of tragic authority, however, as it is a term hard to define, and ideally addressed in more detail in another paper.⁶ This essay represents a highly speculative and preliminary stab at clarifying some aspects of one of the most elusive and to us incomprehensible aspects of Greek drama.

CHORAL IDENTITY AND CHORAL PERFORMANCE

Before turning to the plays themselves, however, I want to consider the way that the conditions of production of these plays and the role of the chorus in the Attic festivals where tragedies were presented may have influenced choral identity. This move is timely due to the recent and important study by Peter Wilson of the institution of the *choregia* in Athens that financed and trained both dramatic and dithyrambic choruses in the theater festivals.⁷

By the mid-fifth century B.C.E., the Athenian polis selected and financed the protagonist, or first actor, and the *auletes* (double pipe player) for each set of Greek tragedies with its satyr play at the City Dionysia;⁸ it also awarded the opportunity to compete, along with honoraria and prizes, to the

5. See above all Gould 1996; Goldhill 1996; Mastronarde 1998 and 1999; and less directly, Sommerstein 1996, 53–70 and 338–53; and Hose 1990–91, 1:18–31.

6. The question of choral authority begins with the claim by the chorus of old men in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* about their authority to sing (104, *kurios eimi throein*) despite their advanced age. See Henrichs 1994–95 and 1996 on the choral self-referentiality and choral projection, which are a source of choral authority. Choruses "assume a ritual posture that functions as a link between their own choral performance and the dramatically constructed rituals performed in the realm of action. Far from breaking the dramatic illusion, as has often been claimed, such choruses draw the audience into a more integrated theatrical experience, in which the choral performance in the orchestra merges with more imaginary performances of polytheism that take place in the course of the play" (1996, 48). "Choruses who draw attention to their ritual role as collective performers of the choral dance-song in the orchestra invariably locate their performance self-reflexively within the concrete dramatic context and ritual ambience of a given play. . . . For lack of a better term, I call this phenomenon choral self-referentiality—the self-description of the tragic chorus as performer of *khoreia*" (1994–95, 58). For an expanded discussion of the relation between choral (especially comic) role and ritual, see Bierl 2001. Gould (1996, 221) argues that the chorus' marginality deprives it of choral authority; Goldhill (1996, 252) counters with an emphasis on the chorus' gnomic wisdom. Silk (1998a, 2) stresses the authority claimed by the higher level of style, language, and intensity of the choral odes; for a similar point, see Easterling 1997, 158–59; and Griffith 1998, p. 42, n. 74. Mastronarde (1998, 55 and 61) argues that Euripidean choruses may have the most limited and problematic claim to choral authority (see his general remarks at 1998, 56, and 1999, 89). As Goldhill well summarizes the issue: "It is, in short, the tension between authoritative, ritual, mythic utterance and specific, marginal, partial utterance that gives the chorus its special voice in tragedy" (1996, 254). "The chorus requires the audience to engage in a constant renegotiation of where the authoritative voice lies. It sets in play an authoritative collective voice, but surrounds it with other dissenting voices. The chorus allows a wider picture of the action to develop and also remains one of the many views expressed. The chorus thus is a key dramatic device for setting commentary, reflection, and authoritative voice in play as part of tragic conflict. This mobilization and questioning of the authority of collective wisdom is one of the most important ways in which tragedy engages with democracy" (255).

7. Wilson 2000.

8. The third actor seems to have been hired separately by the first actor, whereas the second actor may have been a permanent part of the first actor's team. See Csapo and Slater 1995, 223; and Wilson 2000, 85.

tragic poets, as well as a prize for the *choregos*, and a prize to first actors. Yet, as Wilson emphasizes, from an institutional perspective drama was above all a *choral* performance.⁹

At the City Dionysia a wealthy citizen named the *choregos* was chosen by the state to finance choral training and equipment for each set of tragedies. He also selected choral trainers, financed costumes, extras, and props, paid choral salaries, fed and sometimes housed the chorus for the six-month rehearsal period, and celebrated choral victories with a feast.¹⁰ (Similar procedures occurred at other theater festivals such as the Lenaia or at deme performances, but I shall leave them aside here.) Tragic victories were prestigious and could often pave the way for a successful political career; wealthy young men often undertook them for this reason.¹¹ The failure to train and support a successful chorus in style could be socially humiliating.¹² We are told in an anecdote about Alcibiades ([Andoc.] 4.21) that judges for the theatrical contests could be influenced by the identity of the *choregos*. For reasons to be shown below, I would argue that the judges for the tragic contests were very likely concentrating far more than we might think on *choral* performance, and that dramatic victories might often have been awarded as much or more for the choral performance and dramatic spectacle as for the content/plot of the plays themselves, especially given the larger context of the festival, where dithyrambic (and comic) choruses played such a central role.

Prizes were awarded not to plays but to whole productions, and although poet and *choregos* won their own separate prizes, one decision by the judges determined the success of both together.¹³ We know that poets wishing to perform their tragedies asked the *archon basileus* for a *chorus*.¹⁴ At *Laws* 817d, Plato suggests that poets demonstrated songs (*oidas*) to the Archon to get selected. Athenaeus (22a) reports that the early dramatic poets Thespis, Pratinas, Cratinus, and Phrynichus even “relied on the dancing of the chorus for interpretation of their plays.”¹⁵ According to late sources the judges from the ten tribes swore an oath “to give victory to the one who *sang* well.”¹⁶ Unlike tragedy, which does not comment on the conditions of its production, comedy addresses the importance of the chorus to dramatic victory directly. At Aristophanes *Clouds* 1115–16 the chorus promises the judges that they will receive benefits “if they help this chorus”—that is, not the play but

9. Wilson 2000, esp. 6; see also the earlier views of Bacon 1994–95, esp. 6 and 11. Official tragic victory lists include the names of both poets and *choregoi*, but victory monuments (erected by the *choregos*) could delete the former and include names of chorus members. Few dedications for tragic victories have been found, but they seem to have consisted largely of costumes and masks and celebratory *pinakes* (tablets), aspects of the production largely or perhaps even exclusively financed by the *choregos* (Csapo and Slater 1995, 141; and Wilson 2000, 216, 236, 244–48, 251). Most dedications, perhaps significantly, were found in the local demes.

10. Csapo and Slater 1995, 297; and Wilson 2000, 85–94. Both stress the extraordinary expense involved (Csapo and Slater 142 and Plut. *De glor. Ath.* 348d–49b). Lysias 7 and 21 stress the political credibility that a record of liturgies was supposed to win from citizens in court cases.

11. Arist. *Pol.* 1321a31–42; Wilson 2000, 4, 24, 98, and 113.

12. Wilson 2000, 139, 146; Csapo and Slater 1995, 151; and Eupolis, *PCG* frag. 329 and Plut. *Phoc.* 19.2–3.

13. Csapo and Slater 1995, 157.

14. Cratinus, *The Cowherd*, *PCG* frag. 17; Pl. *Leg.* 817d (Csapo and Slater 1995, 108–9).

15. Trans. W. B. Gulick, Loeb edition (1927).

16. Wilson 2000, p. 99 and n. 229.

the chorus. At *Ecclesiazusae* 1154–62 the chorus asks the judges not to perjure themselves but to judge choruses fairly. At *Birds* 445–47, the chorus swears to abide by its pact with Pisthetairos. If it keeps its oath, the chorus shall win by verdict of all the judges and the whole audience . . . but if it breaks its oath, it hopes to win by just one vote.¹⁷ The poets themselves, who at least originally served as composers, choreographers, and trainers of their own choruses, were also deeply involved in choral success despite their formal independence from the *choregos* during the initial selection process. As comic poet, Aristophanes may also hope, usually in his parabases, for his own victory and preen himself on his clever artistry, but in fact, as these same parabases indicate, the victory also depends on the chorus.¹⁸

In short, both the *choregoi* and the *choreutai* (chorus members) had every incentive to make their performance compete with that of actors and poets in the eyes and minds of the audience. The size of the choral group (twelve, later fifteen), its close proximity to the audience in the orchestra, and its opportunity to sing and dance give it some critical advantages in this respect. We find choruses difficult, and our students often read them lightly if at all. Yet from the archaic period on, choruses that are challenging for us to interpret were central to Greek civic life. Sources that discuss tragedy emphasize the critical function of the chorus in civic education, and laws assisted *choregoi* in recruiting participants.¹⁹ Plato (*Leg.* 654b) pronounces those without experience of choral performance (*achoreutos*) to be uneducated (*apaideutos*) and states that “choral dance is the whole of education” (672e; see also *Leg.* 653c). At Aristophanes *Frogs* 1419, Dionysus claims that he came to Hades to find a poet “so that the city may be saved and stage (*agei*) its choruses.”²⁰

Moreover, Athenians themselves almost certainly did not share Aristotle’s relative privileging of action over spectacle (*opsis*) or performance (*Poet.* 6.1450b16–20). Most of us are used to seeing Greek tragedies with a chorus consisting of a few actors who neither sing nor dance and often look somewhat extraneous. Yet anyone who has had the opportunity to see a modern performance that presented a large chorus with brilliant and exotic costumes dancing to electrifying music such as those created by the French director Ariane Mnouchkine in her 1991–92 *Les Atrides* (a tetralogy including Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis* before Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*) would have no difficulty understanding that a chorus can easily compete with or even overshadow actors and action.

The *choregoi* for the ten dithyrambic contests at the City Dionysia selected a group of fifty men or boys from a particular *phyle*, or tribe. At some

17. One “comic” epigram (*IG* 2².3101 from the theater region of Anagyrous) reports that a *choregos*’ victory was won with the sweetly laughing chorus, whereas actors and poet receive no mention (Wilson 2000, 246).

18. E.g., Ar. *Ach.* 641–58, *Eq.* 545–50, *Vesp.* 1048–59, *Pax* 736–74, *Nub.* 519–62.

19. See e.g., [Andoc.] 4.20; Antiph. 6.11; Dem. *Meid.* 15, and *Against Biotus* 1.16; Xen. *Hier.* 9.4; and Wilson 2000, 83.

