Aeschylus and War

Comparative Perspectives on Seven Against Thebes

Edited by Isabelle Torrance

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Aeschylus and War

Comparative Perspectives on *Seven against Thebes*

Civil war, fratricide, a city under siege and women in mortal terror – these are the themes of Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, a tragedy that Aeschylus himself (or at least his persona in Aristophanes' comedy, *Frogs*) boasted was "full of Ares" or martial spirit. This volume takes account of recent research on ancient warfare and of the intimate connection between war and Greek tragedy, which continues to speak to veterans' experiences today. The chapters bring important new perspectives to this undeservedly neglected masterpiece.

David Konstan, *Professor of Classics, New York University, USA*

This volume brings together a group of interdisciplinary experts who demonstrate that Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* is a text of continuing relevance and value for exploring ancient, contemporary and comparative issues of war and its attendant trauma. The volume features contributions from an international cast of experts, as well as a conversation with a retired US Army lieutenant colonel, giving her perspectives on the blending of reality and fiction in Aeschylus' war tragedies and on the potential of Greek tragedy to speak to contemporary veterans. This book is a fascinating resource for anyone interested in Aeschylus, Greek tragedy and its reception and war literature.

Isabelle Torrance is Associate Professor and Research Fellow at the Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies. She has published numerous articles on Greek tragedy and its reception and is author of *Aeschylus: Seven against Thebes* (2007) and *Metapoetry in Euripides* (2013) and co-author of *Oaths and Swearing in Ancient Greece* (2014).

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Comparative Perspectives on *Seven against Thebes*

Edited by Isabelle Torrance

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1 Aeschylus and war

Isabelle Torrance

All the surviving tragedies of Aeschylus deal with war and its aftermath. His *Persians*, first produced in 472 BCE, is famously our only surviving tragedy to dramatize a historical event, the defeat of the Persians by the Greeks at the Battle of Salamis in 480 BCE.[1] His *Seven against Thebes* represents the siege of the city by an invading army and the development and conclusion of that mythological war. In his *Suppliant Women*, the king of Argos provokes a declaration of war from the Egyptians who arrive at his gates to retrieve the young women now under his protection. The *Oresteia* trilogy deals with the aftermath of the Trojan War in the first two plays. In *Agamemnon*, Cassandra is brought home by Agamemnon as a war captive, and he pays for his war crimes with his death. In the *Libation Bearers*, the chorus members refer to the capture and subjugation of their city (75–7), revealing their status as slaves through conquest. The final play of the trilogy, *Eumenides*, concludes with a new focus on a military alliance between Athens and Argos in a manner which evokes contemporary Athenian policy.[2] The title character in *Prometheus Bound*, attributed to Aeschylus, has been punished as a consequence of his perceived betrayal of Zeus following the war between the Olympians and the Titans.

We know that Aeschylus fought in the Persian wars, certainly at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BCE, where he lost his brother Cynegirus (Hdt. 6.114), and probably also at Salamis and Plataea.[3] Aeschylus' participation in the victory at Marathon was reportedly recorded on his epitaph,[4] and his military record is rightly noted by scholars who have discussed his *Persians*. It is remarkable, however, that Aeschylus' personal experience of warfare does not feature in scholarship on his *Seven against Thebes*.[5] Although the play dramatizes a mythological event, it nevertheless represents an experience that Aeschylus had lived through, namely the besieging of his native *polis*. Athens had been besieged by the Persians in 480 BCE, just thirteen years before the production of Aeschylus' *Seven* in 467 BCE. Herodotus tells us that most of the citizens had been evacuated to Salamis; the remaining citizens had barricaded themselves on the Acropolis and resisted Xerxes' forces for an impressive length of time, until some of Xerxes' soldiers managed to scale an unguarded cliff and gain entry into the Acropolis. When the Athenians saw that the Acropolis had been breached, some took refuge in the temple, but the Persians slaughtered them all and burned the buildings

(Hdt. 8.51–4). Soon thereafter the Athenian naval forces managed to defeat the Persians in the naval battle recounted in Aeschylus' *Persians*.

It was also the case that Athens and her allies had besieged Thebes in the aftermath of the Battle of Plataea in 479 BCE, when they had managed to repel the Persian forces decisively. Thebes had capitulated to the Persians during the Persian Wars and was besieged as retribution for failing to lend military assistance in the defence efforts. The allies' plan was to demand the surrender of all those who had gone over to the Persians, especially the chief leaders. However, the demand for the surrender of the traitors was refused by the Thebans, and the siege lasted twenty days until several Theban men of appropriate rank were handed over. According to Herodotus, these men assumed that they would be able to bribe the allies to secure their liberty, but the Spartan commander Pausanias, who feared as much, dismissed the confederate army and had the men executed (Hdt. 9.86–8).

It is not being claimed here that Aeschylus' *Seven* is in any way an allegorical representation of a historical event. Indeed, it is notoriously difficult to construe historical detail or accuracy from a literary text, as the case of Aeschylus' *Persians* makes clear. Although we know that it is based on a historical battle, the play contains fantastical dramatic elements, such as the conjuring of the ghost of the dead Persian king Darius, and typologies of tragic characters, such as the figure of Xerxes as a rash young man who learns too late through bitter experience.[6] Nevertheless, Aeschylus' *Seven* is clearly a war play. In Aristophanes' *Frogs*, Aeschylus' character describes this play as being 'full of Ares' (1021), and in its limited reception history *Seven* has served as a powerful lens through which to examine internecine conflict in contemporary contexts.[7] The purpose of the collection of papers presented here is to help us reframe our understanding of Aeschylus' *Seven* as a war play. Scholarship on *Seven* has frequently discussed the play's literary and artistic merit; these qualities are not in doubt.[8] The intersection between real and imagined topography and material culture in *Seven* has been fruitfully examined by Daniel Berman.[9] In this volume we take a new approach to the play. We investigate what Aeschylus' *Seven* can teach us about warfare, both ancient and modern, and about its attendant trauma. Key to this reappraisal is our recognition of the fact that the playwright Aeschylus was an experienced war veteran, as were many of the members of his audience.

In order to highlight this issue, we begin, in Part I: Modern perspectives, with the insights of a contemporary war veteran of considerable experience, Lieutenant Colonel Kristen Janowsky, who gives her responses to Aeschylus' *Seven* in a conversation moderated by Olivier Morel, experienced interviewer of war veterans and literature expert, and myself as a Classicist (Chapter 2). Notwithstanding the differences between contemporary and ancient warfare, such as the types of ammunition used or modern susceptibility to PTSD,[10] figures like Jonathon Shay, Lawrence Tritle, Peter Meineck and Bryan Doerries have all demonstrated the value of comparative approaches to ancient Greek and modern warfare, particularly in the context of its attendant psychological trauma.[11] Indeed, both Tritle and Meineck discuss scientific evidence which shows that human responses to the stressors of war are biologically determined.[12] Janowsky's perspective gives us

insights into the possible effects of the play's events on an audience who had suffered and experienced siege warfare and had seen combat at close quarters, as the majority of Athenians had. Are Eteocles' actions as a military leader surprising? Are the fears of the chorus members justified? Does a warrior feel empathy for his or her victims, even after dehumanizing them? The answer to all these questions, Janowsky suggests, is yes; but the situation in *Seven against Thebes* is clearly unusual in purely military terms because the fate of the besieged city is inextricably tangled up in the fate of the cursed progeny of Oedipus. Nevertheless, the concept of a physiological element that takes over a warrior in combat, described by Janowsky, evokes the externalized force of the personified Curse in Aeschylus' *Seven*, which helps to guide Eteocles into battle (695–719).

The war dramatized in *Seven against Thebes* is between the sons of Oedipus: Eteocles, who is in control of the kingdom of Thebes, and the exiled brother Polynices, who has made a powerful alliance with another Greek kingdom (Argos) and has raised an army to attack Thebes in the hope of regaining the throne. The action takes place in Thebes as Eteocles prepares the city's defences and a chorus of young women describes the terrifying experience of the siege, its sights and sounds, and imagines the traumatic fates that will befall them should the attackers prove victorious. In the long central scene of the play the shield emblem of each of the leading attackers posted to one of the seven gates is described to Eteocles, who interprets the symbol and attempts to counteract its negative omen for the Thebans by posting an appropriate defender at each gate. When it is revealed that his brother is stationed at the seventh gate, Eteocles selects himself as the appropriate opponent. The meaning and manifestation of Oedipus' curse on his sons, that a Scythian stranger would divide their inheritance, becomes clear: the Scythian stranger is the iron forged in Scythia with which they do battle (*Seven* 727–33; cf. 710–1). At the end of Aeschylus' tragedy the city is saved, but the princes, the sons of Oedipus, have died, slain by each other's hands. The death of the princes thus mires what should have been a time of celebration for the city's salvation, and lamentation over their dead bodies forms the focus of the play's conclusion.

The final portion of the transmitted text follows crudely the outline of Sophocles' later *Antigone*. A herald announces that Eteocles is to be buried with all honours, while Polynices is to suffer the fate of a traitor and be left unburied. Antigone, their sister, announces her intention to defy the order and bury Polynices' body. Most Anglophone scholars believe this appendage to be a spurious interpolation, for various reasons, including the fact that Antigone's presence is entirely unexpected in a play which apparently ends with the extinction of the line of Oedipus.[13] Nevertheless, the figure of Antigone is significant in the reception history of Aeschylus' *Seven*. As Douglas Cairns discusses in the final chapter of this volume (Chapter 10), Sophocles' *Antigone* was undoubtedly influenced by *Seven*, and there is a sense in which the vast reception history of *Antigone*, arguably the most famous and most performed of all surviving Greek tragedies, is directly indebted to the relatively unknown and infrequently performed *Seven against Thebes*. In addressing Brecht's *Antigone* of 1948 as a case study in the reception history of both *Seven against*

Thebes and *Antigone*, Cairns demonstrates how these tragedies contain the potential for commenting directly on a contemporary and immediate context of war, in this instance the role of Germany in World War II. Like both ancient tragedies, Brecht's *Antigone*, as Cairns argues, has important things to say about the lack of connection between those in power and their people in times of war.

The character of Antigone also holds a starring role in Mario Martone's 1998 film *Teatro di Guerra* (literally *Theatre of War*), which charts the fortunes of an independent theatre company's rehearsals of *Seven against Thebes* as they prepare to bring their production to war-torn Sarajevo, as discussed in Chapter 3. Through its adaptation of Aeschylus' *Seven* the film asserts the enduring value of this play for a people under military siege, unfolding through two planes of political turmoil: the external Bosnian War and the internal violent besieging of ordinary civilians in Camorra-run Naples. Civilians, as Peter Meineck reminds us in Chapter 4, are always in danger of meeting their ends as 'collateral damage' in a war zone. In *Seven against Thebes*, the chorus of young women run a high risk of becoming collateral damage through enslavement rather than death, and they imagine violent rape along with the murders of infants and other atrocities should their city fall (321–68). After drawing attention to contemporary military attitudes to collateral damage, Meineck shows how Aeschylus in *Seven* brings to the fore the fate of non-combatants in a very striking manner. Meineck further seeks to understand how an Athenian slave-owning audience with military experience of both defensive and aggressive warfare would have responded to the fears of the chorus in a theatrical setting. He argues that the role of the chorus as potential collateral damage in *Seven* was designed to arouse empathy from the audience, implicitly corroborating Janowsky's assertions in Chapter 2 that war veterans write about war as a therapeutic activity and that warriors empathize with their enemies on a human level.

Political relations between Athens and Thebes were tense during the period in which Aeschylus wrote and produced his *Seven* due to the medizing of Thebes during the Persian Wars as outlined earlier. In Part II: Ancient perspectives, the significance of the city of Thebes and its relationship with Athens in the classical period represent a strong thematic thread across the chapters. In Chapter 5, Fernando Echeverría discusses the siege of Thebes from a classical Greek military perspective, mining the text of Aeschylus for information on siege warfare while also acknowledging the challenges posed by the fictional and literary nature of the siege described. Echeverría places the siege of Thebes within the broad context of historical siege warfare in classical Greece and argues that, along with certain military terminology recorded in Aeschylus' *Seven* for the first time in our sources, such as 'scaling ladder' and 'hoplite' (466), the crucial value of Aeschylus' text for a military historian is in the representation of the experience and trauma of siege warfare for a community under attack. In this respect Echeverría's analysis confirms the conclusions of many other contributions to this volume, especially those of Janowsky, Torrance, Meineck, Griffith and Cairns.

In Chapter 6, Lowell Edmunds argues that there are two faces to Aeschylus' Thebes, responding, in part, to Froma Zeitlin's influential proposition that Thebes

functioned as an anti-Athens on the Athenian stage.[14] He demonstrates that the Thebes presented by Aeschylus has positive military values for an Athenian audience, evocative of the ideology associated with the Battle of Marathon in this period. At the same time Thebes has negative associations from its foundation myth related to Ares all the way through to Eteocles' omission of wives in his rallying call to the Thebans to defend their city, altars, children, and the Earth their mother (*Seven* 13–5). The curse on the sons of Oedipus disappears with their deaths, and mythological Thebes, along with its citizens, has the chance of a new start. The possibility of a new start, however, is overshadowed somewhat in the immediate conclusion of the play by the choral lamentation over the death of the Theban princes. Griffith argues, in Chapter 7, that the music and soundscape deployed in Aeschylus' *Seven* was a powerful tool for engaging the audience in a variety of subject positions related to the events unfolding on stage, causing them to empathize both with the frustrations and responsibilities of the young military leader Eteocles and with the terror of the chorus. Unlike other Greek war plays, or modern war songs and war film soundtracks, *Seven* eschews masculine militaristic music in favour of feminine forms of more varied lyrical expression, which dominate its soundscape and contrast with the constant iambic trimeters of the male characters. The musical strategies employed range from aural bombardment with short syllables to cadences of finality and doom to formalized lament. Paradoxically, it is through the female chorus in this play that warfare obtains representation on stage. Griffith shows, using evidence from Aristotle and a variety of Greek tragic texts, that music was not only a crucial component of Greek tragedy, but that its power to alter an audience's mood and influence their responses was (and remains) a key component in the affective value of the tragic experience.

Classical Thebes was, as Griffith points out, the epicentre of musical talent in the Greek world, and the musicians who performed the accompaniment to Greek tragic choruses would have come mainly from Thebes, perhaps an unwelcome reminder for Athenians of their own lack of prestige in this arena. In Chapter 8, Margaret Foster discusses the most celebrated Theban poet of the fifth century BCE, Pindar, and his representation of the Theban saga. In particular Foster focuses on the father–son relationship in the context of war, with emphasis on the Argive warrior-seer Amphiaraus, one of the Seven attackers, and his son Alcmaeon. As she observes, Amphiaraus, who had an oracular shrine at Thebes, is strangely removed from his genealogical connections in Aeschylus' *Seven*. His son Alcmaeon is never mentioned, nor his wife Eriphyle, who was instrumental in compelling Amphiaraus to take part in the expedition against his will.[15] Alcmaeon would become one of the next generation of sons of the Seven, known as the Epigonoi, who attack and ultimately destroy Thebes. As Foster shows, the omissions surrounding Amphiaraus' family in *Seven* are striking in contrast to Pindar's treatment of Amphiaraus and Alcmaeon in *Pythian* 8, written in 446 BCE to celebrate the Aeginetan youth Aristomenes for his victory in the wrestling contest at the Pythian games. Pindar directly responds to Amphiaraus' characterization in *Seven* in composing his epinician. In his poem, aristocratic excellence, mantic ability and military prowess are reliably transferred from father to son, and

Amphiaraus is rehabilitated to the full glory of his epichoric oracle at Thebes, which Aeschylus refers to only elliptically.

If Aeschylus avoids overt acknowledgement of the destruction of Thebes in the subsequent generation and focuses on the salvation of the city at the end of the play, as discussed by Edmunds, this does not mean, as Sommerstein argues in Chapter 9, that he was unaware of the existence and significance of this established mythology. For the purposes of his trilogy, the extinction of the family line brings about the conclusion of Oedipus' curse on his sons, as Edmunds argues, and Thebes escapes destruction; but does this mean that the oracle of Apollo has been fulfilled? (The oracle received by Oedipus' father Laius stated that he must die without issue for his city to be saved.) Sommerstein suggests that, even as the chorus acknowledge the present salvation of Thebes, we, the audience, are prompted to remember its future destruction through a series of artfully crafted cues, including an interpretation of the oracle of Apollo according to which Thebes must be destroyed in order for the oracle to be fulfilled and a striking word play evoking the name of Eteocles' traditional son Laodamas.

The chapters by Sommerstein and Cairns form a concluding pair of discussions on the theme of the destruction of Thebes. Where Sommerstein focuses on the ancient mythological context of the known future destruction of Thebes, which, for an alert audience, means that the threat of the city's devastation by war remains at the end of the play, Cairns discusses a radical adaptation of the Theban saga, according to which the threat of destruction which looms over the end of Aeschylus' *Seven* and Sophocles' *Antigone* is enacted in Brecht's *Antigone* in a manner which refocuses audience attention more acutely on the twentieth-century context it evokes. Our collection of essays is thus framed by modern perspectives, with a central core of papers exploring a variety of ancient contexts which illuminates our main theme.

In a short piece recently published in the journal *Arion* and entitled 'Aeschylus Offers Paradigms for Today's Politics', Theodore Ziolkowski, Emeritus Professor of Comparative Literature at Princeton University, suggests that:

> Perhaps, rather than restricting Aeschylus to humanities courses at our universities, we should put a good translation of his plays into the hands, or at least onto the night tables, of our political leaders, to be studied alongside the position papers prepared by their staffs. The sometimes-instant experts all too often neglect historical and psychological perspectives and consider nothing but the immediate situation or "deal." . . . Aeschylus understood long ago that today's politics results from underlying and long-standing issues of character, conviction, and personal ambition.[16]

As is often the case when it comes to discussions of Aeschylus, the *Seven against Thebes* gets no mention in Ziolkowski's piece, but it has been the aim of this volume to put that tragedy back on our political and sociological maps, both ancient and modern.

Notes

1 Historical events were rarely represented on stage in Greek tragedy, and the practice could be unpopular. When Aeschylus' older contemporary Phrynichus addressed the defeat of the Milesian Greeks by the Persians (in 494 BCE) in his tragedy *The Capture of Miletus* (produced c. 493–1 BCE), Herodotus reports, in a frequently quoted passage, that it provoked weeping in the audience, and he was fined 1,000 drachmas for reminding spectators of their own woes (Hdt. 6.21). Phrynichus later produced *Phoenician Women* in c. 476 BCE, which also dealt with the Greco-Persian wars but from the perspective of the defeated Persians. This play certainly influenced Aeschylus' *Persians*. For more information, see Hall 1996:14–15, Rosenbloom 2006:11–38, Sommerstein 2008:1–6, Garvie 2009:ix–xi.

2 For discussion see Podlecki 1999:94–100, Sommerstein 2010a:285–6, Torrance 2015b:291–4.

3 See Echeverría in this volume, 74–6, for an overview of what can be deduced from our evidence regarding Aeschylus' military service.

4 On the validity of the epitaph, see Sommerstein 2010b:195–201.

5 Even Rosenmeyer 1962, whose analysis of *Seven* is focused on the fact that the drama is a 'tragedy of war', does not mention Aeschylus' military experience. A rare exception is Gaca 2015:289, who references Aeschylus' military experience in her brief discussion of *Seven* within the broader context of the rape of women and girls in ancient warfare.

6 On the complexities and tensions between the 'historical' and the 'dramatic' in *Persians*, see Pelling 1997, Harrison 2000:25–30, Rosenbloom 2006:139–48, Garvie 2009:xi–xvi.

7 On the Aristophanic description of *Seven*, see Edmunds 94–5 and Griffith 116–20 in this volume. For a discussion of adaptations of *Seven*, see Torrance 2007:108–29, 2015a, and in this volume.

8 Among the most important studies of *Seven* are Bernadete 1967, 1968, Cameron 1971, Thalmann 1978, Winnington-Ingram 1983:16–54, Zeitlin 2009, Sommerstein 2010a:68–95; for an introductory overview and further bibliography, see Torrance 2007.

9 Berman 2007 and cf. Berman 2015:75–121.

10 Crowley 2014 argues, for example, that combat veterans in classical Greece were far less likely to experience PTSD than contemporary US veterans; cf. Melchior 2011 for a similar analysis relating to Roman soldiers, and see Crowley 2012 for a discussion of how Athenian hoplites were psychologically equipped to deal with warfare. Shay 1994:39–68 also demonstrates that ancient Greek culture was better equipped than modern American culture in dealing with combat trauma through the communalization of grief for fallen comrades.

