

# Paths of Song

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The Lyric Dimension of Greek Tragedy

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# Table of Contents

**Abbreviations — IX**

Rosa Andújar, Thomas R.P. Coward, and Theodora A. Hadjimichael  
**Introduction — 1**

## **I Tragic and Lyric Poets in Dialogue**

P. J. Finglass  
**Stesichorus and Greek Tragedy — 19**

Thomas R.P. Coward  
**'Stesichorean' Footsteps in the *Parodos* of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* — 39**

Pavlos Sfyroeras  
**Pindar at Colonus: A Sophoclean Response to *Olympians* 2 and 3 — 65**

Lucia Athanassaki  
**Talking Thalassocracy in Fifth-century Athens: From Bacchylides' 'Theseus Odes' (17 & 18) and Cimonian Monuments to Euripides' *Troades* — 87**

## **II Refiguring Lyric Genres in Tragedy**

Laura Swift  
**Competing Generic Narratives in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* — 119**

Andrea Rodighiero  
**How Sophocles Begins: Reshaping Lyric Genres in Tragic Choruses — 137**

Anastasia Lazani  
**Constructing Chorality in *Prometheus Bound*: The Poetic Background of Divine Choruses in Tragedy — 163**

Alexandros Kampakoglou  
**Epiniian Discourse in Euripides' Tragedies: The Case of *Alexandros* — 187**

### III Performing the Chorus: Ritual, Song, and Dance

Richard Rawles

**Theoric song and the Rhetoric of Ritual in Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women* — 221**

Giovanni Fanfani

**What melos for Troy? Blending of Lyric Genres in the First *Stasimon* of Euripides' *Trojan Women* — 239**

Rosa Andújar

**Hyporchematic Footprints in Euripides' *Electra* — 265**

Enrico Emanuele Prodi

**Dancing in Delphi, Dancing in Thebes: The Lyric Chorus in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* — 291**

Naomi A. Weiss

**Performing the Wedding Song in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* — 315**

Timothy Power

**New Music in Sophocles' *Ichneutae* — 343**

Andrew Ford

**Afterword: On the Nonexistence of Tragic Odes — 367**

**Bibliography — 381**

**Notes on Contributors — 415**

**Index of Proper Names and Subjects — 419**

**Index Locorum — 433**

Enrico Emanuele Prodi

# Dancing in Delphi, Dancing in Thebes: The Lyric Chorus in Euripides' *Phoenician Women*

Despite the great popularity of Euripides' *Phoenician Women* throughout antiquity, its chorus had a bad press already at that time.<sup>1</sup> When Aristophanes' *Dicaeopolis* jibes that, as he puts on Telephus' garb for his peroration to the old men of Acharnae, 'the audience [must] know me, who I really am, but the members of the chorus [must] stand there like idiots' (*Acharnians* 442–3), an unnamed critic remarks:

τοὺς δ' αὖ χορευτὰς : καὶ διὰ τούτων τὸν Εὐριπίδην διασύρει. οὗτος γὰρ εἰσάγει τοὺς χοροὺς οὔτε τὰ ἀκόλουθα φθεγγομένους τῇ ὑποθέσει, ἀλλ' ἱστορίας τινὰς ἀπαγγέλλοντας, ὡς ἐν ταῖς Φοινίσσαις, οὔτε ἐμπαθῶς ἀντιλαμβάνομένους τῶν ἀδικηθέντων, ἀλλὰ μεταξὺ πίπτοντας.<sup>2</sup>

(Schol. EFLh Ar. *Ach.* 443 Wilson)

'But the members of the chorus' : With these words too he is ridiculing Euripides, for the choruses that the latter brings on the stage do not say something relevant to the plot, but tell some stories, as in the *Phoenician Women*, nor do they emotionally side with those suffering injustice, but are simply interposed.

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I am deeply indebted to audiences in Oxford, Seattle, Liverpool, and Venice, which heard versions of this paper and helped it develop into its present shape; to the editors of this volume, for their feedback as well as for kindly requesting it *in lieu* of the one originally delivered at the *Paths of Song* conference; and to Vanessa Cazzato, who much improved it. Quotations from the *Phoenician Women* are taken from Mastronarde's Teubner text (Leipzig 1988). All translations are my own. This paper was first delivered at the memorial colloquium for James Worthen in 2010, and the written version, though much changed, remains dedicated to his memory.

1 On the popularity of the *Phoenician Women* see for instance Bremer 1983, 294; 1984; Criboire 2001.

2 πίπτοντας is found in place of the transmitted ἀντιπίπτοντας only on the TLG-E (the newer online version has again ἀντι-). Filippomaria Pontani, who alerted me to this fact, must be right that the reading – be it due to a rogue scribe or a mere mistake – is the correct one. The sense of the text as transmitted is unclear, as is shown by the paraphrases given by Riemschneider 1940, 55 ('sondern gegen den Zusammenhang dazwischenfallen') and Nikolaidou-Arabatzi 2015, 26 n. 2 ('but their narration lies somewhere in between the plot of the myth', significantly ignoring ἀντι-); conversely, μεταξύ πίπτειν is amply attested and unproblematic in context.

He was not alone. A commentator on the *Phoenician Women* itself curtly notes the ostensible irrelevance of the third *stasimon* to the present events – specifically, to Menoeceus’ heroic self-sacrifice – to which it ought to have reacted:

ἔβας ἔβας ὦ πτεροῦσσα : πρὸς οὐδὲν ταῦτα· ἔδει γὰρ τὸν χορὸν οἰκτίσασθαι διὰ τὸν θάνατον Μενοικέως ἢ ἀποδέχεσθαι τὴν εὐψυχίαν τοῦ νεανίσκου, ἀλλὰ τὰ περὶ Οἰδίπου καὶ τὴν Σφίγγα διηγεῖται τὰ πολλάκις εἰρημένα.

‘You came, you came, O winged one’ : This is pointless. The chorus should have expressed pity for Menoeceus’ death or approval for the young man’s courage; instead it narrates the story of Oedipus and the Sphinx, stuff told over and over.

ἀραῖσι τέκεια μέλεος : ἀπὸ τούτων ἐχρῆν εὐθέως ἄρξασθαι τὸν χορὸν. ἐκεῖνα γὰρ περιττά ἐστίν.

‘With curses his children, wretched one’ : The chorus should have begun from this straight-away. What comes before is superfluous.

(Schol. MTAB E. *Ph.* 1019, 1053 Schwartz)

Contemporary scholarship has put much effort into investigating the role of the chorus and qualifying these rather ungracious statements.<sup>3</sup> On this occasion we shall focus on a particular and hitherto undervalued aspect of the Phoenician women’s relevance to the play named after them: namely, the intimated characterisation of the chorus as a (cultic) chorus within the dramatic fiction, a characterisation which is parallel to, but independent of, their being a chorus in the theatrical reality.<sup>4</sup> Helene Foley put her finger on this characterisation over three decades ago: ‘This chorus, unlike Aeschylus’ chorus of native-born women [*sc. in Seven against Thebes*], is almost a chorus by profession ... The Phoenician maidens dedicate themselves to Apollo and to a life of celebrating myth in a foreign land through dance, song, and prayer in honor of the gods’.<sup>5</sup> However, she did not pursue this valuable insight further or investigate

<sup>3</sup> Beside the relevant parts of the commentaries by Balmori 1945, Craik 1988, Mastronarde 1994, and Amiech 2004, see Riemschneider 1940; Arthur 1977; Parry 1978, 166–73; Cerbo 1984–1985; Foley 1985, 118–19, 136–9; Mueller-Goldingen 1985 *passim*; Nancy 1986; Calame 1994–1995; Gould 1996, 224–5; Medda 2005 (condensed into 2006, 18–27); Papadopoulou 2008, 78–87; Lamari 2010 *passim*; Hilton 2011, 41–6.

<sup>4</sup> By arguing for a further, exceptional layer of chorality in the *Phoenician Women*, this approach complements and enriches the argument made by Calame 1994–1995 on the enduring cultic function of the tragic chorus with reference to the same play. Compare also Zimmermann 2002 on the ‘duplice carattere del coro, contemporaneamente *dramatis persona* e coro culturale’ (p. 122) in Aeschylus’ *Seven against Thebes*.

<sup>5</sup> Foley 1985, 119, 144; see also Hilton 2011, 42. A similar argument is compellingly made by Murnaghan 2006, 99–100 with reference to Euripides’ more obviously metatheatrical *Bacchae*,

its significance for the chorus and for the play more broadly. Doing so shall therefore be our purpose on this occasion. The first part of this paper investigates the elements of choral characterisation that are subtly but persistently woven into the chorus' self-presentation in the early phases of the play, with parallels from cultic (and para-cultic) lyric and dedicatory epigrams; the second and final part explores the Phoenician women's status as a theoric chorus sent from Tyre to Thebes and Delphi and how such status is integral to the narratives they sing and to the role that they perform in the rest of the play.