20. Wilson (2000, 3) stresses that the term *choros* was used in many Greek cities for the educational institutions of the young. See Herington 1985 on the emergence of song culture in archaic Greece in a new form in tragedy.

point in the fourth century, comic choruses also began to be selected from these tribes ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 56.3). Yet there appear to have been no such restrictions on the *choregos*' recruitment of tragic choruses;²¹ the tragedies were not, as was the case with dithyrambs, judged by tribe and their *choregoi* were selected from among all Athenians (*Ath. Pol.* 56.3). *Choregoi* may have selected members of their own demes for their tragic choruses (there is one example that suggests such a case),²² but it seems far more likely that they would have competed to get those citizens who were best and perhaps also more experienced at choral performance within a certain age group.²³ (I confine myself here to a limited age group because Plato [*Leg.* 657d, 665b, 665d–e] suggests repeatedly that choral performance was too strenuous for those over thirty.) Dramatic choruses offered the most virtuosic opportunities for choral display, since they not only wore costumes and masks specific to their identity, and sang and danced, but engaged with the actors both in iambic trimeter scenes and in joint lyrics and laments. Court cases that refer to the infiltration of foreigners into dramatic choruses both as chorus trainers and leaders and as chorus members again suggest a stiff competition to recruit skilled choral performers.²⁴

Dramatic competition may have encouraged an emphasis on representing different identities in performance. Although we have more direct evidence on the performance of actors than of chorus members on this point, I would suggest that both groups were probably judged on their success in representing the Other in performance. In acting traditions comparable to that in Athens where male actors play all the parts, such as Japanese Kabuki, reputation for outstanding performance is built in part on versatility in role playing generally, and on the ability to play the Other (e.g., women) rather than characters like oneself. The slim and often late ancient evidence that we have on such questions at least suggests that something similar obtained for Greek actors. First, all sources agree that the actor's use of his voice was critical to his performance (e.g., Arist. *Rh.* 1403b31–35; [Plut.] *X orat.* 848b). Both actors and choreuts underwent extensive voice training (e.g., [Arist.] *Pr.* 11.22; Pl. *Leg.* 665e; and Antiph. *On the Choreut*, a case involving a boy who was given a potion to improve his voice in a dithyrambic performance and died). The art of acting apparently developed and was refined

21. Wilson 2000, 22, 77; MacDowell 1982. Csapo and Slater (1995, 139), Antiphon (*On the Choreut* 11–13), and Wilson (2000, 82–83) stress the difficulty of recruiting choruses.

22. Wilson 2000, 82–83. Socrates of Anagyrous (*IG* 1³.969) apparently recruited his chorus from his local deme.

23. Until the abolishing of the *choregia* in the late fourth century (Csapo and Slater 1995, 351), choruses were selected from among ordinary citizens, whereas actors were clearly becoming more professional. Increasingly harder music and more complex plots may have favored actors (Csapo and Slater 1995, 351). By the mid-fourth century, *choregoi* may have been able to choose from a class of professional singers (Pickard-Cambridge 1988, 90). At the same time, Aristotle (*Pol.* 3.3.1276b) notes that comic and tragic choruses might consist of the same people on different occasions, and this cryptic remark suggests that choreuts were selected from a limited group, since they acted in dramatic choruses more than once.

24. Csapo and Slater 1995, 358; Plut. *Phoc.* 30; [Andoc.] *Against Alcibiades* 20–21; Dem. *Meid.* 56 and 58–61; and Wilson 2000, 80; Wilson suggests (82) that competition for tragic choruses was probably more intense than for any other choruses. Moreover, there is some evidence that tragic choral performers were more professional. The sons of Carcinus were known as tragic dancers, and the trainer Sannion and others probably also starred in the choruses that they trained (Dem. *Meid.* 58–61; Wilson 2000, 129 and 131).

radically during the fifth century; the performance was probably more amateurish when poets like Aeschylus were their own first actors. Nevertheless, by the fourth century a good actor, says Aristotle in his discussion of delivery in the *Rhetoric*, wins prizes by suiting his voice to different emotional modes and varying both the volume and pitch (depth or shrillness) of his voice and his vocal rhythms (1403b26–33). In his view, a successful contemporary actor like Theodorus could make his voice seem to be the voice of a particular speaker and not someone else (1404b18–22). The voices of females and old men were generally thought to be shriller than those of mature males and appropriate for the higher pitch of lamentation.²⁵ In comedy at least we know that actors such as Euripides' relative in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* amused by adopting an exaggeratedly feminine voice when disguised as a woman (*gunaikieis*, 267–68). Presumably actors, like the Japanese *onnagata* (an actor specializing in women's parts), could carry off a more refined and naturalistic version of this same vocal difference. Aristotle remarks that Callipides and others were censured for their acting style when representing lower-class women (*Poet.* 1462a8–10). Plutarch (*Quaest. conv.* 7.711c) uses standard theatrical language when describing slaves trained to perform Platonic dialogues by suiting the character (*ethei*), modulation of the voice (*phones plasma*), gesture (*schema*), and delivery to the part (existing masks, *hupokeimenon prosopon*). Epictetus praises the late-fourth-century actor Polus for his brilliance in performing Oedipus as both king and beggar;²⁶ when Sophocles' *Trachiniae* offered the protagonist the opportunity to play both the very feminine heroine Deianeira and her hypermasculine spouse Heracles, it is hard to believe the actor did not welcome a comparable chance to display his versatility.²⁷ Lucian speaks of the talents needed to produce walking (*badizon*), speaking (*boon heroikon*), and glancing in a fashion suitable to a dignified tragic hero (*Piscator* 31). He makes clear in two passages (*Piscator* 31, *Nigr.* 11) that a womanish actor with a weak, womanish voice is also not suited even to important tragic female (as well as male) roles, but he does seem to distinguish in his discussions the acting and voice required for male and female parts nevertheless: "Even Helen or Polyxena would never suffer such a man to resemble them too closely, let alone Heracles" (*Piscator* 31, trans. A. R. Harmon, Loeb edition). The kinds of gestures spoken of in these two Lucian passages, such as characteristic ways of walking or glancing, were also thought to be critical to acting throughout antiquity and we can infer from the texts of the tragedies themselves that certain gestures were more often used by some characters than others. For example, supplication or gestures involved in lamentation were more characteristic of women or old and foreign men, whereas military gestures were more characteristic of younger men.

25. [Arist.] *Pr.* 11.16, 11.62; see Hall 1999, 117. Terms such as *oxus*, *gunaikophonos*, *gunaikodes*, *mikros*, and *ichnos* are used to describe female voices.

26. Epictetus *Dissertationes*, frag. 11 (in Schenkl 1916, 412); Pickard-Cambridge 1988, 169.

27. Aeschylus' *Persae* and Euripides' *Bacchae* or *Hippolytus* offer similar opportunities. See Demetr. *Eloc.* 195 on the general need to give actors opportunities for the display of their acting skills. Wiles (2000, 160) also agrees that Greek actors must have adjusted their voices to suit different roles.

The art of choral dance (including a tradition of performing the Other that we see in vase paintings) was undoubtedly far more developed when tragedy began than the art of acting, even though actors came to compete successfully with or perhaps even overshadow the chorus toward the late fifth and early fourth centuries.²⁸ Hence it seems likely that Greek tragedy offered not only actors but also choruses an opportunity to demonstrate on a regular basis their dramatic skills at characterization, perhaps including choral equivalents or approximations of the acting techniques discussed above. Plato calls choral performance *mimemata tropou* (*Leg.* 655d), or imitations of character. The texts themselves clearly indicate that choruses employed traditional age- and sex-linked gestures in representing lamentation or age, for example. Much is known from both visual and textual evidence about the gestures and movements characteristic of maenads or satyrs. In contrast to the dithyrambic choruses, tragic chorus members were masked and costumed like actors and to some extent served as actors; again, according to Plato (*Leg.* 654c), a chorus ideally serves its purpose with body (*somati*) and voice (*phonei*).²⁹ In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, a chorus of Delian Maidens is famed for its ability to imitate the voices of all human beings (162–63). The *choregos* would probably have welcomed the opportunity to show off the training of his choruses not only through the precision of their movement and song, but through their playing of the Other; moreover, the costumes, music, and choreography appropriate to women, foreigners, gods, or high-status old men may have offered more opportunities for varied and character-appropriate visual and aural display than would be the case with ordinary citizens and soldiers, who, to the degree that they were linked with Athenians, might have had to observe the restraint in dress and movement apparently common to this group (at least ideally) in the classical polis.³⁰

If the opportunity to display choral virtuosity was critical to success in the dramatic contests, few poets would have produced a set of three tragedies with the same choral identity in each play; the very sparse and statistically meaningless evidence (see appendix A) that we have at least does not contradict the possibility this could often have been the case. In Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, for example, the chorus becomes increasingly exotic and visually arresting, as we move from old men to wildly lamenting slave women dressed in black to the terrifying Furies, whose first appearance on stage was said to have caused shock—even miscarriages—in the audience (*Vit. Aesch.* 9). Aeschylus was known for his spectacular dramaturgy in respect to costume and choral performance (*choregia*, *Vit. Aesch.* 2). Indeed, the rest of Aeschylus'

28. On the vases showing choruses performing in the costumes of women, old men, and others, which can even predate tragedy itself, see Trendall and Webster 1971. Tragic dance (*emmeleia*) may have been solemn, elevated, and noble, or even static, as ancient sources suggest, but this nobility did not necessarily preclude the characterization already suggested by the chorus' masks and costumes.

29. Aristotle considers the chorus an actor (*Poet.* 1456a25), even if less mimetic than the actors (*[Pr.]* 19.15); for discussion see Rosenmeyer 1993, 560. The chorus may also have mimed or danced to the actors' words (schol. Ar. *Nub.* 1352 and *Ran.* 896), but these sources remain highly controversial (Davidson 1986a, 38). At the same time, choral identity can fade intermittently or sequentially during a tragedy until it becomes almost generic (Kranz 1933, 222).