11 Shay 1994, 2002, Tritle 2000, 2004, 2014, Meineck 2009, 2012, and in this volume, Doerries 2015.

12 Tritle 2014 and Meineck in this volume.

13 This issue is discussed by Edmunds, 100–3, Griffith 117 with n.10 and Sommerstein 178–80 in this volume.

14 Zeitlin 1990a.

15 See Torrance 2014a:53–4.

16 Ziolkowski 2015:3–4. I am grateful to Ken Garcia for drawing my attention to this publication.

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Part I

Modern perspectives

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2 Aeschylus on war

A conversation with Lieutenant Colonel Kristen Janowsky

Moderated by Olivier Morel and Isabelle Torrance

Isabelle Torrance: We are very grateful indeed to have Lieutenant Colonel Kristen Janowsky with us today, who served for almost thirty years in the US Army, and we are indebted to her for the time she has taken to think about Aeschylus and especially about his *Seven against Thebes.* Before we discuss the *Seven against Thebes*, though, I wanted to ask a more general question, if I may, which is something that has divided scholars of Greek tragedy about Aeschylus' war play *The Persians*. The play is about a historical naval battle, the Battle of Salamis, which is won by the Greeks, but the tragedy is described from the perspective of the defeated Persians. The Persian king Xerxes comes home in tatters. He explains how most of his men have died, either in the naval battle or on the way home through hunger and disease. The ghost of his father is raised from the dead during the play. That man Darius is the man against whose forces Aeschylus had fought in 490 BCE at the Battle of Marathon. The naval battle that is dramatized in the play took place in 480 BCE, and the production of the play was eight years later in 472 BCE. Scholars disagree about the purpose of this play. Some argue that it was written as a kind of triumphant victory celebration by Aeschylus about the victory over the defeated enemy, so that everyone could rally together and celebrate the defeat of the Persians, and one piece of evidence given in support of this is that the Greeks are described as singing a triumphant victory hymn as they go into battle (e.g. Hall 1996, Harrison 2000). The other scholarly argument is that this is a tragedy in which the Athenians, the Greeks, were meant to identify with the suffering of the tragic character and to consider the destructive nature of war in a general sense (e.g. Pelling 1997, Garvie 2009).

So my question is: is it possible that one of those views, from a military perspective, from someone who has experience of warfare, is more likely than the other, or are both views possible answers for why Aeschylus would write such a war play? And then a broader question would be – what pushes war veterans to write about their experiences whether in a fictionalized way or in a historical way?

LTC Janowsky: From a modern perspective we always write after-action reports on battles, so there will be an accurate account and there will be a political account, and I'm sure that's always how it is. So you can glorify winning your battle, and say all the things you did great, and how you won, and let's make sure we always do it this way, and we are victors, and there's kind of a propaganda piece to that, and so you pass that on to motivate soldiers, and so there's that. The reality is that not all battles are perfect, ever, no matter what the strategy or technique, or after-action reports. It doesn't matter what you read, how much you study, or how many war plans you have, you always plan for what will go wrong.

So what makes veterans write about war? There are two pieces. There is the intellectual component so that you can explain what went right and learn from what went wrong, so that would be a command and strategic part of it. But then there are veterans, and it depends who is writing. A commander will write from a different perspective than soldiers do. Who is your audience? What is the purpose? Soldiers write therapeutically, but writing about war and what went wrong is not a great motivator. Lots of death and destruction does not motivate the next guy to want to participate and be the next to die. Of course there is also loyalism and nationalism that will motivate people. So the answer to your question is that it can be either, of course, it just depends on who the audience is.

Isabelle Torrance: Do you think it's possible for someone who fought against a particular enemy to subsequently sympathize with that enemy?

LTC Janowsky: Yes. Definitely. Because remember how close combat is in this timeframe. And now it's gone completely back around. Certainly, look at Iraq, which is my frame of reference, how close combat is. For the most part you saw who you were shooting at. So you know your enemy. In this timeframe, you know who you're killing, you see

them. And there are all kinds of movies made where, you know, you capture the prisoner and then you give them your last cigarette, because, you know, all of a sudden you realize it's the guy-next-door kind of thing. So yes, you definitely empathize with your enemy. Anyone who says different is not telling the truth. You realize that they are people and that they are human. So the question is why? Why would Aeschylus write a play sympathizing with the enemy? Could be a whole therapeutic thing. It could be a humanizing thing. We dehumanize war a lot. This is a way to humanize it.

Olivier Morel: That reminds me that there is a creative writing group or association of former soldiers and many of them are women, which is also interesting, called Warrior Writers, here in the US[1] There's one famous example of the Warrior Writers, it's a woman named Robynn Murray who was featured in a documentary film entitled *Poster Girl* directed by Sara Nesson.[2] In this film she is seen writing about her experience as a warrior. She was a machine gunner, and she writes about that, and the film is about the very wide variety of feelings that she experiences when she thinks about what she has done in Iraq, and what she's doing when she writes about it, and especially her relationship with the so-called enemy. The reason I bring up the Warrior Writers is because I think it's very interesting when you speak about this discrepancy between what happened, between the events in which you're involved as a soldier, and then the need or the drive to write. Why is it important to write at some point, and perhaps also to write about this discrepancy? *Poster Girl* deals with this discrepancy between what you feel, what you witness in war, and what you have to reconstruct when you come back.

LTC Janowsky: Well, you have to remember, unless you've been there, there's no real way to describe it. When you are in a situation of imminent death, people are shooting at you, or there are bombs, or mortar attacks, or whatever. In a combat situation where your adrenaline is flowing and there's total chaos around you, whether it's an ancient timeframe or current, your reaction and the decisions that you make are very different from the decisions you would make in a normal environment. Why do we train the military? Why do we simulate combat? Why do we try to get soldiers ready for war? Because I cannot describe to you with words, I cannot tell you how loud

it is, how much chaos, the dust, the smells, the sounds, the stress, I cannot describe to you the adrenaline and what's happening to your body. So there's a physiological 'thing' that is going on that for many, as you've read, takes over.[3] People do crazy things in war, things that they wouldn't normally do. They shoot civilians, and all these other kinds of things. And you can almost look out afterwards, when you come back to your hooch and you smoke a cigarette, and everyone is standing around, and you're processing, it's almost like you are describing another era. I remember telling my son: 'I am living in a video game' (cf. Torrance, 40, in this volume). You see the kids playing *Call of Duty*, and that's how it is. It feels like you're living in a video game. And so there's no describing it. They can tell you all about the training, I mean I went to Fort Bragg and they shot live ammo overhead, and we crawled in mud, and we did all this, but there's no describing it unless you've been there. Thus the need for seasoned combat vets, who are the best trainers, and even those guys could say you've just got to do it, you've just got to be it, you just have to experience it. So there's a disassociation between the warrior and the person, always. I don't think that has ever changed, no matter what. And you can dissect it, and you can talk about it – we had a conversation over lunch about how you can be this soft-spoken regular person but then put that person in a gun truck with an M-50, and put a 'bad guy' in front of them, and they're a different person, and maybe not someone that they're proud of either. But survival instincts are different for everyone. Some people freeze, some people react, some people cower, some people go crazy. You don't know until you've been there. You can watch all the movies you want and think, 'God, I hope I'm that great hero who rushes and throws my body on the grenade and saves my whole platoon'. You really think about that and you hope you can do that but you really don't know, and in each situation you might react differently. In the first mortar attack, you might act this way, and then that experience becomes part of who you are, and now in the next event you act differently because now you've incorporated all these sights and sounds and smells, and so that builds on who you become as a soldier, as a warrior, whatever you want to call yourself. So over time, when you talk about guys who have been

in multiple wars and seen multiple instances of combat, there's a progression of yourself as a warrior, and that's true all through time. So with this processing, I can imagine that there was lots of introspection in antiquity also: 'What did I do?', 'How did I slice that guy's head off?', 'How did I watch this guy die?', 'How did I burn this village down?', 'What kind of person am I that I am capable of doing these things to other people, who are my age, who are younger, children, women?' War makes you really start to examine what kind of a person you are, and what motivates you to do these kinds of things, and it's not simply because you are told to. You could always walk away and say 'No, I'm not going to do that.'

Isabelle Torrance: You mentioned so many things there that made me think of the *Seven against Thebes* and the last point about walking away reminds me of the chorus telling Eteocles not to go and fight his brother, which is one of the big questions of the play – why does he go? You mentioned the difference between someone who has experience of multiple wars, as Aeschylus would have had, and someone without that experience. That reminded me of an insightful question you posed when we spoke about this previously: what kind of military experience does Eteocles have? If we think about other mythological tragic heroes like Theseus or Heracles, they have several wars under their belts, but I couldn't find any evidence for Eteocles having previous military experience (and he is probably quite young, cf. Sommerstein 2010b:82–8). So if he's here with no military experience and there are various possible reactions that you mention, freezing, cowering, reacting, and going crazy, what was your sense of his response to the crisis in the play?

LTC Janowsky: The first time I looked at this I thought Eteocles was a poor example of a leader, that was just my initial reaction. Why is the city not prepared? If I know I'm going to be attacked and I am the commander, for lack of a better word, the commander of my troops, and I know that I have seven gates to defend, then I have assigned defenders of those gates, and I have assigned back-up defenders of those gates, and I have a strategy and I have an escape plan. These things are planned out. This is what military strategists and commanders do. They don't wait till the last minute. I don't wait till my Scout comes in to describe the shield blazons, and then pray

to the gods and then decide 'Ok you go', and 'You go'. That's not efficient, and certainly commanders don't go themselves, they don't because who commands if you're killed (see further pp. 20, 26–8)? That was my initial reaction to it, and then this chorus and his attitude towards women . . . I guess that is a whole other topic.

Isabelle Torrance: Yes, an important one. But regarding one of the things you mention here about sending this guy off and then another, most scholars assume that the defenders were not on stage.[4] In the text there is no indication of anyone on stage, although in some modern adaptations there are characters who are sent off, because if there's nobody there, as you said to me in a previous conversation, who is he talking to? Who is he describing these shield symbols to? What's the point if no military personnel is present?

LTC Janowsky: Right. Well I don't know enough about the staging, but it just seems to me basic common sense. I've already said, you have seven gates to defend, your defenders should be there. You can see them coming. You know they're coming. That's number one. Then there was a comment about him putting on his armour later, and so again commanders don't actively engage in combat unless the city's overrun and there's no one left to fight and you're the last man standing (see further pp. 20, 26–8). So that's an issue. And then the chorus talk about the delay, is the delay that they're worried that the gods aren't responding to their prayers, or are they saying let's get on with it here?

Isabelle Torrance: So this is a passage towards the beginning of the play where the chorus come out with the garlands and fall upon the statues to pray for the salvation of the city, and they say 'Why do we delay?' (*Seven* 98–9). The literal context refers to delay in offering the garlands, but the way Kris had read it was, essentially, why are we, as a city, delaying in preparing our defences for war? This reading emphasizes that the action of the chorus in offering garlands is an attempt to defend the city by securing the support of the gods. There are also various stages at which the messenger comes in and he tells Eteocles what to do, giving him suggestions for modes of action, and Eteocles doesn't do anything straightaway. So these were all issues that we had spoken about, regarding Eteocles' slow response. But to come back to your point about his treatment of the women, I wanted to read the speech that Eteocles makes to the

women. These are young women who are terrified of the city being besieged and have come with offerings to pray for the city's salvation. Eteocles then addresses them as follows:

'I ask you, you insufferable creatures, is this the best policy, does it help save our city, does it give confidence to our beleaguered population, to fall down before the images of the city's gods and cry and howl in a way any sensible person would abhor? Whether in trouble or in welcome prosperity, may I not share my home with the female gender! When a woman is in the ascendant, her effrontery is impossible to live with; when she's frightened, she is an even greater menace to family and city. So now, with you running around in all directions like this, your clamour has spread panic and cowardice among the citizens; you are doing your very best to advance the cause of the enemy outside – the city is being sacked by its own people from within! Now then, if anyone fails to obey my command, whether a man or a woman or anything in between, a vote of death will be passed against them and there is no way they will escape execution by public stoning. Out-of-door affairs are the concern of men; women are not to offer opinions about them. Stay inside and do no harm!' [*Seven* 181–202, tr. Sommerstein]

So my question is, and this is another issue that scholars debate. Is Eteocles, in this military situation, being antagonized by the chorus? Does he have some legitimate reason for berating them, for telling them to go back inside? Is he justified in saying that they are causing panic among the citizens? Or is his behaviour excessive and possibly a sign of his own psychological problems? (See further Edmunds in this volume, 95–6, 105, on Eteocles and the chorus.)

LTC Janowsky: This is what I wrote down as I'm trying to figure out what is the combat status here, and whether or not he is a good military leader: he calls the city 'beleaguered' and he says that they are spreading 'panic and cowardice' in the city. Is that true? Is there panic and cowardice in the city? Is the city overrun? There is no indication that the city's been overrun, or that anybody has entered any of the gates. So Eteocles sounds like he is panicking. None of this is what a good leader would do. A good leader is not going to stand there and threaten to execute his own citizens because he doesn't like these young

women being terrified of being raped and pillaged. If he had been doing something there would be no need for panic. So that's why I wonder if he's efficient. There's a reason that they're panicking.

Olivier Morel: I would like to say about that, without at all being an expert, but when you referred to the chorus saying don't go to fight your brother, we are here at the heart of the tragedy, and I'm using the word 'tragedy', because if there's a meaning in this moment you describe of panic, of madness, of craziness, this is related to the fact that Eteocles is going to fight his own brother, a member of his own family. This is also connected with the history of paternity and maternity of Oedipus' sons, and we have Antigone's 'ghost' that haunts the play in this moment of panic because this is a tragedy of division. So the reason I mention that is because I think it goes back to what we said at the beginning when you were raising the question about dehumanization of the enemy. It is impossible to dehumanize your own brother, and here it questions the status of the metaphor, that is of writing, of the reconstruction of war after the end of a war, which is the situation in which the author finds himself as a war veteran. So there is a reconstruction of an event as a moment where the enemy is profoundly dehumanized while at the same time the enemy is your brother and potentially also your sister (Antigone). So my question is quite tangled, and perhaps it's more a comment. Between this chaotic power of war that is extremely loud and the pointed attempt to control this chaos there is this gap between the two poles in which I think gender is something that is, not by accident, something that Eteocles wants to repress. It has to be abstract, when of course, the entire play and the entire tragedy is about the family history and the tragedy of *philia*. So how did you read that, this moment where he represses the female component when precisely this is the moment of madness and of panic in the play?

LTC Janowsky: His attitude towards the chorus, towards the women, I think it has more to do with the family history, I don't think it has to do with the military point of view. I think it's his attitude towards women based on the Curse, his whole history. I think that's a whole separate sub-line the way he treats women, the way he thinks of them, the way he talks to them obviously. Their concerns are real. If the city is taken over, the women will be raped,

sold as sex slaves. They have a real reason to panic because they see him not reacting, and he just dismisses it by telling them to go away and saying that they are being silly, but I think that has to do with his family history. I think we could call Freud in here and have all kinds of fun with that.

Isabelle Torrance: Yes, and to come back to your point about the noises they describe. They describe noise, they see the dust. I couldn't find any references to smells, maybe that is because the war has just started, I don't know, but that's another question. At the beginning of the play we're told that the city has been besieged for some time, Eteocles says (*Seven* 22). We don't know how long. So again if it has been besieged for some time, why hasn't he done anything about it?

LTC Janowsky: Well that is contributing to their panic. So if they have been looking over the walls for days seeing all this happening and there are dead bodies everywhere, there's the smell of rotting flesh and he's just standing around contemplating the shields and yelling at the women for being histrionic, then, of course, that's just going to feed the panic, especially when he says that if they continue this he is going to stone the general population. He's just not a very nice guy to begin with, and on top of that he is not a very prepared commander, but we don't know how much time has gone by. Typically, I think in that timeframe wars last some time. The invading army has to march. You're on a hill, you can see them coming. That takes some time. You see the horses coming. They have to get into battle positions. They assault the gates. It all takes time, throwing missiles. This is not something that happens quickly. Granted the play is a moment in time and we just don't know what that moment is, but certainly, as it's written, Eteocles takes time to assign defenders, and that is significant for some reason. Why wouldn't they already be assigned? And is it significant because now he takes the seventh gate to fight his brother? Is that why? Or is it significant because he hasn't done anything and he's waiting till the last minute and he's not a very good commander? Or is it significant because he is fulfilling a prophecy? But unless the city is overrun and unless there is no able man standing, there is no reason that a commander would himself go and fight at this point (see further pp. 20, 26–8). He chose to do that of his own free will to fulfil a destiny. I don't know why he did it.

Isabelle Torrance: It might be slightly different in Greek mythological terms where kings and commanders do seem to go into battle, but the fact that he specifically goes to fight his brother is nevertheless very anomalous. And as we are having this conversation, I remembered that Aeschylus actually lost his own brother at the Battle of Marathon, and I had never really made the connection between the fact that he wrote a play about a war between brothers as opposed to obviously himself and his brother fighting on the same side. But to come back to the point about the chorus women – in your opinion their panic is not overblown or unreasonable, you would say?

LTC Janowsky: Short of being there, I don't think so. Certainly you know what's going to happen to them if the city's overrun. But I don't know what their relationship was with him prior. It just seems to me that their panic is typical. He obviously does not know how to cope with it.

Isabelle Torrance: I'm interested in your point about freezing, and you mentioned the concept of time, and this was a point that Olivier had made in a previous conversation we had about the concept of time during war being different from the concept of time in the real world, and of course then the concept of time in a performance is again something that is completely different, and it does feel that there is this very protracted scene in the middle that takes up most of the play, and that is somehow excruciating if you are thinking about the defence of the city. Even in antiquity this scene was made fun of by Euripides, a subsequent playwright, who wrote a play dealing with the same story in which Eteocles says during his organization of the city's defences: 'It would be too time-consuming to tell you the name of each man while the enemy is encamped at our very walls' (*Phoenician Women* 751–2). So it does seem to have been a point of significance even in antiquity.

LTC Janowsky: Right, we talked about that. It seems irrelevant what the shields look like. So what? There are armed men at the gates and I need to defend. We can analyze these shields later for our after-action report. I need to react to this. The descriptions do seem relentless. I understand that there is a whole reference to the gods and this is how the play is written, but it really is a long period of time which, when I read it, contributes to the panic. Okay, let's get on with the war.

Olivier Morel: Is it the fact that he is losing the sense of time because of this panic? If I have time to mention this, there is a great Shakespeare festival here at Notre Dame, and when you said that about this relationship to time, the time of the war, the time of the play, and maybe the time when the writer is writing, and the time that separates us from this play also, which is one of our points of discussion, it reminded me of this very famous sentence in *Hamlet*: 'The time is out of joint' (Act. 1, Scene 5). Is this moment of panic also a moment when you would say that time is out of joint? In other words, when you're in a war as a soldier in a situation of total emergency in a besieged city like that, what is your notion of time that is out of joint, that maybe triggers a need to reconstruct?

LTC Janowsky: It depends on whether you're acting or reacting. It depends on whether you're engaged or not engaged. Eteocles does not strike me as being engaged, which means I think time for him is slower. If you're engaged, time is quicker because you're doing. He does not seem like he's doing anything. He's processing, he's thinking. If you are doing things, getting your gear on, loading your weapon, you're doing things, you're being shot at, you're running, time goes incredibly fast and you can't even conceptualize how fast it goes. But if you're waiting or not actively engaged in combat time is very slow. So I think you're right, I think what's interesting is the writer of the play's timeframe. Why would he put this long protracted description? Is that a breather for him? Is he taking a step back? Is the process getting too intense for him as the writer? Is he inserting this scene as a break from the action that reminds him of his own military experience? Is this the writer's PTSD that he's processing?

Isabelle Torrance: I wanted to ask about a line that I noticed and it struck me in connection with what's going on in ancient Palmyra at the moment with the destruction of antiquities there. At one point the chorus say when they are terrified about the destruction of their city: 'it is pitiful that so ancient a city should be cast down to Hades, the enslaved plunder of the spear, contemptuously ravaged and turned to flaky ashes' (321–3, tr. Sommerstein). The notion of antiquity there, of being so ancient, seems particularly important, and the Greeks did seem to have some consciousness of how important antiquities were. They

admired the Egyptians, who had a much more ancient culture than their own. Is that something that is ever considered in warfare, would you say? Is it a point of consideration when cities or places that are perceived as ancient get destroyed, or is that not a concern at all?

LTC Janowsky: Maybe afterwards, but certainly not during. I don't think so, no. I wish I could give you a longer answer.

Isabelle Torrance: Well let me ask you a different question. Olivier brought up the issue of not being able to dehumanize your brother as an enemy. That's really interesting because it does seem to me that during the course of the play there is some attempt at ideological distancing. So this is a Greek town, being besieged by other Greeks, but the attacking Greeks are described by the chorus at one point as an army of foreign speech (170), which, for the Greeks, was the main indicator of being a non-Greek. So the attackers are described as non-Greeks, even though they are Greek, and there are other details, for example one of the attackers is described as having barbarian-sounding horses (463–4), so again there is an association with foreignness. So how do you see the progression of this in the play? Do you think there is a sense in which this is a moment of realization for Eteocles, that there has been an attempt to create an ideological distance between the Thebans and the attackers which then implodes when Eteocles goes to fight his brother? Is the creation of ideological distance common in warfare?

