Performed Outrage: Frank and Emotional Mortal Criticism at the Gods in Athenian Tragedy and its Religious and Theatrical Impacts.

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by

Victoria Isobel Doherty-Bone

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ii. Abstract

This dissertation examines heated and aggrieved comments made about the gods in Athenian tragedy and analyses them as a component of the theatrical and religious experience of drama. Focusing on plays by Sophocles and Euripides, it analyses the affective content of these criticisms, and how these denunciations are contextualised within dramatic narrative, with attention paid to how the mimetic form of the drama engendered frank criticisms and accusations against the gods.

This thesis begins with a brief chapter outlining the precise details of what makes these utterances stand out in terms of their emotionality and frankness. This is followed by a chapter providing background on tragedy's original socio-religious context as a feature of the Dionysia Festival of Athens, after which cross-cultural examples of mimetic performances using emotional content and display are discussed. This dissertation then considers precursor examples of embittered responses to the gods found in Archaic poetry and early tragedy, providing context and comparison to the frank and emphatic examples selected for deeper analysis.

The plays in which the denunciations take place are then studied in tandem, with Sophoclean and Euripidean examples paired in relation to the identity of the speakers and the impacts of the statements. In Sophocles' *Ajax* and Euripides' *Hippolytus,* overconfident male protagonists suffer as a result of their improper and overfamiliar attitudes to the gods, resulting in a corresponding bitterness against their formerly beloved deities. Sophocles' *Antigone* and Euripides' *Trojan Women* feature female individuals who hit out against the gods as a response to tumultuous circumstances, with two characters in particular, Antigone and Cassandra, speaking from a position of enhanced awareness of the gods' mechanisms. Finally, an examination on the content of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and Euripides' *Ion* shall consider examples where the mortals' denunciations against the gods are foundational to their eventual reconciliation. This arrangement will demonstrate the shared qualities of such utterances and demonstrate the emotional force these mortals' condemnations of the gods bring to the drama, as they respond coherently to extreme circumstances. Throughout these case studies, particular attention is paid to the mimetic nature of tragic performance, with relevant scenes analysed in terms of visual and physical composition, as well as the language used in the mortals' denunciations.

This dissertation will demonstrate how these impious outbursts impacted these tragedies' theatrical storytelling, as well as the elucidation of the thematic content of the plays, with the mimetic features of tragedy engendering new and provocative thought on the gods through emotionalised expression.

1. Introduction

1.1 Setting the Scene

At lines 339-347 of Euripides' *Heracles,* staged around 418 BCE, events have taken a terrible and devastating turn.[1] Amphitryon, Heracles' foster father and caretaker of the hero's family while he is away in Hades, is forced to stand by and watch as his adopted son's wife and family are led away to be slain by the Theban tyrant Lycus. In Heracles' absence, the family has been living at the altar of Zeus as supplicants for days, with Amphitryon expressing hope that the god, or his son, will save them.[2] Alas, when Lycus appears, this faith proves to be in vain, as the tyrant's disregard for conventions of religious sanctuary is made clear. Lycus drags the woman and children away first, promising to return for the old man.[3] As he stands onstage alone, Amphitryon uses the dramatic space to reflect despairingly on the gravity of what has just occurred. Predictably, one of Amphitryon's primary sentiments is immense anger at the injustice he and his family have faced. However, Amphitryon's outrage is not directed at Lycus, the mortal man preparing to murder the family. Instead, Amphitryon turns his critical eye to the god at whose altar he sits:

ὦ Ζεῦ, μάτην ἄρ᾽ ὁμόγαμόν σ᾽ ἐκτησάμην,

μάτην δὲ παιδὸς κοινεῶν᾽ ἐκλῄζομεν·

σὺ δ᾽ ἦσθ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἥσσων ἢ 'δόκεις εἶναι φίλος.

ἀρετῇ σε νικῶ θνητὸς ὢν θεὸν μέγαν·

παῖδας γὰρ οὐ προύδωκα τοὺς Ἡρακλέους.

σὺ δ᾽ ἐς μὲν εὐνὰς κρύφιος ἠπίστω μολεῖν,

τἀλλότρια λέκτρα δόντος οὐδενὸς λαβών,

σῴζειν δὲ τοὺς σοὺς οὐκ ἐπίστασαι φίλους.

ἀμαθής τις εἶ θεός, ἢ δίκαιος οὐκ ἔφυς.

[1] Marshall 2017: 207.
[2] Eur. *HF.* 40-55, 95-97. This dissertation uses Oxford Classical Dictionary abbreviations.
[3] Eur. *HF.* 335.

> Oh Zeus, in vain it was that I had you involved as a co-husband; in vain, it was I called you partner in the child. For you have been less a friend than you appeared. For I, as a mere mortal, prevail over you, the great god, in honour! For I did not abandon Heracles' children; but you show great skill in sneaking into my bed, seizing a bed that is not yours, but have no such skill when it comes to saving your friends. Either you are a fool of a god, or else you are unjust in your very birth![4]

Up until this moment in the play, Amphitryon has been presented as a believer in Zeus' power, even reassuring Heracles' wife, Megara, that they will be saved from the cruelties of Lycus if they remain at the shrine.[5] After his earlier expressions of piety and trust in the god, his accusation about the god's misdeeds, both past and current, is arresting. The god's failure to protect the family, and his past indiscretion with Amphitryon's wife, are both explicitly laid out and criticised. As Amphitryon's hope fails, he openly derides the god as inept and unjust, and draws an unflattering comparison to his own attempts to protect his family, despite his frail mortality, against Zeus' supernatural capabilities and inactivity. The visual composition of the stage as he utters these words emphasise the enormity of his loss, particularly in reference to the play's earlier tableau of the family gathered together around the shrine they believe would save them.[6] As Amphitryon is left isolated by that same shrine, his anger at Zeus gains a piquancy, as the pathos of his hopelessness is reflected in his forlorn physical presentation.

Such negative statements against deities are, in the words of Versnel, "strikingly human", a natural and often appropriate reaction to the gods' detrimental influences on one's life. In light of this inevitability of such thoughts, it is perhaps not a surprise that examples of mortals' express bald anger and indignation at inactive or badly-behaved gods occur repeatedly across the ancient record, despite the obvious inadvisability of insulting a divine authority.[7] In particular, throughout the 5th century BCE in Athens, examples like the one

[4] Eur. *HF.* 339-347. All translations within this dissertation by the present author.
[5] Eur. *HF.* 95-97.
[6] Halleran 1985: 80.
[7] Versnel 2015: 37.

examined above from Euripides' *Heracles,* appeared on the tragic stage of the Dionysia Festival in sporadic but consistent fashion. As with Amphitryon's example, many of them contain strong language, the accusations acquiring an enhanced potency and gravity through the use of the actors' bodies and stage space. This form of comment on the gods is obviously aberrant to expected standards and piety and reverence, as they assault the functional relationship between mortal and god via the mortal's disrespect. Thus, the occurrence of these instances within drama, where strength of feeling trumps the impetus to regard the gods respectfully, is intriguing for a variety of reasons. The public performance of tragedy is one crucial detail to consider, with these comments being made before an audience of 10,0000+ spectators with no record of complaint or censure. Furthermore, the use of these moments as dramatic currency is of particular interest. As an enacted and mimetic form, in which character's walked and talked before the audience, emotionally forceful denouncements against the gods heightened the climactic potential of drama.

The presence of these instances in tragedy therefore raises questions about their use in performances that were at the centre of the Dionysia Festival of Athens.[8] What do these instances suggest about the religious attitudes of its audience, especially regarding impiety? What does it suggest about how the gods were thought about and presented on the tragic stage? How did the genre's mimetic form shape these denouncements? As in the example of Amphitryon, the pairing of these criticisms of the gods often came from characters visibly undergoing extreme hardship, which is shown to mitigate their ability to restrain their negative feelings about the gods. Therefore, as the actors rendered their characters' aggrievement onstage, how were gestures, voice modulation, and other practical features of performance integrated into these expressions? What impact and meaning to the play was added? Overall, what detail and dimension did these moments of bald dislike against the gods bring to the dramas they appeared in?[9]

To fully understand mortal criticism of the gods in Athenian tragedy, this thesis will examine a selection of plays in which mortals openly and emphatically criticise the gods for perceived malfeasance. It will investigate these moments as an active part of a wider narrative and performance in which the conspicuous emotionality and impiety are significant to the story, characterisation, and thematic content of the dramas. Discussion on

[8] Segal 1986: 58.
[9] Paschini 2019: 17-19.

how this emotionality can be detected in the text and how it was most likely effected via movement, stage direction, and placement shall be central to understanding these denouncements against the gods, particularly in terms of their dramatic function, i.e., what these sentiments bring to the play in terms of gravitas, narrative progression, and theme. Attention shall be paid to the language uttered during and around statements that criticise the gods, including whether they occur as part of a speech or in conversation, and the occurrence of exclamations and interjections. The actual content of the denouncements, and how the mortal expresses their unhappiness, such as by insulting the gods, refusing any further worship, or by other expressions of exasperation and perplexity, shall also be considered. Furthermore, what can be gleaned about the visual composition of relevant scenes shall be discussed, particularly the characters' postures and movements. This approach is designed to most accurately determine how impassioned criticisms of the gods were effected through the overall composition of the drama, as well as through the wording of the statements themselves.

While explorations on the apparent injustices of the divine in Greek religion and literature have been carried out in earlier scholarship,[10] this dissertation's focus on tragedy will allow specific analysis on how negative impressions on the gods are formed and presented in public discourse, particularly in relation to their specific application to mimetic narrative. This dissertation will thus combine three separate areas of research: a) prior research on the religiosity of the dramas; b) the description and recognition of emotions in antiquity, and finally c) mimetic performance. These foci will provide the primary scholarly bedrock upon which this thesis's arguments will be based. The most salient work on religious thought relevant to these dramatic portrayals of gods and mortals has been, to date, by Versnel, Parker, and Eidinow. These scholars provide background of how the gods were responded to and represented in Greek literature, and how these representations intersected with Greek religious thought. Additionally, research by Sourvinou-Inwood provides specific understanding as to how the religious environment of the Dionysia provided the setting for the dramas.[11] For the conceptions and expressions of emotions, prior scholarship by Cairns, Halliwell and Konstan is particularly significant, especially in terms of the communicative power of gesture to relay information about an individual's affective state.[12] Last but certainly

[10] Versnel 2015: 37-42; Versnel 2011: 151-237; Peels 2016: 551-572.
[11] Versnel 2015 & 2011; Parker 1997; Eidinow 2016; Sourvinou-Inwood 2003.
[12] Cairns 2013; Halliwell 2002 & 2017; Konstan 2006.

not least, former research into the different components of performance will inform discussion on how these moments were functionally rendered. Mastronarde's discussions on the use of disordered speech in drama, in tandem with Nooter's work on the use of exclamations, is seminal to this dissertation's understanding of how dialogue is used to elicit impressions on the characters' emotional states.[13] Capponi's understanding of how gesture was used in enacted narrative is also pivotal, as is the work of Boegehold and Bremmer, which elucidates the cultural significance of specific postures and gestures within Greek art.[14] This dissertation's understanding of the use of stage space and directions is founded on Hall's examination of the ancient actor's use of the dramatic arena, and Taplin's focus on the interactive action of the plays, as gestures, entrances and exits are used to propel the plot and convey the characters' actions and motivations.[15] Further research on the use of the visual in staging that will be used includes Wyles' research into costume and props.[16] Intensely felt and specifically described aggrievement at the gods has been considered in previous scholarship, albeit limitedly. Versnel has accounted for several instances across antiquity of mortals retaliating against the divine for neglect or unjust treatment. Most recently, Peels has discussed the occurrence of criticism against the gods in narratives, including tragedy.[17] This study will bring these insights into the domain of performance, in order to enhance the understanding of the use of drama and its mimetic toolkit to engage a large audience with the problems of theodicy.[18]

To carry out this investigation, six plays, three from Sophocles and three from Euripides, have been selected for in-depth examination. These have been chosen for the clear and emotionalised criticisms of the divine within the texts, the themes these emotional flashpoints illuminate in their utterance, and the use of language and stage directions used as can be gleaned from the text. No examples from Aeschylus' corpus have been selected; while there are some Aeschylean examples that may be indicative of this phenomenon, they are, for the most part, vaguely worded and uncertain. However, there are passages from *Agamemnon* and *Eumenides* that also feature this heightened emotionality and personal level of complaint, which will be used as illustrative and intertextual examples at relevant

[13] Mastronarde 1979; Nooter 2018.
[14] Capponi 2020; Boegehold 1999; Bremmer 1991.
[15] Hall 2002; Taplin 2003.
[16] Wyles 2011 & 2020.
[17] Versnel 1981: 37-42; Peels 2016: 552-571.
[18] Paschini 2019: 15.

points in the discussion of the plays that have been selected for deeper analysis. Additionally, fragmentary plays that contain examples of this phenomenon will not be analysed in detail. This is because a key interest of this study is to understand how each denouncement worked as a component of a wider narrative, with particular interest paid to how these moments are led up to, and how the play then continues once these impieties have been uttered, i.e. what happens to the characters who utter them.

The plays to be studied closely are Sophocles' *Ajax, Antigone,* and *Oedipus at Colonus* and Euripides' *Hippolytus, Trojan Women* and *Ion.* In each play, characters make note of the gods' influence and respond with affective displays that offer a personalised and detailed critique of the gods specific to their circumstances. In this way, mortals draw the gods into the frame of their suffering as direct and accountable agents, and through the emotionality and particularism of their presentation, attempt an interpersonal engagement with the gods whom they hold responsible. The methods by which these moments are evoked will be investigated, as will their context in the drama's narrative and thematic makeup: that is, the effects on the play's plot and the interplay of these utterances with the wider themes and commentaries.

Before this, however, it is important to contextualise these utterances more broadly, first within a wider cultural trend of commenting on the gods, and then in their original social and ritual environment of the Dionysia Festival. Therefore, the study will begin with an overview of statements against divine authorities, establishing a distinction between conventional statements that acknowledge the gods' responsibility in effecting fate, and heated accusations of the gods' wrongdoing (Chapter 1.2.1). This dissertation will then conduct a review of the Dionysia Festival, and the place of tragedy within the framework of the festival's religious and social activities. This is to facilitate an appreciation for how overt expressions of dislike for the gods persisted within this setting, and how the characteristics of the Dionysia permitted these statements' particularly hostile qualities (Chapter 1.2.2). Next, I will discuss the concept of performance and the visual and aural language of emotions in theatrical artforms (Chapter 1.2.3). I shall then, before turning to the chosen case studies, offer a brief overview of the tradition of open criticism against the gods in Greek epic and lyric poetry (Chapter 2.1. -2.3). This will provide context for the irreverent treatment of the gods across genres which provide tragedy's cultural and literary backdrop, with the same gods, mythical material and conventions of deference and worship adapted for different

mediums. As well as establishing important literary and cultural contexts, this will elucidate further on the phenomenon's specific use in the mimetic and embodied form of drama, in contrast to other performance forms. This will be followed by a brief review of Aeschylus' *Eumenides,* in which Orestes briefly remonstrates with Apollo, but does not exhibit the naked disdain and criticism that occurs in the examples chosen as my main case studies in this dissertation. As such, it will be examined as another important precedent, in which personalised aggrievement against a deity is expressed, but where the full dramatic use of such discontent against the gods does not reach the levels of frank and emotionalised speech seen in later examples.

The chosen plays will then be analysed through the close reading of key scenes in which mortals criticise the gods. The case studies are grouped in pairs - one play by Sophocles and another by Euripides examined side-by-side. This is done for two reasons. First, it will demonstrate the distinctive styles of both authors in their treatment of these extreme moments. Because of the extremity of these moments, the differences in how each playwright treats them is particularly noticeable and ripe for comment. Secondly and conversely, this also means the shared trends in treating these unconventional attitudes to the gods shall also be more clearly detectable, despite the differences in authorial style. Moreover, the plays shall be paired in terms of their similarities in the characters and the circumstances surrounding their outbursts. The first two plays to be examined are Sophocles' *Ajax* and Euripides' *Hippolytus.* The protagonists of these two plays share key characteristics, namely, they are both highly vaunted male individuals within their communities, who each boast an apparently closer-than-average relationship with a goddess, but nevertheless emit condemnatory statements against the gods during their play. Conversely, in the next pair of plays to be examined, namely Sophocles' *Antigone* and Euripides' *Trojan Women,* the characters who utter the critical remarks on the gods are female characters who dwell outside of the usual securities of their societies, as Antigone remains unmarried, and the community of Troy is dismantled around Hecuba and Cassandra. Finally, the third and final pair of plays to be examined, Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and Euripides' *Ion,* are examples wherein mortals appear to reach a point of reconciliation with the gods despite their impassioned denunciations. Every play chosen contains clear indications of the characters' movements before, during or after their statements against the gods, as well as exclamations or forms of direct address that indicate the spoken quality to these statements. By unpicking the language and piecing together the likely placement onstage, movement and use of voice

by the players, as well as appreciating how each play's wider plot and presentation of its characters builds towards a rupture in their relationship with the gods, this study aims to carry out as complete an investigation as possible on the form and impact of these apparent impieties in tragedy.

As already stated, these plays are not the only extant examples of mortals uttering negative opinions on the gods. Euripides' *Heracles* (discussed above) and Sophocles' *Philoctetes* (to be discussed below) are two examples that feature prominent expressions of disdain against the gods that have not been selected for deeper analysis. These examples are ripe for further investigation, and indeed, as both involve elderly males in a position of isolation, there are clear parallels to be drawn between them. However, for the present dissertation, a deep reading of these plays has been foregone in favour of their use as guides for the basic qualities and components of these statements.

These frank and unabashed displays of negative emotion towards the gods are attention-grabbing, bold, and provocative, and they encourage new appreciation for the capabilities of the tragic space in ancient Athens. They speak to the tragic playwrights' interest and ability to deploy their plays' dialogue for reflections on the gods, with the emotionality adding greater punch and demonstration to the plays' conclusions and themes. By parsing them fully, with reference both to the functional and physical details of their rendering, and the wider circumstances of their occurrence, this study aims to understand the construction and use of these moments as enlivened and impactful public expressions on the gods.

1.2: Contexts for Criticism

1.2.1: Speaking Plainly to the Gods

Expressions of dismay, disappointment, and fatalism as a response to the gods' actions (or perceived actions) are not rare in Greek literature. Remarks on the gods' tendency to strike downward or produce hardships for mortals, regardless of these mortals' piety, are found throughout the genres and eras of Greek literature, including the genres of the Archaic period that precede tragedy and form its intertextual base.[19] For example, various characters in both Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* make mention of the overpowering and inescapable interference of the gods, and the pains that mortals undergo due to it (despite Zeus himself complaining of the mortals' persistent and arguably unfair habit of blaming the gods).[20] In his *Histories,* Herodotus recounts the advice given to Croesus by Solon, warning him that the gods will ruin anyone who strives too hard for success.[21] Tragedy also contains these statements in abundance, such as in Aeschylus' *Persians* ("how the savage-minded god swept in on the race of the Persians"), Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* ("O Zeus the tide-turner, I pray I never see you hunt my line like this,"), and Euripides' *Iphigineia at Aulis* ("Oh how I suffer! How the gods bring me such havoc!").[22] However, these statements fall short of taking full stock of the gods' culpability, using them more as a reference to the magnitude of the hardships and calamities the mortals are experiencing, leading into a comment onto the need to endure the hardships life has to offer.[23] They also fulfil an explanatory purpose for sudden misfortune, or serve to assign responsibility to the invisible and absent divine.[24] In essence, they serve purposes other than the naturally occurring need to express real dissatisfaction, or comment on the failure of the gods in fulfilling their role as caretaker or benefactors.[25]

The examples studied within this dissertation, in contrast, are striking in their specific and personalised tone of aggrievement. The mortals involved are not simply referring to the gods to convey their distress and helplessness in the fate of sudden, unexpected disaster, or to philosophically reflect on the gods as the ultimate cause of misfortune through their supreme authority. Rather, they are violently accusing the gods of wrongdoing or neglect

[19] Eidinow 2016: 205-207; Peels 2016: 558.
[20] Homer. *Odyssey.* 1.32-34, 10.70-75, 20.201-202. Homer. *Iliad.* 22.374-386.
[21] Hdt. 1.32-1.34.
[22] Aesch. *Pers.* 911. Soph. *Trach.* 303-304. Eur. *IA.* 537-538.
[23] Versnel 2011: 157-158.
[24] Versnel 2011: Ibid.
[25] Versnel 1981: 37-43.

that they emphatically believe should not have occurred, using the stage space and mimetic voice to do so. For example, when in Sophocles' *Philoctetes,* the titular character, who has been abandoned on a desolate island, discovers his great rival Odysseus is still alive while many of his former friends have died, he responds with bitter disapproval against the gods for allowing such an injustice:

> ἔμελλ᾽: ἐπεὶ οὐδέν πω κακόν γ᾽ ἀπώλετο,
>
> ἀλλ᾽ εὖ περιστέλλουσιν περιστέλλουσιν αὐτὰ δαίμονες,
>
> καί πως τὰ μὲν πανοῦργα καὶ παλιντριβῆ
>
> χαίρουσ᾽ ἀναστρέφοντες ἐξ Ἅιδου, τὰ δὲ
>
> δίκαια καὶ τὰ χρήστ᾽ ἀποστέλλουσ᾽ ἀεί.
>
> ποῦ χρὴ τίθεσθαι ταῦτα, ποῦ δ᾽ αἰνεῖν, ὅταν
>
> τὰ θεῖ᾽ ἐπαινῶν τοὺς θεοὺς εὕρω κακούς;

> It was destined; nothing evil has ever died,
>
> but the gods keep their own well-swaddled;
>
> they get twisted pleasure from keeping the
>
> unscrupulous and depraved from Hades, while
>
> they always dispatch the just and the good.
>
> How is one to place them, and how does one praise
>
> them, if whenever I've praised them, I have found the gods bad?[26]

This is no passing mention of the gods as the likely source of some terrible disaster, and there is no attempt to displace blame from himself for any misdeed. Instead, Philoctetes is speaking in response to news he finds difficult and upsetting, and in his distress, he expounds

[26] Soph. *Phil.* 446-452.

at length with detailed and pointed criticisms about the gods' nature and behaviour. As in Amphitryon's monologue in Euripides' *Heracles,* he does not only criticise the gods for this one example of wrongdoing but observes a wider pattern of disappointing and unjust actions from the deities he had previously trusted. He specifically identifies the gods' imbalanced treatment of the bad and the good, observing their evident preference for saving "their like" (αὐτὰ - also could be "themselves" or "those"), in an obvious allusion to the gods taking care of bad individuals like Odysseus, describing how the gods care for (περιστέλλουσιν) them (translated above as "well-swaddled"). As Philoctetes ends his tirade, he expresses how these observations have altered his own relationship with the gods; he struggles to find reasons to praise them, suggesting a rupture in conventional religious behaviour, as his own individual assessment of his deities takes precedence over learned pious behaviours that encourage respect and deference to the divine.

This extract demonstrates how these statements differ from the tone and content of statements such as those made in Aeschylus' *Persians* and Sophocles' *Women of Trachis,* which use formulaic and prescribed references to the gods and the harm they can effect on mankind. While those do exhibit emotional qualities, such as despair, anger and shock, the above quote from *Philoctetes,* and the example from *Heracles* touched on earlier, intensify the focus on the specific and forthright sense of dislike and aggrievement felt by the mortal towards the god directly. Their responses are thus far more personalised to the character, stemming from their immediate circumstances, which the audience are of course aware of, having observed it in the ramp-up to the statement. As such, these statements cohere affectively and logically to the immediate context of the character's ongoing experience as it has been depicted in the play. Philoctetes' physical demeanour is not signalled in the text immediately surrounding this statement, but he has been discussing at length the hardships he has experienced, including starvation and exposure to the elements, which conveys a pitiful presentation of the character, if not physically, then certainly through his immediate testimony.[27] Because of this greater relevance to the specific context and the character's lived experience, their strengthened statements against the gods are also more pointedly subjective – Philoctetes, Heracles and the other characters investigated below are speaking entirely from a heightened and momentary peak of emotion, which is also filtered through

[27] Soph. *Phil.* 255-316.

their experience and personalities as they are presented onstage.[28] With this brief voicing, hinging on the specific momentary context of the play, as well as the character's emotional distress at the time of utterance, these intense criticisms against the gods suggest an outpouring of feeling concerning the divine, in which an impious but sincere thought on the gods is uttered and asserted under particular circumstances, namely in response to antagonistic news or events. For Philoctetes, it was the news that Odysseus, his sworn enemy, has survived the war while so many soldiers he used to admire did not, while Amphitryon witnessed his family dragged from an altar he had thought would save them. These events act as stimuli which destabilise any pre-existing notions of divine righteousness, as the force of the tumultuous emotion overwhelms any suggestion that the gods are admirable stewards or authorities over mankind. These characters thus deliver profoundly embittered statements which reflect this fresh and apparently spontaneous state of mind, as they discover they have nothing left to lose from damaging their relationship to the wider divine. Outrage, that is a keenly felt mix of anger, incredulity and indignation, comes from a powerful and certain sense of rectitude, which feeds the sense of repugnance experienced during difficult moments, as the characters' expectations, for their family to be saved if they complete the correct pieties, or for the good and brave to be saved and the wicked to be killed, are not met.[29] In the examples discussed in this dissertation, the speakers emit this sense of outrage at divine injustice, and as a consequence, speak far more specifically and aggressively against divine malfeasance than the "prescribed" platitudes that represent a lamenting but resigned fatalism. The mimetic narrative of the play visually shows, as well as explains, the mortals' collapsing sense of reverence towards the gods, as these moments are used to dramatic effect with aesthetic details that point to a character's increasing inability to withstand divine betrayal or indifference quietly. As such, the use of outburst expresses an overwhelming surge of emotion that breaks down the speaker's interest in upholding usual verbal signifiers of politeness and respect, suggesting a natural disorder to the harried, overwhelmed character.[30]

The frankness of these statements, and specifically their lack of deference for higher authority, could classify these instances as examples of *parrhesia,* or frank speech. Tragedy's

[28] Gill (1996: 29 - 53) discusses the beliefs and desires that constitute the concept of a single acting "agent", and the regular expression of these facets as constituting "personality."
[29] Konstan 2006: 56, 117.
[30] Mastronarde 1979: 14, 114.

emergence as a genre specific to Athens, and indeed, the 5th century and the flourishing of democracy and its values of *parrhesia,* could be reasonably suggested as potentially enabling these theatrically constructed moments of intense criticism against the gods. As Saxonhouse notes, the Athenian phenomenon of free speech is shown to be closely linked to a refusal to allow deference to intervene in one's expression. Thus, *parrhesia* released citizens from social hierarchies or conventions of reverence or prostration, enabling greater intellectual autonomy and critical thinking.[31] While Saxonhouse discounts the gods from examples of *parrhesia*, Plato's statement in *The Republic* in which he dismisses frank speech as a natural cause of blasphemy is of particular note here.[32] The breakdown of barriers of behaviour and treatment between different categories, such as human sacrifice and the treatment of humans like animals, leads to the breakdown of *aidos,* that is, a sense of caution and adherence to a particular social order, and a belief of one's need to obey it.[33] From this perspective, a disavowal of *aidos* obviates the speaker from an established code that bound their behaviour.[34] While Saxonhouse primarily discusses comedy and its ribald humours in her analysis, the pattern is readily applied to tragedy and its own extremes, particularly due to the repeated pattern of the *oikos* or *polis* in crisis, leading to the destabilisation of the usual relationships between gods and mortals.[35]

The examples discussed above certainly lack *aidos,* or the conventional modesty that would ordinarily prevent one speaking negatively about the gods, but they also express deep outrage at the god's misbehaviour. In other words, it is not simply a lack of modesty or shame that propels the characters to speak, but a deep sense of indignation (*nemeson)*, which Konstan recognises as the opposite phenomenon to *aidos*.[36] The denouncements, as observed, include incisive critique along with accusation, as Amphitryon and Philoctetes do not solely express personal dislike for the gods, but explain what the gods have done or not done that they find distasteful and unfair, forming the basis for their criticism. These utterances thus do not solely operate as expressions of intense emotionality, illustrated through impious statements. Rather, the emotional demonstration within them, and the characters' stated

[31] Saxonhouse 2005: 29-91.
[32] Saxonhouse 2005: 108. Plato: *The Republic:* 563b.
[33] Saxonhouse 2005: 108-109. Segal 1986: 28-29. Cairns 1993: 2-10.
[34] Cairns 1993: 114.
[35] Hall (2006) discusses the destabilisation of the *oikos* with reference to the hero's *nostos* (107-108). The absence of the male authority figure, before his unsuccessful introduction,
[36] Konstan 2006: 117.

personal investment in the circumstances they are describing, contributes to a momentum in the characters' eventual statements on how the gods are failing their mortal wards, causing the mortals to meaningfully renege or regret their previous observance. Subjective accounts, they may be. However, the loss of fear and shame in stating such frank denouncements of the gods undoubtedly enables observations on inconsistent or failing qualities of the gods to be uttered and expanded upon, such as the passivity of Zeus in allowing suppliants to be dragged from his altar. This peak of emotionality, delivered with a momentum that builds the tension on the character's intense dismay, articulates the perceived shortcomings of the gods clearly, with direct, applicable reference to these shortcomings in the characters' lives. In his treatment of 'divine arbitrariness', and the ancient Greek attempts to address the issue with theodicy, including the prescribed platitudes mentioned above, Versnel invites the modern scholar to keep in mind the conflict innate in recognising deleterious behaviour from the gods, and the humanity and diversity of the Greeks who tried to tackle it.[37] In the instances discussed in this dissertation, this grappling with gods' apparent cruelties is made explicit, as unorthodox thoughts and worries about the gods are shown to be driven by powerful emotional tumult. These emotionalised expressions both speak to strength of feeling problems with the gods could inspire, and also demonstrate how affective displays could be used to convey the gravity of such problems with the gods, as mortals are shown responding, not with lassitude, but outrage that invigorates them to challenge the unfair behaviours of the divine contingent.

As shall be examined in forthcoming chapters, these pained observations and criticisms of the gods' shortcomings as moral arbiters are found in other genres. However, the features of tragedy, its emergence as a mimetic form of narrative within the democracy of Athens, is especially key to our understanding of how these moments arose as includable features of public ritual performance, and their use within those performances. The next section will examine the institution of tragedy as a feature of ritual, and so place these utterances in their original social and religious context.

1.2.2: The Dionysia Festival of Athens

[37] Versnel 2011: 237.

Plainly worded denouncements against the gods in tragedy were originally received by a live audience of 13,000 +, mainly consisting of Athenian citizens. This was not an intimate, secure feast of a select few, homogenous peers, but a public religious festival, beset with ritual meaning and significance. Therefore, the acceptability of such statements to this audience is a key factor, particularly given the high level of functional involvement and theatrical competence the Athenian tragic audience clearly had. The genre of drama was as much a civically significant one as it was a religious one, with wealthy citizens obliged to fund the productions and the Chorus made up of citizens.[38] Thus, the line between the performers and the citizens was exceptionally permeable. With the overall festival managed by the Eponymous Archon, the six selected *choregoi* every year were not only tasked with financing the tragic and dithyramb choruses, but according to a speech by the Athenian orator Antiphon, also hosted and managed rehearsals in their own home, while fines were imposed on families unwilling to let their sons compete without good reason.[39] Given the huge numbers of competitors in the dithyrambic contests alone (up to 1000 individuals, rotated each year), combined with the 36 or 45 individuals involved in the tragic contests (some professional actors returning each year, other citizen *choreutai* members, rotated as with the dithyrambic contests), a significant proportion of the population was responsible, year-on-year, for bringing the Dionysia performance contests before their fellow citizens, with many of those watching likely to be former performers themselves. A significant percentage of the citizenry were thus expert producers and observers of drama.[40] This widespread expertise amongst the populace accounts for Plutarch's report that Athenian hostages during the Syracusan disaster were able to barter food, water, and occasionally even freedom in exchange for verses of Euripides, as the prisoners' ability to immediately recall and perform the poetry would naturally arise from the constant, intensive exposure they had to it.[41]

The high standards of the audience, and the ownership they evidently held over the dramas witnessed at the Dionysia, seems to have naturally led to an increased degree of scrutiny on the actors and playwrights. During his performance as the title character in Euripides' *Orestes* in 408 BCE*,* the actor Hegelochus misspoke a single word (γαλήν), thus providing popular fodder for comedians for several decades afterwards.[42] The fact that

[38] Goldhill 1987: 59.
[39] Antiphon 6.11.
[40] Revermann 2006: 113-116, Hall 2002: 5.
[41] Plutarch, *Nicias*: 29.
[42] Aristophanes. *Frogs.* 303.

multiple comedians referenced it is significant; they knew they would get a positive response from it.[43] In short, the audience's high level of competence could be relied upon, not only to recall Hegelochus' blunder, but to recognise it as funny. This incident and its subsequent currency in comedy points to an exploited potential for meta-theatrical reference, as the audience could be relied upon to know and take enjoyment in the mention of a shared cultural moment that occurred during a tragic production. Hegelochus' misspoken line is a moment of publicly recognised error, emblematic of the Athenian audience's stake in the communal event that was drama – the misspoken line prevented the full experience of the tragedy and so made it ripe for enjoyable farce for the audience and future dramatists to bond over their shared experience, to the detriment and humiliation of the actor and playwright in question.

In a matter of more civil seriousness, Herodotus recounts the fallout Phrynichus faced for his play, *Siege of Miletus,* which dramatised the recent loss of the Athenian allied state to the Persians, causing such distress amongst the audience that the playwright was fined.[44] This detail is significant, as it does suggest that playwrights could be subject to judicial reprisals for what they put on the stage, and that more serious consequences than Hegelochus' ruined reputation were possible. With this detail in mind, it is intriguing to examine the (possibly spurious) account of Euripides' own experience of negative audience feedback for his plays, the content of which is directly pertinent to the topic of this dissertation. Faced with robust criticism for his drama *Ixion* (circa 420), which recounts the title character's assault on Zeus and the attempted abduction of Hera, Euripides apparently received criticism for giving voice to such an openly impious and anti-Olympian sentiment.[45] All this to say, the audience that took their seats were not indolent or casual in their spectatorship. They were constantly reviewing and judging their fellow citizens at an endeavour many could claim a degree of expertise for themselves, much to the probable anxiety of everyone involved in the dramatic production. Furthermore, in a "face-to-face" society such as Athens, particularly where the inhabitants of the city were divided into citizens and non-citizens, and to be a citizen assumed participation in multiple democratic institutions, the Dionysia included, there is an added level of assumed group conformity, and

[43] Revermann (2006: 103) refers to the mode by which comedy would refer to tragedy as "paratragedy".
[44] Hdt 6.21.
[45] Reckford 1991: 125-136. Plutarch. *Moralia.* 1.4.19e.

therefore, censure against those who break the established code (as seen in Phrynichus' example).[46] The religious intolerance exhibited during this time, in the form of the impiety trials, further compounds this impression.[47]Andocides, Alcibiades and Socrates were all accused of *asebeia,* and while the details of these charges are not directly comparable with the tragic denouncements against the gods under discussion in this dissertation, an impiety conviction was a serious possibility in Athens. As seen by Phrynichus' traumatising production recounted in Herodotus, legal repercussions for controversial dramatic content could be pursued. Therefore, it is not beyond probability that impiety on the stage could be prosecuted.[48] Several plays do suggest harmful or destructive action being taken against the gods, Ixion's assault on Hera being only one example. As shall be seen, cessation of worship and the attempted pollution of the offending god's shrine are measures mortals take at the height of their dissatisfaction with the gods. Therefore, these depictions demonstrate actions and sentiments that would have flatly qualified as impiety if encountered in a setting other than the performance arena of the Dionysia.[49]

All this necessarily complicates the picture of the Athenian audiences' sensibilities when they observed a play in action. Athens was certainly no beacon of religious tolerance or freedom, and yet the multiplicity of vitriolic denouncements of the divine by tragic characters suggests there was no seriously enforced taboo against presenting them. This is entirely possibly due to the nature of the tragic stage at the Dionysia festival, and the particular atmosphere it provided for its attendees in their review of the gods (Euripides' alleged controversy over *Ixion* notwithstanding). As observed by Parker, Athenian orators speaking in public venues to the same populace who attended the tragic performances, described the gods' influence in markedly different ways to how tragic performances did, as they deferred from attributing any events (such as military defeats) to malign attention from the gods.[50] These two different settings clearly required different modes of approach when considering the gods, with tragedy allowing overt antagonism to be displayed. The Dionysia itself is thus a key factor in the emergence and formulation of instances of frank and emotionalised criticism against the gods.

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[46] Finley 1983: 122; Cartledge 2006: 10-18.
[47] Parker 2005: 62-67. For the decree of Diopeithes, which explicitly outlawed impiety in Athens from 438 BCE, see Ostwald (1986).
[48] Atkinson 1992: 52.
[49] Most 2003: 303.
[50] Parker 1997: 149.

In her extensive study of the links between tragedy and Athenian religion, Sourvinou-Inwood reconstructed the course of events that made up the Dionysia, with a view to rediscover the perceptual filters active when the original audience took their seats. The features of the Festival, occurring across five days in Spring, included a series of religious actions enacted by the *polis* as a collective. This collection of events that made up the festival combined into what Sourvinou-Inwood termed a "ritual matrix"; that is, a series of religious actions enacted by the *polis*,[51] fitting together as a combined religious programme with the dramatic contests only occurring after the sacrifices to Dionysus took place, a naturally highly emotionalised and dramatic event.[52] These features were combined into a religious programme which drew the Athenian citizenry together as a single cohesive unit as they shared the experience of the festival, and the meal of the sacrifice.[53] Sourvinou-Inwood theorised that the mimetic form of tragedy arose from proto-tragedy, which commemorated the myth of Dionysus' introduction to Athens, which included an initial rejection of the god and a subsequent curse, via a combination of choral odes and a *hypokrites* playing a central role. Thus, the Dionysia created a space, embedded at the heart of the ritual proceedings, in which the uncertainties and collisions between gods and worshippers could be played out.[54] Recognising Greek religion's lack of orthodoxy, with no set religious text or professional priesthood, Sourvinou-Inwood conceived of tragedy as the form through which the *polis* of Athens could interact with the raw content of their religion in imaginative fashion, developing visceral and detailed recreations of known myths.[55] Thus an experimental space in which the gods were problematised and different aspects of the myths were fragmented and toyed with, and individuals famous for the calamities they suffered given voice, enabled a polyvocality and currency of open expression.[56] Athenian religion's predication on the *polis,* and that it was primarily engaged in through rituals, consisting of repeated, predictable action, left a need for a space in which the implications and paradoxes of the religion could be recognised and articulated with freedom. Tragedy's role within the Athenian religious landscape can be described as a detailed and progressing institution that renewed myth for

[51] These included a ritual procession of the statue of the Dionysus to celebrate his arrival (*xenismos*) into the city and into the theatre, official sacrifices, before the commencement of the dithyrambic and dramatic contests.
[52] Bremmer 2007: 132, 136.
[53] Cartledge 2006: 34.
[54] Sourvinou-Inwood 2000: 364. See Parker (1986: 254-274) for the embeddedness of ritual and religion within the formal social structures of the polis.
[55] Sourvinou-Inwood 2000: 350.
[56] Eidinow 2016: 210-211.

the contemporary Athenian audience, structured and controlled through conventions of metre and performative action, but with an enabled unpredictability, as the playwrights' competition with each other bolstered innovation and creativity.[57] This evidently included occasional impious utterances made when mythical figures (like Amphitryon and Philoctetes, discussed above) reached excesses of despair, causing them to kick against the deities that have failed them.

The reception of these dramas to the city en masse is vital to note when considering this facility of drama, wherein the conventions that usually bound the community of Athens together were allowed to be subverted with that community's compliance. The days prior to the dramatic competition solidified the notion of communality amongst the Athenians; during the *pompe,* the city walked together as part of a collective, as the different sections of Athenian society were elided into a single constituent identity.[58] Shared physical movement and action within a large group are key indicators of what Durkheim termed 'collective effervescence', or 'social electricity'. This is a state in which a group reaches peak cohesion, in which phenomena, particularly religious phenomena, are experienced at high levels of excitement by group members, leading to a greater sense of adhesiveness and bonding.[59] In addition to the inebriating effects of the wine, and the shared meal, the mindset in which the audience took their seats would be one of stimulation: excitement and pleasure at the experience of the special occasion.[60] This setting in itself would enable the crowd to collectively experience a greater excess and synchronicity of emotion, which would explain the extreme and uniform reaction Phrynichus received for his *Siege of Miletus,* as the crowd had increased and shared susceptibility to an impactful emotional display.

Pyysiäinen links heightened and excited emotional engagement such as that described by Durkheim to the practice and belief of religious ritual. Particularly with the use of imagery that portrays identifiable agents (i.e., heroes and gods in myths and other representations) with whom they hold existing attachment and familiarity, the religion practitioners experience greater emotional and sensual impact.[61] In the example of festivals like that of the Dionysia, this is primarily achieved through the temporary dissolution of the

[57] Easterling 2006: 46.
[58] Seaford 2006: 27-30.
[59] Durkheim 2001: 209-218. Throop & Laughlin 2002: 40-63.
[60] Cartledge 2006: 34.
[61] Pyysianen 2001: 87-88.

expectations and standards of day-to-day principles and behaviour, which prepared the audience member for greater diversification of thought and experience from the quotidian. For example, Seaford emphasises the alteration of an individual's identity, either through drunkenness or costume onstage, and the combination of which produced a heightened sense of reality that was both impactful and clearly artificial. Consequently, what an Athenian individual would normally expect to encounter in his fellow citizens, or even himself in terms of behaviour and thought, was expanded by virtue of his participation in the Dionysia festival.[62] In this setting and ones like it, as the dramatist Schechner has asserted in his study of the phenomenon of performance and its operation across cultures, statements that could not exist elsewhere are given brief life within the demarcated space of the performance time.[63] It was in this atmosphere that open denouncements of the gods could be heard by the citizenry of Athens en masse, without serious complaint.[64] As a natural, and affectively appropriate reaction to perceived misbehaviour on the part of the gods, the inclusion of aggressively worded denouncements enabled a narrative coherence that made the religious content of the plays more impactful and meaningful to the curiosity of the watching audience, as sincere hope in the divine is explicitly acknowledged through disappointment.[65]

Nevertheless, it is certainly observable that outright insulting the gods was still taboo and possibly reckless, even in an apparently permissive environment. The imbalance of power, and the outright radical notion of rejecting the gods, precludes any true eschewal or denouncement appearing onstage without mitigation or correction, as illustrated by the story of Euripides' defence of *Ixion,* namely that "'I did not take him off-stage, however, before nailing him to a wheel."[66] In Euripides' view, as Ixion did not survive the play without being brutally punished for his transgression, the impiety is a null charge. As shall be examined in the forthcoming case studies, most of the characters who utter damning sentiments on the gods similarly die within their play's run or are fated to die shortly after it. Vitally for the emotionally climactic content of their denouncements, they are usually aware of their

[62] Seaford 2006: 89.
[63] Schechner 2003: 16.
[64] Longo (1990: 14-19) has argued that the stage at the Dionysia festival was also an outlet and a thinking space for political (as well as religious) exploration.
[65] Versnel 2015: 41.
[66] Plutarch. *Moralia.* 1.4.19e. Peels 2016: 556.

impending death.[67] Furthermore, in some examples examined in this dissertation, the individual denouncing the god is shown to the audience to be fundamentally mistaken in their accusations and missing out relevant information that justifies the gods' malevolence or negligence, overlooking their own culpability in bringing about their own downfall. These are, in their excessive emotionality, notably subjective accounts, given by individuals at their most desperate and wretched moment. In his review of Greek religion, and how the Greeks reasoned on the troubling topic of theodicy, Harrison has noted so-called "let-out clauses" are frequently in play across much of Greek literature, explaining why transgressions seem to be unevenly handed out, such as the tendency for punishment to be indirectly brought to pass, or for it to skip generations.[68] These let-out clauses enabled a level of deniability as to the precise reason for a bad person to remain unimpeded or for a pious person to receive constant hardships. For example, in Euripides' *Heracles,* Amphitryon is proven incorrect in his accusations against Zeus, when Heracles is later proven to have been released from Hades to save his family.[69] Heracles' later madness, sent by Hera via Iris, is described as a result of Hera's personal dislike of the hero, and because "the gods will become nothing, if this man's power grows, with no assignment of order"(ἢ θεοὶ μὲν οὐδαμοῦ, τὰ θνητὰ δ᾽ ἔσται μεγάλα, μὴ δόντος δίκην).[70] These reasons are revealed to the audience via a conversation between Iris and Madness, meaning the mortals involved are not privy to these reasons. Thus, the gods' actions, even when dubious, show logic that is notably outside the hearing and understanding of the mortals involved. Other examples to be discussed show clearly that the bad fortune a mortal is experiencing is a result of punishment, meted out justifiably by a deity who is not obligated to share their reasons. More optimistically, the divine's ultimate beneficence is shown in Sophocles' *Philoctetes,* when Heracles, in divine form, appears to absolve the gods of Philoctetes' accusations, by delivering the news that Zeus has ordained it that Philoctetes' foot will be healed, and the Greeks will win the Trojan war, if he returns to battle with Neoptolemus.[71] Philoctetes accepts the news and states explicitly that he will revere the gods, correcting his previous hostility, and asserting a conventionally respectful tone towards the play's end.[72] Let-out clauses, quick revisions at the ends of the plays to

[67] As with Amphitryon, who has been told by Lycus, the tyrant who drags his family away, that he will be shortly returning to the stage to kill him too; Eur. *Heracles.* 335.
[68] Harrison 2007: 375-380.
[69] Eur. *HF.* 516.
[70] Eur. *HF.* 841-842.
[71] Soph. *Phil.* 1411-1441.
[72] Soph. *Phil.* 1442-1445.

correct the accusations, and the acknowledgement that mortals simply are not able to confirm the true reasons for the gods' movements provide adequate cover for these denouncements to feature as part of a wider narrative that ultimately affirms the gods' righteousness.

Further caveats that made plain denouncements of the gods possible, as the following case studies will emphasise, include the identity of the individual, and the geographical and social contexts in which the impieties are uttered. As observed by Peels, "ordinary" Greeks are rarely shown (in drama or elsewhere) to make these criticisms; they are either not Greek, or are in some way exceptional in their identity or manner.[73] The likes of Clytemnestra, an abnormally aggressive Greek woman, and Xerxes, a Persian, show their abnormality through their deviation from the audience's frame of reference, as well as their brazen impiety.[74] Furthermore, such individuals are often placed outside of the stable familiarities of *polis* and *oikos.* They are set aside and away from the usual securities of conventional community and society as they undergo an intense uprooting of their usual lives, as exemplified by Amphitryon's meagre and desperate existence clinging to the shrine of Zeus, and Philoctetes' languishing on an island during war (a chaotic event in and of itself). The remoteness of these locations, displaced from normal, functional society, causes a natural weakening of the usual expectations that would govern the accepted ranges of expression. Where the impiety occurs in a Greek home or civilian centre, as with Clytemnestra's example, the tumult and disruption caused by the war with Troy and Agamemnon's absence, similarly undermines the domestic and political structures. As such, there is a removal of constraints upon the characters' speech that coheres to their momentary circumstances. Death represents the ultimate exile from established society, removing any danger of future repercussions for their impiety, and capping off the impious speech within the drama with a logical and irretrievable consequence.

That death can act as a condition in which a mortal can express open accusation against the gods, free from repercussions, is not a phenomenon only found in the fictional narratives such as tragedy. In his 2017 paper "Greek Epitaphs and the Afterlife: Hopes and Hopelessness" presented at the conference *Belief and the Individual in Ancient Greek Religion,* held at the Institute of Classical Studies, Parker discussed several epitaphs

[73] Peels 2016: 560-569.
[74] Zeitlin 1996: 364.

reflecting on the owner's thoughts on an afterlife.[75] One of these epitaphs blames Artemis for not being present when the epitaph's owner was dying in childbirth, accusing the goddess of being busy hunting rather than looking after her.[76] Another bemoans that the piety the owner had shown throughout his life had been wasted.[77] In his presentation, Parker suggested that the owners of these epitaphs were able to express their discontent with the gods because death had removed all future danger of reprisals for such impiety. As with the characters of tragedy, the owners of these epitaphs were granted a freedom of expression, of recognising a natural but problematic thought, that questioned the very purpose of worship. These epitaphs thus speak to the natural humanity of these sentiments, of the anger and loss felt when one's worshipped gods had not served one a deserved outcome. The sentiment does not transcend the owner's circumstances and does not demonstrate any appreciation of a wider cosmos or afterlife. Instead, they are bluntly insistent on the owner's unfair treatment as they freely describe their perspective on the gods in light of the pitiable circumstances of their deaths, expressed safely from beyond the grave.

These anti-divine statements are of interest because of their emotionally charged content would translate effectively and powerfully into the medium of an active, mimetic stage play. As Halliwell has acknowledged, mimetic performance is able to "activate a complex…emotional understanding" within its audience, as the performed emotions evokes a truth to the life of natural impulses such as fear, surprise and anger.[78] The characters evincing these jolts of strong emotion did so within a few feet of the spectators, and as the actual experience of the drama is a factor in how such moments were delivered, examining the genre in action is key. For it was through the animated, living nature of tragedy that these moments, with their significant emotional weight and content, took form. This dissertation will now examine the physical performance of tragedy, the rendering of character and emotion, and the likely methods and styles used by the drama producers.

[75] Parker 2017 (unpublished).
[76] *GVI* 1609 = Anth. Pal. 6. 348 = Diodorus XVI in Gow-Page, *Garland of Philip.*
[77] *GVI* 1121, Samos, II/I BC (I BC/I AD IG XII.6. 873)
[78] Halliwell 2012: 232-234.

1.2.3: Enacting Emotion: The Visual Experience of Athenian Tragedy

As discussed above, denouncements of the gods frequently emerge from individuals in special, typically desperate circumstances, who give the impression of speaking honestly and earnestly from their reduced and wretched position. Such emphatic and emotionalised statements uttered at key moments are the norm in tragedy, as the dramatic weight of the moment powering the character's assessment. For example, in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannos* (first produced circa 429), when Oedipus discovers the terrible truth as to his identity, he expresses profound regret for even being alive ("O Cithara, why did you give shelter to me? Why did you not kill me right away when you received me, and stop me giving light to my origin among men?"), and describes his encounter with Laius from the perspective of the location in which it occurred ("when you drank my father's blood from my hands, do you remember my deeds?"). Through Oedipus' utterances, the use of rhetorical questions and his reframing of the event in its location suggesting the depth of his confoundment and horror at what happened.[79] Oedipus' inner horror is externalised through his language in more than simply utilitarian details, adding an appropriate human incredulity to the extreme situation that has just played out. This maintains a natural coherence in Oedipus' individual reaction to the events of the play, helping keep track of the gravity of the situation and encouraging the audience to maintain their own emotional investment. As we contemplate this use of the character's expressed emotionality to guide and commentate on the events of the drama as they are still ongoing, the vitality and animacy of tragedy must be recalled. The texts alone give an impression of intense emotional turmoil, and so the use of the body in its rendering ought to be considered.[80] Oedipus could have delivered these lines on his knees, or stood slouched and exhausted, or stood straight with gesticulating with the arms, with the actor's voice modulated to reflect his broken despair, encouraging a clear connection between the words and the individual who uttered them.[81] So too moments of derisions against the gods were enacted physically, with the characters' emotional states conveyed as much with the body as with the voice.

To understand how the physical performance of these denouncements were likely to have impacted their delivery, this dissertation will engage with two separate but equally rich areas of research, namely the study of emotions, and the study of the action of Athenian tragedy.

[79] Eur. *OT.* 1392-1407.
[80] Capponi 2020: 342.
[81] Dale 1969: 164.

Contemporary sources suggest that the audience were fully expected to undergo empathetic experience in their spectatorship, and that the performer themselves underwent an experience analogous to the emotional life of the character. In Plato's *Ion,* the titular rhapsode (that is, a narrator of Homeric epic) is described as experiencing divine infusion, which spurs him to undergo notable affective symptoms, relevant to what occurs in the passage he is reciting ("when I tell a sad story, my eyes fill with tears. And when I describe some terrible and fearful thing, my hair stands on end, and my heart skips beats"). He also describes observing reactions in his audience that suggest a similar affective experience ("when I look down at them, they are weeping, looking fierce or marvelling at the tale").[82] This "emotional closeness" between performer and character thus causes the audience's own emotional investment, as indicated by Socrates' comment to Ion in the dialogue ("So do you know you effect the same on the multitude of spectators?").[83] This shared emotional property will be familiar to modern day theatre practitioners, as with Stanislavski's famous advice used by modern actors to recall one's own emotional experiences in the pursuit of responding "truly" in the guise of one's character, and so produce a more natural performance into which the audience are drawn.[84] This vicariousness is achieved by the actor's ability to reliably produce recognisable and convincing impressions of the character's sincere emotional experience. Achieving such a receptivity and synchronicity from the audience is vital for the actor's success, as the unfortunate account of Hegelochus and his contribution to the field of comedy points to.

There is a distinct difference, however, between the toolkit of a rhapsode, and a toolkit of a dramatist. Ion, as a rhapsode, narrated the internal lives of his characters as well as their actions. As Taplin discusses, "he thought" and "she felt" are typical currency for 3rd person narratives.[85] Thus, diegetic narrative offers persistent insight into their continual thought processes as they flow from action to action.[86] When Achilles considers murdering the entire Greek camp, or Penelope is racked with questions on how to address the man who says he is her husband, this information is revealed partly through interactions with other characters, but also from the characters' unuttered thoughts, which the rhapsode, and therefore the

[82] Plato. *Ion.* 535c-535e; Boyd 1994: 111-113, 115; Liebert 2010: 187-188, 193.
[83] Plato. *Ion.* 535d.
[84] Soloviova, Adler, Meisner & Gray 1964: 137-139.
[85] Taplin 2003: 2.
[86] Plato. *The Republic.* 392d-394c; Berger 2004: 407-433.

audience, have special access to through the narrative.[87] The actors of the Dionysian stage, by contrast, embodied the characters themselves. They were sustained, fictive identities combined with the identity of the actor for the duration of the play.[88] They thus needed to show, as well as tell, the reasons for their behaviour to ensure a coherent and consistent performance. This enacted mode of a character's emotional state, however, can lead to more impactful performance. As Worman notes, sensory language and the mimetic display of emotion can work with the audience's memory of their own embodied history, priming them to react more viscerally to a performance that skilfully uses these features.[89]

Emotional displays offer visible indications for the internal experience of a character, that may not be so readily accessed in mimetic performance as in diegetic narrative with the all-knowing narrator informing the audience of the character's constant mindset. As Cairns has laid out in his discussion of φρῖκα ("shudders"), the psychosomatic symptom is metonymically used in Greek for the emotion of fear itself. The physical action of shuddering is materially grounded in the human somatic response to stimuli that invokes a shivering response, whether it be fear, disgust or joy, and as that physiological effect is visually identifiable by external onlookers, it gains a natural association.[90] The symptoms that Plato's Ion describes are similarly experiential, as his elevated heart rate and piloerection (hair standing on end) conform to the physiological experience of fear in the human body, as the increase in adrenaline causes one's body prepares to react to danger with a burst of energy for the flight or fight. In a performance, mimicking such emotional symptoms would add cohesion and guidance to a character's decisions in play. However, when we consider the "performance" of emotions, and how they are coded and received within social interactions, we run into complications. Firstly, the interpretation of a physiological reaction, such as shuddering, laughing, or crying, is highly dependent to the culture that perceives it, the particular scenario in which it arises, and the identity of the person displaying it. As with the example of φρῖκα, one may experience a visible symptom such as shuddering, for many reasons not pertaining to fear. Cairns notes that joy, disgust, sexual arousal, or even a non-emotional reason, such as cold or illness, may cause shuddering in an individual. Similarly, one may laugh out of amusement, joy, disbelief, or nervousness. However, the culturally

[87] Homer. *Iliad.* 1.188-205; *Odyssey.* 85-95.
[88] Hall 2006: 19.
[89] Worman 2021: 1-3, 14. See also Halliwell 2012: 209-210.
[90] Cairns 2013: 85-87.

expected expression of an emotion, such as laughing for happiness or shivering for fear, is often flattened into a shorthand that is then used as a metonym of that emotion in representations. One only need think of the permanent tears painted on the character of Pierrot's face, from the Commedia Dell' Arte, to indicate the character's hallmark pathos, or the demonic rendered furrowed brows and bared teeth of a *hannya* mask from Noh theatre, representing the madness and envy of the character portrayed.[91]

Thus, to effectively manipulate the audience's emotional responses to the drama, there is a constant need in mimetic performance for the audience to successfully to "mind-read" the character, discerning their internal states and motivations accurately and consistently.[92] Therefore, the use of metonymic and iconic expressions of emotion was likely deployed to provide information and influence the audiences' own emotional register.[93] Although the masks would have covered the facial expressions of the actor, the body's gestural movements and vocalisations would be similarly subject to metonymic flattening for the purpose of a coherent narrative.[94] In the visual art of drama, a character's despair when they question a perplexingly cruel or disinterested god would need to be signalled plainly with visual and audible cues, particularly as these moments are often treated with especial gravitas.[95] As shall be seen in the coming case studies, the dialogue spoken during and around the denouncements to gods often implies that the character is literally lowered to the floor, presenting a collapsed posture that is coupled with vocal exclamations and direct address to the gods. While the actors' delivery is not the sole method of imbuing a performance with dramatic or emotional gravitas, the use of such movement would encode meaning onto the action, and therefore the scene itself, as the character's words and movements are synchronised.[96] The actor's voice would also be key to communicating the affective tone to the statements; paired with gesture that drew attention to the importance of specific words, and to clarify ambivalences, the combined visual and aural components of the performance would be key to the successful communication of the scene's meaning.[97] The character's emotional response to the gods is thus encoded through physical performance, with the

[91] Cairns 2013: 86.
[92] Budelmann & Easterling 2010: 290-303. See also Aristotle: *Poetics:* 1433-1435, in which he discusses the "emotional transport" of tragedy.
[93] Hall-Sternberg 2006: 12-13.
[94] Worman 2021: 170.
[95] Konstan 2006: 14.
[96] Worman 2021: 12.
[97] Boegehold 1999: 53.

emotion interpellated into the relationship with the god in a manner that draws attention in its finality and frank blame.

These bursts of discontent and unhappiness, during which denouncements of the gods are often uttered, indicates the sudden excess of emotion that cause the open denouncement of divine figures normally spoken to with reverence. Specifically, a spontaneous-seeming emission of dislike of the gods signals a sudden and organically occurring moment of intensifying emotional display, suggestive of a naturalistic style decided on through the actor's introspective understanding of how their character would react under such circumstances. In terms of poetic technique, this could count as *ekplêxis,* that is a peaking of acute emotional reaction that works to compel the audience with excitement in-line with the events of the performance, which the audience of the Dionysia would be particularly primed to through their participation in the Dionysia festival, as has been examined above.[98] Halliwell terms this phenomenon as "psychagogic enthralment", which implies that the audience is being guided in its emotions and sentiments through the performance. In the example of mimetic performance, there is thus a question of how this affective connection and guidance would have been effected through performance, and what techniques, including metonymy, would be used to clearly and impactfully convey emotion.