The Phoenician women introduce themselves twice: first to the audience in the first strophic pair of the *parodos* (202–25), then to Polynices in the first episode (280–5). The latter passage almost sounds like a more prosaic résumé of the bare facts of the first,<sup>6</sup> and we shall return to it shortly. But let us first examine the opening of the *parodos*:

Τύριον οἶδμα λιποῦσ' ἔβαν  
 ἀκροθίνια Λοξίαι  
 Φοινίσσας ἀπὸ νάσου,  
 Φοίβωι δούλα μελάθρων (205)

ἴν' ὑπὸ δειράσι νιφοβόλοις  
 Παρνασοῦ κατενάσθη,  
 Ἴόνιον κατὰ πόντον ἐλά-  
 ται πλεύσασα, περιρρύτων  
 ὑπὲρ ἀκαρπίστων πεδίων (210)  
 Σικελίας Ζεφύρου πνοαῖς  
 ἵππεύσαντος ἐν οὐρανῶι  
 κάλλιστον κελάδημα.

πόλεος ἐκπροκριθεῖσ' ἐμᾶς  
 καλλιστεύματα Λοξίαι (215)  
 Καδμείων ἔμολον γᾶν,  
 κλεινῶν Ἀγηνοριδᾶν

ὁμογενεῖς ἐπὶ Λαῖου  
 πεμφθεῖσ' ἐνθάδε πύργους. (220)

ἴσα δ' ἀγάλμασι χρυσοτεύ-  
 κτοις Φοίβωι λάτρις ἐγενόμαν·  
 ἔτι δὲ Κασταλίας ὕδωρ  
 περιμένει με κόμας ἐμᾶς  
 δεῦσαι παρθένιον χλιδᾶν  
 Φοιβείαισι λατρείαις. (225)

where '[t]he chorus of Asian bacchantes is playing a role, but it is the role, effectively, of a chorus' (p. 100).

<sup>6</sup> On the relation between the two passages see Lamari 2010, 51.

Leaving the Tyrian swell I have come as a choice offering for Loxias from the Phoenician island, a slave of the halls for Phoebus where he dwells below the ridge of snow-strewn Parnassus; I sailed through the Ionian sea by ship as Zephyr with his blasts galloped in the sky over the barren plains that wash around Sicily, a most beautiful sound.

Chosen out of my city as the fairest gift for Loxias, I have come to the land of the Cadmeans, sent here to the towers of Laius, kin to the glorious Agenorids. Equal to the gold-wrought statues I became a servant of Phoebus; but the water of Castalia is still waiting for me to steep the maidenly finery of my hair in Phoebus' service.

What invites attention is the interlacing of the language of servitude, offering, and desirability across strophe and antistrophe. Servitude to Apollo is first mentioned at line 205 (δούλα), when the song icastically moves, like the Phoenician women themselves, from Tyre to Delphi, from origin to destination.<sup>7</sup> The chorus returns to it in the second half of the antistrophe, with the repetition in close proximity of the co-radicals λάτρις (221) and λατρείαις (225): the former looking back to their dedication to Phoebus at the point of origin, the latter looking forward to their eventual entering his service at Delphi (though pointedly avoiding all mention of their journey there). Consistently with their projected status as sacred slaves gifted to the divinity, at the very beginning of their song they describe themselves as ἀκροθίνια 'choicest offerings' (or, in a military context, 'spoils') (203). As though prompted by the West Wind's κάλλιστον κελάδημα, in the antistrophe they dwell on their beauty. They are καλλιστεύματα 'most beautiful things' for Loxias (215), chosen as such out of their entire city (214). In their service to Phoebus they are like golden ἀγάλματα, statues or pleasing gift-offerings (220–1). The reference to the 'maidenly finery of [their] hair' (223–4) completes and specifies the picture as one of almost eroticised female attractiveness. The focal point of this complex description is the chorus' self-definition as ἀκροθίνια, which connects the Phoenician women's sacred role with their physical attributes. This connection is highlighted by the very structure of the antistrophe: καλλιστεύματα Λοξίαι (215) resumes the tautometric ἀκροθίνια Λοξίαι of the strophe (203), while the two further references to their desirability accompany the two references to their subordination (221 λάτρις, 225 λατρείαις).

An emphasis on the beauty or worth of the offering is integral to ancient Greek discourse on dedication; so is self-reference as a dedication. A handful of examples from Maria Letizia Lazzarini's collection of archaic dedicatory in-

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<sup>7</sup> On the language of servitude, labour, and submission in Greek religion (which becomes prevalent in Hellenistic and Roman times, but with a few fifth- and fourth-century antecedents) see Pleket 1981, 159–71 (164 on the *Phoenician Women*).



scriptions will suffice to illustrate this point.<sup>8</sup> An ἀκροθίνιον can openly refer to itself as such: Lazzarini 704 ἀφοροθίνια τῷ Διὸς τῷ Ὀλυμπίῳ, ‘choicest offerings for Olympian Zeus’; 705 τῷ Διὸς τῷ Ὀλυμπίῳ ἡκροθίνιον τῷ πεδι[, ‘choicest offering of ... for Olympian Zeus’; 981 Ἀθηναῖοι τ[ῶι] Ἀπόλλων[ι ἀπὸ Μέδ]ον ἀκ[ροθ]ίνια τῆς Μαραθ[ῶ]νι μ[ά]χης, ‘the Athenians (dedicate) to Apollo the spoils of the battle of Marathon’.<sup>9</sup> Ἄγαλμα is another frequently employed term, either on its own or coupled with words or expressions highlighting the beauty of the object offered:<sup>10</sup> Lazzarini 720 = CEG 363 Χαλροδάμανς με ἀνέθεκε θιοῖν περικαλλῆς ἄγαλμα, ‘Chalcodamas dedicated me, a most beautiful offering for the gods’; 728b = CEG 422 Χηραμύης μ’ ἀνέθηκε θ(ε)ῆι περικαλλῆς ἄγαλμα, ‘Cheramyēs dedicated me, a most beautiful offering for the goddess’; 856.1 = CEG 302.1 [Φοί]βο μὲν εἶμ’ ἄγαλ[μα Λ]ατ[οί]δα καλ[ό]ν, ‘I am a beautiful offering for Phoebus son of Leto’. The whole a part of which is selected as an offering can also be mentioned, providing a parallel for the reference to the choice of the Phoenician women at line 214: Lazzarini 636 = CEG 193 Νέαρχος ἀνέθεκε[ν ἡ] κεραμε]ῦς ἔργον ἀπαρχὲν τᾶθ[ε]ναίαι, ‘Nearchus the potter dedicated a tithe from his work to Athena’; 638.1–2 = CEG 205.1–2 Παλάδι Ἀθαναίαι Λύσον ἀνέθεκεν ἀπαρχὲν / ἡδὼν αὐτῷ κτ[ε]άνων, ‘Lyson dedicated to Pallas Athena a tithe from his own possessions’; 803.1–2 = CEG 414.1–2 Δημοκύδης τόδ’ ἄγαλμα Τελεστοδίκη τ’ ἀπὸ κοινῶν / εὐχσάμενοι στήσαν παρθένωι Ἀρτέμιδι, ‘Democydes and Telestodice set up this offering from their common possessions to the virgin Artemis in fulfillment of a vow’.

Several of the examples just cited refer to two further elements in the dedication process: the name of the dedicator(s) and the act of dedication itself. Reference to these is absent from the *parodos* (though note the hint at 219, πεμφθεῖσ’ ἐνθάδε) but appears explicitly in the chorus’ subsequent self-presentation to Polynices (280–5):

Φοίνισσα μὲν γῆ πατρὶς ἢ θρέψασά με, (280)  
 Ἀγήνορος δὲ παῖδες ἐκ παίδων δορὸς  
 Φοίβωι μ’ ἔπεμψαν ἐνθάδ’ ἀκροθίνιον·  
 μέλλων δὲ πέμπειν μ’ Οἰδίου κλεινὸς γόνος  
 μαντεῖα σεμνὰ Λοξίου τ’ ἐπ’ ἐσχάρας,  
 ἐν τῷιδ’ ἐπεστράτευσαν Ἀργεῖοι πόλιν. (285)

The soil of Phoenicia is the fatherland that nurtured me. The sons of Agenor’s sons sent me here, spoils of the spear for Phoebus; but when Oedipus’ glorious son was about to send me to the revered oracle and altars of Loxias, just then the Argives marched upon the city.

<sup>8</sup> Lazzarini 1976.

<sup>9</sup> On the dedication of spoils see Jim 2014, 176–202.

<sup>10</sup> On ἄγαλμα as a key word and concept in dedicatory inscriptions see Day 2010, 85–129.