LTC Janowsky: Yes, definitely. You definitely dehumanize, you make up names, we did it in Vietnam, we do it in every war, where the bad guys have some kind of name. That, in theory, makes it easier to kill them. When you ask why he would purposely go to kill his brother, I think that whole distancing makes sense. They're trying to dehumanize the enemy, they're trying to say they're foreign, so that would make sense. But what doesn't make sense is that they're not actively engaged in battle. That's usually what it takes to live that denial. If I am a combat soldier or actively engaged in combat, and I create this mirage of a person so that I can justify killing them, I have to be actively engaged in combat to do that. I'm not going to sit back in an office and create this entity because I'm not out in the front lines. So Eteocles is not actively engaged. So he's hearing all this dehumanization, but he's not actively in touch with what's around him. I just don't know what he's doing. He's just not

with it, but maybe he never was with it. I mean let's look at his background. Maybe he wasn't the sharpest tool in the shed to begin with, so that's why we have what we have.

Olivier Morel: Well yes, I think it's also a very interesting question because we are mixing three different circles in the play, as far as I perceive it when I read the play. There's the family circle, there is a military circle in which they try to confront the chaos and violence that gives birth to societies or communities, human groups in general, there is the civic circle, what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, what makes us a good citizen or a bad citizen, a good father and mother or a bad one, and this switch that you have to make when you are called off to war that you just described a few minutes ago, or when you have to be able to dehumanize the enemy in order to be able to do your job as a soldier, that suspends the law, which is a moral law also, of the city. So we have the family, the *genos*, the *polis*, the city, and we have the cosmic fight with the chaos of war, and so Eteocles is caught in the middle of three circles, in the middle of all the contradictions involved here. That's how I perceived it. What defines a Greek is also what defines the belonging to these groups, family, soldiers and citizens. How do you resolve this contradiction?

LTC Janowsky: You could say that every soldier, and maybe police and any profession where you have to kill, probably has that same internal battle, because you are one person in your home and you are one person in your job and you are one person in society. And so then you have to take the pieces of each of those, and that in theory is what creates post-traumatic stress. So I've done this one thing, but the combat has become the bigger piece of the circle than my family and my friends, and so I have this bigger piece of the circle that is the 'killer' and it's overriding and creating all these moral and ethical dilemmas, and all this internal 'who am I?', 'how can I do this?', 'what kind of person does these things?' And of course that is your job but it's supposed to be a Venn diagram of sorts, right, where you have some equality in all these pieces in your life and then all of a sudden one piece has taken over, so how do you deal with it, how do you process it? Certainly people write to process, or they go to see a play, or they self-destruct, and it would appear that that may be the case here [with Eteocles]. There

was a self-destruction and a self-fulfilling prophecy of destruction.

Olivier Morel: So in a sense you would say that the fact that Eteocles and his brother killed each other is a kind of self-destruction? So it is a kind of suicidal gesture.

LTC Janowsky: Yes.

Isabelle Torrance: It is presented that way in the play. There are a lot of Greek compounds that have the *auto-* root, which is quite difficult to translate in some of the passages but which expresses the fratricide as a kind of 'suicide', and there is the Greek grammatical form, the dual, used to describe an inseparable pair, that is used to describe the brothers (cf. Torrance 2007:31–2). So that is a really interesting point, that it's almost like a suicide from Eteocles' perspective.

LTC Janowsky: Well you see that even today. Soldiers say they either reintegrate, they partially reintegrate, or they don't, and then they kill themselves. So it's what happens.

Olivier Morel: It's very interesting because I know a female veteran who was in Abu Ghraib and she is a police officer in Chicago, and one day she says there was a veteran who was in crisis during an intervention, and she's a veteran and so she started talking to him, and guess what, he was pointing a gun at them and they were doing the same thing. They had a discussion, she the female veteran and this young man who was an Iraq war veteran with PTSD, and at some point he said, 'I'm not going to kill you, this is suicide by cop' which meant, 'you are going to kill me.' But it reminds me of the play in some way, what we say of the two brothers, which is probably the very essence of the tragedy, brothers killing each other.

Mark Griffith: Just going back to the time issue – one of the confusing things about the play when you stop to read it, although it does not seem to be so confusing when you watch it, and this comes back to whether Eteocles is a good commander in chief or not: is that when he gives his speeches assigning the six different champions, Aeschylus has given him different tenses to use (cf. n.4). There are a couple of times where he says so-and-so 'will do it' or 'I am appointing' so-and-so, but there are a couple of times where he says so-and-so 'has been sent', and you can't figure out from his text whether actually he did have all seven gates covered, and now this is the day that the bad guys have sworn their oath, they're coming

for us now, and okay this shield can neutralize that shield because of the emblem on it, this guy matches this guy, all the gates are covered, and I'm the best guy to kill Polynices. He uses this wonderful word ἐνδικώτερος – who is 'better fitted', who is 'more exactly right'? – to kill Polynices but me? And everything falls into place, and he does succeed in defending the city. He does a really good job. Obviously there's all kinds of other horrible stuff that he does, like kill his brother, but it's very hard to figure whether it's sheer luck – he's sent seven guys there and 'good heavens' each one of the bad guys has come to just the gate where we can actually kill him – or whether he's picking them as he goes and with real skill getting his troops in exactly the right order, and himself, of course, he does kill nasty Polynices.

LTC Janowsky: Yes, from a strict military perspective the mission was accomplished, it was a success, that's it. That's how the military would write it – successful mission. We won, you lost, we don't care how you got there. That's how things have been done, for a long time, but the road taken sometimes can be important. If you look at end state, though, you're right, it was a successful mission, therefore he is a successful commander.

Mark Griffith: Yes, although in the other areas that we're talking about, clearly we cannot say that this guy made a success of his life.

Aubrey Crum: Earlier at the very beginning of the talk you were comparing Aeschylus' *Persians* and *Seven against Thebes* and how the *Persians* can be read as humanizing or empathizing with the enemy, but can we really compare these given that one is familiar and the other is profoundly unfamiliar, and is it really easier to empathize with a stranger than with your brother?

Isabelle Torrance: Well one of the points we have been making about Eteocles and his brother is how they are presented as a kind of interdependent unit at the end of the play, where brother killing brother is presented almost as a suicide.

Douglas Cairns: There is an issue there, and it relates to something you were saying about dehumanizing the enemy and something Olivier was saying about being within or beyond the moral code, and I think the really striking thing is that it's both. So Eteocles and we presume also Polynices hate each other precisely because they were once so

close and they had certain expectations of each other. Each expected the other to behave in a certain way and they regard the other as being in breach of something, but it seems that that is always the case. So if you think of the example of the *Iliad*, you do have this utter dehumanization of the enemy to the extent that you regard the enemy as a piece of meat that you might actually eat, but at the same time you feel precisely that way because you think that this other human being has behaved in ways that you condemn. So there is a degree of being both within and beyond the moral code, and to some extent they are about different moral codes, but there's a conglomeration there where there's a definite oxymoron, there's a tension between regarding someone as completely beyond the pale, someone with whom you share no moral values, and someone you can regard as being in breach of moral values that you both share.

LTC Janowsky: I think that killing is such an abnormal moral value that you have to dehumanize, you have to create a reason to kill.

Douglas Cairns: And that is a moralization, so that is the tension that I'm driving at. So even the dehumanization involves this moral rationalization.

LTC Janowsky: Yes, it's a vicious circle.

Olivier Morel: This is why it is *demoralizing* also.

Peter Meineck: Just to pick up on the point about command, and the question about the ancient audience being able to see this in slightly different terms of a hoplite phalanx, that actually the commander standing in line battle is a noble thing to do. It's a strange army, these seven. On the one hand it's an aristocratic force but they are in a strange way acting like hoplites, and each of the shields is protecting one of the gates. I think of Cleon dying in battle as a hoplite, and Herodotus' description of the great debates about who is going to lead the Athenians at Marathon, and those commanders actually standing in line as hoplites. So I wonder whether in terms of the audience of antiquity, whether they would have interpreted his decision differently. In a way he was compelled to stand at a gate. Not to stand at a gate would have been seen as a cowardly action, and I wonder if that sort of changes slightly why he does it. He doesn't want to do it, but he feels that actually if I'm going to send other men to do this, I have to do it myself. Does that colour his decision?

LTC Janowsky: That would make him a pretty noble guy.

Peter Meineck: But in a reluctant way, right? I have always read it as he doesn't want to do it, but the pressure is such that he goes.

Isabelle Torrance: Because he waits to put himself at the seventh gate.

LTC Janowsky: My understanding is that you give the illusion of leading and then quietly duck to the back when the bullets start flying, theoretically.

Mark Griffith: There are a couple of lines, aren't there, when the chorus are saying don't do it, you don't have to do it, and he then does start talking about honour and valour, and how he can't back away (714–7). To be precise, the chorus suggest that 'God respects even a mean/cowardly victory (*nikēn kakēn*)', and Eteocles replies that 'a true guy, a hoplite (*andra hoplitēn*), shouldn't accept that kind of statement'. So he is judging himself by that hoplite soldier's standards. So that is one of the factors.

Peter Meineck: It makes his decision more tragic.

Fernando Echeverría: There is a passage in the *Iliad* also when Priam warns Hector not to fight Ajax but Hector does it anyway, for his honour. So leadership in ancient society is more this kind of charismatic leadership, not a really professionalized kind of leadership. The only way to get all those men behind you is to do the job yourself. Probably Alexander the Great is the quintessential leader in the ancient world, and we find more professional generals like Cesar doing this sort of thing at some point. If the legions are stuck, he leads the attack and turns the battle somehow. So Eteocles is definitely forced to go, but I would not say that he is willing. It is part of the ideology, part of the culture. He is expected to go.

Douglas Cairns: This is one of the criticisms that Achilles makes of Agamemnon, that he hangs back instead of fighting.

David Hernandez: One of the things about ancient culture is that people were steeped in military ideology from a very young age, so it was integrally tied to being a citizen. I mention this in terms of our discussion of the value system, in terms of thinking about the psychological experience of soldiers, in terms of interpreting behaviour; I think there needs to be a discussion about what the value system is for a highly militarized culture, a culture in which warfare is perennial, and where it is an integral part of education. So if you think about Hitler Youth or ISIS suicide bombers, their experiences in combat are

probably fundamentally different from an American who throughout their life did not really experience warfare but is trained intensely in a program and is then sent off to war.

LTC Janowsky: I hear what you are saying. Your ethical dilemmas are different. When we had talked to children who lived in Iraq, their outlook on life was obviously very different and what they wanted and what they expected were different because they were used to war, and I remember thinking, 'My God, how do these children survive?', and I couldn't even imagine my child coping in a place where you're mortared and rocketed. And so you're right. When you grow up in a militarized environment your psyche is different. But back then, I'm not an expert, but I think there was a warrior culture but there also was a class structure. Not everyone was destined to be a warrior. There were nobles and there were peasants. You probably lived with war all the time, people trying to take what was yours, but not everyone was going to be a warrior.

Mark Griffith: This picks up on Peter's point, I think, and David's – the number of Athenian aristocrats, political leaders, who were killed in battle was high. There wasn't anything like the same degree of disconnect between politicians and the army. The army was made up of the citizens who voted in the democracy and the officers were very often the very wealthy, the upper classes, but they had to fight next to them [the citizens] and be in ships with them, and quite a lot of them did get killed. This is how things are for most of the sixth and fifth centuries, but by the later fifth century, going into the fourth, this warrior culture is increasingly being challenged though not immediately replaced. It is being modified or complicated by other moral codes that are competing with it, so it's not like it's totally straightforward, but manliness – *aretē*, *andreia* – to prove you're a real guy without ever going and fighting in battle, would have been an uphill struggle, much more so than in American society where there is no draft.

Isabelle Torrance: Well that is really the point of this session. Obviously we have not had the opportunity to talk to someone from that kind of militarized society where people grow up from childhood with warfare, but we did have the opportunity to talk with Colonel Janowsky, which is at least one step closer for us in trying to understand what

were some of the issues that Aeschylus may have been processing when he was writing a play like this. And I wanted to note something very perceptive that Colonel Janowsky said previously, which was the possibility of writing to motivate future soldiers, because actually that is exactly what is said about the play by Aeschylus' character in Aristophanes' comedy *Frogs*. He boasts that all those who saw his *Seven against Thebes* would have been seized with a desire to be a warrior (1022). It is difficult to gauge the tone of this statement, and the god Dionysus says it was a bad thing that Aeschylus had done in making the Thebans [who were enemies of Athens] valiant in war, but even so it is significant that the concept of a 'recruitment play' is mentioned directly in connection with *Seven against Thebes*, although it is unlikely that it actually functioned as such (see further Griffith in this volume, 116–20).

Notes

1 See www.warriorwriters.org.

2 See www.warriorwriters.org/artists/robynn.html. Sara Nesson's film about Robynn Murray, *Poster Girl*, won the 2011 award for Best Short Documentary from the International Documentary Association and was nominated for a 2011 Academy Award for Best Short Documentary Film. For more information, see www.postergirlthemovie.com.

3 Compare this assessment of the experience of warfare with the driving force, the Erinys or Fury, that seemingly takes over and compels Eteocles into his decision to go to fight his brother in Aeschylus' *Seven*. See Torrance 2007:32–4 for a brief overview of the issue, with further references.

4 Scholars disagree as to whether or not Eteocles has already stationed some of the defenders before he describes the assignments. Taplin 1977:149–65 argued that Eteocles assigns the defenders one by one during the course of the scene, but Sommerstein 2010a:72–4, following Wilamowitz, focuses on the curious use of tenses in the scene, which implies that three positions have been assigned, three are assigned during the course of the scene, and one where a present tense is used can be understood either way. Cf. Torrance 2007:16–8.

3 Aeschylus, gangland Naples, and the Siege of Sarajevo

Mario Martone's *Teatro di Guerra*[1]

Isabelle Torrance

Introduction

Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* is rarely performed, particularly in comparison with Sophocles' *Antigone*, with which is shares a significant overlap of mythological plot and several important themes (cf. Cairns in this volume). As Peter Meineck has noted, *Seven* is generally considered 'the most impenetrable . . . of all of Aeschylus' plays',[2] and the reasons for this are clearly connected to the importance of the choral songs and the significance of the long central shield scene, where shield blazons are described and interpreted. Both of these aspects of the play have the potential to alienate a modern audience. Nevertheless, there have been a handful of remarkable and innovative adaptations, which demonstrate that the tragedy retains its power to speak to contemporary society. The drama has been used for experimental purposes, as, for example in the German director Einar Schleef's 1986 *The Mothers* (*Die Mütter*), whose exploitation of the Chorus here became characteristic of his theatrical art,[3] and a 2001 production at La Mama Experimental Theatre Company in New York which included a cast of numerous different nationalities and a giant puppet hand, typical of director Ellen Stewart's theatre.[4] Two further powerful adaptations cast the tragedy against the backdrop of a contemporary civil or gangland war. In 1968 the Cuban playwright Antón Arrufat used the drama to address the 1961 Bay of Pigs attack against Cuba led by US-based Cuban exiles, and the play was staged for the first time in Cuba in 2007.[5] Meanwhile, in the US, American pioneer in the genre of hip-hop theatre Will Power had created a very different kind of performance piece, first developed in San Francisco in 2001 but which gained particular acclaim in New York in 2006, based on the Aeschylean play, entitled *The Seven*, that refocused the issue of the family curse through the lens of violent hip-hop culture.[6] Mario Martone's adaptation is arguably the most remarkable of all. It addresses the civil war in former Yugoslavia through the Siege of Sarajevo, as well as the gangland violence in Naples, but it also uses the text of Aeschylus to explore the process of acting and the creation of performance pieces by including a narrative of rehearsals for an actual theatrical production through the medium of film.[7]

The Siege of Sarajevo

It was the Siege of Sarajevo in the early 1990s, the longest siege in modern military history, that made Neapolitan film and theatre director Mario Martone turn to Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* to address the war that he found himself observing from neighbouring Italy. The play spoke to Martone because it describes a siege and a fratricidal war, but also because it explores the suffering of the community under siege.[8] For Martone, the concept for the film came first, but he realized that the theatrical rehearsals needed to be real, not simply imagined,[9] and so the project resulted both in a theatrical performance, which ran in Naples in the Teatro Nuovo from December 19–26, 1996, and again from June 17–25, 1997, and in the film *Teatro di Guerra*, literally 'Theatre of War' but with the English title *Rehearsals for War*, which premiered at the Cannes film festival in 1998.

The subject matter of the film is loosely autobiographical. It follows the struggles of a director (Leo) to mount a production of Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* with the plan of performing in the theatre of war-torn Sarajevo. The dangers involved in this endeavour are on the minds of the performers during the course of the film, and ultimately the trip has to be abandoned because Leo's Bosnian contact Jasmin has been killed by a grenade on his way to the theatre. This narrative runs somewhat parallel to Martone's own experience. He had initially attempted collaborating with Bosnian author Miljenko Jergović on a script for the film. Jergović was to have scripted the part for a Bosnian director who visits Naples to attend rehearsals. Italian author Fabrizia Ramondino, with whom Martone had co-authored the script for his 1992 film *Death of a Neapolitan Mathematician*, and who had written in depth about Sarajevo, was to be another collaborator.[10] Martone followed a few of Ramondino's suggestions, including scenes from a rehearsal of *The Taming of the Shrew* and a Bosnian character who became the librarian in his film, Ms. Hamulić, but the collaboration with Ramondino ultimately went no further.[11] Martone travelled to Sarajevo in search of an actor who could play the part of the Bosnian director. The visit to Sarajevo marked him deeply, and he kept a diary recording the devastation and dire circumstances of the people.[12] Jergović, of course, did not die, but in the end he said he was not able to come to Naples, and Martone proceeded alone with the project.[13] No reason was given for Jergović's decision, but the film offers an interesting reflection on the issue through the figure of Ms. Hamulić, who works at the library in Naples. When Leo confides in her that his theatrical contacts from Sarajevo are no longer willing to come to Naples even though he has secured permissions for them, she replies, 'Perhaps it is better for them not to leave Sarajevo.' 'But why?' asks Leo, 'They might not want to go back,' she says, and 'it is better for them not to be tempted.'[14] This explanation dovetails with Martone's observations of feelings of suspicion among those who stayed in Sarajevo throughout the whole siege directed against those who had left.[15]

Although the awaited Bosnian director never comes and the troupe of Neapolitan actors never makes it to Sarajevo, the brief scenes in the library form an important point of contact between Naples and Sarajevo, not only through the Bosnian

librarian who happens to work there but also through the fact that Jasmin had sent Leo a piece of the library of Sarajevo in his last letter, symbolically wrapped in the polyurethane sheeting sent by the UN to Sarajevo to cover holes in the windows and used in the stage set for Martone's theatrical production (Fig. 3.11).[16] On his own visit to Sarajevo, Martone had clearly been marked by the destruction of its library (Fig. 3.1)[17] and by fact the that books were used as barricades and protection from grenades at the university (Fig. 3.2). Leo ceremoniously gives the

Figure 3.1 Sarajevo library destroyed; photo taken by Martone on his visit to Sarajevo, published in Martone (1998:81).