There are indications that suggest that dramatists were able to innovate ways to effect their plays as they saw fit, suggesting there was a level of freedom as to how a dramatist may direct the action. For example, Roselli notes that Euripides in particular developed music and acting innovations to render a more emphatic emotional experience.[99] The criticism one actor, Mynniskos, gives to his younger contemporary, Kallipides, for moving "like an ape", further indicates that individual choice and improvisation was, to some degree, a factor in the rendering of performance, resulting in different tastes and styles.[100] Taplin argues that naturalism (that is, a style of acting in which actors would attempt to mimic authentic, everyday reactions as much as possible) was the most likely style used in tragedy, pointing to references in the texts themselves that indicate the placement and actions of the players, particularly gestures significant to the plot that indicate specific purpose endemic to the

[98] Halliwell 2012: 229-230.
[99] Roselli 2017: 421. See also D'Angour (2018: 36) in relation to the use of music in Euripides' *Orestes* to effect emotional tones.
[100] Aristotle. *Poetics.* 1461b34-5 on Mynniskos' criticism of Kallipides acting "like an ape". Csapo 2002: 127.

character's countenance and motivations.[101] In moments of panic and reaction, such as when Clytemnestra urgently gestures to the breast that Orestes nursed on as a last-ditch attempt to dissuade him from killing her, or when Philoctetes cries out in agony at the sudden and unexpected pain in his foot, there is deictic use of the language that would cohere logically with corresponding movements, and draw the audience in to the emotional experience of those characters.[102]

However, Taplin's interpretation, while certainly useful in considering the use of action within tragedy, and how these actions would line up with dialogue, neglects tragedy's emergence as a feature of the Dionysia Festival, with ritual features such as the Chorus and music creating a ceremonial (and so non-naturalistic) form to the action.[103] The practical constraints, many of which link back to the religious formula, would further preclude a naturalistic performance style. The *himation,* the robe worn by actors onstage, was heavy and imperfect for frenetic movement.[104] The mask created a static face, its enlarged features visible to the many of audience members several tens of feet away, but also obscured natural facial expressions. Many audience members would have been simply too far from the stage for subtle, realistic action to render the performance naturally. Furthermore, the actor needed to project his voice clearly to the back row, which would most likely have necessitated the correct posture for such projection, limiting both the range of likely postures, and also the tones the actor would be able to render at such volumes.[105] Much of the dialogue was sung, and the existence of the Chorus, and its collective identity and Choral Odes further draw a barrier between Taplin's imagined secular theatre experience. The standardised mask, costume and the metre of the verses would mean no actor would be able to effect any specific mannerisms or idiolect (that is, a mode of speaking unique to an individual person, imitated or created by the actor) onto their characters, precluding the development of any character's individuality. Finally, as discussed above, the performance of emotion is culturally subjective, with conventions dictating how emotions are communicated to an audience. As suggested by the above references to characters from the stylised performance forms of the Commedia Dell'Arte, with Pierrot's tears, metonymic emotional cues often gain new associations in their use within a specific performance genre,

[101] Taplin 2003: 10-14.
[102] Taplin 2003: 44.
[103] Goldhill 1990: 100-101.
[104] Green 2002: 106. Worman 2021: 170.
[105] Hall 2002: 5-21.

particularly those which use masks, costume, and music. Such clearly artificial features of costume and sound production also develop acting styles with deliberate stylisations that impedes natural-seeming action. What thus develops is a "visual carapace" of performance. That is, a range of non-naturalistic and stylised images and visual cues that create a new mode of language for the audience to read and respond to. Combined with the obviously artificial and stylised metres, which produce a corresponding "sonic" carapace, the impact is a marrying of visuals and sound that create a comprehensive performance experience that impacts the audience emotionally.[106] An audience member successfully immersed and acclimatised to the particular language of the performance style is thus able to successfully read the inorganic features of performance with ease. The audience's fluency in regarding the action as such would hasten what Pickard-Cambridge termed "the melting-point," that is the point at which the audience understands the events on stage, not as obvious artifice, but as a coherent and engaging story they can follow with ease.[107] The different components of dramatic performance, including the most clearly inorganic, therefore, contribute to the audience's fluent "reading" of a play as it is performed for them. Thurmiger has suggested that the mask, when placed in the wider performance context of the tragic stage, complete with the *skene, himation* and synchronised movement from the Chorus, was "activated" in such a way as to blend into the narrative and gain meaning specific to its performance and aesthetic context.[108] This steady acclimatisation, built up through familiarity to the particular visual and aural forms observed in this specialised environment, would enable greater fluency in the audience's reception of the characters' psychologies, including when these characters clash with the gods.[109]

The "activation" of mask and costume in this way can be seen in other performance traditions that use such inorganic performance styles. Hindu Kathakali dance drama and Japanese Noh and Kabuki theatre forms, share similarities with Athenian tragedy in their use of music, elaborate costume, make-up, and masks, and so are natural examples of comparison for the scenario of tragic performance. All three genres use codification and visualisation to convey character information through costume and standardised gestures used by the actors. To take the examples of Kathakali in particular, the face paint used

[106] Visual and sonic carapace are terms borrowed from Haselswerdt (2019: 617.) Noel (2019: 297-299) discusses the neurological impact of observing such performances.
[107] Pickard-Cambridge 1968: 187.
[108] Thumiger 2016: 637-664.
[109] Vernant & Vidal-Naquet 1990: 34-35, 79.

directly communicates the role of the character, with green for hero characters, and red for evil characters. A green face with red accents announced a supposedly brave character with a wicked inner nature. Kathakali actor training focuses solely on the body, with attention particularly on facial expressions (*rasas*), with the intricate movements of the actor's eye muscles, eyebrows, mouth, and nostrils all strictly codified to a specific range of emotions (*bhavas*) as well as hand movements, or *mudras,* used to convey the story.[110] In Noh, actors wear masks that convey character archetypes with fixed expressions, such as the demonic *hannya* mask, already mentioned, representing a woman driven mad with jealousy, as well as masks representing young male aristocrats (*chūjō*), young low-born women (*ōmiona*), elderly men (*sarugaku*), and so on. Movement is minimal and codified, with *kamae* (posture) and *hakobi* (steps) being rendered slowly and gradually throughout the performance.[111] The angles at which Noh masks are held can produce different perspectives on the facial expression on the mask, with angles slightly up (*terasu)* causing the mask to "smile" and angling slightly downward (*kumorasu*) causing the mask to "frown."[112] These masks are thus "activated" in a similar manner Athenian masks were, with the presentation and appearance of the mask dependent on its use within the immediate context of the Noh play.[113] Due to the high level of standardisation across performers, these performance traditions do not permit the individual actor to decide how to convey an emotion. There is no improvisation, with a strict uniformity from performance to performance. Additionally, there is no use of subtext, no implicit or subtle rendering of a character's nature, intentions, or actions, ensuring the audience cannot possibly miss or wrongly interpret the content of the drama. In the case of Noh, which is an expression of Shinto religiosity and explicitly understood by its practitioners as an opportunity to consider and reflect with the spirits of their religion, maintaining a unity in appearance and gesture is of high importance. The audience's minds must not be interrupted by the encroachment of their day-to-day reality, keeping their frame of reference within the exceptional visual world of the performance throughout its duration, and the alternative frame of reality it offers.[114] Furthermore, the standardisation and specificity of the gestures, and the obscuring of the actor's face prevents the actors' individual reactions from distracting the audience from this specialised range of visuals. There is no

[110] Raina 2015: 323-338.
[111] Coldiron 2005: 227-248.
[112] Lyons et al 2000: 2239-2245.
[113] Meineck 2011: 131.
[114] Komparu 1983: 245, 269.

risk of an actor accidentally smiling out of nervousness or pulling distracting facial expressions. Actors trained to carry out the same, slow gestures reduces the changes of fidgeting during a performance. As such, movements or expressions that are unconvincing, or an unexpected or accidental register to the voice, are obfuscated and limited through the strict standardisation of the performer's training, while the mask or face paint hides obscures facial tics or distortions caused by singing.[115] Within these performance genres, emotions are conveyed through heavy stylisation, using metonymic cues that do not fail to impact and guide the audience's reactions. Llewellyn-Jones, in his review of the presentation of female characters in Athenian tragedy and Japanese Kabuki theatre, which also uses face paint and standardised movements in performance, explicitly shows Athenian theatre as far closer in form and practise to the stylised, ceremonial tradition than the naturalistic style suggested by Taplin, citing Ariane Mnouchkine's successful 1992 Kathakali production of *The Oresteia* (*Les Astrides*), and Ninagawa's 1984 Kabuki-style *Medea* as evidence that tragedy fit a purposefully inorganic production style, and this was the likely form the original productions took.[116]

When we apply these observations to Greek tragedy, this immersion of the audience within a specific, exceptionalised mode of reality matches the socially effervescent experience of the Dionysia Festival described in the preceding section. In his spatial analysis of Athenian theatre, Wiles emphasises the synchronicity of the Chorus, as well as the layout of the performance, with the Chorus gathered around the *thymele,* and the named characters on the stage.[117] According to Wiles, the silhouetting of the Chorus on the ground of the theatre, with the actors set back and raised over them, would produce a visually striking arrangement that would be visible for the majority of the spectators, with choreography of their movement in interaction with the named, singular character. Boegehold also notes that the gestures used must have been clearly defined enough to prevent ambiguity, and that the added handicap of the bulky *himation* would necessitate larger gestures for the whole audience to be able to see them clearly.[118]

However, it would be unwise to suggest a complete uniformity and standardisation from tragedy to tragedy, particularly when we regard the subject matter of the plays. While the

[115] Hall 2002: 21.
[116] Llewellyn-Jones 2005: 74.
[117] Wiles 1997: 34.
[118] Boegehold 1999: 15-16.

performers' faces were obscured with masks, which were likely to be used and then re-used between performances, the characters of Athenian tragedy show more variation in character and motivation through their dialogue than in either Noh or Kabuki (Kathakali actors do not speak). In tragedy, relationships take a more prominent role, and many plays revolve around a debate, or *agon,* between two characters. The length of a standard tragedy, of between 1,000 and 1,500 lines, grants enough time for the characters' personalities to be displayed, and then engineered towards the plays' plot and outcomes.[119] In comparison, Noh plays are far shorter, containing roughly 500 to 1000 lines of dialogue, the majority of which is sung, and with the Noh Chorus playing a far larger role. There is thus minimal time spent on fleshing out the characters themselves, setting up the *agon* or building suspense. For example, in the Noh play *Ama* (The Pearl Diver), an emotive plotline involving a reunion between son and mother, is eclipsed by the Noh Chorus and the tribute paid to the particular locality of the myth.[120] In comparison, tragedy affords more rumination on its characters' natures and the causes and impacts of their actions, whilst still acknowledging the mythical base of its story. As a result, the characters' actions are not strictly cannot entirely be coded onto a uniform range of gestures but are given meaning in line with their displayed personalities, motivations and circumstances. In his discussion of Antigone's interrogation scene with Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone*, Boegehold notes that the titular character's deportment and responses to Creon's questions is best understood in continuity with her earlier depiction as adamantly and proudly disobeying his orders.[121] Likewise, in Goldhill's discussion of *ethos* in tragedy, he emphasises that the characters' motivations, their reactions to stimuli, and the imagery used to describe them (such as Orestes being the viper that bites his mother), are shown to link back to the mythology that provides the foundation of the narrative, producing a multi-layered approach to the character's displayed personalities, and their interaction with the archetypal foundation of the play.[122] When Pentheus responds with eagerness to Dionysus' suggestion to witness the mysteries, his choice is shown to be prompted through his momentary interaction with Dionysus, and established fixation on the Bacchic rituals.[123] Tragedy thus depicts characters as behaving in coherence with their established and displayed personalities, which precludes a fully codified form to the action play to play and

[119] Gill 1996: 9-11.
[120] Tyler 2004: 25-36.
[121] Boegehold 1999: 59-60.
[122] Goldhill 1990: 108-113.
[123] Goldhill 1990: 115-118.

character to character. While the established framework of established mythology and archetypes are present in tragedy, the characters are shown to improvise to the situations they find themselves in afresh and without overt contrivance.

Therefore, the formula we are presented with for the execution of Athenian tragedy does not fit neatly as a semi-improvised mode of performance, or a formal, standardised form. It retained both the purposely inorganic aesthetic and standardised codification of a ceremonial theatre style, and the intrigue and conflict of a character-focused drama. Therefore, one must imagine an acting form that was both standardised and geared towards exploiting subtleties within its dialogue to best effect. The character's utterances contain vital information to propel the plot and set the ambience, and so the action taken would emphasise this content, without drawing attention away from it, or disrupting the form of the drama.[124] A suitable comparandum could be Italian baroque opera, where the artifice of the performance is instantly apparent from the characters' singing of all dialogue, uses a blended approach between naturalistic, semi-improvised gestural acting, and formal, codified gesture. During instances of recitative narrative, in which operatic characters sing in a rhythm and manner closer to that of normal speech, actors are granted more freedom to improvise their gestures and facial expressions than they would during a soliloquy. In early guides on how to deliver lines, anger is recommended to be expressed *con furia* (i.e., with a burst of excessive energy, volume, and gestures), while expressions of sadness were to be delivered with more variation and subtlety. When codified gestures are used in opera, they are performed to emphasise and guide the characters' emotional register in relation to the events of the plot, such as a character placing his palm over his heart during moments of intended poignancy, or an open hand held out at hip height while two characters converse cordially.[125] When thinking about Athenian tragedy, one must view the difference in format in a single-line stichomythic exchange between two characters, as though in conversation (and indeed, the metre is the closest to that of usual speech), and the longer, more extensive speeches and Choral Odes.[126] Regarding these differences, it is feasible that movement, dance and gesture was varied between the different styles of dialogue throughout a single drama. The audible component to this specialised mode would be provided by the music accompaniment to the scenes, with

[124] Arnott 1989: 162.
[125] Termini 1993: 146-157.
[126] Goldhill 1997: 127.

the songs and metres effecting the desired emotional tenors as suitable to the plot.[127] Particularly key to the phenomenon of mortals accusing the gods, the expressive use of address and exclamations are regularly used in line with expressions of shock, surprise and horror, while the physical positions of the characters suggest their often degraded affective status. Therefore, the action and audio are combined to emphasise the character's affective state in explicit terms, as they go on to express their complete dismay at the gods.[128]

However, to establish how a mortal characters' anger, disappointment and open contempt for the gods was aestheticized through the medium of drama, there is a final quality of tragedy that this dissertation will rely on especially throughout its analysis: namely the embedded nature of these moments within a wider narrative, in which a character's consistent personality, demeanour, their pre-existing relationship with the gods, and the overall environment are all contributing factors in their delivery and significance. Interactions between characters, even brief and unsensational exchanges, grant insight into foundational information as to those characters' traits and relationships, demonstrating them without overt statement. As one person reacts to another onstage, the quality of their first and then subsequent impressions, and then the second individual's response and own stated impressions (and so on), reverberates throughout the play, allowing the events to be effected organically through the choices the characters make.[129] Wyles has highlighted that the meaning of a character's costume and overall appearance was often encoded through the description within the dialogue of any given tragedy. The same can be said for a character's stance, gestures, and demeanour, and as shall be examined, this is a significant detail when considering how a performance was effected. As well as characters frankly describing what another is doing (either while that character is also visible to the audience, or soon to be), this information is also elicited through interaction that draws out and then emphasises key qualities. In Aeschylus' *Choephori,* when Electra is anxiously stood by her father's grave, and needs prompting from the Chorus of Attendant Women, her uncertainty, fear, and timidity is translated through her questions of what she should be doing.[130] These lines then resonate with the Chorus, who responds with exposition for the audience and sympathy and care for Electra, providing information and a guided affect for the audience. When she recognises the

[127] D'Angour (2018: 36) examines this phenomenon in relation to Euripides' *Orestes* and its use of dochmiac metre to produce an agitated tone.
[128] Perdicoijianni-Palédogue 2002: 51. Boegehold 1999: 54.
[129] Hof 2020: 123.
[130] Aesch. *Cho.* 94-140.

lock of hair left by Orestes, and then discovers her brother's return, her earlier uncertainty and helplessness elicits a deeper pathos and payoff; Electra's demonstrably anxious and vulnerable demeanour has underlined her personal need for her brother's return. Similarly, when Medea pleads for supplication from Creon in *Medea,* and in the tense exchange between Agamemnon and Clytemnestra in *Agamemnon,* the aggression of the women is prompted and then deployed through interaction.[131] Electra's helplessness, Medea's outrage and Clytemnestra's resentment are extracted and activated in their discourse through implication, their internal feelings made relevant through their exchanges with other characters, and informing on their eventual outcomes. As such, their words and actions are presented in tandem with the mental processes alluded to as the character proceeds through their play, as they behave in accordance with their own reckoning of the situation, if not appropriately to the values and mores of their society. In the examples of mortals expressing hostility towards the gods, their previous behaviour towards the gods, the surrounding circumstances and concurrent discourse all lead into the mortal characters' impious expressions. The characters reach a pinnacle of emotional distress and frustration directed towards the gods, signalled through dialogue and action, that eventually destabilises their interest or ability to speak reverentially to or about deities they previously worshipped.

[131] Aesch. *Ag.* 914-974; Eur. *Med.* 272-355.

2. Early Examples of Mortal Criticism in Greek Literature

2.1. Introduction

Before full-on discussion of emotional criticism against the gods in Sophocles' and Euripides' tragedies can commence, it makes sense to briefly review examples of open divine criticism in Greek literature that preceded the tragic examples selected for close reading and analysis. This is done to contextualise the material of tragedy within a greater literary tradition, demonstrating that plain dissatisfaction against the gods is not specific to tragedy, but occurs sporadically as a feature of Greek mythical tradition, which tragedy then exploits theatrically. This will further establish what separates these hostile statements against the gods from the prescribed versions mentioned above, and to establish the common content of the criticisms, particularly regarding the insults, threats and accusations that are directed at the gods.

The examples under discussion include extracts from Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* an extract from *Theognidea,* and finally, one example from Aeschylus' *Eumenides,* traversing the range of narrative style from epic to lyric poetry and onto tragedy. The diegetic examples of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* demonstrate these moments as directly quoted speech embedded in a wider narrative, relayed by an all-knowing narrator, who speaks from outside of the events of the drama. The speaker in *Theognidea,* by contrast, is not speaking from within a wider narrative, but directly and in the first person on his own discontent with the gods, providing the immediate impression that these are the speaker's own thoughts and feelings, uttered as they occur to him. Finally, the brief quotation from the *Eumenides* pairs the elements of the wider, involved narrative, with the first-person account of unsatisfying godly behaviour, enacted at a crucial point of the plot in which the presentation of the character and the surrounding events are contributing factors in the criticism's delivery. This last example, which certainly presents open criticism of a god by a mortal, is nevertheless cautious in its phrasing, which is why it has been passed over for more overt and strongly-worded examples in the dissertation's more in-depth analyses. However, its subtlety remains useful, as Orestes expresses a sincere evaluation of his specific relationship with Apollo from a critical perspective, albeit without the heightened emotionality seen in the examples selected for deeper analysis. This overview will provide a stronger benchmark of what is of interest in this dissertation, and what it will offer in terms of the study of tragedy and the presentation of the gods within.

2.2.: Mortal Commentary and Complaint in Homer

In Book 3 of *The Iliad,* Aphrodite comes to Helen to instruct her to comfort Paris, following his humiliating defeat at the hands of Menelaus. Helen's role in causing the Trojan War is ever constant in the epic, and in this instance, she is urged to go and comfort the man who removed her from her husband. However, Helen does not obey, but rebuffs Aphrodite's suggestion, making daring a counter-suggestion:

ὣς φάτο, τῇ δ᾽ ἄρα θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ὄρινε·

……..

θάμβησέν τ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἔπειτα ἔπος τ᾽ ἔφατ᾽ ἔκ τ᾽ ὀνόμαζε·

δαιμονίη, τί με ταῦτα λιλαίεαι ἠπεροπεύειν;

ἦ πῄ με προτέρω πολίων εὖ ναιομενάων

ἄξεις, ἢ Φρυγίης ἢ Μῃονίης ἐρατεινῆς,

εἴ τίς τοι καὶ κεῖθι φίλος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων·

οὕνεκα δὴ νῦν δῖον Ἀλέξανδρον Μενέλαος

νικήσας ἐθέλει στυγερὴν ἐμὲ οἴκαδ᾽ ἄγεσθαι,

τοὔνεκα δὴ νῦν δεῦρο δολοφρονέουσα παρέστης;

And so, she spoke, troubling the soul in Helen's breast

……..

Astounded, she spoke out and called her name:

"Strange goddess, why do you want to cheat me like this? For now, you would lead me to the populated cities of Phrygia or lovely Maeonia, if there is some man dear to you there, what with Menelaus defeating

> the amazing Paris, and he will be minded to lead me home. Is that the reason you are here now, scheming?[132]

The description of Helen's soul being troubled (θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ὄρινε) and "astounded" (θάμβησέν) in response to Aphrodite's instruction, which we are told about before she speaks, gives the audience a privileged insight into Aphrodite's immediate response to the goddess without literally seeing the character. When she does respond, therefore, the audience has context in terms of her internal emotional reaction, contextualising Helen's indignance at goddess's request with her surprise. She directly addresses Aphrodite, "calling her by name" (ἔφατ᾽ ἔκ τ᾽ ὀνόμαζε), as Amphitryon does with Zeus, and she asks pointed and accusatory questions, as Philoctetes does. Helen's internal shock, as well as her combative reply to the goddess, forms an impression of a confrontation between mortal and goddess, as Helen challenges the goddess's actions and demands an explanation. The question itself plainly lays out how Helen feels she has been treated by Aphrodite; "cheated" (ἠπεροπεύειν), raising a question to Helen's own desires.[133] Helen's response strikes an undeferential note, which lays the ground for further combativeness.

Helen's lack of deference is coupled with open speculation as to Aphrodite's intentions, and her true reasons for her continued meddling. There is tone of sarcasm in Helen's exaggeration of Aphrodite's request, as she describes the immense distances the goddess would force her to traipse for the comparatively menial task of comforting a favoured mortal. As such, Helen is making an incisive comment on her situation, and exhibiting a scathing awareness of Aphrodite's capabilities in a purposefully disrespectful manner.

As she continues her rebuttal, Helen's opposition to the order becomes stronger, with a more specific strategy for her refusal:

> ἦσο παρ᾽ αὐτὸν ἰοῦσα, θεῶν δ᾽ ἀπόεικε κελεύθου,
>
> μηδ᾽ ἔτι σοῖσι πόδεσσιν ὑποστρέψειας Ὄλυμπον,

[132] Homer. *Iliad.* 399-405.
[133] Blondell 2010: 20-23.

ἀλλ᾽ αἰεὶ περὶ κεῖνον ὀΐζυε καί ἑ φύλασσε,

εἰς ὅ κέ σ᾽ ἢ ἄλοχον ποιήσεται ἢ ὅ γε δούλην.

κεῖσε δ᾽ ἐγὼν οὐκ εἶμι: νεμεσσητὸν δέ κεν εἴη:

κείνου πορσανέουσα λέχος · Τρῳαὶ δέ μ᾽ ὀπίσσω

πᾶσαι μωμήσονται: ἔχω δ᾽ ἄχε᾽ ἄκριτα θυμῷ.

You go and sit by his side, give up being a god, and don't set foot back on Olympus, but worry over him and keep by him, so he can make you his wife, or his slave. But I will not go there; it would be shameful, to tend that man's couch, the women of Troy will blame me after, and I have unceasing hits on my soul.[134]

In sum, Helen counters Aphrodite with her own instruction in reverse, issuing a chain of defiant imperatives (ἧσο, ὀΐζυε, φύλασσε), emphasising the demeaning nature of what Aphrodite has instructed. Her use of the adverb "always" (αἰεὶ) emphasises the drudgery of the task, as she pictures Aphrodite dutifully fretting besides Paris' side in her place. That Paris will not only make her his wife, but his slave (δούλην), creates a semantic link between the roles of wife and slave, which further strengthens the sense of subjugation and humiliation Aphrodite demands of her, and which Helen now flips to counter the goddess's order.[135] Helen's statement is retaliatory and daring, as she expresses her frustration at the imposition of the goddess' instruction, and reverses their roles, even suggesting the goddess renege her divinity to tend to Paris. This particular image, of the goddess fretting by Paris' side is especially contemptuous, which Helen uses to undermine the goddess's authority with the ridiculous imagery of Aphrodite tending to a mortal man. Through this, Helen highlights how unprincipled and ridiculous she finds the task Aphrodite has assigned her.[136] Helen effectively demonstrates that the goddess' request would undermine her authority, as

[134] Hom. *Il.* 3.406-412.
[135] Suter 1987: 52.
[136] Konstan 2006: 191.

it would Helen's reputation, as she is mindful of how the other women in the Trojan place would judge her (Τρῳαὶ δέ μ᾽ ὀπίσσω πᾶσαι μωμήσονται).

Helen's comments to the goddess are an instant reaction, flung out at a moment of perplexity and disgust, as she defies Aphrodite's order. As she holds in mind the judgement she receives from other women, Helen hits out and derides the goddess.[137] While she is a Greek queen, in the palace at Troy, she occupies a precarious position with the other women, and occupies a liminal space between marriages.[138] When Aphrodite descends to give Helen new instructions that would further devalue her, Helen initially stands firm, revealing her own values to be at odds with the goddess', and defends herself with a satirical reframing of the goddess' instructions.

Helen's statements are a notable departure from the trend of divine address that persists across the Homeric epics and in the traditional representation of authority and ritual.[139] This strictly ordered society, enshrined in the narrative,[140] nevertheless features this brief and unusual one-on-one interaction between a mortal queen and a goddess, where an interpersonal altercation takes place. As it takes place inside the palace at Troy, the interaction appears to be private, with no greater societal relevancy. Thus, the exchange offers a personal moment between Helen and Aphrodite in which their pre-existing relationship, and not the wider social and religious mores of the wider community, sets the tone. Thus Helen appears to be speaking outside of the structures which dictate the behaviour to the gods for the rest of the poem, producing a strikingly bold impression where Helen's true feelings are voiced as she pushes against instructions she finds troubling.

However impressive this moment is, Helen relents when Aphrodite threatens Helen for her boldness: "do not provoke me, and do not anger me so recklessly, and so make me hate you so much, even as I now love you").[141] Helen must adopt a more subservient tone towards the god. There is thus an inherent tension in the comments made by Helen, stemming from the risk of speaking so provocatively toward the deity, with Helen's status as an individual specially singled out by the goddess likely playing a role in how she is able to speak so

[137] Blondell 2010:14.
[138] Suzuki 1992: 10.
[139] Dowden 2004: 189-190; Foley 2004: 183-184.
[140] Osbourne 2004: 215.
[141] Hom. *Il.* 3.414-416.

plainly, if only for an instant.[142] However, Helen does not apologise or utter any comment that attempts to repair the relationship. She continues to rankle as she tends to Paris, expressing her disgust and making clear she is only acting under Aphrodite's instruction. Thus, the spirit of Helen's refusal is kept alive, if not the act.[143]

When Helen pushes back against the goddess, she escalates the narrative's tension to speak frankly and brusquely with the goddess to express her inner frustration and trouble with the goddess' intervention, insulting the goddess by way of her rebuttal. In contrast, the *Odyssey* contains an example where Odysseus also expresses frustration with a goddess familiar to him, but maintains a tone that is conventionally deferential and in-keeping with the poem's adherence to a prescribed formula for mortal-divine relations.[144] In Book 13, Athena appears as a shepherd to an exhausted and confused Odysseus, who has recently been brought to a land that he hopes, but does not know, is his home of Ithaca. After receiving the news that he is indeed home at last, Odysseus is explicitly described as "rejoicing" (γήθησεν…Ὀδυσσεύς).[145] However, when Athena reveals her identity, Odysseus becomes outwardly suspicious of the goddess' words, and explains his dissatisfaction with their present relationship:

> ‘ἀργαλέον σε, θεά, γνῶναι βροτῷ ἀντιάσαντι,
> καὶ μάλ᾽ ἐπισταμένῳ: σὲ γὰρ αὐτὴν παντὶ ἐΐσκεις.
> τοῦτο δ᾽ ἐγὼν εὖ οἶδ᾽, ὅτι μοι πάρος ἠπίη ἦσθα,
> ἦος ἐνὶ Τροίῃ πολεμίζομεν υἷες Ἀχαιῶν.
> αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ Πριάμοιο πόλιν διεπέρσαμεν αἰπήν,
> βῆμεν δ᾽ ἐν νήεσσι, θεὸς δ᾽ ἐκέδασσεν Ἀχαιούς,
> οὔ σέ γ᾽ ἔπειτα ἴδον, κούρη Διός, οὐδ᾽ ἐνόησα
> νηὸς ἐμῆς ἐπιβᾶσαν, ὅπως τί μοι ἄλγος ἀλάλκοις.

[142] Peels 2016: 556.
[143] Blondell 2010:22.
[144] Kullman (1985: 23) understands the marked difference in the gods' actions in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as indicative of the different type of relationship the mortal characters have to them.
[145] Hom. *O.* 13.250.

> It is difficult, goddess, for a man to know you when he meets you, even the very intelligent. For you make yourself like many others. But something I know well, is that you were formerly kind to me, while we sons of the Achaeans warred in Troy. But after we destroyed the grand city of Priam, and some god had broken up the Achaeans, I did not see you at all, maiden of Zeus, nor did I sense you embarking with me on the ship, where you may have protected me from pain.[146]

Odysseus' first words to Athena are critical, complaining about her elusiveness and changeability as evidenced by her apparent lack of support since the Achaeans' departure from Troy. The frequent use of temporal phrases, comparing Athena's "previous" (πάρος) support in past years, to her behaviour "since" (ἐπεὶ) emphasises the goddess's inconsistency. Odysseus' remark that he did not "sense" (ἐνόησα) Athena on his ship, speaks both to his longing, and that he has perceived a palpable lack of overall protection and support from the goddess during his subsequent hardships. Therefore, Odysseus is apportioning blame to Athena for his many misadventures through her inactivity in preventing the disasters that struck him.

Furthermore, Athena's apparent abandonment of Odysseus has destabilised his trust in her. Her divine power to shapeshift, to appear as someone else, causes him additional uncertainty, and results in his unwillingness to believe her assurances without question:

> νῦν δέ σε πρὸς πατρὸς γουνάζομαι… σὲ δὲ κερτομέουσαν ὀΐω ταῦτ᾽ ἀγορευέμεναι, ἵν᾽ ἐμὰς φρένας ἠπεροπεύσῃς - εἰπέ μοι εἰ ἐτεόν γε φίλην ἐς πατρίδ᾽ ἱκάνω.
>
> Now I implore you by your father…. I think you taunt me in your speech, to cheat my heart – tell me, truthfully, if I have come to my cherished home.[147]

[146] Hom. *Od.* 13.312-319
[147] Hom. *Od.* 13. 324-327.

By referring to Athena's father Zeus, Odysseus appeals to a power and authority greater than Athena herself to compensate his distrust. He "implores" (γουνάζομαι) the goddess, raising the question's emotional stake, before going on to explicitly inform her of his weakened trust in her, expressing his suspicion in his final question to her. He feels as though he is being humiliated (κερτομέουσαν ὀΐω) by her, and he acknowledges that it is his very mind (φρένας) that is at risk of exploitation, owing to his deep desperation to find his beloved Ithaca. The verb κερτομέουσαν is used throughout the *Odyssey* in reference to a particularly cruel and aggressive sort of laughter, particularly associated with poor winners vaunting over losers, and the raucous, anti-social laughter of the Suitors.[148] Thus, Odysseus is accusing Athena of laughing at him in this same crude manner, humiliating him for amusement. His final question to her emphasises this pained uncertainty and fear, as he asks her to "truthfully" (ἐτεόν) tell him if he is home or not. Throughout his address, Odysseus refers constantly to his internal assessments of their relationship, how his heart may be tricked, and how he feels or thinks about Athena and her treatment towards him. Moving from his initial pleasure at being told by an unknown shepherd that he has arrived in Ithaca, Athena's revelation of her identity sparks a naturally arising fear in Odysseus that focuses on her unreliability, as he emphasises the length of time since their last interaction.

As opposed to Aphrodite's response to Helen, which consisted of a threat, Athena's response to Odysseus is favourable. She admires his wily, cautious nature, and calls attention to their mirrored attempt to deceive each other.[149] As Odysseus expresses his wavering sense of partnership between him and Athena, Athena seeks to repair it. She explains that her need to respect Poseidon, and intra-divine diplomacy, prevented her from assisting him, leaving Odysseus to battle his hardships alone. This confirms his belief that she was not there with him, whilst also providing an explanation for that absence in such a way that does not complicate or undermine the mortal-god alliance between them.

In both Helen's and Odysseus' examples, they speak directly to the goddess they accuse, and so the specificity and personal targeting of the god is immediately apparent in their speech. Their comments are particular to their complaint. Helen expresses anger at Aphrodite's harmful and unwanted meddling in her life, while Odysseus expresses hurt and damaged

[148] Halliwell 2008: 29, 72, 88.
[149] Doherty 1991: 32-33.

faith over Athena's negligence. Their comments thus follow on from the immediate events in the surrounding narrative in which they play a significant role. This type of direct and casual encounter with the supernatural is a common feature of the wider medium of epic, in which the activities of the gods flow directly into encounters with mortals.[150] The grand scale of the Homeric landscape, in which one is able to take in the activities on Mount Olympus in one line, and the affairs of the Ithacan palace in the next, allows regular description of the gods' activities, and their wider interactions with the mortal cast of the epic poems.[151]

The treatment of the deities as individuals is tied to the Homeric poems' narrative dynamics.[152] Both Helen and Odysseus have had their lives tightly intwined with the interests of the gods, meaning there is a foundational relationship between mortal and god that sets a baseline for their interactions. Athena's care for Telemachus, and Aphrodite's recent rescue of Paris from battle with Menelaus links them to Odysseus and Helen, meaning their personal interactions arise organically. As such, there is a familiarity within each mortal's statements to the gods, as they recognise the deities and have a conversation about the quality of their relationships and how aggravating they find them. Both Helen and Odysseus have similar complaints, as each notes the gods' flippant attitudes to the mortals' travails. Helen withers at the shame of tending to Paris, as her metaphor of travelling to Maeonia and Phrygia conveys a sense of exhaustion at the goddess' requests, and an emphasis on how trivial these instructions are compared to the impact it has on her. Odysseus, similarly, draws a contrast between his desperate desire to reach home, and Athena's toying attitude towards him, facilitated by the ease with which she can change shape, and so making it difficult for him to identify if she is truly there supporting him or not.

The elements of these statements draw parallels with the tragic examples under discussion below, as well as contrasts. As part of an extensive and continuous diegetic report, Helen and Odysseus's interaction with their deities are embedded in the course of narrated events, caused by, and then flowing into other scenarios. In this, there is a clear resemblance to tragedy, in which the wider reasons for the outbursts against the gods are clearly laid out for the audience in the dialogue prior to their utterance. Helen and Odysseus' unique situations cause and shape these interactions, with the characters' statements against the gods adding detail to the relationship from the characters' perspective of the narrative's events. Helen's

[150] Kearns 2004: 62.
[151] Hom. *Od.* 1.1-115.
[152] Kearns 2004: 60.

criticism of Aphrodite shows a savvy, sharp-eyed awareness of her own role which, even as Helen relents and does as instructed, hones a sense of her self-possession as she commentates and highlights the absurdity of the goddess' control over her. Odysseus is unhappy and unsure of Athena's intentions towards him and reflects on the absence of her support throughout his long-winded journey home, so recently retold to the Phaeacians, which results in his unwillingness to believe her word without question. There is thus a coherence, both in terms of the developed, narrative context of these moments occurrence, as the next event in a wider chain, and in terms of the characters' psychological comprehension of their circumstances and relationship with the god.

The grand scope of epic, set across multiple locations and told from numerous perspectives, is made possible by the ever present, omniscient narrator. The gods skim down from Olympus to greet the mortals and enact their plans in the next paragraph of text, granting the reader a constant connection to the flow of narrative events and how they link together across locations, scenes and individuals.[153] An audience familiar with the poem is aware that Athena has constantly been by Telemachus' side, or that Aphrodite has maintained an interest in Paris' wellbeing, or that each goddess has been advocating their interests in the affairs of mortals to Zeus himself. We know before Odysseus that it is Athena he speaks to, and we have been told, not shown, of his fear that he has not in fact reached his home of Ithaca.[154] We are similarly kept informed of Helen's internal consternation at the sight and reception of Aphrodite's instructions. The diegetic tools of the narrative floats in and out of the characters' perspectives, taking us to the top of Mount Olympus and across the sea, granting a persistent multiplicity to the narrative gaze.[155] Zeus, on his throne, complains of mortals blaming him for hardships, before the narrative skims over into its main body, depicting many mortals doing precisely that, their complaints pre-empted to us, and so granting a particular frame to the characters' accusations against the gods when they arise as predicted.[156] The presence of a constant, unnamed guide who describes the action thus facilitates the receipt of all relevant information, whilst also providing a level of objectivity, with all descriptions of the characters, their actions and internal processes divulged from the perspective of a third party. These characters were not visible to the audience to behold

[153] de Jong 2014: 27-28.
[154] Ho. *Od.* 195-216.
[155] de Jong 2014: Ibid. Homer. *Il.* 2.1-110.
[156] Ho. *Od.* 32-41.

themselves, but constructed through reportage, with the most relevant details from the wider narrative selected and presented across a vast geographic area, and from a huge cast of mythological figures. The scene in which Helen meets Aphrodite in her bed chambers, before she walks through the interior to find Paris, or Odysseus encounters a shepherd on the seashore, who magically turns into Athena, is one in a sequence of such scenes in a vividly described narrative, unbound by material obstacles. The characters' statements against the gods are thus activated from this distance, embroiled in a wider narrative which is described, not visibly shown, to the audience. Nevertheless, the epics show these moments of unorthodox interaction with the gods amidst a background of conventional order of address, presenting them as interpersonal and with the mortal interlocuters' emotions as a key factor in the reasons for their utterance.

2.3. Songs of Disappointment: Criticisms of Zeus in the *Theognidea*

In a fragmentary poem attributed to Theognis, the singer declares astonishment at the influence the gods, and especially Zeus, hold over mankind, and how this authority does not grant a logical or fair set of guidelines for mortal behaviours.[157] Additionally, the singer complains that it does not seem to matter how careful one is: plenty of immoral individuals walk around untroubled, while good men are brought low by misfortune.[158] The god is both unassailable and ineffable in his power, precluding any clear or easy explanation. It is simply a harsh reality that the god holds substantial influence over the world of men, and yet does not appear to act logically or conscionably, despite his greater knowledge and ability.

Archaic lyric poetry, as pieces composed and performed in cult scenarios, typically hold a strong line of reverence for the gods.[159] When not overtly praising the gods with the established hymnic formula, lyric poetry frames deities in terms of their control over mankind. For example, in Simonides 526-527frs. ("God is the one who can contrive all things: in mortal life, nothing is safe from harm. There is no ill that men should not expect; in a short space of time God reshuffles everything,") and Mimnermus 2fr ("There's none god does not give a multitude of ills,"), the statements are made entirely in the third person, and possess a timeless, descriptive quality that is typical of lyric *gnome*.[160] Evidently, these authors express appreciation of Zeus and the gods on an epic, grand scale that signifies the distance and immensity of the divine's power, reflecting on these features through aphorisms in which familiar and depersonalised statements are replicated, with a universal view applied. Therefore, observations are pointedly vague and sweeping, with the focus is not so much on the fairness or justice of the gods' actions, but the vagaries of life and the natural laws humanity is subjected to. The speakers are not accusing, but rather, commentating dispassionately and without force. While the modern reader may suspect a tone of disapproval from the simple fact that the author is describing an imbalance of punishment between the deserving and undeserving, there is nothing in the text itself that approaches judgement.[161] There is no attempt to hold Zeus accountable.

[157] For this uncertain attribution to Theognis, see Bakker 2017: 100.
[158] Theognis 373-392 W.
[159] Carey 2009: 26.
[160] Swift 2017: 162.
[161] Greene 1935: 13-14.

By contrast, fragment 373-392 frames Zeus' behaviour explicitly from the singer's particular perspective, and takes an uncompromisingly negative view:

> Ζεῦ φίλε, θαυμάζω σε· σὺ γὰρ πάντεσσιν ἀνάσσεις
> τιμὴν αὐτὸς ἔχων καὶ μεγάλην δύναμιν,
> ἀνθρώπων δ᾽ εὖ οἶσθα νόον καὶ θυμὸν ἑκάστου,
> σὸν δὲ κράτος πάντων ἔσθ᾽ ὕπατον, βασιλεῦ:
> πῶς δή σευ, Κρονίδη, τολμᾷ νόος ἄνδρας ἀλιτροὺς
> ἐν ταὐτῇ μοίρῃ τόν τε δίκαιον ἔχειν,
> ἤν τ᾽ ἐπὶ σωφροσύνην τρεφθῇ νόος, ἤν τε πρὸς ὕβριν
> ἀνθρώπων ἀδίκοις ἔργμασι πειθομένων;
> οὐδέ τι κεκριμένον πρὸς δαίμονός ἐστι βροτοῖσιν,
> οὐδ᾽ ὁδὸς ἥν τις ἰὼν ἀθανάτοισιν ἄδοι.
>
> "Dear Zeus, I wonder at you. You are lord of all, holding honour and the power for yourself; you know the mind and soul of all men, and your power is the utmost, king; so how does your mind, son of Cronus, dare to hold evil and just men all and the law-abiding man, whether discretion orders their mind or if they are won over by wantonness and corruption? And no adjudication of the gods is delivered to mankind, no path to follow that will please the immortals."

The initial address to the god, complete with the epithet "dear" (φίλε) and the comment of the author "marvelling" (θαυμάξω) at him suggests the beginning of a typical prayer formula to the god, emphasising his supremacy and worthiness for worship.[162] The god is

[162] Griffith 2010: 77.

"king", the mortal term of authority frequently used in lyric to reflect respect for the gods.[163] However, the tone shifts, and the singer switches to disparaging the god for allowing injustice to prevail amongst mortals. There are two specific literary techniques utilised in this extract, which are also found in epic and tragedy examples of denouncements against the gods. Firstly, the first-person, or the so-called "lyric I" personalises the sentiments, and makes the "marvelling" the singer's own, creating a deictic reference to the singer's immediate frame of reference. Bakker has commented on the "lyric I", and the use of the present tense in contrast against epic's usual reference to the third person description of heroes in the distant past. The lyric poem is thus bringing the audience closer to its themes and content through its reference to the "here and now."[164]As the poem proceeds, the perspective changes from amazement to confusion, representing a shift in the singer's emotional and cognitive experience that is presented as spontaneously occurring as he speaks, demonstrating his changing affective disposition as he stands before the audience and comments on Zeus's behaviour.

In other places where the singer observes the god's actions in non-praising terms, Archaic poetry typically refers to both the gods and mortals in the third person, and the actions are described generally, not as one singular instance or set of instances, but as a foundational law of the order of the cosmos. Another quote attributed to Theognis speaks of the gods' overwhelming superiority over mankind ("by no means all is accomplished to man's liking; Immortals are much stronger than mortals."), or as the above quotes from Simonides and Mimnermus show.[165] Described in this manner, there is no consideration of a particular time or location; the god is omnipresent and omnipotent, his absolute nature eradicating the particular. The poet of fragment 373-392 of the *Theognidea* breaks with tradition, by placing himself as an individual into a scenario that is usually deindividuated. He offers a perspective that is not purely of the cosmic landscape, from afar and welded into a concept of ultimate objectivity, but brings his own subjective persona into an established divine/mortal dynamic, commenting directly on the dichotomy of just and villainous, and how it is being arbitrated by the gods. This is not the specific narrative scenarios presented in the examples from epic, in which a named, complete character, responds directly to a present deity's prompt. Instead, the individual speaking is carrying forth his own personality to make a statement on a wider

[163] Griffith 2010: 76.
[164] Bakker 2017: 104.
[165] Theognis 617-618; Simonides 526-527; Mimnermus 2; See also Archilochus 232.76.

scenario, which is made more immediate by his very presence as he performs the poem. This is not something occurring in the distant mythical past, but rather, it is in the present moment, with a thinking, physical pair of eyes and a living voice.[166] There is thus an impression of the thoughts occurring as they are being uttered, as the author brings the god into the same pliable present as his audience and describes the gods from only his own and current perspective. Thus, the supreme divine objectivity is diluted with a temporal and local mortal experience.

The second literary device the singer uses are questions to point out how the god is disappointing him, as he probes the god in polemic fashion ("So how, Zeus, can you bring yourself to treat alike wrongdoers and the law-abiding man…?"). The use of questions to the god, as seen in the epic examples, pushes an interrogative tone onto the god, demanding answers for a situation that he is being directly and heatedly blamed for. The singer's curiosity is thus utilised into attempting interaction with the god to find a solution to the inconsistencies the speaker has noted. Therefore, the singer's affective display of confusion and indignation is followed with an effort to extract answers to the dissatisfying order he has observed.

These two devices relay a far more urgently searching quality missing in the more formulaic comments elsewhere in Archaic poetry. The singer of the *Theognidea* evinces an emotional engagement with the deity on a personal level, similar to Odysseus and Helen's, though of course not so particularly linked to a wider narrative. The personal, affective quality of the verse creates a multi-dimensional perspective of Zeus' dominion that is also antagonistic. The poet's opening address to Zeus ("I marvel at you Zeus") and his questions ("How then is it, Son of Cronus, that your mind can bear to hold the wicked and the righteous in the same esteem…?") work to deliberately prioritise the author's subjective response to Zeus' action ahead of the immediate acceptance of the god's rule. Thus, while the author is attempting to comprehend the power dynamic at play, there is also a detectable aggression to his perplexity. Pulleyne has suggested that the use of φῖλε ("dear/beloved") may be considered a personable, almost informal method of address; however, the urgency of the questions, followed by the author's detailed account of the god's inability to differentiate between wrong-and right-doers, mitigates any apparent friendliness or light-heartedness.[167] In fact,

[166] Carey 2017: 39.
[167] Pulleyne 1997: 199.

juxtaposed with these features, the term gains a tone of desperation, as the singer conveys his intense desire for clarity, drawing the god closer in order to gain answers, and so puncturing the dyed-in assumption of Zeus' inapproachability.

The personal investment in the god's rule, and the desire to find answers, is seen again in another fragment of the *Theognidea*:

> Ζεῦ πάτερ, εἴθε γένοιτο θεοῖς φίλα τοῖς μὲν ἀλιτροῖς
>
> ὕβριν ἀδεῖν…. αὐτὸν ἔπειτα πάλιν τεῖσαι κακά…
>
> καὶ τοῦτ', ἀθανάτων βασιλεῦ, πῶς ἐστι δίκαιον,
>
> ἔργων ὅστις ἀνὴρ ἐκτὸς ἐὼν ἀδίκων
>
> μήτιν' ὑπερβασίην παρέχων μηδ' ὅρκον ἀλιτρόν,
>
> ἀλλὰ δίκαιος ἐών, μὴ τὰ δίκαια πάθῃ;
>
> O father Zeus, I wish the gods let the wicked commit crimes as they like…. but then afterwards they pay the price for their crimes…. And so, king of the deathless ones, how is it just that a man exists without doing injustice, nor cause transgression nor broke an oath in wickedness someone who keeps out of wrongfulness, guilty of no transgression and no perjury, but being righteous, does not suffer righteously?[168]

Again, the first-person address to Zeus proceeds towards an interrogation. The content also strikes a similar note, as the poet mourns the lack of clarity or equity in the treatment of good and bad men, also emphasised through his personal stake. These thoughts are phrased as a wish (εἴθε), adding a greater sense of loss and pathos when the author reflects again on the injustice of bad men escaping punishment and good men suffering. The questions are intoned to be especially revealing of this fact, putting pressure on this inherent misalignment in the address to Zeus, with a repetition of terms associated with justice and

[168] Theognis 731-752.

injustice (δίκαιον… ἀδίκων… δίκαιος… δίκαια). The poet continues this line of thought, developing a new outlook on the god that is based on critical appraisal. This leads into speculation as to the future of mortal-divine relations:

τίς δή κεν βροτὸς ἄλλος, ὁρῶν πρὸς τοῦτον, ἔπειτα
ἅζοιτ᾽ ἀθανάτους, καί τινα θυμὸν ἔχων,
ὁππότ᾽ ἀνὴρ ἄδικος καὶ ἀτάσθαλος, οὔτε τευ ἀνδρὸς
οὔτε τευ ἀθανάτων μῆνιν ἀλευόμενος,
ὑβρίζῃ πλούτῳ κεκορημένος, οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι
τρυχῶνται χαλεπῇ τειρόμενοι πενίῃ;

Indeed, which man, should he witness this, afterwards stand in awe of the Immortals, and knowing this, when criminal and wicked men are not shunned by the wrath of men or gods, but fill their boots with wealth and violence, and the good men are weakened and worn out in difficulty and poverty?

In the above verse, the singer describes the fading of respect for Zeus as a natural result of disillusionment with this rife injustice, so drastically that Zeus' worship is jeopardised and the power structure between mortal and god is under threat. While the poet has been describing his own desires for a greater sense of justice and orderliness in the world (εἴθε), this first-person is dropped when he turns to his suggestion of the god's worship being hurt, with his description of "which other man" (τίς…. βροτὸς ἄλλος). The use of "other" (ἄλλος) emphasises that it is not only him failing in his continued observance of the god, but that the discontinuation of the gods' worship is an effect of the universal experience of the sentiment he is uttering.

The poet (or poets) of the *Theognidea* speak more extensively on the mechanisms of the gods' actions than in the examples shown in epic, where the key and vaunted mythological characters of Helen and Odysseus both fixate primarily on their own

complaints and criticisms against the god in their specific, individual situation, and as part of brief conversations taking place in the flow of action. In the *Theognidea,* the poet discusses the wider patterns of the gods' behaviour and how it impacts men generally, keeping the universal view as seen in the other examples of Archaic poetry, but with a decisively critical tone. The questions are not only interrogative but also speculative, linking the speaker's personal aggrievement to the gods' wider control over mortals, as he reflects on Zeus' mishandling of mankind. As with other Archaic poets, the author of the *Theognidea* is making a grand-in-scope commentary on the *cosmos,* with this wider view bringing his personalised statements of discontent into a new significance as the impacts on ordinary, everyman worshippers are described. As such, there is a clear progress in the singer's complaints, which begins with his personal aggrievements against the god, to wider criticisms on the gods' overall role, made in the same aggressive tone, and then onto the eventual suggestion on the cessation of future observance. This is the opposite effect of the gnomic statements seen from the likes of Mimnermus and Simonides, which encourage an understanding that Zeus' power is unapproachable and eternal, with no suggestion that the insignificant mortals could do anything to change the state of affairs. This escalation, from the singer's initial complaint to the suggestion of reprisal on the god, demonstrates how much more active and forceful these statements, questions and criticisms are than the prescribed and blithe commentaries on the gods that occur with more regularity across the Greek literary corpus.

The lyric performance involved a live reading to a gathered group of celebrators, and as expounded on by Griffith, produced an immersive aesthetic and sensual experience for the spectators, complete with wine and appeals to the god to guide the performer.[169] In this impressionistic setting, the singer's adoption of the persona and affective demeanour represented in the poem would better draw the audience into considering the subjective and more human view on the gods from their own position, as opposed to the grander scope set into the distant past by the epic narratives. Griffiths goes on to suggest that in lyric's particularly accessible and impactful performance, it enabled "poet and audience to share a momentary heightened mood and more expansive place for themselves as humans to occupy the world."[170] When the lyric poems involved idealistic ponderings of the gods' supreme might, this heightened transcendence of perspective and awareness could result in

[169] Griffith 2010: 73, 92-93.
[170] Griffith 2010: 94.

correspondingly idealistic impressions of the gods. However, the examples of fragment 373-392, and fragment 731-752 of the *Theognidea* deploy an affective and aggrieved persona to engage the audience in a far more dissatisfied and cynical view of the cosmic order.[171] Through his own description of himself marvelling at the god, to his relentless questions, to his plaintive idealising of a fairer and more logical system, the poet expresses a range of feelings on the matter, and it is through these subjective feelings he articulates his observations, attempting to interact with the god, and not just issue flat praise or commentary. It is an attempt at a dialogue that goes beyond a prayer or request, with the implications of the evil-doer's lack of punishment expounded upon, and logically extended to the possible ramifications of Zeus' permissiveness, namely that a mortal might not see the point in worshipping the god if he fails to enforce order. These fragments, with their direct address to the god, initially resemble standard prayers, but veer off considerably in tone and content, and instead they undermine the god's authority rather than inflate it. This anti-prayer quality becomes a foundational characteristic to the author's inserted textual persona. Rather than asking the god for something through song and hymn, or praising his might, he is criticising the god, emphasising the perplexity and interior perspective that led him to this negative conclusion.[172] The singer therefore sculpts his interaction Zeus to appear conventional and conciliatory in format, but rather supplants this perfunctory, usual communication with a critical and apparently sincere depreciation of the god's behaviour. This prioritises his personal, organic response to the god ahead of the more usual invocation, creating a uniquely different tone to the relationship between god and mortal. The voice from these fragments thus ventures away from the expected address and attitude to the gods, and instead offers an autonomous and reticent conception of morality and order that diverges from the standard version delivered by other authors.[173]

As epic portrays gods and mortals interacting as part of a wider narrative, and Archaic lyric poetry contains impassioned and personal statements in which the speaker directly announces their unhappiness with the gods, when we turn to tragedy, we can see these complementary features joined to create an immersive, physically-enacted experience.

In tragedy, as shall be studied in depth below (Chapters 3-5), the statements against the gods vary in length and force, but they share the same tone, of deeply felt and perturbed

[171] Dewald (2002: 268) discusses a similar use of authorial persona in relation to Herodotus.
[172] Furley 2007: 118.
[173] Pulleyne 1997: 198.

discontent that are reflected in these personalised and pointed statements. Many characters share a similar sense of perplexity as to how the gods could countenance injustice, and some also suggest a danger of mortals ceasing their worship or seeking reprisals. However, there are some key differences between the performance of tragedy and the performance of Archaic epic and lyric poetry. Above all, the transformation of the stage into the spatial and temporal setting of the drama, as well as the extended physical presentation of the named mythical character embodied by an actor as they operate within the narrative, produce a different set of mechanisms for the playwright and performer to operate within. This extended period of time with a character, as their constant personality is exhibited and then deployed within a set location and scenario, is vital to the instigation and use of these outbursts against the divine.

An example from Aeschylus' *Eumenides* illustrates this dynamic. By comparison to the Sophoclean and Euripidean plays studied below, the expression of aggrievement is restrained. However, it demonstrates the potential for a mortal criticising a deity for specific and personalised reasons within an Athenian tragedy and before a Dionysian audience, immersed in the play world.

2.4. Orestes' Dismay in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*

First performed in 458 BCE, the final play of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* trilogy*, Eumenides*, tracks the pursuit and trial of Orestes by the Erinyes, chthonic demon-goddesses committed to seeing him punished for the murder of his mother. As the goddesses pursue him with chilling patience and hungry tenacity, Orestes remains a loyal follower and suppliant of the Olympian gods. In his entreaties to them, it is apparent that he regards his patron gods with suitable deference, sacrificing to them, and underlining his respect for their authority in his overtures.[174] In response, Apollo and Athena respond swiftly and with concern for the loyal, obedient mortal who supplicates himself to them, turning up in person to lead him away from danger and to argue his case against the Erinyes.[175]

In its broad strokes, the relationship conforms strictly to the expectation of a loyal mortal offering constant piety to his deity, regardless of the circumstances he is forced through. This dynamic, in which the mortal conscientiously fulfils the tasks set them by the gods, whether they be standard ritual or unique feats, is common to tragedy. This obedience is expected even in extreme situations: as for example, in Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis* when Iphigineia, upon learning of her imminent sacrifice, declares it "unthinkable" to oppose a god's will.[176] The consequences of stepping away from divine instruction or guidance are frequently portrayed as egregious, as demonstrated in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound,* Euripides' *Bacchae* and Sophocles' *Ajax,* to name a few examples. To survive and thrive as a mortal in tragedy requires constant and unchanging goodness and piety, with continual respect for the distinction in power between oneself and the divinities one is tangled up with.

Aeschylus' *Eumenides,* however, offers something different. After narrowly evading the monstrous Erinyes, who set upon him following his fulfilment of Apollo's instruction to kill his mother, Orestes appeals to the god within his sanctuary at Delphi. Rather than issuing a straightforward prayer or some other typically pious utterance, Orestes expresses something that has undoubtedly been playing on his mind as he is chased down by the chthonic goddesses:

[174] Aesch. *Eum.* 282-298, 468-469.
[175] Aesch. *Eum.* 63, 397.
[176] Eur. *IA.* 1396-1397.

ἄναξ Ἄπολλον, οἶσθα μὲν τὸ μὴ αδικεῖν·

ἐπεὶ δ᾽ ἐπίστᾳ, καὶ τὸ μὴ αμελεῖν μάθε.

σθένος δὲ ποιεῖν εὖ φερέγγυον τὸ σόν.

Lord Apollo, you know how not to be unjust: since you understand (that), learn not to be negligent. For your power is surely enough to do good.[177]

As he speaks, Orestes is addressing the god directly. He stands at the centre of the god's sanctuary, and delivering a standard prayer formula in which he addresses Apollo with the epithet ἄναξ ("lord"), emphasises the god's overwhelming power.[178] However, in his supplication, Orestes adds in a mild reproach. He conveys his understanding and respect for the god's power, observing that Apollo has the "sure ability to do good" (σθένος δὲ ποιεῖν εὖ). However, Orestes is also anxious to point out, in these short, courteous sentences, that Apollo has not been using this ability to its full potential. Alongside the general respect he still offers the god, Orestes' reveals a sense of frustration regarding the hardship he has had to bear with minimal protection.

This is demonstrated by the multiple negations that characterise the first two clauses ("you know *not* to be *un*just…. learn how *not* to be *un*caring" - οἶσθα τὸ μὴ αδικεῖν… τὸ μὴ αμελεῖν μάθε), resulting in a circumlocutionary and litotic statement on Apollo's nature. The first part of this statement is especially vague in its point, but contains an unimpressed tone enfolded within a mild compliment; Orestes does not describe the god as having a good quality (being just), but with legalistic precision, that he knows how not to demonstrate a bad quality (being unjust). This complicates Apollo's reputation as a just god worthy of worship, whilst still giving the impression of praise. Thus, Apollo's disregard for his devotee's well-being is implied. Orestes follows this up with an instruction via a negative imperative constructed with a negatively prefixed substantivized noun (translated here as adjectives): the god should learn to not be uncaring. Orestes is communicating that Apollo *has* been

[177] Aesch. *Eum.* 86-85.
[178] Griffiths 77: 2010.

uncaring, and as a whole, seems to have been rather inactive: Orestes trusts that the god has the potential to be a helpful influence in his travails, but feels an absence of tangible, effective action. His current position as he appears on the stage, with the Erinyes at his heels and him clinging to Apollo's shrine, requires a respectful communication. Nevertheless, he cannot help but emphasise the hardship he has faced, and where he needs Apollo to respond more diligently than he previously had. As a result, Orestes is not plainly beseeching Apollo with a claim that "I need your help" but is mixing in a mild accusation with his prayer. Effectively, Orestes is communicating "I need your help, and you haven't been giving it, and you should have been."

These lines neatly encapsulate this thesis' central interest. Orestes is a conscientious, pious follower of Apollo, but in the moment of these lines' utterance, his patience for the relationship as it stands wears thin, and as a result, the carefully maintained wall of respect between god and mortal is cautiously breeched. This is not typical. Worshippers, by definition, speak deferentially to the worshipped, and so anything that diverges from straightforward praise and prayer stands out, particularly if it involves redressing the gods for disappointing or harmful behaviour. Indeed, the correct fulfilment of the mortal side of the relationship is not only to increase the likelihood of godly intervention and good favour (as Orestes and Apollo's relationship exemplifies), but because to not do so would cause further harm to come down upon the mortal – not only is inactivity unprofitable, but it is dangerous.[179] Orestes and Apollo's relationship survives the former's brief impudence, but then, it was a delicately and cautiously worded complaint, put to a god whose own authority was intertwined with the question of the legality of Clytemnestra's murder. Nevertheless, this is still unusual, as Orestes eschews standard reverential forms of communication, in favour of expressing his immediate, emotionally informed impression of the god and his influence. The play thus lays aside the impersonal religious script in favour of a personalised complaint against the god, with Orestes' interior conception and perception prioritised and made significant to the tragedy overall.

[179] Versnel 2006: 145.

2.5. Chapter Conclusion

The examples investigated above show an overall schema of how and when a mortal would speak plainly about their dislike of the gods. This includes examples of what provokes such irreverent speech, the emphasis placed on the mortal's affective state, and how the impious remark is responded to. In particular, this review has highlighted the nature and range of emotion that was achievable in narratives in which a mortal addressed a god directly. Discontent with a god, particularly one who has effected an unwanted presence in one's life, as with Aphrodite and Helen, or one who has been notably absent, as with Odysseus' and Orestes' observations on Athena and Apollo respectively, is part of the natural range of human sentiment and expression. Nevertheless, the actual voicing of it remains rare, and is normally ensconced in reverential terms of address. Helen's example is notably more aggressive than Odysseus' and Orestes', as she is not asking for the goddess to amend or improve her behaviour, but to go away and leave her alone, essentially rejecting the goddess absolutely. In the example of the *Theognidea,* the singer's complaint against the god is not relegated to an interpersonal exchange or complaint but emits an indignation with the wider disfunction of Zeus' order, calling attention to the pattern of the god's mismanagement. In each of these examples, the performance of these moments would demonstrate, as well as describe, the characters' unhappiness with the divine, using the performer's spoken voice to emphasise the discontent that spurred these denouncements.

As this dissertation now turns to the in-depth review of the examples offered by Sophocles and Euripides, we will be able to see how the expression of negative sentiments and emotions towards the gods opened up greater discussion of the gods' behaviour and was tied into the characterisation and narrative structure of the plays.

3. The Fall from a Great Height: Sophocles' *Ajax* and Euripides' *Hippolytus*

3.1 Introduction

The first two tragedies this dissertation will examine are Sophocles' *Ajax* and Euripides' *Hippolytus,* paired due to the parallels in terms of which characters speak out again the gods, and the circumstances that led to their denouncements. The eponymous protagonists in each of these plays begin in prominent roles within their communities as high-born, athletic males connected to or in position of authority, with Ajax being the chief commander of the Salamian men during the Trojan war, and Hippolytus being the son of Theseus, king of Troezen. Additional to this vaulted social status, both protagonists also boast an especially close or favoured relationship with a goddess, before the play depicts their downfall. The excessive level of personal attachment both Ajax and Hippolytus show to their gods is a key factor to their eventual ruin and denouncement of those same deities, as their attitudes to worship sours drastically as they are left bereft of support. Thus, both dramas depict a shift in their central character in its duration, from god-admirer to god-blamer. In each case, the characters' displayed and emphasised temperaments and personality traits are shown to be a key factor in their obsessive commitment to their chosen deity, and their eventual reversal of that commitment; Ajax indulges in his belief that he has a privileged and companionate bond with Athena, before realising that the goddess has in fact conspired to humiliate him, while Hippolytus similarly relishes his apparently exclusive relationship with Artemis prior to his own downfall. Thus, both characters suffer a social, as well as emotional, fall from grace, as the confidence with which they tout their exceptional relationships with the gods at the beginning of their plays is equalled in force with the bitterness they display at the end. Attention will therefore be paid to how this prior belief, and the confidence and pleasure derived from it, forms Ajax and Hippolytus' actions, and how it impacts their visible attitude after they are shown disgraced and ruined.[180] Furthermore, the deaths of each of these characters take a significant role in the dramas, with each occurring onstage, and so granting their statements against the gods a terminal quality. The following chapter will thus study Ajax and Hippolytus' denouncements of the gods in relation to their death, with their physical presentation and statements around both their criticisms of the divine, and their moment of dying.

[180] Goldhill 1990: 115.

Furthermore, as each characters suffer social humiliation and displacement from previous positions of status prior to their denouncements of the gods, the following study will explore how this factors into their eventual criticisms. As shall be demonstrated, this displacement from the characters' established communities, both physically and in terms of status, is made purposely explicit throughout the tragedies, and leads directly into their discontented statements against the gods.

As well as the destabilised statuses of Ajax and Hippolytus, the following section will also demonstrate that, while the two protagonists most openly call attention to their worsening relationships with the gods, other characters also display anxiety and uncertainty about the gods and their relationship with mortals. This shall be shown to integrate the difficult divine-mortal relations into the dramas' constructed atmospheres of discomfiture, as characters' dialogue, actions, placement, and presentation signal an overall environment of dysfunction between the gods and mortals. As multiple characters, other than Ajax and Hippolytus, note the problematic and destabilised relationship between mortal and god, and react with dismay to the extreme and upsetting events of the play, the protagonists' impious statements do not occur suddenly or with no warning, but rather emerge from a background of consistent, rumbling concern and disruption.

Starting with *Ajax* and its innovative treatment of well-trodden myth, this chapter will emphasise the force with which these statements were made as illustrative of the personality of the character, and the use of staging to effect these instances with dynamic emphasis, animating a conventional narrative with provocative and forceful impact.

3.2 Sophocles' *Ajax*

3.2.1 Introduction

Sophocles' *Ajax,* originally staged circa 430 BCE, contains several moments in which the title character and members of his entourage openly and emphatically blame the gods for a sudden change of fate, with the statements from the title character most plainly demonstrating a retaliatory and embittered tone. When reviewing these moments of the play, there are two elements this study will focus on. First, the character of Ajax himself will be examined, including how his established personality (as it is transplanted from Homer's *Iliad*) is presented and then immediately dismantled onstage once he has realised the goddess has betrayed him, and how it factors into his criticism of Athena and the gods. This tracking of his mental state is marked in the physical performance and staging of the drama, with key moments in the plot emphasised via the character's postural presentation and uttered statements. It is in the aftermath of these emphasised moments that Ajax and his spear-bride,[181] Tecmessa, utter critical statements against the gods, and where Ajax in particular constructs a new understanding that reflects a distrustful and corrupting view of the divine.

Secondly, the opening of the play will be examined for its use of staging, suspense, and characterisation in setting up the foreboding ambience that qualifies the tense relationship not only between Ajax and Athena, but also the gods and mortal-kind as a whole. Odysseus, as Ajax's enemy, provides a thoughtful rumination on the nature of the relationship between the gods and mortals, that works as a greater commentary to what Ajax is personally experiencing. The play's potent use of sudden subversions of expectations to create dramatic and climactic moments, which are then shown to have lingering impacts on the characters' demeanours, demonstrates how theatrical devices could exploit revelation to create a more compelling experience, with the animate medium of drama representing these sudden changes of fate through the characters' affective display. As the characters denounce gods, and especially Athena, who Ajax had previously honoured openly, their negative assessments are given an emphasis drawn from the gravity of the events that sparked them. As the staging emphasises the instability of the relationship between the gods and mortals, and the extent of the calamity that besets Ajax is made clear, the outbursts work to intensify the

[181] Burian (2012: 75) uses this term to denote Tecmessa's status as an enslaved woman, captured during siege and then designated as a particular sexual partner of a soldier.

drama. When Ajax refuses to worship the gods any longer, he uses his affective state, as displayed by his posture and vocalisations, to emphasise the injustice he has suffered. Through his example, the wider tensions between gods and mortals are thus articulated in emotionalised and personal language, with the components of the theatrical production utilised to add greater emphasis to Ajax's profound dismay.