30. See Geddes 1987 on Attic dress.

prominent extant choruses, which consist of virgins who initially rush frantically onto the stage in *Seven against Thebes*, exotic Persians, dark-skinned Danaids from Egypt in *Supplikes*, and divine, winged Oceanids in *Prometheus Vincitus* (if the play is by Aeschylus) make my point about how choral identity may have contributed to a tragic victory quite handily. Even if not all the titles of Aeschylus' lost plays indicate the presence of such arresting choruses, it may be significant that these seven extant plays with their exciting, typically Aeschylean *choregia* were among those most revived, reperformed, and preserved. As we shall see, even Sophocles, who may, unlike Aeschylus, have preferred to use more male than female choruses, apparently compensated for his more sober choruses by gradually moving toward permitting them to engage in a higher proportion of exciting lyric dialogues with the actors (see his late *Electra*, *Philoctetes*, and *Oedipus Coloneus*).³¹ Euripides, who, in comparison with his predecessors, to some extent reduced the prominence of act-dividing choral *stasima* or revised the way that these *stasima* were integrated into the action, seems to have made up for it in performance with a preference for female and other more exotic foreign choruses as well as the exciting "new music."³² Among those few plays for which Euripides won first prize, the choruses for *Bacchae* (foreign women) and *Hippolytus* (with both a female chorus and a contrasting supplementary chorus of huntsmen) are certainly especially interesting from the perspective of choral performance. In sum, even though the success of a chorus depended on factors beyond its identity, the poet's choice of choruses had at the very least to offer the *choregos* a promising opportunity for victory in the tragic contests. Since playing the Other would have been more challenging, a poet would have had a built-in incentive to select such choruses for his plays.³³

31. See, e.g., Kirkwood 1958, 192–93; Esposito 1996, 85 and 107; and Taplin 1984–85 (1988). In the first part of *Ajax* the chorus is similarly deeply engaged in lyric dialogue. Burton (1980, 264–65) argues that late Sophoclean choruses become more actorlike and less prone to gnomic comments.

32. For ancient evidence on the new music, see Csapo and Slater 1995, 333–34, with documents 267–88.

33. These assumptions have important implications for theories concerning the identity of the choral performers themselves. If the *choregoi* for tragedy had free choice to pick the best and most experienced performers for their choruses, it seems less likely that Jack Winkler's theory that tragic *choreutai* were exclusively inexperienced ephebes makes sense (Winkler 1990; see Wilson 2000, 78–79; and Wiles 1997, 93). True, the famous Pronomos vase (Attic red-figure volute krater from Ruovo, Paglia, c. 400 B.C.E., Naples, Museo Nazionale 3240 inv. no. 81673) showing the cast of a satyr play depicts the choreuts (if not their leader Papposilenus) as beardless and two of the actors as bearded. Wiles (2000, 131) argues that the ritual and educational traditions of choral dance explain the youthful images. Moreover, we also hear that chorus members, presumably including tragic chorus members, could be exempted from military service to perform, and ephebes were premilitary (Wilson 2000, 79). Both Wilson (83) and Csapo and Slater (1995, 352) ask why there was exemption from military service for choral participation as well as laws assisting the *choregos* in recruitment if choral performance was part of ephebic training. Winkler argues that the tragic choreuts or *tragoidoi* received their name from the goatlike, breaking voices of the adolescent ephebes, who could be nicknamed *tragoi*, or "goats." Again, however, these are precisely the voices a competitive *choregos* would be unlikely to want in his chorus (Wilson 2000, 79). In addition, Wilson also notes that all but two of the names of the choreuts on the Pronomos vase, as well as their long hair, would suit members of aristocratic families (129). He suggests that *choregoi* may have preferred to recruit members of the elite for the challenging tragic choruses because of their additional experience in the song and dance of symposia (128–29; similarly, Griffith 1995, p. 74, n. 48; see *Ar. Ran.* 727–29). Yet this intriguing theory does not square with the salary paid to chorus members during their training, or remarks in Demosthenes (*De cor.* 18.265) and the Old Oligarch (1.13) that differentiate the elite *choregos* from his demotic choreuts. Ober (2000) stresses that both possibilities cannot be the case.

If this is correct, current assumptions shared by many scholars concerning choral dance need some reconsideration. For if we accept these assumptions, the chorus' capacity and range to play the Other would be heavily compromised. We are generally told in late sources that tragic choruses danced in rectangular formation, which placed the best performers in front and the weakest in the middle. With fifteen chorus members, this meant three rows of five, with the chorus leader in the center of the front row.³⁴ If we look more closely at this late evidence, however, this rectangular formation seems strongly associated with choral *entrances* rather than with choral dance across the board.³⁵ True, Socrates is said by Athenaeus (628e–f) to have remarked in his poems that “those who honor the gods most beautifully with choruses are best in military matters.” Various dance formations could be good for military training or for times of peace, or manly in terms of their disciplined style (Ath. 628e–f, Pl. *Leg.* 7.814e–16d) without being consistently rectangular.³⁶ Given the apparent lack of restrictions concerning choral recruitment for tragedy faced by the *choregos*, there is no a priori reason beyond competition why any tragic chorus members of the fifth century should have had to be weak.

More important, however, to assume that *all* choral dance was performed in rectangular formation does not sit well with other possible evidence, to say nothing of common sense—women, old men, foreigners, and soldiers dancing in the same fashion throughout the varied songs and events of the plays, especially since pretragic choral tradition had already established conventions of choral dancing for different social groups.³⁷ For example, when describing the Spartan necklace dance, Lucian (*Salt.* 12), describes the epebe as leading the dance with steps he will later use in war, whereas the *parthenos* follows, demonstrating how to dance a woman's role in a decorous fashion. The dance thus weaves together female *sophrosyne* (chastity and self-control) and male *andreia* (courage and manliness). Furthermore, pretragic archaic choruses are often linked with circular formations or processions; the visual evidence on choral dance presents dancing groups in lines, often with linked hands, and perhaps in linked circles, not in ranks of dancers.³⁸ Moreover, regardless of whether the orchestra was circular or approximately rectangular,³⁹ some choral passages in drama apparently refer to the chorus encircling characters during its song or action; for example, the Furies ominously encircle Orestes during their binding song in

34. See Csapo and Slater 1995, 353; and Aelius Aristides *On Behalf of the Four* 154 and the scholion to this passage; Phot. *Lexicon*, s.v. *tritros aristerou*, *aristerostates*, and *laurostatai*; Hesychius, s.v. *aristerostates* and *laurostatai*; Poll. 2.161.

35. See Webster 1970, 112; Davidson 1986b, 41 (who thinks this possibility is in itself too rigid); Csapo and Slater 1995, document 308; and Aelius Aristides *On Behalf of the Four* 154.

36. The Athenaeus passage suggests that early choral dance shared the magnificence and elegant movements of men in arms; see also Ath. 628c and 629b.

37. Webster 1970, 200–201; and Di Benedetto 1997, 235.

38. Webster 1970, 1–45, and Crowhurst 1963.

39. The lengthy controversy over the shape of the orchestra at the City Dionysia during the fifth century B.C.E. (whether circular, rectangular, or trapezoidal), has been reviewed most recently in Wiles 1997, 23–86; Revermann 1999; and Rehm 2002, 37–41. A circular orchestra would best accommodate the large circular dithyrambic choral dances.

Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (305–89).⁴⁰ The Furies in *Eumenides* (Vit. Aesch. 9), as well as the choruses of Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* and Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus*, enter one by one rather than in ordered groups.

The only two vases possibly associated with the representation of choral performance in tragedy show one choral group of six figures dressed in military garb in rectangular formation (the Attic column krater in the Antikenmuseum, Basel, Basel B5 415) and another group of women in a row, each in a separate pose (the calyx krater from Altamura, British Museum E467). Ranks of dancers in rectangular formation may well have served dances associated with military themes (the Basel krater), but not, at least not consistently, the movement of, for example, female choral dancers (the Altamura krater).⁴¹ Indeed, rigid adherence to a rectangular formation might have created a visible tension between familiar traditional dance forms and a new generically tragic form that ran counter to cultural identity as expressed in earlier dance. Hence, in my view, David Wiles argues plausibly that dance may have evolved over the fifth and fourth centuries toward a greater emphasis on frontal performance (rectangular versus circular), and that the emphasis on rectangular and more uniform formations in the later sources may reflect the increasing detachment of the chorus from the action from the fourth century onwards.⁴² Finally, even if, as I doubt, the dancers generally moved in rectangular formation and from right to left as the late sources suggest (although this same movement could also occur around an altar), the hand gestures (*cheironomia*) and poses (*schemata*) to which ancient sources refer as critical components of dance could be used to characterize one group of dancers as opposed to another.⁴³ Ancient dance movements linked with lament or maenadic (or satyric) dancing, to say nothing of the use of staffs for old men, are some of those that we can extrapolate from the texts themselves. In addition, early tragic dance was famous for its great variety of figures.⁴⁴ Hence it seems far more likely to me that choral movement, especially in the fifth century, was not uniform even in the most basic sense, but was in some way related to choral identity, and that tragic dance could be gendered or character related (or variously conditioned by and related to specific music, song forms such as paeans, and meter that may have particular associations with gender, age groups, or other cultural identities) in the same way as song, gesture, and voice. As Plato argues at *Laws* 669c concerning a similar issue about (ideal) choral performance, "the Muses would never blunder so far as to assign a feminine tune and gestures to verses composed for men, or to fit rhythms of captives and slaves to a tune and gestures framed for free men, or conversely, after constructing

40. See further Davidson 1986a, 41–43; Rehm 1996; and Scully 1996.

41. The vase may not represent a tragic chorus. Satyr and female choreuts have curiously similar gestures on the Altamura krater.

42. Wiles 1997, 96, and 2000, 134. The twelve-person chorus would in his view (2000, 133) have looked instead to an actor for choral leadership, whereas the fifteen-person chorus had a centrally placed choral leader.

43. See Lawler 1964, 12, 23, 25–27, 72, 82, 83, 87, 114, 128, 133, and 139. For full bibliography on ancient dance and a discussion of methodology, see Naerebout 1997.

44. See Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 732f on Phrynichus' own view of the role of dance in his own oeuvre (*TGF* 3 T T13) and Ath. 21e–22a on Aeschylus.

the rhythms and gestures of free men, to assign the rhythms a tune or verses of an opposite style.”⁴⁵

Finally, the symbolic leadership that the *choregos* exercised over his chorus may also have helped to shape its identity as an undifferentiated group of people who are generally not representative of the core theater audience.⁴⁶ As noted above, *choregoi* developed an important and intimate patronage relation with their choreuts during the selection, rehearsal, and performance process, especially if, as was at least occasionally the case, they were directly involved in supervising their training.⁴⁷ The role of chorus leader, or *coryphaios*, was clearly critical to the success of the chorus; as Demosthenes says, in a passage where he is clearly emphasizing the superiority of *choregos* and/or *coryphaios* to choreut, “if one takes away the leader, the rest of the chorus is done for” (21.60);⁴⁸ or, as Aristotle puts it at *Politics* 1277a11–12, “among choreuts there is no single virtue for the *coryphaios* and the man standing next to him.”⁴⁹ The *choregos* himself was known to have played the role of *coryphaios* in practice on at least one occasion (*IG* 1³.969, in a local deme).⁵⁰ Thus even if he normally chose others to perform the role of *coryphaios*, the *choregos* (literally, “leader of the chorus”) may have retained a symbolic leadership role in relation to his chorus (the terms *choregos*, *coryphaios*, and *tragoidos* were blurred in any case in application).⁵¹ In contrast, however, to some archaic, aristocratic choruses from other poleis, or even to Attic satyr plays, where the chorus was led by the named figure Papposilenus, the tragic *choregos* or *coryphaios*, even though he addressed many or all of the chorus’ iambic lines to the actors, remained anonymous and in principle undifferentiated from the choral collective, despite his higher level of skills.