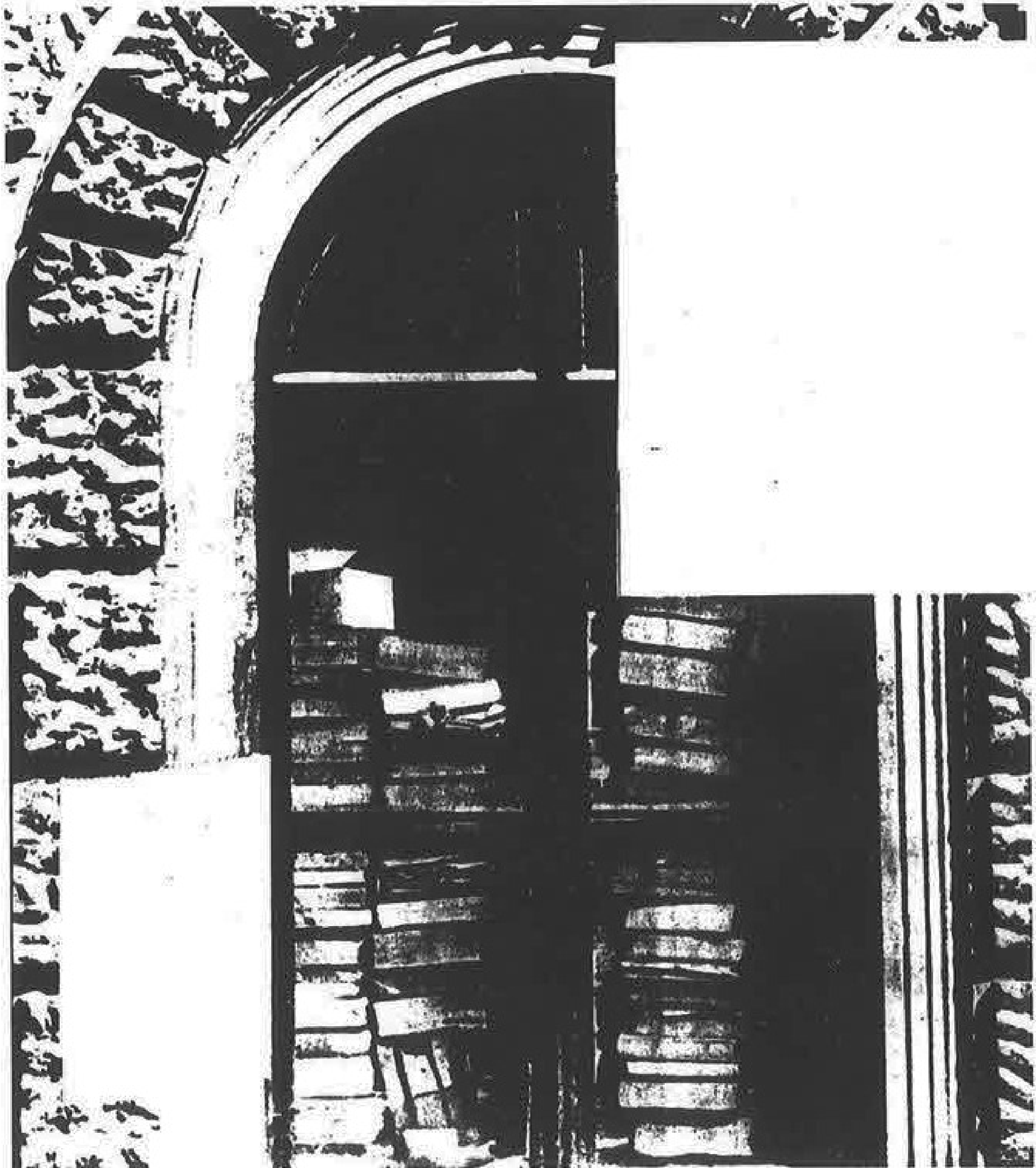

Figure 3.2 Image of photocopy given to Martone of a window in the Sarajevo library stacked with books to protect against grenades; published in Martone (1998:78).

fragment of the Sarajevo library to the Bosnian librarian in Naples after receiving it, but Leo's visits to the library also underline the fact that he is a deep thinker. He visits the library to borrow a book on anthropological rituals as part of his research for staging *Seven against Thebes*, and he is much concerned about the connection between the actors and the text of Aeschylus' play.

A second way in which Naples and Sarajevo are linked in the film is through music. Lucia, who plays one of the chorus members in Leo's play, also performs a raging hard punk performance at a rave approximately two thirds of the way through the film. The performance is entitled *Sarajevo Supermarket* and is

credited to Italian band Contropotere (literally, 'Counterpower'). The lyrics that we hear are as follows: 'Cross – rapes – torture – video – video agonies – video communications – video raids – video vampires – video executions – Jewish stars – red stars – stars and stripes – blue helmets – green helmets – sickle and hammers – black cross – hooked cross – Islamic cross – Christian cross – Sarajevo supermarket – Sarajevo supermarket'.[18] These shockingly stark lyrics point to the commodification of violence and the embroilment of multiple races and creeds within that process. According to this song, what Sarajevo has to sell is political and religious warfare through the medium of video images. And there is a market for such images. War sells. In fact, Leo has been told by the local newspaper executive that they are not interested in reporting on his production unless there is wounding or bombing to report.[19] The message of the song is one of sympathy for Sarajevo, reduced to the status of a supermarket for horror. In the final scenes of the film this message is reinforced in a different way, again through music. At the after-party of the final dress rehearsal, as they anticipate going to Sarajevo, the cast join in singing a Bosnian folk song, which they all seem to know, 'Ah Ljubav, Ljubav' ('Oh Love, Love') addressed to a lover, and this song carries over into the soundtrack while *The Taming of the Shrew* director discusses how Leo's production never made it to Sarajevo in the film's final scene. We have just seen a newspaper headline 'Bloodbath in Sarajevo' and the film ends by raising questions about what is really required in times of war.

Leo's inspiration for the rehearsals of his *Seven against Thebes* is certainly conceived with modern warfare in mind. Most of the rehearsals we see constitute a variety of different exercises designed to make the actors genuinely experience the terror of being blindfolded and having their senses assaulted by unexpected noises and encounters. Sound is a major focus of the theatrical production, as it is in the original,[20] but in a different way. The pounding of approaching cavalry is replaced with sounds of bombs and explosions created by Adriano the sound engineer. A further consideration for a modern adaptation is whether to cut the text of Aeschylus' play. In Leo's production this seems to happen in the end, but not without first exploring the full extent of Aeschylus' text. Martone was aware that the end of the transmitted text of Aeschylus' *Seven* in which Antigone appears is considered extraneous to the original, but he nevertheless chose to give Antigone a major role as leader of the chorus.[21] This has an interesting effect since it creates a relationship between Antigone and Eteocles that does not exist in Greek tragedy, where Antigone's interactions are never with Eteocles but always with her father Oedipus or with the exiled brother Polynices. The presence of Antigone throughout the play in Martone's version generates great sympathy for Eteocles, and this is enhanced by the fact that Martone removes the lines in which Eteocles aggressively calls the chorus 'unspeakable creatures' (A. *Se.* 182) and accuses them of ruining the morale of those defending Thebes (A. *Se.* 191–4).

The lines from the end of the transmitted text of Aeschylus, in which Eteocles is to be buried with full honours, also occur in rehearsals featured early on in the film. This is important since Martone wants to create sympathy for those under siege. The actors in the production use modern costumes and props. Eteocles

broadcasts announcements to the people through a microphone, suggesting communication with the whole population (Fig. 3.3).[22] In the film, the director Leo asks Giovanna, who is playing one of the chorus members, whether she thinks Eteocles was wrong in exiling Polynices, to which she responds, 'I didn't think so, I can't judge who did wrong. But seeing what came out of it. . . . No, I don't think – I don't know who was wrong.'[23] Her answer is equivocal, she is not sure,

Figure 3.3 Eteocles/Vittorio (played by Marco Baliani) addresses the citizens; photograph published in Martone (1998:83).

but she also says twice that she doesn't think Eteocles was wrong, thus creating further sympathy for his position. What she says is corroborated by Vittorio, the actor who plays Eteocles, and his understanding of the role: 'I didn't send Polynices into exile, I sent him away from the city because I knew his way of interpreting a city's political government would have been terrible for the city itself. What is happening is the sign of what Polynices would have done if he were to rule; the world is full of ambitious people, who always think about benefitting from circumstances, even Thebes is full of such people.'[24] So Martone's Eteocles did not exile Polynices for personal gain but in order to save the city. To further this theme, there is a very slight but effective adaptation of an original line from Aeschylus spoken by Eteocles when he goes to fight his brother. The Greek translates as 'The gain comes before the death that comes after' (A. *Se.* 697). Eteocles implies that he will profit from going to fight his brother. In Martone's adaptation, Eteocles says more straightforwardly, 'Better to die sooner rather than later',[25] and the body of Eteocles seems to be Martone's focus for the finale of the theatrical performance. He decides to use a real body rather than a dummy, inspired by an image of a dead soldier wrapped in a cloth from the conflict in Sarajevo (Figs. 3.4–3.6). It is only after this that it is decided to use a real body for Polynices also.[26] In the final scene of the play Antigone declares her intention to defy the order prohibiting the burial of Polynices. The Theban Polyphontes, played by Leo (who is also the director), aims his gun at her (Fig. 3.7), and all the men present then draw weapons at each other, some siding with Antigone, some declaring allegiance to their dead leader Eteocles. One major change made by Martone is to include the Theban defenders on stage and to give them lines from some of the choral odes.[27] A key line during the final scene is: 'A people that has escaped danger can be brutal', delivered in the transmitted text by the messenger to Antigone (A. *Se.* 1044) and in the film by Polyphontes to Antigone. It was a line that Martone made a particular note of in the diary he kept on his visit to Sarajevo.[28] The suffering is not over at the end of the play.

Modern costume and echoes of the war in Sarajevo are important for encouraging reflection on a contemporary situation, but the point of actually bringing this production to Sarajevo generates discussion during the film. Leo is challenged by Luisella, the actress originally cast to play Antigone. She doubts that they would be able to reach a theatre audience in Sarajevo with a production of Aeschylus' play in Italian. She accuses Leo of trying to suit his own interests. Leo stresses that it is about theatre, about connecting with Aeschylus' text and not about presuming to understand the experiences of the people of Sarajevo, but the conversation concludes at an impasse.[29] Soon thereafter Luisella is called to work on a movie in Rome and leaves Leo's production. She will be replaced by the higher-profile starlet Sara, who is in Naples for the production of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* but has had a tense relationship with the director Franco Turco, who seems to have control of all the funding for theatre in Naples and who is happy to pass her on to Leo. Franco and his production are presented as flashy and superficial compared with Leo's.[30] Franco is accused of wasting huge sums of money on props, and he has no interest in Sara's attempts to get into character as Kate to

Figure 3.4 Photograph by Danilo Krstanovič in the exhibition catalogue *Sarajevo!* (Foundation Galleria Gottardo, Lugano, 1995), reprinted in Martone (1998:79) with the caption 'The deposition of Eteocles'.

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Figure 3.5 Deposition of the body of Eteocles in Martone's stage production; Martone (1998:101).

Figure 3.6 Antigone/Sara (played by Anna Bonaiuto) laments over the body of Eteocles; Martone (1998:103).

Figure 3.7 Polyphontes/Leo threatens Antigone/Sara; Martone (1998:111).

his Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, struggling to find reasons her character would want to marry him.

The choice of *The Taming of the Shrew* is an interesting one as a contrast for *Seven*, the former a comedy, generally deemed misogynistic in outlook by modern audiences, the latter a tragedy in which the misogyny of the main character of the original, Eteocles, is dissolved in the new adaptation both by the omission of negative lines and by the powerful performance of Antigone in a new role as chorus leader, played by the starlet rejected from *The Taming of the Shrew*. Leo's production, in contrast to Franco's, has no money at all and is entirely focused on connecting with the characters through Aeschylus' difficult text. Sara, a serious actress, who becomes increasingly invested in the challenging role of Antigone, can perhaps be seen to embody the grief of Sarajevo through her performance of the role, particularly given the suggestive nature of her name, Sara, the first half of the word 'Sarajevo'. The last words of the film go to Franco who discusses Leo's project in the final scene, and there is perhaps no small irony in the fact that Franco Turco (literally, the Turk, the centuries-old enemy of the Greek) reigns supreme in the Neapolitan theatrical arena over the materially impoverished but philosophically rich Greek tragedy. We have just seen Leo tell his actors, after the final rehearsal party, that they cannot go to Sarajevo after all. In the mirror scene, Franco and his actors celebrate their play over a dinner party and scramble to read reviews which praise the talent of Luisella, who had taken over the role of Kate, and the extravagant set. Only one member of the dinner party pauses over a

different page of the newspaper, whose headline reads ‘Bloodbath in Sarajevo’. He asks Franco how it ended for ‘those guys who wanted to go to Sarajevo’. Franco replies, ‘And how was it supposed to end? They didn’t go anywhere. These things are fanciful . . . they think they need theatre there, understand? Those poor people need weapons, is that clear? Weapons! What theatre?’ ‘But they didn’t do their show then?’ asks the man (Renzo), and Franco replies, ‘I said: “Do it anyway . . .” they didn’t want to.’[31]

The whole purpose of Leo’s project was to perform in Sarajevo. According to the end of the film, Leo saw no point in staging the production in Naples, and Franco saw no point in staging it in Sarajevo. We know that Martone did stage his production of *Seven against Thebes* in Naples, twice, so there is a significant divergence here between the fictional Leo and Martone’s own experience. Nevertheless, the abandonment of the performance in the film heightens the tension surrounding the question of theatre’s value for a people at war. It was well publicized in the early 1990s that the American writer, theatre director, and political activist Susan Sontag had gone to Sarajevo to direct a Bosnian version of Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*.[32] Indeed, during his own visit to Sarajevo, Martone had discovered that Sontag was staying in the same hotel and had left a message for her with her assistant, but, as he recorded starkly in his diary: ‘Susan Sontag did not reply to my message.’[33] Sontag is also mentioned at the beginning of the film. When Leo seeks the support of a local newspaper to get a journalist on board in order to facilitate travel to Sarajevo, he is dismissed with the fact that the paper has already done an article about ‘that American writer who went to work in the theatre at Sarajevo’. Leo has to remind them of her name.[34]

Sontag’s experiment, however, validates Leo’s project in certain ways. In the piece she wrote on her return to the US, entitled ‘Godot comes to Sarajevo’, for the *New York Review of Books* in October 1993, she discusses the value of theatre in Sarajevo under siege. Sontag explains her choice of *Waiting for Godot*, as a play about waiting in vain for a people who felt that they too were waiting in vain for international intervention. Wasn’t this insensitive or pessimistic? Sontag was asked. Her answer: ‘In Sarajevo, as anywhere else, there are more than a few people who feel strengthened and consoled by having their sense of reality affirmed and transfigured by art.’[35] The talented actors who had remained in Sarajevo embraced the sense of normalcy afforded them by rehearsals and performance. ‘Far from being frivolous to put on a play – this play or any other – it is a serious expression of normality.’[36] We might also compare the sentiment expressed towards the end of Martone’s *Teatro di Guerra* diary: ‘if you live as if you were in a movie, you do theatre as if you were living’.[37] On this analysis, theatre is an escape from surreal circumstances and can restore a person’s sense of being alive. Sontag’s production would pass Luisella’s challenge of relevance in a way that Leo’s does not, since it was performed by Bosnian actors in a Serbo-Croat translation. Nevertheless, the very fact of bringing a play to Sarajevo could also be read as an act of support for normality and morale among the besieged population, and the stress on connecting with the text of Aeschylus rather than trying to imagine the suffering of the people of Sarajevo would seem to be a secure avenue

for performance. Indeed Sontag reports that two out of the five theatres open before the war had stayed open, and two recent productions she mentions had been of Euripides' *Alcestis* and Sophocles' *Ajax*.[38] Greek tragedy, then, did have a place in war-torn Sarajevo.

Gangland Naples

As a result of not being able to travel, the film also gives us the sense that the actors are somehow trapped in Naples. The production's apparent failure in its overt aim serves a powerful function in reframing our focus on a different kind of warfare within the gangland culture of Naples. If the cast members of the play and of the film have no access to Sarajevo, they are completely embroiled in, or besieged by, we could say even, the everyday life of Naples and all the tensions and instabilities that entails.[39] The location of the theatre where rehearsals are taking place is in the Spanish Quarter of Naples, an area known for high unemployment, poverty, a particularly heavy Neapolitan dialect, traffic in heroin, and the strong influence of the Camorra, the large organized crime network based in Naples.[40] Throughout the film, many of the characters speak in Neapolitan dialect. The presence of the Camorra is felt early in the film when a young boss in the area, Silvano, pressures Leo to come back to his house for a beer. There are also tensions at the theatre. There is no money for the production. Leo manages to get hold of an old generator that he uses to simulate constant noise in the background of the actors' speeches. In one scene an older local woman complains about the noise and a young man becomes aggressive. A fight breaks out, but Silvano arrives and diffuses the situation. Sara, the actress who plays Antigone, approaches Maurizio, one of the other actors, to help her get some cocaine. He entrusts a third actor, Rosario, with the task, but Rosario is a recovering drug addict who ends up having a relapse.[41] Rosario plays an invented Oedipus figure in the production, represented by his blindness coupled with a sense of foreknowledge,[42] and it is interesting that he represents, in his real life, a person who struggles with the powerful force of drug addiction and seems to be losing the battle. One might say he seems 'cursed' by his addiction. Shortly after Rosario's drug relapse the gangster Silvano has an argument with another local mafioso over money. Silvano and his men threaten the mafioso at gunpoint and ensure that he leaves. A few scenes later, Silvano is ambushed by the same man and an accomplice on a scooter, shot five times, and killed. As a result of the murder and ensuing shakedown of the area, the police appear when the actors are on the street outside the theatre holding their fake guns rehearsing at nighttime. The police treat them as if they are holding real weapons, Leo gets frustrated, and he, together with Maurizio and Vittorio, ends up in police custody.

The incident is based on the actual experiences of the cast during rehearsals as reported in Martone's notes. The entry for the 11th of December 1996, which was shortly before the opening of the play, reads: 'We tried to practice once all the way from beginning to end, but we've been stopped by the police. The policemen stopped the actors on the street because they had weapons. They reported us for "causing alarm". One of the policemen said someone could have died, because he

would not have hesitated to open fire at the first suspicious movement . . . They wanted to confiscate the film [the incident was being filmed] . . . we gave them 10 meters of blank film.'[43] By translating and transposing these experiences of interrupted rehearsals to the film, by providing vignettes of everyday life in Naples, and by essentially mingling reality with fiction, Martone gives the film a fraught atmosphere and implicitly suggests that the ordinary people of Naples are being besieged and are at the mercy of a seriously defective political system.[44]

In a bizarre coincidence, on the first day of Martone's rehearsals for the theatrical production of *Seven against Thebes*, the 30th of October 1996, Venetian politician and sociologist Gianfranco Bettin was kidnapped by local gangsters and subjected to a false execution when an unloaded gun was pointed at his head and fired.[45] It was through one of Bettin's books, Martone records in his work notes, where Bettin had described a reading of *Seven against Thebes* done in a small theatre of war-torn Sarajevo, that Martone had been inspired, and it was to Bettin in some ways that Martone owed his choice of text.[46] From its very conception, then, this project was closely tied both to the siege of Sarajevo and to Italian politics, and it makes sense that the film should reflect on the situation in Naples, Martone's hometown, which features prominently in several of his films.[47] Naples is the focus, but Rome makes a brief appearance also when Diego goes to visit Luisella there. Together they admire an Etruscan relief at the National Etruscan Museum of the Villa Giulia (Fig. 3.8). The relief depicts a gruesome scene from the Seven against Thebes myth, one of

Figure 3.8 Etruscan Temple Relief from Pyrgi, c. 470 BCE, Villa Giulia, Rome, Tydeus eating the brain of Melanippus; photo: akg-images / Pirozzi (detail).

the most heinous atrocities recounted in classical mythology: the warrior Tydeus eating the brain of the Theban defender Melanippus.

The detail is one that does not occur in Aeschylus' play, presumably because Aeschylus wants to focus on the horror of the fratricides, but is known from other sources.[48] Luisella focuses on the beauty of the craftsmanship rather than the horror of the scene and then blithely talks about the director of the museum, who has invited her to his house on the beach in India. Martone seems to have included this scene to show that Luisella's conception of art is superficial. She does not recognize the symbolic nature of the image. Italian museums hold other representations of the Theban civil war. A second-century BCE funerary urn depicting the two dying brothers Eteocles and Polynices in the Archaeological Museum of Florence is just one example. It seems significant that Martone chooses an Etruscan image, specifically. Since the Etruscans were the ancient Italians, this suggests a national ownership of the most debased human behaviour of the Theban war that was purposely left out of the Greek tragedy, a reflection on the indignities inflicted by some Italians upon others within the film's Neapolitan context. Luisella had challenged Leo regarding his proposal to bring Aeschylus to Sarajevo, but she demonstrates little understanding of art and ends up playing Kate in the superficial production of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Human suffering

The recognition of human suffering is central, both to Aeschylus' play, where it is articulated especially through the chorus, and to Martone's adaptation, which is set in a hospital where wounded men are treated and women lament (Figs 3.9–3.11).

Figure 3.9 Wounded men being treated in the hospital on the set of Martone's theatrical production; Martone (1998:89).

Figure 3.10 Antigone laments on a hospital bed; Martone (1998:89).

Figure 3.11 Wounded soldiers and lamenting women, hospital set; UN polyurethane sheeting visible in background; Martone (1998:89).

The trauma of war-time injury is thus made into a focus point, and we are reminded of the potential for maiming when Riccardo goes to the hospital storage to get props and we see plastic limbs in addition to the hospital beds. Both Martone and Sontag mention the actor and director Nermin Tulić, who had lost his legs as a result of a bomb outside the theatre.[49] However, crucial to Martone's concept for the hospital, it seems, was Miljenko Jergović's description of someone from Sarajevo who has lived through the siege being 'like a seriously ill man in hospital' and 'like a virus-carrier'.[50] During his stay in Sarajevo, Martone found this virus metaphor to be quite common,[51] and Leo (in the film) describes his Bosnian

contact Jasmin using the same expression.[52] Sontag too spoke of the constant state of malnutrition and exhaustion of the people she encountered.[53]

Sontag also stressed the secular aspect of Bosnian society and rejected inflammatory rhetoric of religiously motivated warfare during the siege.[54] Martone underlines this too. When Giovanna, one of the actresses playing a chorus member, asks Leo if Jasmin is an Islamic name, he replies, 'Yes, but they are as Islamic as we are Catholic',[55] and if we were in any doubt about how 'Catholic' this group of people is, we are shown the same Giovanna completely unable to answer basic questions on Christian conceptions of the nature of God during her university exams on moral philosophy.[56] Religion, then, is not a major issue in Martone's adaptation, although it does hover in the background. His chorus members pray to the gods as in the original, and one of the photos from the theatrical production shows that an image of Our Lady of the Sign was a part of the set (Fig. 3.12). War and trauma,

Figure 3.12 Our Lady of the Sign can clearly be seen as part of the set in this image from Martone's theatrical production; Martone (1998:92).

however, are major concerns both in relation to Sarajevo and in a different sense in relation to Naples, connected through the medium of Aeschylus' play. A dismal hospital scene in Naples, where the sound technician Adriano visits his father towards the end of the film, echoes the hospital of the theatrical set, and we are reminded once again of the dire living conditions for poor Neapolitans. As Adriano opens the window for his father, the 'view' that materializes is a concrete wall.