The similarity between the first three lines of this extract and dedicatory epigrams such as Lazzarini 856 = *CEG* 302 (cited above) is remarkable. It strengthens the impression that the first strophic pair of the *parodos* persistently and deliberately echoes the language of dedication as familiar from dedicatory epigrams, thereby underscoring the Phoenician women's envisaged role as human offerings to Apollo.

The dedication of human beings in sanctuaries abroad is not unique in Greek mythology, or indeed history.<sup>11</sup> In literature it is attested as early as the cyclic *Epigoni*, where Tiresias' daughter Manto was said to have been dedicated as an offering in Delphi (fr. 3 Bernabé = 4 West *ap. schol.* A.R. 1.308b Wendel). Upon hearing Ion call himself a 'slave of the god', Euripides' Creusa politely inquires whether he is the dedication of a city (ἀνάθημα πόλεως) or was sold by somebody (*Ion* 310), showing no sign of finding either option strange. Several foundation myths employ a story pattern according to which a group of people, or sometimes an entire population, is dedicated or tithed to a temple (using explicit terms such as ἀνάθημα 'dedication', ἀπαρχή 'tithe', δεκατεύω 'to tithe', ἀκροθίσιον) and then goes on to found a city.<sup>12</sup> The Mycenaean record also offers examples of what appears to be construed as a gift of men or women to divinities, although it is unclear how it worked in practice.<sup>13</sup>

But are we to think that the service the Phoenician women see themselves performing in the 'kultisches Idyll'<sup>14</sup> of Delphi is limited to being there quite beautifully and belonging to Apollo, like the golden statues and the other offerings in his temple? The mesode (226–38) points us towards a more complex and far-reaching solution:

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**11** A well-known historical case is that of the so-called Locrian Maidens, on which see Graf 1978. On human dedications in the Hellenistic and Roman East see now Caneva/Delli Pizzi 2015, emphasising that this cluster of phenomena 'cannot be framed within a single interpretative paradigm, beyond the mere fact that they all shared in a special relationship with a sanctuary' (190).

**12** See the evidence collected by Ducat 1974, 100–6 and Jim 2014, 281–8; one instance is also recalled at p. 307 below.

**13** The example that first comes to mind is a tablet from Pylos, PY Tn 316 (*DMG* 172) where a series of divinities are allocated gold bowls, gold cups, women, and/or men. The human offerings have been variously interpreted, from cup-bearers (Ventris/Chadwick in *DMG* p. 284) to victims for human sacrifice (Chadwick in *DMG*<sup>2</sup> p. 460) to temple-servants (Hughes 1991, 199–202), the latter seemingly the likelier. Human beings also exchange hands, with a deity as the recipient in at least two cases, in PY An 1281 (*DMG*<sup>2</sup> 312). Several other Pylian tablets (and possibly one from Cnossus, KN X 966) refer to named individuals as *te-o-jo do-e-ro* or *do-e-ra* 'slave of the god', see Gérard-Rousseau 1968, 76–8.

**14** Mueller-Goldingen 1985, 66.

ὦ λάμπουσα πέτρα πυρὸς  
 δικόρυφον σέλας ὑπὲρ ἄκρων  
 βακχείων Διονύσου,  
 οἷνα θ' ἄκαθαμέριον  
 στάζεις, τὸν πολύκαρπον οἶ- (230)  
 νάνθας ἰεῖσα βότρυν,  
 ζᾷθεά τ' ἄντρα δράκοντος οὐ-  
 ρεαί τε σκοπιαὶ θεῶν  
 νιφόβολόν τ' ὄρος ἱερόν, εἰ-  
 λίσσων ἀθανάτας θεοῦ (235)  
 χορὸς γενοίμαν ἄφοβος,  
 παρὰ μεσόμφαλα γάλα Φοί-  
 βου Δίρκαν προλιποῦσα.

O rock that flashes the twin-peaked light of fire over Dionysus' rapturous heights; vine that drips every day as it sends forth the grape of the vine which bears much fruit; divine cave of the serpent; mountain lookouts of the gods; holy snow-strewn mountain; – may I become a fearless chorus of the immortal goddess, whirling round by the hollow of Phoebus, the navel of the earth, once I have left Dirce.

After remarking their absence from Delphi at the end of the preceding antistrophe, the women elaborate in almost fantasising terms on the singing and dancing that awaits them there. This is easily related to the phenomenon that Albert Henrichs – in a paper whose title the present one consciously echoes – terms choral projection: 'when Sophoklean and Euripidean choruses locate their own dancing in the past or in the future, in contrast to the here and now of their immediate performance, or when choruses project their collective identity onto groups of dancers distant from the concrete space of the orchestra and dancing in the allusive realm of the dramatic imagination'.<sup>15</sup> Choral projection, yes, but with a twist. Firstly, in its context within the play it is not an escapist fantasy like many other occurrences of this topos, but rooted in the reality of a determined, explicit, and indeed divinely sanctioned destination (however hindered and rendered uncertain by the present war, as will be explained in the second strophic pair). Moreover, and more importantly, the choral singing and danc-

<sup>15</sup> Henrichs 1996, 49. In that publication he lists the *Phoenician Women* among plays which feature 'a complex pattern of choral projection and choral self-reference that extends over three or more choral odes' (51) but does not elaborate further beyond noting καλλίχορος at line 786 and chastising Mastronarde 1994, 378 n. 1 for excluding a metatheatrical interpretation of that adjective. My argument proceeds in a somewhat different direction, although the two are not mutually exclusive. For recent treatments of choral projection that include its ritual dimension (which is crucial for the *Phoenician Women*, as the rest of our discussion will show) see Kowalzig 2007b, esp. 232–42, Nikolaidou-Arabatzi 2015.

ing that they envision themselves doing upon their arrival in Delphi is not only the actual occupation of the Athenian choreutes in the reality of the tragic performance, but also consistent with the characterisation of the Phoenician women throughout the action of the play, as we shall see. This is a consequence of the way in which the cluster of dedicatory self-references in the first strophic pair of the *parodos* and the choral tension of the mesode resonate with an established network of associations between song – especially, but not exclusively,<sup>16</sup> choral songs for public worship, or ‘hymns’ – and dedication.

In Simon Pulleyn’s words, ‘[t]he hymn is clearly seen as a gift or offering, an ἄγαλμα for the god’.<sup>17</sup> Two ancient anecdotes, or perhaps two variants of one, have Pindar state that he composed a dithyramb or a paeon for the purpose of a sacrifice, θύσων.<sup>18</sup> As Mary Depew has convincingly shown, ‘hymns’ partake of a discourse of self-referential deixis that is shared with material dedications.<sup>19</sup> ‘Dedicatory statues, votive reliefs, inscriptions, and hymns have one thing in common: they typically present, in deictic terms fitting to their medium, the act of dedication itself’.<sup>20</sup> So, as we have seen, does our chorus, both in the first strophic pair of the *parodos* and (in more concise and explicit terms) upon their meeting Polynices in the first episode. Greek cult songs from the archaic to the Hellenistic age offer parallels for several of the dedicatory self-references whereby we have linked the *parodos* to dedicatory inscriptions. Firstly, prayers for reception imply to an extent one’s self-representation as an offering. In the final stanza of Pindar’s *Paeon* 5 (D5 Rutherford, quoted in full at pp. 309–10 below) the speaker entreats Apollo and Artemis to receive (δέξασθε) him, their servant, kindly, together with the sweet-sounding paeon he brings.<sup>21</sup> A similar prayer, addressed to Apollo as Παιάων, concludes what is commonly known as the third triad of *Paeon* 6 (D6 Rutherford). The opening of the same poem – if it is indeed the same poem – is an elaborate prayer to Delphi that she might receive (δέξαι) the speaker, the ‘songful mouthpiece of the Pierian

**16** See for instance Steiner 1993 on Pindar’s association of song and material artefacts such as statues and stelae (with their respective inscriptions) in the victory odes.

**17** Pulleyn 1997, 49.

**18** Dithyramb: Phld. *Mus.* 4.135 p. II 261 Delattre (fr. \*86a Sn.-M.). Paeon: *Pi. apophth.* p. I 3 Drachmann, *Eust. prooem. in Pi.* 31.1 Kambylis = p. III 302 Drachmann. See Svenbro 1984, 926 (suggesting that the anecdote on the paeon may refer to *Pae.* 6.127–8), 929; Pulleyn 1997, 49–50, who notes that the *topos* of the ‘smokeless’ sacrifice of poetry persists in post-Classical poetry (Call. fr. 494 Pf., Leon. Alex. 1.3 Page = *FGE* 1866); compare Kowalzig 2004: 49–50.