3.2.2. Ajax's Personality and Reversal of Allegiance

Sophocles' *Ajax* details the downfall of Ajax following his loss to Odysseus for Achilles' armour in the Contest of Arms. Before the play's beginning, as Ajax plotted to murder Odysseus and the Atreidae in revenge for committing what he saw as an injustice towards him, Athena mystically blinded him and set him to kill the army's livestock instead. The mention of the Greek ships at the play's outset immediately situates the action of the play in a liminal space, namely on the outskirts of the city of Troy during its siege, with the added factor of the war increasing the impression of a tumultuous environment.[182]

Ajax's own identity is drawn with a similar impression of instability. Before he appears in person, Athena and Odysseus describe him in different ways. Leading on from this, his first in-person introduction is also an unstable and untrue portrayal of him, as it occurs while he is under a delusion.[183] His later Deception Speech, where he assures Tecmessa of his agreement to continue living, shortly before killing himself, also indicates this shifting quality to the character and the unexpected turns he both manufactures himself and is subjected to unwillingly.[184] Ajax's accusations against the gods, and especially Athena, thus emerge from this destabilised and constantly changing environment which is echoed in his own presentation. However, it is key to note that this uncertainty is not random but comes from the specific dismantling of Ajax's character in the events of the plot, with his separation from the gods presented as a key part of this degradation of the character's mythical standing.[185] The character as he is presented onstage is familiar to the audience, with his very name bringing with it a well-known and ready story.[186] The character's appearance in the Homeric epics familiarises him as martially excellent, competitive, and aggressive. Ajax's

[182] Soph. *Aj.* 3.
[183] Spiegel 2016: 77.
[184] Crane 1990: 89-90.
[185] Burian 2012: 70.
[186] Goldhill 1990: 109.

conflict with Odysseus and Athena are also features of the Homeric canon. In Homer's *Iliad,* Athena intervenes in a footrace between the two mortal men, making Ajax slip in a pile of dung to ensure Odysseus' victory, an act of divine manipulation that Ajax himself pithily draws attention to by accusing Athena of mothering Odysseus.[187] In the tragic adaptation, these details are intensified, with Ajax's rivalry with Odysseus and anger with Athena heightened through the character's dialogue and actions.[188]

Ajax's reputation for violence and competition is played on before he arrives onstage, as the descriptions of Ajax's slaughter of the herds is used to cultivate suspense and build the anticipation before his arrival. Odysseus' initial description of Ajax focuses on his athleticism and capacity for violence, with Ajax "bounding across the field…sword wet with blood" (καί μοί τις ὀπτὴρ αὐτὸν εἰσιδὼν μόνον πηδῶντα πεδία σὺν νεορράντῳ ξίφει).[189] However, Ajax's appearance immediately confounds this epic-inspired view. With Athena afflicting Ajax with a mystical bewilderment (ἄτη), under which he first appears onstage, their relationship is presented with a misalignment in their intentions and awareness; Ajax greets the goddess with a cheery and overfamiliar "hail Athena" (ὦ χαῖρ᾽ Ἀθάνα), indicating his expectation of familiarity and good humour between them, while she goads him to celebrate his "victory".[190] This is thus a breakdown in agreement and perception between a god and a mortal, as the *charis*, or goodwill that Ajax had been relying on is proven, after the fact, to be void. This idealised sense of shared goodwill is touched on by Tecmessa, where she states "*charis* always engenders *charis"* (χάρις χάριν γάρ ἐστιν ἡ τίκτουσ᾽ ἀεί).[191] As Athena's actions have made clear to Ajax and his retinue, she bears no goodwill or care towards him, despite his apparent desire for a relationship with her, and so engenders a new series of reciprocal reactions, leading to Ajax's cessation of reverence towards the gods. The process by which he reaches this openly disrespectful and antagonistic position is demonstrated through the character's posture and voice, which both break down as Ajax registers what has happened once the ἄτη is lifted. As he regains articulate speech, his statements also reflect a corresponding destruction of trust with the human authorities he had previously been allied to, as his humiliation by Athena has led to his exclusion from his previous social status.[192] This

[187] Hom. *Il.* 23.951-965.
[188] Worman 2001: 229-230.
[189] Soph. *Aj.* 29-31.
[190] Nooter 2012: 31-33; Burian 2012: 72.
[191] Konstan 167: 2006.
[192] Spiegel 2016: 18.

degraded social and physical presentation is thus key to Ajax's fresh assessment on the gods, feeding into a suspicion that Athena is in conspiracy with his mortal enemies.

The run up to Ajax's first appearance onstage after he has realised Athena has betrayed him is lifted is notably drawn out to a momentum that culminates in a dramatic reveal. Immediately before, the Chorus of Salamian Men and Tecmessa have arrived onstage, with the Chorus operating on rumour of what Ajax has done. Tecmessa quickly confirms this is incorrect, continuing the play's multiplicity of perspective and viewpoints.[193] Sounds are emitted offstage, indicating that Ajax has awakened amidst the corpses of the slaughtered livestock (ἰώ μοί μοι… ἰώ μοί μοι …ἰὼ παῖ παῖ.).[194] Vocal exclamations such as these, particularly "ἰώ μοί μοι", signal acute emotional pain and regret, and so Ajax's repetition here, punctuating Tecmessa's conversation with the Chorus, conveys the character's distress at killing the herds instead of his enemies.[195] The breakdown of recognisable, clearly articulated speech further indicates that Ajax is overwhelmed with emotion, and so forecloses his ability to properly speak.[196] As such, Ajax's emotional state is transmitted ahead of his visual appearance, as his wife and retinue anxiously swap erroneous versions of what has occurred. The aural component of the scene is suddenly and dramatically complemented by his second appearance, when Tecmessa opens the door to the *skene* and cries out, "Look, it's open! Now you can see the situation fallen on him, as he bears it himself" (ἰδού, διοίγω· προσβλέπειν δ᾽ ἔξεστί σωι τὰ τοῦδε πράγη, καὐτὸς ὡς ἔχων κυρεῖ).[197] In her statement uttered before she opens the *skene* doors to reveal Ajax, Tecmessa had described him as "sat…fallen amidst the animal bodies" (κείμενος…..ἐν μέσοις βοτοῖς….πεσών), and it is likely this is how Ajax is presented at the moment of his appearance, with the description of him "fallen" (πεσών) encoding the reception of the actor's posture as the audience regards him.[198] Tecmessa's announcement that the doors are open, and her suggestion that the Chorus "look" (προσβλέπειν) holds deictic purpose, and likely combined with complementary action

[193] de Jong 2006: 74.
[194] Soph. *Aj.* 331.
[195] Perdicoyianni-Paléologue 2002: 57-58.
[196] Nooter 2018: 208; see Seale (1982: 147) on the actor's voice, which Seale posits would have been particularly strong to reflect Ajax's might. If the actor's voice was shown to change in form between his greeting of Athena and his outcries, this would be a further indication of the character's degradation.
[197] Soph. *Aj.* 346.
[198] Wyles (2011) suggests costumes on the tragic stage were similarly encoded with meaning, i.e., that the reception and description of a character by another assisted in the audience's correct reading of that costume. It is logical that the same effect was had on posture.

and gesture from Tecmessa as she revealed the scene, and from the Chorus as they reacted to it. There is an escalating internal resonance during the dialogue as the characters react to the events.[199] If the *ekkyklema* was used to physically thrust Ajax out of the *skene,* the action of this would bring Ajax closer in proximity to the audience, and so intensify the audience's attention on Ajax's appearance, as well as manipulate the drama for a heightened emotional reaction, as Halliwell discussed in relation to *ekplexis*.[200] As such, this is a psychologically potent moment, delivered with striking visual imagery as Ajax is arranged in a physically advancing tableau, combined with the shared expressions of worry and fear emitted by Tecmessa and the Chorus.[201] Ajax's appearance, collapsed and surrounded by the corpses of animals, contrasts against his previous description by Odysseus, bringing a pitiful endnote to the impressive image of his bounding across the field in murderous rage.[202] A lowered position, particularly if the character is on his knees, acts as a posture for grief, with Bremmer noting that Ajax's pose here in particular signals self-abasement as he flounders in his humiliation.[203]

Once revealed, Ajax speaks intelligibly and immediately expresses his misery through allusions to a metaphorical "wave" that has "surrounded him during a "storm" (ἄρτι κῦμα φοινίας ὑπὸ ζάλης ἀμφίδρομον κυκλεῖται.), and by begging the Chorus to kill him on top of the dead livestock ("kill me with the rest of these" - ἀλλά με συνδάϊξον), possibly referring to present stage dressing.[204] He then refers to his previously known reputation for military excellence, in ironic contrast to his current pitiable state:

> ὁρᾷς τὸν θρασύν…. ἐν ἀφόβοις με θηρσὶ δεινὸν χέρας; ὤμοι γέλωτος, οἷον ὑβρίσθην ἄρα
>
> Behold the bold…., in me is the fearless, terrible hand against livestock. What a laugh, it is, that I have committed this act."[205]

[199] Hof 2020: 121-122.
[200] Taplin 2003: 108. Halliwell 2012: 229.
[201] Eis 2016: 14; Seale 1982: 153.
[202] Soph. *Aj.* 30.
[203] Capponi 2020: 351; Bremmer 1993: 26.
[204] Soph. *Aj.* 350-351,
[205] Soph. *Aj.* 366.

Ajax addresses Tecmessa and the Chorus, acknowledging that he is exposed to them in his humiliation, whilst making wry reference to his impressive reputation (ὁρᾷς τὸν θρασύν). He continues this bitter comparison in his description of himself as "the terrible hand", again referring to his physical prowess, and juxtaposing it with his present state, represented with correspondingly wretched visuals. Ajax's emotional state, and in particular his devastation and bitterness is highlighted as he utters another exclamation (ὤμοι), and describes his situation as "a laugh" (γέλωτος), with this choice of term highlighting that Ajax is being ridiculed in this scenario.[206] The scenario's absurdity is thus wielded to bring out Ajax's pathos, as he himself acknowledges how ridiculous he looks, particularly in comparison with his impressive reputation, the ruin of which is rendered with stagecraft that used props and scenery to visually impact the audience.[207]

Ajax's first scenes thus fully dismantle his previous identity. As he regains his awareness, Ajax undergoes a complete loss of speech, and posture, which echoes the destruction of his ambitious and proud demeanour. It is after this complete dismantling of the character of epic that the audience witnesses his tragic restructuring, primarily of the character's new relationship with the gods and Athena in particular. However, in-keeping with his aura from myth, this restructuring is predicated on Ajax's established traits of militarism and aggression.

Ajax does not move from his downcast posture until after line 425, where he states "dishonoured…here I lie" (ἄτιμος…. ὧδε πρόκειμαι), bringing another reminder that his physical posture is linked to his deterioration. It is thus in this position that he makes his first statement blaming Athena for his downfall:

> οὔτε γὰρ θεῶν γένος οὔθ᾽ ἁμερίων
> ἔτ᾽ ἄξιος βλέπειν τιν᾽ εἰς ὄνασιν ἀνθρώπων.
> ἀλλά μ᾽ ἁ Διὸς
> ἀλκίμα θεὸς
> ὀλέθρι᾽ αἰκίζει.

[206] Halliwell 2008: 305.
[207] Seale 1982: 153.

> For not to the race of gods nor to the day-walking mankind do I look to, useless that I am. For she of Zeus, the gallant goddess, she torments me to my destruction.[208]

Here, Ajax discusses the realms of man and gods as structures within which he is now unable to operate within due to Athena's unfavourable attention. Firstly, these lines indicate Ajax's internal process of valuation, and how this valuation effects his actions. His ability to look to (βλέπειν) the gods or mankind is directly related to his "worth" (ἄξιος) and "use" (ὄνασιν). Ergo, Ajax expects help to only come to those who are deemed worthy of it. In his destitution, he sees himself as a pariah to both gods and men, unvalued because of his lack of "use". This could only be a reference to his martial glory, that has been debased and depreciated through his mockery; as seen before the ἄτη lifted, he was exceedingly proud of his violent accomplishments, and spoke of tokens of value and prestige, promising golden prizes to Athena.[209] Ajax is thus announcing a change in how he is able to operate, as he is unable to assert his physical strength to any benefit or prestige. However, he also expresses an awareness of Athena's role in causing his downfall. Specifically, Ajax mentions Athena's failure to recognise him as the finest soldier in the army, which perplexes Ajax and his party, and possibly could be something the audience themselves may be puzzling over.[210] Athena's animus for Ajax is, at this point of the play, entirely unexplained, and the extremity of it, in terms of the destruction it has brought to Ajax, has been emphasised without clarification. Indeed, it is notable that the goddess did not only blind him, but also waited until the most devastating moment to snap him out of his trance, bringing him back only once he had humiliated himself before the Greeks.[211]

Noticeably, as Ajax moves to discuss Athena's role in his downfall, and he begins to assert blame against her, his speech is rhythmically structured to add punch to his accusations. These lines are delivered melodically, with the first two longer lines holding twelve and fourteen syllables, the middle two holding five each, and the last holding six. The beat thus directs the strongest impact and gravitas onto these last three lines, in which Athena's

[208] Soph. *Aj.* 401.
[209] Soph. *Aj.* 92-93.
[210] Lawall 1959: 291.
[211] Schein 1997: 131; Podlecki 1980: 55.

culpability is outlined. Athena is not referenced directly, only referred to through euphemism (ἁ Διὸς, ἀλκίμα θεὸς) with a flattering description of her as "gallant" (ἀλκίμα.) However, this is immediately followed by direct reference to her destruction of Ajax (ὀλέθρι), accompanied with an explicit accusation of maltreatment (αἰκίζει). This mix of positive and negative terms could be to offset the potential impiety in challenging a deity, but here it also contains an element of ironic bitterness, not unlike Ajax's description of himself as "a terrible hand against livestock."[212] Thus Ajax causally links his newly abject, worthless status with Athena's adverse treatment, while this caustic tone signals a deeply felt, albeit impotent, rage.

After this, it is likely that he stands up, particularly as from line 430, he delivers an extensive speech decrying his bad luck in the face of his impressive martial ability and lamenting his father's proud battle legacy which is now ruined through his humiliation. The act of standing up would serve a practical need for the actor needing to fully inflate lungs and project his voice for a prolonged period of time. Standing up during his speech would also draw theatrical attention on it, bringing in a sense of the assertiveness and aggression he was previously known for. It is during this speech that he argues against Tecmessa's suggestions of re-joining the Greek army, as he promotes the militarism and athleticism at which he personally excels. He also advances a new theory on the cause of his downfall from this vitalised position.[213] From this standing position, Ajax fleshes out his accusation against the goddess, and develops a new theory as to the reasons for her betrayal, surmising a causal and conspiratorial link between his loss at the Contest of Arms and the ἄτη:

> εἰ ζῶν Ἀχιλλεὺς τῶν ὅπλων τῶν ὧν πέρι
>
> κρίνειν ἔμελλε κράτος ἀριστείας τινί,
>
> οὐκ ἄν τις αὖτ᾽ ἔμαρψεν ἄλλος ἀντ᾽ ἐμοῦ.
>
> νῦν δ᾽ αὖτ᾽ Ἀτρεῖδαι φωτὶ παντουργῷ φρένας
>
> ἔπραξαν, ἀνδρὸς τοῦδ᾽ ἀπώσαντες κράτη.
>
> κεἰ μὴ τόδ᾽ ὄμμα καὶ φρένες διάστροφοι

[212] Soph. *Aj.* 366.
[213] Blundell 1989: 72.

γνώμης ἀπῇξαν τῆς ἐμῆς, οὐκ ἄν ποτε

δίκην κατ᾽ ἄλλου φωτὸς ὧδ᾽ ἐψήφισαν.

νῦν δ᾽ ἡ Διὸς γοργῶπις ἀδάματος θεὰ

ἤδη μ᾽ ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς χεῖρ᾽ ἐπεντύνοντ᾽ ἐμὴν

ἔσφηλεν, ἐμβαλοῦσα λυσσώδη νόσον,

ὥστ᾽ ἐν τοιοῖσδε χεῖρας αἱμάξαι βοτοῖς·

κεῖνοι δ᾽ ἐπεγγελῶσιν ἐκπεφευγότες

If Achilles was alive when his armour was given out among the greatest, no other would have taken them from me. But now the Atreidae passed them all to a man of all-calculating heart, jettisoning the influence I had. And had my heart and mind not been twisted, they would never again count ballots against another man. But now, the grim-eyed daughter of Zeus, unconquerable goddess, at that time I was just then as I was readying my hands to overthrow them, threw me a frenzying plague, I bloodied my hands with grazing beasts. And now they are laughing over their escape.[214]

In his formulation of the events that led to his ensorcellment, Ajax posits a complete reversal of Athena's role as the bringer of justice. His criteria for worthiness, namely strength and martial ability, are referenced once more, as he states with complete certainty (καίτοι τοσοῦτόν γ᾽ ἐξεπίστασθαι δοκῶ) that Achilles, with his peerless skill in battle, would have granted Ajax the armour in recognition of the latter's near-equal ability in battle. Throughout his presentation on stage, Ajax is entirely preoccupied with athletic ability, considering it the only praise-worthy quality, as his exaltation of both Achilles and his father indicates.[215] However, to Ajax's mind, this righteous bequeathal was interrupted by the human greed of the Atreidae, and bolstered by unfair divine action from Athena, with the

[214] Soph. *Aj.* 445-453, selected lines.
[215] Cook 2015: 48-50.

two sides working in tandem to secure his personal destruction. This assumption has already been speculated upon, as Tecmessa has already theorised possible reasons for Athena's betrayal, suggesting that it was due to her unfair favouritism of Odysseus.[216] Ajax develops these theories of a conspiracy between a corrupt god and the miscreant Greek commanders, as his inflexible perspective remains fixed on his physical and martial supremacy. Vitally to Ajax's failing trust, he perceives Athena as assisting his enemies twice, first by denying Ajax the right to punish the Atreidae, and then by destroying his standing by driving Ajax mad and causing him to slaughter the herds. He specifically describes Athena as "warping his mind" (διάστροφοι γνώμης), pointing to this interpretation of Athena as corrupting the course of justice through unfair means.

Casting himself as the rightful superior in the Greek army due to his battle prowess, Ajax offers two versions of himself both as how he sees himself, as an honourable and mighty hero of epic, and as how he was previously seen by the Atreidae and Odysseus. The direct clash in these perceptions is revealed and exacerbated by his slaughtering of the herds, as seen first at line 366 by his self-depracating comments (discussed above), and then here, as he considers the machinations of Odysseus and the Atreidae to deprive him of Achille's armour. Thus, the play sets up a clear contrast between his personality (that is, the main traits he displays that latterly influence his decisions), and character (the operative and impactful agent who interacts with his wider environment, which is found lacking by his peers). Ajax's recognition and description of it grants him an agency that also extends to his expression of his failing trust in Athena.[217] His speech is sung, and Nooter has noted that Ajax is unusual amongst standard heroes of the tragic stage in his use of lyric song. This suggests the character was cast with a poeticized identity, in which Ajax emphasises his suffering, and in doing so, exerts an authority and control in delineating and highlighting that suffering. Through his song, Ajax is exceptionalised amongst the cast, particularly as his retinue, Tecmessa and the Chorus, do not sing as he does.[218] This disconnection further builds on Ajax's isolation, vulnerability, and his mental constriction in accepting what has happened, while also mounting his sense of defiance in the face of his enemies' machinations. Athena's "betrayal", and her failure to support Ajax's inborn supremacy and brute strength, creates an obvious and insurmountable issue for Ajax and his continued

[216] Soph. *Aj.* 953-954.
[217] Gill 1990: 20.
[218] Nooter 2012: 31-39.

existence, perverting the natural and correct order so that Ajax will naturally lose out. It is this subversion of order, as he perceives it, that Ajax now makes a purposeful stand against. In Konstan's review of emotions in ancient Greece, he notes that a desire for revenge, as Ajax has tried and failed to enact, is the natural result of anger at slights and insults, which is what Ajax clearly experienced when Odysseus was chosen over him for Ajax's armour, and when Athena subsequently betrayed him. However, his repulsion at the underhanded methods of the Atreidae and Odysseus, in direct opposition to his in-born athletic supremacy, points to a deep-seated hatred; that is, a response to something deemed innately bad or harmful.[219] Ajax's outrage and uncompromising belief in his own rectitude thus stems from a profound sense of indignation and fury at what he perceives to be the unprincipled and devious actions of Athena and the Atreidae.[220]

Ajax's belief in this perversion, and his determination to resist it, is seen again when Ajax comments that "with the gods' corruption, a lowly man can overcome the better" (εἰ δέ τις θεῶν βλάπτοι, φύγοι τἂν χὠ κακὸς τὸν κρείσσονα). Once more, the gods are recognised, with a great deal of anger from Ajax, as corrupting, distorting influences on correct order, where he would rightfully be considered at the top.[221] This pessimistic view is enforced emphatically when Tecmessa implores him "by the gods" (θεῶν ἱκνοῦμαι) to think of her and their child, in which Ajax states explicitly that he cannot engage the gods any further:

> Αἴας
>
> ἄγαν γε λυπεῖς, οὐ κάτοισθ᾽ ἐγὼ θεοῖς
>
> ὡς οὐδὲν ἀρκεῖν εἴμ᾽ ὀφειλέτης ἔτι;
>
> Τέκμησσα
>
> εὔφημα φώνει.
>
> Ajax

[219] Konstan 2006: 43-50.
[220] Konstan 2006: 117, 191.
[221] Soph. *Aj.* 455 – 456.

You are so vexing. Don't you know by now that I have no obligation to the gods?

Tecmessa

Careful what you say![222]

Tecmessa attempts to compel Ajax to co-operate with the Greek commanders, coercing him with a standard invocation to the gods to add authority to her request. It is thus telling that Ajax specifically baulks at this generic invocation of divine authority. His answer, after telling Tecmessa how vexing he finds her pressuring of him (ἄγαν γε λυπεῖς), creates a frivolous, dismissive tone to meet her impassioned and desperate one, before he goes on to wave away her appeal to the supernatural authority of the divine. That he calls attention to this standard expression of moral enforcement, specifically to state his lack of further exchange within this system, communicates a nihilistic finality. In essence, the linguistic power of such an invocation is nullified, with the emphasis drawn on to the "nothing" that he owes by the juxtaposition of "ἐγὼ θεοῖς" at the end of the first line, before building into his eschewal of all further worship of the gods.[223]

These lines are the most openly dismissive and antagonistic towards the divine in the play, and they hold many of the hallmarks of denouncements against the gods from the wider literary tradition, as seen in the second section of this dissertation. Ajax uses the first person, to specify that he has been personally wronged by the gods. He focuses on what he, personally, has lost, how Athena has betrayed him, and so Ajax does not lose himself or any of the details of what he has suffered. He also poses his statement as a rhetorical question, but in this example, unlike in others that will be examined, this does not add a searching, desperately interrogative tone. Rather, it is posed to Tecmessa, with an informative, rather than inquisitive tone. To ask "do you not know" (οὐ κάτοισθ᾽) implies that the answer to this question is obvious to all involved, and prompts an affirmative response, further pointing to the completeness with which Ajax has accepted his ejection from the divine order.[224] Whether this line was delivered with a tone of frivolousness, with a wave of the hand or a

[222] Soph. *Aj.* 589-591.
[223] Finglass 2011: 311.
[224] Mastronarde 1979: 8.

vindicative spit on the floor, or if it was delivered with gravitas, to indicate the severity of such a separation from the gods, is impossible to say. Either way, the taboo nature of Ajax's words is evident in Tecmessa's response, as she issues a short imperative to Ajax to be careful how he speaks (εὔφημα φώνει – literally "utter good words"), effectively silencing his impiety. Tecmessa's reaction is a reminder of the prevailing social and religious order still in place, and to which she still shows an impulsion to pull Ajax back within the bounds of functional society. Later, Tecmessa's instinct for caution is demolished entirely by the news of Ajax's death, and she reaches a similar peak of emotional aggravation as Ajax here, leading her also to comment on the goddess' culpability in such a way that emphasises the apparent injustice of it, as shall be discussed below.

In his rebuttal to Tecmessa's urging, Ajax explicitly communicates that his disillusionment with Athena's actions has had an impact on his future relationship with the gods, namely that he "owes them nothing" (ὡς οὐδὲν ἀρκεῖν εἴμ᾽ ὀφειλέτης ἔτι). Tecmessa's citation of the god's power does not impact him except to provoke a rebuff, as he has accepted a place outside of the order to which she refers. That Ajax specifies that he no longer owes the gods "anymore" (ἔτι) recalls that this despondent and recalcitrant attitude is the result of recent and devastating events, and that this is a freshly fallen man, still reeling from humiliation. This stripping of his martial might and proud reputation has similarly removed Ajax from the assumed position of worshipper. At the beginning of the play Ajax had promised the goddess "golden spoils from the hunt in thanks to you" (σε παγχρύσοις ἐγὼ στέψω λαφύροις τῆσδε τῆς ἄγρας χάριν) due to his belief in her support in his "victory" against Odysseus and the Atreidae. Now, as Tecmessa pushes him to work with the Atreidae "by the gods", Ajax's response recalls this previous offer he made to the goddess, drawing attention to its newly null status. This withdrawal of service from the gods, and his earlier reference to having no worth or "use" points to a transactional and prestige-based conception of the mortal-divine relationship that collapsed because of Athena's failure to deliver what he had expected, directly leading to the natural abdication of any further sense of obligation. Ajax's affective and logical responses to the scenario he faces are thus shown to be entirely in-step with each other, as he emotionally prepares to commit suicide by separating himself from the gods.[225]

[225] Lawrence 2005: 23.

After this exchange, Ajax and Tecmessa leave the stage, adding a further emphasis on the finality of Ajax's demeanour.[226] While Ajax is not yet dead, the vacating of the space immediately after he openly ends his worship is foreboding. These lines, with their emphatic shortness and simplicity, represents the inevitable result of the disillusionment Ajax has undergone; he has no interest in reconciliation as he regards the gods as entities who ultimately distort rightful order. Thus, he is pointedly alienating himself further from the gods due to their complicity with the Atreidae, the lesser men who supplanted his innate right to prestige via trickery. Gill analyses Ajax's suffering as caused especially because of the apparently unjustified nature of his humiliation. Despite his certitude in his righteousness, he has no patron to support him, and so his death comes as a result of this lack of visible or sympathetic ally. However, his suicide also works as an act of defiance in the face of corrupted system.[227] In his Deception Speech, where he misleads his retinue by presenting the opposite of his sentiments and intentions, Ajax does not only suggest he may serve the Atreidae, but also to "give way to the gods." (τοιγὰρ τὸ λοιπὸν εἰσόμεσθα μὲν θεοῖς εἴκειν.)[228] The gods and the Atreidae are thus irretractably bound in Ajax's perceptions – to reconcile with one is to reconcile with the other, marking both contingents as emblematic of what he struggles against.

From Ajax's dramatic entrance on the *ekkyklema* to his defiant exit from the stage, his relationship with his human peers is shown in a state of free fall, with the visual and aural composition of the stage a seminal component in the representation of Ajax's dynamic mental and affective state. Shortly after his Deception speech, in which he feints towards acclimatising to the new order, his return to commit suicide in full view of the audience confirms his defiance towards these inimical contingents, with his physical act of suicide onstage emphasising his refusal to go any further with either the gods or his former human allies. Thus, his sword becomes his best ally as he refers to his course of action in the plural first person ("we are well-equipped" - εὐσκευοῦμεν).[229]

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[226] Seale (1982: 157-158) suggests that Ajax is withdrawn via the *ekkyklema,* in the same prone and hopeless position amongst the slaughtered herds as he begun the scene. The present author doubts this, as the volume of speech making throughout would necessitate some help with the actor's voice projection. Nevertheless, it is possible that the *ekkyklema* was used to withdraw the stage items used to stand in for the slaughtered herds.
[227] Gill 1996: 206-207.
[228] Soph. *Aj.* 667-668.
[229] Seale 1982: 165; Soph. *Aj.* 823.

The play thus continues to show violence, hopelessness, and shame in dramatic onstage moments throughout, using movement and the actor's body to convey the immediacy of the plot, rather than concealing these facets offstage and filtering them through report.[230] The play shuns tact and convention, in favour of bald and forthright statement, lingering on Ajax's destructive upheaval and uncertainty. Mueller's review of the prop of Ajax's sword, and how it creates a continuing and possibly causal link from the drama's epic origins through to Ajax's death, and how it represents his active agency, right up until the moment of his death, adds further dimension to Ajax's trajectory.[231] Ajax begins his time onstage in a collapsed position, but rises during his argument with Tecmessa, and in doing so, raises a voice in argument against his treatment by all other parties. At the moment of his death, he is upright again, only to once more render himself low, with his body prostrate on the floor for the rest of the play. This constant physical movement from low to high throughout the drama works to effect Ajax's trajectory from exalted hero to a denigrated physical form, crumpled onstage.[232] Worman suggests that the lack of outright mention of Ajax's immense physical or athleticism, aside from the mention at the beginning of the play of him bounding across the plains with a sword, works to strip Ajax of his mythical renown, presenting him emasculated due to his ruined reputation.[233] However, Ajax's purposeful and emphatic ejection of any further engagement with either the Atreidae or the gods serves to assert his will, as he uses his words and striking presentation, either collapsed or stood in argument, to articulate his complete despair and his outrage. Throughout the play, as he continually criticises his enemies, he is surrounded by his followers and supporters, namely Tecmessa, and notably the Chorus of Salamian men, who sympathetically mourn with Ajax over his ruined reputation.[234] Thus, the primary voices heard alongside Ajax are not condemnatory or scathing towards his pain, but endorse his lamenting and aghast perspective, confirming the injustice he has been subjected to, and providing social proof of his right to defiance. Ajax's flat and emphatically declared statement of no longer owing the gods, delivered at the close of his first appearance awakened from the bloody night before, resonates through and

[230] Segal 1998: 25.
[231] Mueller 2016: 20.
[232] Worman 2021: 32.
[233] Worman 2021: 126.
[234] Soph. *Aj.* 134-140.

demonstrates plainly the lack of way forward for Ajax from the moment he utters this declaration.[235]

In Ajax's final prayers to Zeus, Hermes, the Erinyes and Helios, he prays respectively for his body to be found by Teucer, for his death to be quick, for the wrongs he has suffered to be recognised, and for his parents to be delivered news of his death quickly.[236] These prayers could be considered as Ajax's acknowledgement of a reconciliation with the gods. However, if this is the case, the reconciliation remains partial. Ajax does not praise the god or express any contrition, and he does not make any overtures other to pray for himself. Therefore, the character himself is not actively seeking to offer the gods anything, or earn himself any last *charis*, but rather, voices a last request for kindness. Thus, his suicide works to express his inability to accommodate the gods' rule, but also works to partly demonstrate the character's need to reconcile with the gods in order to gain the posthumous respect he hopes for.[237]

In sum, Ajax's storyline and character development communicate an epic, mythological character's view on the divine when forced into a tragic setting. Tecmessa's use of the common and anodyne linguistic device to call upon the gods is responded to with acrid bitterness, as he rejects any obligation to the greater authority in light of his crushing disappointment and disillusionment with the systems he is forced to persist within. With the emphasis on these lines as he states them, and their resonance on his dramatic entrance and final exit, the use of a personalised and attentive criticism on the gods is used to graphically heighten Ajax's trajectory towards downfall to new affective and logical extremes, bordering the taboo.

3.2.2. Tecmessa and Odysseus: Multivocal Concern on The Gods

While Ajax's statements against the gods are the most clearly antagonistic, other mortals throughout the play, namely Tecmessa and Odysseus, also express doubt or concern about the gods in a less aggressive or flagrant fashion. Taken together, these suggest a wider, more systemic anxiety over the relationship between gods and mortals. While Ajax's outspokenness, borne of a combination of his brash persona and his abandonment of societal

[235] Pelling 2008: 95.
[236] Soph. *Aj.* 815-865.
[237] Lawrence 2005:

inclusion, characterises his denouncements of the gods, the content of comments made by Odysseus and Tecmessa are less extreme and founded less on personal discomfiture. Ajax's statements are thus at the extreme end of a spectrum that other characters also act within, imbuing the play's atmosphere as a whole with one of generalised and communal anxiety about the relationship dynamics between gods and mortals.

This anxiety is established in the play's unusual opening and is subtly effected from the prologue, with Odysseus' movements onstage and his discourse with Athena producing a tense state of affairs between mortals and gods. In Heath and Okell's formulation of the beginning of the prologue, they posit Odysseus as entering from the side of the stage which represents the Greek camp, before he slowly makes his way cautiously to the outside of the *skene* doors, where Athena first speaks to him and makes her presence known.[238] Odysseus makes a comment about his inability to see the goddess, despite hearing her (κἀν ἄποπτος ᾖς ὅμως, φώνημ᾽ ἀκούω), suggesting an incongruity in their relationship that sets Odysseus off balance.[239] Odysseus is already in a cautious mood, as he "hunts and searches" around the stage, examining the ground outside the tent for Ajax's footprints (κυνηγετοῦντα καὶ μετρούμενον – literally, "hunting and measuring".)[240] As Athena makes explicit in her dialogue, they are talking outside the tent of Ajax next to the shore for the Greek ships (ἐπὶ σκηναῖς σε ναυτικαῖς ὁρῶ Αἴαντος).[241] Thus, the action takes place in-between two spaces of danger namely, on the cusp of the seashore and immediately outside Ajax's tent.[242]

In the following exchange, Athena continues to play on the power differential between them, as she increases and manipulates the tension of the situation. Athena's response to Odysseus draws out the suspense, as she answers Odysseus' anxious questions about the disturbing events of the night in piecemeal fashion, with a calmness that mismatches with Odysseus' increasing anxiety.[243] This sense of suspense and danger is drawn to a pinnacle when Athena moves to call Ajax out onstage, much to Odysseus' terror. To Odysseus, Ajax presents a real danger, and so he begs her not to do so ("what are you doing, Athena? Don't call him out!.....Don't by the gods, but let him stay inside" - τί δρᾷς, Ἀθάνα; μηδαμῶς σφ᾽ ἔξω

[238] Heath & Okell 2007: 364.
[239] Soph. *Aj.* 15-16.
[240] Soph. *Aj.* 4-5; Seale 1982: 145.
[241] Soph. *Aj.* 3-4.
[242] Finglass 2011: 140.
[243] Hof 2020: 127.

κάλει…μὴ πρὸς θεῶν, ἀλλ᾽ ἔνδον ἀρκείτω μένων).[244] Athena, omniscient and invulnerable, calls Ajax out anyway, conveying a blithe lack of concern for Odysseus' fear. The resonance of this scene, in which each of Athena's comments have an observable and agitating effect on Odysseus, as discussed by Hof, is illustrative of the affective immediacy and susceptibility of the dramatic medium; characters react to events instantly and with apparent authenticity, whilst remaining alive to changes and challenges in their midst.[245] As the scene continues, Odysseus' unease persists, but the appearance of Ajax alleviates his fear. Prior to this emergence, the stage was a space of risk and unknown outcomes in which Odysseus carefully scoped out signs of threat. With Ajax's emergence, this sense of risk is entirely eliminated by his odd presentation. Ajax greets Athena twice and praises her as his dearest friend, an indication of his unguarded effusiveness ("Oh hello Athena, hello child of Zeus, who well-supports me!" - ὦ χαῖρ᾽ Ἀθάνα, χαῖρε Διογενὲς τέκνον, ὡς εὖ παρέστης).[246] Athena plays along with Ajax's exuberant celebrations, accepts his promises of granting her "trophies of all gold from the spoils of this hunting" (παγχρύσοις ἐγὼ στέψω λαφύροις,) and congratulates him on eradicating his enemies while she securely shields Odysseus from him.[247] As Athena has aptly demonstrated, Odysseus' enemy is no longer a threat to him.

However, when Ajax departs the stage, there is still a mismatch in tone emanating from Odysseus and Athena, as reflected in their statements:

Ἀθήνα

ὁρᾷς, Ὀδυσσεῦ, τὴν θεῶν ἰσχὺν ὅση;

τούτου τίς ἄν σοι τἀνδρὸς ἢ προνούστερος

ἢ δρᾶν ἀμείνων ηὑρέθη τὰ καίρια;

Ὀδυσσεύς

ἐγὼ μὲν οὐδέν᾽ οἶδ᾽: ἐποικτίρω δέ νιν

[244] Soph. *Aj.* 74-76.
[245] Hof 2020: 130; see also Seale (1982: 146) on the suspense of this scene.
[246] Soph. *Aj.* 91.
[247] Soph. *Aj.* 92-93.

δύστηνον ἔμπας, καίπερ ὄντα δυσμενῆ,

ὀθούνεκ᾽ ἄτῃ συγκατέζευκται κακῇ,

οὐδὲν τὸ τούτου μᾶλλον ἢ τοὐμὸν σκοπῶν·

ὁρῶ γὰρ ἡμᾶς οὐδὲν ὄντας ἄλλο πλὴν

εἴδωλ᾽ ὅσοιπερ ζῶμεν ἢ κούφην σκιάν.

Athena

Do you see, Odysseus, how great the strength of the gods is? Could you find a more careful and able man than this?

Odysseus

I know of no other. But I still hold compassion for this wretch, despite his hostility, for the terrible yoke of blindness that is on him. I consider him, and myself; for I see us as we are – we live as phantoms and light shadow.[248]

Odysseus' presence and subsequent interpretation sets the tone for the conversation going forward, in which both Ajax and Athena are regarded with a fresh assessment. As Odysseus voices his thoughts, he guides the audience in their view, encoding the scene with new meaning.[249] He is notably calmer than he was before Ajax's appearance, reflecting thoughtfully on the situation where he had previously expressed anxiety. However, Odysseus notably does not endorse Athena's glib behaviour towards Ajax.[250] Now he has seen Ajax for himself, Odysseus does not express any relief or righteousness in view of his enemy's punishment, but instead articulates compassion (ἐποικτίρω), which seems to surprise him, as he utters a reminder that Ajax is his sworn enemy (καίπερ ὄντα δυσμενῆ). Rather, the sight of Ajax has led to a revelation that overrules his personal animosity, and allowed him a distance

[248] Soph. *Aj.* 121–126.
[249] Goldhill 1990: 115; Hof 2020: 130.
[250] Burian 2012: 72.

from himself, to comment on the scene from as a detached, godlike observer. First, Odysseus highlights Ajax's inability to understand his situation, the "terrible blindness" (ἄτῃ…κακῇ) that Athena inflicted and then exploited to humiliate Ajax without his knowing. Odysseus thus expresses empathy for Ajax through recognition of their shared status as mortals, stating frankly that when he considers his former enemy, he also cannot but think of himself (τοὐμὸν σκοπῶν), before extending this thought to the whole of humanity (τἀνθρώπεια). Through this comparison, Odysseus suggests that Ajax is not singled out for the "terrible blindness" (ἄτῃ…κακῇ) and the harm that accompanies it but understands it as an ever-present danger that is innate in the lives of mortal men; by Odysseus' own admission, Ajax was a paragon of strength and ability, and yet was laid low by divine machinations.[251] Odysseus' likely stance is not indicated in the text, other than that he has been instructed to stand quietly and watch.[252] As such, it is most likely that Odysseus delivered these lands stood up (and not crouched or prone), with his face pointing in the direction of Ajax's entry or towards Athena, a pose suitable for the deep ponderance he is clearly in at this point. Odysseus, as he watches quietly, is shown to be taking in the picture of what is happening between Ajax and Athena passively, digesting the meaning, before describing his discomfiture with what he has seen, and what it represents.

Again, space is significant in the formation of Odysseus' perspective, and the liminality of the setting benefits Odysseus' revelation. While Athena clouded Ajax's eyes, Odysseus was briefly permitted to share her viewpoint. With his own "mortal blindness" temporarily alleviated, Odysseus is offered rare insight, and consequently understands the shared condition of mankind, speaking of viewing himself, Ajax, and mankind in the first-person plural (ὁρῶ γὰρ ἡμᾶς) and referring to all mankind as "we who live" (ζῶμεν). The improved vantage-point is a definite factor in his ability to assess his shared humanity with even his most bitter enemy, as his language includes verbs for "see" (ὁρῶ) and "contemplate, consider" (σκοπῶν), contrasting against Ajax's god-sent blindness (ἄτη). The description of men as "phantoms" (εἴδωλ) and "light shadow" (κούφην σκιάν) reinforce the idea of mankind as insubstantial, temporary creatures, whose shifting between existence and non-existence confirms them as insecure and ultimately unimportant entities.[253] Thus, Odysseus is offering a perspective that extends beyond the vindictiveness of mortals and gods, reflecting unflatteringly on Athena's

[251] Soph. *Aj.* 1340-1342.
[252] Soph. *Aj.* 65, 87.
[253] Soph. *Aj.* 121-126.

own attitude, as she encourages moderation for mortals, but takes her anger out on Ajax to the extreme.[254] Odysseus' comments here are not so confrontational, but they portray a lack of enthusiasm for what the goddess' power represents for him, now he has been granted this unsettling understanding.

Athena's response to Odysseus' philosophising on human nature reinforces the inferred divide between mortals and the gods:

> τοιαῦτα τοίνυν εἰσορῶν ὑπέρκοπον
>
> μηδέν ποτ᾽ εἴπῃς αὐτὸς εἰς θεοὺς ἔπος,
>
> μηδ᾽ ὄγκον ἄρῃ μηδέν᾽, εἴ τινος πλέον
>
> ἢ χειρὶ βρίθεις ἢ μακροῦ πλούτου βάθει.
>
> ὡς ἡμέρα κλίνει τε κἀνάγει πάλιν
>
> ἅπαντα τἀνθρώπεια, τοὺς δὲ σώφρονας
>
> θεοὶ φιλοῦσι καὶ στυγοῦσι τοὺς κακούς.

> Looking on him, do not ever grow arrogant and speak a word against the gods, nor walk because your hand is weightier than another's, or your wealth deeper founded. One day inclines the balance of all human things to sink or rise again. Know that the gods love men of steady sense and hate the wicked.[255]

Athena's response offers a standard warning on the dangers of mortal arrogance, which it is later revealed to be the cause of her ire against Ajax. Athena also broadly concurs with Odysseus on the momentariness of mortals and the ease with which mortal lives can be destroyed or made, in "a day" (ἡμέρα). However, she does not engage with Odysseus' ruminations, nor does she offer reassurance; the nuances of Odysseus' observations are

[254] Burian 2012: 72-73.
[255] Soph. *Aj.* 127-134.

flattened by these formulaic lines.[256] Sorum has described this tension between Odysseus and Athena as an example in tragedy where Homeric divinity is "called into question." Certainly, as Odysseus' introspective musings are left unanswered by Athena, this tension is shown to arise from the disconnect in a relationship that was previously secure and well-established.[257] In addition, Odysseus' eventual support for Ajax receiving proper burial rites, while the other Greek commanders refuse it, is caused by his involvement in the opening scene, as his dismay for the goddess' behaviour awakens a sense of kinship within him.[258]

Tecmessa also briefly criticises Athena, although her statements are neither as forceful as Ajax's, nor as philosophising as Odysseus'. However, she too utters them as a coherent reaction to the events of the play, stemming from her overall character and demeanour. Throughout the play, her dialogue is emotionally motivated, as she reminds Ajax and the audience that were he to die, she and their son would suffer. Therefore, when her attempts to dissuade Ajax from committing suicide fail, her response is appropriately framed through her previously exhibited personality and expressed concerns for herself and her son.[259] In particular, her previous conversations with Ajax, and the hope she gained during his Deception speech, create greater dramatic impact when she realises Ajax is missing, and then when she finds his body. Immediately before Ajax kills himself, when it is discovered that he has left his tent without informing anyone else, Tecmessa's reactions build on the suspenseful atmosphere as she reacts immediately, leaving the stage to look for him and claiming she will "save the man hurrying toward death" (σῴζειν…. ἄνδρα γ᾽ ὃς σπεύδῃ θανεῖν).[260]

This build-up results in a heightened emotional and dramatic payoff when Ajax's body is found. When Tecmessa arrives onstage to see the body, she makes vocalisations similar to those Ajax made (ἰώ μοί μοι" - "oh no! No!", ("ἰὼ τλήμων" - "oh misery!") and moves to cover the body.[261] Therefore, the drama's emotional register is heightened at this key moment by Tecmessa's devastated vocalisations. It is at this point that Tecmessa utters plain and frank criticisms against Athena:

[256] Mastronarde 2008: 328.
[257] Sorum 1986: 365.
[258] Soph. *Aj.* 1332-1335; Sandridge 2008: 440-441.
[259] Soph. *Aj.* 495.
[260] Soph. *Aj.* 803-812; Taplin 2003: 42.
[261] Soph. *Aj.* 891-894, 915-919.

τοιόνδε μέντοι Ζηνὸς ἡ δεινὴ θεὸς

Παλλὰς φυτεύει πῆμ᾽ Ὀδυσσέως χάριν.

But like this, the terrible goddess Pallas, daughter of Zeus, planned this misery for the benefit of Odysseus.[262]

Once again, there is the suspicion that Athena has turned against Ajax, not because he might have done anything to deserve sanction, but because the goddess is in devious conspiracy with Ajax's mortal enemies. It is apparent that Tecmessa has adopted Ajax's theorising, when she proceeds to comment on his unsurpassed martial ability, and the mocking laughter of the Atreidae.[263] However, there is extra significance in Tecmessa's voicing of these damning thoughts, as it represents a drastic change in her own attitude to the gods. When Ajax had previously uttered an impiety, it had been Tecmessa who chided him, pleading with him to consider the ramifications of his actions.[264] However, upon seeing Ajax's corpse, she blames Athena exclusively for the devastating outcome and the hardship she is now expecting to face. Tecmessa's outburst is thus a vehicle for candid statement which informs us of the impact of Ajax's death on his spear-bride and son, as she ruminates on their likely fate now Ajax is dead ("child, to such a yoke of slavery we are now heading" - τέκνον, πρὸς οἷα δουλείας ζυγὰ χωροῦμεν).[265] This obliteration of her security and the horror of the moment is shown to have broken the ritual conventions that Tecmessa has previously been careful to uphold. Emotional duress and the recognition that she has nothing to lose informs her abdication of religious observance, as she explicitly blames Athena for her fresh hardship. The play thus posits Tecmessa's shifting thoughts and feelings on the gods, and how she chooses to engage with them, in direct connection to her situational context and how she responds to the events around her; her criticism against Athena is freely expressed in the immediate and distressing context of discovering Ajax's body. Of course, the audience are aware that Athena punished Ajax due to his impiety, as communicated by the Messenger

[262] Soph. *AJ.* 956-957.
[263] Soph. *Aj.* 961-966.
[264] Soph. *Aj.* 485-524. See Porter 2017: 8 for discussion on the "irreverent humanism" that is a hallmark feature of the Homeric Ajax's psyche.
[265] Soph. *Aj.* 944-945.

shortly before Ajax's suicide.[266] While this makes Athena's treatment of Ajax coherent from an audience concerned with divine and mythological injustice, Tecmessa was not onstage for this disclosure, and so it is consistent with the play's internal logic that she is still in a place of ignorance and perplexity as to the apparently excessive cruelty of Athena towards Ajax.[267]

Again, as with Odysseus, there is no explicit information in the text that lets us know of Tecmessa's likely physical position as she makes these utterances. However, the presence of Ajax's body, laid out in a prone position, perhaps even crumpled in some way to reflect the wound of the sword, recalls the lowered status Ajax was in when he was revealed by Tecmessa after Athena's divine blindness had been lifted. As Ajax lies on the ground, an apparent victim of the divine cruelty, Tecmessa's utterance emphasises this position of absolute loss, whether she delivered these lines standing, or collapsed on her knees. When she covers the body with a shroud (φᾶρος), she would have presumably crouched or bent over, and it is feasible that she has stayed in a sat position next to the body while she continues. Most apparent is that she is in close proximity to the corpse, with her gestures towards it particularly loaded with feeling; Finglass has discussed the possibility that the φᾶρος she uses to cover the body is a feature of her costume, namely a veil, and so explaining how she had it to hand to tend the body.[268] If this is true, Tecmessa's motion towards the body, and the joint act of unveiling herself and veiling the body produces a paired gesture of grief with care for the deceased.[269] Her statement against Athena is thus delivered during the completion of a collection of funerary acts that emphasise grief for a dead family member. As these are among her last lines in the play, these remarks conclude Tecmessa's presentation. Her depiction is therefore capped off with this bitter and decidedly impious statement, which is bred from a heightened sense of crisis and despair, and a break in the transactional incentive of further respectful observance. As with Odysseus and Ajax following their disquieting statements on the gods, Tecmessa shortly leaves the stage after her denouncement of Athena, suggesting that such a statement does not leave anything else left to say.

As with Odysseus' comment on the blindness of mortals, Tecmessa's lines provide a backdrop of antagonism between mortals and gods which contextualises Ajax's own, more explicit and

[266] Soph. *Aj.* 769-774.
[267] Finglass 2011: 411-412.
[268] Soph. *Aj.* 915.
[269] Finglass 2009: 276-278.

pointed dissatisfaction. His statements are not univocal, and he is not alone in experiencing misgivings and shock at the gods' actions. Thus, the antagonism within the play does not stem from one unusual person, but filters through to multiple members of the cast, who communicate their consternation and anxiety in the wake events that have derailed their prior outlook or thwarted their hopes and expectations. Whether it is Odysseus realising that Ajax has been struck with madness, Ajax responding to his ruined reputation, or Tecmessa discovering that Ajax has killed himself, these moments are delivered at key moments in the plot through specific staging that emphasises the character's affective states at the time of their criticisms of the gods.

Ajax's fall from grace is presented as inevitable, but his sullen refusal to co-operate any further with the gods is a surprise, with its provocative nature made apparent with Tecmessa's censure. The visual and aural composition throughout the drama presents both the central character's peaking outrage, which causes a breach in the typical forms of address, as well as the rumbling discontent and worry that can be seen in the words and actions of other characters who are less obviously inimical to the gods. Much of this pattern is repeated in the next play this study will examine, Euripides' *Hippolytus,* whose central character also undergoes a prodigious fall from grace that results in a reversal of loyalty to a formerly favoured goddess.

3.3 Euripides' *Hippolytus*

3.3.1 Introduction

Euripides' *Hippolytus,* produced in 428 BCE, shares many similarities with *Ajax,* particularly in terms of their main complainant. Both plays feature an athletic, confident, and well-esteemed male protagonist who undergoes sudden reversals of fortune, resulting in a major shift in his attitude towards a deity he had previously worshipped. The titular character of *Hippolytus* operates on an assumption that he is exalted in the eyes of the gods, before unwittingly causing a rupture between himself and the divine, through his refusal to honour Aphrodite. In response, Aphrodite induces his stepmother, Phaedra, with desire for Hippolytus, causing her Nurse to accidentally reveal her infatuation to Hippolytus during an effort to help seduce him. After Hippolytus' disgusted rejection, Phaedra kills herself, accusing Hippolytus of wrongdoing via a letter to Theseus, her husband (and Hippolytus' father), spurring him to call upon Poseidon to kill Hippolytus with a huge wave that knocks him off his horse and smashes him against the rocks.

Like in *Ajax*, Hippolytus' criticism comes in the form of an outburst, delivered shortly before his death, and after the gods' machinations have been brought to light through his downfall. However, the general unease towards the divine is more broadly constructed throughout the cast than seen in *Ajax*, as Phaedra, the Nurse, Theseus, and even Aphrodite and Artemis themselves comment directly on the troubled interaction between gods and mortals. Each goddess provides an expository overview of the events of the play, Aphrodite at the beginning to the audience alone, and Artemis at the end to the mortal characters as they take in the fallout of the play's events. There is thus a clear roadmap for the characters to proceed along, as they respond to Aphrodite's scheme with emotionally driven actions that damn them.[270] Hippolytus' final statements against the gods is thus the sum of the collective ill-feeling towards the gods that have gained momentum towards the play's conclusion, which is echoed by Theseus' closing sentiments. This ongoing and accumulating sense of collective aggrievement manifests as outright statements of frank dismay and distrust towards the gods, reaching its natural peak in the titular character's express wish to harm the gods. The following section will investigate how *Hippolytus* establishes this tense

[270] Ebbott 2017: 131-132.

environment from the play's opening scene, in which Aphrodite explicitly discloses the antagonistic situation directly to the audience, before several mortal characters go on to emit shock and judgement against deities for their indecorous and harmful behaviour. This will be followed by a review of how the character of Hippolytus himself accentuates the antagonism of the play with his personality, and how his eventual forceful outburst against the gods is a natural conclusion of these combined factors.

3.3.2. Collective Affective Responses to Divine Trouble

In the opening of *Hippolytus,* Aphrodite addresses the audience directly, providing an instant and clear overview of the play's story and setting. In this opening, Aphrodite stresses Hippolytus' refusal to worship her, and the insult she suffers as a result:

> ὁ γάρ με Θησέως παῖς, Ἀμαζόνος τόκος,
>
> Ἱππόλυτος, ἁγνοῦ Πιτθέως παιδεύματα,
>
> μόνος πολιτῶν τῆσδε γῆς Τροζηνίας
>
> λέγει κακίστην δαιμόνων πεφυκέναι:

> "For the child of Theseus, of Amazon birth, chaste pupil of holy Pittheus, alone among the folk of this land of Troezen speaks of me, casting me as the worst of the gods."[271]

As Aphrodite tells it, Hippolytus has committed unambiguous and flagrant impiety. While Hippolytus is a resolute virgin, Aphrodite explicitly states that this is not a problem, signalling his connection to Artemis is of little interest to her.[272] Rather, his open hostility to her needs redress.[273] Hippolytus is accused of speaking against Aphrodite, describing her as the "worst" or "vilest" of the gods (λέγει κακίστην δαιμόνων πεφυκέναι). That this is aberrant

[271] Eur. *Hipp.* 10-13.
[272] Barrett 1964: 158.
[273] Eur. *Hipp.* 14-20.

behaviour is made clear, by Aphrodite's assertion that Hippolytus is "alone" (μόνος) amongst the Troezens in this disrespect. While Aphrodite makes clear that Hippolytus' virginity is not the reason, in and of itself, for her ire against him, she draws a clear line of causation between his obsessive protection of his virginity, and his reasons for abstaining from worshipping Aphrodite.[274] While Aphrodite provides little information about what Hippolytus has actively done to dishonour of Aphrodite, aside from refusing to worship her, the extremity of her language, with the superlative κακίστην, indicates his statements and actions against the goddess are grave. Hippolytus' character is thus sketched out, before he enters the stage, as notably impious and divergent in his religious behaviour. Aphrodite's course of action is decided on and flows from this assessment of his character, as she mounts a reprisal for his disrespect to her. Aphrodite unambiguously communicates that Hippolytus "has committed wrongdoing" (ἡμάρτηκε), and so frames her response against him as an equal effort to correct bad behaviour, stating, for equilibrium, that she "honours those who revere my power" (τοὺς μὲν σέβοντας τἀμὰ πρεσβεύω κράτη).[275]

This opening prioritises the goddess' demeanour and plans, clarifying and justifying her grievance.[276] It also places emphasis on Hippolytus' responsibility in causing this ire. Vital details about his character are communicated, namely that he is an avid hunter and practises abstinence, and that both features are part of his religious acknowledgement of Artemis, to such an extent her traits become his.[277] From her perspective, the goddess is correctly enforcing rules of convention by seeking to punish an unusually bold and aberrant individual who fails to recognise her authority.[278]

However, as Aphrodite continues to explain her plan, the opening problematises the goddess' behaviour, as she spreads the conflict and tumult beyond the offending title character. Aphrodite coolly informs the audience that she intends to target Hippolytus, not by directly punishing him, but by causing his stepmother, Phaedra, to fall in love and become overcome with desire for him. She does this in full knowledge of the pain this brings Phaedra, and that it will lead to her death. By the goddess' own account, Phaedra is entirely innocent, and has even been admiringly pious towards her, having dedicated a temple to Aphrodite.[279]

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[274] Cairns 2008: 313.
[275] Eur. *Hipp.* 20-21, 5. For *hamartia* in Greek tragedy, see Stinton 1975: 221-254.
[276] Ebbott 2017: 140.
[277] Eur. *Hipp.* 10-20.
[278] Mastronarde 2008: 300.
[279] Eur. *Hipp.* 26-41, selected lines.

Aphrodite's circumambulatory approach hurts the pious as much as the impious, which she acknowledges herself:

> ἡ δ᾽ εὐκλεὴς μὲν ἀλλ᾽ ὅμως ἀπόλλυται
> Φαίδρα, τὸ γὰρ τῆσδ᾽ οὐ προτιμήσω κακὸν
> τὸ μὴ οὐ παρασχεῖν τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἐχθροὺς ἐμοὶ
> δίκην τοσαύτην ὥστ᾽ ἐμοὶ καλῶς ἔχειν.
>
> But, upstanding as she is, Phaedra will nevertheless die.
> For I will not be troubled by her agony, so to give up
> on reaping so great justice on my enemies, as would benefit me.[280]

The goddess rationalises her behaviour by explicitly balancing Phaedra's pain against the injustice of Hippolytus' behaviour. Nevertheless, there remains an innate inequity to the goddess's method, which Aphrodite acknowledges in this defensive explanation. Aphrodite's phrasing of this plan makes apparent that she is aware of the imbalance in her treatment to Phaedra, as she must specify that the queen will "nevertheless" (ὅμως) die, the conjunction indicating that there are reasons that Phaedra ought to live. Aphrodite's acknowledgement that her actions against Phaedra are unjust is also signalled when she claims she "will not be troubled" (οὐ προτιμήσω) in light of the revenge she would exact on her enemies (ἐχθροὺς ἐμοὶ δίκην τοσαύτην ὥστ᾽…. ἔχειν), showing plainly that her harm against Phaedra needs to be justified. The goddess is stating plainly that she is carrying out an act of injustice against an innocent mortal to strike someone she hates (ἐχθροὺς), a term that signals her opposition to Hippolytus, and her desire to cause pain to him.[281]

[280] Eur. *Hipp.* 47-50.
[281] Konstan 2006: 189.

Aphrodite's opening speech contextualises the play's actions, imputing meaning and gravity onto the mortal characters' interactions as they occur. It also sets the tone for the specific relationship between Aphrodite and Hippolytus, which is particularly rife with antagonism, leading directly to Hippolytus' eventual outburst against the gods. While Hippolytus' statements form the climax of this antagonistic relationship between gods and mortals, however, two other mortal characters, aside from Hippolytus, name and criticise the goddess specifically for her damaging impact. Both instances are delivered in fits of outburst, evincing a frankness that is borne of emotional duress.

The first outburst against the goddess comes from the Nurse in response to discovering the reasons for Phaedra's languishing, which is indicative to the queen's deteriorating mental state.[282] Phaedra's arrival onstage is accompanied by the Chorus' descriptions of her "ravaged" body and sickly complexion (τί δεδήληται δέμας ἀλλόχροον), to which the Nurse reacts with great concern.[283] This description encodes Phaedra's appearance with pitiful concern, as she is presented to the audience as weak and close to death. The physical features of her entrance, the way others move around her, and details of her costume communicate her illness, with the audience contributing the information they have already been told about Phaedra's slow death from her unwanted desire for Hippolytus, sent by Aphrodite.[284] In addition to this worrisome demeanour, Phaedra's removal of her headdress, which she cannot do without help, indicates her inability to operate normally, as Phaedra makes her abject and sickly state clear through the dynamics of her frail appearance.[285] As Phaedra is ashamed of her desire for Hippolytus, she attempts to withhold the reasons for her reduced status, while the Nurse desperately tries to extract the information. Thus, the resulting scene is one of great tension, where one character tries to withhold information the other wishes to find out, and one cannot succeed without causing frustration or fear in the other. The use of stichomythia heightens the emotional stakes, intensifying each character's frustrations, and resulting in greater impact when the information is finally given up by the reticent Phaedra, creating a moment of intensified revelation for the Nurse. The stichomythic pattern is interrupted at

[282] Cairns 2017: 2-6. Worman 2021: 48-50.
[283] Eur. *Hipp.* 174-175, 176-177.
[284] Wyles (2011: 77-78) discusses this effect particularly in relation to Sophocles' *Electra* (line 185) and *Hippolytus* (line 77.)
[285] Kousoulini 2019: 27-28. Worman 2021: Ibid.

the precise moment the Nurse realises that Phaedra is in love with Hippolytus, reinforcing the impact of the revelation:

> Τροφός
>
> Ἱππόλυτον αὐδᾷς;
>
> Φαίδρα
>
> σοῦ τάδ᾽, οὐκ ἐμοῦ κλύεις.
>
> Nurse
>
> You speak of Hippolytus?
>
> Phaedra
>
> It's not me, but you who say it.[286]

These lines are shorter than the ones uttered before it, and so end the chain of stichomythia with a dramatic punch, as the Nurse asks the curt, two-word question (Ἱππόλυτον αὐδᾷς), which the audience is already aware is the correct answer. The suspense of the interaction is extended by Phaedra's answer, which affirms the Nurse's guess with purposeful indirectness (σοῦ τάδ᾽, οὐκ ἐμοῦ κλύεις), as she attempts to disown the shameful fact by not openly admitting it, displacing the responsibility for stating it onto the Nurse. Her refusal to voice her attraction further cultivates the fraught atmosphere further, as she communicates her fear of the conventions she is breaking. The Nurse's resulting outcry confirms the need for this sensitivity. It is the first onstage response to Phaedra's attraction to Hippolytus, and so imputes the severity of the revelation for the audience. She repeats that she cannot bear the news (οὐκ ἀνασχέτ᾽, οὐκ ἀνέξομαι – "this cannot be withstood, I will not withstand this"), emphasising her distress, and matching Phaedra's deference to speaking this attraction with her inability to hear it. Leading on from this revelation, the Nurse expresses her shock in the form of a denouncement of Aphrodite for her intrusive and perverse influence on Phaedra:

[286] Eur. *Hipp.* 352-353.

Κύπρις οὐκ ἄρ᾽ ἦν θεός,

ἀλλ᾽ εἴ τι μεῖζον ἄλλο γίγνεται θεοῦ,

ἥ τήνδε κἀμὲ καὶ δόμους ἀπώλεσεν.

"…Cypris, you are not a god, but something greater than what a god is. You have destroyed utterly her and me and this house."[287]

Just as Aphrodite, paraphrasing Hippolytus, makes use of a damning superlative, with the goddess described as "the worst of the gods" (κακίστην δαιμόνων), the Nurse also uses heightened language of comparison to express her fear and shock at what is occurring. Her description of Aphrodite as "something more than a god" (μεῖζον……θεοῦ) places Aphrodite outside of the Nurse's known frame of reference, as she expresses the extremity of what is occurring through the likening of Aphrodite to something other than known and predictable deities. Her words convey the enormity of the damage, with a statement on the unbelievability of Aphrodite's reach and destructive power, as she hits Phaedra directly in her compulsions.[288] Aphrodite's divinity is questioned before the Nurse emphasises that this lack of divinity must be because of the goddess' destructive form. The hyperbole grants an insight into the Nurse's heightened emotional state as she reacts to shocking and unwanted news. The Nurse's reaction confirms that Aphrodite's plan, delineated in the prologue, has now been actioned in real terms, while the mortals it impacts struggle understand it, as indicated by Phaedra's unwillingness to speak of her attraction to Hippolytus, and the Nurse's inability to hear it. The emotions expressed from this relatively minor character is thus immediately and recognisably human, as she reacts with appropriate impulses of surprise and shock.[289]

Shortly after this exchange, the Nurse's demeanour changes considerably, and she urges Phaedra to embrace her passions and seduce Hippolytus, applying the rhetorical art of persuasion to engineer Phaedra's consent.[290] This may well be framed as a sincere attempt to adapt to the trauma of the recent revelation, as the Nurse chooses to work with the situation, instead of resisting it.[291] Rather than catastrophise any longer, she formulates a picture of

[287] Eur. *Hipp.* 359-360.
[288] Versnel 2011: 274.
[289] Ebbott 2017: 136; Halliwell 2012: 232.
[290] Buxton 1982: 1, 58.
[291] Pelling 2008: 89.