Teatro di Guerra, Italian cinema, and Greek tragedy

Martone's *Teatro di Guerra* holds an important position within Italian cinema. It might be argued that his work influenced the more recent Neapolitan film *Gomorra*, directed by Matteo Garrone in 2008, based on the book by Roberto Saviano, which details the horrors of living in Camorra-run Naples. Both Garrone and Martone owe a debt to Roberto Rossellini, the father of Italian realism, but *Teatro di Guerra* connects on a deeper level with certain features of Rossellini's work identified by Martone, such as the coexistence of both the secular and the religious, and a moral approach in which film functions as a vehicle for truth.[57] Thematically, *Teatro di Guerra* can be loosely aligned with films such as Pasolini's *Notes for an African Oresteia* (1970), which also seeks to appropriate Greek tragedy to a foreign contemporary context and encounters difficulties along the way.[58] Structurally we might compare Pasolini's *Oedipus Rex* (1967), which operates within two contexts, one contemporary and one mythological, and which, like Martone's *Teatro di Guerra*, is vaguely autobiographical.[59] In Martone's film Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* operates on three different levels. The film engages directly with the ancient text, its mythological context, and its possible meanings. Ostensibly the tragedy is used to reflect on the contemporary and ongoing war in Sarajevo. Implicitly the exercise draws attention to the political crises within Neapolitan society and their impact on the daily lives of the ordinary people. As Alessandra Orsini has pointed out, the connection between the three cities – Thebes, Sarajevo, and Naples – is psychological rather than geographical.[60] However, it is through these three separate but intertwined narratives that Martone's film demonstrates how Greek tragedy as a genre and theatrical performance as a vehicle both have a powerful role to play in helping human beings to process and deal with contemporary warfare and its attendant trauma.

Notes

1 Many thanks and much gratitude are due to Giovanna di Martino, who was instrumental in helping me acquire a copy of Mario Martone's film *Teatro di Guerra*, and to Elisabetta Drudi for her invaluable assistance in translating Martone's recorded notes in *Teatro di Guerra: Un Diario*. The translated quotations from the script of *Teatro di Guerra* reproduced in this chapter are based on Elisabetta Drudi's work. This paper has also benefitted from the generous feedback of audiences at the University of Notre Dame and at the Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies. For advice on Italian cinema and several helpful suggestions on an earlier written draft, I am especially grateful to John Welle.

2 Meineck 2006:148.
3 Schleef's *Die Mütter* combined Euripides' *Suppliant Women* with Aeschylus' *Seven*. See Fischer-Lichte 2004:355–9, Torrance 2007:127.
4 Di Martino 2014:158–9, 164–5.
5 See Torrance 2015a.
6 On Power's *The Seven*, see Meineck 2006:150–7, Foley 2012:104–7, Wetmore 2015.
7 This technique of including rehearsals for a stage production of Greek tragedy features in a number of films from different cinematic traditions, including Tyrone Guthrie's *Oedipus Rex*, Jules Dassin's *A Dream of Passion*, Babis Plaitakis' *The Summer of Medea*, and Werner Herzog's *My Son, My Son, What Have Ye Done?*, all discussed by Michelakis 2013:118–24.
8 Martone 1998:17, 19. On Greek tragedy as a source of inspiration in Martone's work, see esp. Orsini 2005 and cf. Vianello 2013 on his *Oedipus Rex*. Martone's theatrical productions of Greek tragedies include adaptations of *Philoctetes* (1987), *Persians* (1990), *Seven against Thebes* (1996), *Oedipus Rex* (2000), and *Oedipus at Colonus* (2004). In 2013 Martone directed Elsa Morante's 1968 *Serata a Colono* at the Teatro di Roma, an adaptation of *Oedipus of Colonus*.
9 Martone 1998:18.
10 Martone 1998:18.
11 Martone 1998:19.
12 The diary entries are published in Martone 1998:39–54.
13 Martone 1998:20.
14 Martone 1998:155–6. For ease of reference, all quotations from the film are referred to by the page numbers of the script printed in Martone 1998.
15 Cf. Martone 1998:46.
16 Martone 1998:167. Sontag 1993:56 describes using this sheeting to cover the front platform of her *Waiting for Godot* performed in Sarajevo during the siege.
17 Cf. Martone 1998:42–3.
18 Martone 1998:191.
19 Martone 1998:125–6.
20 On sound in Aeschylus' *Seven*, see Edmunds 2002 and Griffith in this volume.
21 Martone 1998:57–8.
22 Martone discusses how the technique of using microphones is akin to ancient masks, which amplified the voice at Martone 2004:208.
23 Martone 1998:195–6.
24 Martone 1998:194.
25 Martone 1998:208.
26 Martone 1998:79–80.
27 Arrufat also gave the Theban defenders speaking roles but did not assimilate them with the chorus in the same way; on this adaptation see further Torrance 2015a.
28 Martone 1998:47.
29 Martone 1998:151–4.
30 In this respect Leo's experience of theatrical production in Naples mirrors Martone's own, cf. Martone 2004:202.
31 Martone 1998:222.
32 Although, in the end, she staged only Act I (Sontag 1993:56).
33 Martone 1998:50.
34 Martone 1998:125–6.
35 Sontag 1993:52; cf. Eagleton 2003:23–40 on the value of tragic agony.
36 Sontag 1993:54.
37 Martone 1998:249, and see also Janowsky in this volume, who compares the experience of combat to the fiction of a video game (14).
38 Sontag 1993:52.

39 Loffreda 2012:48–51 notes that the city of Naples in this film is presented in a state of permanent instability and degradation. On the complexities of how organized crime blends into everyday life in Naples, see e.g. Pine 2012.
40 For an overview of organized crime networks in Naples, see Allum 2006.
41 Martone 1998:172–3.
42 Orsini 2005:89 treats this figure as Tiresias, but it is clear from Martone 1998:131 that this is meant to be Oedipus.
43 Martone 1998:77.
44 On the cinematic techniques used to deconstruct the boundaries between real life and fiction in *Teatro di Guerra*, see especially Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003:64–70.
45 The incident was reported by A. Gumbel in *The Independent*, published on the 12th of December 1996, as having happened 'last month', but Italian newspapers reported the event as having occurred on the 30th of October, see e.g. Pasqualetto 1996 for *Corriere Della Sera*.
46 Martone 1998:61.
47 E.g. *Death of a Neapolitan Mathematician* (1992), *Nasty Love* (1995), *The Vesuvians* (1997), in addition to *Rehearsals for War* (1998). For further discussion of Martone's cinematic representations of Naples, see O'Healy 1999, Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003:51–72. Naples also features as the location of the death of the poet Giacomo Leopardi in the recent *Leopardi* (2014).
48 E.g. Pherekydes *FGrH* 3 F 97, and see Gantz 1993:518.
49 Sontag 1993:56, Martone 1998:44.
50 Martone 1998:40.
51 Martone 1998:46.
52 Martone 1998:147.
53 Sontag 1993:54, 56.
54 Sontag 1993:54.
55 Martone 1998:147–8.
56 For the script see Martone 1998:181–2.
57 Martone 2004:121–2.
58 This link is also made by Fusillo (2002:12). On Pasolini's *Notes for an African Oresteia*, see Usher 2014.
59 Pasolini's *Oedipus Rex* opens and closes with scenes set in contemporary Italy, while the main narrative of the film takes place in a mythological space. See Casarino 1992 for further discussion of the film. For Pasolini as an influence on Martone, see Martone 2004:171–5, 208.
60 Orsini 2005:98; cf. Dottorini 2013:126 on how the film deals with the invisible aspects of war.

7 The music of war in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*

Mark Griffith

Introduction: war and music in classical Greece

War was an integral component of fifth-century Greek life, both (for men) in the form of active participation in war-making as a soldier or sailor and (for everyone) in terms of direct or indirect encounters with the deadly and painful consequences of war. Whether in the context of *polis* versus *polis* conflicts or of incursions between Greeks and 'barbarians' over access to and acquisition of raw materials, grain, slaves, and the like, it was expected that most citizen men at various points in their life would serve as hoplites or light-armed infantry in a battle-line and/or as rowers in a war-fleet and that all families would suffer from time to time individual losses or traumas caused by war, even while they would also be conscious that a high proportion of their domestic and industrial slaves had been acquired from other places by force. The public and private celebration of victories and of soldiers who had died nobly in battle is well documented in the hundreds of grave monuments, epigrams, literary descriptions, and visual representations of battle-scenes from all over Greece – especially, of course, from Athens, whose 'epigraphic habit' was exceptional and whose vase painters, sculptors, and playwrights alike disseminated their work widely, both geographically and diachronically, so that later generations have been able to recapture their experience and points of view. Epideictic oratory (e.g. Athens' annual Funeral Oration), recitations of heroic epic (most notably, Homer's *Iliad*), and funerary epigrams by Simonides and many others (mostly anonymous) all provide famous examples from what was clearly an enormous repertoire of commemorative documents and events.

Fifth-century Greeks were also very musical, of course. Occasions for public and private musical performance were numerous and are relatively well-documented for modern scholars to study. Music played a significant role in children's and adolescents' education and physical training, in religious ceremonies of all kinds (sacrifices, prayers, weddings, adolescent coming-of-age ceremonies, funerals, etc.), at festival competitions, at work, at dinners and symposia, and even in warfare (as we shall see shortly). Like most peoples in the history of human civilization (and even before) the Greeks employed singing, percussive effects, and melodic instruments as an accompaniment to and enhancement of social interactions of all kinds and as a mood-altering form of communication.[1] And of course the Theatre of Dionysus

at Athens was one of the most intensely and brilliantly innovative and expansive musical venues in the whole of Greece.

So how did these two dynamics interface in 'real' Greek life and in the artificial realm of Greek tragedy? In what ways was Greek war-making accompanied and enhanced, or mimetically represented, by music? And in what ways were the consequences of war (death, suffering, loss, devastation, slavery; or triumph, glory, conquest, domination) described, mitigated, or otherwise dealt with through musical performance?

In general (i.e. in comparative terms), even while the vast majority of musical occasions and applications in all societies tend to involve peaceful, cooperative, and even affection-inducing (we might say, 'harmonious') human or human–divine interactions, warlike music is possible and indeed is not uncommon. In the modern era, we may think of many contexts and occasions on which music has preceded, accompanied, or closely followed military combat. Musical signals made by bugle, trumpet, or drums (whether or not we classify these as 'music') have been part of innumerable battle scenarios.[2] In the preliminaries before battle, J. P. Sousa's marches or the percussion-heavy tunes that accompanied Ottoman armies in earlier times or the skirling bagpipes favoured by Scottish clans and their military regiments have all in their day contributed to building a mood of aggression, or at least of camaraderie and concerted action, among the troops. Likewise militaristic songs, such as *La Marseillaise* or *Rule Britannia*, have been effective on many occasions in building up nationalistic or institutional fervour.[3]

Much celebratory war music is quite crude and banal, if we judge it by strictly musical/aesthetic criteria. An egregious example is Beethoven's 'Battle Symphony' (Op. 91, composed in 1813 to celebrate the defeat of Napoleon at Vitoria);[4] and hundreds of movie soundtracks might be cited whose chief purpose is to stir a general mood of patriotism or military zeal (or pure aggression) while scenes of adventure and mayhem are being shown on screen. One can point to a few distinguished exceptions to this tendency for war music to be bombastic and unimaginative: for example, Serge Prokofiev's splendid soundtrack for *Alexander Nevsky* and Elmer Bernstein's for *The Magnificent Seven* (itself distantly related, we may surmise, to Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*).[5] In more ironic mode, Francis Ford Coppola's use of Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* to accompany the horrendous/exhilarating helicopter gunship assault on a peasant village in *Apocalypse Now!* was impactful and disturbing, successful on several levels at once. More commonly, however, music in war movies is designed as an affect-inducing technique to keep audiences emotionally hooked, in suspense, and positively excited, stoking their desires for one particular side to win and for their favourite character(s) not to get killed. Almost every modern movie, whatever its story and genre, has a soundtrack – and the soundtracks for war movies, or for battle scenes within movies of any kind (e.g. about super-heroes or car chases in crime movies), tend to be among the most loud, insistent, and often cliché.

In antiquity, doubtless the most famous instance of music deployed for warlike purposes is provided by the Biblical narrative at Joshua 6:1–27, as the Israelite priests blow their rams-horn trumpets while they parade seven times round

the walls of Canaanite Jericho. Then (6:20) 'the people [of Israel] shouted and the trumpets were blown . . . and the walls fell down flat' (or, as the American 'spiritual' song expresses it, 'Joshua fit the battle of Jericho / and the walls came tumbling down'). Was it the trumpets or the shout that brought about this unique victory? Clearly it was the Lord who really did it; but the eery sound of the rams' horns seems to have been understood as a crucial element in the process.[6]

On a different wavelength completely, we find musical works such as Benjamin Britten's sombre, impassioned *War Requiem*, or Bob Dylan's sarcastically lyrical 'With God on Their Side' and Country Joe MacDonald & the Fish's 'I Feel Like I'm Fixin' to Die Rag' – anti-war songs, whose simple acoustic guitars and unglamorous vocals focus attention on verbal critique rather than affective melodic or rhythmic stimulation. Or again, at the opposite extreme, in real-life military (rather than concert) contexts, after battle is over, we have 'Taps' played on the bugle or 'Amazing Grace' on the bagpipes, slow, simple melodies played at ceremonies to commemorate with the greatest possible solemnity and dignity those who have died in combat.

So 'the music of war' can sound very different and can operate in very different ways. What do we find by way of 'war music' in Greek tragedy overall, and in particular how does music contribute to the dramatic impact and meaning of Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*?

Music (and war) in Greek tragedy

In the contest scene of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, Aeschylus' tragedies in general are characterized as being 'full of' warlike elements. His opponent 'Euripides' disapprovingly refers (928–30) to 'moats, and griffin-eagles embossed on shields, and horse-craggy utterances that are not easy to understand,' while 'Aeschylus' in response proudly claims (1016–18) '[I made our citizens into] men who breathe spear, lances, white-crested plumes and helmets, greaves, and seven-ply leather [i.e. shields]!' And then, when Euripides and Dionysus ask him how he achieved this, he boasts (1021–2), 'by composing a drama stuffed full of Ares (*Areōs meston*)' – 'Which drama?' – '*Seven against Thebes*!'

Both Euripides and Dionysus here seem to accept this characterization of Aeschylus' plays, and of the *Seven* in particular, though Euripides of course emphasizes that Aeschylus' era was one in which, even if the Athenians defeated the Persians at Marathon (490 BCE) and at Salamis (480 BCE), that is more than 70 years before the production of *Frogs*,[7] they also were much cruder and more simple-minded in their theatrical tastes than his own sophisticated audiences. Since then, Euripides claims, he himself has made tragedy hipper and more accessible to all, 'more democratic' (951): so nowadays all kinds of characters can speak on stage, young women, old women, slaves . . . (948–50); things are not so hi-falutin' and (implicitly) not so militaristic.

The *Frogs* is a comedy, of course; and it was written to be performed late in the fifth century (405 BCE), at a time when, on the one hand, the glories of Marathon and Athens' rise to supremacy among the Greek city-states were distant memories

and, on the other, the plays of Aeschylus were increasingly felt to be rather old hat, as compared with the latest inventions of Sophocles, Euripides, Agathon, and their rivals. Aeschylus' music, in particular, like that of his famous contemporary Phrynichus, was by now quite out of style. Even though the actual melodies are not preserved in our medieval manuscripts for us to assess, any modern reader of the *Frogs* can appreciate the rhythmic contrasts reproduced in the hilarious strings of clunky Aeschylean lyrics (dactylic runs followed by the ponderous thrumming of (probably) a kithara: *to phlat o thrat to phlat o thrat* . . .), versus the melismatic slitherings of Euripidean monody and choral song, 'whirrrrrrrrrling and twirrrrrrrling (*eieieieilissete* . . .) amidst the dolphins, etc.' (*Frogs* 1264–97, 1309–63; cf. Aesch. *Ag*. 108–11, Eur. *Electra* 435–7). Although so much is lost to us at this distance, especially in the absence of the actual melodies and choreography, we can recognize a familiar scenario here: old is challenged and succeeded by new – Elvis succeeding Sinatra; the Beatles succeeding Elvis; Michael Jackson and Prince succeeding the Beatles . . . and so on and so on.[8]

Music in most cultures thrives on innovation, even while traditional forms and melodies persist. The Athenian theatre was a hotbed of innovation, both in the dithyrambs that were performed there every year – mostly composed by non-Athenians and with non-Athenian pipe-players driving the melody – and also in the tragedies and comedies, for which most of the playwrights and actors (at least in the first half of the century), as well as all the chorus members, were Athenian citizens. More than a third, and often as many as half, of the lines of verse composed for our surviving tragedies were originally sung, to the accompaniment of the double-reed-pipes (*auloi*); and this is true of the *Seven against Thebes*. In later fifth-century tragedies, actors were often given quite extensive singing roles, but Aeschylus' use of actors' song is more limited.[9] In our play, there are, alas, large-scale textual uncertainties as to whether Antigone and Ismene, the two daughters of Oedipus, actually appear on stage and speak and sing, or whether our manuscripts contain interpolations that have added these roles to Aeschylus' original script;[10] but I follow the majority of scholars in believing that originally there were no actors' lyrics in Aeschylus' play and only the chorus had a musical role.

And it is quite a role. Obviously we don't have the actual melodies, though we do have some idea of roughly what they might have sounded like.[11] As for the choreography, we know even less[12] – though, curiously, *Seven* is one of very few tragedies about which we are given specific choreographic testimony (reliable or not) from an ancient source. In Athenaeus (a second-century CE author of enormous range but little historical sense) mention is made (22a1–4) of a statement by Aristocles (a second-century BCE historian) that 'Aeschylus' dancer Telestes was so skilful (*houtōs technitēs*) that in the dancing of *Seven against Thebes* he made the actions vivid and clear through the dance (*phanera poiēsai ta pragmata dia orchēseōs*).' Unfortunately we have no idea whether this Telestes was a choreographic assistant/designer for Aeschylus' original production – with *ho Aischulou orchēstēs* ('Aeschylus' dancer') meaning really his *orchēstodidaskalos* ('dance-teacher'), a term employed by Athenaeus just a few lines earlier in reference to 'Telesis or Telestēs', who is said himself to have 'invented many dance-steps

(*schēmata*) – or whether he was a much later performer who himself enacted and danced old plays, including those of Aeschylus.[13] But it is intriguing to be told that the choreography of this particular play could be so vivid and 'realistic' that the offstage action was thereby made 'plain' (*phanera*) to the audience.

For the most part, however, in our speculations about ancient choreography we have to rely solely on our analysis of the lyric meters in which the different songs are composed, along with the occasional self-referential indications within the verbal text – and, alas, our medieval manuscripts of the surviving plays contain almost no stage directions and no comments about the melodies either. We are not even sure about the actual performance space at this date in the Theatre of Dionysus: but probably it comprised just an *orchēstra*, with no stage building, that is the same, flat, broad performance space for actors and chorus throughout.[14] From the text of our play itself, we may surmise that for this production statues of various (Theban) divinities were situated around the orchestra; the chorus members were costumed as young Theban women; and they probably made their first entrance one by one or in small groups (*sporadēn*) rather than in a single body, as was more usual.[15]

So: how did Aeschylus deploy his musical resources so as to define and enhance the meaning and impact of this play 'stuffed full of Ares'? What does the music of his play contribute to its treatment of war? Aeschylus' compositional choices provide us with an intriguing insight into the role of tragedy in the Athenian *polis* and into the ways in which 'playing' and impersonating fictional characters of the past and giving (some of) them a musical 'voice' could expand the range of empathetic possibilities available to a watching and listening audience. In what follows I will suggest that the musicality of Aeschylus' chorus provides a peculiarly powerful mechanism for engaging and affecting the audience and moving them into a series of unexpected and exciting – unstable and constantly shifting – subject positions in relation to the unfolding action, a process that depends on music's unique capacity (as Aristotle in particular notes) for altering and enhancing listeners' moods and mental states. Music enables the tragic action to be felt and taken in differently – to be experienced viscerally, through the senses and the body as well as verbally and imagistically – and the audience's taking in of the chorus' expressive voice and movements constitutes a vital ingredient in the overall dramatic effect. Whether this effect is to be regarded as 'aesthetic' or 'cognitive' or even 'religious' – or perhaps all three at once – will be considered in the final section of this chapter.