**19** Depew 2000. Parts of her arguments had been anticipated by Svenbro 1984; Day 1994, 55–6; Pulleyn 1997, 49–51.

**20** Depew 2000, 64.

**21** Day 1994, 55–6.

Ones', together with the Graces and Aphrodite.<sup>22</sup> The latter is a thinly veiled reference to the charm and attractiveness of the performance (and of the performers);<sup>23</sup> a similar allusion can be found in 'Paeon' 12.5–8 (G1 Rutherford, actually a *Prosodion*),<sup>24</sup> where the sacrifices sent from Naxos to Delos are said to come Χαρίτεσσι μίγδαν 'together with the Graces'. Furthermore, the notion of the pleasantness of the offering stands behind the emphasis on χαίρειν that pervades both dedicatory inscriptions and hymnic poetry.<sup>25</sup> Beside the obvious example of the *Homeric Hymns*, where χαῖρε normally introduces the conclusion of the poem, similar expressions are used in explicit connection with the song itself in the refrain of the Dictaeon hymn to the Kouros (*IC* III/2 2 = *CA* pp. 160–1),<sup>26</sup> Aristonous' hymn to Apollo (*FD* III/2 192.45 = *CA* p. 164),<sup>27</sup> and the so-called Erythraean paeon to Asclepius in the version found at Ptolemais (*IGR* I/5 1154.30–1 = *CA* p. 138).<sup>28</sup> Isyllus' paeon (*IG* IV<sup>2</sup>/1 128 = *CA* p. 135) and the history of its composition are explicitly equated with a dedication by the inscription that preserves it: ταῦτα τοί, ὦ μέγ' ἄριστε θεῶν, ἀνέθηκεν Ἴσυλλος (83), 'to you, O far the best of the gods, Isyllus dedicated these'<sup>29</sup> – an equation emphasised by the fact that, like the other hymnic compositions just cited, its text was really set up as a dedication in a sacred space.

One can thus argue that the Phoenician women's self-presentation in the *parodos* and the associations that it evokes bestow on them a clear overtone of chorality that is internal to the dramatic fiction and consequential with it, overlapping with and emphasised by (but not exclusively relying on) the obvious fact that they actually are a chorus in the reality of the stage. It is important to note, with Leslie Kurke, that the analogy with sacrifice and dedication concerns 'not the poem per se ... but the poem in full choral performance, sung and danced in unison and in perfect synchronization by a well-trained, beautifully outfitted chorus'.<sup>30</sup> In Pindar's fifth and sixth *Paeans*, as we have just seen, what Leto's

<sup>22</sup> Day 1994, 61; Depew 2000, 64, 75–6.

<sup>23</sup> See Rutherford 2001, 307 with Day 2010, 252–3.

<sup>24</sup> On *P.Oxy.* 1792 (whose fr. 1 preserves 'Pae.' 12) as a manuscript of Pindar's *Prosodia* not *Paeans* see D'Alessio 1997, 25–7.

<sup>25</sup> See Day 2000, 46–57; Depew 2000, 62–4; Day 2010, 234–8, 248–54, 262–3. On the functioning of χαίρις between the divine and the human sphere see also Jim 2014: 22–3, 60–84.

<sup>26</sup> Depew 2000, 63.

<sup>27</sup> On Aristonous' hymn see Furley / Bremer 2001, II 45–52; LeVen 2014, 299–304, esp. 304.

<sup>28</sup> Day 2010, 249–51. On the Erythraean paeon see Furley / Bremer 2001, II 161–7; LeVen 2014, 286–94, esp. 292–3.

<sup>29</sup> Depew 2000, 64. On Isyllus' paeon and the inscription in which it is embedded see Furley / Bremer 2001, II 180–92; Kolde 2003, esp. 47–8, 220; LeVen 2014, 317–28, esp. 318, 328.

<sup>30</sup> Kurke 2012, 221.

children and Delphi are asked to receive is the speaking first person with his accoutrement of gracefulness and song, not merely the song as such. Just as a dedication in a temple inseparably joins the original act of dedication with the permanence of the dedicated artefact (with the inscription on the latter testifying to and memorialising the former),<sup>31</sup> so an offering of song involves both the text in its envisioned permanence through time and the original performance in its embodied totality. This is the key to solving one potential oddity that may otherwise affect our interpretation as outlined above, namely the Phoenician women's equation of themselves – not specifically of their song and dance – to dedicated objects. This is obviously mandated by the back-story that Euripides assigns to them, but does not conflict with their characterization as a chorus. For the time of the performance, the singer and dancer is herself a part of the offering she brings into visible and audible existence, at once dedicator and dedication. The allusions to the Phoenician women's attractiveness (215, 220–1, 223–4) are part and parcel of this conceptualisation of choral performance, as is more obviously the case in Alcman's maiden songs (*PMGF* 1 and 3 *passim*)<sup>32</sup> but also, for instance, in the opening of Pindar's sixth *Paeon*, with its emphatic reference to Aphrodite as an attendant to the (male) speaker.

The portrayal of a group of women as a dedication, arguably in connection with a musical performance, finds two hitherto unremarked parallels from the early decades of the fifth century. Neither of them is an exact equivalent of the situation we have unpicked in the *parodos* of the *Phoenician Women* – far from it – but they allow us better to contextualise Euripides' representation of his chorus and its implications. The first of these texts is a notorious poem of Pindar, four fragments of which – covering just over fifteen verses, perhaps a substantial proportion of the original poem<sup>33</sup> – are transmitted by Athenaeus, who quotes them from Chamaeleon's monograph *On Pindar* (fr. 31 Wehrli = 35 Martano *ap. Ath.* 13.573c–574b). As Chamaeleon's notoriously imaginative storytelling would have it, the Corinthian athlete Xenophon vowed that he would

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**31** Day 1994, 43–6, 54 (see also 1989, 22–5 on funerary epigrams).

**32** On visual self-referentiality in maiden song (both *partheneia* proper and references to choruses of young women in other literature) see now Swift 2016. The often neglected but crucial point that such emphasis on the performers' attractiveness has a divine as well as a human audience in mind is at p. 282.

**33** The minimum possible total is twenty lines (four stanzas). It is endorsed as the true figure by Snell and Maehler as well as Burnett 2011, 50–1 and Liberman 2016, 55 n. 65; this is not without problems, as it necessarily implies that a single verse is missing between 16 and 18. A slightly higher figure, such as twenty-five lines, may be closer to the truth: see van Groningen 1960, 49–50 (at least twenty-five); Currie 2011, 289 and n. 80 ('We do not know how much of the original poem is missing').

bring (ἀπάξειν) courtesans to Aphrodite, according to a supposed local custom, if he won at the Olympic games; his wish was granted, whereupon this *skolion* – the only surviving poem of Pindar that was certainly called so by its author<sup>34</sup> – was performed during the sacrifice in which said courtesans took part. If Chamaeleon is right at least in connecting the poem to Xenophon’s double Olympic victory, which Pindar commemorated more directly in *Olympian* 13, then its composition and performance are to be dated to 464 BC; given the explicit reference to Xenophon, we cannot be very far off that date in any case. The first passage that Chamaeleon quotes (fr. \*122.18–20 Sn.-M.) probably constituted the end of the poem:

ὦ Κύπρου δέσποινα, τεὸν δεῦτ’ ἐς ἄλσος  
φορβάδων κορᾶν ἀγέλαν ἑκατόγγυι-  
ον Ξενοφῶν τελέαις  
ἐπάγαγ’ εὐχωλαῖς ἰανθείς. (20)

O mistress of Cyprus, here to your sanctuary Xenophon brought a hundred-limbed herd of grazing girls, rejoicing in the accomplishment of his prayers.

Following Heinz Alexander Schmidt, Leslie Kurke has rightly remarked the sacrificial undertones of φορβάδων, ἀγέλαν, and ἑκατόγγυιον (the latter recalling a hecatomb).<sup>35</sup> However, the picture should be broadened slightly. The entirety of these three remarkably self-contained verses is essentially a dedicatory inscription in lyric formulation.<sup>36</sup> As Schmitz pointed out, it contains all the elements that we would expect from one:<sup>37</sup> references to dedicator, dedicatee, dedicated

**34** Hubbard’s 2011, 353–5 contention that ἀρχὰν σκολίου at line 14 does not designate the poem itself as a *skolion*, but as ‘a subtext of witty σκόλια at future symposia’ is not justified by the text, see Currie 2011, 289 n. 82. On the generic label and its implications see Liberman 2016, esp. 54–7; see also Carey 2009a, 31–2, suggesting that the label *skolion* here is less than serious. As Thomas Coward points out to me, Pindar may have used the word *skolion* also in another poem (presumably the one which included fr. \*124–\*126 Sn.-M.) if [Plut.] *Mus.* 28 = *Mor.* 1140f is correct to claim that he credited Terpander with the invention of *skolia*.

**35** Schmitz 1970, 73 n. 70; Kurke 1996, 58; see also Budin 2008b, 122–5, but note Pirenne-Delforge 2009 and Burnett 2011, 58–9 on some over-interpretations in her analysis of the poem.