Aphrodite as an all-powerful divinity whom Phaedra would be sensible to obey.[292] As her foundational understanding of the goddess appears to have been assaulted by the revelation of Phaedra's improper desire for Hippolytus, the Nurse restructures her impressions to understand why the goddess has caused such a disruptive urge within Phaedra, suggesting that she has adapted her understanding of the gods to the extremity of the event she is faced with.[293]

Aphrodite is also criticised by Theseus, although his statement against the goddess is considerably less ambivalent and offers no possibility of a revision of viewpoint. At the very end of the play, after Hippolytus has died onstage, Theseus delivers a frank and undiluted comment condemning the goddess forcefully:

> ὦ τλήμων ἐγώ, ὡς πολλά, Κύπρι, σῶν κακῶν μεμνήσομαι.
>
> How wretched I am! Cypris, I will remember your evildoing![294]

To understand the full context of these lines, and the bluntness of their delivery, it is key to note that Theseus is speaking from a point of intractable devastation. Theseus had asked his father Poseidon to lethally punish Hippolytus for assaulting his wife; now he finds out that Hippolytus is in fact innocent of the crime. Following the Nurse's example, Theseus' criticism of Aphrodite is prefaced by an anguished pronouncement "how wretched I am" (ὦ τλήμων ἐγώ). The moment is high in pathos, as Theseus realises that he was manipulated into causing his son's painful death. In his address to Aphrodite, Theseus first refers to himself in his wretchedness, emphasising the cause of his anger at the goddess, and so giving his statement a particularly aggressive and pointed edge. His description of Aphrodite as "κακῶν" ("doing evil") recalls Aphrodite's paraphrasing of Hippolytus' views of her (κακίστην), demonstrating a symmetricity to the drama.[295] Theseus' direct address, albeit made in the goddess' absence, marks Aphrodite out specifically for blame and grievance, and conveys a desire to communicate with the goddess directly. His final promise to remember

[292] Eur. *Hipp.* 442-451.
[293] Knox 1966: 213.
[294] Eur. *Hipp.* 1461.
[295] Eur. *Hipp.* 13.

(μεμνήσομαι) her actions holds a note of menace and suggests that Theseus' future behaviour towards the goddess will be shaped by these experiences, which has inspired Theseus to hold a personal grudge against Aphrodite.[296] These final lines act as a coda to the negative statements that had gone before it, and so end the play with a confirmation of the maintained antagonism between the mortal characters and Aphrodite. It is then followed by a five-line stanza from the Chorus on the collective grief of the city in viewing the fall of great figures such as Hippolytus.[297] Theseus' damning utterance is thus followed by a community interpretation of the catastrophe presently engulfing the king and his family. The anxiety and catastrophe of these events are thus sublimated through to this response, allowing an individualised example of the effect to be shown directly to the audience, as they observe Theseus' personal and unique pain in response to these mythic tropes.

The comments from the Nurse and Theseus arising naturally from the immediate disruption they are subjected to, as they become overwhelmed and express their emotions candidly. However, *Hippolytus* does not limit its criticism to Aphrodite specifically. Rather, the play features several moments that suggest the nature of the gods overall is under scrutiny by the mortal characters. Specifically, comments throughout signal an awareness of a deficit between how gods ought to behave, and what they are then seen to be doing, with a critical eye that casts doubt on the respectability of divine nature. Comparisons and references to mortal behaviour patterns serve to illustrate this gap, bringing the gods further under scrutiny, as the play questions their supposed supremacy over mortals in terms of their wisdom and temperament.[298]

For example, regarding her desire to exalt those who honour her and punish those who "are so high-minded toward me", Aphrodite states that "even (κἀν) the gods have this trait" (ἔνεστι γὰρ δὴ κἀν θεῶν γένει τόδε), suggesting there is something unexpected about them exhibiting this pattern of behaviour.[299] However, her use of the plural θεῶν indicates that this is not a reaction unique to her, but is found regularly amongst the divine. After she vacates the stage, and following Hippolytus' pointed refusal to "greet" Aphrodite's statue, his Attendant prays to Aphrodite to ignore Hippolytus' unfriendly treatment of her:

[296] Konstan 2006: 193.
[297] Eur. *Hipp.* 1462-1466.
[298] See Gregory 2008: 263 – 265 for discussion on shared characteristics in tragedy.
[299] Eur. *Hipp.* 7-8; Blundell 1989: 46-47; Goldhill 2003: 170.

"ἡμεῖς δέ, τοὺς νέους γὰρ οὐ μιμητέον

φρονοῦντας οὕτως, ὡς πρέπει δούλοις λέγειν

προσευξόμεσθα τοῖσι σοῖς ἀγάλμασιν,

δέσποινα Κύπρι. χρὴ δὲ συγγνώμην ἔχειν·

εἴ τίς σ᾽ ὑφ᾽ ἥβης σπλάγχνον ἔντονον φέρων

μάταια βάζει, μὴ δόκει τούτων κλύειν.

σοφωτέρους γὰρ χρὴ βροτῶν εἶναι θεούς."

"We must not imitate the young men when they have thoughts such as these. As fits a slave to speak here at you image, I pray and worship you, Mistress Cypris. You should be forgiving when one that has a young tempestuous heart speaks foolish words. Act like you did not to hear them. You should be wiser than mortals, being gods."[300]

The Attendant's plea that Hippolytus be forgiven includes an explanation for why the goddess should overlook this abstention, based on the premise that the gods *should* or proclaim to be (χρὴ) wiser and overall better than mortals. The construction of χρὴ plus infinitive is a gnomic construction, as occurs in Greek lyric poetry (see above 2.3). As in the examples from lyric poetry, the Attendant is emitting a presumption for that the gods hold superior wisdom, and that this is foundationally true to the cosmos.[301] Of course, the audience knows that Aphrodite is already planning Hippolytus' downfall, and as has already been discussed, is side-stepping her own values to achieve this.[302] Furthermore, the aphoristic quality of the statement, and the Attendant's use of the plural θεούς (gods), signals that he is speaking universally, with an expectation for all gods to be wiser, and therefore less quick to anger, than mortals. This echoes Aphrodite's use of the plural in her earlier comment, where

[300] Eur. *Hipp.* 119-120.
[301] Lardinois 1997: 213, 215-216; Bundy (1986: 15) discusses this construction in relation to Pindar.
[302] Mastronarde 2008: 324.

she had pre-emptively invalidated the Attendant's hope that the gods are too wise to seek revenge for minor acts of disrespect, with her confirmation that similar traits are found in both gods and mortals.

In its dialogue, the play offers a recurring example of a trait that is applicable to both mortals and gods, whilst also acknowledging the difference between the two entities. The term "σεμνός" and its derivatives are used multiple times across the play to refer to the gods and mortals. However, because this term has two meanings that are closely connected (either "haughty, sanctimonious" or "august, revered"), which are each used to describe mortals and gods respectively, it simultaneously highlights how mortals and gods are similar, but also how their experience of the same quality differs, as do the results of their expression this characteristic. The pejorative meaning of this term is used as an accusation, directed at Hippolytus, for his refusal to worship Aphrodite, when the Attendant declares that "to hate that which is haughty and not ally to all" ("μισεῖν τὸ σεμνὸν καὶ τὸ μὴ πᾶσιν φίλον") is a unifying trait amongst all men. Hippolytus concurs with this sentiment, rhetorically asking "whenever is conceit in men not a burden?" ("τίς δ᾽ οὐ σεμνὸς ἀχθεινὸς βροτῶν;"). The Attendant then brings in the gods and their comparable nature, asking whether or not the gods will also share these feelings, which Hippolytus affirms ("if we mortals use the gods' ordinance" (εἴπερ γε θνητοὶ θεῶν νόμοισι χρώμεθα).[303] Thus the characters observe that both gods and mortals recognise the same behaviour as either pleasing or displeasing, with the recognition that the quality of σεμνὸς is a negatively regarded trait.[304] Five lines later, however, the Attendant uses the positive meaning of the term, asking why Hippolytus does not greet such a "revered goddess" (σεμνὴν δαίμον᾽).[305] The meaning of the term, so recently determined as an undesirable quality, gains a different meaning when found in the goddess, suggesting that the same trait found in a mortal and a deity will similarly be altered in its expression and outcome. This rapid switching of this meaning, within only a few lines, thus blurs the border between the positive and negative use of the term, and so demonstrates a similar blending in attitudes between the shared aspects of gods and mortals' behaviour patterns.[306]

[303] Eur. *Hipp.* 98.
[304] Goff 1990: 82.
[305] Eur. *Hipp.* 99.
[306] Conacher 1998: 33-34.

Throughout the rest of the play, σεμνὸς is repeatedly used, mainly in honorific reference to the gods.[307] However, the negative meaning occurs again at one particularly key moment in the play. As the Nurse is trying to convince Phaedra to give in to her passions for Hippolytus, she reminds the queen of the gods' own unrestricted sexual behaviour, citing Zeus' affair with Semele, and Eos' with Cephalus as examples to follow.[308] In her exhortations, the Nurse admonishes Phaedra that "to wish to be better than the gods" (κρείσσω δαιμόνων εἶναι θέλειν) is arrogance (ὕβρις), and that Phaedra should "dare to love"(τόλμα δ' ἐρῶσα).[309] After Phaedra resists again, refusing to partake in behaviour she finds reprehensible, the Nurse responds with a derisive question, using a derivative of σεμνὸς (τί σεμνομυθεῖς; "what is this high-minded speak?"), to reflect her disdain for Phaedra's apparent superciliousness.[310] This exchange between the two women alights on to two distinct traits or forms of behaviour which apply to both mortals and gods, with drastically different outcomes for each. As well as the changing meaning of σεμνὸς, the embarkation of sexual affairs is common to both gods and mortals, with wildly different outcomes for each, despite the similarity in nature. The Nurse's statements indicate that she understands the divine as a measuring stick for appropriate conduct, using their authority over mortals to logically reason that their actions offer a guide to how mortals should also act. However, her attempt to mimic Aphrodite by intervening in Phaedra's affairs and encourage sexual union between her and Hippolytus leads to the destruction of the *oikos*.[311] Even in her examples of free divine love, the difference between mortals and gods is outlined. While Zeus and Eos do not suffer any consequences for the affairs the Nurse cites, she neglects to mention that the same cannot be said for their mortal lovers, with Semele burning to death, and Cephalus kidnapped unwillingly.[312] For the gods, love and sex are enjoyable pursuits, whilst mortals suffer inordinately for the same activity.[313] In her bid to persuade Phaedra, the Nurse in fact emphasises the misfortune guaranteed when mortals mimic the gods' behaviours. At the same time, Phaedra's adamant refusal to behave in a way she feels is dishonourable, casts

[307] Eur. *Hipp.* 61, 143, 713, 746, 886.
[308] Eur. *Hipp.* 452-456.
[309] Eur. *Hipp.* 475-476.
[310] Eur. *Hipp.* 490. Pelling 2008: 91.
[311] Goff 1990: 82-83.
[312] The reference to Eos and Cephalus is the earliest textual example of these two names being linked. Later literature, namely Pausanias (*Descriptions of Greece.* 1.3.1), Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 7. 690-862) and Apollodorus (3.14.3) provides more details on the myth. See also Lefkowitz 2002: 326.
[313] Kearns 2013: 57-60. Robson 2013: 107, 226. Plato: *Symp:* 179e-180b.

judgement on the licentiousness of the Nurse, and by extension, on the casual sexual pursuits of the divine.[314]

As the Attendant expresses hope that the gods are better in nature to mortals, and the Nurse unwittingly highlights the harm caused by the divine's baser qualities, the play frames the gods in a notably unflattering manner, as the deities who are featured fail to display the behaviours and values expected by the mortals.[315] Following their example, as the Nurse demonstrates, leads to disaster, while any semblance of a standardised law or sense of justice is cast aside to fulfil whatever end they may have, as Aphrodite's opening signals plainly.[316] In the final scene, where Artemis promises to also target an innocent follower of Aphrodite in order to take revenge on her, it is made clear that this is not an unusually cruel or aberrant example of divine cruelty, but the standard for all deities.[317] In the face of the mortals' excesses of misery, Aphrodite and Artemis remain comparatively indifferent, and even interchangeable, as each dispassionately effect harm on unaware and innocent mortals for their own unrelated aims.[318]

Hippolytus thus maintains a consistent through-line in which the gods are explicitly shown as an unreliable and destabilising influence on the mortal characters, and where the mortal characters struggle with their ability to interpret their relationship with the gods effectively, leading to emotional statements decrying the subsequent worsening circumstances. Hippolytus, the Nurse, and Theseus each address and criticise the off-kilter system in which they live, as they undergo a series of perturbing revelations that resists easy comprehension. They exhibit shock, horror, and hopelessness at their situations, reacting in ways that are highly appropriate to the revelation of how divine authorities toy with mortals with callous zeal. Throughout the play, the dialogue and the metrical arrangement suggest an attention and prioritisation on showing the frank affective reactions of the characters, as they are stripped of concern for convention due to the events and realisations that destabilise their ability to sincerely respect, or even understand, their gods.

[314] See Pelling 2008: 92 for discussion on the common trope in tragedy of using a gods' mythical record against them.
[315] Ebbott 2017: 141.
[316] Conacher 1967: 34; Blomqvist 1982: 408.
[317] Eur. *Hipp.* 1421-1422.
[318] Knox 1979: 225-228.

3.3.3. Hippolytus' Character and the Downward Spiral

It is within this environment, that the title character undergoes his own reassessment of his relationship with the gods. The shared recognition of dubious divine behaviour throughout the play places Hippolytus' outburst in-line with other statements against the divine, differing only in its extremity. Nevertheless, Hippolytus' own fracturing relationship with the gods differs significantly from those of the other characters, not only in its explosivity, but also in how the play portrays his relationship to the gods, and particularly Artemis, with a focus on his personal attachment and emotional investment throughout the play. Hippolytus' relationship with the gods is constructed in two significant scenes in which Hippolytus' extreme emotionality is foregrounded with his actions and dialogue. The play culminates in Hippolytus' ruined relationship with the gods in his death scene, with clear indications in the text of the placement and physical performance of the characters. This scene is delivered with heightened emotional tension that results in frank expression of outright rage at the gods.[319] Not unlike Sophocles' *Ajax*, Hippolytus starts the play deeply attached to his chosen goddess, and in this close attachment, posits himself as an outstanding mortal within her fold. Just as Ajax sought to distinguish himself with his martial ability, Hippolytus emphasises his chastity. In both cases, the mortal is drawing a parallel between themselves and their patron goddess' qualities, as an indication to his exceptional worthiness and proximity to the goddess. This exalted closeness is then destabilised during the play, resulting in a climactic severance as the mortal realises their relationship with the goddess is not so protective or privileged as they had presumed.

The stage at the beginning of the play contains two statues, one of Artemis and one of Aphrodite, and so recreating a sacred grove. Hippolytus enters fresh from a hunt and greets the statue of Artemis with an extensive paean, bringing her a prop-garland, and describing the untouched meadow (ἐξ ἀκηράτου λειμῶνος) he collected it from.[320] As he continues, he links the inviolability of the meadow and his virgin status, to his uniquely close relationship with the goddess:

ὅσοις διδακτὸν μηδὲν ἀλλ᾽ ἐν τῇ φύσει

[319] Arnott 1989: 37; Cairns 2017: 4.
[320] Eur. *Hipp.* 73.

τὸ σωφρονεῖν εἴληχεν ἐς τὰ πάντ᾽ ἀεί,

τούτοις δρέπεσθαι, τοῖς κακοῖσι δ᾽ οὐ θέμις.

ἀλλ᾽, ὦ φίλη δέσποινα, χρυσέας κόμης

ἀνάδημα δέξαι χειρὸς εὐσεβοῦς ἄπο.

μόνῳ γάρ ἐστι τοῦτ᾽ ἐμοὶ γέρας βροτῶν·

Such greatness is not taught to anyone but is bestowed in the nature of those who are sound of mind in all things, they are to pluck, but the corrupted are not ordinanced by the law.

But, oh beloved mistress, receive upon your golden head from my devoted hand this garland.

For this honour is for me alone among men.[321]

In his prayer to Artemis, Hippolytus asserts a relationship with the goddess that is predicated on his own specialness, but which also showcases his excessive devotion on this goddess, and his neglected relationship with Aphrodite.[322] Outstanding amongst other mortals, only he can boast as to the closeness of their connection (μόνῳ γάρ ἐστι τοῦτ᾽ ἐμοὶ γέρας βροτῶν). His interaction with the statue, described as he carries it out, (χρυσέας κόμης ἀνάδημα δέξαι χειρὸς εὐσεβοῦς ἄπο), enacts the close proximity and physical contact that Hippolytus keenly initiates with the goddess, as he delivers her a garland he has personally constructed.[323] Hippolytus is thus demonstrating an understanding of his relationship with the goddess that is based on a personal intimacy which he actively claims, and seeks to maintain to the exclusion of all others. As he goes on to describe, this exalted nature is not learnable (διδακτὸν μηδὲν), but is granted only to those who are born with the correct nature (ἐν τῇ φύσει… εἴληχεν).[324] Such an extreme belief was not common to any contemporary cults that

[321] Eur. *Hipp.* 79-84.
[322] Cairns 1997: 51.
[323] Taplin 2003: 69-70. Bruzzone (2012: 71) discusses Hippolytus' interaction with the statue in terms of agalmatophilia, or the sexual love of inanimate objects.
[324] Eur. *Hipp.* 80-81.

would be known to the audience, thus suggesting that Hippolytus is unusual in his behaviour.[325] Thus, the play's focus on the immaculacy and exceptionality of Hippolytus himself, including his virginity, as is indicated by his pledge "to return to life's post as he begun it" (τέλος δὲ κάμψαιμ᾽ ὥσπερ ἠρξάμην βίου), speaks to this imbalance within the character.[326] In addition to this, Hippolytus repeatedly describes Artemis' meadow as "inviolate" (ἀκηράτου), which in itself indicates a lack of wariness or worldliness on his part.[327] Meadows feature in myths as locations of erotic encounters, particularly between gods and mortals, bringing a longing intensity to Hippolytus' address to Artemis, that imputes an inappropriateness onto his obsession with her.[328] Cairns has noted that the meadow is not a representation of Artemis as completely chaste, but rather an inviolate sexuality, particularly with the lush descriptions of the fecund growth from the spring-time bees and streams.[329] There is, however, a potential violence to the meadow that foreshadows Hippolytus' death, and particularly his death at the hands of a divine perpetrator. Goff has highlighted that the sexuality of the meadow's locale is often connected to sudden and violent sexual encounters, typically between mortals and gods.[330] Therefore, as Hippolytus sings of the lustrous meadow, in which he yearns for Artemis, he is placing himself in an expanse where he is in fact at risk of dangerous godly whims. As Hippolytus interacts with Artemis' statue, singing her a paean that reflects exceptionally strong feelings towards the goddess, the additional presence of a statue of Aphrodite, ignored throughout, demonstrates the imbalance in his religious activity that has earned Hippolytus Aphrodite's ire. Therefore, the scene holds an air of danger, as Hippolytus effuses over Artemis and the importance of chastity in the presence of Aphrodite, with the audience already aware that the love goddess is going to avenge her neglect using a plan that involves sexual opportunity.

Immediately following his paean to Artemis, Hippolytus' reaction to Aphrodite is shown in instant contrast. He ignores the goddess' cult statue and is prompted for explanation by the Attendant. In the following exchange, Hippolytus demonstrates an evasiveness in explaining precisely why he does not worship Aphrodite. First, he informs the Attendant that he does worship Aphrodite, but being chaste, he does so from afar (πρόσωθεν αὐτὴν ἁγνὸς ὢν

[325] Barrett 1964: 172. Mueller 2021: 122.
[326] Eur. *Hipp.* 88-89.
[327] Eur. *Hipp.* 73, 76.
[328] Bremer 1975: 269 – 270.
[329] Cairns 1997: 65. Eur. *Hipp.* 77-79.
[330] Goff 1990: 59.

ἀσπάζομαι). Upon further prodding, he divulges a disdaining attitude toward Aphrodite herself:

> οὐδείς μ᾽ ἀρέσκει νυκτὶ θαυμαστὸς θεῶν
>
> I find nothing good about gods who marvel at night.[331]

Hippolytus avoids making a clear statement of dislike or disapproval. His use of the plural (θεῶν) makes the target of his statement imprecise, but the context and the description of these gods he disapproves of as being "at night" (νυκτὶ) recalls sexual activity taking place in beds after dark. Nevertheless, despite this hedging and imprecise language, Hippolytus' displeasure, the identity of the goddess he is disrespecting, and why he is distancing himself from her are all clear, with the line itself, as it is used to dismiss the goddess, asserting a tacit impiety in the goddess's presence. His distant greeting to Aphrodite is not seen by the audience, and so remains ineffectual as a defence against his apparent impiety onstage. Nevertheless, Hippolytus' unwillingness to approach the goddess is contextualised and quantified in his behaviour. In his earlier speech to Artemis, Hippolytus describes how those who are "corrupted" (κακοῖσι) cannot lawfully serve Artemis.[332] His relationship with Aphrodite is thus conducted through an understanding that any proximity to her could jeopardise his highly valued relationship with Artemis. Hippolytus immediately leaves the stage after this underhand comment, allowing these words and the understated hazard they represent to settle on the audience.[333]

The dichotomy drawn by Hippolytus between the inviolate nature of Artemis and the sexuality of Aphrodite falls along a familiar purity and pollution model. That which is pure risks corruption when it encounters impurity; indeed, this scene, with its imagery of the unsullied meadow, is directly referenced by Parker in his study on pollution as an example of this fragility.[334] In Hippolytus' first appearance onstage, his worship of Artemis is presented as highly significant to him on a personal level. Functionally speaking, Hippolytus' actions as

[331] Eur. *Hipp.* 106.
[332] Eur. *Hipp.* 81.
[333] Eur. *Hipp.* 119-120. Taplin 2003: 122.
[334] Parker 1983: 164.

a worshipper of Artemis upholds convention, and in her own appearance at the end of the play, Artemis describes Aphrodite as "most hated by those who love chastity," suggesting that Hippolytus' avoidance of the love goddess was recommended as a loyal follower.[335] The clash of values between Artemis and Aphrodite does suggest a mutual tension between the worship of these two goddesses.[336] However, as established during his first appearance, Hippolytus applies this model egocentrically. Thus, he overinterprets the pollution/purity dynamic as a method of gaining personal esteem.[337]

In particular, Hippolytus' affective predilections and whims are shown to be a driving factor in his relationship with the gods, including in his antagonisms. As discussed by Cairns, emotion in *Hippolytus* plays a disruptive role that is likened to burden and physical ailment, particularly regarding Phaedra's ἔρως and her pining for Hippolytus.[338] However, Hippolytus also evinces symptoms of overwhelming affection, as his worship is stimulated by emotional fixation. Hippolytus thus forges a close relationship with the goddess, and so magnifies his emotional and personal stakes in maintaining his virginal status. Hippolytus therefore remains in a developmentally arrested state, refusing to graduate to the next stage of adulthood. This interminable youth, as Davies has suggested, is a key part of his excessive and exclusive relationship with the goddess, as he rests on the liminal edges of human community, his observance of Artemis causing excessive habituation of the wilderness.[339]

When asked directly about his avoidance of Aphrodite by the Attendant, Hippolytus gives a minimal and imprecise answer. Juxtaposed with his enthusiastic prayer to Artemis, his reticence is striking. As much as he may dislike Aphrodite and all she represents, she is still a goddess, and to baldly express dislike and disapproval would be inadvisable. By talking around his disapproval of Aphrodite, Hippolytus stays shy of committing outright impiety and so evades any more stringent correction from the Attendant and his peers. However, Hippolytus casts aside this caution later in the play when he is provoked to emotional outburst. After catching the Nurse attempting to perform a love charm on him for Phaedra's benefit, Hippolytus unleashes a vitriolic tirade that conveys the depth of his disgust at sexual

[335] Eur. *Hipp.* 1301-1303.
[336] Braund 1980: 184-185.
[337] Dowden 2007: 53.
[338] Cairns 2017: 4.
[339] Burian 2006: 203; Davies 2000: 58-60. See also Cairns 1997: 55-59.

interactions with an extensiveness and emotionality that could not have been expressed in direct reference to Aphrodite.

After discovering the Nurse's scheme, Hippolytus exclaims "Oh Earth, mother of sunlight and the wide expanse, what unutterable words have I heard" (ὦ γαῖα μῆτερ ἡλίου τ᾽ ἀναπτυχαί, οἵων λόγων ἄρρητον εἰσήκουσ᾽ ὅπα). He then comments on his inability to stay silent after what he has just heard (οὐκ ἔστ᾽ ἀκούσας δείν᾽ ὅπως σιγήσομαι – "Having just heard terrible things, how can I keep silent"), before demanding the Nurse not touch him (οὐ μὴ προσοίσεις χεῖρα μηδ᾽ ἅψῃ πέπλων;).[340] These spontaneous reactions, delivered through stichomythia in exchange with the Nurse's pleading, emphasise Hippolytus' feelings of shock and revulsion. The actor's physical performance may have reinforced the character's emotional state.[341] Arnott suggests that gestures for detestation likely followed that of vase paintings of tragic performances, such as *Eumenides* and the priestesses encountering of the Erinyes, in which one hand is outstretched with the palm facing outwards, and the second is coiled against the chest while the body as a whole turns away from the object of detestation.[342] This physical movement, combined with Hippolytus beginning his reappearance on stage with an exclamation, repeated descriptions of what he has just heard as "unspeakable" and "terrible" (ἄρρητον, δείν), and his demand for the Nurse to not touch him, creates a composite impression of rage and disgust being unbottled in one dramatic incident.[343]

Following this explosive return to the stage, Hippolytus continues to express his outrage, expanding upon his feelings about sexual relations in a sharp. First, women, as the main agents of sexual reproduction and Aphrodite, are pilloried in place of the goddess. Hippolytus then addresses Zeus, demanding to know why the god did not allow men to procreate without women, and suggesting that men could have gained sons sexlessly by exchanging gifts in temples (εἰ γὰρ βρότειον ἤθελες σπεῖραι γένος, οὐκ ἐκ γυναικῶν – "if you had willed it, mankind could have sowed kin not out of women").[344] Hippolytus thus experiences hatred for women, and by extension, Aphrodite for the threat of pollution they

[340] Eur. *Hipp.* 601-602, 604.
[341] Cairns 2013: 90-91.
[342] Arnott 1991: 66-67. Also see Roman writer Quintillian's guide to gesture, which claims "extend the arm out with the palms turned away on the left side" to show repulsion (*The Art of Oratory.* 11.3, 83.)
[343] Eur. *Hipp.* 601.
[344] Eur. *Hipp.* 616, 626.

represent. To Hippolytus, therefore, they represent something fundamentally wrong and harmful to this deity and her affiliates, as he expresses a sincere desire to wipe out any need for them going forward.[345]

As well as his distaste for women and a wish to live without them, Hippolytus also recalls his earlier disapproval of Aphrodite, and the threat she posed to his chastity. He names the goddess directly as the instigator of licentiousness: "I hate clever women….for Cypris breeds mischief in the clever ones" (σοφὴν δὲ μισῶ:….γὰρ κακοῦργον μᾶλλον ἐντίκτει Κύπρις ἐν ταῖς σοφαῖσιν).[346] And again, Hippolytus casts licentiousness as a source of pollution that poses a threat to his own purity.[347] As discussed by Most and Barrett, Phaedra is most likely to be on stage at this point, adding an increased sense of chaos and calamity as she is witness to her own downfall, with Barrett imagining her "cowering by the side".[348] Willinks suggests that Phaedra doesn't cower, but moves to draw closer to the Chorus, seeking comfort and maybe synchronicity with their movement.[349] Either way, the scene posits Hippolytus moving aggressively, as he bursts in, and Phaedra and the Nurse moving evasively or fearfully. Hippolytus addresses Phaedra as a "vile creature" (ὦ κακὸν κάρα), before commenting on the need "to purge away the pollution from my ears with water" (ἀγὼ ῥυτοῖς νασμοῖσιν ἐξομόρξομαι, ἐς ὦτα κλύζων), and expressing fear that he has been dirtied by learning of Phaedra's desire for him ("and having heard such a thing, do I seem impure?"- ὃς οὐδ᾽ ἀκούσας τοιάδ᾽ ἁγνεύειν δοκῶ;).[350]

Hippolytus ends his tirade with a declaration that he will "never have my fill of hating women, even if you say I am always talking of it" (μισῶν δ᾽ οὔποτ᾽ ἐμπλησθήσομαι γυναῖκας, οὐδ᾽ εἴ φησί τίς μ᾽ ἀεὶ λέγειν).[351] Hippolytus has apparently expressed these misogynist views before this instance, and frequently so: hating women appears to be a constant, insatiable need. He himself understands this as justified, because of how women are "always evil" (ἀεὶ γὰρ οὖν πώς εἰσι κἀκεῖναι κακαί).[352] However, this perception is filtered with extreme bias through Hippolytus' fixation on purity, and his desperate desire to remain linked to Artemis.

[345] Konstan 2006: 43.
[346] Eur. *Hipp.* 642-643.
[347] Eur. *Hipp.* 654.
[348] Barrett 1964: 272; Most 2008: 43-45.
[349] Willink 2006: 14-16.
[350] Eur. *Hipp.* 653-655.
[351] Eur. *Hipp.* 663.
[352] Eur. *Hipp.* 666.

The fear that he may lose this exceptional connection, and that the Nurse's proposal may have in some way rendered him impure, arise from the same obsession that motivates his excessively personal praise to Artemis, and his horror at the thought of encountering Aphrodite or anything that pertains to sex. Hippolytus is thus shown to be susceptible to excessive emotionality, leading him to brash and inadvisable courses of action.[353]

Hippolytus' hatred of Aphrodite is thus entirely predicated on a need to maintain his intense connection to Artemis. The extreme level to which he has misinterpreted this relationship as private access to the goddess is grounded in his self-absorption and egotism. The intensity with which he cleaves to Artemis ironically draws a line of parallel between Hippolytus and the mortal sexual partners with the gods that are referenced by the Nurse in her speech to Phaedra.[354] If we re-examine the myths of Cephalus and Semele, lovers of Eos and Zeus, it is significant that both these figures are famous for suffering greatly because of their entanglements with the gods, while their divine paramours, in contrast, remained untroubled. Hippolytus' involvement with Artemis is sexless, but it nevertheless is comparable in its closeness and intensity, and it ends in equally tragic fashion. The level of his fanaticism and its emotionality are made clear in the poles of reaction displayed in his interactions with these two goddesses. First, his obsequious prayer to Artemis demonstrates how his devotion toward her goes beyond the standard god-worshipper relationship, and into something altogether more personal and intense. In contrast, his initial frostiness in front of the statue of Aphrodite, and then the unhinged fury toward Aphrodite via the proxies of women and sexual reproduction, demonstrate the fear and repulsion consistent with someone invested in a relationship founded on chastity, and paranoid about somehow harming this chastity. This impassioned approach to his worship is doomed due to the volatility that comes from how rashly he pursues his desire.

Hippolytus' death is directly caused by yet another god, namely Poseidon. Like Phaedra's first appearance, where she is carried onto the stage to exclamations of shock and concern, Hippolytus' death scene is also multi-sensory, involving the character making physical contact with others, screaming in pain, and taking on gestures and postures relevant to his current state.[355] After being struck by a wave sent by Poseidon on Theseus' request, Hippolytus is either carried onstage, or enters via the *ekkyklema,* to die before the

[353] Ebbott 2017: 137.
[354] Eur. *Hipp.* 451-456.
[355] Worman 2021: 40.

audience.[356] As he is brought on, there is purposeful attention to the damage done to Hippolytus' body, as he references his broken flesh, requests help and appears to shout in pain as he is helped by the Attendants, lamenting his fate throughout.[357] From these indications, as Hippolytus is presented wracked with pain and completely physically broken, he speaks while either lying down or from a lowered position throughout. In his final moments, Artemis arrives to reveal the truth of Aphrodite's curse, and Hippolytus shares the stage with the goddess for whom he has been so overwhelmed with devotion, at the very moment this bitterness is setting in. Bieber has suggested that Artemis descends via the stage's flying machinery, presenting a visual of the goddess's supernatural and revered power, as she tends to her dying favourite.[358] Initially their interaction reflects this conventional arrangement, as Hippolytus calls out to her, using standard honorifics, and she affirms that she still honours him highly.[359] However, as the exchange between the goddess, Hippolytus and Theseus continues, there is a shift in tone. As Artemis reveals the true chain of events that begun with Aphrodite's scheme, and the scene focuses on the interaction between father and son, Hippolytus and Theseus focus their attention on the gods, who they begin to explicitly blame for their calamity. Initially, blame is localised to just Aphrodite, but as Theseus and Hippolytus' exchange continues, there is a broadening in focus as Hippolytus moves to blame the gods as a whole.[360] This occurs in stages, with Artemis first describing Theseus as being "deceived by a god's desires" (ἐξηπατήθη δαίμονος βουλεύμασιν), thus attributing blame to Aphrodite without naming her directly for a second time.[361] Following this, Hippolytus names Poseidon as the one who has killed him ("how bitter are the gifts of your father Poseidon" - ὦ δῶρα πατρὸς σοῦ Ποσειδῶνος πικρά), mediating Theseus' own culpability with a godly actor.[362] When Hippolytus briefly pauses this relocation of blame, and reasserts Theseus' murderous intentions towards him ("you would have killed me yourself, you were so angry" - ἔκτανές τἄν μ᾽, ὡς τότ᾽ ἦσθ᾽ ὠργισμένος), Theseus reasserts that he was manipulated by a higher power ("the gods overthrew my reason" - δόξης γὰρ ἦμεν

[356] Bieber 1954: 280.
[357] Eur: *Hipp.* 1347-1388.
[358] Bieber 1954: Ibid.
[359] Eur. *Hipp.* 1398.
[360] Eur. *Hipp.* 1400.
[361] Eur. *Hipp.* 1406.
[362] Eur. *Hipp.* 1411.

πρὸς θεῶν ἐσφαλμένοι).[363] Following this statement, Hippolytus brings their ruminating thoughts on the divine to a frankly stated conclusion:

> φεῦ: εἴθ᾽ ἦν ἀραῖον δαίμοσιν βροτῶν γένος
>
> "Oh misery! Would that the race of man could curse the gods!"[364]

The location of this outburst at the end of Hippolytus' discussion with Theseus naturally brings a conclusive statement to their new position. There is a clear emphasis on the overwhelming aggrievement mortals are experiencing, and the aggression naturally arising from it. Hippolytus here prefaces his criticism against the gods with an exclamation (φεῦ) that both conveys his distress and draws attention to the importance of what he goes on to say.[365] Following this, the wistful tone achieved by "εἴθ" ("if only"), gives the line a longing, melancholy aspect. What Hippolytus is wishing, however, is hostile; by invoking a curse, he wishes to curse the gods (ἀραῖον δαίμοσιν). This construction with ἀραῖον is a common curse formula that occurs in multiple places across the tragic corpus, and often when a character, with great urgency either curses another, or impels them to a certain action via a threat of a curse.[366] At this point in the play, there have feasibly been two previous curses uttered by other characters, namely Theseus (to Poseidon to bring about the wave that kills Hippolytus) and Phaedra, according to Mueller's interpretation of her death scene, and the letter she left on her body when she committed suicide.[367] In Phaedra's case, and in Hippolytus' case here, the curser's death is intended to be especially potent. However, despite the usual power of the dying's curse, Hippolytus utters his wish in vain; as Barrett states, it is a "divine murderer" he decries, and so his curse will not impact his attackers as he would like.[368] Nevertheless, the automatically taboo nature of his statement is immediately indicated by Artemis, who immediately shushes him.[369] Hippolytus' curse against the gods is consistent with his established personality and his tendency for extreme reactionism, as his anger motivates a

[363] Eur. *Hipp.* 1413-1414.
[364] Eur. *Hipp.* 1415.
[365] Wright 2016: 592.
[366] Hatch 1908: 166; See Eur. *Iph. Tau.* 778; Soph. *Phil.* 1182; Aesch. *Seven Against Thebes*. 898.
[367] Mueller 2011: 169.
[368] Barrett 1964: 411.
[369] Eur. *Hipp.* 1416.

clear and understandable desire for revenge.[370] Vitally, because of this pluralised description of the gods, Hippolytus is not discounting Artemis from his curse, but implicitly includes her as one of the deities who bears responsibility for his unfair treatment. In the play's conclusion, the character has reached the outcome of his previous devotion to Artemis and his obsessive protectionism over his religious chastity, only to die painfully from the actions and complicity of multiple different gods, entirely reversing his relationship with her. In the lines previously, Hippolytus has spoken of being "destroyed utterly", with the term used (ἀπώλεσεν) meaning both physical and emotional (or spiritual) crushing, pointing to Hippolytus' internal strife, as well as his physically broken body.[371]

The exchange with Theseus, delivered in stichomythia, has steadily roused Hippolytus' frustration with the gods, as father and son exchange information and jointly lament over what has transpired. Their sense of jointly felt outrage thus increases as they speak, escalating within each individual and between each other through a catalytic process, bolstered by the shared view of the divine's ultimate culpability, and the understanding that they were manipulated.[372] The emotional force of the content of the lines is thus reinforced through the characters' interaction, creating a field of affirming and asserted agreement, until Hippolytus' reaches a peak in outrage at their shared target. As with the exchange between the Nurse and Phaedra, each character's emotional state amplifies the other, reaching a crescendo in which information is divulged in a fit of pent-up emotion that interrupts the pattern of exchange, delivering an impactful emotional conclusion.[373]

Hippolytus' distress arises from his particular relationship with Artemis. However, he also speaks to a broader theme in terms of the systematic relationship between gods and mortals. Hippolytus is not only speaking for himself, but is specifically wishing for the collective mankind (βροτῶν), as a collective, to contest the malign divine influence, also perceived of as a collective (δαίμοσιν). This caps off the play's portrayal of the damaging influence of the gods. Hippolytus' comments are rational and emerge organically from his personal situation, as well as the experience of other tormented mortals. Notably, Theseus' final address to Aphrodite echoes this desire to respond to the gods' misdeeds.[374] Hence, the play closes on a

[370] Konstan 2006: 56.
[371] Schenker 1995: 6.
[372] For this contagion of anger, see Ekman (2007: 111).
[373] Easterling 2006: 158.
[374] Eur. *Hipp.* 1460.

pessimistic and resentful note, with gods and mortals separated into two distinct and opposing cohorts.

Hippolytus' statement against the gods is forceful and delivered with momentum. However, its taboo nature and the potential disruptiveness is mitigated through the conditions and form of its utterance. In particular, Hippolytus' brief moment of abandon is not directed at any god in particular, but, as with Ajax's disavowal of service, is aimed at the divine collective. Hippolytus' conversation with Theseus has already broadened the target of their dismay from one goddess in particular, to a collective term of unspecified divine personalities (δαίμοσιν). Δαίμων has a wider range of meaning than θεός, and can be translated as "god", "lesser god", "spirit", and any other entity that contains a supernatural, numinous element.[375] This multiplicity and variation of meaning adds a further level of imprecision as to what Hippolytus is cursing. Thus, no single god has been singled out for direct criticism, and the target of Hippolytus' blame and vengeance is tactically imprecise. In examples where the god is simply named as responsible for the mortals' troubles, as seen when the Nurse specifically names Aphrodite as the source of Phaedra's unwanted lust, the specific offending deity is explicitly named. Following on from this, it is notable that Theseus, in his final line of the play, directly tells Aphrodite that he will not forget her actions. This is, from the context, immediately understandable as a judgement and threat. However, decontextualised, it reads as a straightforward description as to what Aphrodite has done, and what Theseus will do in response to it. It does not include a description of Aphrodite directly as bad god, only her actions are described as "κακῶν". As a result, he can name Aphrodite directly, while Hippolytus' plain expression of aggression, even hypothetically stated, has a vague target. By doing so, the actor was insulated from committing direct impiety, and the audience from hearing it. Mikalson has suggested that this delicate handling of criticisms against the gods indicates that tragic depictions of the gods were fictional creations, that were disassociated from the cult figures found in Athens' sanctuaries.[376] Similarly, it has been put forward that Euripides in particular used Archaic forms of the gods as representations of abstractions, such as love or madness, simply to instil a fear for these powerful and capricious forces that came from the audience's religious imagination.[377] That the use of religious figures known to the audience, like the use of

[375] Schenkeveld 1988: 113-114.
[376] Mikalson 2004: 24.
[377] Winnington-Ingram et al 1985: 325.

impiety, was simply to create a more compelling dramatic experience, is logical to consider. Nevertheless, just because these are being exploited for dramatic and theatrical impact, does not mean they lost all religious significance during their appearance. It is particularly difficult to believe that every audience member would know to disconnect the familiar deities, prayer formulas and ritual actions seen onstage from the same iconography and practises they encountered in their own worship. Aphrodite and Artemis are each portrayed with hallmarks of their worship, including statues to which Hippolytus pays conventional tribute.[378] The divine characters are thus persistently identified with their cultic personages, meaning that a complete disassociation would have been very unlikely. Additionally, the distancing language Hippolytus uses, as he evades accusing a particular god despite the clear identity of which gods have harmed him, suggests a cautionary attitude. Therefore, the conventions of deference to the gods are still active in the performance, although it is mitigated through its various elements.

Additionally, it is notable that Hippolytus' criticism of the gods is tempered in performance by the other characters' reactions to his denouncement. This is also a strategy present in *Ajax*, when Tecmessa chides Ajax for his rejection of the gods.[379] In *Hippolytus*, Artemis immediately follows his risky comment with a cry of "enough" (ἔασον), and her assurance that Aphrodite will lose a follower of her own through a similar retributive scheme.[380] Having another character react and censure the disgruntled mortal's impieties gives an in-play resistance against bald statements against the gods, reaffirming convention, and preventing any further or freer impiety to be committed. While the impious thought is voiced, Artemis' interruption ensures it remains brief, and with a condemnation of it on the record. The unorthodox sentiment is thus shown checked within the play.

Finally, *Hippolytus,* as with *Ajax*, puts its most frank and unbridled criticisms of the gods into the mouth of a character dies shortly afterwards. This is particularly significant in *Hippolytus,* as the protagonist's disappointment and disillusionment with the gods is paired with a prolonged and embittered death onstage which shows his physical agony and invokes substantial pathos through the actor's movement and dialogue. The character repeatedly makes tormented exclamations ("αἰαῖ αἰαῖ" … οἴμοι μοι…. "ἔ ἔ":… "φεῦ φεῦ:"), draws attention to his broken body and physical pain ("διά μου κεφαλῆς ᾄσσουσ᾽ ὀδύναι, κατὰ δ᾽ ἐγκέφαλον

[378] Sourvinou-Inwood 2003: 330.
[379] Soph. *Aj.* 591.
[380] Eur. *Hipp.* 1416-1423.

πηδᾷ σφάκελος"), and gives his silent helpers instructions to "handle and bind my broken flesh carefully" (ἀτρέμα, δμῶες, χροὸς ἑλκώδους ἅπτεσθε χεροῖν.)[381] The emphasis on Hippolytus' pain, acted through his vocalisations and delicate movement around the stage, plausibly depicts Hippolytus' present and ongoing agony ahead of his denouncement of the gods. Thus, Hippolytus' outburst is shown alongside his worsening physical dilapidation, as his dies violently and in pain. Hippolytus' collapsed status is also consistent with Aphrodite's original plans. In the beginning of the play, Aphrodite claimed that she intended "to lay low" (σφάλλω) Hippolytus for his insult to her.[382] The obvious figurative intent of this word is given a literal meaning as Hippolytus is truly made low, never to rise again.[383] He is therefore speaking from the position of someone who is defeated, who is viewing and understanding the gods and his relationship with them from a ground down and toppled position. Vicious accusations and aggression coming from a character who is clearly and pitifully dying are inherently unthreatening in their utterance. Hippolytus, an exuberantly passionate character, who reacts with extreme, egotistic bias in all matters, offers a further layer of deniability through his fallibility. Nevertheless, he offers a voice for troubling but inevitable thoughts, particularly when gods freely liaise with mortals, regardless of the impact on their chosen lovers. These distancing measures demonstrate, above all, that such impieties were not neutrally received by the audience, but that they remained taboo, even as they were usable. In the cases of *Hippolytus,* these denouncements also work as commentary, showing the extreme outcomes of dalliances between gods and mortals, as the play creates a heightened and realistic portrayal of a cavalier godly meddling in the mortal sphere, with the force of Hippolytus' arrogant and fallible personality utilised to brazenly call out the inequity and express the ill-feeling bred from it. Following a play in which speech has been exchanged amongst the mortal characters to degrade and reject each other, a brief moment is taken to use frank words to take aim and strike out at the gods from a position of exclusion and degradation.[384]

3.4. Chapter Conclusion

[381] Eur. *Hipp.* selected lines 1351-1361.
[382] Eur. *Hipp.* 6; Knox 1979: 225.
[383] Short 2013: 143.
[384] Saxonhouse 2005: 132.

Sophocles' *Ajax* and Euripides' *Hippolytus* each present a protagonist who would be familiar in type to the original audience. The Homeric hero, or the promising ephebe were regular features of public art and choral performance, and so the portrayal of these archetypes within these two plays subverts these ideals to produce complicated depictions in which these characters openly deride the gods as they find themselves ejected from their previous vaunted place within their societies. Are we to feel pity for them, or enjoy their downfall as a much-deserved act of cosmic justice? In each case, the dysfunction of the characters, particularly how they relate to the divine, marks them out as incompatible with a workable communal state. Ajax and Hippolytus are both egocentric males, who enjoy unusually close relationships with goddesses who parallel their most highly valued qualities. Crucially, they are each shown to be unique among their societies in the extremity to which they are pursuing their relationships with the gods, self-legislating their behaviour via a stringent and unwavering belief in their higher principles, while in fact driven by their own desires for achievement and note. Both characters' eventual rejection of their goddesses and the divine as a whole, is thus vitalised by their disappointment when their inflated expectations of their own worthiness are not met with corresponding attention. They push away gods who they perceive as failing them, while the play makes clear to the other characters and audience that these mortals have had a role in causing their own downfall.

The performance space in each play, as with the actors' bodies' movement and placement onstage, enforces the characters' emotionality before and during their overt denouncements of the gods. In both cases, Ajax and Hippolytus emit their denouncements from a physically lowered position, or in Ajax's case, most likely having stood up from a lowered position. Their statements against the gods thus come after their heroic form has been denigrated, with attention paid in the dialogue to the characters physical and psychological pain.[385] Additionally, both plays use dialogue and metrical arrangement draw out these statements against the gods to the greatest theatrical use, causing the greatest impact in their utterance. Through the escalating tensions rendered via stichomythic exchanges, metrical layout adding greater punch to revelations and vocalisations, Ajax and Hippolytus' criticisms against the gods are delivered with aplomb and gravitas, the scandalous nature of their criticisms adding a natural weight to their statements, and causing a ripple of effect through the drama; in both cases, the characters are hurriedly shushed for their impiety. Comparing

[385] Worman 2021: 32.

these two examples, it is notable that Euripides asserts his character's final denouncement with particular dramatic attention, as it arrives at the end of the final scene's climactic exposition between Theseus and Hippolytus, where the revelation of Aphrodite's duplicity is revealed. However, while Euripides' example is delivered with more punch, Ajax's statement remains significant as he is also shushed hurriedly, and he utters it before he takes the decision to kill himself. Thus, there is a quiet sense of dread and impact created in Ajax's moment, as he matter-of-factly declares his relationship with the gods henceforth nullified while he is still living. His suicide could thus be interpretated as connected to his deliberate severing of the gods' influence.

Each play contextualises the characters' reactions to the gods with the comments and observations of other mortals, in which they emerge in relation to a wider network of statements on the divine, many of which observe and acknowledge the gods' unseemly aspects. Both characters are granted a cult to their personality that would have been known to the original audience, suggesting their private sense of exceptionalism is not played to an entirely unsympathetic audience. Hippolytus' cult is even referenced by Aphrodite herself, while Ajax's is subtly imputed through discussion about the treatment of his corpse.[386]

In both tragedies, the protagonists are spoken to directly by the gods, and in Ajax's case, even though he is in the process of being humiliated by her, he is the only character in the play who is able to lay eyes on Athena directly. Their openly combative nature with the gods, in each case, follows direct contact with their most beloved goddess, with their reach to the goddess facilitating their ability to speak frankly and directly as the plays bring them to the pinnacle of their lives through an attention on their hopelessness. As such, Ajax and Hippolytus are, through the same mechanism that marks them out as special, able to speak with a complete absence of deference to the gods at the close of their onstage lives. These two plays thus represent the problematisation innate in such outbursts against the gods, as these characters are both exalted, but paradoxically laid low due to the character traits that caused them to place themselves in a higher register of treatment than their peers.[387]

As the examples of Sophocles' *Ajax* and Euripides' *Hippolytus* have shown, complicated relationships with the divine could be enlivened in performance with the use of the apparent

[386] Burian 1972: 153-155. Eur. *Hipp.* 30-33.
[387] Another play that features this character type, with a similar personality-type uttering denouncements against the gods, is the fragmentary Bellorophon, also by Euripides.

emotion, telegraphed through the performer's speech and movements onstage. The performances thus created an animacy, with living, apparently spontaneous portrayals of the story, in which the characters' reactions could be shown in detail, including negative feelings towards the divine expressed at peak moments. The characters' personalities and their individual circumstances, constructed through live performance, thus play a vital role in forming and informing their outbursts against the gods as their affective dynamics animates and then directs their statements.

4. Women Under Fire: Sophocles' *Antigone* and Euripides' *Trojan Women*

4.1 Introduction

Sophocles' *Ajax* and Euripides' *Hippolytus* present one type of scenario for a mortal falling out with the divine. The protagonists are egocentric males who hold high status within their communities. Both boast a closer than average connection with a female deity, and both express a belief that this close connection grant them a higher level of esteem among their peers and the gods. In this light, it may thus be unsurprising that each protagonist's relationship with the gods results in a similar outcome, as they focus on their individual suffering, and do not only criticise the gods, but express a desire to effect reprisals.

By contrast, the characters who express fury at the gods in Sophocles' *Antigone* and Euripides' *Trojan Women* are female. At moments of significant and devastating loss, they call out and denounce the unfairness of their situation, expressing distress and dismay on realising the gods' neglectful or instrumental role. Their outbursts are notably less aggressive and do not focus on reprisals nor do they include any explicit wish to harm any deities (as with *Hippolytus*) or to abdicate further observance (as with *Ajax).* Nevertheless, through their outbursts, the women indicate their deep and personal grievances against the gods, to whom they blame. Once again, the characters' placement and movements reinforce these sentiments, giving their statements extra weight. In each case, the characters' heightened emotionality draws attention to and emphasises the depth of their feelings, while their actions combine with their statements to add further content and tone to their complaints.

The following sections will investigate how the denouncements for the gods are framed in *Antigone* and *Trojan Women,* where the characters of Antigone, Cassandra, and Hecuba each utter different forms of criticism against the gods, with notably different details to their stage presentation in each example. However, the rising emotion present in each example, and the amalgamations of dynamic action and notable posture to their outbursts, produce scenes in each play where the characters' denouncements of the gods are forcefully and decisively voiced.

Beginning with Sophocles' *Antigone*, first staged in 424 BCE, the discussion will centre how Antigone's jabs at the divine are enabled through her extreme alterity. As shall be demonstrated, the traits that cause Antigone to clash with Creon and the conventions of her city, are the same traits that lead her to challenge the gods at crucial moment in the play

with the theatrically heightened zeal. While her outburst is brief, and hedged with qualifying statements, it is nevertheless intriguingly indicative of the character's development, from overtly pious to openly accusing the gods of unfairness, and her ability to use her heightened emotional state to bring into account gods who have been noticeably absent throughout the play.

4.2. Sophocles' *Antigone*

4.2.1 Introduction

Taking place in Thebes following a civil war between Oedipus' sons Polyneices and Eteocles that resulted in the death of both brothers, Sophocles' *Antigone* (441 BCE) opens to a setting in which disarray and internal conflict already abound. The play then chronicles the further struggle, when the titular character, and sister to both combatants, disobeys the Theban leader, Creon, over the burial of Polyneices, resulting in Antigone's prosecution and condemnation to death. The action of the play, as Mueller has posited, occurs within two distinct realms; the temporary, political world the mortals operate within, and the eternal realm controlled by the gods, upon which the impermanent mortal contrivances are built.[388] In these differing areas of jurisdiction, it is vital to note that the gods' dominion entails both below and above the human area of influence, which Creon boasts control throughout the play. Zeus' ability to strike down from the sky is glimpsed in the Chorus' description of Capaneus' death, and the sandstorm that rises suddenly from the earth to obscure Polyneices' body long enough for Antigone to perform a brief funerary ritual demonstrate the active power that can emerge from the chthonic divine powers.[389] The realm the mortals operate within, which the stage space represents, is sandwiched in between, with only these flashes of the divine interest and influence occurring for brief instances, spectacular in their force but immediately forgotten as the mortals are obliged to contend with the political and social matters that require their attention. The mortal characters show only a partial understanding of these differing planes of control, with Creon and the Chorus especially exhibiting a narrow and short-sighted perspective, whilst Tiresias and Haemon are obedient but passive in their acceptance of the gods' higher laws. The play's events thus occur in a location where the human characters are cut off from the gods, with some only referring tangentially to the greater systems in which they are a part of.

Antigone is the standout, literally and symbolically, in this scenario. From her initial introduction, Antigone persistently dismisses human laws and relationships, whilst keeping her attention fixed on the gods' operation. As a mortal with a heightened appreciation of the divine laws, Antigone inhabits a space in between these two separate realms. She not only operates outside of the political and social structures of Thebes, but her very existence is proven to be liminal, even to the macro categories of life and death. The play makes clear

[388] Mueller 2011: 423.
[389] Mueller Ibid

that Antigone thrives on this sense of otherness. She exhibits an awareness of how she differs from those around her, almost taking pride in her ability to contravene their standards, which grants her a persisting sense of self-determination. It is this apparently in-built exceptionality to the character, and her heightened awareness of the gods, that results in a climax in which her previous composure gives way to an outburst of extreme emotion. Occurring at a pinnacle within the play, Antigone openly questions the worth of the gods and adherence to them, with her physical placement and posture also playing a significant role in the rendering of her troubled expression on the dynamics between mortals and gods. In this, her similarity to other women who reach such extremes of emotion in tragedy shall be noted, with the recurring themes of alterity and emotion paired with the open state of hostility with the gods.

4.2.2. Positioned for Disaster: Antigone's Alterity

The play's introduction immediately establishes Antigone's innate contrariness that will lead her to diverge from the expected civic and religious conventions. In her opening dialogue, it is clear that Antigone has summoned her sister Ismene to instigate their exit of the city boundaries in order to break Creon's edict and bury Polyneices where he lies, on the battlefield beyond the city walls ("I have sent for you to come outside the city gates, so that you might hear alone" - "καί σ᾽ ἐκτὸς αὐλείων πυλῶν τοῦδ᾽ οὕνεκ᾽ ἐξέπεμπον, ὡς μόνη κλύοις").[390] The location itself, beyond the bounds of the city, geographically places Antigone in a place out of reach of the usual demands and conventions of her community, and her choice in going there signals her comfort and readiness to diverge from the crowd. Ismene's inability to join her offers a convenient measure for Antigone's radicalness.[391] Ismene is Antigone's match in sex, age, and status, and she shares her sister's hurt in losing their brother and being unable to complete his funeral arrangements.[392] However, Antigone steps forward and initiates transgression, while Ismene does not. Antigone describes Ismene as the lone (μόνη) person to hear her plan to bury Polyneices, while Ismene uses the same word pejoratively when she explains why she does not want to go through with Antigone's

[390] Soph. *Ant.* 19.
[391] Paris 1997: 112-113.
[392] Soph. *Ant.* 65-66. Lardinois (2012: 56) suggests that the actors playing Ismene and Antigone wore the same costume and mask, to emphasise their similarity.

rebellion ("Now you see that we two have been left entirely alone" – "νῦν δ᾽ αὖ μόνα δὴ νὼ λελειμμένα σκόπει").[393] Furthermore, Ismene is mindful of their position: her advice to Antigone to "….remember that we are women" (ἀλλ᾽ ἐννοεῖν χρὴ τοῦτο μὲν γυναῖχ᾽ ὅτι ἔφυμεν), reminding the audience about the conventions on female behaviour that Antigone proves willing to break.[394] When Ismene refuses to go through with Antigone's plan, Antigone proceeds alone, showing a clarity of purpose and willingness to be alienated from even her closest peer.[395] Antigone exhibits a personal pride in carrying out her deed, demanding her sister openly tell people about her act ("Oh hell, shout it out! You will be hated more if you are silent;" - οἴμοι, καταύδα, πολλὸν ἐχθίων ἔσει σιγῶσ᾽). By contrast, Ismene is fearful ("how frightened I am for you" - ὡς ὑπερδέδοικά σου), and in earnest care she proposes a compromise, promising to help her sister if she maintains secrecy ("cover this in secrecy, I will do it with you" – κρυφῇ δὲ κεῦθε, σὺν δ᾽ αὔτως ἐγώ).[396] Had Antigone accepted support from her sister and concealed her crime from their wider community, she would have been safe. However, in the first scene, with Ismene as her foil, Antigone is shown to depart from her sister, physically as well as literally, as Ismene goes back inside the city, and Antigone moves across the stage alone.[397] Antigone's indifference to Ismene's solidarity, and her complete lack of mention of Haemon (her betrothed and Creon's son), who is shown to care great deal about her, has been regarded by some scholars as an indication to the character's hubristic and ultimately flawed nature.[398] Nevertheless, she demonstrates her ability to operate in isolation and seek externality, qualities that allow her to recognise and move against what she believes to be a flawed authority.

Antigone's solitude and rejection of social conventions is also evident in her first confrontation with Creon, after she has been arrested for carrying out Polyneices' funeral rites and is brought before him for interrogation. Antigone is led onto the stage under guard, and so is most likely standing while she is being questioned by Creon. Creon has already established that he is solely interested in enforcing his own rule, and so acts as a foil to Antigone's disinterest in the values and laws of her human peers. As they share the space together, Antigone's demeanour and motivations are contrasted with Creon's, as it was earlier

[393] Soph. *Ant.* 58.
[394] Soph. *Ant.* 61-62.
[395] Bennet & Tyrell: 446.
[396] Soph. *Ant.* 81, 85.
[397] Seale 1982: 84-85.
[398] Minadeo 1985: 142.

with Ismene. He describes her head as "bent towards the ground," (σὲ τὴν νεύουσαν εἰς πέδον κάρα). In this posturing, if we imagine Creon standing over Antigone,[399] the characters' traits are contrasted.[400] He is male, aggressive and forthright in his orders, while she is female and modest, directing her gaze downwards.[401] While their personalities undoubtedly complement each other in their shared stubbornness, Creon's over-valuation of human power is contrasted with Antigone's dismissal of it; confronted with a young female dissenter, Creon tries and fails to reassert his masculine superiority.[402] In her explanation of her motives, Antigone does not dress down Creon himself, or the governmental structures he represents, but emphasises the eternality of the gods' laws:

οὐ γάρ τί μοι Ζεὺς ἦν ὁ κηρύξας τάδε,

οὐδ᾽ ἡ ξύνοικος τῶν κάτω θεῶν Δίκη

τοιούσδ᾽ ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ὥρισεν νόμους.

οὐδὲ σθένειν τοσοῦτον ᾠόμην τὰ σὰ

κηρύγματ᾽, ὥστ᾽ ἄγραπτα κἀσφαλῆ θεῶν

νόμιμα δύνασθαι θνητὸν ὄνθ᾽ ὑπερδραμεῖν.

οὐ γάρ τι νῦν γε κἀχθές, ἀλλ᾽ ἀεί ποτε

ζῇ ταῦτα, κοὐδεὶς οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου 'φάνη.

For me, it was not Zeus who ordered this,

Nor as it was the justice of the gods of below

who distributed the laws among man.

And nor do I believe that your proclamations could be so great, as to

[399] Presumably the actor playing Creon was taller, or made to appear taller through costume or posture, than the actor playing Antigone.
[400] Seale 1982: 91.
[401] Bremmer 1993: 22.
[402] Foley 2002: 180.

> be able to turn over the unwritten and immovable codes of the gods. For they are not for today, or yesterday, but they live always, and no one knows from where they emerge.[403]

Antigone refers both to the celestial (Ζεὺς) and the chthonic divine (κάτω θεῶν), acknowledging these as two separate spheres of control that hold jurisdiction over mankind. Human laws, and the polis, are superficial outgrowths of these more permanent and powerful forces. Creon and his supporters fail to realise this divine significance to their lives, which causes their comparative flippancy towards these divine laws.[404] However, Antigone's self-awareness of her unusualness in perceiving this is referenced in her use of the first person. She specifies it was her own reckoning of Creon's laws that led her to dismiss them in favour of the divine ones ("for me, it was not Zeus who ordered this" - οὐ γάρ τί μοι Ζεὺς ἦν ὁ κηρύξας τάδε). She repeats the first person a line later, reinforcing that it is her unique standpoint and decision-making that has determined her position ("and nor do I believe that your proclamations could be so great - οὐδὲ σθένειν τοσοῦτον ὡόμην τὰ σὰ κηρύγμαθ'). She is thus emphasising her own unique viewpoint and so exhibiting self-awareness of her own decision-making abilities and independence in her forming and affirming her beliefs.

Antigone's reference to the "gods below" (κάτω θεῶν) is especially significant as it resonates with her refusal to neglect Polyneices' burial rites, the action that led her into direct conflict with Creon and his human-centric worldview. However, Antigone's associations with death comes not only from her insistence of carrying out the correct funeral rites on her brother's body, but also from her constant reference to death and the underworld as she explains to other characters why she is so willing to push back against the demands Creon places on her, and eventually, how she will be able to speak against the gods themselves. Mueller has suggested that this attachment to death can be seen in Antigone's posture onstage, reading her downcast eyes not as a signal of demureness (after all, she is not a demure character), but as a fixed gaze upon the underworld.[405] Antigone's association with death is thus paired with

[403] Soph. *Ant.* 450-457.
[404] Mueller 2011: 420.
[405] Mueller 2011: 425. Boegehold (1999: 60) states that her posture is likely to be in keeping with her gendered expression, but notes that her nods of the head in response to Creon's questions

her understanding of herself as other, distinguished from other characters and operating from a position beyond their understanding. She thus uses death as a way to assert and explain her alienation. This is an alienation that Antigone works to maintain; when Ismene returns to the stage to claim part responsibility in break Creon's edict, Antigone demands she not implicate herself and share Antigone's death ("do not share my death….my death will suffice" - "μή μοι θάνῃς σὺ κοινὰ….ἀρκέσω θνῄσκουσ᾽ ἐγώ"), and delineates the difference between the two of them explicitly in terms of their choices ("you have chosen life, while I, death" - σὺ μὲν γὰρ εἵλου ζῆν, ἐγὼ δὲ κατθανεῖν).[406] Antigone is thus cut off from her entirely from her living relatives, as she instead pursues a relationship with the dead.[407] Finally, Antigone's commitment to this particular course of action, and how she has melded her very identity to this otherworldly alterity is expressed when she tells Ismene that "my soul has long been with the dead, so that I may serve death" (ἡ δ᾽ ἐμὴ ψυχὴ πάλαι τέθνηκεν, ὥστε τοῖς θανοῦσιν ὠφελεῖν.)[408] Her reference to her soul (ψυχὴ) emphasises the bond she has with death as she merges her sense of self with that of death, while her use of πάλαι ("long", "for a long time") indicates that she is settled into this mindset and accepting of what it will bring.[409] She is in effect communicating how completely and innately she is incompatible with the world around her, which she expresses again when she pushes for Creon to give her a death sentence quickly ("why do you wait? There's nothing about your words that pleases me, just as nothing of mine pleases you" - τί δῆτα μέλλεις; ὡς ἐμοὶ τῶν σῶν λόγων ἀρεστὸν οὐδὲν….οὕτω δὲ καὶ σοὶ τἄμ᾽ ἀφανδάνοντ᾽ ἔφυ).[410] This complete acceptance of death, and its link to Antigone's inability to fit in with her living community are what eventually leads Antigone to openly criticise the gods for their unclarity and apparent negligence, as her outcast status and espousal of death grants her an ability for honesty not afforded to those bound by convention.[411] She occupies the extraneous perspective that is either dismissed or punished, as both she and Creon clash over what Lauriola describes as an interchangeable

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regarding whether or not she committed the crime is likely carried out with a sobriety and seriousness that echoes the fierceness she displayed in her opening. Soph. *Ant.* 441.