Aeschylus *could* of course have composed military, warlike music if that had suited his plans for the play. Such music seems always to have existed in human societies, as we have seen – even while one might estimate that 'warlike' music is outnumbered by 'peaceful' (gentle, romantic, cheerful, etc.) music by a factor of about 10:1 or even 50:1 (and plenty of music seems to fall into a category that is neither one nor the other, i.e. affectively fairly neutral).[16]

In ancient Greece, the use of music in and around warfare was fairly extensive. Spartan troops are said to have advanced into battle to the accompaniment of *aulos* music, and Cretan, Lydian, and other armies are reported as marching to music.[17] Greek armies regularly sang celebratory paeans to Apollo before or after a battle.[18] Signals could be blown on a *salpinx* (trumpet) during the course of

battle. The rowers in Greek warships (triremes) were kept in time and energized by the playing of a piper (*aulētēs*) and perhaps of a drummer as well. Young men danced the *pyrrhikhē* and other vigorous 'shield dances', solo or in formation, to *aulos*-accompaniment, in a combination of entertainment and balance and stamina training.[19] More fancifully, Plato in the *Laws* has his Athenian Visitor assert not only that there are certain types of choral songs and dances that are warlike and build courage, physical fitness, and military discipline, while other types, composed in different melodic modes and rhythms, are more conducive to peaceful activities and mentalities (7.813c–815c, and cf. 7.794c–802e, 8.834d–835b), but also that women as well as men should practice both kinds – a very unorthodox proposal in the ancient Greek context, in which women were not normally expected to participate actively in warfare. (I shall return to discuss this passage further in what follows).

In Greek tragedy, we find several examples of celebratory and hortatory songs being sung by choruses after or before a crucial battle, in modes that presumably reflect real-life Greek practice. Thus in the *parodos* of Sophocles' *Antigone* the chorus rejoice and thank the gods for saving them from the Argive assault:

> Sun's own radiance, fairest light ever shone
> on the seven gates of Thebes,
> then did you shine, O golden day's
> eye, coming over Dirce's stream,
> on the man who had come from Argos with all his armor
> running now in headlong fear as you shook his bridle free. . . .
> . . . Great-named Victory comes to us
> answering Thebe's warrior joy.
> Let us forget the wars just done
> and visit the shrines of the gods,
> all, with the night-long dance which Bacchus will lead,
> he who shakes Thebe's acres.
>
> (Soph. *Ant*. 100–8, 147–53; tr. E. Wyckoff)

In a similarly up-beat manner, the old men of Colonus (Athens) appeal to their gods in anticipation of Theseus' imminent battle against Creon and his Theban troops:

> Oh, to be where the enemies wheel about,
> to hear the shout and brazen sound of war!
> Maybe on Apollo's sacred shore
> or by that torchlit Eleusinian plain . . .
> . . . For to these regions the warrior-king Theseus
> will press the fighting on – as he brings
> help to the two maiden sisters,
> self-sufficient in his battle-strength!
> . . . These are the riders of Athens, conquered never;
> they honor her whose glory all men know,
> and honor Poseidon too . . .
> the one who holds the earth firm.
>
> (Soph. *OC* 1044–5, 1052–7, 1068–71; tr. R. Fitzgerald, adapted)

Both of these songs are performed by male choruses, referring to recent or imminent victories over threatening foes in contexts rather close to that of *Seven against Thebes*, a military action against invaders from another Greek *polis*. In both cases the songs express – and elicit – patriotic fervor, mentioning divinely assisted resistance and the chorus' joy at victory, achieved or anticipated.

And in Aeschylus' own *Persians*, produced five years before his Theban trilogy of which *Seven* alone survives, a Persian messenger recounts the inspiring paean that the Greeks sang as they prepared for battle at Salamis – and the demoralizing effect of these sounds on their Persian adversaries:

> . . . A song-like, happy tumult
> sounded from the Greeks, and island rocks returned
> the high-pitched echo. Fear fell among us,
> deceived in hope; for they – and not as if to flee –
> chanted a solemn paean, and to battle
> rushed with fervent boldness: trumpets flared
> setting every Greek aflame.
>
> (Aesch. *Persians* 387–95, tr. Benardete)

So a 'play full of Ares' might seem to offer plenty of opportunity for music of similarly militaristic and inspiring mood. But the music of *Seven against Thebes* is nothing like any of the examples I've just cited.[20] Of course a female chorus such as that of *Seven* would not be expected to sing in quite the same manner as the male choruses of the above-mentioned plays; and indeed Aeschylus makes the most of the feminine aspects of musical performance provided by his choice of chorus for this play, as we will see.[21] Women in ancient Greece apparently had a much wider variety of musical idioms and techniques available to them than men did. Their range of vocalizings was greater (including wails, ululations, moans, etc., as well as more conventionally melodic and verbal singing), and they were expected to use physical percussive devices (hands and feet: clapping, stomping, beating, and thumping) more extensively than men. Women also had more extensive options for instrumental accompaniment – that is, in addition to the *auloi* (double pipes) and standard stringed instruments (lyre and *kithara* – though they rarely played the full-scale concert *kithara*), women played various kinds of multi-stringed instruments that were apparently not available to citizen men[22] and various kinds of percussion instruments too: frame-drums (*tympana*), rattles of various kinds (*seistra*), castanets and clappers (*krembala, krotala*), even occasionally cymbals and gongs.[23] Altogether, these added up to a much greater and more versatile repertoire of 'feminine' sonorities than was available to free citizen men outside of the Theatre.[24]

The degree of musical participation by women in various social and religious activities seems also to have been considerably greater than the rather narrow range of lyre- and kithara-based music making that is recommended for Athenian boys and men in our – generally rather conservative – surviving sources, including critics like Plato and Aristotle. In most regions and city-states of Greece,

including (to a lesser degree) Athens, women (especially unmarried women) sang and danced in choruses not only for Artemis, Hera, and Aphrodite but also for Dionysus and Cybele/Rhea (= the Great Mother) as well as Demeter-Persephone (= the Two Goddesses).[25] Women sang at work as they wove cloth, ground grain and baked bread, washed clothes, and so on;[26] they sang lullabies to their babies; and in particular they sang laments at funerals or after military defeats.[27] Athens was unusual (as Plutarch notes) in banning such large-scale and demonstrative expressions of grief in public.[28] So the Athenian dramatists could enjoy to the full the opportunities provided by the Theatre to present men in drag (i.e. those ubiquitous 'female choruses' of tragedy; also of course satyrs in the satyr-dramas) vocalizing, gesturing, and dancing in ways that Athenian men would never normally do and conducting scenes of ritual lamentation that were forbidden anywhere else in Attica yet widely practiced all over the rest of Greece and beyond.

Likewise, foreign men in Greek tragedy might lament musically and extravagantly,[29] as they are represented doing in Aeschylus' *Persians* – a play adapted, we are told, from an earlier tragedy by Aeschylus' famous rival Phrynichus, in which the chorus were not male Persian Elders (as in Aeschylus) but Phoenician slave women.[30] The ending of Aeschylus' *Persians* is full of antiphonal lament and musical cries of grief and despair, as well as distinctive body movements and choreography (tearing, beating, 'rowing' with the hands) as the King of Persia and his councillors lament the catastrophic defeats and losses at Salamis, Plataea, and afterwards:[31]

> [Chorus] Loudly shall I send, to greet your return,
> an evil-omened shout, an evil-practiced cry:
> a weeping wail I shall sing,
> the wail of a Mariandynian mourner.
> [Xerxes] Send a wail of evil sound
> lamenting and grievous . . .
> [Xerxes] Sweep, sweep, sweep with the oar, and groan for my sake.
> [Chorus] Ah, ah! Pain, pain!
> [Xerxes] Cry out antiphonal to me.
> [Chorus] My duty is here, O master, lord.
> [Xerxes] Lift up your voice in lamenting now.
> [Xerxes and Chorus together] O woe, woe, woe upon woe.
> [Chorus] Black with bruises again the blows are mixed,
> Oh, with the groans.
> [Xerxes] Beat your breast too and cry Mysian laments. . . .
> [Chorus] With clenched hand, grimly mourning.
> [Xerxes] Shriek a piercing cry.
> [Chorus] And so I shall . . .
>
> (Aesch. *Persians* 935–42, 1046–59, tr. Benardete)

The Theatre was thus a place to which Athenians (and visitors to Attica as well) could go to *hear* as well as see (and for scores of them each year, even perform for themselves) scenes and sounds that they couldn't normally experience in everyday

life. (The ancient Greeks had no recording devices: all music was played and heard live, face to face.) Enhanced through the vicarious techniques of *mimēsis* (i.e. 'performing, playing'), a massed audience could experience, live – acoustically and visually as well as linguistically and cerebrally – the adventures and sufferings of people like – or quite unlike – themselves, facing some of life's most extreme conditions and terrifying threats (what Aristotle classifies as 'representation[s] of serious action . . . that produce pity and fear and <other> such <strong> emotions,' *Poet*. 6. 1449b24–8, etc.).[32] Watching *Seven against Thebes*, audience members are brought to identify and empathize – share the point of view, temporarily adopt the subject position – alternately, of *both* an angry, tormented young man as he does his best to lead his city to safety and victory against an invading army even while the ghosts of his family's past mistakes and misdeeds haunt him at every step *and* of the community within which this young man lives, including the regular soldiers (i.e. the Scout/Messenger) and, above all, the women – daughters, sisters, mothers, and slaves – who constitute half the population of the city.[33] Eteocles' character is portrayed, as is conventional in Greek tragedy for a male hero, through measured speech (in iambic trimeter verse), while the chorus' point of view, feelings, and identity are expressed largely through song and dance (in various lyric meters). The audience shares both perspectives and to some degree is thus brought to engage emotionally and even corporeally, as well as intellectually and critically, with their respective actions and reactions. The music is obviously central to this engagement – it *moves* the audience, acoustically, corporeally, viscerally, in ways that the iambic dialogue and rhesis cannot[34] – just as, for example, the music of opera, or of Sufi *qawwali* performance, or of Pentecostal gospel services transcends the capabilities of the spoken word in uplifting and transforming the sensibilities of those attending.

Aristotle and other ancient musicologists remark that among the most affective kinds of music (i.e. 'enthusiastic' melodies in Lydian or Phrygian *harmonia* played on the *auloi*) are the kind used in the theatre. The term 'enthusiastic' (*enthousiastikos*, derived from the adjective *entheos* = lit. 'filled-with-god' = 'inspired, possessed') is used interchangeably by Aristotle in the *Politics* with other terms such as 'orgiastic', 'sacred' (*hieros*), and 'Bacchic'. At one point (*Pol*. 8.5.1340a9–10) he remarks that, even outside the theatre, the highly affective and mood-altering *aulos* tunes (*melē*) of Olympus 'make souls inspired' (*poiei tas psuchas enthousiastikas*), and he continues: 'inspiration/possession (*enthousiasmos*) is a <temporary> reaction (*pathos*) of the soul's *ēthos*,' following this with the further suggestion (1340a22) that 'we are altered (in) our soul as we listen to such tunes (*metaballomen tēn psuchēn akroōmenoi toioutōn*).'

The beauty and affective power of the human singing voice and of the musical structures (melodic tones, rhythms, phrasings) that create their own formal patterns of anticipation and satisfaction, tension and release, buildup and resolution (cadences), crescendo and diminuendo, accelerando and ritardando, modifications of texture and sonority, and so forth – that is, all that is entailed in the standard Greek musical terms *melos* (melody), *harmonia* (melodic mode, or tuning, or musical 'idiom'), *phōnē* (voice, texture, timbre), and *rhuthmos* (rhythm,

beat, meter, 'flow')[35] – was intimately connected in the Theatre of Dionysus with the instrument that was always employed to accompany those singing voices: the double reed pipes (*auloi*). This extremely versatile instrument, widely used (as we have seen) in many different social contexts by the Greeks and Romans (= *tibia*), was renowned for its tonal range and its expressivity: it produced a warm (or even 'hot'), breathy sound that, in the hands of a virtuoso – and the Theatre employed only virtuosi – could be strident or soft, shrill or booming, fierce or tender and mellow, and it could modulate effectively and uninterruptedly from one musical tuning or idiom to another (in ways that a *kithara*, for example, with its fixed, pre-tuned strings, could not). We might think of a combination of bagpipes, clarinet (Mediterranean or Klezmer-style), and saxophone.[36] Ancient sources all agree that the *auloi* could stir the emotions and alter the mood of audiences in ways that no other instrument could match. So the contrast between an unaccompanied, 'bare' (male) speaking voice such as that of Eteocles in our play and a group of singing 'women' (albeit played by men) accompanied by the pipes, would be extreme – and the process of the audience's identification with each would thus be, I suggest, deliciously different: Eteocles sounds like 'us' (the seated, attentive, predominantly male Athenian audience members), and he talks and argues in somewhat 'normal' language and tones, while the chorus are excitingly 'other' and different from us, even as their affective musicality engages us, alters our mood and feelings, and draws us into identifying with their collective song and dance – both because of the traditional function of a Greek chorus as representing its whole community[37] and because of the sheer attractiveness and affective quality of the musical sounds themselves (to say nothing of the visual and kinesthetic impact as well, discussed earlier). Music moves people, immediately and strongly, in ways that no other of the fine arts – or literature – can begin to match.[38]

In planning the musical components of this play, Aeschylus' choice was to provide, first, a soundscape that would suggest a whole city under siege with its population in near or actual panic; and second, a 'voice' suggestive of fate/the family curse – of an Erinys.[39] Both these musical modes, or 'voices', contrast with the solo male voice – militaristic, fiercely committed yet resolutely controlled and 'monotonous' (i.e. unmelodious, rhythmically regular) – of the young Theban general, Eteocles, son of Oedipus. Thus in the first half of the play, the choral voice explores the violent threats and acts of degradation faced by a captured city and brings these to auditory/musical life. In the later portion, the musical focus shifts more to the Erinys and the history of this family – and then finally, to the lament for the two dead brothers.

So let us begin by looking at the dynamics of the first half of the play and at the ways in which the chorus expresses musically the fear, anticipation, and desperate religiosity experienced by a vulnerable population under attack.[40]

Such scenes were not entirely new to Greek literature. The grim realities of female suffering, loss, and enslavement in war were already a striking, though subordinate, element in Homer's *Iliad*. That poem actually concludes with women's lamentation over Hector at his funeral (Book 24), with Hecuba, Andromache, and Helen all in turn uttering their respects and their feelings of loss while the

assembled women of Troy respond in antiphonal lament.[41] In an even more poignant, though much shorter, scene in Book 19, Achilles' captive concubine Briseis utters a speech of lament over Patroclus' dead body, and the narrator adds a brief and sickening, yet almost casual, comment of his own:[42]

> And now, in the likeness of golden Aphrodite, Briseis
> when she saw Patroklos lying torn with sharp bronze, folding
> him in her arms cried shrilly above him and with her hands tore
> at her breasts and her soft throat and her beautiful forehead.
> The woman like the immortals mourning for him spoke to him:
> 'Patroklos, far most pleasing to my heart in its sorrows,
> I left you here alive when I went away from the shelter,
> but now I come back, lord of the people, to find you have fallen.
> So evil in my life takes over from evil forever . . .
> . . . Therefore I weep your death without ceasing. You were kind always.'
> So she spoke, lamenting, and the women sorrowed around her
> grieving openly for Patroklos, but for her own sorrows each.
> (Homer *Iliad* 19. 282–90, 300–3)

This is what war does, and what war has always meant over the millennia, particularly when conducted by traditional patriarchal societies in which, for the most part, men select, capture, or buy women to be their wives or concubines or slave labourers. (Briseis herself, as she explains, came to be Achilles' concubine when he sacked her city, killed her husband and three brothers, and made her his slave – and that is how she came to make friends with 'kind' Patroclus (*Iliad* 19. 291–301)). In such on-going socio-political circumstances, girls and women have to plan their lives accordingly, in full awareness of the possible vicissitudes in their family fortunes and their city's successes and failures in war. War is thus often a significant component of the 'traffic in women.'[43] (For boys and men, prospects are measured instead in terms of the likelihood of wounding or death in face-to-face combat on the battlefield, which in our play is no less prominent an issue.) Regardless of religious affiliation or geopolitical context – Greek polytheism, Biblical Judaism, Medieval and Early Modern Christianity or Islam – the picture was not much different, it seems, and the habit, or system, of brutality and rape inflicted on female captives of war apparently persists all over the world today.

Euripides is the playwright who is most widely recognized for his exploration of this theme, above all in his *Trojan Women* (415 BCE) – itself a play full of music and female lament.[44] But Aeschylus, with the uncannily expressive and musical voice of the captive concubine Cassandra in *Agamemnon*, the asylum-seeking Egyptian refugees in *Suppliant Maidens*, and the terrified Theban maidens in our play, offers in some ways even more disturbing imaginings and re-creations of the mood of female horror and helplessness in the face of male violence and the impact of war – even when that war may appear to be 'just' and divinely sanctioned.[45] In all three of these Aeschylean plays music does much of the vital dramatic work of representing female victimhood and anguish. Cassandra's wild vocalizing and dochmiac-framed outbursts of horror and dismay in *Ag*. are uniquely pathetic and

suspenseful, and the *Suppliant Maidens* overall is the most musical of all surviving Greek tragedies, dominated as it is throughout by the voice and movements of the singing chorus. Such musically extravagant characters and choruses manage to be at the same time, I suggest, both wildly alien, 'exotic', and 'different' and yet also utterly engaging and irresistible in their appeal to our empathetic feelings – in much the same way that Purcell's Dido, Bizet's Carmen, or even performers such as Michael Jackson and Prince can appeal to audiences of radically different social backgrounds and ethical outlooks.

There is an additional twist to this phenomenon of tragic music, in relation to Athenian plays about the travails of ancient Thebes. For, even while it has been well noted by Froma Zeitlin and others that 'Thebes' in Greek tragedy often is presented as the city where everything goes wrong, that is an 'anti-Athens', and a model of tragic dysfunction,[46] it is also indisputable that classical Thebes, of all the cities in Greece, had the most distinguished reputation for its music – even more distinguished, one might say, than the cities of Lesbos, Ionian Miletus, or Archaic Sparta. By contrast, Athens over the years was, in terms of its indigenous achievements, rather a musical nonentity: most of the distinguished musicians who performed in Athens during the sixth century had been foreign visitors, and that process continued into the fifth century with the dithyrambic competitions at the City Dionysia and other musical events at the Panathenaia. And while the dramas staged in the Theatre of course provided opportunities for Athenian playwrights and choruses to imitate the music of the rest of the world, the accompanying auletes were largely drawn from outside Athens, especially Thebes.[47] Thebes' musical heritage – from mythological figures such as Cadmus and Harmonia, Amphion, Linus, and Dionysus himself[48] to the city's dominant position in *aulos* production and competitive *aulos*-playing throughout the fifth century that we find celebrated by Pindar (himself a highly-trained *aulos*-player and even *aulos*-teacher, we are told) and multiple inscriptions and vase-paintings – all together amount to a reputation and a reality of musical pre-eminence that Athenians might find hard to stomach.[49] The Theatre of Dionysus at Athens provided a venue where the best Theban auletes (and dithyramb composers) could come to stir the Athenian audience's emotions and explore the latest and most adventurous musical innovations.[50] We do not know who played the *auloi* for Aeschylus' tragedies; but the production budget and design scheme would certainly have paid serious attention to that aspect of the performance.

Reading – and hearing – the music of *Seven against Thebes*[51]

The opening (lines 78–107) of the first choral song (*parodos*) were probably delivered in short, abrupt spurts (what Greek scholiasts would term *sporadēn*), with individual chorus members entering one or two at a time, crying out their separate phrases of alarm and dismay. The metrical structure (esp. the lack of strophic responsion) and the character of these detached, non-continuous utterances all seem to suggest this:[52] that is, this is not (yet) a coordinated choral *group* expressing its collective opinion but rather a swirling, disjointed succession of individuals

who are rushing to this spot from different parts of the city, drawn by what they hear going on all around them.[53]

The meter is mainly dochmiac, a distinctive rhythm that is widely used in Greek tragedy – but virtually nowhere else[54] – to express/convey anxiety, terror, grief, and disturbance of all kinds.[55] It so happens that this is also the metre in which one of our earliest and most substantial (though still very small and damaged) surviving scraps of annotated music from Greek tragedy is composed, the celebrated Vienna papyrus of Euripides' *Orestes*.[56] Aeschylus' music, we know, was not so melodically free-flowing and ornamented as Euripides' – the parodies in Aristophanes' *Frogs* make this resoundingly clear – but the basic melodic line as well as the rhythmic pulse of our extended *Seven* passage might well have been similar to that of the *Orestes* fragment.