**36** The initial asyndeton is noteworthy; so is the aorist ἐπάγαγ(ε), which is more at home in a dedicatory epigram – memorialising an event that took place in the past, from the reader’s perspective at any rate – than in a song purportedly referring to a contemporaneous event. A possible explanation is that lines 18–20 were presented as reported speech, as though they were read out or proclaimed by a third party: maybe the same Ἴσθμοῦ δεσπότης whose speech is referenced at 13–14, or the usual τις of projected reception (*Il.* 6.459, 462; 7.87, 91; etc.)?

**37** Schmitz 1970, 71 n. 50; see also Hubbard 2011, 354.

‘object’, act of dedicating, and occasion of the dedication (the fulfilment of a prayer, itself a common trope in dedicatory epigrams).<sup>38</sup>

Stephanie Budin may very well be right to suggest that an ἄλλος of Aphrodite, coupled with the deictic δεῦτ(ε) in a poem that calls itself a σκόλιον, should be taken less than literally, as gesturing to the sympotic *andron* rather than to an actual temple.<sup>39</sup> She is certainly correct on two further points: that, contrary to some earlier interpretations, no permanent dedication in a temple for the purpose of ‘sacred prostitution’ is suggested by what survives of Pindar’s text (or of Chamaeleon’s for that matter); and that Chamaeleon’s account of the occasion of the *skolion* is likely to be his own reconstruction based on no other evidence than the poem itself.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, the ‘bringing’ of the women is implicitly but clearly *presented* as a dedication in a space that is, at least imaginatively, portrayed as sacred. Any contrast with the reality of the occasion would only highlight the significance of Pindar’s description as well as the tongue-in-cheek interplay between the sacred intimations of his language and its rather more earthly referent. And, much like true dedicatory epigrams do the objects they accompany, it is the quasi-epigram embedded in the song that memorialises and re-performs (and, if Budin is right, altogether creates) Xenophon’s ‘dedication’ of the courtesans to whatever service of Aphrodite the occasion entailed. If the courtesans themselves played a role in the performance of the *skolion*, as Bruno Currie has recently suggested (the masculine *persona loquens* in line 14 need not be an obstacle),<sup>41</sup> the parallel with the Phoenician women becomes even more striking; but the relevance of this poem to the broader theme of dedication in song does not require this to have been the case.

The second example is an epigram attributed to Simonides (14 Page = *FGE* 732–5). It is quoted in slightly different wording by three ancient authorities: Cha-

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**38** On ἐπάγω (and its variant ἀπάγω, perhaps supported by Chamaeleon’s use of the same verb in his narrative) see van Groningen 1960, 44–6; Budin 2008b, 138–9; Currie 2011, 289 n. 81. For references to an earlier prayer or vow in connection with the act of dedication in inscriptional texts see Lazzarini 1976, 280–2; Pulleyn 1997, 41. Here εὐχολαΐς probably means prayers rather than vows, given the reference to joy at their fulfilment; nevertheless, considering the racy occasion of the performance, a *double entendre* may well have been intended, with Xenophon quite as glad of his own fulfilment of his vow as of the goddess’ fulfilment of his prayer.

**39** Budin 2006, 85–6 and 2008b, 115–9, 140; see also Burnett 2011, 58–60. Differently, Cingano 2003, 42–4 and Currie 2011, 289–92 argue for a public, choral performance in a temple, but largely on the precarious authority of Chamaeleon.

**40** Budin 2008b, 140, 150–2, with references.

**41** Currie 2011, 290 n. 83. Whatever the case, the poem would certainly have been a good candidate for sympotic reperformances involving *hetairai*, see Hubbard 2011, 354–5 (though with the *caveat* recalled above).



maeleon immediately before his discussion of Pindar's *skolion*, Theopompus as reported in a scholion to Pindar's thirteenth *Olympian* (*BNJ* 115 F 285b *ap. schol.* 32b p. I 365 Drachmann), and Plutarch in his essay *On the Malice of Herodotus* (39 = *Mor.* 871b).<sup>42</sup> All three sources agree that the epigram accompanied an object representing the Corinthian women who prayed to Aphrodite for the salvation of Greece at the time of the Persian invasion. This is the text printed by Sir Denys Page, a slightly amended version of that given by the Pindaric scholion:

αἴδ' ὑπὲρ Ἑλλάνων τε καὶ ἀγχεμάχων πολιητᾶν  
 ἔστασαν εὐχόμεναι Κύπριδι δαιμόνια·  
 οὐ γὰρ τοξοφόροισιν ἐβούλετο δῖ' Ἀφροδίτα  
 Μήδοις Ἑλλάνων ἀκρόπολιν δόμεναι.

These stood in wondrous prayer to Cypris on behalf of the Greeks and their close-fighting fellow-citizens, for divine Aphrodite did not wish to give the citadel of Greece to the bow-carrying Medes.

In their commentary to the epigram, the three sources disagree as to the identity of the unnamed αἴδ(ε) of the opening verse – Corinthian women generally according to the Pindaric scholion and Plutarch, Corinthian courtesans according to Chamaeleon – as well as to the object(s) to which the epigram referred, a set of bronze εἰκόνες (Plutarch) or a πίναξ (Chamaeleon); in turn, the latter can be understood as either a painting of the *hetairai* or a catalogue of their names.<sup>43</sup> Another important variant concerns the main verb at line 2, which both in Plutarch and in Athenaus' quotation of Chamaeleon is given as ἔσταθεν – a passive form (perhaps with intransitive meaning) which has a considerable likelihood of being the true reading.<sup>44</sup>

The first couplet effectively conflates the image (if this is what it was) with the women it represents. Both the women and their likeness stood in prayer for Greece and Corinth; both this prayer and the artefact that memorialises it are, each in its own way, dedicated to Aphrodite. As Bruna M. Palumbo Stracca suggests, the γάρ that introduces the second couplet is more easily accounted for if the main verb refers to the dedication of the image as well as (or instead of) to

<sup>42</sup> On this epigram and its different transmitted versions see Boas 1905, 47–71; Page in *FGE* pp. 207–11; Palumbo Stracca 1985, 58–65; Budin 2008a and 2008b, 140–9.

<sup>43</sup> See Palumbo Stracca 1985, 61–2.

<sup>44</sup> See Palumbo Stracca 1985, 61–3 (passive); Sider 2008 (intransitive).

the original prayer.<sup>45</sup> The aorist of ἵστημι can be used to denote the act of ‘setting up’ an object as a dedication to a divinity:<sup>46</sup> see for instance Lazzarini 688.1–2 = *CEG* 429.1–2 αὐδὴ τεχνήεσσα λίθο, λέγε τίς τόδ’ ἄ[γαλμα] / στήσεν Ἀπόλλωνος βωμὸν ἐπαλαί[σας] ‘skilful voice of the stone, tell who set up this offering gracing the altar of Apollo’, 679 = *CEG* 194 Παλ[άδι] μ’ ἐγρεμάχαι Διονύσιο[ς ἐνθά]δ’ ἄγαλμα / στέσε Κολοίο παῖς ‘Dionysius, the son of Coloius, set me up here as a gift-offering for battle-rousing Pallas’, and 803.1–2 = *CEG* 414.1–2 quoted above. This – especially, but not exclusively, if ἔσταθεν is the true reading – supports the interpretation of the epigram as portraying not only the actual dedication of the image, but also the notional dedication of the women it depicts. But there may be more to it than this. The verb ἵστημι, in both the active and the middle, is also a favourite designator for the act of setting up a χορός or participating in one.<sup>47</sup> In Pindar’s second *Paean* (D2 Rutherford), the bright-headbanded maidens of Delphi sing ἰστάμεναι χορὸν / [ταχύ]ποδα ‘setting up a swift-footed chorus’ (99–100). The title character of Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Aulis* asks στήσομεν ἄρ’ ἀμφὶ βωμόν, ὦ πάτερ, χορούς; ‘shall we set up chorus around the altar, father?’ (676). In the same poet’s *Electra*, the heroine laments that she will not be able to dance ἰστάσα χορούς / Ἀργείαις ἅμα νύμφαις ‘setting up choruses with the brides of Argos’ (178–9).<sup>48</sup> The twelve Spartan maidens of Theocritus’ *Epithalamian of Helen* πρόσθε νεογράφω θαλάμῳ χορὸν ἐστάσαντο ‘set up a chorus in front of the newly painted bedchamber’ (18.3). So one could easily suggest, with David Sider, that the Corinthian women ‘stood as a chorus ... that is, that their prayer took the form of a choral ode’.<sup>49</sup>

Once we discount the intriguing but untrustworthy stories spun by Chamaeleon, the details of the background and performance of these two short poems elude us. In neither case can choral performance by the women in question

<sup>45</sup> Palumbo Stracca 1985, 63. However, if Bernardakis’ conjecture δαμόνια is accepted (as it is by Page), γάρ can also be taken as referring to the adjective specifically: the women’s prayer was a thing of wonder and miracle, as is shown by the fact that Aphrodite did not allow the Persians to conquer Corinth.