[406] Soph. *Ant.* 546-547, 555.

[407] Lardinois 2012: 62.

[408] Soph. *Ant.* 559-560.

[409] See Ilievski 2013: 31-32 on the Platonic view of the soul as the prime "mover" within a person's body. Darcus (1979: 30) emphasises the soul as a remaining component of a person after they die, as seen in Homer.

[410] Soph. *Ant.* 497-501.

[411] A comparison can be made to the Shakespearean Fool of English 17th century theatre, in which characters who are dispossessed from the action's centre are able to voice dangerous truths that those with more investment or status cannot. See Milward (1984: 22)

"foolish-sounding wisdom" and "wise-sounding foolishness." Antigone's refusal to fall in line with those around her naturally leads to conflict, with other characters expressing constant aggravation and perplexity at her behaviour.[412]

Creon, in particular, displays frustration at Antigone's inflexibility. As Antigone refuses to yield to his demands, Creon makes a key association between Antigone and elements of the wilderness, comparing her to raw materials and wild animals that need to be "worked" by humans:

> καὶ τὸν ἐγκρατέστατον
>
> σίδηρον ὀπτὸν ἐκ πυρὸς περισκελῆ
>
> θραυσθέντα καὶ ῥαγέντα πλεῖστ᾽ ἂν εἰσίδοις.
>
> σμικρῷ χαλινῷ δ᾽ οἶδα τοὺς θυμουμένους
>
> ἵππους καταρτυθέντας
>
> And it would be the strongest iron weapon, from the fire, cooked to utmost hardness, that would break most easily: and I know the smallest bit will discipline the most stubborn horses.[413]

Creon's assessment of Antigone guides the audience in judging her actions, describing her in terms of wildness versus human order and application. Both the iron (σίδηρον) and the horse (ἵππους) are described with superlatives (ἐγκρατέστατον, καταρτυθέντας) - Creon emphasises Antigone's extremity as she resists his influence. The horse metaphor particularly draws attention to Antigone's refusal to live within human constraints, as she rejects any attempt to be curbed. However, Segal has noted that as Creon responds to Antigone's arguments with metaphors of human treatment of raw materials that he sees as potentially mouldable, he is thus still exhibiting a belief that he will be able to control her.[414] By using these allusions, he

[412] Lauriola 2007: 394.
[413] Soph. *Ant.* 475-479.
[414] Segal 1964: 58.

is acknowledging her extreme otherness from the civic community which he rules, depicting her as a feature of the wilderness that he has not yet conquered or manipulated for his own ends. Creon's assumption that Antigone will "break" (ῥαγέντα) or become disciplined (θυμουμένους) emphasises his inability to comprehend the extent of her otherness, and his overconfidence in his ability to exert his influence onto her.

Similarly, Creon approaches the gods and the underworld with officiousness and bureaucratic trickery, seeking loopholes so he can do as he wishes, which further emphasises Antigone's alterity, and places her further into a situational and geographical context where constraints do not impact her. After condemning her to die, he describes her place of death, with an emphasis on how he will evade punishment by keeping Antigone suspended between two distinct poles:

> ἄγων ἔρημος ἔνθ᾽ ἂν ᾖ βροτῶν στίβος
>
> κρύψω πετρώδει ζῶσαν ἐν κατώρυχι,
>
> φορβῆς τοσοῦτον ὡς ἄγος μόνον προθείς,
>
> ὅπως μίασμα πᾶσ᾽ ὑπεκφύγῃ πόλις.
>
> Bringing her along there on the desolate path void of mortals, I will hide her within a hewn-out tomb to live, setting out only as much food so as to satisfy the religion, and so how the city escapes pollution.[415]

Creon attempts to manipulate the terms of transgression to only technically avoid committing a perverse crime, whilst still placing a living person in tomb. He specifies that Antigone is going to be allowed to live (ζῶσαν), but away from men, making her isolation from the social and the political literal. Placing her in a tomb with just enough food to evade religious pollution for killing her sets Antigone on either side of the border of life and death, whilst allowing Creon to tread the line between religious acceptability and transgression. His

[415] Soph. *Ant.* 773-776.

bureaucratic approach, centred entirely on the human, material world, overlaps with religious convention, which he attempts to exploit to his own ends. She is physically brought out of the city and placed somewhere "desolate" (ἔρημος), where she will be "hidden" (κρύψω). Hiding implies the shamefulness of his act, but also the disagreeableness Antigone represents to a well-ordered world, as though she is a loose end that needs tidying away.

Despite Creon's actions, Antigone is ultimately vindicated at the end of the play. Creon's refusal to bury Polyneices is proven to cause birds (another wild thing) feasting on the body to carry the pollution to the altars. This revelation is delivered by Tiresias, who describes Creon's transgression as disturbing "the upper and lower worlds" (ἀνθ᾽ ὧν ἔχεις μὲν τῶν ἄνω βαλὼν κάτω), similar to Antigone's reference to the gods of below and above. In addition to this, the sandstorm that allowed her access to Polyneices' body, and the question of who originally buried him, indicates that the natural phenomena experienced by the characters are pointedly supporting Antigone's cause, which some scholars suggest is proof within the play that she is supported by the gods.[416] As such, Antigone appears to have accurately assessed the gods' will, and prioritised it suitably, as opposed to the over-confident decrees uttered by Creon. Her perspicacity is thus not only limited to her frank assessment of the human systems around her, but also grants her a lens on divine behaviour that is not dissimilar to Tiresias' ability. This enhanced vision, and her close proximity to the gods thus takes over Antigone's attention, explaining her disinterest to the social conventions that bind her sister, and the political edicts that dictate her city, as she purposely maintains a defiance of Theban law.[417] In the words of Boegehold, Antigone "stands sure of her place in an ordered world", conducting herself with a stately confidence in her course of action and its likely outcomes.[418]

Despite this unique vision, her acceptance of death and her proven record of stepping out of expected lines of convention, Antigone's statements against the gods nevertheless come as a surprise. Firstly, it appears as a contradiction against her apparent understanding that she will die for her actions, and secondly, it undermines the confidence with which she had previously spoken of the gods and the righteousness of their laws, as she suddenly appears to question them as she moves away to die. However, after explicitly imputing the character with this natural-seeming and dyed in insubordination, the play approaches the moment of

[416] Mueller 2011: 422; Bennett & Tyrrell1990: 442.
[417] Lardinois 2012: 63.
[418] Boegehold 1999: 62.

Antigone's death with an increased focus on the emotional cost of her sustained isolation. The character's death is thus presented as a climax, in which her terse refusal to engage with those around her, as discussed above, reaches a pinnacle that causes a breakdown in her composure.

4.2.2. Antigone's Outburst

To understand how Antigone's criticism against the gods is used, one must first appreciate how the scene utilises an intensified emotionality that was not present in her earlier scenes. Antigone's dialogue, placement, movement, and vocals are stylised, and build a crescendo of the emotional and dramatic intensity. Antigone's statements leading up to her outburst, as well as those of the Chorus and Creon, all reassert the theme of Antigone's detached status from the polis and life itself. However, now Antigone articulates this detachment through her personalised statements of distress. As the emotive pitch of the scene rises, Antigone utters a lament that brings her to a state of despairing ecstasy which complements her alterity and discontent with the constraints of civic control.[419] It is in this moment of emotional ecstasy, detached from any influences that may anchor her, that she utters her criticism of the gods.

Antigone is brought onto the stage accompanied by guards as she is led to her tomb. Upon sight of her, the Chorus sing their pity for her in an agitated metre, conveying the climactic nature of the scene.[420] As she moves towards her grave (and across the stage), she effects a far more distraught tone than she did in her earlier interactions with Ismene and Creon. Her youth and sex are prioritised as tragic aspects of her death, with the imagery lingering on the features of a bridal party to build the aesthetic of her wedding that she will not be able to celebrate ("I have not had a share in bridal chants, nor will they sing me my bridal hymn" - οὔθ᾽ ὑμεναίων ἔγκληρον, οὔτ᾽ ἐπινύμφειός πώ μέ τις ὕμνος ὕμνησεν).[421] This lamentation over her marital status adds a new pathos to her ejection from her community at the very age when she should be joining it as an adult, as she is forced to stay an unmarried maiden.[422] This is a significant change from her earlier disinterest in human relationships. Johnson has

[419] Cassidy 1991: 29.
[420] Soph. *Ant.* 801-805, 885; Gagné 2013: 363.
[421] Soph. *Ant.* 815-816.
[422] Margariti 2018: 91-93.

drawn a particular relevance in Antigone's extreme marginality in terms of her age. As an adolescent girl not yet married, Antigone resides on the cusp that connects a girl's childhood with her adulthood. However, her development is halted as she moves to cross a different boundary, namely the threshold of her tomb, going from life to death.[423] Due to these details, Lardinois has suggested that Antigone is dressed in a bridal costume in her final scene, as the original Athenian audience would be familiar with the practise of dressing deceased girls of Antigone's age in bridalwear for their burial.[424] Thus, Antigone's final scene utilises reference to real funerary customs that held particularly poignant significance, which would effect greater emotional impact as she sings her final speech.

At this emotional peak, Antigone reflects on the multiple facets of her alienation:

> ἰὼ δύστανος, βροτοῖς οὔτε νεκροῖς
>
> κυροῦσα μέτοικος οὐ ζῶσιν, οὐ θανοῦσιν.
>
> Oh misery! For I am an alien amongst men and corpses, I do not belong to the living nor the dead. [425]

In addition to indicating her increased emotionality, Antigone equates civic exile with her present position between life and death.[426] The exclamation (ἰὼ δύστανος) intimates her failing composure echoed perhaps in a raised voice. Furthermore, by describing herself as μέτοικος, someone who is not officially recognised as part of the community in which the live, Antigone again asserts her alterity and isolation.[427] She does not fit in, and so is forced to remain uncomfortable, being exceedingly aware of her alienation from her immediate environment, whether it be the city and its conventions, or a tomb and the dead.

Indeed, Antigone repeats the term μέτοικος, this time linking it directly to her marital status, as well as the famously incestuous union of her parents, Oedipus and Jocasta:

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[423] Johnson 1997: 384-385.
[424] Lardinois 2012: 57-58.
[425] Soph. *Ant.* 850-851.
[426] Wiltshire 1976: 31.
[427] Mueller 2011: 422.

ἰὼ ματρῷαι λέκτρων

ἆται κοιμήματά τ᾽ αὐτογέννητ᾽ ἐμῷ πατρὶ δυσμόρου ματρός,

οἵων ἐγώ ποθ᾽ ἁ ταλαίφρων ἔφυν·

πρὸς οὓς ἀραῖος ἄγαμος ἅδ᾽ ἐγὼ μέτοικος ἔρχομαι.

Alas, my mother's bed! The guilt, of my mother sleeping with her own child, my father, in this way, most wretchedly, I have been brought forth. To these, I come accursed and unwedded.[428]

Here, Antigone's unmarried status (ἄγαμος) is specifically linked to her alien status (μέτοικος), pointing to the fact that they are symptoms of the same thing. Her very genesis contributes to her undesirable uniqueness among her peers, being, the offspring of an incestuous union, but it is this closed off family, reproducing within itself, that causes Antigone to be cut off further from those around her.[429] Shortly before she utters her outward criticism of the gods, Antigone claims that she would not have risked her punishment to bury a son or husband, contradicting her earlier claim of devotion to the gods' laws, and so reinforcing her separation from forces exterior to her particular genesis.[430]

As Antigone's emotional display increases in force, she focuses in particular on her connection to Polyneices, the intensity and exclusivity of their relationship recalling the incestuousness from which each of them emerged.[431] She lists her qualities as "unlamented, unfriended and unmarried" (ἄκλαυτος, ἄφιλος, ἀνυμέναιος), the asyndeton intensifying the effect of the negative "ἄ" prefix, or alpha privative, having similarly described Polyneices in the play's opening as "unhonoured," "unwept" and "unburied" (ἀτιμάσας ἄκλαυτον, ἄταφον).[432] Through this stylistic repetition, an equivalence is drawn between Polyneices and

[428] Soph. *Ant.* 861-864.
[429] Seaford 1990: 79.
[430] Seaford 1990: 79-80.
[431] Zellner 1997: 317.
[432] Soph. *Ant.* 22, 29, 876.

Antigone, as she opens the play describing his exclusion through his lack of burial, and in her final appearance describes herself echoing these thoughts. As Antigone reflects on this exclusion and the asymmetry of her relationship with the gods, although she has demonstrated an increased appreciation of their laws and role in comparison to her peers, she nevertheless becomes increasingly indignant throughout her final scene as her emotions gain momentum. Her former composure gives way as the weight of the play's events finally culminates in her outburst, which she delivers in a lament before she leaves the stage to die. The staging and action during her outburst represents Antigone's otherness in the visual composition of the stage, em the importance of her detachment from those around her in her final song in which she breaks conventions of piety to cast light on the troubling inaction of the gods.

In her closing speech, Antigone refers to contact between her and Creon ("and now he leads me by his hands" - καὶ νῦν ἄγει με διὰ χερῶν).[433] The use of "and now" (καὶ νῦν) draws attention to the finality of the action as it happens, Antigone's death is signalled to be immediately at hand, as Creon is able to influence Antigone directly through his physical interaction with her. With this registering of her final moments, Antigone's emotions reach a peak in which her alterity, deathliness, and attention on the gods are brought into high relief, and in her outrage at all that has happened, she delivers an outburst that makes clear the extremities of her emotions and how these hardships are impacting her:

ἀλλ᾽ ὦδ᾽ ἔρημος πρὸς φίλων ἡ δύσμορος

ζῶσ᾽ εἰς θανόντων ἔρχομαι κατασκαφάς.

ποίαν παρεξελθοῦσα δαιμόνων δίκην;

τί χρή με τὴν δύστηνον ἐς θεοὺς ἔτι

βλέπειν; τίν᾽ αὐδᾶν ξυμμάχων; ἐπεί γε δὴ

τὴν δυσσέβειαν εὐσεβοῦσ᾽, ἐκτησάμην.

ἀλλ᾽ εἰ μὲν οὖν τάδ᾽ ἐστὶν ἐν θεοῖς καλά,

παθόντες ἂν ξυγγνοῖμεν ἡμαρτηκότες.

[433] Soph. *Ant.* 916.

εἰ δ᾽ οἵδ᾽ ἁμαρτάνουσι, μὴ πλείω κακὰ

πάθοιεν ἢ καὶ δρῶσιν ἐκδίκως ἐμέ.

But so desolate of friends, wretched I go living to that place of death. Where have I transgressed the gods' justice? Why should I look to the gods in my misery anymore? Which ally do I call to? I am called impious, from being pious. But if it is that this is good to the gods, then I would agree with my suffering, having mis-stepped. But if they mis-stepped, I do not wish any more suffering than what I go through unjustly now.[434]

The term ἔρημος (desolate), used previously by Creon to describe where he will be sending her, reappears in her final statements, reminding the audience of the uninhabited quality of her destination. Antigone goes to her grave alone, without carers, with the paradox of life in a grave reemphasised (ζῶσ᾽ εἰς θανόντων). Antigone's antithetical existence thus is spotlighted in her pinnacle scene and provides the context in which her challenge to the gods is set. Her questions, three in a row in quick succession, are not addressed to anyone specific, indicating their inanswerability, and so signal Antigone's lack of support in her distress. These questions thus work as an expression of her desperation; her lament gains tones of bitterness and confusion as she continues to desperately try to understand how she has reached this point.

Antigone's first demand to be told "where have I transgressed the gods' justice" (ποίαν παρεξελθοῦσα δαιμόνων δίκην;) is legitimate. As Tiresias later confirms, Antigone is ultimately proven correct in her instinct that leaving Polyneices' unburied was against the gods' will, and so she has broken no divine rule.[435] Thus her question is both reasonable and futile, as she grasps for an answer that will never come. Her second question, "why should I look to the gods in my misery anymore" (τί χρή με τὴν δύστηνον ἐς θεοὺς ἔτι βλέπειν;) is thus a logical follow up question - as she has accepted her separation from her mortal peers, and committed to the gods entirely, the help and guidance she has received from the gods is

[434] Soph. *Ant.* 919-929.
[435] Soph. *Ant.* 1064-1071.

conspicuous in its absence, despite the personal cost she has incurred. Vitally, we see Antigone question why she should "still" look to the gods (θεοὺς ἔτι βλέπειν). Implied within this term is the strain Antigone is feeling in maintaining her piety, as her disappointment in the gods, as well as her anguish at her death, drives her outburst. That Antigone is being punished so perversely for acting within the gods' law undermines her previously expressed certainty, as divine authority is undermined by the lack of support shown to piety. Her final question ("what allies do I have" - τίν᾽ αὐδᾶν ξυμμάχων;) caps off this line of thought, as she reflects on her abandoned status in its totality. Antigone lacks "allies" (ξυμμάχων), or fellow fighters, presenting her travails in the language of a military confrontation. These questions are used in the dialogue to illustrate Antigone's *aporia* and her crisis of emotions, rather than as a functional attempt to gain information, their expressivity and wording revealing the details of Antigone's feelings of indignation.[436] Her suffering makes no sense and her pious behaviour is being treated as though it were impious. This unclarity is made explicit when she goes on to state plainly "I am called impious, from being pious" (τὴν δυσσέβειαν εὐσεβοῦσ᾽, ἐκτησάμην). Her use of δυσσέβειαν, a term that can also mean "ungodly", brings in a suggestion of Antigone's withdrawal from the divine as her feelings towards them darken.[437] That she juxtaposes these two words, δυσσέβειαν and εὐσεβοῦσ, with their shared root (σεβ-), creates a phonetic repetition as they are spoken that further highlights how these dissonant meanings have become so tangled, leading to Antigone's unwarranted "punishment". As Antigone is forced to go to her grave prematurely, despite her conscientious piety, she finds that her understanding of the concept of honour and correct behaviour towards the gods has become semantically blurred with impiety, causing a paradoxical outcome. These foundational principles are thus undermined through the lack of clear definition, causing Antigone's commitment to them to become destabilised.

These questions effectively express Antigone's deepening horror at her circumstances, imparting this shock with the audience. However, through her utterance of them, Antigone articulates an awareness as to the true cause of her suffering. In the midst of the cruelty done

[436] Mastronarde 1979: 9-14.

[437] Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (lines 532-533) references δυσσεβία as the parent of violence (δυσσεβίας μὲν ὕβρις Τέκος), in connection with the deterioration of civic order that the Chorus foresee occurring in the face of no leadership (lines 517-523: τίς δὲ μηδὲν ἐν δέει καρδίαν ἂν ἀνατρέφων…. ἔτ᾽ ἂν σέβοι δίκαν – "Who, if he did not train his heart in fear, would still revere justice?"). Therefore, there is a connection between δυσσεβίας and the disruption to civic order that we see in *Antigone.*

to her by Creon, Antigone wonders out loud why the gods do not help her. The questions thus provide a troubled coda to Antigone's experiences within the play. Aside from the contact with Creon and the presence of the guards, there is little indication of Antigone's posture, gesture, or placement onstage. It is possible that Antigone, possibly played by a smaller actor, was shown to be dwarfed and at risk, as larger, hostile figures surround and take control over her. However, the extensive nature of the speech would mean the actor would be likely to take certain steps to facilitate voice projection, meaning Antigone would most likely have to be upright and standing with her head up and chest out. Her actions within the scene (namely arriving onstage under guard, taking Creon's hand, and being led offstage) also make it likely that Antigone is standing throughout with other cast members at either side of her. As observed by Bremmer, while females were likely to have taken up less space while standing, an erect posture was nevertheless a pose that signalled action and assertion.[438] During Antigone's impassioned outburst, the actor's need to open his airways to project his voice in this climactic final speech likely meant his head was thrown back, and tilted upwards.[439] The strength and vitality of this likely posture contrasts with Antigone's bowed head during her interrogation by Creon, transcending the danger that surrounds her with a passionate song that lays out her grievances. Now, Antigone turns questioner, interrogating the wider structures that have caused her death. Although she is stood near Creon (due to their physical contact), she does not address him once during her final speech, indicating her attention is not on her immediate captor, but elsewhere, as she lifts her head to sing, with her volume and stance distancing her away from the other actors onstage while she faced the audience.[440] It is then likely that she took a central position onstage with the other actors encircling her, as her emotionality escalated the final pitch of the song.

The force of Antigone's statement is alleviated though her follow-on statement, in which she allows for the possibility that she has somehow misstepped and in fact been impious ("But if it is that this is good to the gods, then I would be in agreement with my suffering, having erred." - ἀλλ᾽ εἰ μὲν οὖν τάδ᾽ ἐστὶν ἐν θεοῖς καλά, παθόντες ἂν ξυγγνοῖμεν ἡμαρτηκότες·). By voicing her uncertainty, Antigone defuses the tension that has arisen from the questions she has just asked, admitting that her perspective, as unusually broad and insightful though it may be, is still limited. Her polite use of an optative ἂν ξυγγνοῖμεν ("I would be in

[438] Bremmer 1993: 24.
[439] Hall 2002: 21.
[440] Seale 1982: 100.

agreement"), used in reference to the gods' possible reasons for punishing her, indicates a passive acceptance of their will, recalling the usual prescriptive resignation of mortals' observing the destructive force of the divine on their lives (see 2.1., above). However, the second half of this thought reasserts that her treatment could be a sign of the gods' inaction despite her innocence. As Cropp has commented, Antigone here is hedging her judgement on the god's justice or injustice, particularly in terms of the punishment she wishes on those who send her to her death now.[441] While she is not quite renouncing her previously expressed commitment to the gods, as Kitto has argued, she is capable of critically examining them and their behaviour, which inspires difficult questions.[442] These questions are not easily or casually uttered, emerging only through the exceptional circumstance that Antigone finds herself in. The peaking emotional crescendo of her speech, achieved through her rhetorical questions and defiant posture while under imminent threat from the hostile characters surrounding her, produces the heightened environment in which she is able to express a critical review of how the gods, and the undefined categories of piety and impiety, fail her.

These questions represent a peak of fear and frustration before Antigone's comes out of her ecstasy and rediscovers a semblance of her previous self-possession. Nevertheless, her relocation to her tomb, located in an untamed, untreated area, recalls the wilderness of Antigone's character, and her inability to exist within human society untroubled, as her association with the wilderness is recognised in tandem with her precise view on the gods.[443] Her criticism of the gods thus emerges from her unique placement within her community, as her inability to operate within the split jurisdiction of gods and mortals grants her a wider perspective, but also an ejection from these two areas. Her challenge to the gods, delivered on her feet as she looks up to project her voice, is a striking moment that asserts her character's capabilities. Unlike the collapsing figures of Ajax and Hippolytus, who withdraw their worship in grudge against the gods whilst in a dejected state, Antigone emits a vitality at the hour of her death. Her questions assault the gods unexpectedly, as she utilises her unique perspective and placement to shine a light on the gods' unforthcoming nature and apathy to their own laws.

Antigone's heightened emotionality when she raises her voice against the gods is thus combined with her affiliation with the wilderness and its untamed features, emphasising her

[441] Cropp 1997: 142.
[442] Kitto 1959: 170.
[443] Worman 2021: 155-156.

exteriority to the civic orderliness of Creon's Thebes. The occurrence of these extremes of emotion in concert with Antigone's geographical placement facilitates her articulation of her troubled relationship with the gods, as her statements are indicative of a shift in her mindset as she moves to death. As she raises her questions to no one in particular, failing to address or acknowledge the other characters stood around her, she is, as Mastronarde has noted, completely "out of contact" with the corporeal, and is instead speaking through her extremes of emotion to a level that transcends those around her.[444] In this, Antigone bears a strong resemblance to the presentation of other female figures in tragedy, who undergo transformation in conjunction with excessive emotion and an affiliation to the wilderness. In particular, Kornarou draws parallels between Antigone and the character of Niobe from Aeschylus' play of the same name. Niobe's transformation into a rock and her relocation to a tomb without truly "dying" recalls Antigone's own link to the wild. Especially key in this comparison is the extreme and overpowering emotional tumult experienced by each woman in relation to their disputes with the gods, and it relates to their placement in the wild and by a tomb.[445] There are also similarities to be drawn to the *Bacchae,* and in particular, to Agave, who also clashed with a male family member, namely Pentheus, who sought to suppress behaviour that deviated from the norms of his civic expectations. Cassidy has noted that Agave's placement in the wilderness occurs in conjunction with her aberrant emotional state and her resulting ecstasy, the circumstances of which can be relayed to Antigone's final appearance onstage.[446] Antigone is not a direct parallel for Agave, as she is not overcome by Dionysiac frenzy, nor does she commit any acts of violence. While she is certainly liminal to the city, first appearing before the audience as she sneaks just outside the gates, she is still defined by it and held to its standards, even if she kicks against any attempt to control her. However, she does hold a connection to the wilderness, referenced through Creon's metaphor of unworked raw materials and feral animals, and through the location of her tomb as a desolate place away from any human tracks. Thus, her connection to humanity is further weakened through these affiliations.[447] Furthermore, the escalation of her distress and emotional suffering during her final speech, leading to her embittered questions against the gods, recalls a Dionysiac frenzy in the extremes of emotion that displaces her from the

[444] Mastronarde 1979: 17.
[445] Kornarou 2010: 270.
[446] Cassidy 1991: 34-36.
[447] Lardinois 2012: 63.

immediate danger she is in.[448] Both the plays that feature Agave and Niobe featured problematised relationships of the gods, with Agave's worship of Dionysus resisted by her son Pentheus, which causes her maenadic trance, and Niobe having suffered the loss of all her children at the hands of Artemis and Apollo.[449] While there are no examples from either of these plays that count as emotionalised personal attacks on the gods, their association with an untamed wilderness, combined with the sense that these women have reached a defining moment in their relationship with the gods, and their intense emotional tumult that cause them to become detached and undergo a prodigious transformation that separates them entirely from civic society, is key to how they are presented. Antigone, delivering her criticisms erect onstage in a mounting lament, would produce a powerful emotional pitch, which we can easily imagine affected the original audience in such a way that would be especially impactful during the primed atmosphere of the Dionysia Festival (see 1.2.2., above).

Antigone's outburst against the gods is all the more striking because it is the most religiously conscious character in the play who is breaking the taboo; she expresses aggressive dissatisfaction with the gods, and even goes so far as to question why she should be pious towards them. However, upon reviewing the characterisation of Antigone throughout the play, and the environment she is interacting with, it becomes easy to see that Antigone's unique, and somewhat unusual, status among her peers singles her out as the ideal person to make these comments. Given Antigone's extreme alterity, in terms of her marital and civic status, and her affiliation with death, she evinces a clearer vision than those around her. Her dissociation from society also leads her to appreciate the deeper reality of her environment through her inability to fit in. This is what led her, in part, to bury Polyneices despite Creon's edict. However, her estrangement also gives her a clearer view on the gods, to cross one more boundary, and defy yet another convention; she can see and call out the dysfunction within the gods' approach to justice and injustice.

Mueller has described the world of *Antigone* as deictic – that is, it is defined by its reference to other places. While the entirety of the action takes place within the immediately understandable mortal realm, the dynamic between the celestial, the earthly and the chthonic is vital to the plot.[450] As Tiresias points out, birds are able to take the human rot,

[448] Seaford 1993: 145.
[449] Kornarou 2010: 263; Euripides. *Bacchae.* 1169-1170.
[450] Mueller 2011: 419.

which should be under the earth, to the gods' altars, revealing how these separate realms bleed into one another, causing religious pollution. The majority of mortals in *Antigone* are unable to perceive or understand this. Creon, in the aftermath of a devastating war, is concerned with keeping the city's newfound stability in place; his abrasive and officious personality notwithstanding, he had no true reason to think he has transgressed the gods' laws. As Antigone notes, these laws are unwritten and unknown, and Tiresias' urgent message to Creon comes after the damage has already been done.[451] Because these laws and the logic behind them have no true visibility or presence in polis life, their nature is ungraspable to those who do not have Antigone's unique perspective as a walking example of transgression.

Antigone's brief suggestion of an unjust divine momentarily changes the source of the play's antagonism, and the form of her outburst, as a series of desperate questions, highlights the lack of clarity that all mortals in the play operate under. The confusion between impiety and piety, honouring and dishonouring the gods, raises the issue of what the point of trying to discern the gods' wishes is, particularly as serious attempts at piety lead to calamity.[452] Antigone's unusually cruel punishment obliterates any sense of order, and while she does not forget the role of Creon (who will ultimately suffer tremendously for his blinkered impiety through the suicides of his son and wife), the scale of this unclarity, and the repeated tendency for all other characters to care more for their basic needs than the details of the gods' laws, demonstrates the intense difficulty for most people to understand what the best course of action is.

Throughout *Antigone,* the eponymous protagonist is not shown to enjoy the arrogance or social centrality of the protagonists in *Hippolytus* or *Ajax.* She does not enjoyed a vaunted social position, and she does not assume a sense of pre-eminence amongst her peers; indeed, she experiences the opposite. Like the landscape of the Thebes, Antigone's character is also represented through deictic gestures referring to what she is not, and where she is not included. She is derided and excluded, before being sent into an exile she treats with a sense of inevitability. However, her sense of agency is profound. Antigone steps forward into the frame, and outside of the city gates, while her sister shrinks from making the same bold choice. Antigone's character is developed from her first appearance, and as her perspective is

[451] Soph. *Ant.* 454-456, 996.
[452] Ahrensdorf 2009: 87.

fleshed through the dialogue, her agency enables a frank evaluation of a divine. Holt has suggested that *Antigone* eases the shock of such a character like Antigone breaking polis rules, using sympathy for Antigone and disdain for Creon.[453] This could equally be applied to her final, unrestrained outburst towards the divine, as Antigone draws attention to the looming and silent menace of the divine's ineffable punishment.

4.3 Euripides' *Trojan Women*

4.3.1 Introduction

[453] Holt 199: 670.

Sophocles' *Antigone* offers a departure from the presentation of the protagonists of *Ajax* and *Hippolytus*. Antigone as a character does not scramble for preferential treatment and does not presuppose a closer than usual connection with the gods, but rather, steps forward to defend the religious practices she values, in the knowledge that it will lead to her death. Her outburst against the gods is shown to be a rupture brought about by an escalation of her emotions, with its upright delivery indicative of her ability to identify and challenge the gods' inaction.

Explicit anti-divine sentiments in Euripides' *Trojan Women* (415 BCE) are expressed by two characters, Cassandra and Hecuba, who are shown experiencing the aftermath of the fall of their city. These characters are notably different from each other, as Cassandra is a younger woman with no children, but an exceptionally close relationship to a deity and speaks from a place of privileged intuition (and so is not unlike Antigone), while Hecuba is an older woman who speaks from a position of grief for her family, experiencing the rupture of her domestic life keenly. However, despite these differences, Cassandra and Hecuba are both depicted as expressing their deteriorating impressions of the gods during the same event, namely the sacking of their city, Troy, and through their relationship as mother and daughter, during the destruction of the same family. Thus, their criticism against the gods emerges from their same horror at what they have recently witnessed, and their shared future as slaves to the victorious Greeks. As each woman is depicted responding to these circumstances, both utter statements (and in Cassandra's case, carries out a particular action) that expresses profound dissatisfaction with the gods. The content of their remarks reflects the events that are occurring around them during the sack of Troy, and so the connection between the characters' disillusionment with the gods and their deteriorating circumstances is made especially clear. In particular, the use of the characters' placement on the stage, their postures and their actions, as well as their emphatic statements, will be of especial note in the following analysis.

Apart from these heated comments provided by Cassandra and Hecuba, the play opens with a discussion between two gods, Poseidon and Athena, in which Poseidon explicitly voices judgement on Athena's behaviour. While this statement differs from other examples discussed in this thesis, as it is uttered by a deity and is not especially emotive in its expression, it nevertheless resonates with the statements provided by the two mortal women. This multivocality, as not one, but two women each express shock and outrage with the gods

inactivity during Troy's fall, points to the collective failure of religion in the fall of Troy, as each character's aggrieved statements endorses the other.[454] The plot of *Trojan Women* has invited comment for its unusual structure, with the play's form consisting of a series of short episodes involving the different women of Troy during the city's sacking.[455] Hecuba remains onstage throughout to provide a continuous commentary linking these separate episodes, and bringing an emotional forward-momentum to the narrative.[456] The structure of *Trojan Women,* whilst focusing on the individual women's stories, thus highlights the common aspects of their experiences through their brief interactions before they are separated. The prologue and the features of Cassandra's and Hecuba's comments on the gods provide a continuous thread through which the characters are rendered in high relief using their emotional displays, as they respond with honest dismay at the events of their city's destruction.

4.3.2. Intra-divine Criticism: Athena and Poseidon

The play opens with Poseidon directly addressing the audience, and pointing towards with a figure lying on the stage, whom he identifies as Hecuba:

> τὴν δ᾽ ἀθλίαν τήνδ᾽ εἴ τις εἰσορᾶν θέλει,
>
> πάρεστιν, Ἑκάβην κειμένην πυλῶν πάρος,
>
> δάκρυα χέουσαν πολλὰ καὶ πολλῶν ὕπερ:
>
> And for anyone willing to look, she is here,
>
> Hecuba, lying in misery, pouring many tears
>
> for many others.[457]

[454] Rabinowitz 2017: 225.
[455] Haigh (1896: 300) described it as a "mess" of unconnected scenes. The present author disagrees with the negativity of this assessment but does appreciate why it may be conceived as such.
[456] Hall 2006: 55.
[457] Eur. *Tro.* 36-38.

The way Hecuba is facing and the placement or movement of her arms and legs are not specified. From her pouring tears (δάκρυα χέουσαν), however, it has been reasonably suggested that she is emitting sound, thus signalling her distressed emotional state and establishing an especially tragic tone.[458] Hecuba will be central to the play and its events, but for now it is not a position of agency or capability she occupies. Rather, she remains crumpled and silent, while the gods, the architects of Troy's siege, explain the scenario, namely that Troy has fallen, and Hecuba is crying in grief for those who have been lost. Poseidon's exposition gives meaning to her position as he explains it to the audience, framing her first appearance through this affective lens.[459] The former queen of Troy is also displayed as completely isolated from her previous position of security and grandeur: lying exposed on the bare ground, in the dust, outside her city's walls, alone and without any companions or retinue.[460] To add further pathos, Poseidon observes that Hecuba does not know that her youngest daughter, Polyxena, has been sacrificed to Achilles' ghost.[461] The act of lying prone on the stage points to her helplessness, vulnerability and hopelessness, particularly if Hecuba is flat down, with her arms laid out by her side, which naturally draws the attention, even as she remains a passive element in the scene.[462] Such a position would be visible to the audience from the seats of the theatre up the side of the hill: the tableau, of the standing, speaking god, beside the collapsed, keening woman, is a striking introduction to the drama.[463]

Athena then joins Poseidon, and initiates conversation. Their discussion begins somewhat tensely, with Athena asking Poseidon to forget their previous "enmity" (ἔξεστι…λύσασαν ἔχθραν τὴν πάρος, προσεννέπειν;), in return for a favour. The following conversation introduces details of Athena's plan gradually, and eventually the goddess requests that Poseidon punish the Achaeans, and so help the Trojans (τοὺς μὲν πρὶν ἐχθροὺς Τρῶας

[458] O'Neill 1941: 288; Nooter 2018: 35.
[459] Wyles 2011: 34.
[460] Poole 1976: 259.
[461] Eur. *Tro.* 39.
[462] Halleran 1985: 94.
[463] O'Neill (1941: 208) suggests the use of sound in this opening, with Hecuba wailing, rather than speaking, was the same theatrical device used in Aeschylus' *Niobe,* which also depicts a grieving mother suffering from the gods' negative influence.

εὐφρᾶναι θέλω, στρατῷ δ᾽ Ἀχαιῶν νόστον ἐμβαλεῖν πικρόν.)[464] In response, Poseidon criticises Athena:

> τί δ᾽ ὧδε πηδᾷς ἄλλοτ᾽ εἰς ἄλλους τρόπους
>
> μισεῖς τε λίαν καὶ φιλεῖς ὃν ἂν τύχῃς;
>
> Why do you leap from one side then turn to another? You hate and love in excess like this?

Questions, as has already been seen in Euripides' *Heracles* and Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and *Antigone,* can often hold a pointed insult within them, as the inquirer draws attention to contestable conduct by another. For Poseidon, he uses his questions to highlight the lack of moderation or consistency in Athena's feelings. Noting that she swings "in excess" (λίαν) between the extremes of hating (μισεῖς) and loving (φιλεῖς), Poseidon asks why she "leaps" (πηδᾷς) from one to another. In his review of Aristotle's discussion of μῖσος, Konstan highlights that hatred could only be seen as a "moral emotion" when consistently applied to identifiable groups for cause, such as thieves. However, swapping her enemies and friends regularly, Athena lacks the consistency that would grant her clear morality to her aggression.[465] Furthermore, the extremity to which she pursues her enmity demonstrates a deficiency of moderation.[466] Poseidon's observations undermine Athena's righteousness and places her actions under scrutiny, while the presence of Hecuba, collapsed and still weeping at the gods' feet, makes the criticism especially acute.

Athena responds to Poseidon with a rebuttal and a degree of testiness ("don't you know what outrages they did in my temple?" – (οὐκ οἶσθ᾽ ὑβρισθεῖσάν με καὶ ναοὺς ἐμούς;), before going on to describe Ajax's rape of Cassandra at her shrine. Nevertheless, despite Athena's defence, Poseidon's criticism nevertheless introduces some accountability and comment on the goddess's behaviour during the events of Troy. One god criticising another offers perhaps the only example in extant tragedy where a deity is forced to defend themselves and offer explanations for their actions, as their similarity in status and power naturally creates a check

[464] Eur: *Tro:* 65-66.
[465] Konstan 2018: 39-40.
[466] Cairns 2008: 313.

against one another.[467] The gods also do not suffer the same shortcomings as mortals when they scrutinise each other's behaviour, due to the gods' greater understanding and awareness of the wider systems at hand that may justify harm to mortals (such as an ancestral curse) or prevent assistance.[468] Therefore, criticism between gods holds far greater weight than that which emanates from the ultimately powerless, unaware and short-lived mortals. Thus, ahead of the main action in *Trojan Women*, the exchange between Poseidon and Athena has raised the crucial question of the gods' ability to justly distribute fair treatment.[469]

Following this attention on the gods' machinations and motivations, the play moves to the prone figure of Hecuba. When the gods depart, she finally speaks and immediately brings attention again to her body, its position and how she feels both physically and emotionally. Indeed, her body's pains very much reflect the emotional, as well as physical, hardships she is undergoing:

> "ἄνα, δύσδαιμον, πεδόθεν κεφαλή:
>
> ἐπάειρε δέρην· οὐκέτι Τροία
>
> τάδε καὶ βασιλῆς ἐσμεν Τροίας
>
> ....
>
> τί δὲ θρηνῆσαι;
>
> δύστηνος ἐγὼ τῆς βαρυδαίμονος
>
> ἄρθρων κλίσεως, ὡς διάκειμαι,
>
> νῶτ᾽ ἐν στερροῖς λέκτροισι ταθεῖσ᾽.
>
> οἴμοι κεφαλῆς, οἴμοι κροτάφων

[467] Examples of this have already been see in this dissertation, such as in the *Odyssey* (13.340-345), when Athena informs Odysseus that she evaded helping him at sea out of respect to Poseidon. Artemis gives a similar reason to Hippolytus for not helping him, as seen at the end of *Hippolytus* at lines 13329-1300 ("We gods have a custom: None will impede another's will but will always remain neutral." - θεοῖσι δ᾽ ὦδ᾽ ἔχει νόμος· οὐδεὶς ἀπαντᾶν βούλεται προθυμίᾳ τῇ τοῦ θέλοντος, ἀλλ᾽ ἀφιστάμεσθ᾽ ἀεί.).
[468] Harrison 2007: 376.
[469] Mastronarde 2008: 328.

πλευρῶν θ᾽, ὥς μοι πόθος εἰλίξαι

καὶ διαδοῦναι νῶτον ἄκανθάν τ᾽

εἰς ἀμφοτέρους τοίχους, μελέων

ἐπὶ τοὺς αἰεὶ δακρύων ἐλέγους."

Up, head, from the ground; pull up your neck.

Troy is no longer, and so are we, Troy's rulers.

……

Do I sing a dirge?

I who am utterly abandoned by fortune with my joints cramped, here I am left, my back stretched upon this hard bed.

O my head, my temples,

My ribs; longing to have twisted and turned the spine and back, from that side to the other, wailing an elegy in tears.[470]

Body part by body part, Hecuba brings attention to her present physical experience. As this is the first time she has spoken since the play's opening, it is probable the actor raised his head and shoulders to assist airflow to his lungs while singing.[471] The words thus direct and strengthen the meaning of her physical performance, with actions augmenting the effect of the words as she communicates the pain in her body. She is too exhausted to lift her head, unable to carry out simple movements without literally telling herself to do it, and thus communicating her aching body's weakness to the audience. The transition from the gods' grand perspective to Hecuba's enfeebled bodily experience is audibly reinforced through her accompanying laments. The questions she asks herself conveys Hecuba's discombobulation at the gravity of recent events, and she emphasises her helplessness in the wake of Troy's

[470] Eur: *Tro:* 98-118.
[471] Hall 2002: 21.

destruction – "here I am left" ("ὡς διάκειμαι").[472] Combined with mentions of her aching head, limbs and back, Hecuba's lamentations of her city's fall directly tie her own well-being and that of the city (οὐκέτι Τροία….καὶ βασιλῆς ἐσμεν Τροίας).[473] A parallel is thus drawn between her somatic state and her identity as a Trojan, as her body suffers while her conceptual existence and sense of self is obliterated.

The play's opening dialogue between the two gods, discussing the events of the war and their intentions going forward, while Hecuba's position, words and likely her movements, plainly indicate that she is grounded in a frail and aching human body.[474] Hecuba is thus stuck, unable to depart Troy with the same breeziness as Athena and Poseidon do, ready to effect another distant calamity on another set of mortals. Instead, she is left completely unaware of the gods' discussion throughout, further compounding her humiliation and deprivation, as she is given no clear explanation as to the gods' intentions or roles. Furthermore, as the gods have already discussed the outcomes of the Greeks' departure from Troy, and that they will be shipwrecked, Hecuba's suffering has already been shown to have no greater significance or meaning. While the "inverted" schema of *Trojan Women* offers pre-emptive assurances that the worst of the Greeks' excesses will be punished (after the events of the play), the full impact of Hecuba's misery is laid out with no greater comfort forthcoming, and her entring of her body and pain in her performance provides a striking counterpart to the gods' dispassionate conversation..[475]

4.3.3. Cassandra Breaks Away

Hecuba's inability to acknowledge and appreciate the gods and their role in the Greek's forthcoming calamities is contrasted with Cassandra's heightened awareness of the gods' behaviours through her clairvoyance. From her entrance to her departure, Cassandra poses a physically volatile figure, who demonstrates the dismantling of religious structure in Troy immediately and forcefully through her actions. As a prophetess of Apollo with a close relationship to the deity, Cassandra's gesture of severance from the god holds particular significance, while her dynamic performance brings a suggestion of aggression and violence

[472] Eur. *Tro* 113.
[473] Eur: *Tro* 99.
[474] Zeitlin 1996: 211-212.
[475] Dunn 1993: 31.

to her words. Cassandra's presentation and her particularly animated performance, in which she physically interacts with props and her costume, serve to visually display the character's experiences in an eye-catching, emphatic manner, including her decision to cut contact with the gods. As in the case of Antigone, Cassandra's unique placement away from her mortal peers and comparatively closer relationship with the gods causes her statements against them to have a particular gravitas and significance.

After Hecuba rises from the ground and expounds further on how her family have been assaulted and her home ruined, Talthybius, the Greek herald, delivers news of her children, and particularly Cassandra.[476] Talthybius informs Hecuba that Cassandra is now slave to Agamemnon, to "share his dark bed" (λέκτρων σκότια νυμφευτήρια,) to which Hecuba advises her absent daughter to "tear the sacred garlands from her skin" (ἀπὸ χροὸς ἐνδυτῶν στεφέων ἱεροὺς στολμούς).[477] While Hecuba intends this to be an action to protect the purity of these objects, in honour of the virginity with which Apollo has graced Cassandra (τοῦ Φοίβου παρθένον, ᾗ γέρας ὁ χρυσοκόμας ἔδωκ᾽ ἄλεκτρον ζόαν;), this instruction foreshadows Cassandra's future completion of this gesture onstage, whilst also subjecting Apollo himself to scrutiny both with her words, and with her action.[478]

Cassandra's arrival onstage is announced by Talthybius, who sees her arrive from afar, although he initially mistakes her appearance for something else:

> πιμπρᾶσιν — ἢ τί δρῶσι — Τρῳάδες μυχούς,
>
> ὡς ἐξάγεσθαι τῆσδε μέλλουσαι χθονὸς
>
> πρὸς Ἄργος, αὑτῶν τ᾽ ἐκπυροῦσι σώματα
>
> θανεῖν θέλουσαι;

[476] Eur. *Tro* 246-256.
[477] Eur. *Tro* 252-253.
[478] Eur. *Tro.* 254-255.

> Are they burning – is that it – the Trojan women, their quarters, so to not be led to the land of Argos, is it that they are willing to set their bodies ablaze and die burning?[479]

As Talthybius conjectures the Trojan women (Τρῳάδες) deliberately setting aflame first their quarters (πιμπρᾶσιν… μυχούς) and then their own bodies (ἐκπυροῦσι… σώματα), the audience is given more information about the events of Troy that are occurring offstage. That Talthybius believes the women of Troy are committing mass suicide in such an extreme fashion raises the viscerality of the scene with imagery that paints a vivid picture of the destruction impacting the city, and the despair of its populace.[480] Even when this impression is proven to be incorrect, as Hecuba identifies that the flames are actually from Cassandra carrying a torch ("But (it is) my child Cassandra runs here in frenzied race" – "ἀλλὰ παῖς ἐμὴ μαινὰς θοάζει δεῦρο Κασάνδρα δρόμῳ,) the impact of Talthybius' statements is still resonates. As Cassandra comes onto the stage, she presents herself and Hecuba in close proximity to the living flame she carries, evoking Talthybius' description of the women burning and creating a visual allusion to it before the audience.[481] Her energised and frenetic presentation, as indicated by her "frenzied race" (μαινὰς θοάζει), points further to this volatility, and she refers to her prop multiple times:

> Ἄνεχε· πάρεχε.
>
> φῶς φέρ᾽, ὦ: σέβω φλέγω· — ἰδού, ἰδού —
>
> λαμπάσι τόδ᾽ ἱερόν
>
> Lift it up and offer it! Bear up the light, oh, I worship it and let it burn - see, see, on the honoured torch! [482]

[479] Eur. *Tro.* 299-303.
[480] Halleran 1985: 96.
[481] Eur. *Tro.* 306-307; Halleran
[482] Eur. *Tro.* selected lines, 308-310.

Cassandra's motions with the prop, as suggested by the text, suggests that she is lifting it high, possibly gesturing to it as she speaks, giving it a physical prominence on the stage. The presence of this prop draws attention to the general meaning of this item when encountered outside of the play, as Cassandra's actions repurpose it for her immediate and particular context of Troy's fall.[483] As she holds the torch, Cassandra sings marriage hymns to Hymen in a mix of short, dochmiac metres, in which she recalls the torch's use during a bridal party as she celebrates her nuptials ("To my wedding, I lift up and blaze the torch's light" - ἐγὼ δ' ἐπὶ γάμοις ἐμοῖς ἀναφλέγω πυρὸς φῶς) and refers to a conventionally attired wedding party of Trojan maidens (ὦ καλλίπεπλοι Φρυγῶν κόραι).[484] However, her febrile action, the circumstances of her appearance and the tone already set by Hecuba's laments, emphasises Cassandra's apparent madness, bringing a disturbing tone to these features of her appearance. Worman has thus noted a purposeful splitting in the purpose of the torch that plays on its dual meaning as both a feature of wedding celebration, and of a feature of war, as Talthybius' initial impression of the Trojan Women self-immolating indicates.[485] This perversion of the torch extends to the reasons for Cassandra's celebration. The union she is referring to is her enslavement to Agamemnon, causing her celebration to strike an inappropriate and unhinged note. Cassandra also dances as she holds the torch ("lift the foot, lead the dance on high" - πάλλε πόδα, αἰθέριον ἄναγε χορόν), during which her movement would cause the flame to move and flicker, creating a pyrokinetic effect and serving as a further reminder as to the recent use of flame in Troy's siege.[486] Cassandra's toying with religious features is thus used theatrically to intensify the character's impact and contrasted her with Hecuba's manner and deportment.[487]

Cassandra's entrance is significant, as it directly leads into her emotionalised and emphatic act of severing connection with Apollo, providing theatrically rendered details that influence the tone of her denouncement. This includes the dramatic tenor set by Cassandra's first appearance, with Talthybius' perturbation at the suggestion of the women self-immolating and Hecuba's concern for her daughter darkening the play's atmosphere as each character

[483] Eur. *Tro.* 310, 315, 325-326. Mueller (2016) does not discuss the use of Cassandra's torch in this scene but does discuss the realism props brought in a performance on the Athenian tragic stage. See 4-8 & 73-75.
[484] Eur. *Tro.* 320-333, 339.
[485] Worman 2021: 180.
[486] Eur. *Tro.* 325-326.
[487] Worman 2021: 176,180-182.

registers the chaos Cassandra presents.[488] Cassandra is depicted as unstable, her singing of a wedding song grossly inappropriate to her circumstances, and her presentation of the wedding torch mistaken for the ongoing atrocities committed around her, encapsulating the interruption and perversion on domestic life that is occurring around them during Troy's fall.[489] Her character's frenzied presentation thus leads to a corresponding distortion of meaning for the wedding ritual, the features of which she recontextualises to her circumstances and which take on fresh significance that relates to the destruction and death of Troy's fall.

In light of this complete destabilisation, Cassandra's song contains references to multiple deities and instrumental forces that reflect and accentuate her chaotic manner. Firstly, Cassandra utters a cry of εὐᾶν, εὐοῖ while she dances.[490] These are cries used in Bacchanalian revels, meaning that Cassandra is bringing in features of Dionysiac frenzy into her performance.[491] Hecuba describes Cassandra twice as μαινὰς, a term (as Barlow notes) is explicitly used to Bacchic revellers, and so explicitly assigning Cassandra's appearance and actions as characteristic of the worship and frenzy of Dionysus. In his review of tragic references to weddings and Dionysian revelry, Seaford notes that wedding songs can be used in tragedy to signal the destruction or death of the bride, as has been seen already with Antigone.[492] Cassandra's emotional profile as she enters the stage is thus already at an elevated level, as her actions and behaviours are the same as those found in a Dionysian celebration, escalating her mania to apparent ecstasy.

However, her song also contains details that allude to a greater degree of contrivance from Cassandra, which ultimately leads to her violent rejection of Apollo through her machinations. While she appears to be chaotic and out of control, Cassandra also sings to Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft and sorcery.[493] This could be an allusion to the goddess' role as a torch-bearer, but her additional associations of chthonic and instrumental power to cause mishaps are also a factor to consider.[494] When Hecuba removes the torch, the most

[488] Hof (2020: 121-139) examines this resonance in the prologue of Sophocles' *Ajax,* as discussed above. However, many of his points are also relevant here, particularly on how each character's statements feed its way through the play to effect practical outcomes, and tonal resonance.
[489] Croally 1994: 74.
[490] Eur. *Tro.* 326.
[491] Barlow 1986: 174; Croally 1994: 73.
[492] Seaford 1993: 121.
[493] Eur. *Tro.* 323, 329.
[494] Barlow 1986: 174

obvious emblem for chaos and destruction, from Cassandra's hands, the prophetess' manner subsequently changes, and she provides a reason for her odd demeanour:[495]

> μῆτερ, πύκαζε κρᾶτ᾽ ἐμὸν νικηφόρον,
>
> καὶ χαῖρε τοῖς ἐμοῖσι βασιλικοῖς γάμοις·
>
> καὶ πέμπε, κἂν μὴ τἀμά σοι πρόθυμά γ᾽ ᾖ,
>
> ὤθει βιαίως· εἰ γὰρ ἔστι Λοξίας,
>
> Ἑλένης γαμεῖ με δυσχερέστερον γάμον
>
> ὁ τῶν Ἀχαιῶν κλεινὸς Ἀγαμέμνων ἄναξ.
>
> κτενῶ γὰρ αὐτόν, κἀντιπορθήσω δόμους

> Mother, cover my head with victory wreaths, and be glad for my kingly match: and send me, if I seem reluctant, with a firm push. For if Loxias is a prophet, the famous master Agamemnon will have a more troubling marriage than that of Helen. For I will slay him, and lay waste to his house.[496]

Cassandra's speech switches to longer iambic trimetric lines, implying the character's change to a more composed demeanour, as she focuses on relaying information quickly and comprehensively to her mother. As she speaks, Cassandra explains the reasons for her apparent exuberance for her wedding, namely the instrumental role she is due to play in causing Agamemnon's death. Her manic wedding song is thus not only sung to impress upon those watching the totality of the atrocities and cruelties of Troy by distorting these rituals, but to foretell her upcoming role in the violence that will be visited on Agamemnon, as she prepares to use her enslavement as a path to vengeance.[497] As Seaford has suggested, Cassandra is not only signalling her own death through her references to a Bacchic revelry,

[495] Eur. *Tro.* 343
[496] Eur. *Tro.* 353-359.
[497] Rabinowitz 2017: 228.

but also the latent destruction she represents to Agamemnon's house.[498] During her wedding song, and as she speaks with more clarity to her mother, Cassandra mentions Apollo twice, referencing their previously close relationship, and also recalling her gift for prophecy through her use of his epithet "Loxias" (Λοξίας).[499] Through the suggestion of her wedding, and the garlands of Apollo that she is still wearing at this point, there is thus a reminder of her bonding to the god. Her wedding song forged a connection between Cassandra and Agamemnon (who's death she is planning), but also Cassandra and death, and Cassandra and Apollo, as she moves to combine these "unions" into one singular event, in which she would take agency to "slay (Agamemnon) and lay waste to his house" (κτενῶ γὰρ αὐτόν, κἀντιπορθήσω δόμους). Cassandra thus takes the culturally-enshrined artefacts of a wedding and duplicates them in a new context to give them a darker meaning.[500] However, it is following this allusion to the violence and bloodshed that she intends to bring about through her nuptials, that Cassandra expresses her deepening dissatisfaction with Apollo, particularly in line with his apparently imprecise prophecies. As she uses invocation to Dionysian rites and Hecate to harm Agamemnon, and her movements onstage convey a dangerous and unpredictable energy, Cassandra's heightened assertiveness and aggression is applied as she turns her attention onto the god who she now acknowledges has let her down.

As she converses with Hecuba, Cassandra expresses surprise and critical dismay at Apollo upon learning that her mother is to be made a slave of Odysseus, leading her to doubt the veracity of Apollo's prior forecasts:

> ποῦ δ᾽ Ἀπόλλωνος λόγοι,
>
> οἵ φασιν αὐτὴν εἰς ἔμ᾽ ἡρμηνευμένοι
>
> αὐτοῦ θανεῖσθαι;
>
> Where are Apollo's words, which said, to my interpretation, that she (Hecuba) would die here?[501]

[498] Seaford 1993: 128-129.
[499] Barlow 1986:176.
[500] Seaford 1987: 106-108.
[501] Eur. *Tro.* 428-429.

Her intimate relationship with the god is now in question, as she expresses critical doubt in the god's prophecies (ποῦ δ᾽ Ἀπόλλωνος λόγοι), and her ability to accurately interpret them (οἵ φασιν…. ἔμ᾽ ἠρμηνευμένοι). This is phrased in the form of a question, rhetorically asked to express Cassandra's worsening disappointment and confusion, similar to Antigone's use of questions. This mounting personal unhappiness with the god has a rippling effect on her understanding of the infrastructural set of beliefs that she has followed up until this point:

> ὦ στέφη τοῦ φιλτάτου μοι θεῶν, ἀγάλματ᾽ εὔια,
>
> χαίρετ᾽: ἐκλέλοιφ᾽ ἑορτάς, αἷς πάροιθ᾽ ἠγαλλόμην.
>
> ἴτ᾽ ἀπ᾽ ἐμοῦ χρωτὸς σπαραγμοῖς, ὡς ἔτ᾽ οὖσ᾽ ἁγνὴ χρόα
>
> δῶ θοαῖς αὔραις φέρεσθαί σοι τάδ᾽, ὦ μαντεῖ᾽ ἄναξ.

> O garland of my most beloved god, farewell joyful things: I leave the feasts, which I glorified before. I tear (the religious items) away from my skin, which is still yet chaste, so that the wind will carry these to you, Lord of Prophecy.[502]

The trochaic metre in which Cassandra sings signals a mounting agitation in her voice as she bids farewell to her religious accoutrements, which she pulls off and destroys.[503] Evidently, Cassandra associates her worship of the god with pleasing and celebratory things, which are bitter for her to discard, but which she nevertheless destroys in an act of violence that communicates the weakened values upon which these celebrations took place. Her relationship with Apollo was particularly close, as highlighted by her description of Apollo as "most beloved" (φιλτάτου) and her mention of the feasts which she glorified (ἑορτάς…ἠγαλλόμην). This is not a purely servant/master relationship, but something familiar, that has provided Cassandra with familial comfort and stability. Her sceptical questions thus arise in the context of what appears to be a tender relationship, the end of

[502] Eur. *Tro.* 452-454.
[503] Suter 2003: 10.

which Cassandra is now mourning. Removing the key tokens of her relationship with Apollo, therefore, is a demonstration of Cassandra's withdrawal of her continued observance. While the destruction of Troy and the deaths of her family is the most obvious motivation for this course of action, Cassandra only references Apollo's failed prophecies in her removal of her sacred garments, suggesting this is the motivating factor in her discontinuation of observance. Her personal reckoning is unretractable from her gesture. It is apparent that Cassandra is concerned about her upcoming defilement as a captive of Agamemnon, which would in turn damage the venerability of the religious garments she wears.[504] Yet, through the removal of her items of worship, Cassandra ends her association with Apollo with a rough and attention-grabbing gesture, involving a similar level of physical activity and excitement. By "tearing" them from her skin (χρωτὸς σπαραγμοῖς), an action reminiscent of the tearing of clothes in mourning rituals, Cassandra is violently and pointedly severs her connection to the god.[505] Casting off her garments as to prevent them being polluted through sexual intercourse is not solely in honour of the god, but produces a spectacle and statement out of the "death" of her connection with Apollo, as this component of her identity is cancelled by her removal of them.[506] That they are physically destroyed further points to this wiping out of Cassandra's former adherence, as there is no possibility for them to be re-worn, preventing her from ever assuming the role they held again.[507] Furthermore, the violence of the act, as Cassandra rips away and destroys the garlands, recalls the brutality and stripping away of meaning presently happening in Troy, as its buildings and institutions are destroyed in the siege. It is in this unretractable action that she casts aside her religion and calls out the gods' inactivity with punch.

The act of destroying her garlands is reminiscent of the same action as it was performed in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon,* during the climactic scene in which Cassandra calls on Apollo and discard her robes and garlands before moving into the house, making her disdain apparent:

> τί δῆτ᾽ ἐμαυτῆς καταγέλωτ᾽ ἔχω τάδε,
>
> καὶ σκῆπτρα καὶ μαντεῖα περὶ δέρῃ στέφη;

[504] Katsouri 2014: 175.
[505] Foley 2002: 23.
[506] Wyles 2011: 65-66.
[507] Bendlin 2010: 179.

σὲ μὲν πρὸ μοίρας τῆς ἐμῆς διαφθερῶ.

ἴτ᾽ ἐς φθόρον· πεσόντα γ᾽ ὧδ᾽ ἀμείβομαι.

ἄλλην τιν᾽ ἄτης ἀντ᾽ ἐμοῦ πλουτίζετε.

ἰδοὺ δ᾽ Ἀπόλλων αὐτὸς ἐκδύων ἐμὲ

χρηστηρίαν ἐσθῆτ᾽, ἐποπτεύσας δέ με

κἀν τοῖσδε κόσμοις καταγελωμένην μέγα

φίλων ὑπ᾽ ἐχθρῶν οὐ διχορρόπως, μάτην

But why should I wear these items of derision, this staff and the prophetic garland around my neck? I will destroy you utterly before I receive my fate. Foul things! Having fallen there, I repay you! Someone else, other than me, can invest in that delusion. Look, Apollo himself strips me of the prophetic raiment, having watched me taunted, by friends who came from enemies, without my wavering, for nothing.[508]

Aeschylus's Cassandra appears far more embittered than her counterpart in Euripides *Trojan Women.* In particular, Cassandra is far franker about the contempt she has suffered from her peers due to her association with Apollo, observing that her special relationship with him has in fact caused more agony than pleasure. However, her focus remains on her items of worship, and not the god himself, only referring to him directly as she reflects on the hardship she experienced "for nothing" (μάτην). Doyle reads the action as defiant: Cassandra's experience of pain and suffering through her connection to Apollo is rendered viscerally, and results in her resistance and dislike of any further involvement.[509] As she waits outside the palace doors where she will shortly be murdered, Cassandra declares that she will no longer "invest in that delusion" (ἄτης… πλουτίζετε), decrying and denigrating her former worship as a mistake. As she continues, she recalls the mockery she suffered while Apollo

[508] Aesch. *Agamemnon.* 1265-1273 (selected lines.)
[509] Doyle 2008: 62.

watched on, and emphasises the asymmetry of their relationship and how the imbalance of suffering has weighted on her in particular. She begins to destroy the features of her religious dress, before describing Apollo himself stripping her of her garments (Ἀπόλλων αὐτὸς ἐκδύων ἐμὲ).[510] Thus, she attributes responsibility for the abandonment of her worship to both herself in this moment, as her extreme dismay in the god reaches its limit, but also to Apollo, who has treated her adherence to him so indifferently. The imagery of the god stripping away Cassandra's religious clothes emphasises the crudeness of their relationship's ending, with her sacred costume destroyed ahead of a new role in which sexuality is an inherent factor.[511] This further emphasises the ultimate emptiness of her relationship with Apollo, which she is alerted to in her final moments.

By reading these scenes intertextually, we can see that the disrobing scene in Euripides' *Trojan Women* parallels Cassandra's words and actions in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* in their disillusionment with Apollo, which results in the removal of religious items which severs any further connection to the god. Furthermore, in both plays the breaking of the garlands is done shortly before Cassandra leaves the stage in the knowledge that she is going to her death. However, by placing her decision to sever her connection to Apollo in the immediate aftermath of Troy's fall, as opposed to after she has already arrived in Argos, Cassandra's action holds more premeditation and direct relevance to the collapse of Troy. Her action, as she slides into a controlled and purposeful way of speaking following her manic appearance, thus takes on a defined purpose, as Cassandra recognises the redundancy of Apollo's role in light of Troy's fall. There is nothing in the text to suggest that Cassandra ever sinks to her knees or lowers her body in any way, meaning she most likely delivers these lines standing. This would allow the broken garlands to fall from her standing height, adding to the defiant tone to her action, before she walks off the stage, free from the god's influence, with her stated plan to cause Agamemnon's death.