The chorus of young Theban women describe their own terrified and somewhat incoherent cries with self-referential commentary: 'I am shouting' (78 *threomai*),[57] and these merge with the vivid description of the fearful sounds and sights of the Argive army as it advances, 'rushing and roaring like a mountain water-fall' (80 *rhei*, 85–6 *bremei . . . dikan hudatos orotupou*), towards the walls of the city. (The merging is even reflected in the resonance of *threomai*, *rhei*, and *bremei*.)[58] The enemy troops clatter and thump and crash, producing what amounts to a virtual 'cry for help' (89 *boān*) directed into the chorus' ear from the very earth-floor (*pedia*) of Thebes as it is struck by the hooves and weapons of the enemy: 'the hoof-struck ground sends a cry to my ear' (84 *pedia hoploktup' ōti khrimptei boān*; cf. 89 *boā*).

Interspersed with these descriptive phrases are unmetrical[59] cries or shrieks: 78 (?) *iō, iō*, 87 *iō, iō*, 97 *iō*; etc. Through these auditory cues, as well as a direct address at 100, the audience[60] are directly drawn into sharing the chorus' experience: 'Do you hear, or don't you hear, the din/crash of shields?' (100 is an unresolved iambic trimeter, and thus relatively unmusical, it seems, though two other trimeters within this passage [103, 106] are more agitated-sounding, with resolutions. It is impossible to determine whether these three trimeters were sung, like the surrounding dochmiacs, or delivered in regular speaking tones.)

The merging of sounds and sights becomes even more complete in the (often-cited) synaesthetic phrase: 103 'I can see the thumping – it's the clatter of many spears!' (*ktupon dedorka . . . patagos oukh henos doros*).[61] For the chorus, hearing the sounds makes it possible to picture the source before their very eyes. And in the audience's case, we *can* indeed see the chorus as they enact the 'thumping, clattering, crying' of horses, harnesses, chariots, shields, and spears, as well as the marching feet of soldiers.[62] The chorus' own stamping feet (as they dance), their hand-percussion,[63] and the shrieking/howling/skirling of the *auloi* all add further musical layers enhancing the vocal melody. Reminiscent of the 'rushing river' of Pindar's song that Horace mentions (*Odes* 4.2) or the 'stream of words' that flows from a Homeric orator's or poet's mouth, but now less articulate and less sweet on the ear, the roaring mountain torrent (85–86) and 'crashing/breaking wave, stirred up by the winds of Ares' that the chorus describes (112–15 *kuma . . . kakhlazei*) is

an assault on the ear rather than a charm for it. The audience is swept along and aurally bombarded by the chorus' multiple short syllables (resolved dochmiacs and iambics) and extensive onomatopoeia, an assault that is in its own way rhythmically exciting and engaging – and one must assume that it was melodically appealing and suspenseful as well.[64]

By this point in the play, war – or at least the materiality of war, its sensory, experiential dimension – paradoxically has become a female matter. It is mainly through the voices of the female chorus members – and perhaps the gendered musical instruments as well – that war obtains representation on stage (whereas at other moments in the play it will be *via* the spoken iambic reports of the Scout/Messenger, describing the Argive army's manoeuvers and the shields of their seven champions). Thus intermittently the chorus as an orderly – or disorderly – formation (which through emotion and music tries to push against its traditional *taxis*) aspires to become/replicate an army (*stratos*, whose etymological sense, 'spread out', from the Greek verb *stornumi*, in turn recalls, in a way, the visual effect of the choral presence on stage). In this sense one could say that the female chorus begins here to 'embody' the Argive army, so that the *agōn* between the chorus and Eteocles can be read as a surrogate of the final conflict between Eteocles and Polynices; and meanwhile Eteocles' attempt to silence the chorus becomes an attempt to reclaim war for the male sphere. Overall, war has been transformed in these scenes and songs into the tumult of affects mobilized on stage.[65]

For this chorus, at this moment, the most urgent goal is to approach the images of the gods as suppliants, to adorn them with gifts, and to beg them for help (92–9, 101–2, etc.). They address the gods and goddesses collectively and then each one in turn: Ares, Zeus, Pallas Athena, Cypris/Aphrodite, Lycian Apollo, Hera, Artemis . . . (presumably, their statues are placed around the orchestra):[66]

> 87 '*Iō, Iō,* gods and goddesses, ward off this evil that is surging towards us . . . !'
>
> 92–9 'So who will protect us, who of the gods and goddesses will keep them away?
>
> May I, myself, then fall in supplication at the images of the divinities?
>
> *Iō,* blessed ones, well enthroned here, this is the moment <for me> to clasp your images. Why do we delay, as we moan out loud?'

In what follows, their song becomes more cohesive and unified, with strophic responsion and symmetrically ordered structures of invocation, even while it continues to be punctuated by shrill melodic and rhythmic refrains of *E E E E*, *pheu*, or *Iō, Iō*, and to employ insistent repetitions of words and phrases (134 *epilusin . . . epilusin . . .*, 167 *teleioi teleiai te*, 171 *kluete . . . kluete*, 177–8 *melesthe . . . melomenoi*). It reaches its rhetorical climax in the pair of stanzas at 166–81 (strophe ~ antistrophe C), as they throw themselves at the mercy of the 'all-protecting' (166 *panalkeis*), 'completely-guaranteed-successful city-defenders' (166–7 *teleioi teleiai te . . . purgophylakes*), 'liberators' (175 *lutērioi*), 'lovers-of-their-city' (176 *philopoleis*), 'caring for us' (178 *melomenoi*). And the maidens conclude (174–81) with a ritually correct process

of 'reminding' those gods and goddesses (181 'be mindful, please . . . !' *mnēstores este moi*) of the 'due deeds of devotion' (*philothutōn . . . orgiōn*) that the city has performed for them in the past.

The chorus has thus, we might say, up to this point done a 'beautiful' job of musically and verbally channelling its terror into effective ritual action: their actions and words, though in places only semi-articulate, are rhythmically coordinated and insistently directed so as to ensure divine attention, favor, and assistance (177–8 *melesthe, melomenoi . . . orgiōn mnēstores este moi*).[67] The second-person plural imperatives and interrogatives implicitly draw together the inhabitants of Thebes ('do you hear . . . ?'), the gods and goddesses of the city (179 *arēxate* 'help us!'), and the theatre audience itself as collective addressees of the chorus's appeals. Thus we are all brought to share the young women's sense of intense anxiety, of dependence on others for their salvation, and of their personal identification with the fate of the whole city. What happens to Thebes will happen directly to them – and this is true also for their divinities, inasmuch as looting and damage to shrines and radical changes to ritual practice often result from the capture of a city (cf. 218, 321–5, 421–9, 531, etc.); and the audience is brought to feel that it is almost happening to themselves as well, as the whole theatre space has by now become 'Thebes'. This is not just a battle for the throne or for the settling of scores between two cursed brothers: regime change will entail the incursion of a whole 'different-voiced army' (170 *heterophōnōi stratōi*)[68] into this sacred space and their domination of the whole community. The integrity of Thebes is in jeopardy, and the empathizing audience has been brought by the chorus' lyrics to feel this threat as affecting them as well.

Eteocles enters. Strikingly (and notoriously, among modern critics), he is disgusted with the chorus's behaviour and their shrill singing (and presumably also their wild movements, i.e. dancing that has been choreographed so as to appear semi-chaotic, almost out of control, yet still intently focused and collaborative). 'You, unbearable creatures (181 *thremmata ouk anascheta*) . . . Is this the best way to defend a city, . . . by howling and shrieking and prostrating yourselves before the images of the gods . . . ?' (181–6). The scene that follows provides a clear example of that typically Greek way of thinking about causation and responsibility that we refer to as 'double determination', as the same event is seen as being caused by both human and divine agencies working in parallel or in tandem. In this scenario, Eteocles as 'governor, steersman' of the city (62 *oiakostrophos*, cf. 3 *oiaka nōmōn*, and Aesch. *Supp*. 770 *kybernētēs*) and as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, in contrast to the prayerful chorus focuses above all on the human resources at his disposal, that is his massed troops and – in due course – his secret weapons, the seven champions that he selects to defend the Seven Gates.

This is man's work – both in the sense of male work and of its being a set of rational, human responsibilities rather than a matter of blind faith and dependence on the gods. Women (from this perspective) should not get in the way, should not distract men from their war effort. Their voices and physical presence should not be allowed to express anything other than positive assistance to the military. (Eteocles would like to hear real 'war music', we may say.) Eteocles thus sees

the chorus' desire to pray so fervently for divine help as at best a subordinate component of the war effort and currently as undermining it through expressions of fear and uncertainty – and eventually he persuades, or intimidates, the young women into agreeing with him, at least briefly. Though the chorus insists (226–32) that 'the strength of god is even superior (sc. to mere human 'discipline and best-practice' = 224–5 *peitharchia . . . eupraxia*) and that it can 'save and restore the helpless one' (227–9 *ton amēchanon orthoi* [lit. 'set up straight']) and rescue him even from 'the hanging clouds of direst trouble', Eteocles retorts (230) that 'This is *men's* work (*andrōn tad' esti*)', to perform blood sacrifices and make public prayers to the gods.[69] '*Your* job, in turn (232 *son d' au*) [i.e. as women], is to be silent (*to sigān*) and remain indoors!' The chorus continue to argue, but eventually their sung dochmiacs give way (245) to spoken iambic trimeters in a line-by-line exchange (*stichomythia*) with Eteocles; and finally they agree (263), 'I am silent. I will endure along with everyone else (*xun allois*, masculine, implicitly referring to the men as well as the women of the city) what is fated.' They move away from the statues (as Eteocles instructs them to do, 265) and prepare to sing a more restrained prayer for the gods' assistance – so not actually heading back indoors and remaining mute as Eteocles had first demanded (which would mean leaving the orchestra – and taking no further part in the play!), but rather reconfiguring their role and toning down, modulating rather than silencing their mode of ritual singing and dancing – not such a radical adjustment after all from their previous activity.

This whole scene of dialogue exchange (*amoibaion*) between Eteocles and the chorus at 203–45 is a brilliant piece of theatre (or opera, or whatever we should call it). Eteocles himself is not a musical or lyrical figure at all. Even when he reaches the most extreme state of distress, towards the end of the play, he does not sing, unlike for example, Sophocles' Oedipus or Aeschylus' own Orestes in the *Libation Bearers* and Xerxes in *Persians* (or even, briefly, Prometheus in *Prometheus Bound*). He is presented instead as a resolutely prosaic/pragmatic, rationalizing young man – one who is surrounded by voices and demonic forces that 'sound' much different from him, voices that, I have suggested, thereby have the capacity to tap into the audience's emotions more immediately, more viscerally, and more evocatively than he does.

The song that the chorus performs after Eteocles departs to arrange his battle plan (287–368 = the first *stasimon*) does indeed revisit some of the same elements that we saw and heard in their opening song (*parodos*), even while they are no longer roaming so vigorously around the orchestra nor directly approaching the statues of the gods. The metre is more restrained now: mainly alternations between syncopated iambics (lekythia, etc.) and aeolics – rather similar in flavour, overall, to many of the lyrics of for example, Aesch. *Agamemnon*, composed ten years later.[70]

From descriptions of the foreign threat and pious, fearful requests (once again) for the gods to protect the inhabitants of Cadmus' city and to do damage to the approaching enemy, the chorus in the second strophic pair build to some disturbing images of the fate of a captured city, especially its women:

Pitiful[71] it [is/would be], to hurl a city so venerable as this down to Hades,
enslaved, prey of the spear . . . , burnt to ashes . . . ,
. . . and the women manhandled (326 *kekheirōmenas*) and led away,
Ah, Ah!
young and old alike, like horses, grabbed by the hair,
with their clothes being ripped off them.
[It] cries loudly for help (*boāi*), the city cries as it is emptied out
of this ruinous/ruined plunder,
a mixed babble of sounds (*meixothroou,* cf. 78 *threomai*).
Heavy are the misfortunes that I dread!
Woeful it (is/would be], that newly-grown-up, unripely plucked,
<sc. girls> before the proper time have to leave their homes
to tread a hateful path.
The dead man, I claim, does better (is better off) than they (do).[72]
Many things <happen>,
when a city is subdued.[73]
Ah, Ah!
Many disastrous things does it go through.

(321–39)

The two corresponding moments in strophe and antistrophe at which normal words suddenly fail and inarticulate – but presumably musical – shrieks or wails intervene (327/339 *E E*, rendered here as 'Ah! Ah!') are the moments when the maidens contemplate the prospect of being raped by their captors. The musical register can convey more, or at least suggest more vividly and affectively, than plain words can describe or convey. Loss of one's home city, eradication of *ta nomima* (334 = normality, local and family traditions), deprivation of status and freedom, brutal violation of one's body by a stranger: all of these are the standard costs of losing a war, and all of these are what a conquering state routinely expects to inflict on its enemy, in ancient Greece and in many arenas of war even today. This is what the young Athenian men in Aeschylus' chorus are given by the playwright to sing, to the accompaniment of the shrill, breathy, and mournful voice of the *auloi*,[74] as they evoke the feelings of the women in a city under attack.

Further mixed and disturbing sounds are onomatopoetically reproduced by the chorus in what follows: 345 *korkorugai* ('tumult'?), 348 *blakhai* ('wails'). And there follow vivid descriptions of babies being torn from their mothers' breasts, grain and fruits being grabbed, spilt, shared out or fought over by the victors . . . (At 351 the Greek term *harpagai* is equivalent to Latin *rapina*, i.e. 'violent seizure'). And then the chorus's imagination returns to their own worst fantasy-nightmare:[75]

Slave-girls, young, new to their suffering,
<enduring> the bed won by the spear
of a man enjoying his success (*andros eutuchountos*)—
since, when the enemy is stronger <lit. 'is on top'> (*hyperterou*),
it is to be expected

that a night-time consummation/duty arrives (*nukteron telos molein*),
added to (*epirrhothon*) their utterly-lamentable miseries.[76]

(363–8)

This, then, is the soundscape, or phonosphere – and the imaginary landscape or cityscape – that surrounds Eteocles as he begins his lengthy consultation with the messenger, about the disposition of his champions at the Seven Gates of Thebes. Space does not permit a full commentary here on the ways in which the chorus punctuate his and the messenger's dialogue with their own strophically responding lyrics (375–630); we may simply note that this contrast between speaking men and singing women maintains the gender distinction that was established in the opening scenes, as well as the contrast between the rational and confident planning of Eteocles and the more emotional, religiously tinged, and musical responses of the maidens – up until the fateful moment when the Scout announces that 'the seventh one at the Seventh Gate is your own brother . . . ' (631–2), and Eteocles responds with his defiant, half-crazed acceptance speech of the role of defender and fratricide (653–76).

At this point, with the long sequence of paired speeches from the messenger and Eteocles completed and all seven champions matched up in an archetypical sequence of performative speech-acts,[77] there follows another short, urgent scene in which the chorus sing back and forth in quick exchanges with the speaking Eteocles – just as they did in their opening scene with him, but now with a radically different dynamic. Now it is they who are taking the initiative in making suggestions and offering strong advice ('don't do it!'), while the king is frozen into a state of hopeless, yet grim and determined, resignation.[78]

After Eteocles struts off stage towards his destiny at the Seventh Gate, the chorus sing one of the most astonishing and gripping odes in all of Greek tragedy: a masterpiece of formal symmetry (clearly evident despite the messed-up state of our manuscripts), an over-arching resumé of all the trilogy's main themes, and a chillingly insistent reminder of the inescapable presence and deadly impact of the *Erinys* – however we choose to translate this eery word, the 'Fury' that embodies or encapsulates the curse(s), the family hatreds, the tainted bloodline that has been the focus of this whole trilogy.[79]

The metrical structure of this ode (720–91), especially its first two strophic pairs, has been much analysed and admired.[80] In the first pair of stanzas, the sequence of neatly dovetailed choriambic or ionic cola,[81] wrapped up with the so-called Alcaic decasyllable clausula of 726 = 733, re-poses – and conclusively answers – the deadly riddles that have haunted Oedipus' family for three generations. The stanzas interweave almost all the key themes of the trilogy: in the strophe, the Erinys who embodies the demented father's curse (723–5); the spirit of rivalry that has divided the brothers ever since birth (726 *paidoletōr eris*); the 'all-too-true oracle of evils to come' (723 *panalēthē kakomantin*); and then, in the antistrophe, the 'Chalybian Stranger . . . divider of the property-lots, Steel (*Sidēros*, 727–33)', who will award to each of the brothers an equal share, that is as much land as he deserves = a patch of earth for his grave, 'with no share in the large territories'

(733 *tōn megalōn pediōn amoirous*). In the second strophic pair (734–49) the chorus go deeper still, now in predominantly iambo-cretic-trochaic rhythm, reaching back into the earlier phases of the story and linking these up to the imminent – by now, we sense, already occurring – 'mutual slaughter' of the two brothers (734 *autoktonōs autodaiktoi*). Their singing reminds us that so much past and present bloodshed and so many violations of family ties have piled up that we can no longer imagine cleansing or liberating this house from its 'new troubles mixed with ancient-born evils' (740–1). And at this point the chorus launches into a rehearsal of the original three-stage process of transgression and ruin (744–5), dating back to Laius' and Jocasta's first encounter with the oracle of Apollo.

The final, echoing word of this whole, long choral song is – of course – *Erinys* again (791): 'And now I tremble lest she bring <everything> to completion, the bent-kneed, swift Erinys!' (790–1 *nun de treō mē telesēi kampsipous Erinus*). With this phrase the chorus, in long-range yet tightly packed ring-composition, echo the opening of their song (720–1 'I shudder at the goddess who is unlike the <other> gods, and who destroys households'). That goddess has now achieved her purpose and is about to 'finalize, complete' everything (*telesēi*), as the messenger will confirm immediately after this choral song.[82] Those other gods too, the gods of Thebes to whom the chorus have been praying throughout the play, have also been listening, it seems, and have fulfilled their obligations, by providing a Theban victory and protecting their city, just as the chorus requested. Religion works, prayer pays off, it appears, at least in the eyes and hearts of the faithful – the chorus' earlier music, desperate and improper though it may have sounded to Eteocles, was effectual and was apparently heard by the gods and goddesses of Thebes.

In this long ode (the second *stasimon*), the musicality of the Theban maidens is focused not, as in the opening scenes, on summoning up the sounds and sights of battle and its chaotic consequences but on the repetitions and resonances of this family's long history of human mistakes and divine sabotage. The sense of 'finality' is formally reinforced by the artful symmetries and ring composition of the whole song, in contrast to the scattered and unpredictable lyrics that we heard from them on their first arrival. The song thus conveys in its musical cadence a sense of 'completion, finality' (724 *telesai*, 791 *telesēi*) from the perspective of the family of the Labdacids, a musical cadence, even before the official news of the successful defence of the city is announced. The lyrical 'shuddering' and 'trembling' of the chorus (720 *pephrika*, 790 *treō*) must elicit analogous responses in the theatre audience, very much as Aristotle outlines in his *Poetics*[83] – a point to which I will return at the end of this chapter. The chorus's fears concerning the city's demise and their own capture and violation are no longer so immediate and overwhelming: but their new awareness of the nightmare existence – and imminent extinction – of their city's royal family is no less vivid and pitiful. Their music, we might say, is at this point less about war as such and more about longer-term family traumas.

In the final scenes of the play, the chorus's role – and consequently the musical character of those scenes – is unfortunately uncertain, given the much-contested state of the manuscript tradition.[84] In the most probable reconstruction of Aeschylus' original text, the chorus proceed to convert their laments and expressions of

anguish from singing about themselves and their personal terror concerning the future to outpourings of sadness and acknowledgment of the harsh fate experienced by the two young warriors who have died so horribly and unnaturally at each others' hands. The maidens are now conducting a ritual lament (*thrēnos*) – a routine which, as we noted earlier, would in fact be forbidden in Athens at this period yet would be quite familiar to all Athenians, from Homer's *Iliad*, from visual monuments such as the Dipylon vases, and from the current practice of many neighbouring Greek states, as well as from numerous lamentation scenes conducted in the Theatre of Dionysus.[85] Their antiphonal expressions of grief and dismay – still referring to the Erinys and the curse but focusing more on the actual preparations for the brothers' burial – thus move us away from the political scenario of male political leadership and the 'captaincy of the ship' that was presented earlier in the play, dwelling instead on the finality of this family's fate and the loss of its sons and heirs. By this point, the chorus of young women are completely in charge of the theatre space, and their musical skills and gestures of lamentation are channelling the audience's final response to all that they have seen, without mediation from male authority figures or representatives of the polis.[86]

Towards a conclusion: the effects and affects of war in Greek tragedy – ethics, aesthetics, 'religion'

What are we to say, then, about the audience's responses to these shifting musical currents in our play? What are we to make of the ways in which a play like *Seven* informs or reminds the Athenians about the horrors inflicted by war and the traumatic consequences of military and political decisions made by a city's or nation's leaders, even while it also entertains them with artfully designed sounds and sights and puzzles them with challenging moral and religious questions that defy simple answers? How did the Athenian audience react to this highly musical portrayal of a group of terrified Theban girls? And what is the effect and purpose of concluding the trilogy with a series of ritualized laments and musical expressions of this chorus's collective dismay?