This seems to me hardly accidental. To make choral leadership within the drama pointed and thematically significant (even if the distinction was visible in the *coryphaios*’ role in performance) would symbolically substitute a relation between the *choregos* himself as choral producer and his chorus (or perhaps even the relation between the poet, also usually of distinguished birth, as chorus trainer and his chorus) for the often complex and sometimes ambivalent relation between actor and chorus. Choruses consisting of men of military age, especially if they acted as civilians rather than soldiers,

45. Trans. R. G. Bury, Loeb edition (1926). The rhapsode Ion in Plato’s *Ion* comments on the ability to know what women, a slave, and a free man might say (540b).

46. On the *choregos*’ symbolic leadership and close identification with his chorus, see Wilson 2000, 18, 110–14, 127, 131, and 139.

47. For a discussion of the patronage relationship, see Wilson 2000, 124.

48. Trans. Wilson 2000, 133.

49. See Wilson 2000, 133; trans. Csapo and Slater 1995. At *Pol.* 1284b11–13, Aristotle argues that a chorus leader would exclude a singer whose voice was louder and better than that of other choreuts.

50. Wilson 2000, 131.

51. *Choregos* can describe the producer or the chorus leader (Wilson 2000, 113–15). *Tragoidos* during the classical period can mean a member of a tragic chorus, a tragic actor, or the tragic poet (Csapo and Slater 1995, 360). Xen. *Mem.* 3.4 discusses the leadership of the *choregos* (see Wilson 2000, 81). Hired choral trainers, *chorodidaskaloi*, who had over time replaced the poet in this role, could also become *coryphaioi* (see Dem. *Meid.* 17 and 58–59, and Wilson 2000, 84). At least in the case of dithyrambic choruses, *choregos* and chorus could express their close identity by wearing the same costumes at the dramatic festivals (see Dem. 21.16, 22; all were to wear crowns).

could indirectly raise awkward questions about the relation between leaders and followers in the democracy, whereas the choruses culturally defined as “natural” followers like women or foreigners would not. Socially marginal choruses make such issues of leadership oblique or implicit, whereas, as we shall see in the case of Euripides’ (?) *Rhesus*, to be discussed shortly, choruses consisting of soldiers potentially raise such delicate questions more directly. It may not be surprising that explicit remarks such as those made by the chorus of soldiers at *Ajax* 158–61 about the relation of leaders and followers of free status are apparently rare in extant tragedy: “Small men without the aid of great men are unsafe guardians of a wall; for little men are best supported by the great and the great by smaller men.”⁵² Even in the case of choruses of old men, who often serve in an active and critical advisory role to their leaders, the poets buffer any potential mass and elite issue by defining non-Athenian old male choruses as aristocratic, but strictly advisory to the monarch and reluctant to take any initiative, whereas in plays set in Athens such as Euripides’ *Heracleidae* or Sophocles’ *Oedipus Coloneus*, where the chorus also consists of local gentry, the ruler’s relation to the older male chorus is as “democratic” or responsive to the popular will as the archaic, mythical setting permits and the chorus itself is more inclined to be assertive and even to take the initiative. If the relation between chorus leader and hero in a tragedy symbolically echoed that of *choregos* and protagonist, all of these questions would become even more fraught and complicated. Indeed, Athenaeus (12.534c) tells us that whenever Alcibiades served as *choregos*, he wore purple when processing before the Dionysia. He thus (outrageously?) assimilated himself to tragic actors, who often wore purple, and in essence linked the actor’s potential leadership role in relation to the chorus within the plays with that of the *choregos*.

CHORAL IDENTITY IN THE TRAGEDIES

Let me turn now from issues focused on performance to issues relating to choral identity within the plays themselves. Insofar as we can speculate on the basis of the fragments as well as the extant tragedies by the three major poets (but not including other tragic fragments), there may well have been slightly more female than male choruses in Greek drama. This may reflect cultic reality in earlier Greece, for, as Claude Calame argues, female choruses predominate in myth, iconography, and poetry in the prearchaic and archaic periods, even though the balance begins to shift during the later archaic period.⁵³ Richard Seaford even goes so far as to suggest that choruses were in origin (due to their relation to Dionysiac cult) generically female.⁵⁴ At the same time, this balance does not reflect the reality in classical Athens, where, as far as we can tell, women’s role in ritual choruses is minimal in comparison with other cities or with earlier periods in Greek history, and

52. Trans. H. Lloyd-Jones, Loeb edition (1994).

53. Calame 1977 (trans. 1997). Song was gendered as more female than male in Greek culture, especially the threnodic songs of Greek tragedy (Hall 1999, 113).

54. Seaford 1994, 269–75.

female choruses were apparently not sponsored by the Athenian state as were male choruses.⁵⁵ Drama, however, often deliberately inverts or moderates the cultural norm and apparently redresses its imbalances, at least in terms of fictional representation if not in terms of performers.⁵⁶ The heavy civic emphasis in Athens on male choruses—including in the City Dionysia itself, where the male dithyrambic choruses remain dominant in terms of numbers and resources, and even more dominant if we include the male choruses of satyr plays—is thus countered by the pointed representation of the Other in the tragedies.

Martin Hose, Victor Castellani, and especially Donald Mastronarde have attempted to give us various calculations demonstrating that female choruses apparently predominate in the case of Aeschylus and Euripides, whereas Sophocles has a slight preference for male choruses.⁵⁷ Extant Aeschylus apparently shows a marked preference for cross-sex choruses, where protagonist and chorus are of the opposite gender and sexual tensions are central aspects of the action.⁵⁸ My own summary (appendix B), which is admittedly just as speculative and statistically insignificant, differs to some degree from the work of these earlier scholars and aims to the very limited degree possible to make more distinctions about choral identity. Thanks to numerous papyrus fragments, our information on Euripidean choruses is far more extensive and accurate, and in the case of many male choruses we often cannot be sure which belong to satyr plays and which to tragedies. Gender is not the only important variable. Distinctions of age, place, or function are also critical. There appear to be more choruses of old men than of those of military age, but there are also choruses consisting of priests, about which we know virtually nothing since we have at best a fragment of Euripides' *Cretans* to give a hint as to their possible role (*TGF* frag. 472). Male choruses of military age seem especially common in (or exclusive to?) plays set during the Trojan War (Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, Euripides' [?] *Rhesus*; there is also a fragment of Aeschylus' *Myrmidons*). A number of male choruses are or appear to be foreigners; there are also female foreign choruses, including barbarian female choruses in plays set in Greece itself

55. For a summary of the evidence, see Wilson 2000, 40–42; and Stehle 1997, 117–18.

56. On this kind of gender reversal in tragedy generally, see Foley 2001. Di Benedetto (1997, 241) argues that tragedy attempts to realize the potential of forces not expressed in political institutions. In this respect, female choruses parallel the central roles of female protagonists in tragedy.

57. See Hose 1990–91, 1:22–27 (relying heavily on Webster 1967); Castellani 1991; and Mastronarde 1998, esp. 63–64, and 1999. Sommerstein (1996, 53–70 and 338–53) analyzes Aeschylus' fragmentary tetralogies and trilogies. Gould (1996, p. 220, nn. 14, 15, and 20) also discusses the issue in passing. It is possible that Sophocles' seeming predilection for male choruses was idiosyncratic. Mastronarde argues that Aeschylus' 14 male choruses represent 23.3 percent relative to the total number of known plays and 41 percent relative to those plays in which the gender of the chorus is known; the 20 female choruses represent 33.3 and 59 percent respectively; in 26 cases (43.3 percent) the gender of the chorus is unknown. In Sophocles, 24 are male (25.8 and 62 percent), 15 are female (16.1 and 38 percent), and 54 (58.1 percent) are of unknown gender. In Euripides, 15 are male (20 and 37 percent), 26 are female (34.7 and 63 percent), and 34 (45.3 percent) are of unknown gender. In sum, 53 are male, 61 female, and 114 unknown.

58. See the discussion of Castellani 1991, 1. He counts twenty Aeschylean cross-sex choruses. Extant Sophocles has one, *Antigone*; a few other examples, such as Sophocles' *Hipponeus* (p. 15, n. 5) may occur among the lost plays. Euripides is harder to categorize, because his plays often have a major character of each sex.

(Aeschylus' Suppliant trilogy and Euripides' *Phoenissae* and *Bacchae*), or Greek female choruses that perform in foreign settings, including places outside Troy (Euripides' *Helen*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*). Divine choruses of both sexes seem to be less popular after Aeschylus. Female choruses can be composed of virgins, married women, undifferentiated women, or priestesses or temple slaves (Aeschylus' *Hiereiai*; Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, *Phoenissae*); no known plays have a chorus that identifies itself as consisting of old women, although the mothers in the chorus of Euripides' *Suppliques* appear to be past childbearing age, and older women may be included in undifferentiated female choruses.⁵⁹ Non-Athenian male choruses often stress their age and/or physical incapacity, whereas Athenian old men are eager to act and may even act to the limits of their capacity (Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus* and Euripides' *Heraclidae*).

We are generally told that Greek tragic choruses must be "marginal" because choruses, in contrast to tragic characters, cannot, by the conventions of the tragic stage, initiate, control, or take action.⁶⁰ Though choruses retain a certain degree of mobility, their effective interventions are verbal rather than physical.⁶¹ A. M. Dale also stressed that choruses do not trespass on the actor's ground in the sense of making rhetorically argued speeches, and that actors generally encroached on traditional choral territory rather than the reverse;⁶² in her view, choruses do win their point, but through different, more lyrical and emotional, means.⁶³ Moreover, while the heroic actors may die or meet with disaster, choruses, as the people of lower status whose destinies receive less pointed attention from the gods and other unseen forces, are defined as survivors.⁶⁴ Before we can make further progress, these clichés need to be modified and defined as a trend more than a convention. Just as choruses from Aeschylus to Euripides gradually sing fewer or shorter odes and speak fewer lines, choral roles seem to become more passive, and exceptions more intermittent. Although Aristotle praises Sophoclean choruses as actors in contrast to those of Euripides (*Poet.* 1456a25–28c),

59. Here I am qualifying Goldhill (1996, 247), who suggests that older women are excluded because they are not a ritual category. Women past childbearing age are closely linked with a major ritual/tragic function, however: lamentation; Plato (*Leg.* 12.947d) assigns two groups to mourning at state funerals, girls and older women. Goldhill also notes that no chorus representing ephebes is known; perhaps, however, the satyr chorus captures some of the epebic character.