Cassandra's self-control is beyond the understanding of those with whom she shares a stage. Her knowledge of the bigger picture, and especially the punishment pending for the Greeks, defines the content and quality of her dialogue with the other characters. Like the gods in the prologue, she provides information on events that occur after the play is over, informing the audience and Hecuba of the punishment that will be brought on the Greeks once they leave

[510] Aesch. *Agamemnon.* 1206.
[511] Doyle 2008: 65.

Troy. As she shares this wider awareness of the bigger picture with the gods, it naturally complicates her relationship with Apollo, and her understanding of her religion once her city has fallen. The gods conveniently do not interfere with the calamity at Troy, despite its inhabitants' previous adherence to religious practises, producing a realistic resentment in Cassandra's attitude to her religious items.[512] As the chaos of Troy's fall renders her role as priestess of Apollo void, she responds with a calculation that, from the outside, seems irrational. This apparent changeability also characterises her relationship with the gods, as her actions and words refer to up to four separate gods: Apollo, Dionysus, Hymenaeus and Hecate.[513] Each god adds an element to her appearance, such as Dionysus' maenadic influence in her torch dance, or Hymenaeus' role as a marriage deity in her planned nuptials to Agamemnon, that will lead to her captor's death, and Hecate, whose affiliation for sorcery represents an instrumentalization of malevolence for supernaturally invoked revenge. Likewise, her use of the torch, in which the flame is recalled both as a symbol of celebration, and as a method of destruction as it consumes Troy, demonstrates Cassandra's manipulation of religious emblems as the meaning of these items are impacted by the war that surrounds them. Similarly, her destruction of her garland, another religious emblem, is shown as an expression of Cassandra's new perception of the item as little more than useless decoration, with Apollo's power to make these garlands "special" in any way defused.[514] Through her fluidity of persona and her foresight, Cassandra consciously and soberly accepts her fate, and in doing so, can effect a greater sense of independence and individuality.[515] In other words, Cassandra asserts control over her religion, while her religion does not control her, which proves valuable as the fundamentals of family and religion are jettisoned in the aftermath of Troy's fall.[516]

4.3.4. Hecuba's Failed Prayer

After Cassandra's impactful scene ends, she leaves Hecuba on the stage with only the Chorus for company. The Chorus observes that Hecuba collapses again ("do you not see how the

[512] Lefkowitz 1989: 77-78.
[513] Papadopoulou 2000: 521.
[514] Eur. *Tro.* :180.
[515] Rabinowitz 2017: 228.
[516] Croally 1994: 73.

mistress falls outstretched?" - οὐ δεδόρκατε δέσποιναν ὡς ἄναυδος ἐκτάδην πίτνει).[517] This was most likely achieved by the actor falling to his knees and then falling forward onto his hands.[518] When the Chorus attempt to help Hecuba up, she shrugs them off, indicating contact between her and some Chorus members, with her rejection of help further compounding the hopelessness of the scene.[519]

It is from this kneeling position that Hecuba delivers a frank and emphatic inditement against the gods, referring directly to her physical position as she does so:

> πτωμάτων γὰρ ἄξια
>
> πάσχω τε καὶ πέπονθα κἄτι πείσομαι.
>
> ὦ θεοί ... κακοὺς μὲν ἀνακαλῶ τοὺς συμμάχους,
>
> ὅμως δ᾽ ἔχει τι σχῆμα κικλήσκειν θεούς,
>
> ὅταν τις ἡμῶν δυστυχῆ λάβῃ τύχην.
>
> For this fallen state, I suffer, and still more I have suffered, and what I will yet suffer. Oh gods…. I call on such terrible allies, but nevertheless, it is form to call on the gods, when ill-fortune seizes us.[520]

Hecuba begins a prayer, addressing the gods directly (ὦ θεοί) as part of a regular form. However, she suddenly interrupts herself to disdain the gods emphatically (κακοὺς μὲν ἀνακαλῶ τοὺς συμμάχους). The disorder of Hecuba's prayer, as she begins but then stops to deride the figures she was beseeching, is strongly indicative of an ambivalence within the character that overwhelms her attempts to revert to the standard customs she was previously familiar with.[521] Hecuba states plainly that she prays to the gods to maintain the "form"

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[517] Eur. *Tro.* 463-464.
[518] It is possible that he would have fallen onto his back from a kneeling position. However, this would have been more difficult to execute neatly, and it would have been more difficult to arise back into a kneeling or standing position. Lying on the back would also have made it more difficult for the actor to speak his lines with the necessary expansion of the lungs.
[519] Eur. *Tro.* 462-468.
[520] Eur. *Tro.* 469-472.
[521] Mastronarde 1979: 53.

(σχῆμα) that is expected when encountering hardship (ἡμῶν δυστυχῆ λάβῃ τύχην). Even as Hecuba claims that she will "nevertheless" (ὅμως) continue to observe this form, her mention of tradition as a reason to do so, and that is she is making this observation at the point of her abandoned prayer reflects the fading importance of this custom.[522] The gods, in Hecuba's plain-spoken opinion, are "terrible allies" (κακοὺς…..συμμάχους), proven useless to Troy as it burns.[523] This insult interrupts and immediately cancels out her attempt to pray conventionally, as it replaces the usual hymnic form, in which the gods flattered in the hopes of their favourable attention, with an entirely opposite method of criticising them bluntly.[524] That this flattery is replaced with insult further emphasises the purposelessness of the act, with the suddenness of this reversion indicating that Hecuba has been suddenly struck by this thought and sentiment. Interrupting her initial "ὦ θεοί" with a sudden need to plainly describe the gods as pointless suggests the thought only occurred to her after she started speaking; she has interrupted herself, just as her religious understanding has been interrupted by the actions of the Greeks. The impression therefore is one of an uncontrived and autonomous thought, that is uttered against and in contrast to a backdrop of the cultural expectation for standard piety and praise. Just as Cassandra ripped her sacred garlands apart, Hecuba similarly devalues a ritual feature of her religious observance, namely prayer, by verbally deconstructing it and observing the underwhelming reasons to continue.

Paired with this cessation of worship is Hecuba's return to focus on the corporeality of her suffering, which in turn emphasises the immaterial quality of the gods. Her refusal to stand, and her physical gesture of rejecting the Chorus' help, further compounds the sense of helplessness to her position, as her posture and lamentation articulate her suffering and the gods' corresponding pointlessness.[525] Hecuba demonstrates none of the manic gusto of Cassandra, who draws energy and satisfaction from the knowledge of Agamemnon's and Odysseus' forthcoming misfortunes. Instead, Hecuba's repetition of πάσχω, in the present, past and future tenses, adds a sense of her enforced passivity, as well as the inescapability and interminability to her anguish. However, like Cassandra, Hecuba's body and actions serve to reflect the present state of her relationship with the gods with regards to her emotional registering of them. Hecuba's refusal to remain upright, despite the Chorus' concern for her,

[522] Croally 1994: 73-74.
[523] Sluiter 2008: 15.
[524] Furley 2007: 119.
[525] Suter 2003: 21.

acts as a visibly defiant expression of her loss, as she refuses to see the purpose of saving face in the aftermath of her city and house being destroyed. Her brief impiety is a similar expression of the scepticism about expected behavioural forms that bear no real use or comfort following the collapse of Troy.

It is noteworthy that immediately following her outburst, Hecuba does not resume her prayer, but instead describes her family's previous status as lords of their region, reflecting on the trajectory of her experience at Troy. From a princess marrying into a great house, to an old woman who witnessed her city's fall, Hecuba's different personas at different parts of her life testify to the personal human cost of the sack of Troy by the Greeks, as her family's domestic lives are taken apart.[526] The point is made again when Hecuba vividly describes the slaughter of her husband Priam at his hearth and the enslavement of the daughters she had prepared for marriage, remarking "no one told me this. I saw it with my own eyes" (οὐκ ἄλλων πάρα κλύουσ᾽ ἔκλαυσα, τοῖσδε δ᾽ εἶδον ὄμμασιν,") and "straight from my hands they were pulled" (ἄλλοισι θρέψασ᾽ ἐκ χερῶν ἀφῃρέθην".) [527] Through such laments, Hecuba asserts her emotional anguish and psychological turmoil at the injustice done against the city and its inhabitants.[528] Suter has observed that the women of *Trojan Women* use lament as a mode through which they gain authority to comment on the events around them.[529] With this in mind, the statements she makes about the gods amount to a legitimate and seriously intended critique of their behaviour, the heightened emotionality both adding force to the charge.

Trojan Women seeks to add more depth and texture to its characters than a simple litany of abuses would do, demonstrating its characters' responses to the destruction of the city in detail. As the Trojan women are incapable of any decisive agency, their responses represented are of their internal impressions, rather than their actions. Therefore, as they remain helpless to prevent their enslavement, they turn to how the gods have disappointed them. Thus, they reflect on their previous customs, retrospectively stripping down the pretensions and conventions of religion as they recognise the gods' capabilities for neglect.[530] Hecuba's lack of faith in prayer highlights the discrepancy she can no longer tolerate

[526] Eur. *Trojan Women.* 474, 484, 490.
[527] Eur. *Trojan Women.* 481-483, 484-486.
[528] Foley 2002: 116-117.
[529] Suter 2003: 21-25.
[530] Croally 1994: 83-84.

between the ongoing expectations of behaviour now, and the triviality of such gestures following the complete routing of domestic stability and the ceremonies that are part of the household and wider cultural infrastructure.

As in *Antigone*, where the gods' persistent silence in the face of increasingly aggravated tumult results in the title character desperately begging for clarity, the characters of *Trojan Women* display an innate uncertainty and ignorance. In *Trojan Women*, this ignorance is played on in the play's opening and the conversation between Poseidon and Athena, in which the gods discuss the destruction of the homeward-bound Greek ships for their expressed impiety, with the weeping, unaware Hecuba lying between them.[531] Towards the end of the play, while carrying out the funerary rites and wrapping the body of Astyanax, her grandchild, Hecuba again comments on the role the gods played in Troy's fall, specifically mentioning the sacrifices her city made in vain to the gods (οὐκ ἦν ἄρ᾽ ἐν θεοῖσι πλὴν ούμοὶ πόνοι Τροία τε πόλεων ἔκκριτον μισουμένη, μάτην δ᾽ ἐβουθυτοῦμεν).[532] She states this with a repetition of her scepticism about their help, shortly after which the play concludes with laments from the Chorus.[533] The play thus begins with the gods' stated intent to punish impiety, and ends on a stricken mortal's query as to why she should have ever prayed to the gods.[534] There is thus a two-tiered effect within the play in terms of perspective – the macro, panoptical view by Poseidon and Athena, as they spectate and plan the next stage in the mortals' lives, and the intimate, blinkered and painful perspective as represented by the Trojan women in particular. Where the gods-eye standpoint lays the groundwork and expectations for the long-term, the play zeroes in on and details the lived reality of its unaware and suffering mortal characters.

[531] Eur. *Tro.* 77-97.
[532] Eur. *Tro.* 1240.
[533] Eur. *Tro.* 1280.
[534] Peels 2016: 555.

4.4. Chapter Conclusion

The significance of the speakers' sex, and their placement in their society is particularly relevant when considering the similarities and differences between *Ajax* and *Hippolytus,* and *Antigone* and *Trojan Women*. As has been already discussed in the first two plays, the societal exile undergone by these characters is a key factor in their reasons for uttering impieties, as both Ajax and Hippolytus suffer from personal humiliations that reduce their once lofty positions to pariah status. For the female characters of *Antigone* and *Trojan Women*, there is no suggestion of them ever enjoying any centralised or authoritative roles in their communities. As such, their trajectory to the outside of a functional societal framework, and the emotional tumult that leads to their expression of grievance against the gods, is less based on their personal egos and expectations, and results more from the serious upheaval that occurs around them. The women of *Antigone* and *Trojan Women* have both recently experienced war within their cities, causing their outbursts to stem, in part, from the injustices and losses that effect their communities en masse. Furthermore, the women of these plays are not shown to be actively pursuing a closer personal relationship with any god or using their association with any deity to claim a higher degree of honour. There are no extensive paeans relayed to a god, or greetings that indicate a special patronage. These women do not enjoy authoritative or honoured positions in their communities, nor do they revel in an assumed position of favour with a deity. Nonetheless, they still utter emphatic and aggrieved expressions that reflect negatively upon the divine, the use of their statements and physical acting throughout serves to intensify their criticisms into exceptionally combative and incisive comments about their gods' failure to justify their worship.

Antigone, in her embittered two-line interrogation on the value of piety to the gods, exhibits qualities that have been interpreted by some quarters as egocentric and arrogant.[535] The play's account of her refusal to obey Creon, a male political authority, involves the character purposefully stepping forward alone to flout a law she deems unjust, in order to bury her brother following his failed campaign against Thebes. Her reasons for doing this are somewhat inconsistent, as has been much discussed by scholars.[536] However, her first and most earnestly argued motive was adherence to the gods' laws regarding burial, and it is thus curious to note that she also utters a series of frantic enquiries towards the end of the play

[535] Oudemanns & Lardinois 1987: 106-110.
[536] Kitto 1939: 126-127. Levy 1963: 139.

that emit a dissatisfied view on the gods' involvement. It is thus key to question why and how this moment fits in the play, and if and how it relates to a wider consistency with Antigone's character and relationship with the gods. In particular, Antigone represents an extreme alterity that grants her licence to question different types of authority. Similarly, Cassandra in *Trojan Women* is distinct from her peers, speaking and behaving in a manner that they cannot understand. However, like Antigone, despite the confusion and consternation she creates in the other characters, Cassandra maintains an aura of control, as she exhibits special knowledge and understanding of her situation, a foreknowledge coming from her established ability for clairvoyance.

Cassandra's eventual removal of her garland, carried out with similar physical energy as her interaction with the torch she carries onstage, is indicative of the character's assertiveness in her relationship with Apollo, as she takes a decisive step to cease connection to this deity. As she does so, she references several other deities in such a way that dilutes her connection to him. The aggression with which she does so is comparable to the earlier rendering of Cassandra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon,* and the character's increasing outrage at the god's ineffectualness there. In seeming contrast to Antigone and Cassandra, who both deliver their criticisms and refusals of the gods while standing, Hecuba, who is considerably older than the other two women, utters her criticism of the gods collapsed on the ground. However, her comments do not appear to be emitted weakly or pathetically, but with an air of defiance and open disdain. As Hecuba refuses help from the Chorus to stand up, and then disrupts her usual prayer to chastise the gods for their inaction, she exhibits a strong-willed refusal to allow any appearance of amelioration in her circumstances, using her position to emphasise her suffering, but also to shame the gods for their role in letting Troy burn. As with Antigone and Cassandra, her statement emerges as an outburst, occurring suddenly and unexpectedly from her speech, suggesting a rush of overpowering emotion that causes her to discard entrenched religious practices. In comparison to the titular male characters of *Ajax* and *Hippolytus,* who utter their comments in a shocked reaction following their fall from an exalted place within their society, the women of *Antigone* and *Trojan Women* are shown, in their comments, to have followed their religion with reliable obedience, either with Antigone's earnest adherence to the gods' laws of burial, or Hecuba and Cassandra's quotidian and functional observance of rites and festivals. Their eventual criticisms of the gods thus come from a place more commonly occupied by the original audience than the examples set by the egotistic male protagonists of *Ajax* and *Hippolytus*, as the women have

not caused their downfall by over-reaching for a more exalted position or claimed an exceptional relationship with the gods that has been denied to them. Hecuba, in particular, refers to the religious festivals and rites a family would perform as standard, and it is only as she lies collapsed following her city's complete destruction that she observes that there was no reason for her to have been so conscientious.

As seen in the examples of *Ajax* and *Hippolytus,* the Euripidean examples of denouncements against the gods in *Trojan Women* are more frankly and aggressively framed than in Sophocles, with Cassandra's energetic performance and Hecuba's blunt insults against the gods creating a notably aggressive and disdainful impression of the characters' feelings. Both Cassandra and Hecuba purposefully break with religious observance, physically and with their words, emitting that they are too unhappy with the gods to worship them any further. Antigone, in contrast, questions the gods intensively, with a weakening of her forceful line of enquiry towards the end of her speech, as she caps off her accusatory questions with a characteristic display of piety. Nevertheless, the force of Antigone's delivery is emphasised as she sings her complaints and accusations while surrounded by her enemies, her outrage transcending the physical danger she is in to call attention to the gods' failings.

In tragedy, all mortals who utter impieties are in some way externalised from the communities around them and estranged from the norms of everyday life and the steps one would normally take to signal one's conformity. They utter their impieties alone, with no other voice joining their forceful dismay, and so their impieties gain no acceptability or social traction. Cassandra and Hecuba, however, appear to break this rule, as they both utter statements that reflect a deteriorating impression of the gods. However, the reasons for this exceptionality is apparent, namely Cassandra and Hecuba have not been removed from their positions in society, nor do they voluntarily reside outside of it. Rather, their community has been dismantled around them, as their family members are either killed or sold into slavery. Therefore, their statements come at a moment in which they are exceptionally mindful of the redundancy of any further social or religious decorum, with Hecuba's observation of the "form" (σχῆμα) for praying to the gods offering little more than a circular justification for doing so.[537] The impiety uttered by the Trojan women, like the impiety uttered by Antigone, serves to present a realistic and reasonable response to hardship by these female characters, as they recognise the lack of support or comfort they are receiving from the gods. Their use

[537] Eur. *Tro.* 471. Croally 1994: 83.

of attention-grabbing details as they do so, such as Antigone's stance in the presence of her captors, Cassandra's interaction with the torch, or Hecuba's refusal of help from her collapsed position, make clear the reasons for their denouncing the gods, and their emotional register while doing so.

5. Reconciling with the Gods After Impiety

5.1. Introduction

From the plays examined so far, there appears to be a standard pattern to acrimonious relationships between mortals and gods in Athenian tragedy. Reaching a peak state of emotional duress, a character is unable to hold back their indignation, and so emits a brief exclamation or outburst that specifically blames the gods for their part in their current predicament. Such denouncements are usually delivered on a death bed or while the character is moving knowingly towards their demise. Often, they are physically positioned down low, granting a sense of defeat and loss as they do so, with the only examples where this has not been the case have arisen from characters especially alienated from usual human society and mindset.

Their pending death and devastation might explain the mortal's lack of fear of reprisals from the gods for their impiety, or even nullify their apparent challenge to the god's authority. Moreover, because mortals who are dying or enslaved have no real future within their present community, the possibility for such aggrieved attitudes to persist and spread socially is limited. These moments of outburst often mark the complete severance of a character from their prior life, not just in terms of their physical existence, but also their position within viable systems and communities. This may be because the functioning system is no longer operational, as in *Trojan Women,* or because the protagonists have been purposefully removed from their communities, as in *Ajax, Hippolytus,* and *Antigone.* In all four plays discussed so far, there is no return for these characters. Their abandonment of their gods and communities is a one-way street, and any reconciliation can only occur after they have died.

In Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and Euripides' *Ion,* by contrast, this pattern is subverted. Not only do the characters reconcile with the gods and their wider religious and social systems during their time onstage, but they gain this satisfying reaffirmation of their relationship with the gods while still alive, only dying or leaving the stage once this closure has been achieved. This is shown regardless of the strength of the complaints levied at the gods, or indeed actions taken by the characters that signal serious intentions to harm or degrade the gods and their worship. Thus, these plays work in contradistinction to the earlier observed tendency in tragedy to provide the punishment for impiety within the plays

themselves, as seen in the example of Euripides' *Ixion*.[538] Therefore, these plays, as the characters' statements draw excessive attention on the gods' dubious actions, pose an intriguing example in which open impiety may be survivable, even in cases of impassioned and unredacted denouncements against the gods.

This chapter will consider how these examples of frank criticism against the gods are presented in these plays, which also go on to depict these relationships recovering in the final scenes. As in the previous case studies, how the characters' personalities and physical performances cohere to their emission of their outbursts against the gods shall be central to the investigation, as will how they are able to seek reconciliation despite their antagonism. This is particularly true in the case of *Ion,* which contains several especially aggressive diatribes against Apollo, but nevertheless ends with a remarkably optimistic ending for the mortals responsible for the most egregious impieties.

Looking at Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* first, special interest will be paid to Oedipus' understanding of how he was manipulated to commit crimes of parricide and incest by the gods, the role ignorance plays in his own defence, and his accusation of the gods' responsibility. These accusations do not obstruct but enable his reconciliation with a functioning social framework and the gods themselves, as Oedipus' importance as a future figure of cult at Athens reasserts the special level of proximity and significance he has with the divine, but also causes the issue of the gods' involvement in his crimes to re-emerge.

[538] See section 1.2.2. Reckford 1991: 125-136. Plutarch. *Moralia*. 1.4.19e.

5.2. Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*

5.2.1. Introduction

Oedipus at Colonus, staged in 401 BCE, contains prominent themes of exile, separation and reconciliation, as displayed by Oedipus himself. The play depicts the title character as a wearied beggar who has suffered during the years following his exile from Thebes, seeking the grove of Eumenides as the place he was foretold he would die. After some tension with the Chorus of Athenian Elders, who express concern about the potential for pollution Oedipus represents as a notorious perpetrator of incest and parricide, Oedipus obtains support from Theseus, who protects him from threats from Creon (who wishes for Oedipus to return to Thebes, as the location of his death will stand to benefit from divine favour). Following a brief dramatic interlude, where Oedipus' daughters are briefly taken by Creon, Oedipus is able to remain in the grove and so bestow Athens with future prosperity through his hero cult. The play ends with Oedipus going earnestly to his death, which is heralded by thunder heard onstage, with the gods taking a visible and co-operative role in Oedipus' satisfied end.

The events that led to his exile would have been familiar to the original audience at the Dionysia through Sophocles' earlier treatment of it in *Oedipus Tyrannos*. However, despite retreading some of this story-ground, *Oedipus at Colonus* features a title character who is markedly different from the one found in the earlier play. At the end of *Oedipus Tyrannos*, Oedipus claims that "the hand that dealt me the blow was my own", openly accepting blame for the murder of his father Laius and his incestuous union with his mother Jocasta.[539] In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus espouses a completely different attitude, as he eschews the responsibility that the Chorus attempts to place on him for his family's tragedy. In his aggressive defence against the Chorus' prejudice, Oedipus makes certain statements that strongly allude to the gods as the true perpetrators of his crimes, with the heavy implication that the judgement Oedipus has faced in his years in exile should be passed to them.

The obvious question of why this change has taken place can be answered in direct relation to newly emphasised details of Oedipus' character, which mainly pertain to his experiences in exile. Additionally, as has been seen already in this dissertation, the character's displeasure

[539] Soph. *Oe. Tyr.* 1334.

with the gods is part of a coherent profile, with the outbursts naturally arising from the conversational prompts and emotional momentum of the scenes. As such, these moments are presented as arising naturally through the immediate action, with an internal logic to Oedipus' demeanour and psychology. Interestingly, these moments lead to his eventual reconciliation with mainstream religion, as the gods confirm his place within the grove of the Eumenides as an honoured hero, and Oedipus is promised to bring prosperity to the land in which he is interred.[540] His rejection of guilt and accusations against the gods is not only framed as a consequence of his displayed demeanour but assist in Oedipus' readmittance into a community that will then benefit from his burial.

5.2.2 Oedipus' Implication: Who Was To Blame?

Oedipus' indignation towards the gods is revealed early in the play, emerging after the character is provoked into an expansive and declarative rebuttal of guilt by the Chorus.[541] The nature of this disclosure is clearly an outburst, as the character is shown to be responding to an interaction that he has found stressful, as Oedipus' demeanour notably changes from meek to outraged at any accusation of guilt.[542] The beginning of the play initially features Oedipus and his daughter Antigone alone, having arrived in the grove of Colonus outside Athens, which is where Oedipus has been foretold that he will die after years of hard-living following his exile from Thebes.[543] From his first appearance, Oedipus' speech and actions reveal him to be frail and vulnerable. He enters the stage being led by his daughter, and it is apparent from their exchange that he is entirely dependent on her for all his basic needs due to his infirmity and blindness, which Seale suggests was signified with a bloodied mask, and so adding individuality to Oedipus' presentation.[544] Both are moving slowly, and wear rags, adding further visual clues as to their weakened and destitute state.[545] In particular, Oedipus requires Antigone's help him sit down ("Now sit me down and take care of the blind man," - κάθιζέ νύν με καὶ φύλασσε τὸν τυφλόν), indicating physical interaction between the two characters as Antigone eases him down, before he asks her

[540] Soph. *OC.* 92.
[541] Soph. *OC.* 263-277.
[542] Scodel 2008: 243.
[543] Soph. *OC.* 42-45.
[544] Seale 1982: 114.
[545] Seale 1982: Ibid.

where they are ("Can you instruct me exactly where we have come to?" - ἔχεις διδάξαι δή μ᾽ ὅποι καθέσταμεν;).[546] In turn, Antigone's response indicates that she has been looking after Oedipus in this way for an extended period of time, demonstrating the lack of any other support Oedipus has had ("Indeed, because of time, it is not necessary to teach me this" - χρόνου μὲν οὕνεκ᾽ οὐ μαθεῖν με δεῖ τόδε).[547] Other statements from Antigone and Oedipus during the play's opening further communicate the level of hardship they have experienced as indigent wanderers, with Oedipus referring to their means of scraping a living via begging ("who will take-in the wandering Oedipus with measly donations? It is little I ask for, yet smaller still than I receive, but it is enough for me" - σμικρὸν μὲν ἐξαιτοῦντα, τοῦ σμικροῦ δ᾽ ἔτι μεῖον φέροντα, καὶ τόδ᾽ ἐξαρκοῦν ἐμοί"), and Antigone referring to the specific hardship Oedipus, as a frail, blind man, has faced ("for the road you have travelled is far for an old man" - μακρὰν γὰρ ὡς γέροντι προὐστάλης ὁδόν).[548]

As well as conveying this hand-to-mouth existence, Oedipus expresses an anxiety around unknown people. When the Chorus of Athenian Elders first approaches to ask who the old stranger refusing to move from grove is, Oedipus hides from them. When he does reveal himself, he is careful to obey them, and needs Antigone's help throughout the encounter:

"Οἰδίπους

πρόσθιγέ νύν μου.

Ἀντιγόνη

ψαύω καὶ δή."

Οἰδίπους

ἔτ᾽ οὖν;

Χορός

ἔτι βαῖνε πόρσω.

Οἰδίπους

[546] Soph. *OC.* 21, 23
[547] Soph. *OC.* 22.
[548] Soph. *OC.* 5-6, 20.

ἔτι;

Χορός

προβίβαζε, κούρα, πόρσω· σὺ γὰρ ἀΐεις.

Oedipus

Reach out your hand to me.

Antigone

I take it in mine.

Oedipus

Still further?

Chorus

Go further still.

Oedipus

Still more?

Chorus

Lead him forwards, girl. You can see.[549]

The implicit stage directions, together with Oedipus' interactions with the Chorus, further reveal Oedipus' vulnerability and meekness as he is forced to interact with strangers who he regards with obvious caution. He shuffles across the stage uncertainly, making sure he conscientiously follows the Chorus' instruction, relying on Antigone's guidance throughout. The character is thus presented as wholly weak, being assisted by his daughter, and showing his physical weakness and internal nervousness through his movement. The blind Oedipus' tactile experience is highlighted through the visuals, as he leans on his daughter and moves falteringly using the Chorus' directions. Thus, the interactions between the different

[549] Soph. *OC.* selected lines, 173-180.

characters onstage realise the quality of their personalities.[550] Oedipus' exhaustion, feebleness and fearfulness are communicated with his actions and interactions with others, positioning him in a uniquely submissive and disadvantaged position, as he lingers on the outskirts of established and secure community. Once Oedipus has shuffled far enough for the Chorus' liking, they instruct him to "sink low on that rock" (λᾶος βραχὺς ὀκλάσας).[551] Oedipus is thus physically lowered under instruction from others, who by contrast, are standing. The posture Oedipus settles in thus represents his continued debasement and exclusion from human society, with Bremmer noting that seated positions are commonly associated with displays of inferiority and supplication, which very much applies to Oedipus at this point in the play.[552]

However, there is an abrupt and unexpected shift in Oedipus' demeanour when the Chorus demands that he vacate the grove, due to a fear that Oedipus carries pollution from his crimes of incest and parricide. When asked, Oedipus resists divulging his name to the Chorus, with the character signalling his discomfort made apparent with his repeated use of the negative μὴ ("No, no, no, don't ask who I am, don't enquire, seeking this!" - μὴ μὴ μή μ᾽ ἀνέρῃ τίς εἰμι, μηδ᾽ ἐξετάσῃς πέρα ματεύων), the impression of his fear and dismay intensified by his reactionary, panicked response.[553] The intensity of the scene increases further when the Chorus pursues the matter with a string of imperatives interspersed with their questions, insisting that Oedipus tell them who he is ("what do you mean…Speak!....What is your origin, stranger? Speak! Where do you come from?" - τί τόδ᾽;… αὔδα… τίνος εἶ σπέρματος, ὦ ξένε, φώνει, πατρόθεν.)[554] Before he finally answers, Oedipus again expresses resistance and hesitation, reverting to asking Antigone for advice and help ("ah me, what will I suffer, my child? – "ὤμοι ἐγώ, τί πάθω, τέκνον ἐμόν;").[555] As Oedipus finally reveals his identity, the Chorus' speech immediately becomes peppered with exclamations and appeals to the divine (ὢ ἰοὺ ἰού… ὦ Ζεῦ… ἰὼ ὢ ὤ), indicating their shock at finding out this information, and they immediately pressure him to leave the grove ("Get out, and away from this place!" - ἔξω πόρσω βαίνετε χώρας).[556] Neither Oedipus nor the Chorus make specific mention of what Oedipus is so notorious for, but still evince a shared understanding of the magnitude and

[550] Worman 2017: 46.
[551] Soph. *OC.* 199.
[552] Bremmer 1993: 26.
[553] Soph. *OC.* 210-211.
[554] Soph. *OC.* 212, 214, 216.
[555] Soph. *OC.* 217.
[556] Soph. *OC.* 221, 223, 227.

severity of his past. This implies that the story of his parricide and incestuous marriage to his mother is widely known outside of Thebes, and that the anxiety Oedipus has in interacting with strangers and revealing his name is linked to the abuse he has suffered as a result of his infamous past and his suspected pollution. As such, the dramatic tension of the scene is increased as Oedipus has his shameful history brought up against his will, with the dialogue evincing a disorder of exclamations and half-completed sentences that speak to the agitated emotional register of the speakers.[557] The interaction is portrayed as distressing for both Oedipus and the Chorus, with gesture likely used to ante up the characters' statements as their reactions catalyse each other's.[558] Throughout this exchange, there is no indication in the text that Oedipus has stood up out of his seating position, which suggests that he has remained seated, as would be suitable for his aged and intimidated demeanour. As the Chorus urges Oedipus to leave, however, and for the first time he does not obey them, his continued sitting becomes a signal of his defiance.[559] It is from this position, as Oedipus refuses to move, despite the increased tension of the situation, that he begins to launch his defence, and in doing so, shifts blame onto the gods.

Oedipus' argument against the Chorus rests on two claims of injustice against himself. Firstly, Oedipus argues that the stigma and persecution he has received as he was not culpable for his infamous wrongdoings. Secondly, he makes specific mention of the "true" perpetrators of these events, who held the knowledge and agency to effect the crimes Oedipus unwittingly committed. To fully deconstruct and understand the implications of Oedipus' speech and the new demeanour in which he delivers it, it will be analysed in sections, starting with Oedipus' defence of the events in Thebes. This includes a vociferous rebuttal of his supposed guilt:

οἵτινες βάθρων

ἐκ τῶνδέ μ᾽ ἐξάραντες εἶτ᾽ ἐλαύνετε,

[557] Van Northwick 2015: 94; Mastronarde 1979: 65, 114.
[558] Boegehold 1999: 34.
[559] Van Northwick (2015: 84) suggests that Oedipus moves across the stage in relation to his shifts between passivity and defiant anger, moving to the left (towards Thebes, according to Van Northwick's orienteering of the stage) when he is submissive, and moving right (towards Athens) when he is resisting. While there is no indication in the text that this appears to be how Oedipus moves, it is possible, and corresponds to this thesis' theories on stage movement.

ὄνομα μόνον δείσαντες;

οὐ γὰρ δὴ τό γε

σῶμ᾽ οὐδὲ τἄργα τἄμ᾽: ἐπεὶ τά γ᾽ ἔργα μου

πεπονθότ᾽ ἐστὶ μᾶλλον ἢ δεδρακότα,

εἴ σοι τὰ μητρὸς καὶ πατρὸς χρείη λέγειν,

ὧν οὕνεκ᾽ ἐκφοβεῖ με· τοῦτ᾽ ἐγὼ καλῶς

ἔξοιδα.

You drive me from the land after disturbing me from this bench, but you've feared only a name. As surely it is not what I am, nor my deeds: After all, my deeds are in what I've suffered more than what I've done, if it is necessary to speak of my mother and father, being as it is that for which you recoil from me. This I understand completely.[560]

This is the first instance in the play where Oedipus directly refers to his past and gives his own reflections on and understanding of the notorious events in Thebes. Oedipus' logic is underlined by a potent emotionality that counters the Chorus' own, as he highlights that the Chorus have formed their impressions via a second-hand account, whereas Oedipus has suffered directly from his misfortunes.[561] Oedipus is indignant at his maltreatment as a suppliant to Athens, and weary at the vilification he has faced throughout his life due to an infamy he had no true agency in creating. That both Oedipus and Antigone emphasise the years Oedipus has suffered in exile in their first appearance onstage (lines 1-9, 20) as well as Oedipus' anxiety in disclosing his name to a then reactionary and panicked Chorus (lines 210-214, 227,) enforces the notion that Oedipus has experienced protracted vilification because of his disrepute. This is further suggested from the emphasis Oedipus placed on his personal understanding of the Chorus' prejudice against him, implying he has encountered

[560] Soph. *OC.* 263-270.
[561] Markanatos 2002: 34-35.

such reactions before ("as I know well" - τοῦτ᾽ ἐγὼ καλῶς ἔξοιδα). His use of an intensifying version of οἶδα, together with καλῶς, indicates heavily that he has experienced the Chorus' condemnatory attitude several times before. His use of language also explains Oedipus' decision to hide from the Chorus until he knew they were safe for him to talk to. In this context, Oedipus' response is that of a man growing increasingly frustrated with the stigma and horror his name can cause, as the play suggests through this dialogue of the prolonged abuse Oedipus has received on account of his notoriety. For Oedipus, his *kleos* is negative, as he must cope with the prejudgement of those who have heard his story, but who have not met him.[562] It is not his physical person that causes their horror, but the depersonalised and self-contained reputation attached to his name ("is it my name you fear?" - ὄνομα μόνον δείσαντες;). Through this statement, Oedipus stresses the distinction between his name (ὄνομα), and his being in a physical sense (σῶμ᾽). As he highlights, the Chorus were not familiar with Oedipus himself, or the events of Thebes, but formed their judgement on him through what they had heard, and "not on what I am or my deeds," (οὐ γὰρ δὴ τό γε σῶμ᾽ οὐδὲ τἄργα τἄμ᾽).[563] The use of σῶμ᾽ draws attentions to Oedipus' corporeality, and his presentation as he appears onstage, where his frailty and weakness has been emphasised. This also implies a distinction between the Oedipus as a figure of legend, and the mortal, frail Oedipus who remains in the immediate and heightened presence of the tragic stage. His name gains a materialised essence of its own, causing the Chorus' fear of it as his notoriety, powered by the extremity of his crimes, has spread ahead of him, even as he cowers before onstage, a helpless old man.[564]

Having argued against the Chorus' hasty decision to evict him from the grove, Oedipus then moves on to address the infamy of his reputation specifically, and so defuses the "unspeakable" terror of it with his frankness. As an addendum to his insight on his reputational self (i.e., his name) and his bodily self, Oedipus dismisses his "acts" (τἄργα), and explains why the reputation the Chorus fears so much is misleading. This could be taken as another reference to his frailty, and his clear inability to act as a threat to anyone, despite his infamy. However, Oedipus' elaboration on this point ("after all, my deeds are in what I've suffered, more than what I've done" - ἐπεὶ τά γ᾽ ἔργα μου πεπονθότ᾽ ἐστὶ μᾶλλον ἢ δεδρακότα) clarifies that he is specifically referring to the infamous events in Thebes, which led to his

[562] Van Northwick 2012: 142-143.
[563] Van Northwick 2015: 88-95.
[564] Haselswerdt 2019: 620-621.

exile and ostracism. Oedipus does not see his τἄργα in Thebes as crimes that he himself committed, but rather, things that were engineered for him to experience as an inactive participant. Oedipus uses several words associated with action, repeating the word ἔργον ("deed" - τἄργα, ἔργα) and speaks that what he has "done" (δεδρακότα) as suffering (πεπονθότ) drawing attention to the concept of the "act", and supplanting this idea of an identifiable, incriminating deed with that of a passive suffering. As such, Oedipus takes the opportunity to assert a new version of events, as he is finally given the opportunity to respond to the accusations against him extensively and meaningfully. However, his framing subordinates his active role to that of a victim. Specifically, his description of himself as suffering (πεπονθότ) reinforces the sense that he is not the one who has committed these acts, but that he has been acted upon, suffering crimes instead of committing them. Thus, in confronting the details of his past, Oedipus implicitly rejects any accusation of guilt directed at him. While he may have performed the mechanical, physical actions of which he is accused, his lack of culpability in terms of his intentions and correct knowledge cancels out his guilt.

With this set up, Oedipus proceeds to project that blame and culpability onto a new target, who Oedipus indicates should be considered with the same pejorative terms as he has been. Oedipus builds up to this redirection of blame by emphasising how his ignorance negates his true culpability:

> καίτοι πῶς ἐγὼ κακὸς φύσιν,
>
> ὅστις παθὼν μὲν ἀντέδρων, ὥστ᾽ εἰ φρονῶν
>
> ἔπρασσον, οὐδ᾽ ἂν ὧδ᾽ ἐγιγνόμην κακός;
>
> νῦν δ᾽ οὐδὲν εἰδὼς ἱκόμην ἵν᾽ ἱκόμην
>
> And yet, how am I evil in my nature:
>
> I retaliated against what was done to me, in as much that if I mindfully effected (what I did), then even if this was the case, I would

not have been born bad. Now I arrived knowing nothing about where I had come.[565]

While the Chorus's concern about the pollution is consistent within the framework of mainstream Greek religion, Oedipus nevertheless objects aggressively to their attempted expulsion of him, prioritising his own mounting frustrations with the gods over the common conventions.[566] His objection does not come from a differing read of this purity/pollution law, but simply that the events that caused this apparent pollution were not his fault, and so his expulsion from the grove is undeserved. His concern with κακός, and his insistence that he was not born evil again feeds into his earlier point that his actions are not reflective of his actual character or self, but are a result of something of which he had no true control over. Oedipus points out that from his arrival in Thebes, he was left entirely unaware of the significance of the city and his connection to it, emphasising that he had known "nothing when I arrived where I arrived" (οὐδὲν εἰδὼς ἱκόμην ἵν᾽ ἱκόμην). The repetition of ἱκόμην ("I arrived") gives a teleological quality to his statement, indicating the looped fate Oedipus found himself in, as he was led blindly onto a course of action that only had one ending. By creating a retrospective picture of his clueless arrival at Thebes, Oedipus is able to leave the more precise and gratuitous details of his crimes unsaid, focusing instead on his obliviousness at the very outset of the events that led to his exile and notoriety. Thus, Oedipus repeatedly emphasises his ignorance as the deciding factor in his own conclusion of his innocence, insisting on the impossibility of any fair assessment finding him ultimately culpable.[567] In addition, Oedipus claims he only acted in retaliation (ὅστις παθὼν μὲν ἀντέδρων – "I retaliated against what was done to me"), within an engineered scenario. ἀντέδρων ("acted against") can be translated as "retaliate", referring to the actions Oedipus took in blindness when prompted. This, in turn led to the next damning situation and another act from him in response, which would lead him into a new scenario that he would then act in, (and so on), thus engineering a spiral of action that he was unable perceive or influence. Oedipus tenaciously argues throughout that he has been unfairly treated, with Mastronarde noting that he reasserts the same details several times to stress his innocence, and even interrupts the Chorus in his passionate insistence that he was not to blame for his

[565] Soph. *OC.* 270-273.
[566] Parker 1983: 137.
[567] Murnaghan 2019: 238-289.

actions.[568] The following redirection of blame to those who did know what Oedipus did not, is thus the logical outcome of Oedipus' dismissal of his own guilt, casting these perpetrators as malicious in their knowing manipulation:

> ὑφ᾽ ὧν δ᾽ ἔπασχον, εἰδότων ἀπωλλύμην.
>
> But instead, I suffered under the influence of those who
>
> in full knowledge destroyed me utterly.[569]

This reference to a true perpetrator is brief, and Oedipus desists from mentioning any individual by name. However, the details offered illuminate Oedipus' anger and aggrievement when regarding the role the true culprits, who are responsible not only for Oedipus' mistakenly committing the crimes of parricide and incest, but for the years he suffered due to the notoriety of his actions. Oedipus maintains the focus on himself and emphasises his suffering, but also alludes to a plural agent who has impacted greatly on these events, purely through use of a relative pronoun ("I suffered under the influence of these ones," - ὑφ᾽ ὧν δ᾽ ἔπασχον). This pronoun has no immediate antecedent, but clearly refers to the "true" perpetrator who Oedipus is displacing all his blame directly onto. That Oedipus sees himself as a victim of this unknown instigator is made explicit when he describes himself as "suffering by them," using the ὑφο plus genitive construction to clarify his passive role to this agent's active role. There have been some suggestions that it is a reference to Oedipus' parents.[570] However, this supposition is based on convenience, and does not fit with Oedipus' stated understanding of culpability. His earlier reference to his parents ("if it is necessary for me to talk about my mother and father, being as it is that for which you recoil from me" - εἴ σοι τὰ μητρὸς καὶ πατρὸς χρείη λέγειν, ὧν οὕνεκ᾽ ἐκφοβεῖ με) is notably reserved; it does not naturally make them (the grammatical or otherwise) the ones who guided Oedipus to his wrongdoing.[571] Additionally, Oedipus further describes the unnamed perpetrators as "knowingly destroying me" (εἰδότων ἀπωλλύμην). Oedipus' earlier argument

[568] Mastronarde 1979: 65. Soph. *OC.* 542.
[569] Soph. *OC.* 274.
[570] Kelly 2009: 54.
[571] Soph. *OC.* 268.

emphasises his ignorance as one of the reasons for his innocence, and so it makes sense that whoever he deems as ultimately responsible for these acts will have been operating from a position of knowledge, as they purposely guided him into his crimes.[572] In comparison, Oedipus emphasises that he knew nothing (οὐδὲν εἰδὼς). A key identifier of this unnamed perpetrator, therefore, is the full understanding of the course of action Oedipus took, before he commenced it. Jocasta and Laius do not fit this description. Like Oedipus, they were unaware of the circumstances they were acting within, a fact Oedipus comments upon later on when he describes his marriage to Jocasta ("for she bore me, brought me into this world, alas to my misery, and I did not know and she did not know" - ἔτικτε γάρ μ᾽ ἔτικτεν, ὤμοι μοι κακῶν, οὐκ εἰδότ᾽ οὐκ εἰδυῖα), and his aforementioned assessment of his deadly encounter with Laius when neither knew the other's identity.[573] Laius and Jocasta were like him, acting without true comprehension or control of their circumstances.[574] All other involved mortals, such as Creon or even Tiresias, also lack such influence, or are far too tangential to Oedipus' notorious deeds to be natural candidates for blame. Thus, the most reasonable option available is that Oedipus is referring only to the gods, who act from an ultimate position of authority and knowledge. Indeed, the fact that there is no explicit reference to the gods here increases the likelihood that it is them who are being referenced, as any other perpetrator could be named unproblematically. The effect of this "unnaming" of the perpetrator is paradoxical, as Oedipus expresses a burgeoning outrage, coming from a long untapped source of anger, that he is only now releasing.[575]

This interpretation is also thematically appropriate. A reference to the gods as the ultimate perpetrators of Oedipus' unwarranted suffering is in keeping with the presentation of divine-mortal relations so far. Antigone, in her earlier appeal to the Chorus, also addressed Oedipus' wrongdoings, with a direct reference to the gods' influence ("Please, for if you were to look, you would not find a mortal man who could escape if the gods were to lead him astray" - οὐ γὰρ ἴδοις ἂν ἀθρῶν βροτὸν ὅστις ἄν, εἰ θεὸς ἄγοι, ἐκφυγεῖν δύναιτο).[576] By noting her father's inability to control his fate, Antigone implicates the gods' role in Oedipus' downfall. Through this pessimistic observation, Antigone places her father's suffering within the expected dynamic mortals and gods are known to have, as he is shown to have suffered as many others

[572] Soph. *OC.* 273-274.
[573] Soph. *OC.* 982-983, 992-995.
[574] Allan 2013: 174.
[575] Ugolini 2019: 111.
[576] Soph. *OC.* 253.

can and have, from the ultimate control the gods wield to "lead" him (εἰ θεὸς ἄγοι).[577] Oedipus' outburst thus expresses his indignation and frustration from enduring maltreatment for his part in a scenario in which he was set up to fail, solely because the gods willed it so. Furthermore, this is not a dynamic that is unique to him but represents a general law for all mankind; Oedipus simply represents a living and present example for the extremes of the gods' cruelty and complete control. His anxious behaviour at the beginning of the play, his frailty and exhaustion from years of transitory living, is thus attributed to the gods who led him to err, and then left him to suffer the consequences, as Oedipus' aggressive and embittered testimony on how he has been personally impacted by the gods' manoeuvrings.

Oedipus maintains this anger and indignancy on the topic of his innocence throughout the play and continues to assert the gods as the true perpetrators when the subject is mentioned. Thus, he maintains a steady emotional baseline throughout the play, with his tenacity on this point indicating that he is not casually or momentarily blaming them out of convenience but is truly outraged that the gods have caused him to suffer so gravely. For example, later on in the play, Oedipus is arguing against Creon, who has arrived to convince him to return to Thebes, so the honour of his final resting place will transfer to Thebes instead of Athens.[578] After Creon has mentioned Oedipus' crimes as a tactic to pressure the King of Athens, Theseus (who has promised to support Oedipus) to let him take him back to Thebes, Oedipus explicitly, if briefly, reasserts this blame:

> εἴ τι θέσφατον πατρὶ χρησμοῖσιν ἱκνεῖθ᾽ ὥστε πρὸς παίδων θανεῖν, πῶς ἂν δικαίως τοῦτ᾽ ὀνειδίζοις ἐμοί, ὃς οὔτε βλάστας πω γενεθλίους πατρός, οὐ μητρὸς εἶχον, ἀλλ᾽ ἀγέννητος τότ᾽ ἦ.
>
> If, through the god-ordained oracle, a death comes to my father by his child, how could you honestly blame me, I who was not yet begotten by my father, or borne of my mother, but was still unbegotten?[579]

[577] Markanatos 2002: 35.
[578] Soph. *OC.* 735-736, 755-760.
[579] Soph. *OC.* 969.

Oedipus "restages" the events in Thebes, reassessed years after the fact, restating his belief in his innocence on account of the gods' control, which he mentions explicitly in his example. It is the "god-ordained oracle" (θέσφατον) that is the effector, as Oedipus emphasises the gods' words in leading to his actions. Oedipus mentions this in tandem with the fact that he was not born at the time of this oracle (ἀγέννητος), and asks how he could be "justly" (δικαίως) blamed in this scenario (πῶς ἂν δικαίως τοῦτ᾽ ὀνειδίζοις ἐμοί), his use of δικαίως emphasising that he has been unjustly blamed. By this account, Oedipus' parricide of Laius and incestuous marriage with Jocasta, followed by the years of persecution he has thus suffered, were simply the result of this domino-effect launched years before his birth. This observation, and Oedipus' frank and open discussion of his family's misfortune, argued tenaciously and repeatedly, conveys a sense of outrage. Oedipus' comments on the gods' oracle and his inability to alter it, being unborn, are framed in the form of a rhetorical question with an expectation of an answer confirming that he could not possibly be blamed fairly. His statement thus echoes Antigone's earlier theoretical philosophising and draws it explicitly into the immediately visible and applicable. Oedipus is a frail, abused old blind man, who has been harried for acts that he had no agency in committing, and so embodies the brow-beaten mortal suffering due to divine interference. As he persists throughout the play, Oedipus draws repeated attention to this imbalanced share of guilt as he seeks vindication for what he has suffered. Oedipus' obstinate demeanour therefore sets the terms for the ongoing reassessment of his past, as the length of time since his departure from Thebes is shown to have allowed him to put his actions and the events surrounding it in wider context. This includes a fresh understanding on how the gods were ultimately responsible for his supposed crimes, and that this was unfair to him.[580]

The observation that Oedipus was not truly culpable for the events that led to his ejection and exile from Thebes is met with agreement and sympathy from the Athenian cast members. Nevertheless, there remains a tension in their ability to accept him into their city because of the religious pollution he is believed to carry. The Chorus' statements during their first encounter with Oedipus encapsulate this conflict between the prescriptive and compliant attitudes mortals take in view of the gods' prerogative to enact harm, and their more instinctive and independent emotional response to an individual who invites pity because of their undeserved and brutal fates. When they learn Oedipus' identity, the Chorus

[580] Van Northwick 2012: 143.

immediately change their position on his right to stay, but not because they themselves are offended, or (as Oedipus has pointed out) because they are frightened or condemnatory of him. On the contrary, the Chorus explicitly disavow themselves from the decision, and instead cite their fear of repercussions from the gods:

> ἀλλ᾽ ἴσθι, τέκνον Οἰδίπου, σέ τ᾽ ἐξ ἴσου
>
> οἰκτίρομεν καὶ τόνδε συμφορᾶς χάριν
>
> τὰ δ᾽ ἐκ θεῶν τρέμοντες οὐ σθένοιμεν ἂν
>
> φωνεῖν πέρα τῶν πρὸς σὲ νῦν εἰρημένων.
>
> But know, child of Oedipus, we pity you and he equally together in kindness. But from the gods, we, trembling, would not have strength to utter more to you now.[581]

As the Chorus make clear, Oedipus and Antigone have their pity (οἰκτίρομεν), and they are regretful in ejecting Oedipus from the grove. Implicit is in their reactions is the suggestion that the Chorus would not necessarily choose this course of action were they acting independently but do so to obey divine law. The gods' laws are thus shown as being an externally applied measure on the behaviour of the Chorus. Rather than recognising and appreciating divine involvement as an integrated and logical part of their lives, the characters do not register the gods' laws as innate or correct on an emotional level. Therefore, the Chorus immediately throw off their previous promise to Oedipus as if repelled, not by disgust (as they make clear), but out of fear. The Chorus are vulnerable mortals who are in a particular position of relatability to Oedipus as they, like he, are old men. Nevertheless, in this moment, their independent feelings are second in importance to the gods' laws, making them fearful of becoming victim to the gods' whims themselves.

[581] Soph. *OC.* 253-256.

Indeed, as stated by Theseus later, there is a suggestion that the entire city may suffer if they allow Oedipus to stay in the grove of the Eumenides.[582]

The Chorus are thus incentivised to act as the gods' proxy by continuing Oedipus' punishment through the risk presented to their community if they do not. Their comments reflect the conflict between their common customs and their instincts. The liminal setting of the play, as Oedipus hovers outside the borders of Athens, and symbolically, outside the bounds of order, both civic and divine, presents a space that is exterior to the confines of a structured and predictable community.[583] His prolonged externality to these bounds allows Oedipus to describe his own personal relationship with the gods honestly and complain about their role in his difficult life. In comparison, the Chorus, still tied to the city and concerned for its welfare, feel compelled to err on the side of caution, even as they voice their intuition for pity for this apostate. Eventually, they are convinced that their instinctive and natural compassion for the transient Oedipus is in line with their gods' will, reflecting a synthesis between these two opposing forces that conveniently affirms their internal judgement of fairness with that of the gods'.[584] This eventual synthesis, however, could not have been achieved without Oedipus' bold refusal to accept blame. A blind beggar, meekly taking direction from the other characters as he navigates the physical environment and developing situation, Oedipus only stands firm when the Chorus express judgement against him for the events in Thebes. As the Chorus show that they are aware that ejecting Oedipus from the grove is cruel, and that they are only doing so to keep the gods happy, they share with Oedipus a recognition that the behaviour and laws of the gods are not always fair, regardless of their power. It is this natural instinct and sense of relatability that sees the Chorus' and Theseus' way clear to allow Oedipus to purify himself, and stay in the grove of the Eumenides.[585]

As the play progresses to its end, Oedipus' foreknowledge of his death, given to him by Apollo, enables him to exert a degree of control and agency of his fate.[586] Indeed, it was through the confidence given to him from this oracle that Oedipus is able to tenaciously argue his right to stay in the grove throughout the play.[587] Apollo's original instruction to

[582] Bernidaki-Aldous 1990: 164.
[583] Blundell 1989: 292.
[584] Blundell 1989: 302.
[585] Soph. *OC.* 422.
[586] Soph. *OC.* 86-90.
[587] Burian 1974: 410.

Oedipus indicates the gods are still involved and invested in his fate, as it is made clear that Oedipus is acting from the god's instruction willingly, particularly as he fights tenaciously to remain in the grove and meet his death in the land Apollo instructed him to. The thunderclap heard onstage, and the Messenger's report of a god's voice during Oedipus' death further confirms Oedipus' importance to the gods, as they help him pass away cleanly and peacefully.[588] Oedipus' death thus acts as a moment reconciliation between him and the gods, as they co-operate to bring profit to Athens at the place of his final burial. Van Northwick conceives of Oedipus as acting as a "vessel" for the gods' power, through the "gift of his dead body", as his life's purpose is made clear to him once he reaches the grove of the Eumenides.[589] The importance of Oedipus' role in this may explain how he is able to express outrage at the gods' cruelty towards him, as the gods' interest in Oedipus is not focused on him and his actions, but rather on his potential to bring prosperity to a city they favour.

Oedipus' long-standing antagonism is shown to have festered over the years since he left Thebes, with his sudden outpouring of bitterness suggesting that this problem of the gods' role has been left largely unaddressed until the events of the play. It is in the action of the drama, and particularly Oedipus' death, that leads to his eventual reconciliation with the gods. Nevertheless, there are indications that Oedipus' complaint with the gods is needed to be smoothed over, particularly through the identity of the different gods who play a role in Oedipus' exaltation to hero cult status. The importance of the grove of the Eumenides, and the chthonic goddess' affiliation with it, is made immediately clear when Oedipus declares his refusal to move once he is told who the grove is dedicated to ("Now may they graciously receive their suppliant: for I will never depart from my place in this land" - ἀλλ᾽ ἵλεῳ μὲν τὸν ἱκέτην δεξαίατο· ὡς οὐχ ἕδρας γῆς τῆσδ᾽ ἂν ἐξέλθοιμ᾽ ἔτι).[590] Oedipus' supplication to these goddess', and the veneration he shows them as he refers to them as θεῶν σεμνῶν, thus occurs alongside the character's descriptions of the unfair treatment he received from a godly source.[591] While Oedipus keeps his accusatory statements of the gods imprecise, with no one deity or family of deities, singled out or named, he does refer to the "god's oracle" (θέσφατον) as the cause of his misfortunes (discussed above).[592] The clear impression is that Apollo, the oracular god, is the individual deity against whom Oedipus makes his

[588] Soph. *OC.* 1500-1515, 1625-1627.
[589] Van Northwick 2015: 90-114.
[590] Soph. *OC.* 44-45.
[591] Soph. *OC.* 89-90.
[592] Soph. *OC.* 969.

accusations, as he specifies that it was this oracle that began the whole affair. However, as the Eumenides are specified as playing a significant role in his return to human community as a hero, it is notable that there is a distinction made in the play between the Olympian gods and the chthonic deities. As has been observed by Bierl, the location of the play, in the grove of the Eumenides, references Aeschylus' play of the same name, recalling the polarity between the chthonic goddesses and the Olympian gods, as Oedipus exploits the ritual prohibitions of the grove to join with the goddess' as a figure of chthonic power.[593] However, the present author disagrees with Bierl in the suggestion that this indicates that Oedipus was not acting under any guidance from Apollo, or the other Olympian deities, as Oedipus clearly indicates that he has been told of the grove of the Eumenides via Apollo.[594] When thunder and lightning occur onstage, Oedipus immediately attributes it to Zeus as a signal that the time for his death has arrived.[595] Thus, his benevolently managed death involves both the order of the Olympian gods and the Eumenides, with the Olympian gods' presence mitigated and diluted by the chthonic goddesses'.[596]

Oedipus' outburst, and his allusion to the gods as effecting the string of events that ruined him, offer an honest moment of emotional and logical assessment on an authority usually solely interacted with through ritual and deference. Oedipus' earlier focus on his σῶμα (his mortal, corporeal body) is not only a comment on his human limitation, but an allusion to his subjection to a higher, inhuman power, and the frail and temporary body he is trapped in. His eventual death frees him from his body, and so he gains a newly respected status through his death. Indeed, it is his impending death, and his knowledge of it that both demands and enables his honesty. His outbursts expurgate the character's outrage before his eventual reconciliation with the gods he receives in the grove of the Eumenides.[597] Directed by Apollo, this is the area where he is finally absolved and compensated for his ruin, and this display of emotion allows that eventual moment of conclusion to occur, the innate religiosity of the locale allowing as much of a face-to-face between mortal and god as is possible.[598]

[593] Bierl 2019: 172-175. See also Rodighiero 2011: 62-65.
[594] Bierl 2019: 173.
[595] Soph. *OC.* 1460-1461, 1514-1515.
[596] Kelly 2003: 81.
[597] Soph. *OC.* 45.
[598] Krummen 1993: 195.

5.2.2. The How and Why of Reconciling

Oedipus' vulnerable state and his emotional reaction when provoked by the Chorus leads directly into his complete rebuttal of any accusation of guilt, as he asserts his innocence through his inability to know the impact of his actions. In doing so, he implicitly blames the gods for the grave crimes he is accused. For the rest of the drama, Oedipus takes charge of his narrative past, asserts his innocence constantly, and conducts his interactions throughout the play accordingly.[599]

However, even as he openly names the gods repeatedly as the causers of the parricide and incest he committed and remains indignant at the blame he has received for these crimes throughout, Oedipus also evinces a desire to remain conventionally adherent to the gods. This causes conflicts in the tone to his statements, as hedges his accusations with qualifications, suggesting possible reasons for the gods' actions, and observations on the importance of piety. These statements balance out his statements against the gods, suggesting a need to temper his claims, with the gods presented as much responsible for his salvation as his misfortune.[600] Throughout this balancing act, there is a notable tension, as Oedipus is caught between ejecting blame for himself, and placing it onto the gods, whilst being left without any further explanation or reasoning as to why the gods targeted him, and still needing to rely on them for his salvation. However, through his problematising of this question, Oedipus opens the process through which he eventually reaffirms piety to the gods as the recommended practice for mortals, before he himself becomes a figure of reverence.

Oedipus' willing step towards reconciling with the gods occurs after his initial confrontation with the Chorus over the matter of his guilt. At this point in the drama, Creon has arrived on the stage, and in his heated exchange with Oedipus, derides him for his crimes with his parents.[601] As with the Chorus' mention of this thorny subject, Oedipus reacts with an emphatic defence. This time, however, he openly accuses the gods by name for their role, and tempers his complaint with a caveat:

[599] Markantonatos 2002: 36.
[600] Gagné 2013: 386-387.
[601] Soph. *OC.* 939-960.

ὅστις φόνους μοι καὶ γάμους καὶ συμφορὰς
τοῦ σοῦ διῆκας στόματος, ἃς ἐγὼ τάλας
ἤνεγκον ἄκων· θεοῖς γὰρ ἦν οὕτω φίλον,
τάχ᾽ ἄν τι μηνίουσιν εἰς γένος πάλαι.

What bloodshed and incest and calamity there is to me, as has been driven away by your mouth, while I bore this unwillingly! For this way was the gods' desire. Perhaps they took against (my) race long ago.[602]

This statement, uttered in response when Creon mentions his "crimes", follows the same pattern as his previous outbursts, as Oedipus responds heatedly to the suggestion that he was the wrongdoer. His force of feeling is evident as he repeats, explicitly, the incest and parricide he committed, but poses them as events he has suffered rather than perpetrated, stating again his unwillingness (ἄκων) as the reason for his innocence. Instead, it was a god's "desire" (φίλον) that led him to commit his crimes, as Oedipus again brings the gods into the frame as instigators, explicitly mentioning their role in effecting the events before his birth, and so mitigating the blame for these crimes.[603] However, as Oedipus places all responsibility onto the gods, absolving himself of wrongdoing, he is left with the awkward question of why, if there was not anything he had done to effect his fate, did the gods cause it to happen.

The suggestion of the gods' anger at his ancestor added to the end of the outburst represents Oedipus' attempts to logically understand, under the weight of onerous theological and existential implications, the reasons for his gods' enmity. Tragedy's facility as a recreation of a shared mythological past allowed the playwright to include logical and humanising details to the usual mechanics of these well-trodden stories, and in *Oedipus at Colonus,* such a character is depicted as expressing an awareness of his own life from a freshly liminal perspective, at the end of his life, and at the edge of a new city. Oedipus is thus suitably placed to comment on the events of his life, both from a new vantage point, but also with a pathos and emotionality that is coherent to his composite character as he is presented throughout the play. Thus, a central problem to the Oedipus myth, namely the question of

[602] Soph. *OC.* 962-965.
[603] Kelly 2009: 57.

his guilt and his supposedly corrupted essence, is interrogated brazenly by the character himself. The myth is thus deconstructed onstage, speaking directly to the inconsistencies and internal injustices that exist within it as a burning, all-important issue for the character in the play, rather than as an abstract narrative quirk or philosophical concept to be ruminated on impassively. Oedipus' response is imperfect, impromptu, and emotional, but his centrality to the narrative, and to the history he is looking back on, adds an intimacy and urgency his analysis.[604]

Oedipus' life is revealed and contextualised to the Athenian audience as a deliberate exercise of exploration into their city's history, reminding the audience of the city's proud history and reputation for assisting suppliants. By contrast, Oedipus is denied that same clarity, and is left to speculate on the mysterious past that yawns behind him, both ineffable and inescapable.[605] His statement thus interacts with his myth with an awareness and self-referentiality that briefly addresses the key contradictions within it. The urgency and outrage Oedipus expresses are congruent with his personal loss and hardship, as his dramatic embodiment allowed a realistic human interface to extreme mythical events.[606] By acknowledging the possibility of the gods' hatred for his ancestor, Oedipus is able to accept the impossibility of the past being corrected, as he sculpts a new vision on the gods that replaces his previous. As Gagné states, he utilises his religious power as someone stained by the gods, as well as his social leverage as an innocent to carve out a new beneficial relationship with them.[607]

Thus, the play leads Oedipus to reconnect with the gods, whose presence he has been cut off from as part of his exile from the city state. Oedipus repeats his belief of the gods' guidance on his destructive actions once more ("And so I was led into evil, led there by the gods." - τοιαῦτα μέντοι καὐτὸς εἰσέβην κακά, θεῶν ἀγόντων) but follows this statement with praise for Athens for their correct religious practices and piety.[608] The tendency to express plain dislike of the gods whilst also emphasising the importance of piety, allows appreciation of the difficulty innate in criticising the gods openly. In Oedipus' case, the heavy emphasis on his lengthy suffering, combined with the character's sustained protestation of innocence adds

[604] Rado 1961: 235.
[605] Reineke 2014: 124.
[606] Vernant & Vidal-Naquet 1988: 10.
[607] Gagné 2013: 340.
[608] Soph. *OC.* 997-1004.

weight to his complaints against the gods, as well as a keen pathos to his recommendation of piety.