<sup>46</sup> Palumbo Stracca 1985, 60, 64.

<sup>47</sup> See Alonge 2012.

<sup>48</sup> I reproduce the text printed by James Diggle in his OCT (Oxford 1991). Alonge 2012 advocates rejecting Reiske’s ἰστάσα in order to retain the manuscripts’ στάσα and instead emend the transmitted χορούς into Seidler’s χοροῖς, on the strength of *IT* 1143 χοροῖς δὲ σταῖην and fr. 122 Kan-nicht (*Andromeda*) οὐ χοροῖσιν . . . ἔστηκ’. Seidler’s emendation is plausible, but no less so is Reiske’s: as the Pindaric and Theocritean parallels suggest, ἵστημι (or ἵσταμαι) χορὸν (or χορούς) can refer to simply taking part in a chorus – which, as Alonge remarks, is the sense the context demands – with no necessary implication of being the chorus leader.

<sup>49</sup> Sider 2008.

be proved. However, in both cases we are presented with a performance – of whatever kind – by women who are conceived of as an offering. In one case they are explicitly presented as such; in the other, the dedication is only intimated by the text, but made evident by the actual setup of the artefact in the temple of Aphrodite. So, the intimated chorality of the dedicated Phoenician women is not as unique as it might seem. What remains to be done is to tease out the significance of this choral characterisation of the chorus. On the external, contextual level, as Smaro Nikolaidou-Arabatzi has recently put it, ‘Whenever a Euripidean chorus introduces its own dancing into ritual choral events from the past or future, it broadens its choreia with fictional mirrors of its own performance, thus validating its initial role of offering praise to the honoured god Dionysus’<sup>50</sup> – an effect that is all the more powerful if what is introduced is not only a momentary imagination of chorality but a consistent characterisation. But the details, implications, and significance of this characterisation within the tragedy itself also invite exploration, and it is to such exploration that the second part of this paper is dedicated.

Already Claire Nancy, in one of the most perceptive analyses of the choral odes of the *Phoenician Women* published to date, recognised a broadly ‘lyric’ quality to their discourse on the level of themes and imagery: ‘Lyrique en ce sens d’abord qu’il procède par une disposition de motifs, par un jeu de contrepoint: image contre image, scène contre scène. Qu’il réagence librement les données légendaires pour faire émerger un sens enfoui jusqu’ici dans la trame de l’histoire’.<sup>51</sup> But the choral odes are ‘lyric’ – beside the concrete sense of being sung and danced on the stage – under another aspect too. As we know from Pindar and the other late archaic lyricists, the normal disposition of large-scale choral cult song is to begin by introducing the speaker and the song itself before launching into an extended mythical narrative, typically related to the cult in which they are taking part or the locality in which it takes place, only to return to the present of the performance at the very end. The countless variations and the different combinations of specific topics in the poems that survive only emphasises the persistence of this basic structure. And the Phoenician women’s singing throughout the play can be seen, on a deep level, to partake of a similar fundamental disposition.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Nikolaidou-Arabatzi 2015, 28.

<sup>51</sup> Nancy 1986, 474; see also Cerbo 1984–1985, 190, who finds structural echoes of the ‘forme spécifique della lirica arcaica – ditirambo, inno, *threnos*’.

<sup>52</sup> The connection between the Phoenician women’s myth-telling and their dramatic persona is observed by Foley 1985, 144 (quoted above, p. 292).

After introducing themselves, their provenance, their purpose, and their present situation in the *parodos*, during the greatest part of the *stasima* (most of the first, the antistrophe and epode of the second, and the whole of the third) they engage in a series of interwoven mythical narratives about Thebes and its royal house. That the *stasima* can be taken together to constitute one such song cycle was noticed already by Wilhelm Riemschneider almost eight decades ago.<sup>53</sup> As Marilyn Arthur notes, ‘The choral odes of the *Phoenissae* explain this connection between the city’s present ills and the conditions of its foundation. They are organized in the form of a survey of the history of Thebes which leaves off only as the last chapter is about to be added in the form of an assault on the city and the duel between the brothers’.<sup>54</sup> (It is often remarked that Euripides’ *Phoenician Women* and the eponymous chorus stand in marked and self-conscious contrast with Aeschylus’ *Seven against Thebes*.<sup>55</sup> One wonders if there is a touch of competition also in Euripides’ telescoping of the entire Theban tetralogy of 467 BC into the choral parts of a single play.<sup>56</sup>) So, not a series of independent songs interlaced one by one with the dramatic action, as the ancient critics quoted at the beginning of this paper would have wanted, nor the occasional pointless rambling that they saw in them, but rather steps in one long path of song that winds its way alongside the action and becomes conspicuous when the action recedes into the background only to bow out for a time when the action comes to the fore again. If the argument presented in the first half of this paper is correct and the Phoenician women present themselves in the *parodos* with a clear suggestion of choral characterisation, then this fact becomes easier to account for. The template of choral lyric is (granted) blown out of proportion and to some extent distorted, but its imprint is recognisable nonetheless.

But we should not stop here, as there is another level on which the model of choral lyric in action, as it were, is relevant to our understanding of what the Phoenician women do and why. If the argument made so far in this paper is ac-

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53 Riemschneider 1940, 16, 25. In his view, this ‘Liederzyklus’ includes the *parodos* and excludes the fourth *stasimon*. However, the latter is a natural end-point for the song cycle, whose retracing of Thebes’ history since its foundation culminates in the present situation and its immediate future (the duel of Eteocles and Polynices and their mutual fratricide), in which the fourth *stasimon* is absorbed. This return to the present, however, provides far from a sense of closure: see below, pp. 313.

54 Arthur 1977, 163–4; similarly Parry 1978, 167. On time, myth, and narrative in the choral sections of the *Phoenician Women* see Lamari 2010, chapters 2, 3, and 5 *passim*.

55 See e.g. Rawson 1970, 112; Aéliion 1983, I 197–227; Cerbo 1984–1985, 186; Foley 1985, 113–39; Hilton 2011, 28–46; Torrance 2013, 94–133.

56 On the *Phoenician Women* as ‘a Theban mythical ‘megatext’ see Lamari 2010, 17, 135–7.

cepted, upon their arrival on the stage they characterise themselves as a choral offering sent by their Tyrian sovereigns to the sanctuary of Apollo in Delphi via Thebes. Two aspects of this endeavour need highlighting in this connection. Firstly, that the women’s journey from Phoenicia to Greece is a mythically significant one; secondly, that the path of their song partly retraces this journey and plays out the complex relation between that myth (and others) and the present.<sup>57</sup> ‘[L]e voyage des Phéniciennes – writes Nancy – est une réédition: elles ont mis leurs pas, si l’on peut dire, dans ceux de leur ancêtre Cadmos, qui n’est autre que le fondateur de Thèbes’.<sup>58</sup> The opening of the first *stasimon* makes it clear (638–42):

Κάδμος ἔμολε τάνδε γᾶν  
 Τύριος, ὣι τετρασκελῆς  
 μόσχος ἀδάματον πέσημα  
 δίκε τελεσφόρον διδοῦσα  
 χρησμόν ...

Cadmus came to this land, the Tyrian man, for whom the four-legged calf fell to the ground without compulsion and gave fulfilment to the oracle ...

The deictic τάνδε brings Cadmus’ journey into the chorus’ present space, and the very location of this reference at the beginning of their extended myth-making casts him as the foundational figure to look to – for them no less than for Thebes. This passage stands in a triangular relationship with two other significant nodes of the play.<sup>59</sup> One is the opening of the *parodos*, which we examined above: both describe in similar language a journey from Tyre to a mythically charged present space (note 216 Καδμείων ἔμολον γᾶν),<sup>60</sup> thus establishing an implicit but clear link between Cadmus and the Phoenician chorus that retraces his steps in song no less than in deed. The other is the very beginning of the tragedy, where Jocasta describes Cadmus’ journey from Phoenicia into the present space in terms which the opening of the first *stasimon* replicates almost verbatim (3–6):<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Arthur 1977, 166; Nancy 1986, 463.

<sup>58</sup> Nancy 1986, 463.

<sup>59</sup> See Riemschneider 1940, 25.

<sup>60</sup> Mastronarde 1994, 334 (see also 8 and n. 2 on the ‘arrival motif’ more generally in the play).

<sup>61</sup> There is a continuing controversy over whether the play opened with what is now line 1 or rather, as several ancient sources appear to suggest, with line 3 itself. See most recently Meccariello 2014 with references to earlier bibliography.

Ἥλιε, θααῖς ἵπποισιν εἰλίσσων φλόγα,  
 ὡς δυστυχή Θήβαισι τῆι τόθ' ἡμέραι  
 ἀκτῖν' ἐφήκας, Κάδμος ἠνίκ' ἦλθε γῆν  
 τήνδ', ἐκλιπῶν Φοίνισσαν ἐναλίαν χθόνα. (5)

Sun, who on swift mares drive your blaze around, how wretched was the beam you shed on Thebes that day when Cadmos came to this land, leaving the coastal soil of Phoenicia.