60. [Aristotle's] *Problemata* 19.48 characterizes the chorus as an inactive attendant or caretaker (*kedeutes apraktos*; the translation of *kedeutes* is difficult) who does not share the active hero's hypodorian musical mode, but expresses in its own lower-key fashion (*to goeron kai hesychion ethos*) goodwill (*eunoia*) to those on stage. To my knowledge all scholars have followed him in accepting this generalization. On other ancient views, see Mastronarde 1998, 67; Meijering 1985; and Gentili 1984–85 (1988), 33–35. Aristotle's argument that the chorus as actor should *sunagonizesthai* with the principals (*Poet.* 18.1456a25–28) is not confirmed elsewhere. Gentili (34–35) thinks that Aristotle means collaboration in action and dialogue and imitation of *ethe*, not intervention. Calame (1994–95, 148, and 1999) argues that chorus and actors (and by extension the audience itself [1999, 149]) share ritual functions, rather than other kinds of actions.

61. Di Benedetto 1997, 260–62. In his view, choruses can occasionally leave the stage, pursue, or raise ghosts and persuade actors to heed their advice, but when they try to act (e.g., the chorus of *Agamemnon* against Aegisthus, of Euripides' *Heraclidae* against the Herald, of Euripides' *Helen* against Theoclymenus), they fail.

62. Dale 1969, 211.

63. Dale 1969, 212, 214.

64. See, e.g., Gould 1996, 86, and Mastronarde 1998, 57.

Sophoclean choruses, who all too often define our vision of the Greek chorus, best fit this traditional cliché about risk-free passivity. They may take charge for limited periods during the play, as in *Ajax* or *Philoctetes*, initiate action or attempt resistance (*Oedipus Coloneus*), actively conspire with the principals (*Electra*),⁶⁵ feel genuinely threatened by the Greek army (*Ajax*), or urge positions on the principals that they in fact adopt (on Oedipus in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, during his quarrel with Creon; on Creon in *Antigone* [1098–107]),⁶⁶ but they largely seem to abide by this supposed convention governing choral action and survival. At the same time, because, as noted earlier, Sophocles' late choruses actively engage in a greater proportion of lyric dialogue with the actors, from a performance perspective they become more visibly and deeply engaged in the action (whereas Euripides' choruses may often seem in this respect more detached).⁶⁷

Aeschylean choruses, who are generally thought to be more significant actors in any case (proportionally more of his plays are named after choruses as well), present a far more ambiguous picture.⁶⁸ As Maarit Kaimio has stressed, the fate of Aeschylus' choruses is deeply involved with that of his protagonists, and their dialogue with actors is more involved, searching, and extensive than in the case of Sophocles or Euripides.⁶⁹ His divine choruses, of course, are anything but incapable of action or unaffected by the plays' events, and the apparent decline in divine choruses after Aeschylus may be indicative of an evolution in choral identity. The Furies of Aeschylus' *Eumenides* actively pursue Orestes, submit to the trial, threaten Athens after his acquittal, and are finally tamed by Athena. The Oceanids in *Prometheus Vincit* (if the play is by Aeschylus) arrive against the advice of their father to side with Prometheus and choose to share new divinely inflicted tortures with the god at the end of the play. Although we are uncertain about the authenticity of the final scene of *Seven against Thebes*, the play as we have it concludes with one half of the chorus of women choosing to disobey a civic edict that denied burial to Polyneices; these women accompany Antigone offstage to bury the body and, presumably, to face the consequences of their disobedience. Even earlier in the play the terrified chorus does not strictly follow Eteocles' instructions on modifying their hysterical behavior to suit the wartime situation.⁷⁰ Aeschylus' suppliant Danaids are defined as active resisters to marriage with their cousins; they threaten to commit suicide to get their way, are forced into marriage, and at

65. See Esposito 1996, 98.

66. Gardiner (1987, 92) argues that Antigone makes the chorus responsible for her death (see her use of plurals at 927–28), thus attributing an active role to their silence.

67. See n. 31 above.

68. Podlecki (1972) calculates the percentage of choral participation in each of Aeschylus' plays. See Dale 1969, 211, on the transition from Aeschylean choruses who assert their will and dominate the action to late-fifth-century tragedy; Dale envisions a straight chronological development (219), but she underestimates the complexity of choral initiative in later Euripides. If anything, choruses become more active toward the end of the century, even in the case of Sophocles.

69. Kaimio 1970, 159, 241, 243–46. Sophocles' choruses are not personally endangered by the fate of the actors (65, 243).

70. Foley 2001, 45–46. If this ending was not by Aeschylus, it was accepted as viable action for a chorus by those who categorized the play as Aeschylean.

some point in the trilogy kill their fiancés. Certainly, they apparently obey their father in all this, and, as women, are unable to defend themselves physically until the horrific wedding night. They also characterize themselves as fearful in conformity with cultural expectations about women. Yet, especially given their dominating stage presence as the play's main protagonist and the constant threat from their cousins, they do not come across first and foremost as defined by passivity or safety from risk. The slaves of *Choe-phoroe* do step back from responsibility and conceal their active role in entrapping Aegisthus and aiding in the conspiracy to assist Orestes' revenge (872–74), but only toward the end of the play. Even the old men of *Agamemnon* debate whether to intervene in the action and are only forestalled by differences of opinion (1346–71); actively grieving for their lost king, they also challenge Clytemnestra at length, and attempt to resist Aegisthus and his guards.⁷¹

Euripidean choruses are more varied than those of Sophocles, although they take action or suffer consequences far less often than in Aeschylus. Some choruses, such as the female chorus of *Orestes*, deliberately and self-consciously make a choice for safety (1539–40), despite their earlier active complicity with the actors.⁷² Yet the female chorus of *Ion* first debates whether to tell Creusa about Apollo's oracle concerning Ion to her husband (695–98, 756) and then decides to do so, thus risking direct involvement in her plot to poison the boy interloper Ion at a celebration in his honor. The women repeatedly comment on their willingness to risk death for their mistress' sake (760, 857–58, and 1119–21) and later think that they will do so (1229–30). In the final scene they advise Creusa to take refuge at Apollo's altar and are saved along with her when the Delphic priestess reveals Ion's true identity as Creusa's son. The chorus of *Iphigenia among the Taurians* pledges to assist actively in Iphigenia's escape plan with Orestes in full knowledge that they are taking a mortal risk (1075–77). Indeed, Iphigenia puts them in a position of authority by supplicating them to acquire their consent (1069–70). The chorus' deception of the messenger to the Taurian king is exposed (1309–10) and it only escapes punishment through a divine intervention by Athena as *dea ex machina*. This chorus of Greek women, who are enslaved to the service of Taurian Artemis, not only barely avoids harm, but is promised its own separate return to Greece. The chorus of *Phaethon* may help conceal the dead Phaethon's body even though it fears the consequences.⁷³ At the same time, the chorus members are never given a fate as individuals. The chorus of *Iphigenia among the Taurians* asks Orestes and Pylades for details about its families (576–77), just as the chorus of *Troades* pathetically requests more specifics on its members' assignments as slaves to Greek leaders (292–93). Only the principals get an answer.

Enslaved choruses in Euripides frequently face an uncertain future. For example, members of the chorus of *Troades* go off to share the unfortunate destinies to be encountered by the Greek heroes who are no longer protected

71. As Rosenmeyer (1977, 38) puts it, they are "rhetorically purposive."

72. Mastronarde 1998, 66.

73. Frag. 781. In Euripides' *Cretans*, the chorus of priests opposes Minos' impulse to punish Pasiphae (frag. 472e).

by Athena (see also the end of *Hecuba*).⁷⁴ The chorus of *Helen*, once again captive Greek slaves in a foreign land (in this case Egypt), comes close to taking and may actually take the same risks as the chorus in *Iphigenia among the Taurians*. It advises Helen to consult the priestess Theonoe, shares her plot, but manages to avoid implicating itself in the plot at the last minute by feigning ignorance. Yet if the lines (*Hel.* 1626–41) often reassigned by commentators to a servant belong to the chorus or its leader, as they do in the most important manuscripts (L and P), this chorus does attempt to intercede in the action in order to save Theonoe from punishment, and again risks death. The chorus of *Bacchae* is temporarily jeopardized by imprisonment from Pentheus. Although the chorus of *Hecuba* does not share in the collective blinding of the Thracian king Polymestor and the killing of his sons by Hecuba and her women, it is clearly implicated in it and is saved from direct participation only by remaining on stage while the crime takes place within the queen's tent. Finally, the chorus of *Supplikes* is desperate to win burial for its sons and engages in aggressive supplication and active mourning in order to achieve its goals.

Euripides' interest in suffering victims leads him to flirt repeatedly with jeopardizing the survival of and stressing the pain and uncertainty of his chorus. His choruses, as Kaimio points out, move toward greater contact within the choral group and hopeless wishes as a result of their vulnerability to external circumstances.⁷⁵ Most important of all to note is that gender does not correlate clearly with inactivity or lack of assertiveness in cases that defy the supposed norm in both Aeschylus and Euripides. Female choruses in tragedy who act or attempt to act or suffer risk are not less common, and are very possibly more common, than male choruses, even if they often take action, as is also the case with female characters, in contexts relating to revenge/conspiracy, suppliance, or funerary and other rituals.⁷⁶ In the case of Aeschylus, this female activism is dramatically enhanced by his propensity for cross-sexed choruses, that is, choruses of the opposite gender to the protagonist, who often openly oppose the other sex.⁷⁷

Let me turn finally, however, to *Rhesus*, which to some extent raises important questions about the supposed difficulty of using as chorus members men of military age capable of action. This play may not be by Euripides and could date from the fourth century as well as the fifth.⁷⁸ Among extant tragedies, *Philoctetes*, *Ajax*, and *Rhesus* all have choruses consisting of men of military age on active duty in the Trojan War.⁷⁹ The range of action permitted to these three choruses, all of whom have the capacity to act independently, is conveniently circumscribed by their commitment to military

74. Mastronarde 1998, 65, and 1999, 95–96. He suggests that Euripides uses these female choruses to reflect a collapsing community (1999, 100, and 1998, 64).