In the establishment of a hero cult dedicated to him, Oedipus' ending bears more than a passing resemblance to Ajax's in his own play, also written by Sophocles (see section 3.1.2, above). In both examples, a mortal who has behaved aberrantly under the misdirection of a deity expresses plain dislike and rejection of the gods as a result, but still manages, upon their death, to achieve some level of reconciliation, despite not retracting their previous criticisms. While Oedipus' death is not onstage, the thunderclaps used to signal his impending demise enable the audience to witness his end by proxy.[609] Both Ajax's and Oedipus' civically important deaths are achieved through Zeus's assistance, and result in the establishment of their cults.[610] However, Ajax's utterance against the gods is more a display of his unchanged character, which in turn leads to his suicide as a refusal to concede. In contrast, Oedipus' uncertainty as to why the gods have targeted him, and his lack of caution in expressing his outrage at his abusers, god and mortal alike, is particularly transformative for the character, and is vital in his reclaiming of space as a cult figure. His supplication and alliance with Theseus are presented as central to the establishment of his cult, and it is his initial refusal kowtow to the Chorus on the matter of his supposed guilt that enabled him to do so.[611]

Oedipus' outbursts against the gods occur at key moments where he has a choice in directions. Is he to be ejected from the grove, or will he be allowed to stay? Will he be encouraged to return to Thebes, or will he resist Creon? In each case, Oedipus chooses to stand his ground, speaking from unilateral position which is bolstered through his emotional momentum and personal understanding of his own circumstances. As already outlined above, the play highlights Oedipus' stark change, as the man who shuffles onto the stage, asking meekly for help and relief from strangers then takes the initiative to leave the stage to go to his death.[612] His character is thus in a state of constant evolution throughout, which is reflected in the reframing of his physical presentation, from meekly sat to refusing to move under duress. Oedipus becomes argumentative and raises points in his favour against his attackers, evidently doing so with a considerable degree of indignation and force that

[609] Soph. *OC.* 1472-1473.
[610] Van Nortwick 2015: 95-96.
[611] Anderson 2008: 127-129.
[612] Soph. *OC.* 1542-1543.

speaks to the bitterness that has predictably developed during his years of exile. Oedipus' inclusion into a community who will then honour him is caused in part by his ability to explain clearly and unflinchingly how he is not responsible for his alleged crimes, and how he has been caused such misfortune. As such, his reconciliation is not despite his criticisms against the gods, but in fact is enabled by the honesty of his portrayal, as reflected in his dialogue, actions and the emotional force behind his presentation. Likewise, Oedipus' special power, and his connection to the grove of the Eumenides, grants him the advantage to review and confront his past head on, mounting a stringent defence that may not have been possible before.[613] The criticisms Oedipus offers on the gods thus have a material impact, as opposed to most other examples in this dissertation. As well as demonstrating and laying bare his frustrations, Oedipus is able to convince those around him that he has been unfairly treated, and that this unfair treatment needs redress.

[613] Van Northwick 2012: 144.

5.3. Euripides' *Ion*

5.3.1. Introduction

The last play to be examined by this dissertation is, by a considerable degree, the most prodigious in terms of open hostility directed at the gods. Euripides' *Ion,* staged sometime between 421 and 412, contains a multitude of aggressive and emotionally driven statements that are directed against the god Apollo. Hermes opens with a discursive prologue detailing the background that has led to the events of the play, and which has caused overwrought antagonism directed towards the gods. Several years prior, Apollo had raped Creusa, a princess of Athens, leading to her birthing and abandoning their son, the titular Ion, in secrecy. Unbeknownst to her, Ion, now a youth, was rescued by Apollo and raised as the orphaned attendant of the Delphic shrine. In the action that follows, the pair unknowingly encounter one another, when Creusa visits the oracle to enquire about the reasons for her and Xuthus, her current husband',s childlessness, and to also discover the fate of the baby she abandoned as a young girl. The first exchange between Ion and Creusa centralises Creusa's trauma from Apollo's rape, even as she defers from stating the reasons for her antipathy towards the god outright. This is shown to ignite uncertainty and criticism directed at the god from Ion himself, who reconsiders the relationship between the gods, mortals and morality in light of Creusa's testimony. Following on from this, Xuthus, Creusa's husband, is told by the oracle that Ion is in fact his son and decides to take him to Athens as his heir. Upon learning this, during her second scene, Creusa openly and passionately accuses Apollo of neglecting her and her lost child in the form of an extensive monody, in which she finally speaks openly on the god's rape to her sympathetic entourage. To take revenge on the god, and because she believes Ion to be an interloper in the Athenian royal family, she and her Old Servant plot to poison the young man during a feast in his honour. When their plot is discovered before Ion can drink the poison, he pursues Creusa with an intent to kill her in revenge, before being stopped by the priestess of Delphi at the last minute, who reveals tokens left with Ion as a baby, proving him to be the son that Creusa lost. Ion, however, is left dissatisfied with Apollo's actions, and moves to enter the temple to confront the god directly. However, he is interrupted by Athena, who enters the stage to explain that Ion is fated to found the colonies of Ionia for Athens. With mother and son reunited and promised a future

of prosperity that will benefit Athens as a nation, the play ends on an upbeat note, where Creusa declares that despite her earlier vitriol against Apollo, he has, after all, managed things correctly.

Throughout this complicated plot, Creusa's emotion is a key tool to its telling, as the long-standing impact of Apollo's assault and the pressure of holding silence reaches a climax that leads to her impassioned and expansive denouncement of the god, and her attempted assassination of Ion. Furthermore, her repeated criticism of Apollo, empowered through her mounting outrage, resonates with that of Ion during their first encounter, leading him to ruminate further on the problems of the gods' poor moral behaviour. Ion's insight is significant, as he transitions from being a devoted adherent to Apollo, lovingly cleaning the shrine, to seriously questioning the god's righteousness within a short period of time, with the power and severity of Creusa's accusations shown to have a profound impact on him.[614] The aggression and seriousness with which these accusations are prosecuted are such that suggestions of direct action against the gods, in response to their wrongdoing, occur at three separate moments in the drama, with the seriousness of the suggestions varying in each case. It is notable, however, that despite the extremity of their complaints and the lengths to which the mortal characters are willing to go to seek redress, neither Creusa nor Ion suffer death or destruction. Instead, by the play's conclusion, both characters are reconciled with each other and the gods, and prepare to leave the sanctuary with promise of a successful future. As the two characters discuss their dissatisfaction in honouring and worshipping unjust gods, the play utilises impassioned and extensive emotional displays, highlighting the damage done to their relationship with the god by the deity's apparently bad behaviour. Through this, the process by which that relationship is repaired allows the conventional relationships between mortals and gods to resume, and in the finale of *Ion,* to pave the way for future prosperity for the mortals.[615]

To investigate this particularly complicated play, and its wealth of inimical statements against the gods, the following discussion is categorised into three sections. The first will discuss Creusa's first and second scenes onstage, in which her emotionalised reactions are shown to gain in momentum until she reveals the details of the god's misbehaviour in a climactic outpouring. The second section will discuss Creusa's expressed plan to pollute the

[614] Willetts 1973: 205.
[615] Vernant & Vidal-Naquet 1990: 83; Futo Kennedy 2009: 89-94.

shrine with her blood, and how this extreme moment of impiety is followed by complete reconciliation with the god. Finally, as Ion's status changes from a loyal acolyte of Apollo's to gravely questioning the god's righteousness, the final section of this chapter will review how Ion's reactions are contrasted with Creusa's, and how his discursive and thoughtful reflections on the gods' nature leads to a new perspective on the dynamic between god and mortal. Through this discussion, it will be demonstrated that Creusa and Ion's demands for accountability against godly misbehaviour is ultimately proven to achieve a footing in which their relationship with the gods appears to be conducted with more open and fair terms, as the emotionalised complaints are shown to empower the characters to confront the deity who has disappointed them so severely.

5.3.2 Creusa and Apollo – Holding and Breaking Silence

From Creusa's first emergence onstage to her final statement, her relationship with Apollo is a crucial motivator in her actions. This is apparent by her repeated allusion and retelling of the god's assault, constantly reminding the audience of its significance to Creusa's demeanour and chosen courses of action.[616] In particular, her powerful emotions stemming from her efforts to conceal the rape is highlighted in two connected scenes. The first is an opening conversation with Ion in which she releases incomplete details of Apollo's attack in piecemeal fashion, adding an air of mystery as she expresses strong feelings against the god without elucidating why. The second is an extensive monody explicitly delineating her grievance against Apollo, delivered after Creusa discovers that her husband has been given Ion as a son by the god, and so leaving her apparently childless and usurped within her own household.[617] The first scene sets up a series of questions that are thus answered in her later speech, which is delivered as Creusa's emotional register reaches a particular peak of despair that causes her to crack and unleash a torrent of plainly expressed hatred of the god.

In Dunn's analysis on the use of affective suspense in *Ion,* the first scene following Hermes' prologue, in which Ion and Creusa meet and sympathise with each other (without realising they are related), is particularly emphasised in terms of how it builds up a later pay off for their emotional reunion at the end of the play.[618] However, as well as the sentimentality of a

[616] Murnaghan 2006: 109.
[617] Eur: *Ion:* 859-922.
[618] Dunn 2021: 169.

long-lost mother and son reunion, there is also a pronounced negative suspense established in this scene, in terms of Creusa's brief but repeated aggression towards the god Apollo. Before Creusa arrives on the stage, Ion has been conscientiously tending the shrine's portals, while singing praise to Apollo, and so exhibiting only conventional adherence to the god's worship.[619] Creusa's striking entrance immediately introduces pained emotion and antipathy, as she visibly weeps while approaching from the side:[620]

Ἴων

ἀλλ᾽ ἐξέπληξάς μ᾽, ὄμμα συγκλῄσασα σὸν

δακρύοις θ᾽ ὑγράνασ᾽ εὐγενῆ παρηίδα,

ὡς εἶδες ἁγνὰ Λοξίου χρηστήρια.

τί ποτε μερίμνης ἐς τόδ᾽ ἦλθες, ὦ γύναι;

ὃ πάντες ἄλλοι γύαλα λεύσσοντες θεοῦ

χαίρουσιν, ἐνταῦθ᾽ ὄμμα σὸν δακρυρροεῖ;

Κρέουσα

ὦ ξένε, τὸ μὲν σὸν οὐκ ἀπαιδεύτως ἔχει

ἐς θαύματ᾽ ἐλθεῖν δακρύων ἐμῶν πέρι:

ἐγὼ δ᾽ ἰδοῦσα τούσδ᾽ Ἀπόλλωνος δόμους

μνήμην παλαιὰν ἀνεμετρησάμην τινά:

οἴκοι δὲ τὸν νοῦν ἔσχον ἐνθάδ᾽ οὖσά που.

ὦ τλήμονες γυναῖκες· ὦ τολμήματα

θεῶν. τί δῆτα; ποῖ δίκην ἀνοίσομεν,

[619] Eur: *Ion:* 82-183.
[620] Halleran 1985: 103-104.

εἰ τῶν κρατούντων ἀδικίαις ὀλούμεθα;

Ion

But you have made me astonished, your eyes are shut, and tears are dampening your noble face, when you are looking at the sacred oracle of Apollo! What thought has come to you, oh lady? All others are glad to see the hollow of the god, but here it leaves you weeping?

Creusa

Oh stranger, it is not foolish of you to have questions about my tears. Having seen this home of Apollo, I took stock of an old memory; my mind was at home, while I was here. Oh, suffering women. The shamelessness of the gods. What now? Where shall we bear when we are being destroyed by the unjust actions of those who are much stronger?[621]

Creusa's initial silence enables Ion to draw the audience's attention to her presence, and so impute emotion onto her presentation. As he describes her weeping, her appearance and gestures are thus encoded with this value, and the importance of this detail of Creusa's emotional display is communicated to the audience.[622] His observation that all other (ὃ πάντες ἄλλοι) visitors delight at the Sanctuary, suggests the unusualness of Creusa's disposition, as she responds irregularly to the sacred environment. She is thus shown entirely in isolation, with the only value given to her appearance being her emotional display and its peculiarity to its context. The impact of her emotions thus increases through the lack of their ready explanation, with their incongruity suggesting that they are improper so close to the shrine.[623] Before she even speaks, therefore, Creusa's immediate repulsion to the Sanctuary is displayed, as she exhibits her anguish at being in the presence of the religious centre.

[621] Eur: *Ion :* 241-254.
[622] McClure 2020: 229. Wyles 2011: 28.
[623] Wiles 1997: 80.

Creusa's response to Ion connects her current emotional status to an explicitly negative perspective on the gods and the shrine, the sight of which has caused her distress (ἰδοῦσα τούσδ᾽ Ἀπόλλωνος δόμους). Creusa refers to her internal experience of "a certain memory" (μνήμην…τινά) that has caused her distress, in her first and purposely vague allusion to Apollo's assault. As she describes her "mind being at home, while I was here" (οἴκοι δὲ τὸν νοῦν ἔσχον ἐνθάδ᾽ οὖσά που), she indicates how the memory of the assault has displaced her from the present moment, referring to her mind as being closer to a past event than where she currently physically stands. Thus, Creusa is signalling her inability to move on from her trauma and indicates that the shrine itself is relevant to her visible anguish.[624] Her emotionality is further expressed through her address to "suffering women" (ὦ τλήμονες γυναῖκες) in direct juxtaposition with an address to "shameless gods" (ὦ τολμήματα θεῶν). Her mention of suffering women clearly refers to herself but in imprecise terms, the use of the plural masking her individual identity, and also suggesting she is speaking generally about the gods' abuse of women. Due to her repeated self-referentiality, as she describes her "memory" (μνήμην), "mind" (νοῦν) and then this pluralised description of women suffering in connection to shameless gods, she ensures her statements thus only make sense to her alone. The effect of their disjointed and unforthcoming nature also speaks to the magnitude of her internal strife, as she tries and fails to suppress emotions that occur in reaction to the shrine of Apollo, their strength making them all the more difficult to conceal.[625] As well as the expression of her personal distress, her use of τολμήματα (shameless), use in reference to the gods' behaviour, implies the breaking of boundaries, a reference to the social and legal rules Apollo himself has transgressed in his treatment of mortals, but which she alone has experienced.[626] Her description of the "injustices of the stronger" (κρατούντων ἀδικίαις) adds to her emphatic but imprecise accusations

Creusa's unwillingness to convey precise information indicates the sensitivity of what she is referring to, and the power of her emotions as she persistently fails to conceal her instinctive reactions to the shrine. Thus, her appearance demonstrates a clear tension between her desire to speak, and her need to remain silent. This tension is further built upon as her conversation with Ion continues, as she peppers her speech with short, emphatic barbs in response to Ion's mentions of Apollo, merely hinting at the reasons for her animosity while displaying it

[624] Weiss 2008: 41-43.
[625] McClure 2020: 227-229; Weiss 2008: 41-43.
[626] Hoffer 1996: 306.

forcefully. When Ion asks about the great honour of seeing the Long Rocks, a location sacred to Apollo in Athens (and where the god carried out his assault on Creusa), she retorts:

τιμᾶ; τί τιμᾶ: ὡς μήποτ᾽ ὤφελόν σφ᾽ ἰδεῖν.

Honour? What honour? Would that I had never seen them.[627]

The repetition of the term "τιμᾶ" (honour) in the form of questions conveys a bitter scepticism, as though Creusa finds it incredible to associate the god and any attributes of his worship with such an admirable quality as "honour". Creusa's subsequent comment ("would that I had never seen them" - ὡς μήποτ᾽ ὤφελόν σφ᾽ ἰδεῖν) indicates that she has encountered this location, as Ion has enquired, but that she has been left with a significantly negative impression. Creusa, through her mocking response to Ion's anodyne question, rebuffs any suggestion of honour to Apollo while persistently dishonouring him, as she makes sure to counter any respect shown to the god with a statement that insults him. Again, Creusa only utters comments that she herself understands, referring to Apollo's rape only by alluding to a reprehensible detail about a location affiliated with the god. When Ion inquires further, she again answers cryptically, stating "I know of something shameful in that cave" (ξύνοιδ᾽ ἄντροισιν αἰσχύνην τινά.).[628] This comment emphasises this specific location, and quality of the act that took place there, with Creusa claiming a secret, meaningful knowledge that she pointedly does not share. Creusa's disgust is thus contained within herself, but barely so, as she cannot stop making her fury known to the perplexed Ion.[629]

As the conversation with Ion continues, Creusa takes two further jabs at Apollo that emphasise her disdain for the god, whilst also indicating a particular familiarity with him that grants her confidence in her denunciations. When prompted by Ion to speak more about her childlessness with her husband Xuthus, Creusa responds:

[627] Eur: *Ion:* 286.
[628] Eur: *Ion:* 288
[629] Martin 2018: 213.

ὁ Φοῖβος οἶδε τὴν ἐμὴν ἀπαιδίαν.

Phoebus knows my childlessness.[630]

Again, this comment merely alludes her previous involvement with the god, without any clarification of how Apollo is relevant to her childlessness. However, as Apollo is described as knowing what has caused Creusa's undesired barrenness, there is an implication that he is in some way responsible. The recurrence of her cryptic speech further suggests that she must speak about her relationship with Apollo cautiously, as she openly blames Apollo, but defers from stating why.

Creusa makes one more statement that could be considered an insult against the god, albeit via indirect implication. When Ion tells her that he is a servant of Apollo's (Λοξίου κεκλήμεθα), Creusa responds immediately with a statement that pities him:[631]

ἡμεῖς σ᾽ ἄρ᾽ αὖθις, ὦ ξέν᾽, ἀντοικτίρομεν.

We pity you again in return, oh stranger,[632]

Creusa appears to offer straightforward sympathy to Ion, which he interprets as due to his orphanhood.[633] However, in context with her previous statements, Creusa's pity can be linked to the mention of Apollo, as she expresses sadness that Ion is bound to such a disreputable, unpleasant god. This matches the pattern of statement since her arrival onstage, as she constantly devalues areas of the god's worship and wider religious associations. Ion's stewardship is pitiable because Apollo is an undesirable god. The Long Rocks are winced at, because of an unspecified and dishonourable occurrence there. And Creusa's childlessness is to be blamed on Apollo.

[630] Eur. *Ion.* 306.
[631] Eur. *Ion.* 311.
[632] Eur. *Ion.* 312.
[633] Eur. *Ion.* 313.

The conversation between Ion and Creusa otherwise flows naturally, with each interlocuter asking questions interestedly, with a sympathy and ease that foretells their currently unknown mother-son relationship.[634] Creusa's outbursts only occur at points in the discourse where details of Apollo and his worship, or where the sensitive topic of her childlessness, arise. Thus, Creusa is consistent in her emotions and the stimuli that provokes them, making clear her deep-seated resentment of Apollo due to a personal event that she has suffered, and her connected belief that he is not worthy of worship. Creusa's battery of pointed statements thus diminishes the standing of Apollo's worship through her complete disdain. The site of Delphi and its conventional reputation of grandness and sacredness is discredited by Creusa's brazen dislike and loudly stated perspective, as her repeated statements of Apollo's disreputableness and lack of honour devalues these religious icons.[635]

Before she leaves the stage, Creusa, pretending that she is asking on behalf of an absent friend, learns from Ion that an answer from Apollo on the whereabouts of her lost child will not be forthcoming. This leads to her uttering a brief outburst in which she states explicitly much of which she had been alluding to in her previous conversation, whilst maintaining a degree of separation:

ὦ Φοῖβε, κἀκεῖ κἀνθάδ᾽ οὐ δίκαιος εἶ

ἐς τὴν ἀποῦσαν, ἧς πάρεισιν οἱ λόγοι:

ὃς οὔτ᾽ ἔσωσας τὸν σὸν ὃν σῶσαί σ᾽ ἐχρῆν,

οὔθ᾽ ἱστορούσῃ μητρὶ μάντις ὢν ἐρεῖς,

ὡς, εἰ μὲν οὐκέτ᾽ ἔστιν, ὀγκωθῇ τάφῳ,

εἰ δ᾽ ἔστιν …

ἀλλ᾽ ἐᾶν χρὴ τάδ᾽, εἰ πρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ

κωλυόμεσθα μὴ μαθεῖν ἃ βούλομαι.

[634] Conacher 1959: 21.
[635] Willetts 1973: 206.

> Oh Phoebus, then and here you are not just to her, who is not here, though her words are. And you did not come forward to save the child when you were needed. And as a prophet, you had no words for his mother what she asks you, so if he is no longer, she could complete the funeral rites, and if he is living…. but now it is necessary to drop it here, if I am stopped from learning what I want by the god.[636]

These lines are plain in their accusation, giving a clear account of what the god has done to provoke Creusa, albeit displaced to a non-existent "friend" who takes on Creusa's identity. Her open address to the god, as Creusa addresses the target of her abhorrence directly, heightens the energy and emotionality of the speech, as Creusa confronts Apollo and demands him to address the injustice she has suffered. Creusa was relying on Apollo to save their child, convinced that his godly power would make sure his son would be kept safe; however, this hope has been met with profound disappointment. Similarly, Apollo's famed ability as a prophet (μάντις) is of no use to her, as she is still not privy to an audience with the god. Creusa's explicit reasons for her disenchantment and devaluing of the god thus emerges logically from her observations and is exemplified with her current dilemma. Despite being a deity with the ability of foresight, and despite his past with Creusa, which should oblige her kind treatment from Apollo, he remains unforthcoming. The multiple injustices of this situation feeds into Creusa's outburst, as she describes the situation plainly as "not just" (οὐ δίκαιος), as the multiple minor and incongruous barbs she made earlier give way to an explicit and expansive description of why Apollo is unworthy of respect. Throughout the first scene, there is no indication as to Creusa's movement or posture, and so it is natural to assume she delivered all her lines stood opposite Ion, near where she entered on the parados.[637] Thus, her conceptual opposition to the god and his worship is indicated through her positioning opposite Ion, as she faces down any mention of respect to the god with a matching statement dishonouring him. Creusa's position outside the shrine is also significant, as it signifies her exclusion from the god's care. Her words are aggrieved,

[636] Eur. *Ion.* 384-391.
[637] Halleran 1985: 103.

indignant and aggressive, further indicating that Creusa is delivering her lines standing, not cowering or collapsing.

Through the arrangement of this scene, Creusa's animosity toward Apollo is paced, which demonstrates how her anger has built up as she concealed the rape and its effects. The longevity of her antipathy towards Apollo, and the effort Creusa has expended in suppressing it, thus intensifies its impact, as her anger has turned to unyielding hatred of the god, which is not tempered by the passage of the years.[638] In her introduction to the audience, Creusa is only able to refer to the assault through allusions that she alone can understand. Throughout, she refers to her internal experiences of memory and thought, indicating her self-contained reckoning of the situation, which she has been unable to discuss openly with any other individual. Her silence and speaking are thus thematised throughout the drama, as McClure demonstrates, with her aggression towards Apollo at the centre of both her inability to speak, and her desperate desire to do so.[639] This is apparent also when Xuthus, Creusa's husband, appears on the stage. Creusa urges Ion not to share the details of what they were just discussing ("be quiet before this man regarding what we were talking about" - τοὺς λελεγμένους λόγους σίγα πρὸς ἄνδρα), before she tactfully dismisses herself and exits the stage, placing more distance between herself and the god.[640] Creusa thus evinces a clear awareness of the sensitivity of what she is discussing, both in terms of the impieties she is uttering, and the socially precarious position she is in.[641] In Creusa's first scene, therefore, the play thus exploits the tension of Creusa's pressing need to conceal her emotions, as her outrage is shown to bubble over repeatedly. Try as she might, Creusa cannot withhold her true feelings on the god.[642]

Creusa reappears onstage after Ion has been "gifted" to Xuthus as an adopted son by Apollo's oracle, leading to speculation by the Old Tutor that Ion is in fact Xuthus' illegitimate child, who he is trying to introduce to his house via illegitimate means.[643] This incident instigates Creusa's full disclosure of Apollo's assault via a monody, as her imperfectly-maintained silence is shown to break completely in light of this new emotional aggravation. The content

[638] Konstan 2006: 48.
[639] McClure 2020: 227-228.
[640] Wolff 1965: 184. Eur. *Ion.* 394-395.
[641] Eur. *Ion.* 392-400.
[642] Larue 1963: 128.
[643] Eur. *Ion.* 808-831.

of this monody refers back to her earlier conversation with Ion and her unexplained knowledge pertaining to Apollo's holy site at the Long Rocks, her trauma at seeing the shrine at Delphi, and Apollo's relevancy to her childlessness. Thus, these two scenes are linked through Creusa's reasons for hating Apollo, and her ongoing emotional momentum, providing continuity and exposition throughout.[644] The monody itself is a hymnic parody which maintains a beauty of language and imagery that recalls a standard prayer of praise.[645] Creusa's physical presentation immediately before and during her anti-Apolline speech can be gleaned, as in her first speech, from details about her entrance. Creusa enters the stage with her Old Servant, whom she supports as they move together through the steep landscape of Delphi ("I tend to you" - σ'…. ἀντικηδεύω, "support my limbs" - συνεκπονοῦσα κῶλον).[646] The characters thus make physical contact with each other, possibly moving side by side as they cling to one other for support. As they address each other, Creusa refers to the Old Servant as "father" (πατέρ), and he calls her "daughter" (θύγατερ), thus demonstrating that Creusa is accompanied by a familial contingent, as she expresses affective connection to the character to whom she will confess her long-held truth.[647] The Chorus of Creusa's Athenian maidens are also present, and it is they who break the upsetting news to Creusa about Xuthus' adoption of Ion, which they present as troubling news to Creusa, and so anticipating her reaction sympathetically.[648] The Chorus even goes so far as to express a wish to share death with Creusa, should her circumstances lead to that.[649]

The performance of these relationships, and the emphasised intimacy within them, helps elicit Creusa's revelations about Apollo's assault and her hidden pregnancy, by providing a supporting onstage audience as she experiences a fresh difficulty that leads to a new pressure to speak out about Apollo's crimes.[650] For the monody itself, there is little information as to her stance or placement onstage. Nevertheless, because of the vocal demands on the actor in singing a prolonged speech, it is likely she delivers it standing, and in the centre of the performance area. This would ensure the full dramatic potency and would enable the actor's voice to reach as far as possible. The problematisation of Apollo and the concept of divinely-

[644] McClure 2020: 231.
[645] Taplin 2003: 119.
[646] Eur. *Ion.* 725-740.
[647] Eur. *Ion.* 733-735.
[648] Eur. *Ion.* 788-835.
[649] Eur. *Ion.* 857-858.
[650] Murnaghan 2006: 110. McClure 2020: 231.

upheld justice with gods behaving so callously is thus carried and articulated through the passionate and attention-grabbing display of the character, and the scenario she describes in detail in a subverted formal prayer.

McClure notes that Creusa's monody is delivered primarily in lyric anapaests, a metre that conveys agitation, and so relays her turmoil as her ability to withhold her emotions finally fails.[651] Creusa explicitly connects her tried and failed attempt to hold silent on Apollo's rape to her distress:

> ὦ ψυχά, πῶς σιγάσω;
>
> πῶς δὲ σκοτίας ἀναφήνω
>
> εὐνάς, αἰδοῦς δ᾽ ἀπολειφθῶ;
>
> τί γὰρ ἐμπόδιον κώλυμ᾽ ἔτι μοι;
>
> πρὸς τίν᾽ ἀγῶνας τιθέμεσθ᾽ ἀρετῆς;
>
> οὐ πόσις ἡμῶν προδότης γέγονεν,
>
> στέρομαι δ᾽ οἴκων, στέρομαι παίδων,
>
> φροῦδαι δ᾽ ἐλπίδες….

> O my soul, how will I stay silent? And how could I have brought light to that darkened bed, and quit that shame? For what fetters still grip me? Who is my equal in terms of "goodness"? Has my husband not betrayed me, without a home, without children, hope has flown from me…[652]

[651] McClure 2020: Ibid.
[652] Eur. *Ion.* 859-869.

Her opening of ὦ ψυχά ("oh my soul") refers directly to her internal self, and so indicates Creusa's battling internal state.[653] It is her psyche, the part of her life that is directed and understood via her thought processes, that is centred in the current proceedings. As she goes on to express her inner confoundment, she calls into question how she be able to maintain her previous "silence" (πῶς σιγάσω), pairing this with another question, namely how will she be able to "bring light to that darkened bed, and quit that shame" (πῶς δὲ σκοτίας ἀναφήνω εὐνάς).[654] Her reference to a "darkened bed" (σκοτίας….εὐνάς) points to both the secrecy and personal burden Creusa has endured, referring directly to the rape itself via the place where it occurred (i.e. the bed), the "darkened" quality of it suggesting a secretive, reprehensible experience. In the coda of this question, Creusa adds "how do…I quit the shame?" (πῶς δὲ… αἰδοῦς δ᾽ ἀπολειφθῶ). At this moment in the play, and in her earlier appearance onstage, Creusa has clearly struggled with overwhelming emotions that she does not feel able to express openly, which both prohibit and urge her to tell her story. That all her comments are targeting a major deity naturally grants a need for repression, but her mention of "shame" (αἰδοῦς) suggests the painful internal ambivalence she experiences over her assault.[655] The term αἰδος, as discussed by Saxonhouse, is used in Greek literature (and in Herodotus in particular) to refer to a woman's modesty, as well as a sense of respect for the laws and customs of one's community.[656] Creusa's mention of αἰδος here is thus revealing in the motivations for her long silence, and for the reasons of her breaking it, both in terms of the impropriety of the topic, and the social judgement she fears.[657] The measures she previously took to hide the affair, such as her refusal to speak in front of Xuthus, and (as revealed in her conversation with the Old Servant) her concealment of her pregnancy through the ruse of an "illness", are now abandoned as her hopelessness sets in at the prospect of being eclipsed in her social role by an interloper.[658]

Creusa pairs her desire to "quit shame" with an observation of the lack of virtue in her social peers, and the subsequent lack of admirable traits for her to match in her own behaviour;

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[653] Gill (1996: 43-44) discusses this term with a definition that comes from Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics:* 6.1,1139b 4-5, namely an internal sense of choice, and the concept of making a choice, as leading to the wanted momentum that causes action. See also Padel 1992: 27-36.
[654] Larue 1963 129-130.
[655] Scafuro (1990: 141) observes that shame is a common expression in other tragic examples of rape, such as Io in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* (642).
[656] Saxonhouse 2005: 56-59.
[657] Zeitlin 1996: 80.
[658] Eur. *Ion.* 394, 944. Loraux 2020: 181.

“what fetters grip me? Who is my equal in “goodness”? (τί γὰρ ἐμπόδιον κώλυμ᾽ ἔτι μοι; πρὸς τίν᾽ ἀγῶνας τιθέμεσθ᾽ ἀρετῆς;). In particular, Xuthus’ lack of ἀρετή, in accepting an adopted child unrelated to his wife as his heir, is especially relevant, as his failure to behave conscientiously towards Creusa both reduces her feelings of shame in comparison to his treachery and alienates her from the marital security which she had previously sought to protect (“is it not my husband who betrays me” - οὐ πόσις ἡμῶν προδότης γέγονεν). By Creusa’s reckoning, she has been ejected from her household and stripped of her opportunity to have children (στέρομαι δ᾽ οἴκων, στέρομαι παίδων), due to Apollo’s malicious behaviour. Her previous shame and fear of social censure have therefore been obviated with the news of her apparent usurpation from her house. Now, as Creusa says, “hope has flown” (φροῦδαι δ᾽ ἐλπίδες), she is effusive and detailed in her outrage.

Prominent among Creusa’s complaints is that she has had to suffer in silence in the years since Apollo’s assault. Creusa adamantly refuses to continue repressing her story, with an accusatory and punitive tone in her expression:

σιγῶσα γάμους,

σιγῶσα τόκους πολυκλαύτους;

ἀλλ᾽ οὐ τὸ Διὸς πολύαστρον ἕδος

καὶ τὴν ἐπ᾽ ἐμοῖς σκοπέλοισι θεὰν

λίμνης τ᾽ ἐνύδρου Τριτωνιάδος

πότνιαν ἀκτάν,

οὐκέτι κρύψω λέχος, ὡς στέρνων

ἀπονησαμένη ῥᾴων ἔσομαι.

στάζουσι κόραι δακρύοισιν ἐμαί,

ψυχὴ δ᾽ ἀλγεῖ κακοβουλευθεῖσ᾽

ἔκ τ᾽ ἀνθρώπων ἔκ τ᾽ ἀθανάτων,

οὓς ἀποδείξω

λέκτρων προδότας ἀχαρίστους.

> I was silent on the union; I was silent on the grieved over birth. But, by the seat of Zeus among the stars, by the goddess of the mound, by the water-filled pools of Triton, no longer will I hide that bed, as I unload from my chest that crushing weight. Tears are dropping from my weeping eyes, my soul is in pain, having been taken advantage of by men and by gods, who I will prove to be unwanted deceivers of beds.[659]

As Creusa makes clear, maintaining this silence on the matter, in and of itself, has been traumatic. Her repetition of the verb "σιγῶσα" ("I was silent") twice in quick succession, as she recounts the "union" (γάμους) and then a "grieved birth" (τόκους πολυκλαύτους), makes an explicit connection between the rape and her pressured silence. The gravity of these events is described as incurring significant cost to Creusa's wellbeing. The act of breaking this silence is "unloading a crushing weight from my chest" (ὡς στέρνων ἀπονησαμένη ῥᾴων ἔσομαι), a metaphor that calls into mind the psychological impact these events have had on Creusa, as a literal, suffocating weight she has had to carry in secret. She continues to describe her personal suffering as it visibly appears before the audience and the other characters, describing her eyes weeping (στάζουσι κόραι δακρύοισιν ἐμαί), offering a "close-up" of the tears falling. The word used for "eyes" is κόραι, which more usually means "maidens" or "girls". This term thus possesses a double meaning. As Creusa describes her eyes as though they themselves are girls, weeping bitterly over being overpowered in a sexual encounter, underscoring the nature of the crime as one committed against a passive and demure girl. Her vulnerability as a young woman, terrified into silence through these crimes, is highlighted in her fateful decision to speak out, as her reference to these new revelations indicate something shocking and sullying about Apollo. Having previously questioned her ability to reveal what happened to her, Creusa has now built the emotional momentum and fortitude to do so, declaring indignantly that she will "no longer hide that bed" (οὐκέτι κρύψω λέχος). Thus, she again emphasises the "scene of the crime," which had featured prominently in her earlier discussion with Ion, answering his questions on why she

[659] Eur. *Ion.* 868-880.

so hated the Long Rocks retroactively. By providing these details now, having conspicuously avoided answering them earlier, Creusa reveals that she will no longer protect the god from the damage to his standing in revealing the rape, exposing the dishonour to which she had alluded.[660]

As Larue has demonstrated, Creusa's monody works both as a parody of a hymn, and as a conventional hymn, in which a mortal may mention past instances where a god has helped them to convince them to give their help again. Here, Creusa recalls the opposite, namely a time when the god betrayed her.[661] This monody's heightened register of intensity, and its purported intention to reach the god, as a hymn would, leads to the question of what Creusa's intention is when this anti-hymn reaches Apollo. Hymns, as well as drawing good fortune to mortals, are intended to bolster the god they are sung to. By implication, in Creusa's song, there is a clear desire to drag the god down.[662] Her song, as McClure has observed, is a palinode, or a song of blame, that pairs with the form of a hymn to target the god directly.[663] In this, she repeatedly refers to beds in an obvious allusion to both sexual intercourse and birth, focusing on the gendered nature of the god's crime against her.[664] Creusa was targeted for Apollo's unwanted sexual attention in the same physically enclosed space in which she later gave birth to his illegitimate offspring. Furthermore, the pressures of maintaining secrecy on the pregnancy is shown to have alienated Creusa from those who may have provided support, as the Old Servants states.[665] Crucially, it is in this speech that she first explicitly describes her sexual encounter with Apollo itself in negative and undesirable terms. She refers to her "soul", or internal self, for the second time, as she describes the psychic pain from "being taken advantage of by men and the gods" (ψυχὴ δ᾽ ἀλγεῖ κακοβουλευθεῖσ᾽ ἔκ τ᾽ ἀνθρώπων ἔκ τ᾽ ἀθανάτων), who, in-keeping with the sexual nature of this crime, "are unwanted collaborators of beds" (λέκτρων προδότας ἀχαρίστους). Creusa's presentation and dialogue draws attention entirely to the internal suffering that she has undergone, with emphasis that this suffering comes from the emotional and mental toil of remaining silent following the sexual assault and the resulting pregnancy. As she acknowledges her husband's apparent betrayal of her, as well as Apollo's (κακοβουλευθεῖσ᾽

[660] Eur: *Ion:* 286.
[661] Larue 1963: 131.
[662] Furley 2008: 127-131.
[663] McClure 2020: 233.
[664] Wassermann 1940: 590.
[665] Eur. *Ion.* 944.

ἔκ τ᾽ ἀνθρώπων ἔκ τ᾽ ἀθανάτων), she becomes accuser, and openly threatens to expose those who have behaved so poorly (ἀποδείξω). This stated aim is in keeping with her language of bringing light to a darkened, hidden event, and her refusal to remain silent.

As she continues, Creusa details her accusations against Apollo. In doing so, Creusa uses imagery to describe the experience of the god's descent upon her, using heightened sensory and narrative detail:

> ὦ τᾶς ἐπταφθόγγου μέλπων
>
> κιθάρας ἐνοπάν, ἅτ᾽ ἀγραύλοις
>
> κέρασιν ἐν ἀψύχοις ἀχεῖ
>
> μουσᾶν ὕμνους εὐαχήτους,
>
> σοὶ μομφάν, ὦ Λατοῦς παῖ,
>
> πρὸς τάνδ᾽ αὐγὰν αὐδάσω.
>
> Oh you, who sings with the voice of the seven-toned lyre, who sounded hymns from the loud, soulless horns from the field, it is on you, son of Leto, I will call blame, before the light of the Sun.[666]

These lines bring in another feature of Apolline association, namely music and hymns, in immediate and direct context with Creusa's darkening imagery of the cave and the bed.[667] The instruments she refers to, the lyre and the horn, are contrasted in sound; while the lyre has a multiplicity of tones, the horns' resonance is described as "loud" (εὐαχήτους) and "from the field" (ἀγραύλοις), recalling the use of fields in such erotic encounters, whilst also placing this assault on the outskirts of civic life.[668] Thus, the description conveys the quality of an

[666] Eur. *Ion.* 881-886.
[667] Graf 2009: 32.
[668] Deacy 2013: 399.

overwhelming sound that carries an open, wild area, which she describes as ἀψύχοις (translated above as "soulless"). Creusa has already used ψυχὴ twice in reference to herself and her experiences, particularly in terms of the internal trauma and ambivalence she experiences. The term ψυχὴ thus holds a relevancy to the internal life of an individual, with the tumult of opposing thoughts and feelings animating them to respond unpredictably and with feeling.[669] Referring to these loud horns as ἀψύχοις, following on from her constant reference to her shifting internal life, works to draw a direct contrast between her and the instrument, and by extension, the god who attacked her, as she reflects on the lack of thought or feeling present in the god's callous actions towards her. The silent, suffering Creusa, with her ψυχὴ in trouble, is contrasted with the loud, unfeeling horns that signal Apollo's presence.

As Creusa moves on to her explicit accusation against Apollo, she uses imagery of lightness (αὐγὰν αὐδάσω) that contrasts with her previous descriptions of darkness; what has previously been hidden is now being brought to light, with Apollo's connection to the burning Sun holding a particular relevance in her descriptions.[670] Vitally, she specifically blames (μομφάν) Apollo (ὦ Λατοῦς παῖ - literally "Leto's child"), again pairing the form and tropes of a classic hymn with the content of a palinode.[671] She is thus moving on from her general threat to expose a multitude of men and gods mistreating women (οὓς ἀποδείξω), to exposing the specifics of her own assault.[672] Creusa is thus making a direct and unadulterated accusation, naming Apollo as a wrongdoer, and calls for public acknowledgement on the injustice of his actions as part of a wider pattern which she also recognises and addresses.

Creusa goes on to describe her encounter with Apollo in detail, using sensory language and evocative imagery to describe the experience:

ἦλθές μοι χρυσῷ χαίταν

μαρμαίρων, εὖτ᾽ ἐς κόλπους

[669] Klempe 2020: 26-27.
[670] Bilić 2020: 709-712.
[671] McClure 2020: 233.
[672] Eur. *Ion.* 879.

κρόκεα πέταλα φάρεσιν ἔδρεπον,

ἀνθίζειν χρυσανταυγῆ:

λευκοῖς δ᾽ ἐμφὺς καρποῖσιν

χειρῶν εἰς ἄντρου κοίτας

κραυγὰν Ὦ μᾶτέρ μ᾽ αὐδῶσαν

θεὸς ὁμευνέτας

ἆγες ἀναιδείᾳ

Κύπριδι χάριν πράσσων.

You came to me, with dazzling, golden, flowing hair, when I had collected crocuses into the folds of my robe, dressed with flowers reflecting the golden light. With my white wrists in your hands' grip, you pulled me into the cave where was our bed, as I cried for my mother, as you, godly lover, brazenly indulged in Cypris' gifts.[673]

Paradoxically to the content of the ode, and in contrast to her repeated descriptions the dark bed to which Apollo brought her, Creusa's description of the encounter itself is flooded with descriptions of light and aesthetically appealing imagery. Apollo's hair is golden (χρυσῷ), flowing (χαίταν) and dazzling (μαρμαίρω), indicating a gleaming shine. Similarly, Creusa's crocuses, resting in the drapes of her robe where she gathered them, are described as reflecting the Sun (ἐς κόλπους κρόκεα πέταλα φάρεσιν ἔδρεπον). Her retrospective horror and bitterness notwithstanding, the supernatural, sunlit beauty of the scene is a reminder of the celestial nature of her attacker, and the majesty endemic to his appearance and manner. Nevertheless, this language of light and brilliance also contains Creusa's shock and trauma regarding the encounter. While Apollo's description calls to mind his undoubted beauty, there are also suggestions of the vividness of his appearance. The description of Creusa's

[673] Eur. *Ion.* 886-896.

flowers as "reflecting the Sun" calls to mind this bright lightness during the encounter, which is both blinding and startlingly beautiful. Her white wrists (λευκοῖς… καρποῖσιν) add another shade of lightness to the scene's colour palette, and speak to her youth at the time, as does the fact that she was caught while picking flowers.[674] Her cries for her mother and the description of Apollo's sudden descent and his grasp on her wrist also suggest her youth and vulnerability, as the encounter is described in detail from Creusa's literal perspective. Creusa beheld Apollo's shining and sudden arrival in stunned astonishment, while her wrists, clasped in the god's firmed grip, was the only part of her own body visible to her from her physical standpoint. Thus, the scene pairs her physical and emotional memory of the event with copious, multisensory detail, with the overwhelming array of sights, sounds and physical sensation of Apollo's grasp evoked from Creusa's memory.

The emphasis on light indicates this assault occurred during the day, before Creusa was pulled into the dark "cave bed" (ἄντρου κοίτας). On the same note, the way Apollo is described as "indulging in Cypris' extravagances" points to his manner of committing a transgression; he does it "ἀναιδείᾳ" - "shamelessly", or "brazenly", as it is translated above. That Creusa describes Apollo's actions thusly, combining the alpha privative with αἰδος, contrasts Apollo's blithe committing of the assault with Creusa's emphasised shame. By doing so, Creusa emphasises the lack of guilt or culpability Apollo experiences in committing an act that in fact warrants condemnation, using her own example as a measure of the god's poor behaviour. Instead, the god shows that he is unafraid of the consequences of descending so swiftly on a young noble girl, before indulging in the "gift of Aphrodite", despite the obvious transgression and harm it entails.[675] Apollo's godliness is thus being set in terms that do not pertain to his majesty or worthiness for being worshipped, as Ion has demonstrated in his prayers at the beginning of the play, but instead with his irresponsible behaviour and shamelessness centre stage.

Creusa continues her detailed polemic against Apollo, moving on from the assault itself to her unsupported and concealed pregnancy:

τίκτω δ᾽ ἁ δύστανός σοι

[674] Martin 2018: 374.
[675] Wolff 1965: 178.

κοῦρον, τὸν φρίκᾳ ματρὸς

εἰς εὐνὰν βάλλω τὰν σάν,

ἵνα με λέχεσι μελέαν μελέοις

ἐζεύξω τὰν δύστανον.

οἴμοι μοι: καὶ νῦν ἔρρει

πτανοῖς ἁρπασθεὶς θοίνα

παῖς μοι — καὶ σός, τλάμων·

σὺ δὲ κιθάρᾳ κλάζεις

παιᾶνας μέλπων.

> For you, I brought into the world a boy, pitifully, and in trembling fear of my mother, I cast him to that bed, that same bed where you had seized me, the unhappy, weak sufferer. Alas, and now, he has gone, snatched, and feasted on by birds on the wing, my child – and vile one, yours too. But you sing on the cithara, screeching your paeans.[676]

Again, Creusa's recollection rests on her emotional reaction and suffering, as she refers to her primary reason for hiding her pregnancy; because of her fear of what her mother would say. Creusa uses the term (φρίκᾳ), which describes a "trembling", which has been discussed above as a metonym for fear in Greek literature (see 1.2.3.).[677] Creusa remembers how boxed in and helpless she was, having been overpowered by a god, and then abandoned by him as she was forced to face the realities of being a young girl who is, as would be seen by her parents, inexplicably pregnant. Her repeated description of herself as "weak", or "useless" (μελέαν μελέοις) emphasises the alienation she experienced while she underwent this

[676] Eur: *Ion:* 897-906.
[677] Cairns 2013: 86-89.

overwhelming hardship at such a young age, explaining why she was forced to expose the baby, and how Apollo is ultimately responsible due to her contrasted helplessness. Using the visceral and upsetting imagery of the baby being ripped apart by birds (ἔρρει πτανοῖς ἁρπασθεὶς θοίνα), Creusa adds pathos by reemphasising her maternal connection, referring to the baby as "my child" (παῖς μοι), pairing the image of herself as a helpless young girl with that of a grieving mother. Immediately this expression of the depth of her horror and loss at contemplating what happened to her baby, and her comment that it was *her* baby that was lost, Creusa then turns to Apollo, uttering simply but impactfully "καὶ σός, τλάμων" ("and yours too, vile one.") The use of τλάμων ("vile one") delivers a stark value judgement to Apollo, who Creusa addresses directly as she insults him (σός), increasing the impression of her boldness as she insults him openly. This open address with an insult as an epithet to the god signals how completely Apollo has fallen away from the expectations set for him as a god.[678] Creusa then goes on to describe Apollo singing and playing the lyre (σὺ δὲ κιθάρᾳ…μέλπων), portraying the disparity between her current distressed state and his blitheness, as Creusa reflects on his crime against her years after the fact, sympathising with her adolescent self's vulnerability and helplessness, while regarding Apollo with open anger and accusation. The monody's similarity to a standard hymn or paean is most prevalent at this point in the speech, as Creusa makes specific mention of such hymns being sung with instruments associated with Apollo's musical associations. But as Creusa's personal demeanour and response to Apollo shapes the form of her monody, this "hymn" gains a twisted and risible quality; it is Apollo himself singing the paean, and he is doing so unmelodically (κλάζεις παιᾶνας).

When regarding the reasons for Creusa's extreme antipathy towards Apollo, while the loss of the baby is clearly a key reason for outrage, the intercourse between herself and the god also bears examination. In particular, the question of whether it is cogent to describe the encounter as "sexual assault" or "rape", particularly when regarding the weight and significance of these modern terms, need to be approached with due care and sensitivity, to avoid unduly reading modern concepts that that would not have had the same perspectives or definitions to the original audience.[679] Particularly because of the beauty of Creusa's monody, the question of whether Creusa truly suffered a rape, and not a seduction, has been

[678] Sluiter 2008: 11-13.
[679] Burnett 1962: 95. Lefkowitz 1993: 27.

considered from multiple angles by different scholars. Burnett and Lefkowitz point to Creusa's language in describing the encounter, suggesting that it is not described in terms that would have been improper or objectionable to the original audience. In the extract discussed immediately above, Creusa describes what occurred between her and Apollo with the verb "ἐζεύξω" ("to yoke"), a common term for marriage, and in another extract discussed earlier, Creusa also describes the event as a γάμους, that is, a "union", or "marriage." Creusa's account of Apollo taking her by her wrists mimics the imagery of such a gesture taken from marriage ceremonies, with the verb ἐμφὺς ("clinging") indicating an affectionate clasping of the wrist by the groom as he leads the bride to consummate the marriage.[680] While Creusa herself describes the sexual encounter with Apollo as "unwilling" (ἄκουσα) in a later line, the question of how the original audience would have perceived the sexual intercourse, and whether it was legitimate or illegitimate, is important when considering Creusa's tirade of accusation against the god.[681] Linguistic features of her testimony do suggest an air of propriety in their encounter, and the bucolic nature gives a backdrop that legitimises the scene through the regular eroticisation of such encounters in the wider mythic corpus.[682] Indeed, the known trope of a god happening upon a young girl and copulating with her to produce famed and exceptional mortal children is so regular as to be casually treated, most classically encapsulated by the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, in which Kore is kidnapped by Hades while collecting flowers.[683] This line of thinking does not take into account Creusa's encounter with Apollo as the cause for her extreme ire towards the god, but instead posits the loss of the baby as the primary, and possibly only, reason for her anger at the god.[684]

However, despite this splendour of language, Creusa's demeanour, and her emphasised details of the event, emphasise a sense of sexual misconduct that demands recognition and correction on a systematic level; as Creusa states, she is not only criticising Apollo, but all "traitors of women's beds".[685] While Kore, in the Homeric Hymn, called for her father, Zeus, to help her, Creusa calls for her mother, which illuminates the incapability of mere human parents to respond and stop a god's assault on their daughter.[686] Additionally, Creusa's illicit

[680] McClure 2020: 234.
[681] Eur. *Ion.* 941.
[682] Deacy 2013: 399.
[683] Homeric Hymn to Demeter. 2.6– 7. See also Bremer 1975: 268– 74.
[684] Griffiths 2017: 255.
[685] Eur. *Ion.* 880.
[686] Hoffer 1996: 301.

pregnancy, which she hid from her parents, speaks to the illegitimacy of Apollo's sex with her, as her pregnancy and baby could not be accepted into her family unit as a recognised quantity; she had no supportive framework for the act against her or its consequences. The experience of her pregnancy and labour are referred to with language that highlight the physical pain and discomfort she felt throughout it, further indicating the bodily invasion that she experienced, as she masked her pregnancy with a "secret illness" (νόσον κρυφαίαν),[687] as divulged by the Old Servant, and then gave birth in "secret pain" (κρύφιον ὠδῖν᾽), as she recalls to Ion in their recognition scene.[688] The term γάμους, despite its general use for "marriage" discussed above, can also mean lascivious or illicit intercourse, as demonstrated by Demosthenes' use of it to deride Aeschines' mother as a performer of "daylight nuptials" (i.e. prostitution).[689] The use of this term can thus suggest the absolute opposite of acceptable sexual intercourse, to highlight the impropriety of such an act through its paradoxical use. Similarly, in her stichomythic exchange with the Old Servant after her speech, Creusa describes what occurred first, euphemistically, as a "terrible struggle" (ἀγῶνα δεινὸν), and then secondly as "Phoebus laid with me unwillingly in a terrible union" (Φοίβῳ ξυνῆψ᾽ ἄκουσα δύστηνον γάμον).[690] She thus emphasises the negativity and sexual immorality of Apollo, casting blame on his side while she remains the victim: as Rabinowitz observes, Creusa would not present the encounter with such an emphasis on her blamelessness had it been a seduction, rather than a forceful rape.[691] Furthermore, as her one-line responses tend to contain more frank descriptions of what occurred, it is only in her extensive speech that she uses terms that might suggest marriage. The conventionally beautiful language and imagery of the monody, when contrasted with Creusa's copious descriptions of the fear and shame she suffered in light of Apollo's attack, emphasises the overwhelming sensory experience of the encounter, with the beauty of Apollo's appearance drawing a striking clash with the roughness of his act.[692] As such, we are encouraged to consider the true brutality of an almighty, supernaturally-powered god descending on a teenage girl, as the adornments of language and imagery familiar to such typical story outlines found in myth are subverted through the victim's perspective.

[687] Omitowoju 1997: 11.
[688] Eur. *Ion.* 944, 1487.
[689] Demosthenes 18.129. Eur. *Ion.* 868.
[690] Eur. *Ion.* 941.
[691] Rabinowitz 1993: 197.
[692] McClure 2020: 234.

Creusa's familiarity with the god is based on a corporeal physicality, which is not reflected in the high-minded pieties held by Ion at Apollo's Sanctuary at Delphi. Creusa encountered the god intimately, in an enclosed, subterranean space, and not the open air, sunlight-flooded shrine at Delphi. Furthermore, Creusa's youth, unpreparedness and innocence are repeatedly emphasised qualities that further illuminates the injustice of Apollo's assault. This is especially highlighted at a climactic moment close to the play's end, when the priestess presents to the warring Ion and Creusa a keepsake left behind with the baby Ion when he was left at the Delphi sanctuary:

> Κρέουσα
>
> σκέψασθ᾽: ὃ παῖς ποτ᾽ οὖσ᾽ ὕφασμ᾽ ὕφην᾽ ἐγὼ —
>
> Ἴων
>
> ποῖόν τι; πολλὰ παρθένων ὑφάσματα.
>
> Κρέουσα
>
> οὐ τέλεον, οἷον δ᾽ ἐκδίδαγμα κερκίδος.
>
> Creusa
>
> Look: As a child, I wove this embroidery!
>
> Ion
>
> Of what kind? Girls weave many things.
>
> Creusa
>
> Not finished, an apprentice piece from the weaver's shuttle.[693]

This exchange, which was presumably delivered with props that matched Creusa's description, provides material proof of Creusa's innocence, by evidencing the tender age in which she underwent her ordeal. Creusa was an ordinary girl, clumsily undergoing her

[693] Eur. *Ion.* 1417-1419.

education in the traditional subjects for an Athenian girl. The piece she left with Ion is frozen in time, catching Creusa at a delicate stage of her development; her later description of it as "the careless work of a girl at her loom" (παρθένια …κερκίδος ἐμᾶς πλάνους) shows that Creusa is retrospectively aware of her own immaturity and innocence when she created it.[694] That it was a practise piece left unfinished further suggests the rupture in her life that occurred from the attack, as her careless, carefree childhood came to a savage end, uncomplete and unhealed. Present day Creusa is also frozen in time. Her tears when she first saw Apollo's shrine, and her admission that her mind is elsewhere, also suggest that Creusa is psychologically trapped in the cave where she was raped, isolated from maternal comfort, and where she later had no other choice but to abandon her baby.

As Creusa comes to the end of her defamatory speech against Apollo, she maintains its intensity, repeating the visceral imagery of the baby being snatched:

ὠή,

τὸν Λατοῦς……

……

εἰς οὗς αὐδὰν καρύξω

Ἰὼ κακὸς εὐνάτωρ,

ὃς τῷ μὲν ἐμῷ νυμφεύτᾳ

χάριν οὐ προλαβὼν

παῖδ᾽ εἰς οἴκους οἰκίζεις·

ὁ δ᾽ ἐμὸς γενέτας καὶ σός γ᾽, ἀμαθής,

οἰωνοῖς ἔρρει συλαθείς,

σπάργανα ματέρος ἐξαλλάξας.

[694] Eur. *Ion.* 1491.

> Oh, child of Leto …….. I will tell you myself: o evil lover, who did not receive any gift from my husband, you have founded in his house a child, while my offspring, and yours, anonymously, is snatched and ripped apart by birds of prey, removing the baby clothes his mother gave him.[695]

Again, Creusa points out the imbalance in Apollo's actions, awarding the undeserving Xuthus while abandoning Creusa and her baby. That this is the second time in short order that she has used this imagery of the baby being snatched underlines her sense of horror, as she repeatedly visualises the scene. The gruesomeness reinforces the atrocity of Apollo's behaviour, and again highlights the god's parentage of the child, (ἐμὸς γενέτας καὶ σός γ'), thereby reasserting his neglect. Creusa's reference to the child as "ἀμαθής" (translated above as "anonymously" but could also be "unknown" or "forgotten") adds further weight to Apollo's perceived negligence and the tragedy of the forgotten infant, dying so brutally because of his mother's inability to care for him, and his father's apparent apathy. As a final impactful statement, Creusa creates a tender image imposed on with gore, as she imagines the small clothes she gave her baby ripped away by the birds as they consume the infant.

As Creusa reaches the conclusion of her speech, she decisively stresses the injustice of Apollo's behaviour towards her:

> μισεῖ σ᾽ ἁ Δᾶλος καὶ δάφνας
>
> ἔρνεα φοίνικα παρ᾽ ἁβροκόμαν,
>
> ἔνθα λοχεύματα σέμν᾽ ἐλοχεύσατο
>
> Λατὼ Δίοισί σε καρποῖς
>
> Delos hates you, and so do the shoots of young laurel beside its lush foliage, there revered Leto gave birth to you, of Zeus.

[695] Eur. *Ion.* 907-918.

Creusa's use of the term μισεῖ ("hates") is significant. It is a final, emphatic declaration of personal feeling that guides Creusa's statements and actions. As before, with her calls for Apollo's actions towards her to be brought to light, Creusa demonstrates a desire for others to see and recognise his wrongdoing. Therefore, it is not her own hatred she describes, but Delos, a place of high significance to Apollo and his myth, being as it is the place where his mother, Leto, gave birth to him. That Leto is mentioned here, as well as earlier in the same speech (ὠή Λατοῦς), recalls the maternal perspective from which Creusa is speaking.[696] Apollo has betrayed the mother of his child, and so it is his mother who Creusa thinks of, intensifying the judgement she calls upon him. Similarly, the mention of laurel (δάφνας) brings another motif of Apollo's worship into the fold, further adorning the picture with authentic detail of the god's myth.[697] Laurel has been described as populating the shrine, and potentially there are physical reminders of this Apolline motif onstage. However, as Creusa speaks of this tree hating the god, she also raises associations of Apollo's myth that parallel her own, by recalling the story of Apollo's attempted rape of Daphne.[698] Thus, she is undermining this item's religiosity by sullying its association with Apollo with by reference to yet another woman who suffered sexual aggression from Apollo. This creates the impression that Apollo's actions with Creusa is part of a wider pattern of his sexually rapacious behaviour towards women, building on Creusa's allusion to multiple women suffering from the gods' poor behaviour.

Finally, Creusa recalls the precise moment, location and setting of Apollo's own birth, mobilising these details against Apollo to further discredit him.[699] Apollo's apparent cruelty towards Creusa, and his callousness in regard to his son, who's brutal and forgotten death has been described a few moments prior, are juxtaposed next to the idealistic imagery of his own sanctified and noted birth, cheapening its majesty through Creusa's comparisons. As with her earlier statements, Creusa dismantles the god's worship with her critiques, including his sacred places and his mythical background, as she envisions these motifs of his divinity rejecting him themselves. Thus, Creusa openly holds a long-standing personal grudge

[696] Eur. *Ion.* 908.
[697] Wiles 1997: 204.
[698] Eur. *Ion.* 76; Martin 2018: 147; Daphne was a nymph turned into a laurel tree after Apollo pursued her unsuccessfully (see Graf 2009: 105-106.)
[699] Graf 2009: 27-29.

against the god, and as she sings, her open fury reaches a momentum that will profoundly shape the rest of the drama.[700]

5.3.3. Destroying or Saving the Shrine

Creusa's speech renders her outrage at Apollo explicit, delivered with multiple invocations to the god and his mother to create a twisted reversal of a hymnic structure.[701] This exceptionally impious speech, in which Creusa purposefully degrades several motifs and features of Apollo's worship, serves to bring the play to a violent climax as Creusa decides to take physical action in response to the god's crimes. As Creusa begins to consider her options for vengeance, propelled by this powerful sense of outrage, the characters surrounding her on the stage, namely the Old Servant and the Chorus of Athenian maidens, are in full support of her position. Tellingly, when she and the Old Servant are discussing her options in acting on her righteous anger, it is not she, but he who suggests action that would directly target the god; "burn down the revered shrine of Loxias" (πίμπρη τὰ σεμνὰ Λοξίου χρηστήρια).[702] As can be seen, her passionate campaign against Apollo has convinced those around her, as the Old Servant allies immediately with her against all her perceived enemies, even the godly ones. To burn down the shrine is to reject completely the structures of power and worship in place, and takes an offensive and a scorched earth tactic that fully renders the committer as anathema to the wider social and religious community, as they act to assault a key communal centre of worship, and thus prevent others' ability to observe the god's ritual. Immediately after her monody, despite her searing remarks about Apollo, Creusa rejects his suggestion out of self-preservation ("I am afraid to; I have already had my fill of calamity" – δέδοικα, καὶ νῦν πημάτων ἄδην ἔχω).[703]

However, towards the end of the play, when her ploy to poison Ion is discovered and she is cornered in the shrine, Creusa surrenders this caution as her death appears inevitable, and moves to commit an act of desecration to the shrine as Ion readies to slaughter her. The plot

[700] Konstan 2006: 193.
[701] Larue 1963: 131.
[702] Eur. *Ion.* 974.
[703] Eur. *Ion.* 975.

to kill Ion, and the formulation of it, has occurred offstage, potentially to keep the audience's sympathies for Creusa intact by leaving her most taboo act out of sight.[704] The action is dramatically brought back to the stage when Creusa reappears, hurrying to sit on the altar to claim sanctuary from an enraged Ion.[705] The introduction to the scene, with the character hurrying back onstage, brings an element of surprise and urgency to the play's climax, and as she physically interacts with the altar, it brings a heightened level of integration between the character and the stage setting.[706] She encourages Ion to slaughter her there, to "harm the one who has harmed me" (λυπήσομέν τιν᾽, ὧν λελυπήμεσθ᾽ ὕπο.)[707] It is not entirely clear who Creusa is referring to in this statement. However, given the Old Servant's former suggestion, to destroy the shrine, and her own aversion and strength of feeling regarding Apollo and his places of worship, it is possible to take Creusa's words as an intended assault on the god himself. Being slaughtered on his altar would not only pollute Ion, but also the god's sanctum itself, sullying it with human blood. Such an act is not so different from the Old Servant's original suggestion to burn the sanctuary down. Instead, however, Creusa is not only physically assaulting the shrine, but sullying it with the ritual pollution of human sacrifice. Such an attempt to pollute the shrine by deliberately having oneself killed on it, in a purposeful display of contempt to the god, signifies the intense crisis at hand. Creusa's manipulation of this aspect of religious convention, therefore, indicates her detachment from these conventions of worship. The effect of her repeated devaluation is thus demonstrated, as she is now inured enough against the god to exploit these taboos to her own ends.[708]

Upon the revelation and reunion of Ion as her son, however, Creusa's burning outrage for Apollo and her sense of grievance is swiftly substituted for overwhelming gratitude to Apollo for acting conscientiously:

> αἰνῶ Φοῖβον οὐκ αἰνοῦσα πρίν,
>
> οὕνεχ᾽ οὗ ποτ᾽ ἠμέλησε παιδὸς ἀποδίδωσί μοι.

[704] Dunn 2021: 178.
[705] Martin (2018: 33) suggests the altar was placed in the orchestra area of the theatre, meaning the action would closer to the audience, feasibly increasing the dramatic impact of the scene.
[706] Halleran 1985: 36-37.
[707] Eur. *Ion.* 1311.
[708] Foley 1985: 40.

αἵδε δ᾽ εὐωποὶ πύλαι μοι καὶ θεοῦ χρηστήρια,

δυσμενῆ πάροιθεν ὄντα.