The parallel between Cadmus' arrival as described in the prologue and that of the chorus as described in the *parodos* validates and authorises the chorus' beginning of their narrative in Cadmus' name at the opening of the first *stasimon*. In turn, this nexus authorises the chorus' narrative in the *stasima* as a lens through which to reflect on the present situation of Thebes, echoing Jocasta's lengthy exposition in the prologue (though as an individual character she has, understandably, a more pressing concern for her immediate family) but enriching it with different and broader perspectives.<sup>62</sup> The Phoenician women's kinship with Thebes and its ruling house, which they emphasize repeatedly, especially during the early stages of the play (216–9, 243–9, 291–2, cf. 819), has a similarly authorising function for their utterances.<sup>63</sup>

But where does their chorality come in? Part of the answer, I suggest, lies in the well-established Greek practice of *theōria*: in Ian Rutherford's terse definition, 'extraterritorial religious activity in which a city-state or other political entity sends sacred delegates to act on its behalf'.<sup>64</sup> Such sacred delegations often included a chorus, whose task it was to perform upon reaching their destination (and, in some cases, at chosen points along the way too):<sup>65</sup> a choral offering consistent with the conceptualisation we examined earlier in this paper. Although not strictly identical to this practice, the sending of a group of women to a pan-Hellenic sanctuary as sacred dedications with an offering of song and dance distinctly resonates with it.<sup>66</sup>

*Theōriai* too are often represented as retracing (in either direction) a mythical journey, from which the delegation's own journey draws its *raison d'être*. A few examples variously related to Athens will suffice. The yearly Athenian mission to Delos was thought to retrace the steps of Theseus and the 'twice seven' at least as

<sup>62</sup> See Lamari 2010, 23–4, 41.

<sup>63</sup> Cerbo 1984–1985, 186; Nancy 1986, 464. See also Hilton 2011, 250–1 for the 'moral and intellectual authority' (251) displayed by the chorus at various stages in the play.

<sup>64</sup> Rutherford 2013, 4.

<sup>65</sup> On the choral component of *theōria* see Rutherford 2004; Kowalzig 2005 and 2007a *passim*; Rutherford 2013, 41–2, 237–49.

<sup>66</sup> On *theōria* as 'a kind of cultural metaphor through which to express inter-state relations' in Attic drama, especially comedy, see Kowalzig 2005, 60–1 (quotation from 61).

early as Plato, who claims that, ‘as the Athenians say’, the ship used by the *theōria* was the very one on which the hero and his companions had sailed (*Phaedo* 58a–b).<sup>67</sup> It can be argued that Bacchylides 17, though not an Athenian poem, suggests that this idea goes back at least to the first half of the fifth century.<sup>68</sup> An intriguing intersection of (envisaged) *theōria*, human dedication, mythical travelling, and song is testified by a fragment of Aristotle’s *Constitution of the Bottiaians* paraphrased twice by Plutarch (fr. 485 Rose *ap. Thes.* 16.2–3, *QG* 35 = *Mor.* 298f–299a). The treatise traces back the inhabitants of the northern Greek city of Bottiaea to the Athenian human tribute sent to Minos before Theseus’ time. According to this myth, their descendants were later sent by the Cretans to Delphi as an ἀνδρῶν ἀπαρχή and subsequently migrated to Iapygia in present-day Italy before coming back to the Greek peninsula and settling in Bottiaea; and for this reason, Aristotle concludes, at one of their festivals the young women of Bottiaea sing ἴωμεν εἰς Ἀθήνας ‘Let us go to Athens!’.<sup>69</sup> If Pindar’s fifth *Paeon* (D5 Rutherford) is an Athenian commission, as has been commonly maintained since its first publication,<sup>70</sup> its final part displays a similar preoccupation with mapping the chorus’ theoric voyage to Delos onto the quasi-mythical Athenian colonisation of the Aegean isles that justifies it:<sup>71</sup>

- Εὖ-] (35)
- βοιαν ἔλον καὶ ἔνασσαν·
- ἰήϊε Δάλι’ Ἀπολλον·  
καὶ σποράδας φερεμήλους  
ἔκτισαν νάσους ἐρικυδέα τ’ ἔσχον  
Δᾶλον, ἐπεὶ σφιν Ἀπόλλων (40)  
δῶκεν ὁ χρυσοκόμας  
Ἄστερίας δέμας οἰκεῖν·
- ἰήϊε Δάλι’ Ἀπολλον·  
Λατόος ἔνθα με παῖδες  
εὐμενεῖ δέξασθε νόωι θεράποντα (45)  
ὑμέτερον κελαδενναῖ  
σὺν μελιγάρυϊ παι-  
ᾶνος ἀγακλέος ὀμφᾶι.

**67** On this and other Athenian *theōriai* to Delos see Rutherford 2004, 82–9; see also Kowalzig 2007a, 56–128.

**68** See Kowalzig 2007a, 88–94, esp. 92.

**69** See Rutherford 2004, 71–2.

**70** Grenfell / Hunt 1908, 20; see also Rutherford 2001, 296–8; Kowalzig 2007a, 84. In Wilamowitz’s opinion (1922, 327–8) it was a Euboean commission.

**71** Rutherford 2001, 297; 2004, 83–5; 2013, 240–1; Kowalzig 2007a, 83–6.

... they took Euboea and settled it. *Ieie*, Delian Apollo! And they peopled the scattered isles that bear flocks, and held famous Delos, since Apollo the gold-haired gave them the body of Asteria to inhabit. *Ieie*, Delian Apollo! There, children of Leto, welcome me, your servant, with kindly disposition, to the resounding, honey-voiced strain of a glorious paean.

In this last case, the parallel with the Phoenician women is particularly close, not least because the latter's journey too retraces and recalls a mythical path of colonisation. Another example worth citing is the Pythais, a state-sanctioned *theōria* sent by Athens to Delphi at irregular intervals since relatively early times.<sup>72</sup> The earliest explicit evidence for it is the so-called Nicomachus Calendar, compiled probably in the last decade of the fifth century on the basis of earlier religious legislation,<sup>73</sup> but an allusion to the Pythais can be detected already in the opening of Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (9–14 with schol. E 12, M 13 Smith), produced in 458 BC,<sup>74</sup> and it has been plausibly argued that a paean by Simonides – so no later than the first half of the century – is also connected with this rite (*PMG* 519 fr. 35(b).1–10 = fr. 100 Poltera).<sup>75</sup> While in Aeschylus' tragedy there is only a hint that the mythical episode in question – Apollo's landing in Attica and his march to Delphi escorted by an Athenian contingent – finds an echo in contemporary cult practice, Apollo's journey and that of the Pythais are explicitly identified by Ephorus in a passage quoted by Strabo (*BNJ* 70 F 31 *ap.* 9.3.12): ἐξ Ἀθηνῶν δ' ὀρμηθέντα ἐπὶ Δελφοὺς ταύτην ἰέναι τὴν ὁδόν, ἧι νῦν Ἀθηναῖοι τὴν Πυθαΐδα πέμπουσι 'and when from Athens he set out to Delphi he journeyed on the very road on which the Athenians now send the Pythais'.<sup>76</sup> The 'paean and prosodion' composed by Limenius for choral performance by the Athenian 'Craftsmen of Dionysus' at a much later Pythais, probably in 128/7 or 106/5 BC (*CID* III 2 = *CA* pp. 149–59),<sup>77</sup> leaves implicit the connection between the mythical journey and the procession, but explicitly connects the former with the song

<sup>72</sup> On the Pythais see Boëthius 1918; Rutherford 2004, 76–81; Rutherford 2013, 222–30, 312–3, and *passim*.

<sup>73</sup> On the Nicomachus Calendar see most recently Parker 1996, 43–8; Lambert 2002. The data relevant to the Pythais are brought together by Rutherford 2013, 312–3, 376–7.

<sup>74</sup> Boëthius 1918, 31–7.

<sup>75</sup> Rutherford 1990, 173–6. Poltera 2008, 370 disagrees, on the argument that fr. 100 and fr. 102 (*PMG* 519 fr. 32) – probably a Delian poem, or at least one concerned with the Delian myth – 'were probably not far apart in the roll': Lobel 1959, 54.

<sup>76</sup> Πυθαΐδα is Radt's palmary emendation of the transmitted Πυθιάδα (2002–11: III 92); that the passage refers to the Pythais was already assumed by Boëthius 1918, 31, 35–6.