75. Kaimio 1970, 100 and 245. They often use the first-person singular and can be introduced to the audience in the *parodos* (entrance song) by addressing each other.

76. See further Foley 2001, 83, 118–19, 122, 152–54, 156–67.

77. Sophocles' one cross-sex chorus, in *Antigone*, also appears in the context where a female character actively rebels.

78. Most recently, Zanetto (1993) supports Ritchie's (1964) arguments for Euripidean authorship in his Teubner text, whereas Burlando (1997, 105–28) argues for a fourth-century author.

79. On the problem of the exact age and status of the chorus of *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, see Burton 1980, 6, and Gardiner 1987, 16.

obedience to their leaders, and we certainly have no other male choruses in tragedy who are not limited in their activity by age or religious functions. The sailors of *Ajax* are represented as exceptionally concerned about their own survival and dependent on their heroic leader. Neoptolemus' soldiers in *Philoctetes* take more initiative in the conspiracy against Philoctetes and are left alone to guard and persuade the recalcitrant but weaponless hero; at the same time they define themselves repeatedly as obedient to their young master. *Rhesus*, however, presents a different case. This play makes clear that an active, assertive, responsible chorus of men of military age is not incompatible with the loosely defined and constantly evolving tragic genre of the fifth and fourth centuries. As the play opens, the chorus of Trojan soldiers on night duty awakens Hector and tells him to arm and rouse the allied forces. It is worried about activity in the Greek camp. Hector decides to attack the Greeks since he believes they are planning to escape on their ships. The chorus questions his interpretation and urges him to a decision. Aeneas enters and, challenging Hector's abilities in counsel, supports the chorus' judgment. In a change of plan, Dolon is selected to spy on the Greeks.

The chorus later questions the self-confident Dolon's tactics as well, although it celebrates his courage. In the next scene, Hector at first plans to reject the help of Rhesus, who has arrived as ally to the Trojans. The chorus again expresses doubts about Hector's judgment and persuades him to change his mind. The chorus invests hope in Rhesus and returns to active duty as night watchers, although it begins to fear for Dolon. The men briefly leave the empty stage to Odysseus and Diomedes, who have come to spy on the Greek camp and kill Rhesus, but return in aggressive pursuit of the Greek infiltrators. Odysseus tricks them with his knowledge of the Trojan password that he has extracted from Dolon. After a messenger announces the death of Rhesus, the chorus fears blame for the new arrival's death. Hector reappears and holds them responsible, but the soldiers deny they are at fault. They are rescued from blame by the Muse, mother of Rhesus, who appears as *dea ex machina* with her son's body. The play closes as the Trojans return to battle.

The military chorus of *Ajax* misjudges and fails to comprehend its leader Ajax, and is incapable of taking action on its own initiative except to search for Ajax at Tecmessa's behest (803–6) once he has left to die. The chorus of *Philoctetes* sides ideologically more closely with Odysseus than with the sensitive and heroic Neoptolemus and actively promotes the conspiracy against Philoctetes, but it remains a group of followers, even enthusiastic ones. Nevertheless, our notions about choruses of military age may be overly conditioned by Sophocles, for in the epic environment of *Rhesus* we encounter a chorus whose judgment, if not physical ability in arms, is repeatedly shown to be equal or superior to that of its leaders; this vocal chorus (with its high proportion of the play's lines) is not only capable of action, but aggressive in pursuit of its duty and willing to take responsibility for its actions, as long as it is blamed justly. It nearly pays for them.

True, the action of *Rhesus* takes place among Trojans and in their camp, not among Greeks, but to the degree that choral identity in tragedy is de-

fined by the questions that choral action and behavior might obliquely raise about leadership in a democracy, the play confronts awkward issues in a fashion that generally seems to be avoided in other extant plays. If the chorus' large number of lines in iambic trimeter are, as one would expect, spoken by the choral leader in this play, rather than by the chorus as a group, the issues mentioned earlier in our discussion of the *choregos* would implicitly come into play even more visibly. Indeed, as Kaimio notes, Euripides' tendency, in marked contrast to Sophocles, to develop a more authoritative and aggressive role for his chorus leader in relation to his chorus raises the point more generally.⁸⁰ In short, choral action in tragedy seems to depend less on a physical or moral incapacity to act than on a need for, or duty or inclination to accept, *leadership* or commitment in a range of specific contexts.

CHORAL IDENTITY IN ACTION

Let us now turn to our final set of questions. To what degree can we in fact make generalizations about different choral groups, such as old men, soldiers, women, slaves, and foreigners in tragedy? Are such generalizations compromised to the point of meaninglessness by differences in the treatment of choral identity among the three major tragic poets themselves? To the degree that there are differences, what role do they play? In this essay, I can only address a small, but I hope representative, sample of the possible issues involved.

Several critics have correctly argued, for example, that female choruses permit a more intimate and open relation between a chorus and a female protagonist.⁸¹ Similar, if often less intimate, bonds can develop between male protagonists and male (especially military) choruses. As far as we know, male choruses never establish a relation of intimacy with a female protagonist who plays a predominantly familial or religious role, although they can engage extensively with female protagonists who step out from the domestic world to act in a political context, such as Antigone or Clytemnestra. Female choruses, by contrast, can develop a prominent if not necessarily intimate engagement with both male and female characters in plays where both sexes play a critical role in the action, such as those involved with the Orestes myth. In one case, the female chorus of *Prometheus Vincit* becomes so deeply engaged with the divine hero that it chooses to share in his fate. The only male chorus that could be said to do the same is the chorus of *Alcestis*, which seems almost (if not quite) equally engaged with the heroine and her husband Admetus throughout.⁸²

80. Kaimio 1970, 172 and 245. Whereas Sophocles' chorus leaders have little contact with their choruses (171), Euripides' frequently address, exhort, and even command the group on their own initiative. Interestingly, Euripides' Electra implicitly refuses the role of choral leader at *El.* 175–80.

81. Hose 1990–91, 1:17–20; Gould 1996, 224; Mastronarde 1998, 64. Kaimio (1970, 68) sees this as especially characteristic of Euripides.

82. Alcestis' winning of the equivalent of masculine fame for her heroic choice to die (see Foley 2001, 315–16, with further bibliography) may be a critical factor here. The second hypothesis to the play (4–5) categorizes the chorus as present to sympathize with Alcestis.

The critics mentioned above go on to suggest, moreover, that female choruses create a relatively more private setting for a drama, in contrast to choruses of old men, who tend to establish a public and political context for the action.⁸³ Female choruses, they argue, focus on domestic issues of natural interest to this group or to the female protagonist with whom they are bound by ties of sympathy or friendship; they would be out of line if they took a predominantly political interest in the action.⁸⁴ Moreover, since Greek society expressed repeated doubts about autonomous decisions or moral independence on the part of actual women, female choruses would in any case, like some of the outrageous female characters in tragedy such as Clytemnestra or Antigone, overstep appropriate limits in asserting anything but the most gnomic and conventional moral authority in a tragedy. (This paper has already argued that female choruses do in fact overstep such conventional limits.)⁸⁵ In contrast, male choruses, who are capable of such independence in principle, are generally hampered only by physical limits, unusual dependence, political identity (Attic or non-Attic), or military obedience from so doing. Note, for example, that the only chorus that breaks down into a group of individualized voices is the twelve old men of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (1346–71), although the chorus of *Seven against Thebes* as we have it can divide into two groups and act accordingly. As generalizations, such claims concerning male or female choruses are helpful. Yet they by no means explain the full range of extant tragedies familiar to us.

First, there are many features common to all choruses that tend to equalize their role regardless of their specific identity. All choruses gravitate to

83. Mastronarde (1998, 64) argues that female choruses are more personal and domestic and less linked to the political community than are choruses of older men. Mastronarde (1998, 66, and 1999, 95) and Castellani (1991, 10) link them more closely with dramas of intrigue. Mastronarde (1998, 64), Castellani (6), and Hose (1990–91, 1:17) characterize female choruses as weaker, more frightened, and more likely to be victimized; as Kaimio (1970, 64–65) points out, however, Aeschylus' choruses are consistently fearful because their future depends on that of the actors. For Gould (1996, 224), female choruses can represent the voice of the excluded and/or oppressed that opposes the male heroic voice.

84. See, e.g., Gardiner 1987, 163, on the chorus of Sophocles' *Electra*: "If Sophocles had made this a chorus of men, he would have had to deal with the questions of political morality, of revolution, of the relationship between the ruler and subject or between citizen and state. In consequence the focus of the play would very likely be shifted from Electra's behavior to the males as the true body politic. Therefore, Sophocles has made the chorus women who, fulfilling the office of the many allegorical female figures from Roma to Columbia, symbolize the spirit of the nation without implying any actual participation of the women in the political reality of the state. It is the function of the Mycenaean women to display, as representatives of the people of the land, the emotional response of the people: the conviction that Electra's actions are right and just, approved by society and the gods." (See also 119, and Burton 1980, 102.)