I praise Phoebus, though I did not praise before, as he returns to me the child he neglected, this gate and oracle I look on with friendship, having been hostile before.[709]

Compared with her earlier signals of hostility at the sight of the shrine (δυσμενῆ), Creusa now looks at its features with "friendliness" (εὐωποὶ). However, Creusa does not show remorse for her earlier shocking statements, but rather as someone who is satisfied that a former complaint has been rectified. As with Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus,* the matter of the god's misbehaviour is not entirely dismissed, but rather there is a recognition that a reconciliation is needed for a prosperous future; Ion will go on to found Ionia, and his descendants will benefit from his divine paternity and favour, just as Oedipus will be granted a hero cult at Athens.[710] Creusa's previous accusations have not proven groundless, despite some scholarly claims.[711] She still adheres to her earlier accusations, as indicated by her description of Apollo as being "once neglectful of (his) child" (ποτ᾽ ἠμέλησε παιδὸς). She has only been mollified by the return of her child, giving her an appreciation that this is an encounter that has yielded something worthwhile. In short, her outrage has been defused and disincentivised.

Creusa's change of heart may be startling, and the extreme positivity of the ending does bring its credibility under scrutiny.[712] However, she does not fully reverse her previous position. Apollo has undoubtedly been presented in unfavourable and dubious terms, and his behaviour has been chastised by multiple mortals, several of whom, namely Creusa and her entourage, have entertained the possibility of damaging his worship in revenge. Creusa had in fact declared that she would not be revising her judgement of Apollo earlier, before she

[709] Eur. *Ion.* 1609-1613.
[710] Eur. *Ion.* 1571.
[711] Wolff 1965: 180.
[712] Martin 2018: 7.

leaves the stage at the end of her first scene, when she declared that she would never fully embrace or revise her feelings for him, but still recognise his godhood:

> Λοξίας δ᾽ ἐὰν θέλῃ
>
> νῦν ἀλλὰ τὰς πρὶν ἀναλαβεῖν ἁμαρτίας,
>
> ἅπας μὲν οὐ γένοιτ᾽ ἂν εἰς ἡμᾶς φίλος,
>
> ὅσον δὲ χρήζει — θεὸς γάρ ἐστι — δέξομαι.
>
> If Loxias is willing to repair his previous faults, even then he would not become dear to me, but as a giver of prophecies, since he is a god, I will accept that.[713]

Creusa has thus expressed a clear ambivalence toward Apollo that promises to remain even after he addresses his crimes against her. Her statement that she will "accept" (δέξομαι) him minimises any favourable connection to the god she may have, as her experiences with the god has negated her ability to praise or worship him with any sincerity in the foreseeable future. While her eventual claim of friendship does exceed her original prediction, she still does not claim to worship him, or signal that she regards him as exalted in any way, and so the reconciliation remains partial.[714] Her remark that she will accept Apollo "because he is a god" (θεὸς γάρ ἐστι) is plainly observational, as she simply remarks on his godhood as a factor that she must keep in mind. This neutral observation of Apollo's divine nature, which she makes clear does not automatically lead to worship or even admiration, significantly disempowers Apollo, as Creusa fails to be dazzled or daunted by his standing. Thus, Creusa is able to construct a relationship with the god that ceases to be hierarchical (in spirit, at least, as Apollo still possesses special abilities and immortality), and is instead approaching an equal, negotiated cooperation. Her final declaration of "friendliness" resonates with this sense of partnership, as her relationship with the god is based on reciprocated goodwill, rather than obligated and kowtowed reverence. Thus, Creusa agrees to set her contentions with the god

[713] Eur. *Ion.* 425-428.
[714] Griffiths 2017: 259.

aside to pursue a favourable relationship with him, enabling the play to end on a tone that is not anti-Apolline.[715]

This final affiliation to Apollo and the other Olympian gods is not unproblematic, however. The strength of Creusa's testimony against the god, and the readiness of her allies to commit acts of destruction towards Apollo and his shrine, speaks to the tentativeness of this relationship, as Creusa has demonstrated the ability to spread misgivings and impiety to other characters. Creusa, due to the nature of her encounter with Apollo, can claim a knowledge and proximity to him not common amongst mortals, which has given her an authority that she wields through her intensive displays of emotion. It is through this expressive emotional range that her aggression towards the gods turns Ion, who is otherwise depicted as having a straightforwardly pious and subservient relationship with the god before she arrives. As shall now be examined, the role of their interaction in instigating Ion's worsening opinion of Apollo is fundamental to the retributive forms of justice Ion suggests in response to the troubling revelations Creusa's demeanour exposes him to.

5.3.4. Ion: An Onstage Reassessment of the Divine

As the above discussion demonstrates, throughout *Ion,* Creusa's emotionality is a key factor in her treatment of the god, as she divulges the events that has caused her deep-seated antipathy and aggression towards Apollo in staggered fashion. Ion, by contrast, forms and articulates his negative thoughts on the gods with less pronounced emotion, and more conscious thought. This is perhaps not surprising, given the more immediately traumatic nature of what Creusa had experienced, but it nevertheless provides a contrast, both between Creusa and Ion, and also between Ion's behaviour at the beginning of the play, as an unquestioning devotee of Apollo, and his later temperament towards the god as a result his exposure to Apollo's unadmirable qualities. Through Ion's evolution, he clearly struggles with his new perspective on Apollo and his actions, culminating in a climax, as Ion is forced

[715] This has caused considerable debate amongst scholars as to the intention of the play, and whether it is a rationalist treatise, criticising belief in the gods, or an ultimately pro-Apolline, and so pro-Olympian morality tale. While I will not be getting into the details of this debate or assessing the play on its anti-god/pro-god merits, there is no point in denying why *Ion* inspired this debate, given the content of Creusa's expressions especially. See Burnett 1962: 90-96, and Wassermann 1940: 590.

into a position where he must seriously consider breaking laws he has followed so stringently all his life.[716]

Ion's initial piety is set up from the play's outset, as he is the first character to be introduced following Hermes' introduction. As is indicated by his entry song, Ion comes onto the stage equipped with props that indicate his status as a steward of Apollo's Sanctuary, and which also allude to the duties he performs as part of this role. As the text indicates, this includes a branch of laurel to sweep the sanctuary and a bow, which Ion uses to shoot at the birds which nest around the sanctuary and threaten foul the sacred portals:

> ἡμεῖς δέ, πόνους οὓς ἐκ παιδὸς
>
> μοχθοῦμεν ἀεί, πτόρθοισι δάφνης
>
> στέφεσίν θ᾽ ἱεροῖς ἐσόδους Φοίβου
>
> καθαρὰς θήσομεν, ὑγραῖς τε πέδον
>
> ῥανίσιν νοτερόν· πτηνῶν τ᾽ ἀγέλας,
>
> αἳ βλάπτουσιν σέμν᾽ ἀναθήματα,
>
> τόξοισιν ἐμοῖς φυγάδας θήσομεν·

> And we, completing the work always done since childhood, with boughs and garlands of laurel we make the entrances to Phoebus' sanctuary immaculate, moistening the ground with drops of water; and for the companies of winged birds, who mark our holy work, this bow of mine turns you runaway.[717]

The presence of the bow draws attention to Ion's relationship to Apollo, not only as the sanctuary's attendant, but also through his resemblance to the god as his son, creating a

[716] Farrington 1991: 134.
[717] Eur. *Ion.* 102-108.

personal link between the mortal and the god. This filial connection, which has already been made explicit in Hermes' prologue, is rendered visually, with Apollo's reputation and worship endorsed through Ion's appearance and his lively entrance.[718] In Ion's opening song, he describes his chores around the sanctuary while he does them, physically demonstrating his everyday rituals he enacts as he keeps the shrine in order, communicating the character's adherence to Apollo with clear visuals and physical action. As he makes clear, this is an entrenched course of action for Ion, as he notes that he has completed these duties regularly since his childhood (ἐκ παιδὸς μοχθοῦμεν ἀεί). Ion's attentive cleaning of the shrine, particularly the entrances (ἐσόδους), and his careful guard over the portals from birds that would foul them (πτηνῶν τ…. αἳ βλάπτουσιν σέμν᾽ ἀναθήματα) establishes the constant work needed to maintain the purity of the shrines. The use of religious props, such as the boughs and garlands of laurel (πτόρθοισι δάφνης στέφεσίν), encode his performance of these tasks with a distinct purpose, namely to preserve Apollo's divinity and sanctuary.[719] Ion's desire to maintain this purity in the shrine is similarly reflected in his strict stipulation that only good words be spoken at the shrine (στόμα τ᾽ εὔφημον φρουρεῖν ἀγαθόν), and his later concern on whether or noth the Chorus have completed the needed purifications to enter without polluting the space ("while the sheep is unslaughtered, do not approach the Sanctuary" - ἐπὶ δ᾽ ἀσφάκτοις μήλοισι δόμων μὴ πάριτ᾽ ἐς μυχόν).[720] Ion also demonstrates an emotional and personal attachment to the god, as he calls to Apollo in paeans twice during his opening speech ("O Paean, O Paean, may you be fortunate, child of Leto!" - ὦ Παιὰν ὦ Παιάν, εὐαίων εὐαίων εἴης, ὦ Λατοῦς παῖ). Ion even goes so far as to hope that he stay working at the temple indefinitely (""would that I never cease to be ever in the service to Phoebus"" - εἴθ᾽ οὕτως αἰεὶ Φοίβῳ λατρεύων μὴ παυσαίμαν), illustrating that he feels a tight bond with the god that makes leaving the sanctuary unforeseeable.[721] Ion is thus presented as uniquely bound to Apollo, as his physical resemblance and personal care for the god is stressed through his appearance and performance. Ion is not attending the shrine in perfunctory and duty-bound fashion, but is shown to take his role to heart, as he maintains the inviolability of the shrine with devotion and exactitude.

[718] Willetts 1973: 207.
[719] Wyles (2020) discusses the use of theatrical props in recalling the civic identity of the audience. It is reasonable to suggest that this can be extended to religious props and items.
[720]Eur. *Ion.* 228-229.
[721] Eur. *Ion.* 125-127, 141-143, 152-153.

Therefore, the play sets up a personal, as well as structural, conflict with Ion's rosy views of Apollo, as they are ready to be challenged and complicated by Creusa's furious testimony. Given his secure placement in the established religious system of Delphi, and his lack of immediate and direct experience of Apollo himself, as Creusa has experienced, Ion's polite uncertainty to this conflict is contrasted with her excesses of passion. When he encounters Creusa, and her bitter weeping, Ion's response is sincere perplexity, as indicated by his initial questions to her on why she is crying. This is the introduction of complicated and unpredictable human behaviour into the regularised sacred space. Ion's confusion is indicated by his verbalised recognition and description of Creusa's crying ("Ah! But you astound me, with your eyes shut with tears" - ἔα, ἀλλ᾽ ἐξέπληξάς μ᾽, ὄμμα συγκλήσασα σὸν δακρύοις).[722] Ion's reaction to Creusa evinces bewilderment, as he exclaims and confesses directly that he is surprised, as Creusa's appearance disrupts his comfortable expectations and undermines his previous confidence and certainty in his charge of the shrine and its guests. Ion is thus somewhat wrongfooted by this introduction to the mysterious, weeping visitor. As their conversation continues, while Ion has moments where he softly reproaches Creusa for her bellicose attitude towards the god, he does not argue or aggress, but exhibits a worried reaction to her overt aggression.[723] When Creusa scathingly retorts about the Long Rocks in Athens, Ion sensitively asks "why do you hate something the god so loves?" (τί δὲ στυγεῖς σὺ τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ φίλτατα;).[724] When she responds with reference to a shameful deed performed at that location, Ion immediately changes the subject, asking Creusa about her marriage status, backing away from the volatile topic.[725]A short-time later, when Creusa again issues a comment that could easily be read as an anti-Apolline statement, namely when she exclaims her pity about Ion's indentured servitude to the god's shrine, Ion interprets this in light of his orphanhood, and not his servitude to the god ("for I do not know she who birthed me or those that brought me forth - ὡς μὴ εἰδόθ᾽ ἥτις μ᾽ ἔτεκεν ἐξ ὅτου τ᾽ ἔφυν.)[726] Ion is thus diplomatically managing Creusa's impiety onstage, purposefully interpreting it into a new meaning that does not threaten the integrity of Apollo's worship. The exchange between Creusa and Ion is thus a tense balancing act, with Ion maintaining a distance from Creusa's emotional outbursts to question and infer a safer intent than her stance against Apollo

[722] Eur. *Ion.* 241-243.
[723] Martin 2018: 199.
[724] Eur. *Ion.* 287.
[725] Eur. *Ion.* 298-299.
[726] Eur. *Ion.* 313.

suggests. Nevertheless, Ion is suddenly exposed to real world complexity that the sealed world of the shrine had previously shielded him from.[727]

Furthermore, when Creusa delivers a concrete charge against Apollo, namely his assault on a mortal girl, Ion is forced into confronting a frank accusation against his god. First, he responds with shock at Creusa's revelation ("Phoebus coupled with a woman? Do not say that stranger!" – "Φοίβῳ γυνὴ γεγῶσα; μὴ λέγ᾽, ὦ ξένη.")[728] He then expresses brief doubt in response to Creusa's testimony ("it is not so; she is dishonoured by a man's indiscretion" - "οὐκ ἔστιν· ἀνδρὸς ἀδικίαν αἰσχύνεται"), before asking a series of questions in the stichomythic exchange on the whereabouts of Apollo and Creusa's child, while Creusa asserts the child's abandonment and apparent death.[729] The shift in Ion's demeanour thus occurs in stages, progressing from shock, to disbelief, to questioning, as he is faced with a convincing stranger who problematises his understanding of the god.[730]

The tension is thus set up, so that when Ion breaks his line of questioning, and delivers his conclusion from it, he expresses a radical shift in perspective:

> ἀδικεῖ νιν ὁ θεός· ἡ τεκοῦσα δ᾽ ἀθλία.
>
> The god commits injustice: the mother is wretched.[731]

The brevity of this line is important to understanding it, as Ion delivers a simple and terse judgement against Apollo. Ion's interaction with Creusa has provoked this radical shift in demeanour, as the culmination of her repeated denouncements of the god breaks down his previously unchallenged piety, causing a reversal of impressions. This results in his unembellished and plainly worded statement that Apollo has indeed acted unjustly (ἀδικεῖ), with the declarative tone and succinctness adding weight to his delivery. There is no argument or reason Ion can think of that would explain or excuse Apollo's behaviour, meaning there is little more to say, except that the god is unjust. Ion pairs his condemnation

[727] Hoffer 1996: 294.
[728] Eur. *Ion.* 341.
[729] Eur. *Ion.* 341-355.
[730] Conacher 1959: 32.
[731] Eur. *Ion.* 355.

of the god with a reference to the mortal girl Creusa has told him about, making it apparent that his verdict on the god is a reflection on the treatment of this girl, who is pitiable and therefore blameless in comparison (ἀθλία).

Through this scene, Ion is gradually educated on Apollo's apparent impropriety, developing the character's impression on the god as these fresh realisations dawn on him. Ion's statements to Creusa thus show hesitancy and thoughtfulness that correspond to the discomfort these thoughts naturally invoke in him as a pious follower of the god, before he delivers his final and damning rebuke. The drama draws out this change, starting from Ion's first surprised reaction to Creusa's tears, to his discomfiture with her open dislike of the god, and then finally his shock and subsequent acceptance that his god has indeed behaved improperly. His conversation with Creusa thus catalyses this growth, complicating the character's formerly unmarked view of the god, when he had previously delighted in cleaning of the Sanctuary and maintaining a vigilance in keeping the thresholds to it unmuddied by dirt or bird droppings. Ion's demeanour is shaped gradually through his anxious performance, and is coded as a sensitive and empathetic response to Creusa's clear agony. As he encounters information he had previously not been privy to, his questions to her help abet the discrediting of Apollo, even as he hedges them, as he transitions from certain and confident worshipper, to uncertainly questioning his god's nature.[732]

After Creusa departs, this newly encountered knowledge continues to work on Ion's impressions of Apollo and other gods. While Creusa conveys her feelings in a great momentous outburst, Ion is not powered by a torrent of emotion, so much as a worried realisation of what these recent revelations mean for his understanding of the gods and their relation to correct behaviour. Standing alone on the stage following Creusa's departure, the empty space creates a fitting arena for Ion to voice these tentative thoughts that have emerged from this encounter. In a use of rhetorical questions to show his uncertainty, Ion queries what he has just experienced ("why does this stranger keep speaking darkly against the god?" – "τί ποτε λόγοισιν ἡ ξένη πρὸς τὸν θεὸν κρυπτοῖσιν αἰεὶ λοιδοροῦσ᾽ αἰνίσσεται δρόσον καθήσω;").[733] It briefly seems that Ion is going to shrug this odd encounter off and resume his Sanctuary life unchanged. However, it is swiftly made clear that Ion is troubled:

[732] Conacher 1959: 34.
[733] Eur. *Ion.* 429. Mastronarde 1979: 8-10.

ἀτὰρ θυγατρὸς τῆς Ἐρεχθέως τί μοι

μέλει; προσήκει γ᾽ οὐδέν. ἀλλὰ χρυσέαις

πρόχοισιν ἐλθὼν εἰς ἀπορραντήρια

δρόσον καθήσω. νουθετητέος δέ μοι

Φοῖβος, τί πάσχει; παρθένους βίᾳ γαμῶν

προδίδωσι; παῖδας ἐκτεκνούμενος λάθρᾳ

θνῄσκοντας ἀμελεῖ; μὴ σύ γ᾽: ἀλλ᾽, ἐπεὶ κρατεῖς,

ἀρετὰς δίωκε.

Anyway, what do I care for the daughter of Erechtheus? It means nothing to me, so I will pour the water from the golden vessels into the sacred pitchers - but I admonish Apollo, what makes him do this? Does he corner young girls into unions, and then desert them? Does he beget children in secret and then allow them to die? But you must not! You yet have power to pursue virtue![734]

As Ion gradually acclimatises to Creusa's statements, his time alone onstage allows him to fully digest the gravity of her testimony. He attempts to dismiss Creusa and her plight twice, asking rhetorically why he should "care about the daughter of Erechtheus" (ἀτὰρ θυγατρὸς τῆς Ἐρεχθέως τί μοι μέλει;), and then claiming that it means "nothing" to him (προσήκει γ᾽ οὐδέν). That he begins this proclamation of indifference with the particle ἀτὰρ, a verbal cue for a change of topic (translated as "anyway" above), indicates his desire to get his mind away from this uncomfortable matter, and back to the familiar tasks that reaffirm his connection to the god and the religion he follows. Ion's prior solace in Apollo has been challenged by Creusa, and in her absence, his attempts to repair the disruption Creusa has brought thus

[734] Eur. *Ion.* 433-440.

serve to emphasise his discomfort, as he makes a half-hearted attempt to revert to his previous routine. However, despite this voiced intention to return to his work, there is no indication in the text that he does so. Compared to the industrious and good-natured bustle of his entrance, Ion now stands still on the stage, perhaps still holding the same tools he was using before Creusa arrived. These recent revelations thus cause him to freeze in place, as he finds himself unable to return to his previous life, the vestiges of which he still holds. Ion is thus caught directly between his earlier life as a believing temple attendant, and the aggressive scepticism displayed by Creusa.

His attempts to return to his previous life is then instantly shown to be in vain, as following on straight from his statement that such a revelation is "nothing" to him, Ion returns to Creusa's testimony, contradicting his own proclamation of disinterest with an immediacy that indicates how pressing this topic is for him. Straightaway, he issues an "admonishment" (νουθετητέος) to Apollo, followed up by a question. This question, τί πάσχει, literally means "what do you suffer?", taken colloquially to suggest someone is coerced in some way into doing something, translated above as "what makes (Apollo) do this?". Ion is gradually coming around to holding the god accountable, as he begins to seriously consider the accusations against him directly. However, as he asks his first explicitly accusatory question, there is still tonal hedging of the charge against the god. His questions work on this uncertain approach to the accusations, as he wonders out loud if the god has done the crimes he had been accused of, and if so, what compelled him to do it.

Ion then utters an imperative directly to Apollo: "you must not!" (μὴ σύ γ᾽). Ion's statement cuts across his previous uncertainty, as the urgency of the command pulls Apollo's culpability straight into the frame. Ion is therefore shown to be deeply troubled, as he issues an exclamation that reflects his distress that the god's behaviour raises such worrisome questions, particularly in regard to the cruelty of the god's treatment towards mortal women. Ion uses the term "βίᾳ γαμῶν," literally "forced union" to describe Apollo's actions towards Creusa, which is the first description of the encounter itself within the play. This term (possibly the closest Greek phrase to the modern English "rape") is significant as it focuses on the personal violation suffered by Creusa, and not the irregularity of extra-marital intercourse and the resulting lack of support for her child, which he also raises (παῖδας ἐκτεκνούμενος λάθρᾳ θνήσκοντας ἀμελεῖ).[735] Ion's concern is not restricted to the thorny legal

[735] Omitowoju 1997: 10; Scafuro 1990: 129-130, 141.

ramifications of the god's misbehaviour, but crucially on the wounds caused by how callously they interact with mortals. That Ion notes the sexual encounter between Apollo and the mortal girl itself as reprehensible gives an indication of his own standards for ethical behaviour. Whether Ion's measure of correct behaviour and basic justice comes from his own instinct for ethics, or from the exposure he has had to the sanctuary's standards for cleanliness, is made unclear. However, it is apparent that the god's misbehaviour is a surprise to Ion, as he remarks that the god is easily capable of pursuing virtue (ἐπεὶ κρατεῖς, ἀρετὰς δίωκε), and so reasserts his expectation for the god. Ion thus evinces a note of perplexity that the god, with his capabilities far beyond that of a mortal man, has not behaved to expectations of moral behaviour. This line bears a note of similarity to a comment made by Orestes in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, discussed in section 2.3., which is also addressed to Apollo, and involves the god's mortal follower, Orestes, reproaching the god for not acting as virtuously as he could.[736] In Orestes' example, the god is directly present, having already arrived to assist Orestes in his flight from the Erinyes. Thus, there is an immediate sense of Orestes' comments being received and responded to, as Apollo takes demonstrable action to assist him, calling on Hermes to escort him to Athens for a trial.[737] However, in Ion's example, the god's absence leaves Ion unanswered and uncomforted. Ion is undergoing a sudden and acute shift in his understanding of the god, but as he voices his concerns to the god, the conversation remains notably one-sided. Without any such assurance or clarification, Ion continues to go through the logical and moral irrationalities of a god behaving improperly as he continues his solo rumination. As he continues, he considers how Apollo's wrongdoings impact on his future worship, and the worship of other gods:

καὶ γὰρ ὅστις ἂν βροτῶν

κακὸς πεφύκῃ, ζημιοῦσιν οἱ θεοί.

πῶς οὖν δίκαιον τοὺς νόμους ὑμᾶς βροτοῖς

γράψαντας, αὐτοὺς ἀνομίαν ὀφλισκάνειν;

εἰ δ᾽ — οὐ γὰρ ἔσται, τῷ λόγῳ δὲ χρήσομαι —

[736] Aesch. *Eum.* 85-87.
[737] Aesch. *Eum.* 90.

δίκας βιαίων δώσετ᾽ ἀνθρώποις γάμων,

σὺ καὶ Ποσειδῶν Ζεύς θ᾽ ὃς οὐρανοῦ κρατεῖ,

ναοὺς τίνοντες ἀδικίας κενώσετε.

For whenever a man engenders wrongdoing, the gods punish him. So how will you write the just laws of mankind, while incurring lawlessness yourselves? Because if – and this is not so, but I am just suggesting it – if one gave out justice to you for forcing mortals into unions, you, Poseidon, and Zeus who rules the sky, you will all empty your temples in payment for your crimes.[738]

As he continues to respond to the information he has taken from Creusa, Ion carries this independence of thought to a provocative end, uttering many sentiments that will later be echoed by Creusa. Like her, Ion understands these crimes as inherently shameful and deserving of public condemnation, although unlike her, he perceives it from a detached perspective. Ion uses discursive reasoning to reflect on precisely what he finds objectionable about the gods' behaviours, pointing out the hypocrisy in their authority when they so poorly govern themselves (αὐτοὺς ἀνομίαν ὀφλισκάνειν). As he expands on this, he uses a scenario that he makes pains to point out is hypothetical (οὐ γὰρ ἔσται, τῷ λόγῳ δὲ χρήσομαι). Ion does not only criticise Apollo, but Zeus and Poseidon also, picking out the two Olympians by name for their repertoire of wrongdoing. The criticism is therefore not localised to one single act from one individual god but widens the scope to take in the pattern godly misdemeanours. This is also echoed by Creusa in her later speech, where she swears vengeance for the traitorship of beds by the gods in the plural. Compared to Creusa and her retinue's repeated desire to damage the shrine with fire or pollution, Ion's picture of the gods' temples emptied in payment for their crimes is calmer and more formalised in its suggestion. In his hypothetical vision, the gods' shrines and sacred places are not destroyed or wiped out but are steadily bankrupted through the reduction of their material holdings. Thus, the gods are envisioned as losing influence steadily, representing the similar devaluing

[738] Eur. *Ion.* 441-448.

of the gods' influence that is already taking place in the play, as Creusa's constant needling at the god leads to Ion's expansive ruminations on the god's actions.

Particularly present in Ion's diatribe against the gods is how their disreputable behaviour undermines the very notion of wrongdoing, something that the next section of his speech also lays bare:

> τὰς ἡδονὰς γὰρ τῆς προμηθίας πάρος
>
> σπεύδοντες ἀδικεῖτ᾽. οὐκέτ᾽ ἀνθρώπους κακῶς
>
> λέγειν δίκαιον, εἰ τὰ τῶν θεῶν καλὰ
>
> μιμούμεθ᾽, ἀλλὰ τοὺς διδάσκοντας τάδε.
>
> For you are quick to commit wrongs out of pleasure before thinking. No longer is it correct to speak of men committing bad deeds, if we follow the gods' "good" behaviour, as those who teach us these things.[739]

As Ion continues to extrapolate from his new observations about the gods, he reaches a series of troubling conclusions.[740] Ion focuses on the interchangeability of moral categories implied by the god's lawlessness, as mankind's ability to recognise a "bad" deed is dangerously undermined if they follow the god's example, given the latter's evident inability to control themselves in pursuit of their basest pleasures (τὰς ἡδονὰς γὰρ τῆς προμηθίας πάρος σπεύδοντες ἀδικεῖτ᾽). The gods' role in setting these bad examples is referenced twice, first as Ion describes mankind "mimicking" the gods' good acts (τῶν θεῶν καλὰ μιμούμεθ'), and then immediately again when he refers to the gods as teaching (διδάσκοντας). There is thus nothing admirable or good emerging from the gods that transcends the expectations of human experience.[741] The gods are thus more a source of fatal corruption than a reliable authority. Through this corruption, they threaten any reasonable attempt to identify and understand the categories of good and bad, eliminating any authority or confidence in ascertaining distinction between them. As such, Ion observes the fundamental disconnect in

[739] Eur. *Ion.* 449-452.
[740] Lee 1991 : 473.
[741] Halliwell 2008: 226-229.

his own faith and authority as attendant to the god's shrine; Creusa's refusal to recognise the god's authority, which had so flummoxed him, is a reasonable position to take when one views the emptiness of the god's moral and legal integrity. Ion's opening, where he had so carefully cleaned the threshold to the shrine, and shot at any birds who flew too close, holds a particular resonance as he utters his new contemplations on the gods' behaviours, and how their misdemeanours eliminate any corresponding borders along the lines of good and bad. Indeed, his first instinct once Creusa, the source of his growing confoundment, has left the stage is to return to his work in sanctifying the sacred space, before he cannot hold back his nagging concerns.[742] There is thus a natural seeming disorder to his thoughts as he tries and fails to repress his newly critical views on the god. Such a prodigious shift in his understanding of the god is shown to have a lingering impression on Ion, particularly in terms of his new concern about the categories of virtuous and wicked behaviour. Later on, when he is adopted by Xuthus and understands that he will be leaving the Sanctuary for a crowded and competitive life as a high-flier in Athens, Ion makes similar comments that express a concern for his own ability to recognise the difference between good and bad when under the pressure of rulership ("when one takes pleasure in loving rogues, and hates good out of fear of death" -τοὺς πονηροὺς ἡδονὴ φίλους ἔχειν, ἐσθλοὺς δὲ μισεῖ κατθανεῖν φοβούμενος.)[743] The play thus demonstrates the effect of Ion's interaction with Creusa as it happens in real time, as his spontaneous reflections on the moral volatility of the gods visibly cause a crisis within himself.

At the play's climax, Ion's ruminations are translated into an actionable situation, in which both his and Creusa's perspectives on the gods are brought into direct relevancy with each other. As Creusa sits on the altar, preparing to be slaughtered and so bring pollution to both Ion and Apollo, Ion delivers a frustrated outburst that he cannot kill Creusa without contravening the gods' laws:

δεινόν γε, θνητοῖς τοὺς νόμους ὡς οὐ καλῶς

ἔθηκεν ὁ θεὸς οὐδ᾽ ἀπὸ γνώμης σοφῆς·

[742] Mastronarde 1979: 114.
[743] Eur. *Ion.* 627-628.

τοὺς μὲν γὰρ ἀδίκους βωμὸν οὐχ ἵζειν ἐχρῆν,

ἀλλ᾽ ἐξελαύνειν·

How terrible it is, that the god has imposed such laws onto mankind, not good or cleverly thought out. For the corrupt should not be present at the altar but driven out.[744]

His frustration at his inability to eject her violently from the shrine is expressed by specific reference to the technicalities of his religion. Despite his heightened emotional register, his language still retains his capacity for calculated judgement and reference to an external code that checks his actions. The presence of an evildoer in the shrine offends Ion's preference for explicit codification, breaking the barriers of the shrine threshold and polluting his stringently cleaned spaces. As ever, in comparison to Creusa's outraged certitude and decisive action, Ion's response is more querying than definite, even during the recognition scene itself; while Creusa rushes forward to embrace him with delight, mirroring Xuthus' own enthusiasm during the false recognition scene, Ion backs away, demanding full explanation before he is willing to accept Creusa as his mother.[745] The dramatic potential of the tension produced in this crisis, and between Ion's constancy and Creusa's impulsiveness, is fully harnessed in the play's conclusion.

Ion experiences a prodigious change in perspective and circumstance during his time onstage. The conclusion, with Creusa and Ion reunited and confirmed as mother and son thanks to Apollo's intervention via the priestess, and Athena's arrival to give a full disclosure of the future triumph of their Ionian and Athenian descendants, appears to concisely settle the numerous issues raised across the play. The gods' laws that prevented Ion from killing Creusa while she sat on the altar prevented Ion's accidental matricide, and Apollo's fathering of Ion proves dynastically significant, as Ionia's connection to Athens is explained and elevated through godly instigation.[746] Ion's worries concerning Apollo's wrongdoing are thus

[744] Eur. *Ion.* 1312-1315.
[745] Whitman 1964: 257.
[746] Wassermann 1940: 588.

qualified, albeit not entirely obviated. Rather, Apollo's assault on Creusa has produced a benefit in the figure of Ion himself, and his future importance in establishing the Athenian settlements in Ionia, as the play bolsters these networks through this invented mythical connection.[747] Before Athena arrives onstage to close the play, Ion has expressed significant concern about the wording of the prophecy which gifts him to Xuthus, querying if he was in fact Xuthus' son or Apollo's ("The god is truthful or prophecy is a lie. My heart is concerned, mother and suitably so." - ὁ θεὸς ἀληθὴς ἢ μάτην μαντεύεται, ἐμοῦ ταράσσει, μῆτερ, εἰκότως φρένα).[748] Ion's concern remains on the viability of the god's standing, which now rests on whether the prophecies delivered at the shrine can be trusted. Although this is hastily cleared by Athena in the play's last moments, the mortal's interactions with each other have nonetheless caused a space to open around the gods' apparent insuperability, leading to a relationship in which the god's behaviour has been proven accountable to mortal critique. This open criticism was made possible by the mortals' frank speech and honest emotionality. Griffiths has noted that Creusa and Ion's demeanours and approaches to Apollo display the principle of *parrhesia,* or frank speech (see 1.2.1 of this dissertation), as each character responds honestly and with apparent spontaneity to the god as they regard him with an increasing aggravation. Thus, their open expression of their opinions and impressions of the god is not adjusted for conventions as submissiveness to a deity. This open and forthcoming disposition from Creusa and Ion are contrasted with the deception and stonewalling displayed by the god Apollo, and to a lesser extent, with the naïve gullibility of the compliant mortal Xuthus, who thoughtlessly accepts Apollo's prophecy without question.[749] The two central characters are thus positioned to clash with established and traditional forces and conventions, which lack the curiosity, sincerity and liveliness to create a meaningful and open-minded relationship between mortals and gods.

Throughout *Ion,* the mortals' scepticism about Apollo and his actions places common mythical conventions in a fresh context that frames the gods' actions in a usually neglected perspective.[750] Numerous plays in this dissertation have a zoomed-in quality on how certain mythical events may have played out in naturalistic, human terms, but *Ion* goes one step further, explicitly addressing a standard and normalised feature of myth, namely the seizure

[747] Walsh 1978: 301.
[748] Eur. *Ion.* 1538-1539.
[749] Griffiths 2017: 253.
[750] Hoffer 1996: 290.

of young women by a male divinity, and the divine fatherhood of heroic founders. The play then endeavours to depict such an event through the perspective of the mortal girl who suffered it, and critiquing it through two different perspectives: hers, and a conventionally pious mortal who retains a distance from the event as they are told of it second-hand. As Ion and Creusa meet and interact, the two mortals draw out of each other a range of emotional reactions that then informs on each characters' experiences of the god. *Ion* thus demonstrates an attention on the human details of such mythological tropes, particularly regarding an aftermath that is often forgotten in the broader myth. The experimental potential of drama, to imagine and theorise about how situations, involving certain characters from mythical history and the true impact of a gods' involvement with a mortal, is particularly visible in *Ion*, as the titular character's divine parentage and the means through which he was fathered, are targeted for criticism.

Ion offers a repeated and intensifying displays of anti-god sentiment that are relayed through its characters' emotionality and evolving impressions, as they encounter fresh scenarios that lead to readjustments of their perception. Creusa is evidently opposed to Apollo and so her behaviour correspondingly falls well outside the expected perimeters of how mortals are expected to behave towards a god, particularly as it is powered by strong emotional states. The certainty with which she commits to her death points to her recklessness in maintaining this position. This has already been seen in this study with the examples of *Antigone, Trojan Women* and *Hippolytus*, in which mortals' understanding that they have no possibility to escape death, respond with fear, horror and outrage, and so intensifying the emotional pitch of the stage. However, Ion's more thoughtful, less violent response to the gods' misdemeanours, expressed in his concerned and measured language, levels out Creusa's passionate extremes, pairing an excessively emotional set of appeals with a reasoning that serves to bolster the damning statements of the gods with dispassionate thought.

The minimal reference to the characters' postures while onstage thus indicate that much of these statements were uttered while they were standing, and not with a deliberately diminished physical stance, which would indicate weakness or an inability to challenge the gods. However, Creusa's most emphatic statement, her monody, is uttered while she is surrounded by sympathetic characters who hear and respond to her story with support. Thus, her anger is bolstered by her community, further enabling her desire to pose a significant threat to Apollo. In *Ion*, the emphatic performance of the characters' emotional reactions to

deities' unbecoming actions, set within a location of charged religious relevance and strict codification, fully equips the embodied vitality of drama to play out and experiment with strands of mythical narrative, producing an outcome that is ultimately consistent with wider religious practises and values, but by way of rigorous critique.

5.3.5 Chapter Conclusion

Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and Euripides' *Ion* both present mortals who express pronounced dismay in the gods, but do not face the same end as the other examples examined in this play. Instead, the characters who point out the injustice in the gods' actions are given happy endings and honoured positions in their communities. These uncommonly upbeat endings have led to these tragedies described as "anti-tragedy", as their endings promise a bright future for the characters and the state of Athens.[751]

In both plays, the characters' social interactions with other mortals instigate their denunciations of gods, as their perspectives are shifted onto how the gods have harmed them, with their emotional reactions adding tone and affect. In Oedipus' case, his overt refusal to accept any further blame or repercussions for his parricide and incest causes him to openly address and argue against the Chorus, when their panicked attempt to evict him from the grove of the Eumenides inspires a sudden change in his demeanour, from timidly cowering in front of all questions, to a passionate defence of his innocence. This change in Oedipus' deportment is echoed in a reframing of his physicality. At the moment of his outburst, Oedipus is sitting on a rock, having been led there by his daughter. This position recalls similar postures and body placements noted in other plays reviewed in this dissertation, but in Oedipus' example, while this position is initially undertaken as a signal of his physical weakness and agedness, it becomes a statement of his defiance and immovability. Once his past is raked up, and Oedipus is affronted with fresh accusations of wrongdoing, his physical demeanour and placement on the stage is reframed, as he interrupts and pushes back against the Chorus to argue his innocence, and remark with fresh outrage on the gods' ultimate responsibility. Oedipus' open confrontation with his past thus

[751] Ringer 1998: 95.

leads to an increased emotional register that alters the meaning of his body's framing and posture.

This use of physical presentation to relay the characters' relationship with the gods, and the role of social interaction between the characters in drawing out their dissatisfaction is also present in Euripides' *Ion.* When Creusa enters the stage, Ion's description of her crying informs the audience of her emotional state before she reveals her ardent loathing of Apollo. Following this, Ion's comments elicit further reactions from Creusa, as the details of her antipathy towards the gods emerge gradually. *Ion* thus paces the revelation of Creusa's outrage towards Apollo, sustaining a dramatic weight to her vendetta against the god as Creusa's outbursts give fragmentary information on why she is so hostile to the god, and point forward to her eventual attempts at harming the god. Unlike Oedipus, Creusa does not simply express her anguish at the god's malign attention, but she emits a sincere outrage at the god's actions, which propels her towards her eventual attempts at assaulting Apollo's shrine. As with other examples seen in this dissertation, the Euripidean example studied exceeds the Sophoclean in the aggression and pointedness of the comments emerging from the aggrieved mortals. In the case of *Ion,* it must be also noted that Creusa undertakes a serious attempt to damage the god for his misbehaviour, which also surpasses that of the other plays examined in this dissertation. While Hippolytus merely wishes to curse the gods,[752] and Cassandra destroys her own items of worship,[753] Creusa takes decisive action that would damage her divine enemy's central sacred site.

Oedipus and Creusa do not only express their own raw discontent at the gods but manage to convince the individuals with whom they share a stage of their righteous anger. The Chorus is convinced to allow Oedipus to stay in the grove of the Eumenides, whilst Creusa's unsavoury information on Apollo causes a crisis within Ion, making him cease his usual duties. In each case, the characters state their unhappiness early on in their play, with the remainder of the drama set partly round their eventual reconciliation, as Oedipus prepares to die in the location Apollo recommended, and Creusa and Ion are finally revealed to each other as mother and son. Both Oedipus and Creusa complain about events that happened a long time prior to their plays beginning, and they enter the stage wounded from the calamities that struck them. This is in direct contrast with the examples observed in the other

[752] Eur. *Hipp.* 1415.
[753] Eur. *Tro.* 428-429.

plays, in which the mortals undergo the adverse circumstances that cause their disappointment with the gods during play itself. As a result, Oedipus and Creusa do not utter their statements in immediate response to these calamities themselves, but to unwanted reminders of them, with the Chorus' discovery of Oedipus' identity after he arrives at the grove of the Eumenides, and Creusa having to visit the sanctuary of Apollo to ask an oracle. In each case, their innocence at the time of these catastrophes is highlighted, as is the extent to which they have suffered in the intervening years, thus inviting sympathy and clemency. Both Oedipus and Creusa receive information that gives them a reason to set aside their hard feelings in order to cooperate with the gods, as Oedipus is shown where he will finally die, and Creusa is reunited with her long-lost son. Thus, a key stage in each character's relationship with the gods is the disintegration of the heightened emotions that caused their vituperative outbursts.

While Oedipus' and Creusa's trajectories are ultimately affirming of their relationships with the gods, each character still holds an outsider position when they express their frustrations with the deities. With Oedipus, he is lingering on the edge of human civic society, having been in exile for an indefinite number of years prior. Creusa, similarly, expresses her contempt against the god from the position of one who is dispossessed of civic society, despite her standing as a princess of Athens. Creusa only divulges the full account of Apollo's crime against her after she hears the news of Xuthus' adoption of Ion, which she takes as a sign of her being pushed out of her domestic life. It is only then, once she no longer feels any security of her home or standing, that Creusa confesses her history with the god, and her resulting hostility towards him. Thus, her statement against the god occurs after a humiliating and degrading "otherness" is enforced upon her, and it is in the recent aftermath of this imposed otherness that she expresses her critical feelings for the gods.

The examples of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and Euripides' *Ion* demonstrate that impiety was not necessarily a death sentence when it occurred on the tragic stage. Oedipus and Creusa are largely sympathetic characters who are affiliated with Athens, and who each end their plays openly embracing the gods going forward as they are able to achieve outcomes they desire. Nevertheless, the content of their complaints and the mitigated quality of their reconciliation with the gods indicate that these relationships will not be of blind obedience, but rather more accountable in their nature. Therefore, the heightened and stressed nature of their complaints against the gods, articulated through their affective expressions, are shown

to have a final impact on how they interact with the gods long-term, with their newly negotiated relationship having a beneficial relationship not only for them, but on their wider community also.

6. Conclusion

This thesis has examined the ways in which tragedy presented aggressive, critical, and blaming attitudes towards the gods. It began by first establishing the distinctive tone and personalised sense of aggrievement present in certain extracts from tragedy with reference to Euripides' *Heracles* and Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, before examining the social and religious setting of the Dionysia festival that permitted overt and explicit expressions of negativity towards the gods. This was followed by a review of the visual medium of drama and performance, with attention on the use of stylisation in the depiction of emotions, and the immersive potential of dramatic productions (Chapter 1). This study then went on to investigate precursor examples in Archaic poetry and early tragedy (Chapter 2). These examples demonstrated the use of emotionalised grievances within other forms of Greek literature, as familiar mythical characters in Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* were shown to speak freely to the gods about the events they are most famous for, and the speaker in the *Theognidea* emits an aggrieved and critical view on the gods. These examples contextualised tragedy's own use of remonstration with the gods, which was seen in the early tragic example of Aeschylus' *Eumenides.* These introductory chapters provided the social, religious and literary backdrop to the treatment of negative feelings about the gods and supplied important detail as to how the specific form of tragedy, as a mimetic artform, shaped antagonistic sentiments against the gods, particularly when compared with differing forms of literature.

In the case studies (Chapters 3-5), a close reading of the selected plays' relevant scenes, in conjunction with a review of each play's overall depiction of the nature of mortal-divine relations, revealed common details of circumstance that produced these denunciations, as well as physical placement. Frequently, the characters' physical placement onstage reflects their stated discontent with the gods. In Sophocles' *Ajax* and Euripides' *Hippolytus* (Chapter 3), for example, the titular characters are collapsed or prone in the same scenes as their denouncements towards the gods.[754] Their bodies are thus degraded at the time of their criticisms, communicating both the emotional agony that has caused their outburst, and that the gods have abandoned them. This reduced posture is directly connected to the characters' ejection or removal from their previous social status'. Ajax is introduced when he is collapsed in despair at his humiliation, and then later kills himself, thus rendering himself as permanently ineffectual, while Hippolytus is similarly collapsed and dying at the moment of

[754] Soph. *Aj.* 309; E. *Hipp.* 1353.

his outburst. Likewise, in Euripides' *Trojan Women,* (Chapter 4), Hecuba also lies prone on the ground, with her dialogue drawing specific attention to the frailness of her body.[755] In each of these cases, the human characters' physical postures reflect either their ejection from their community (including the natural "exile" their impending death represents), or their community's destruction. By contrast, the titular character in *Antigone,* (Chapter 4) Cassandra (Chapter 4) in *Trojan Women* and Creusa and Ion in Euripides' *Ion* (Chapter 5)*,* deliver their antagonistic comments whilst standing. While they share Ajax, Hippolytus, and Hecuba's prodigious disappointment in the actions of the gods, they are not speaking from a weakened and defeated state. Instead, they are complaining aggressively as they reconsider the role the gods will play in their lives going forward with a new scepticism. Furthermore, these comments by Cassandra, Creusa and Ion against the gods coincide with active measures against their enemies. Standing, Cassandra utters her statement as she is promising to help effect Agamemnon's death and the destruction of his house, while Creusa and Ion both invoke penalties on the gods for their misdemeanours against women.[756] Their posture and state of mind are therefore presented as consistent with their current circumstances. This is true, too, of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* (Chapter 5)*,* in which Oedipus probably remains seated whilst delivering his stringent defence.[757] This is a posture appropriate to his age, which also conveys his determination not to move from the grove, as he decides in that moment to tackle the injustice of his situation head-on. Significantly for Oedipus, his statements against the gods, and his adamant refusal to move, come only after he has been provoked by the Chorus' sudden attempt to reject him, as his ability to defend himself, against both past and present accusations of wrongdoing, is predicated on his indignation as it is provoked.

When regarding the varying demeanours of the characters who make these denouncements against the gods, the mortals' prior relationships with the gods are shown to be key to how they conduct themselves during their later conflict with the deities. Ajax and Hippolytus both grasp for a closer relationship with their chosen deities before they are laid low and utter their criticisms from a position of complete dejection, having failed to achieve their ambitions of a closer relationship.[758] In contrast, both Cassandra and Creusa each experience personal involvement with Apollo, while Ion is the deity's son and steward of his shrine at Delphi. These

[755] Eur. *Tro.* 98-99, 113-116.
[756] Eur. *Tro.* 363-364. Eur. *Ion.* 443-448, 1311.
[757] Soph. *OC.* 263-270.
[758] Soph. *Aj.* 91; Eur. *Hipp.* 73-86.

characters' proximity to the gods thus empower their criticisms, granting a privileged knowledge that allows them to confidently complain about these deities from a more informed position, particularly in regards to the *charis* they have given the gods through their particular bonds.[759] Cassandra and Creusa each ridicule Apollo's abilities as a god of foresight and of music, respectively.[760] These are elements of the god's specialism that each woman has encountered directly; Cassandra through her own gifts of foresight and Creusa during Apollo's assault, granting these mortals' denouncements an increased pointedness and authority.[761] In both cases, these women also express rejection of Apollo's worship and veneration through the destruction or dismissal of his items of worship. Their verbal denouncements are reinforced with the physical drama, as Cassandra destroys her garland directly onstage, while Creusa rushes in and sits on the god's altar with a plan to pollute it with her own blood.[762] In each case, the characters perform with displays of heightened emotion before they utter their criticisms, with Cassandra manic entrance onto the stage with a torch, and Creusa weeping bitterly.[763]

In comparison to these emotional and retributive responses from Cassandra and Creusa, which stem from their privileged understanding of the gods, the tragedies also depict more thoughtful and less reactive examples of such criticism. Ion's response to negative information about the gods remains cerebral, stated as a hypothesis in response to a situation he is currently a mere spectator in. His exposure to Creusa's blistering anger nevertheless is shown to have an impact on his action around the stage. When he is given the stage space to himself, Ion is stilted and unable to continue his temple duties untroubled.[764] Later on, this is brought to a climax when Creusa goads him into killing her while she sits on the altar. This causes Ion to freeze in indecision and spurs him to criticise the gods for their improperly thought-out laws.[765] Ion's hybrid origins as both a mortal and a god, as well as his sheltered upbringing in the sanctuary of Delphi, has left him blinkered to the realities of the gods' nature, as evidenced by his careful cleaning of the sanctuary. As compared to Creusa's own forceful outrage stemming from her direct contact with Apollo, Ion's underinformed and conscientious personality precludes an excessive or impassioned display of outrage. Therefore, his suggestion of a

[759] Peels 2016: 564-565.
[760] Eur. *Tro.* 428-429; Eur. *Ion.* 897-906.
[761] Eur. *Tro.Wo.* 428-429; Eur. *Ion.* 905-906.
[762] Eur. *Tro.Wo.* 453; Eur. *Ion.* 1311.
[763] Eur. *Tro.* 306-307; Eur. *Ion.* 241.
[764] Eur. *Ion.* 433-440.
[765] Eur. *Ion.* 1312-1315.

penalty against the gods consists of a formal and dispassionate structure of fines being paid out from the temples, in-keeping with his preference for clear, codified systems.

It has been a repeated observation in this dissertation that many of the mortals who utter these denouncements do so before going knowingly to their deaths, with the increased emotionality of the scene driving the outburst, as the mortal characters acknowledge their final defeat and the gods' role in it. Antigone, who exhibited a constantly pious demeanour throughout her play, uses her final song and its escalated emotional pitch to ask incisive questions about the worth of piety when she is to suffer a particularly brutal punishment.[766] Similarly, Cassandra's manic entrance to the stage sets a heightened tone of agitation which culminates in her climactic destruction of her sacred garlands before she leaves the stage to go to her death. Both women bear resemblances to maenads in their final moments, as the peaking emotion creates an air of ecstasy and their final heights of despair cause them to transcend the constraints that previously kept them pious. The use of dialogue to rile characters to the point they are agitated enough to break with convention is another particular element to tragedy's medium that facilitates provocative and divergent thought on the gods. In *Hippolytus,* both the Nurse and Hippolytus emit their outbursts after partaking in a string of stichomythia that has wound the characters tensions to breaking point, causing the Nurse to doubt Aphrodite's divinity, and Hippolytus to express a desire to hurt the gods directly to the goddess he has been fixated on for much of his play.[767] Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus* similarly utters his denouncements of the gods after two exchanges, first with the Chorus of Athenian Elders and then with Creon.[768] These conversations observably agitate and provoke Oedipus with accusations of guilt for his part in the notorious events at Thebes, triggering his impassioned rebuttal, part of which consists of open blame against the gods for their role in placing him on the path that caused him to commit his crimes.

Criticising the gods is thus utilised in the dramas via emphatic and climactic statements when the characters are past the point of no return. Numerous characters utter their statements before they willingly take the course of action that they acknowledge will lead to their death. Ajax commits suicide, and Creusa intends to have herself killed on Apollo's alter, while Cassandra, Hecuba, and Antigone all utter statements that suggest their preparation to die,

[766] Soph. *Ant.* 919.
[767] Eur. *Hipp.* 311-353; 1395-1415.
[768] Soph. *OC.* 263-270; 962-965.

shortly before or after their observations on the gods' shortcomings.[769] While there are apparent exceptions, namely Ion and Tecmessa, there remains a link to the characters' inability to see a hopeful future. Tecmessa has suffered the death of her protector, Ajax, an eventuality she has dreaded since the play' beginning, while Ion utters his criticisms of Apollo's behaviour while experiencing severe uncertainty and frustration in light of the recent revelations on the god's morally dubious behaviour.[770]

As has been observed, common linguistic markers of mortals' criticisms of the gods occur in several of the examples investigated. First, denunciations against the gods often occur in juxtaposition with vocalisations that signal distress and calamity. Secondly, characters also frequently address the gods directly. Amphitryon in Euripides' *Heracles* addresses an absent Zeus in his criticism of the god's behaviour. Creusa and Ion also both do so, as does Cassandra and Hecuba.[771] Thirdly, it is notable that certain characters form their antagonistic commentaries on the gods via prayer or prayer formula. Creusa and Hecuba both phrase their statements against the gods in the form of conventional prayers, using the language and structure of the prayer to frame their complaints. The use of conventional prayer formula signals a desire on the part of the mortals for the gods to hear their criticisms. However, as each of the mentioned examples indicate, these prayers or attempts at prayers subvert the usual forms, as Hecuba interrupts her prayer formula to criticise the gods,[772] while Creusa's monody alters the typical formula of listing the occasions when the god had benefitted her, to emphasize instead how he has wronged her. These prayer formulas are thus used to communicate with the god, but with the twist that the formula signals a desire to deliver insults and criticisms, rather than praise. Even where a conventional prayer formula is not included, this communicative element remains observable. Antigone does not call to the gods at the moment of her death, but utters an address to her tomb, followed by three rhetorical questions on the worth of piety.[773] These rhetorical devices are used to create greater impact as she leaves the stage for the last time, whilst also spotlighting the injustice of her situation. Finally, vocalisations are frequently used to emphasise the characters' despair, and reminds us of the spoken nature of these comments, as the character speaks out with volume to project to the audience. For example, Hippolytus' cry of "φεῦ", uttered in his remarks about the gods, adds

[769] Soph. *Ajax.* 815-865. Eur. *Ion.* 1311. Eur. *Tro.* 459, 508,509. Soph. *Ant.* 559.
[770] Soph. *Aj.* 489-495; Eur. *Ion.* 1312-1315.
[771] Eur. *Heracles.* 339.
[772] Eur. *Tro.* 469-472; *Ion.* 859-922.
[773] Soph. *Ant.* 891.

further to the emotionality the character's presentation, emphasising his angst as he discovers the reasons for his premature death, namely the scheming of Aphrodite.[774] The use of these common factors points strongly to the performed and extroverted nature of the drama, as the repeated use of exclamations and address signal the importance to an audience to these expression of despair and outrage, as the characters evince a desire for their complaints to be heard.

The content of the characters' verbalisations reveal commonalities and variations in the causes of their unhappiness, and their reactions to the gods' apparent cruelty or neglect. For example, as seen in both *Ajax* and *Hippolytus,* the protagonists' heightened impressions of their own worthiness of godly favour inevitably leads to their disappointment when the gods either cause their downfall or do little to prevent it. This causes Ajax to eschew any further obligation to the gods, while Hippolytus wishes to exact hypothetical revenge upon them. However, in each of those plays, the supporting characters, such as Odysseus and Tecmessa in *Ajax,* and the Nurse and Theseus in *Hippolytus,* also express personalised and emotionally driven criticisms of the gods that are not based on their thwarted ambitions, but rather the distress they feel at the upheaval they have witnessed from the gods' malignant attention. In another example of outbursts matching their circumstances, in *Antigone* the titular character questions the point of worshipping the gods in light of her painful upcoming death, observing the inversion of piety and impiety through the gods' refusal to intervene in mortal matters, as her previous stalwart refusal to cross the gods' laws has still led to calamity. As Antigone observes, there is a confusing interchangeability of what one should do and what one should not do, an unclarity that she had appeared to be unbothered by until her final scene. This confusion of the boundaries between good and bad behaviour is also prevalent in *Ion,* where the title character observes that the gods' misbehaviour creates a poor example of mortals to follow. There is thus a common observation that the gods' dubious action or inaction undermines the moral and legal frameworks in which mortals operate. The distress that Ion and Antigone express, therefore, does not stem from their inflated impressions of their own importance, as with Ajax and Hippolytus. Instead, both Ion and Antigone exhibit a grounded understanding of the systemic problems improperly behaving gods cause, as any security or confidence in correct behaviour is weakened or eliminated. Thus, the aggressive and unflattering remarks about the gods do not emerge incongruously, but are emitted amidst states of chaos and instability. The

[774] Eur. *Hipp.* 1415.

characters who utter these denouncements are simply the most central to the narratives, and their outbursts emerge as commentary on the general atmosphere of disrepair evinced through the plays. It is the breakdown of ordinary, operational affairs that leads to the brief flourishing of impiety.

The reasons for such instability vary from play to play, but there is an overall emphasis on the obviation of centralised civic order through upheaval or exile. In *Ajax, Antigone,* and *Trojan Women,* there is an immediate context of warfare, with the destruction and chaos of the conflict directly leading to the destabilisation of conventional mores. While there is no warfare in *Ion* and *Hippolytus,* the households involved nevertheless face crises, as Creusa contemplates subverting her husband's planned adoption of Ion, and Phaedra is dying from her unnatural desire for Hippolytus. The household is thus shown to be under assault and deconstruction, which leads to reverence towards the gods being deprioritised. In *Oedipus at Colonus,* while the setting is within a grove in which he feels secure, Oedipus is nevertheless exiled from any civic centres, and is threatened with expulsion from the one area in which he wishes to stay. Oedipus' utterance does not take a wide view of divine malfeasance, and he does not remark on the diluting of boundaries of good and bad, but rather focuses on how he personally suffered in the wake of the divine's negative attention on him. Indeed, Oedipus' focus on his suffering, and how it motivates him to speak against the divine, is common throughout all case studies discussed. The dramas thus demonstrate the characters' emotions as driving their attacks on the gods, as the weakening conventions from the surrounding community enables greater prominence and expression of the individual's thoughts of discontent. Hecuba's references to her pained body, and Creusa's description of her internal experience of her memory and psyche demonstrate this explicitly, while other characters use the first person to emphasise their individual experience.[775] While there are certainly common features of the content and the form of these statements, these instances of impiety are shown to be expressly personal and unique to the characters who utter them, as the tragedies make it impossible to separate the character from their specific criticisms of the gods, as the embedded narrative explains in detail how these characters ended up developing a personal discontent with the gods.

Following many of these denouncements, the mortals who utter them regularly receive censure and chastisement from other characters. Hippolytus is hurriedly shushed by Artemis,

[775] Eur. *Tro.* 114-116. Eur. *Ion.* 250, 859.

while Tecmessa similarly urges Ajax to watch his mouth.[776] Creusa also faces light criticisms from Ion during their first conversation, when she cannot hold back her extreme distaste for Apollo and his places of worship.[777] These moments in which mortal statements against the god are met with suppression suggests that, despite the unbridled expression of these denouncements, they nonetheless contain a potent sense of taboo. While this taboo necessitates a degree of caution, it also reveals how this sensitivity could be exploited for dramatic effect, as the tensions naturally rise upon the utterance of such impieties. In the examples where mortals do not meet with any censure, the criticisms tend to be milder and less direct. For example, in *Antigone,* the protagonist does not criticise the gods directly with any insults or refusals to worship them, but phrases her dissatisfaction in the form of questions. Similarly, in *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus only hints (albeit very clearly) that it is the gods to blame for his crimes and offers his own theory as to why the gods may be justified in targeting him. These Sophoclean examples are notably less overt than the Euripidean examples studied. Indeed, no Sophoclean drama studied within the case studies has included any serious attempt at reprisals, as seen in Euripides' *Hippolytus* and *Ion,* and the attribution of negative values and insults to the gods occurs less directly and forcefully in *Ajax, Antigone* and *Oedipus at Colonus,* than in *Hippolytus, Trojan Women* and *Ion.* Euripides' flagrant use of clashes between gods and mortals to increase the tensions within his plays may be a stylistic choice, as his plays are notably more fast-paced in their points of escalation than Sophocles', creating more open conflict between mortals and gods; nevertheless, it is key to note that many of his plays still typically end with conventional affirmations of the gods' power.[778] In contrast to Euripides' style, Sophoclean examples are constructed so to produce an understated but impactful impression of aggrievement through their staging and use in the narrative. Antigone's intensive questioning of the purpose for piety in light of her unfair punishment or Oedipus' offended refusal to move from the grove of the Eumenides, while only briefly impious, emphasise the characters' specific and individualised complaints on the gods' in the immediate context of their plays' events, and the coherence of their affective and cognitive responses with the situations as they are presented in the play.

With the audience's successful reaching of the "melting-point" (Chapter 2), these affective and intensive displays would stimulate the audience's own sensory experience, which

[776] Eur. *Hipp.* 1416; Soph. *Ajax.* 591.
[777] Eur. *Ion.* 287.
[778] Lefkowitz 1989: 72-75; Gibert 2017: 67.

facilitated the full dramatic and emotional effect of these plays in their discourse.[779] Therefore, the plays' aesthetic use of physicality and vocality grants greater insight of the characters' presentation as individuals with integrated inner lives that are informed and shaped by the circumstances which still impact them.[780] This living dimension to the genre, of conveying the emotional lives of the characters not only through reported dialogue but through visual cues, vocalisations, and interpersonal conversations, and the relating of this internal experience to their dealings with the cosmic forces of which they are immediately subject, reifies their relationship with the gods in grounded terms. Their emotional outbursts are accompanied by their invested assessments of the divine's undesirable influence, unique to them and their particular circumstances. Tragedy thus offered an exploratory framework where myth was translated into animate, physical representation, with the characters responding with comprehensible and coherent personalities. In these established personalities, the characters' voicing of how the problematic aspects of the gods' rule impacted them offered an opportunity for authentic and natural frustrations to be expressed and explored, in ways that were not appropriate for acknowledgement in other areas of public discourse.[781]

Many of the tragedies discussed sought to resolve the problematising elements of godly behaviour with information that affirms a conventional perspective on the gods. Thus, Ajax and Hippolytus' culpability and open transgressions provide context for the negative attention from the divine, while the establishment of their cults offers a future relevancy for the flawed but renowned title characters. Oedipus, in *Oedipus at Colonus*, openly addresses the central, fraught question at the heart of the earlier play about his life, as the conflict between his individual responsibility and the gods' role in his crimes is addressed directly, with immediate reference to Oedipus' weakened state and corporeal limitations. Similarly, Creusa, in *Ion*, points out and derides a staple mythological trope, namely the seizure of mortal girls by rapacious male gods. In these examples, the characters demonstrate a self-awareness of the mythical content of the stories they appear in. Thus, established tropes are thrown into relief by the characters questioning the narrative. Creusa's blistering rage at Apollo for his rape holds relevance in terms of this recognition of a wider pattern within known myth, as she does not only refer to her own experiences, but to a plurality of female

[779] Pickard-Cambridge 1968: 187; Zeitlin 1993: 149; Worman 2021: 3; Ruffell 2008: 38.
[780] Vernant & Vidal-Naquet 1990: 32-33.
[781] Souvinou-Inwood 2000: 291. Parker 1997: 146.

victims of the gods.[782] Ion's commentary on this regular godly behaviour at the end of his first meeting with Creusa also points to the play's awareness of this mythological pattern, which Ion condemns explicitly.[783] These moments of disdain for the gods thus offered an opportunity for the open critique of the customs and behaviours spread across the mythological corpus, with the live performance engendering force and dynamism to these critiques through the empathy of witnessing the characters struggle openly with the immediate problem of the gods' role in their lives. The satisfying reconciliations achieved in *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Ion* speak to the resolutions possible, even when aggressions between gods and mortals have escalated to open conflict.

To conclude, Athenian tragedy regularly presented mortals entering into significant and real relationships with the gods and their nature, and included in these presentations the negative and problematic aspects of this dynamic. Embedded in the ritual matrix of the Dionysia Festival, building on and adapting myths already known to the audience, tragedy offered an integrated experienced of heightened, enacted mythical history, in which mortals reacted with increasing unpredictability towards the gods, and with their challenges to their deities shown to be motivated and powered by their overwhelming emotions.[784] These moments offer insights into how drama was effected on the tragic stage, and specifically how it intersected with its religious and mythical content. The raw emotional content of the outrage and horror expressed by Creusa, Ajax and the other characters who regard and denounce their gods with unflinching reprehension was enhanced by actions that conveyed the characters' internal states. Furthermore, the dramatic force these instances provided, as pinnacle moments in the plot, in which the characters' interest in following prescribed forms of piety disintegrates in the face of their extreme hardships, speak to the potential for tragedy's potential as an emotionally impactful and immersive artform. Across the Greek world, beneath the polite and conventional façade of piety, rumbled deep discontent and bewilderment on inconsistencies and cruelties present in myth and religion.[785] The intensities of tragic enactment, focalised through the audience's vicarious spectatorship, allowed these darker sentiments to emerge briefly and in the form of emotional flashpoints that breached religious conventions in a controlled, highly aestheticized environment. Problematised

[782] Eur. *Ion.* 879-888.
[783] Eur. *Ion.* 445-447.
[784] Souvinou-Inwood 2000: 149.
[785] Versnel 1981: 37-43.

understandings of the gods were drawn out through interpersonal dialogue and articulated through physical performance and emotionalised statements. This emotionalization of critical religious thought was thus instrumentalised by the dramatic and mimetic medium of tragedy to meaningfully work through potential problems between gods and mortals.

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