<sup>77</sup> On the poem see Bélis in *CID* III pp. 84–129; Vamvouri 1998; Furley / Bremer 2001, II 92–100. Bowie 2015b, 110–7 and Thomas 2015, 33–7 focus particularly on its spatial aspect. On the date see Bélis in *CID* III pp. 133–42 (assuming 128/7); Schroeder 1999, 71–4 (arguing for 106/5).



itself, for which it serves as an aetiology and which, accordingly, it validates (13–21):<sup>78</sup>

τότε λιπὼν Κυυνθίαν νᾶασον ἐπ[έβα θεό]ς πρω[τό-  
κα(α)ρπὸν κλυτὰν Ἄτθιδ' ἐπὶ γα[λόφωι ] Τριτωνίδος·  
μελίπνοον δὲ Λίβυς αὐδάγ χέω[ν λωτὸς ἀνέμελ]πεν [ἀ-  
δειϊαν ὅπα μειγνύμενος αἰειόλ[οις κιθάρι]ο[ς] μέλεσιν,  
ἄ]μα δ' ἴαχεμ πετροκατοίκητος ἀχ[ὼ παιὰν ἰὲ παιὰν.] Ὁ δὲ γέγα-  
θ' ὅτι νόωι δεξάμενος ἀαμβρόταν δω[ ]ν, ἀνθ' ὧων  
ἐκείνας ἀπ' ἀρχᾶς Παιήονα κικλήισκ[ομεν ] λαὸς αὐτ[ο-  
χθόνων ἠδὲ Βάκχου μέγας θυρσοπλή[ξ ἐσμὸς ἱ]ερὸς τεχνι-  
τῶων ἔνοικος πόλει Κεκροπίαι.

Then, leaving the Cynthian island, the god reached the glorious land of the first crop, Attica, on the hilly ... of Tritonis. The Libyan reed poured its honey-breathing voice and sang a sweet strain, mingling with the varied tunes of the *kithara*, and at the same time the echo that dwelt in the rock rang out, 'Paeon *ie* Paean!' And he rejoiced because he understood the immortal ... Therefore since that primeval time we call on Paeon, we the ... indigenous people and the great thyrsos-stricken holy swarm of the Craftsmen which lives in Cecrops' city.

As we have seen, the journey of the Phoenician women, like the Pythais, is a mythically significant one. If anything, on the play's own terms their mid-way stop in Thebes seems to be *more* significant, from this point of view, than their envisaged end-point in Delphi. It is incorrect to imply, as sometimes is done, that their true destination was Delphi and they merely got stranded in Thebes more or less by chance on their way there. Firstly, the chorus leader's statement at lines 282–3 explicitly contradict this view: 'the sons of Agenor's sons sent me *here*, spoils of the spear for Phoebus'. Secondly, attention should be paid to the first strophe of the *parodos*, lines 208–11, where the chorus describe their voyage through the 'Ionian Sea' with the West Wind blowing over Sicily. This ostensibly counter-intuitive itinerary has led to (in Donald Mastronarde's words) 'a great deal of nonsense',<sup>79</sup> which there is no point in rehearsing here; as he has shown, a route clockwise around the Peloponnese is a perfectly reasonable solution for anyone wanting to sail to Delphi coming from the east, even more so in the light of the precedent offered by the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (404–43).<sup>80</sup> But this itinerary also creates a further effect. If one is sailing to Delphi across the Ionian Sea, Thebes is not on one's way; one can simply dis-

<sup>78</sup> See Vamvouri 1998, 56–7; Rutherford 2004, 81; Bowie 2015b, 116.

<sup>79</sup> Mastronarde 1994, 210.

<sup>80</sup> Mastronarde 1994, 209–10.

embark at Cirrha and walk the few miles up to Delphi from there. So if the Phoenician women have sailed that way and now find themselves in Thebes, it means they were positively going to Thebes as much as to Delphi.<sup>81</sup> Despite the obvious divarication of their spatial (and temporal) perspective, which conspicuously encompasses their Delphic destination and their Phoenician origin as well as their present location,<sup>82</sup> the centrality of Thebes in their journey – not only in the play as such – ought not to be allowed to slip out of sight.

As John Gould recognised, collective memory is key to the chorus' engagement with Thebes, even more than kinship per se: 'From the first *stasimon* to the last, the memory of the chorus plays over, and their songs rehearse, the long history of Thebes'.<sup>83</sup> This provides a stark contrast with the individual characters (with the partial exception of Jocasta and Tiresias); the Phoenician women are 'far more firmly conscious of the rootedness of the play's events than are the heroic protagonists'.<sup>84</sup> This contrast in attitude is mirrored by the drastically limited amount of actual interaction between the chorus and the characters during most of the play, noted by Enrico Medda and especially glaring in the finale, where an elaborate lamentation such as the one sung by Antigone and Oedipus could have been expected to include a more substantial choral element than the handful of anapaests at 1480–4.<sup>85</sup> For all its knowledge of Theban myth, Medda argues, this 'estranged' chorus behaves like an external observer who has no business intervening in the action.<sup>86</sup> For the most part, the Phoenician women speak to the audience, not to the characters in the play; indeed they come close to being an internal spectator of the dramatic action, suspended between detachment and involvement and possessed of a broader viewpoint than any of the characters have.<sup>87</sup> Still, their detachment should not be overplayed: their rel-

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**81** Compare the reconstruction proposed by Mastronarde 1994, 209–10 (the chorus made their way to Thebes in order for their Theban kin to escort them to Delphi from there).

**82** See Arthur 1977, 169; Calame 1994–1995, 144; Lamari 2010, 43–8, 167–9.

**83** Gould 1996, 225.

**84** Gould 1996, 225. See also Foley 2003, 21–2; Medda 2005, 128–9.

**85** Medda 2005, 126–8. See also Arthur 1977, 165; Cerbo 1984–1985, 189; Foley 1985, 139–40. Medda notes the expectations raised by the futures *ἰαχίσω* and *θρηνήσω* in the fourth *stasimon* (1295, 1303) and subsequently frustrated.

**86** Medda 2005, 129. See also the slightly different argument put forward by Hilton 2011, 252, who highlights rather the chorus' powerlessness – 'their role as victims in a war over which they have no control'.

**87** Medda 2005, 129–30. Compare Murnaghan's argument on the metatheatrical function performed by the chorus of the *Bacchae* and the 'shadow chorus' of Theban women that joins them: 'Euripides gives us two models of choral experience, and so presents within tragedy the terms of a debate about the role of the chorus and the closeness of its relationship to the

ative lack of personal involvement with the individual characters does not belie their deep, ancestral involvement with Thebes, her mythical history, and her destiny – with Thebes as cultural patrimony, one might say, or cultural inheritance, more than as a physical place or civic community.<sup>88</sup>

The Phoenician women's intimated characterisation as a theoric chorus is instrumental to their 'combination of foreignness and remote kinship' (Foley)<sup>89</sup> and to the complex and peculiar role that they take up in the play. As we have seen, a theoric chorus is naturally invested with the task of performing links between time and time, place and place. And what the Phoenician women perform, with their songs and their long journey, is the thread that links Thebes and Phoenicia, their present and their past.<sup>90</sup> After the almost idyllic association of dancing with Dionysiac worship at the close of the strophe of the first *stasimon* (655–7), song and dance are repeatedly evoked as a foil for the horrors of Thebes' history, which are explicitly characterised by a lack of music or by its perversion. Ares is Βρομίου παράμουσος ἑορταῖς 'out of tune with the festivals of Bromius' (785) and does not partake in (fulsomely described) choral songs, leading instead a κῶμον ἀναυλότατον 'utterly pipe-less revel' (790); the Sphinx came ἀμουσοτάταισι σὺν ᾠδαῖς 'with most unmusical songs' (807) and ἄλυρον ἀμφὶ μοῦσαν 'on a lyre-less tune' (1028), giving rise to songs of mourning throughout the city (1033–8). As Nancy notes, the chorus implicitly counters this unmusicality with its own song and dance as well as by the alternative histories that it narrates.<sup>91</sup> But musical resistance can only go so far. Once they have finally rejoined the present and faced its sheer horror in the fourth *stasimon*, the Phoenician women and their song all but fade from sight.<sup>92</sup> In this light, their iridescent song-cycle and its strange relation to the events in the play can also serve as a *mise en abyme* of mythical narrative and its relation to the present, of the poetic act and its relation to the world. By reference to the all-pervasive medium of choral song in one of its most solemn, liturgical manifestations, Euripides is able to enrich his play with further perspectives and meanings – and perhaps to reflect, and invite reflection, on the possibilities and limits of tragedy itself.

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main actors that we still struggle with' (2006, 100). Arguably, also the chorus of the *Phoenician Women* can be viewed from a similar metatheatrical angle.

**88** Cf. Gould 1996, 225.

**89** Foley 1985, 119 n. 25.

**90** Cf. Aéliion 1983, I 210, who notes 'cette façon d'utiliser le chœur pour voyager à travers le temps'. On time and space in the *Phoenician Women* see Lamari 2010, chapter 5.

**91** Nancy 1986, 471–4, see also Di Benedetto 1971, 261.

**92** Cf. Arthur 1977, 165.