85. Stehle (1997), by contrast, argues that staging female choruses in archaic Greece such as those performing *parthenia* or maiden songs (33) or even choral songs by married women (much rarer) required careful strategizing by poets, so that the women's choral authority derived from their communities and their playing of conventional and circumscribed gender roles (72–73) rather than from their own subjectivity or personal authority in a public context (93–94). Male choruses of military age, by contrast, derived their authority from their own public social and political roles, but could metaphorically appropriate a female role in the interest of the community (132). Interestingly, tragedy does not problematize the role of female choruses (here played by men) in the same way and in fact can expand women's voices to appropriate untraditional gender roles. Yet tragedy retains the metaphorical as well as actual appropriation of female roles by males who are generally not of military age. For example, the chorus of Euripides' *Heracles* establishes links with the remote Delian maidens who perform for Apollo through the shared singing of paeans (687–94). Symposiastic poetry apparently keeps old men and old age at bay (226) in a very different fashion from tragedy, which laments the old man's loss of physical strength, but gives him prominent authority to sing and speak for the community.

traditional wisdom, even when such wisdom is misapplied or only crudely fits the situation at hand. Such gnomic wisdom is a property shared by all participants in the culture as well as by many foreigners on the Greek stage, and all choruses reason, argue, and decide on the basis of this and other evidence.⁸⁶ Female (or foreign) choruses seem to have the same degree of access to authoritative cultural memory, especially in the form of myth, as their male counterparts, even if they sometimes make a point of reminding the audience how they acquired their knowledge (at home, at the loom, from stories [*Ion* 506–9, *Phoen.* 819]). Second, choral mentality derives from the religious sphere as much as, and perhaps more than, from the political sphere (those spheres are in many ways inseparable in any case). Choral performance of ritual gestures or allusion to ritual or the gods is as pervasive a part of its role as its relation to a civic community.⁸⁷ Attic women (or foreigners) had even in reality a significant role in the religious life of their city, and tragedy seems repeatedly to accord them an authoritative form of religious citizenship.⁸⁸ In so far as tragic song was linked even in antiquity with lamentation,⁸⁹ women, and to a lesser degree old or foreign men, have a critical and active link with mourning behavior and suppliancy.⁹⁰ Finally, although choruses are usually of lower social status than the characters (even divine choruses are of lower status than other divinities), stylistically, linguistically, religiously, and as we have seen, performatively they can occupy a higher plane due to their language, themes, song, and dance.⁹¹

Choruses of older men do tend to voice views and take stands most representative of the political community.⁹² The presence of a female chorus by no means guarantees a domestic focus to the action, however, whereas male choruses, such as that of *Alcestis*, can occasionally (and perhaps in this case uniquely) enhance a largely private or domestic setting. The female chorus of Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* is primarily focused on the fate of the city and eventually even outdoes its leader Eteocles in this respect.⁹³ The gradual absorption of the choruses of Aeschylus' *Supplikes*, *Choephoroe*, *Prometheus Vincetus*, and *Eumenides* into a larger political world is a critical part of their dramatic role. The chorus of Euripides'

86. See Gardiner 1987, 189. As seems to be generally agreed (although I do not know of a detailed study of the issue), the proportion of gnomic generalizations is probably highest in the case of choruses of older men (the active chorus of Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus* may be an exception, until toward the end; see Burton 1980, 264 and 284). Sophocles' late choruses are apparently less gnomic in general, although the chorus of maidens in his earlier *Trachiniae* may represent an exceptional absence of traditional wisdom (Burton 1980, 83). In Euripides, no trends are clear (Mastronarde [1998, 72] argues that Euripides' choral odes are generally more contemplative). Female choruses are also not necessarily less meditative than choruses of old men (see, e.g., *Eur. Med.* 1081–115, and *El.* 699–746; and Burton 1980, 224–25 on the chorus of Sophocles' *Electra*), although choruses of soldiers may be the least meditative (Burton 1980, 40, on the chorus of *Ajax*, and 248–50, on *Philoctetes*).

87. Calame (1994–95), however, argues for a loose connection between ritual practice and the choral performance of women in tragedy; see further n. 6 above.

88. Foley 2001, esp. 7, and Wiles 2000, 143.

89. See Hall 1999, 113, and n. 53 above.

90. Foley 2001, 287–88.

91. Silk 1998a arguing against Gould 1996.

92. Kirkwood 1958, 184, 187, 191; Mastronarde 1998, 61, and 1999, 93.

93. See Calame 1994–95, 143, on this chorus' repeated references to the polis. On its role, see Foley 2001, 45–53.

Phoenissae is foreign as well as female, but it, along with Jocasta and the young boy Menoeceus, maintains a civic perspective on events in a fashion far more effective than that of any of the play's male leaders.⁹⁴ The chorus of Euripides' *Ion* takes on, in its support of its mistress Creusa, a defense of Athenian autochthony. Euripides' chorus in *Bacchae* is concerned with propagating Dionysiac religion throughout Greece, and is largely indifferent to familial concerns. Female choruses can act to a greater or lesser degree as representatives of their whole community (Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and *Electra*, Euripides' *Hippolytus*) and some Sophoclean and Euripidean female choruses make a point of linking domestic and civic concerns.⁹⁵ The chorus in Euripides' *Andromache*, for example, concludes its meditation on the parallels between two wives in a home and two rulers in a city with the following: "When swift blasts bear sailors along, the judgment of two minds at the tiller and a crowded mass of experts is weaker than a simpler mind with absolute power. Effectiveness belongs to the one, both in house and in the city, when people want to find what is appropriate" (479–85; cf. 465–93, 642–44).⁹⁶ Moreover, it is important to remember that domestic and public worlds are often linked far more intrinsically in the Greek mind than in our own.⁹⁷

Comments by ancient scholia on choruses suggest a pervasive interest in the dramatic implications of choral identity, even if their views can be contradictory or unconvincing. For the scholiasts, distinctions between slave and free and native and foreign are critical to understanding choral behavior.⁹⁸ For example, several note that free citizens in choruses of both sexes, although they should be respectful, can think independently from and express some opposition to tragic leaders, especially when these leaders are wrong or unjust, whereas slaves in principle lack that free speech.⁹⁹ In a scholiast's view, the chorus of *Ajax* can appropriately criticize Menelaus, but a chorus of Thracian women, as in Aeschylus' *Threissai*, could not.¹⁰⁰ Even the chorus of *Medea*, although it should have sided with its ruler Creon, can in principle, as a group of free women, decide to side with justice and Medea.¹⁰¹ The chorus of Euripides' *Phoenissae*, one scholiast notes, should ideally be, like other choruses in general, fellow citizens who would have sympathized with Jocasta and her family. But its foreign identity permits it

94. See Arthur 1977; and Foley 1985, 106–46.

95. See below on the mediating roles of the choruses of *Trachiniae* and *Hippolytus*; these chorus women are natives in contrast with the heroines Deianeira and Phaedra. The chorus women of *Electra* are characterized in an unusual fashion as citizens (*politides*, 1227). See Gardiner (n. 84 above); and Foley 2001, pt. 3, sec. 2.

96. Trans. Lloyd 1994.

97. For a discussion of this issue in drama, see Foley 1982.

98. See Meijering 1985.

99. E.g., the scholia to Soph. *Aj.* 134a and *OT* 463; to Eur. *Phoen.* 202 and *Med.* 823; and Meijering 1985, p. 95, n. 11. In fact, tragic slave choruses often exercise free speech.

100. In the view of the scholiast to *Aj.* 134a, choruses should speak with modesty, make clear what they think, and sympathize with the hero or heroine (Meijering 1985, 95). The scholia to Ar. *Ach.* 443 and Eur. *Phoen.* 1019 criticize Euripides' choruses for insufficiently sympathizing with suffering victims.

101. Schol. *Med.* 823. In Euripides' *Andromache*, Hermione claims for free women the female equivalent of free speech (153).

to criticize the male leader Eteocles for his injustice as a chorus of native Theban women would presumably not have been permitted to do.¹⁰²

Establishing links among separate worlds or mediating between male and female or Greek and foreign characters seems to be particularly, if not exclusively, common to female choruses, and in this they sometimes rely on common panhellenic or even more general religious bonds.¹⁰³ The choruses of *Seven against Thebes* or *Choephoroe* try to facilitate relations between family and city or male and female that have been previously shattered. The female choruses of *Trachiniae* or *Hippolytus* are as much concerned with the panhellenic role of Heracles or with the central role of Hippolytus in his community as they are with Phaedra or Deianeira, female characters with whom they have a more intimate relation.¹⁰⁴ The contrast between the engaged and active reaction of the Oceanids of *Prometheus Vincitus* to Prometheus' fate and that of their father Oceanus is marked. Female choruses think of cultural membership in terms of shared religious rites, and thus they imagine themselves as able to cross cultural and political boundaries, even between Greeks and barbarians, through such participation.¹⁰⁵ At Euripides' *Hecuba* 650–56, for example, in contrast to Odysseus earlier in the play (321–25; see also *Andr.* 1038–46, *IA* 781–800),¹⁰⁶ the chorus of Trojan slaves concludes a meditation on its own suffering with a concern for its Greek counterparts: "There is lamenting too by some Spartan girl near Eurotas of the lovely stream, tearful in her house, while the mother with children killed sets hand against her graying head and tears her () cheek, scratching her nails all bloody."¹⁰⁷ As noted earlier, barbarian or formerly barbarian female choruses preside in tragedies set in Greek cities and the reverse; others are on their way to moving from one environment to another, such as the choruses of Aeschylus' *Supplices*, or Euripides' *Troades*, *Hecuba*, or *Iphigenia among the Taurians*; still others are awed sightseers in another environment ([Aeschylus'] *Prometheus Bound*, Euripides' *Ion* and *Iphigenia at Aulis*). In short, by being less linked with a specific political system or set of priorities, female choruses can offer a broader vision of cultural commonalities, even if they often focus less on political realities. Sometimes they could even be said to reconstitute a kind of fragile and beleaguered community, often a community based on ritual, in the face of physical threats, slavery, or a shattered world that makes little sense (Aeschylus *Supplices*; Euripides *Troades* and *Hecuba*). As boundary crossers, female choruses are also more prone to imagine magically escaping from

102. Schol. *Phoen.* 202, discussed by Meijering 1985, 96.

103. As discussed earlier, in the case of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Antigone*, male choruses do try to mediate quarrels among or resolve issues involving men.

104. On *Trach.* 950–52, see Gardiner 1987, 129 and 132; and Burton 1980, 79.

105. Other examples are members of the foreign chorus of *Phoenissae*, who establish empathy with Thebes through a remote shared ancestry.

106. Fletcher 1999, 42. At 790–92 the Greek chorus of *Iphigenia at Aulis* represent the views of Trojan women.

107. Trans. Collard 1991. See Easterling 1997, 163–65, on the chorus as witnesses and models for appropriate emotional reaction, especially pity.

their current difficulties to a safer and more sympathetic environment than are their male counterparts.¹⁰⁸

Although we have seen that female choruses are not in fact less prone to initiate action than male ones, the question of the relative moral status of various choral groups has also been a persistent area of critical investigation.¹⁰⁹ Like the tragic scholia discussed earlier, Horace (*Ars poetica* 196–201) gives the chorus an undifferentiated role in expressing and helping to maintain piety, justice, good counsel, the preservation of secrets, law, and peace. Yet female choruses, like female characters, are sometimes thought to be more irresponsible, especially in relation to political concerns, and more prone to deception and revenge. Once again, such generalizations do not hold consistently. Males and females have different roles to play in revenge or conspiracy plots, but neither is exempt from deceptive roles. The female choruses of Euripides' *Medea*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, or *Helen* may assist the heroine in her plot, but the chorus of *Philoctetes* facilitates the deception of the lame hero in a fashion almost equal to Odysseus, even if they pity Philoctetes more openly than he does. In the plays relating to the Orestes myth, males and females are equally involved in deception and revenge. The chorus of *Ajax* ignores its master's treachery to the Greeks.¹¹⁰ As noted earlier, the chorus of *Medea* proves indifferent to a threat to the Corinthian royal family when it sides with Medea's revenge, and the chorus of Euripides' *Electra* eggs on Orestes and Electra but then to some extent turns on their moral stance, and especially on Electra (1201–5), once they have taken action.¹¹¹ Yet these female choruses are not indifferent to moral issues at other points in the play (see the chorus' plea to Medea not to kill her children at *Medea* 811–13). Moreover, as noted earlier, female choruses often prove to be deeply concerned with the status of their city.

In conclusion, if one looks simply at what choruses say, choral identity does not define choral role in the action and thought of Greek tragedy as much as one might expect, even though old men are generally more firmly linked with political concerns about which they offer leaders proportionally more advice, and female choruses with domestic or religious ones. Moreover, it should always be recalled that a specific choral identity may fade progressively or intermittently in the course of a drama even when it has been sharp earlier on. From the perspective of performance, however, choral identity was probably far more noticeable on the level of voice, costume, gesture, dance, and musical mode. Choruses are not by any generic definition incapable of action and important initiatives, even in late Euripides. If anything, we find choruses in late Sophocles and Euripides to be increasingly engaged in the action, though not to the extent that they were in Aeschylus. And if *Rhesus* is a fourth-century play, the trend may continue. Exceptions

108. Escape odes by female choruses are common in Euripides and rare in Sophocles; *Trach.* 947–70 is the only example.

109. Mastronarde 1998, 60.

110. Burton 1980, 6; and Gardiner 1987, 62, on the moral obtuseness of the *Ajax* chorus generally.

111. On *Medea*, see Mastronarde 1998, 73–78. See Foley 2001, 236, 239, 241, on the chorus in *Electra*.

to or variations on such trends concerning choral action and identity are probably critical to defining our understanding of the plays in which they occur (e.g., the unusual role of the chorus of Euripides' *Phoenissae* discussed earlier). Finally, considerations relating to performance may have played a role equal to or even more important than issues relating to content in determining the poet's free choice¹¹² to define choral identity in individual plays and in assessing the role and dramatic effect of tragic choruses.¹¹³

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APPENDIX A. KNOWN OR CONJECTURED TRAGIC TRILOGIES
OR TETRALOGIES (WITH EXTANT WORKS IN BOLDFACE)

AESCHYLUS

Known Trilogies/Tetralogies

458 *Oresteia*: *Agamemnon* (Argive old men), *Choephoroe* (foreign [?] slave women), *Eumenides* (Furies), *Proteus*

467 Oedipus tetralogy: *Laius*, *Oedipus*, *Seven against Thebes* (Theban virgins), *Sphinx*
472 (may not be a connected tetralogy) *Phineus* (men?), *Persae* (Persian old men), *Glaucus*, *Prometheus Purkaieus*

c. 463. *Supplices* (Egyptian virgins, the Danaids), *Aigyptioi* (Danaids with secondary male chorus? or male if this is the first play in the tetralogy?), *Danaides* (Danaids or Argive male citizens?), *Amymone*

Edonoi (Thracian male?), *Bassarides* (female), *Neaniskoi* (young men), *Lycurgus* (authorship uncertain) *Prometheus Purphoros*, *Prometheus Vincetus* (Oceanids), *Prometheus Luomenos* (Titans)

Conjectured Trilogies/Tetralogies

Myrmidones (Greek soldiers), *Nereides* (goddesses), *Phruges* or *Hektoros Lutra* (Trojan men)?

Psychagogoi (Greek men?), *Penelope*, *Ostologoi* (Greek men?), *Kirke*

Hoplón krisis (foreign slave women or Nereids? or soldiers?), *Threissai* (Thracian slave women), *Salaminiai* (Salaminian women)

Eleusiniói (Eleusinian men), *Argeioi* or *Argeiai* (Argive men or women—title uncertain), *Epigonoi* (male?)

Poludektes, *Phorkides*, *Diktyoulokoí* (satyric?)

Memnon, *Psychostasia*, *Phrugiai* (Trojan women)

Semele or *Hydrophoroi* (Theban women), *Xantriai* (Theban women), *Pentheus*

Lemniai (Lemnian women), *Kabeiroi* (men or minor deities), *Hypsipyle*

SOPHOCLES

None known—some have conjectured a trilogy based on the Telephus myth

EURIPIDES

438 *Kressai* (Cretan women), *Alkmaion in Psophis* (Greek virgins), *Telephus* (Greek men, age uncertain), *Alcestis* (Greek men)

112. See Gould 1996, 29.

113. I am grateful to comments from audiences at Chicago and Princeton, and from Christian Wolff.

- 431 *Medea* (Corinthian women), *Philoctetes* (Lemnian men), *Diktys*, *Theristai*
 415 *Troades* (Trojan women), *Alexandros* (Trojan women?), *Palamedes* (men?),
Sisyphos
 412 *Andromeda* (Ethiopian virgins), *Helen* (Greek slave women) . . .
 406–5 (posthumous group not necessarily planned by Euripides) *Bacchae* (foreign
 women), *Iphigenia at Aulis* (Greek women), *Alkmaion in Corinth* (Greek women?)

APPENDIX B. CHORAL IDENTITY IN AESCHYLUS, SOPHOCLES,
 AND EURIPIDES (INCLUDING FRAGMENTS)

WOMEN

Virgins

- A. *Supplices* (also foreign), A. *Aigyptioi* (?), A. *Seven against Thebes* (Greek)
 S. *Nausikaa* or *Plyntriai* (mythic), S. *Trachiniae* (Greek)
 E. *Aiolus* (mythic), E. *Alkmaion in Psophis* (Greek), E. *Andromeda* (foreign), E. *Phoenissae* (foreign)

Priestesses/Chorus, Identified by Religious Role

- A. *Hiereiai*
 E. *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (slave handmaidens to priestess Iphigenia), E.
Phoenissae (slaves dedicated to serving Apollo at Delphi)

Foreign Women

- A. *Choephoroe* (slaves, probably Trojan), A. *Supplices* (also virgins), A. *Aigyptioi*
 (with secondary male chorus?), A. *Danaides* (?), A. *Bacchae*, A. *Bassarides* or *Bassarai*, A. *Heliades*, A. *Hoplon Krisis* (? possibly goddesses), A. *Threissai*
 S. *Aichmalotides*, S. *Eurypylus*?, S. *Kolkhides*, S. *Rizotomoi*
 E. *Alexandros*?, E. *Bacchae*, E. *Hecuba* (slaves), E. *Troades* (slaves), E. *Phoenissae*
 (virgins dedicated to serving Apollo at Delphi), E. *Andromeda* (also virgins)

Greek Women

- A. *Aitniai* (?), A. *Argeiai*? (or *Argeioi*? title uncertain), A. *Kressai*, A. *Lemniai*?, A.
Perrhaibides, A. *Salaminiai*, A. *Semele* or *Hydrophoroi*, A. *Xantriai*
 S. *Atreus* or *Mykenaiiai*, S. *Bacchae*?, S. *Electra*, S. *Creusa*, S. *Hydrophoroi*?, S. *Lakainai*, S. *Lemniai*?, S. *Phaedra*, S. *Pthiotides*
 E. *Andromeda*, E. *Alkmaion in Corinth*?, E. *Danae*, E. *Electra*, E. *Helen* (slaves), E.
Supplices (mothers and handmaidens), E. *Ino*, E. *Hippolytus Kaluptomenos*, E. *Hippolytus Stephanias*, E. *Hypsipyle*, E. *Iphigenia at Aulis*, E. *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, E. *Ino*, E. *Ion*, E. *Kressai*, E. *Medea*, E. *Meleager*, E. *Orestes* (possibly virgins), E. *Peliades*?, E. *Phaethon*, E. *Skyriai* (or *Skyrioi*—title uncertain)

Female Deities

- A. *Eumenides*, A. *Prometheus Vincetus*, A. *Nereides*, A. *Toksotides*
 S. *Mousai*?

MIXED CHORUS

- E. *Theseus* (boys and girls)

MEN

Men of Military Age

A. *Myrmidons*, A. *Neaniskoi*, A. (or S.) *Epigonoï*?
 S. *Ajax*, S. *Achaion Sullogos*?, S. *Philoctetes*
 E. *Alope* (athletes)?, E. *Palamedes*?, [E]. *Rhesus*, E. *Telephus* (or older men?)

Old Men

A. *Agamemnon*, A. *Persae*
 S. *Antigone*, S. *Oedipus Tyrannus*, S. *Oedipus Coloneus* (Attic)
 E. *Alcestis*, E. *Antiope* (and female subchorus), E. *Bellerophon*? (or younger men),
 E. *Erechtheus* (Attic), E. *Heraclidae* (Attic), E. *Heracles*, E. *Kresphontes*, E. *Telephus* (or soldiers?)

Foreign Men

A. *Persae* (also old), A. *Phineus*?, A. *Aiguptioi* (secondary or main chorus?), A. *Edonoi* (foreign?), A. *Kares* or *Europe*, A. *Mysoi*, A. *Phryges* or *Hektoros Lutra*, A. *Psychagogoi* (?)
 S. *Aithopes* or *Memnon*, S. *Alexandros*, S. *Antenordiai*, S. *Mysoi*, S. *Skythai*?, S. *Phaeacians*?, S. *Phryges*?
 E. *Archelaus*?, E. *Phryges*?

Male Deities

Prometheus Luomenos

Priests

S. *Manteis* or *Poluidos*, S. *Meleager*
 E. *Kretes*

Greek Men

A. *Argeioi*?, A. *Ostologoi*, A. *Eleusinioi*, A. *Kabeiroi*? (or foreign demi-gods?), A. *Philoctetes*, A. *Psychagogoi*?, A. *Kerykes*
 S. *Ajax*, S. *Dolopes* (satyr play?), S. *Kamikoi*, S. *Larisaioi*, S. *Peleus*?, S. *Poimenes*, S. *Skyrioi*, S. *Syndeipnoi*?, S. *Tympanistai*?
 E. *Chrysippus*? E. *Oineus*? (foreign? plus secondary Greek chorus?), E. *Philoctetes*, E. *Phoenix*?, E. *Skyrioi* (or *Skyriai*—title uncertain)?

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