We might wonder whether Aeschylus' tragedy provides a kind of anticipatory or exploratory trauma therapy, given music's well-attested powers of curing mental and spiritual malaise.[87] In the 'safe space' of the Theatre, his mass audience can be exposed, male and female alike, to potential perpetrators and potential victims, to the experience of war's terrors and sufferings, and to the political and religious pressures that drive people to commit such atrocities against their fellow human beings. Yet this exposure is presented to them in a basically pleasurable form and medium: the tears, shudders, anticipations, and horrified identification with others who are suffering *in extremis* are made poetic, made musical and formally/aesthetically pleasing.

What do we make of that, of taking such pleasure at watching and listening to a chorus like that of *Seven*? The answer is not simple. We certainly aren't being made more warlike and 'full of Ares' – but as we sit comfortably in our seats and watch the events unfold, are we being inured against the feelings of outrage and

moral dissatisfaction that, according to Plato and other moralistic critics, we ought to be feeling? Is the affect that we experience a substitute for intellectual and ethical engagement?[88] Or does Dionysian tragedy actually use its range of affective techniques to open us up to heightened awareness of ‘other’ points of view, other possibilities of feeling and being, than those we usually take for granted outside the theatre? If so, is such a heightened awareness liberating? or merely self-indulgent?

There are several different approaches that we might take. In terms of socio-political commentary, we might ask whether Aeschylus is presenting in this play a critique of monarchy and of the typically self-absorbed behaviour of aristocratic families, using the music only to highlight the broader social consequences and emotional costs of such behaviours.[89] (On that kind of critical reading, we might be expected to conclude that democracies work better in these respects and do not cause such social and personal havoc nor engage so recklessly in unnecessary bloodshed and wars – hardly a viable conclusion, we might observe, for fifth-century BCE democratic Athens, any more than for twentieth- and twenty-first-century CE USA.) Or is this play a critique of war itself, comparable to for example Simone Weil’s essay on *The Iliad, the Poem of Force*? Or perhaps a proto-feminist presentation of the sharp gender divisions that war elicits, and the different perspectives that men and women are likely to hold on the prospect and implications of battle and conquest? (But the behaviour of the chorus in the opening scenes and their ways of addressing the gods do not seem by any means exemplary, as several critics have noted: several of Eteocles’ criticisms of their excessive emotionality, even impiety, seem to be valid. And in the end, Eteocles’ successful defence of his city seems to remain as a positive achievement, even amidst his family’s devastation, since that defence has saved these women along with the rest of the Theban community.)[90]

Or should we think instead of Aeschylus not so much as a political and social commentator but as rather a hyper-observant, humanistic man of the theatre, using all the affective and artistic means at his disposal to heighten the emotional and aesthetic impact of his drama – music being one of these means – without any further socio-political agenda?[91] Is the play’s music then simply one of Aeschylus’ techniques for bringing his audience to experience and imagine as vividly as possible, from multiple different perspectives, the reactions and feelings produced by warfare, as an enrichment of their consciousness and as an exciting and novel aesthetic experience in its own right – we might say, as entertainment? On such an aestheticizing reading, tragedy (or at least, Aeschylean tragedy) may seem to be intended as a means of broadening our experience and providing satisfying sensory and emotional stimulation rather than changing our opinions.

It seems hard, if not impossible, to take *Seven* as a critique of war itself given the vividness with which Aeschylus brings home to us the absolute need for Eteocles and his champions to fight in defence of their city. No voice of disagreement or critique is included in the play, no suggestion that an alternative, peaceful resolution is possible. We do not know how Aeschylus presented the complex sequence of events that had led up to Polynices’ and Adrastus’ decision to lead an invading Argive army against Thebes, lacking as we do the two preceding plays of the

trilogy, which might have clarified these and other issues (or might not). Within *Seven* itself, we are told (by the messenger, at 631–49) that Polynices is predicting a 'paean of triumph' (633–5), calling on the gods of his fatherland (639–40), and bearing on his shield an image of Dikē (Justice) while proclaiming that she will restore him to the position that he is entitled to, as ruler of Thebes (643–48); but Eteocles tells us in response that Polynices has never acted justly since the moment of his birth and that Dikē has never had anything to do with him (662–7). Eteocles here and throughout the play is presented as the resourceful and devoted defender of his city and its people against external attack – and it doesn't appear from this scene that we are meant to conclude that he should give up on the war effort and simply let the invaders in – especially as the chorus have described so vividly what the likely consequences will be for the current inhabitants of the city. Negotiation is impossible; defeat or surrender would be hideously disastrous: all-out defence seems to be the only option for Thebes.

As for the presentation of war's sufferings, especially with regard to the treatment of female captives: Athenians would already be well aware of what the usual practices were in dealing with a captured city, and they hardly needed, we might think, a playwright to point these out to them. Some would recall the Athenian participation in the sacking of Sardis in 498 BCE; many more would remember the Persians' retaliations during the more recent invasion of 480–79. And everyone was aware of how Greek *poleis* routinely behaved in their inter-city wars and power struggles or in intra-political feuds between ruling families.[92] In our play, Eteocles, as we have seen, is a brave commander, driven by equal parts machismo and tactical skill – as well as by an out-of-control sibling rivalry and hatred – to take his own place at the Seventh Gate where (he himself points out) he belongs, even if that is at the same time the place into which the Erinys of his family has manoeuvred him so as to make sure of his horrible and unnatural death and the extinction of his family. His wise decisions, his fratricidal intentions, and his ugly death all seem horribly necessary, even appropriate: as he himself phrases the dilemma (673–5), 'Who else is more right for this than I (*tis allos mallon endikōteros*)?' And the play overall seems, like for example, Homer's *Iliad*, even with its intermittent acknowledgment of the terrible consequences of full-scale inter-city warfare, to present this as an inevitable component of human and political existence, not as something that can or even should be abolished. A stronger case can be made that for example Euripides' *Trojan Women* is an 'anti-war' play – but even that play presents and elicits contradictory views at every turn.[93] Wars will happen, and even *should* happen – or so virtually every classical Greek author known to us insists, or takes for granted. That is part of what a *polis* is for, and war making is a key part of what makes a free man a free man, a Greek a Greek. Without war, it is hard to prove the manliness (*andreia*) of a man or the superior political strength of a community and hard to acquire sufficient cheap slaves.[94] And in *Seven*, the sufferings and atrocities contemplated by the chorus are not in fact realized – their city is not captured – and they are in any case, we might say, no more shocking, perhaps less so, than those frequently depicted in poetic and visual accounts of the capture of Troy.[95]

But if the play is not directly anti-war or proto-feminist, certainly it does not conform to the brief and simplistic description suggested in Aristophanes' *Frogs* ('a play full of Ares', promoting militarism and male valour). The lyric portrayals of war's horrors are an essential component of this tragedy, no less impactful than the descriptions of the stalwart champions and of Eteocles' resolve. What are we to make of this discrepancy in perceptions between Aristophanes' characters and ourselves? We return to our initial question: What did Aeschylus' singing chorus, his 'war music', do for his original Athenian audience? (How did it affect them?) What does it do for us, his modern audience(s)?[96]

The Theatre of Dionysus was a place where the Athenians' imaginations were encouraged to roam more freely, where things could be said and (mimetically) 'done' (performed) that would not be permissible or desirable elsewhere.[97] The playwrights were licensed to open up the audience's minds and senses to a fantasy world (including an acoustic world) beyond their usual range of experience and also to explore disturbing and fearful aspects of their existence and of their society that they normally did not talk about and perhaps preferred not to think about, converting those fantasies and terrors into aesthetically delightful works of art.[98] A tragedy about the nature and consequences of war allowed/enabled a mixed audience of various ages and social classes, and to some degree probably of genders too,[99] to experience together – vicariously, but vividly – what is involved and what war is like, from the perspectives of the vanquished as well as the victors. As they watched and listened, audience members would adopt the subject positions alternately, not only of the elite and ambitious main characters of these plays whose decisions and sufferings dominate the stage (in this case, Eteocles in his grim deliberations and angry outbursts) but also of characters of lower status, men and women who just want to stay out of trouble and get through life unscathed – the messengers, scouts, servants, nurses, tutors, and choruses who watch, worry about, criticize, and interact with those domineering royal 'heroes' and 'heroines' but who will almost always (we know) – unlike those heroes – survive the tragic calamity intact and relatively untraumatized.[100] And in the case of a tragic chorus, their musicality is able to provide a collective voice and an acoustic/expressive power that the audience can vicariously enjoy and even, we might say, regard as almost their own – a different kind of privilege and psychological empowerment, to set against the solemn and more restricted tonal and rhythmic constraints that have to be observed by the (socially superior) male protagonists. (I will return in a moment to this idea that the collective singing voice and dancing bodies of the chorus present an empowering imaginative alter ego for the audience themselves.)

Plato, of course, did not think that vicarious experience of such emotional states and exploration of such fantasies was good for anyone. Both in the *Republic* and in the *Laws* it is argued that feeling such improper emotions in the first place or imitating/representing/expressing them for others to watch and listen to (through the process of *mimēsis* in the theatre or through character-building choral dances) can only weaken and corrupt the souls of young and impressionable citizens and would provide rotten examples of human and divine behaviour for audiences to be influenced by. For Plato, tragedies of the Aeschylean type simply do not belong in

an ideal city, and it is unthinkable that intelligent people should want to adopt the subject positions of panicking maidens or should relish listening to a song about an inescapable, curse-induced Erinys.

We need not engage here at any length with Plato's (notorious) views on drama; but we may note that in the *Laws* his Athenian Visitor seems actually to echo our play in particular:

> [ATH.] Suppose a large and powerful army, whether Greek or not, were to force its way into the country and make them [the citizens] fight a desperate battle for the very existence of the state. It would be a disaster for their society if its women proved to have been so shockingly ill-educated that they couldn't even rival female birds, who are prepared to run every risk and die for their chicks fighting against the most powerful of wild animals. What if, instead of that, the women promptly made off to temples and thronged every altar and sanctuary, and thus covered the human race with the disgrace of being by nature the most cowardly of all creatures? . . . So let's lay down a law to the effect that women must not neglect to cultivate the techniques of war, at any rate to the extent indicated. These are skills that all citizens, male and female, must take care to acquire.
>
> (Plato *Laws* 7.814b–c)[101]

That is to say, Plato's Athenian Visitor would be especially disapproving of a play that shows women responding in this hyper-emotional (and misguidedly religious) way rather than contributing valiantly themselves to the war effort, just as Socrates in the *Republic* would abhor the *mimēsis* of a political leader who erupts as Eteocles does into expressions of anger, hatred, and accusations against the gods rather than exhibiting calm and purely rational decision making. And these Platonic complaints bring us back to our own inquiry as to *why* the Athenians enjoyed going to the theatre to watch such dreadful scenes and to experience such frantically mixed feelings and *why* Aeschylus designed a play that highlights such extreme emotionality and brings the audience to share so immediately – thanks especially to the musical components that we have explored – in these feelings of panic, desperation, dependency, loss, and resignation.

A good answer (or at least part of the answer) may be found, as often, by consulting Aristotle. Aristotle is often accused by modern critics of being too bookish and cerebral (or medicinal) and too formalistic and aestheticizing in his analysis of tragedy.[102] I think this accusation is mistaken (though this is not the moment to defend Aristotle in detail). It is true that he seems to have no interest in the idea that tragedy might provide political or religious commentary and critique. But he is intensely interested in the cognitive and affective processes that go on during the performance and watching of a tragedy; and he thinks that ethical judgments and fine-tuning of sympathies are central to an audience's engagement and satisfaction. At the same time, he believes that without a hefty component of *pathos* ('affect') no worthwhile tragic effect is possible.[103] And in both the *Poetics* and the *Politics* Aristotle also makes clear that he thinks music

is uniquely effective at arousing emotional responses and altering an audience's psychological/affective state.

In his basic definition of tragedy (*Poetics* 6. 1449b23–28) Aristotle includes *melos* (music, melody) as one of the six component 'parts' (along with plot, character, ideas, language, and visuals): 'tragedy is a representation/performance (*mimēsis*) of a serious/important action (*spoudaias praxeōs*) . . . with pleasurably-enhanced <or "embellished"> language (*hēdusmenōi logōi*). . . . ' He goes on to expand a little on this latter phrase, explaining that it involves, along with elaborated language and metrical speech (*lexis*), also the *hēdusmata* ('spice, seasonings, flavour') that melody and rhythm provide.[104] In chapter 4 he has likewise observed that delight in *harmonia* and *rhythmos* is basic to human nature and is a key reason for the invention and development of drama and other forms of representational/expressive art.[105] In Book 8 of the *Politics* he goes into more detail about the expressive and affective capabilities of music and particularly focuses on the exciting and mood-altering effects of Dionysian performance (see nn. 34, 55).[106]

Aristotle's observations about the effects of (certain kinds of) music show that he is well attuned to the enhancement that music can provide to a dramatic performance. He also insists in both the *Poetics* and the *Politics* that music is inherently enjoyable, even when it is conveying/expressing disturbing emotions or sad moods – and many modern musicologists, neuroscientists, and aestheticians have agreed. Thus, although Aristotle does not discuss choral lyrics specifically in the *Poetics*, his focus throughout that treatise on the pleasure experienced by audiences as they watch and listen to extreme suffering (*pathos*) onstage and his interest in the ways in which an audience itself responds with strong emotions (especially pity [*eleos*] and fear [*phobos*]) to the action and characters of a well-designed tragedy, all suggests that he is fully alert to this (musical) aspect of performance – especially given that so many of the most pitiful and fearful scenes in Greek tragedy, as we have seen, are conducted in lyric meters, that is with musical enhancement (*hēdusmenos logos*). Indeed, in Aristotle's view, the full 'tragic' effect cannot properly be achieved without music, and this is one of the reasons he regards tragedy as a more complete and exciting art form than epic.[107] We must think too that even the neatness and patterning that Aristotle so admires in the plot (*muthos*) of a play like Sophocles' *OT* must be related to the 'rhythm and harmony' of that play's musical structure (cf. *Poet*. ch. 4). Aristotle is convinced that an audience's feelings of fear and pity (which are conditioned in part by processes of identification and sympathy) will necessarily involve a peculiar mixture of pain and pleasure, and this aestheticizing/affective view of the tragic effect has often been promoted by others since (with or without acknowledgment of Aristotle), though it has no less often been resisted and rejected.[108]

The passage from Aristophanes' *Frogs* that we sampled near the beginning of this chapter actually contains, I think, in the (seemingly frivolous but not thoughtless) commentary that 'Dionysus' offers there, an important insight into the effect on an audience of watching a chorus perform an anxious and grief-filled song and dance in the theatre. After 'Aeschylus' claims (1026–7) that his production of *Persians* 'taught [the Athenians] always to desire to defeat their enemies', Dionysus

responds (rather flippantly, as usual) that indeed he was delighted while watching that play, and he singles out as the main source of his pleasure the exotic musicality of the chorus of Persian Elders: (1028–9): 'Yes, I really enjoyed it when the chorus listened to dead Darius and right away clapped their hands together like this (*hōdi*) and said '*iauoi'*!'" Our manuscripts of Aeschylus' *Persians* do not actually contain the word *iauoi*; but the text is full of multiple expressions of woe (*EE, IŌ, OTOTOI,* etc.) along with frequent references to the chorus beating their heads, their clothing, and the ground (see above, p. 121).[109] The experience of watching and listening to these scenes of enemies lamenting pitifully, abjectly, and noisily, consulting with the ghosts of the dead, and singing and dancing exotically all the while, is (as Dionysus observes) highly pleasurable – and his enjoyment does not appear to have been derived simply from *Schadenfreude* (i.e. pleasure at an enemy's discomfort) but also from a delight at the unusual vocalizings, clapping, and visual spectacle.

'Aestheticizing' is one term we might use, then, for the imparting of exquisite formal structure and control and the deployment of expert artistic techniques to render representations of human suffering beautiful and enjoyable for others to watch and/or listen to. Another term might be 'religiosity' – not in the sense (too often invoked in relation to the interpretation of Greek tragedy) of referring to the gods or other superhuman entities to 'explain' or 'justify' the painful events on stage but rather in the sense of the eliciting of 'wonder, awe, amazement, uplift,' the altered psychological states in which people feel themselves temporarily transported into a closer relationship with greater-than-human powers or with the cosmos as a whole. 'Art' and 'religion' seem almost always to be closely related (at least in pre-modern societies); and almost all known societies have employed music extensively (and in many different ways) in their religious activities.[110] The affective states of wonder, yearning and need, comfort and joy, sense of being together (with the divine and/or with the rest of a group) are all fostered by (various kinds of) musical performance, and all of them belong also to the experiences that we think of as being 'religious'.[111]

Religious and secular musics need not and often do not sound different from one another.[112] In the ancient Greek context they certainly did not. A tragic chorus such as that of Aeschylus' *Seven* taps into a deeply resonant reserve of 'enthusiastic' and 'sacred' music (in Aristotle's terminology), involving as it does a group of singers accompanied by the double pipes, performing in Lydian and Phrygian modes, and often even imitating the conventions of hymnic or lament traditions. The mood-altering effects of their music – a state of uplift, being 'moved', 'possession' by god (*enthousiasmos*), excitement, and transformation, whatever we wish to call it – take the audience (briefly, and dynamically) out of their normal physiological and mental habitus and bring them collectively into an enhanced, or at least different, state of awareness and connection to their surroundings.[113]

A couple of highly successful productions of (adapted) Greek tragedies based on the Oedipus story have demonstrated this process (empirically) rather convincingly in recent years: Julie Taymor's production of Stravinsky/Cocteau's *Oedipus Rex* (based on Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*; originally composed and presented as

a rather austere oratorio in 1927 but spectacularly staged by Taymor with dancers, masks, puppets, and more in Japan in 1992); and Lee Breuer's and Bob Telson's *Gospel at Colonus* (based on Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, in Robert Fitzgerald's translation; staged several times between 1983 and the present).[114] Both of these productions – which many regard as among the most powerful and moving productions of a Greek drama ever attempted in the modern era – are dominated by music; and even while individual solo singers shine at various points in both performances, and there are fine moments in the spoken narration or dialogue and several spectacular visual effects as well (especially in Taymor's piece), it is the choral passages that make the greatest impact of all. In both productions a remarkable integration of the choral group into the flow of the play is achieved, while at the same time the chorus remains qualitatively distinct from the individual characters, in its musical idioms as well as its choreography and closer relation to the theatre audience. Both of these productions could be said to have imported into the Greek play a recognizably Christian element, in terms both of plot structure and musical idiom: to that extent they can be said to be not authentic in their religiosity. At the same time, the brilliantly designed and executed musical elements do succeed to an unusual degree in drawing the audience into a dynamic and 'inspired' response to the stage action, much as I am suggesting the original music of a play like *Seven* did: and this response has many of the characteristics of a religious response.

A Greek tragedy is obviously not a 'religious ceremony' in any normal sense of that term. But it also is not a documentary, nor a historical narrative or lesson – again, Aristotle insists on the difference between history and tragedy (*Poet*. 9. 1451a35–51b32). It is a 'play', a fantasy. However much painful, disturbing truth and reality a tragedy may contain – in this case, truth about the horrors of war, about the complex and confused motives that impel leaders into war, and about the dreadful consequences of intra-familial hatreds, and so on – every drama presented in the Theatre of Dionysus is also designed to engage an audience in such a way that they may share (to some degree) the experience of both the victims and the perpetrators, while at the same time feeling safe in their seats and secure in the knowledge that they will not personally get harmed. The audience's normal states of awareness – and their comfort level – are altered for an hour or two as they are transported into unfamiliar, fantasized states of excitement, sympathy, fear, astonishment, desire, aversion – and ultimately relief – both through their identification with different characters' situations and attitudes in the play and also through the acoustic impact of those characters' voices and of the accompanying *auloi*. We might say that Aeschylus in the *Seven* is not 'teaching' his audience anything new about the rights and wrongs of war or war's effects, nor about religion; but he is bringing home to them in a new and uniquely (synaesthetically) expressive way what that 'serious action' (*spoudaia praxis*) is like and how the gods might be imagined as working – what it *feels like* for all involved (tragedy as a multi-faceted *pathos* machine).

That is what Dionysus – and theatre in general – can do in ways that history and philosophy or political science cannot. In the case of musical theatre, it is not that

the music makes the action more realistic or more understandable in intellectual terms – obviously, people do not usually sing when they are scared or suffering deeply, nor when they are trying to persuade someone else not to undertake a murderous act or attempting to explain the workings of a family curse.[115] But music's power to alter an audience's mood and shape their affective responses makes it perhaps the most valuable tool of all in a Dionysian artist's repertoire.[116]

Notes

1 For introductions to ancient Greek musical culture in general, see Barker 1984, 2012, Comotti 1989 (especially recommended as a place to start), West 1992, Mathiesen 1999. For a good general introduction to the study of music of all kinds as it operates in cultures around the world (ethnomusicology), see Nettl 2005. On the origins of human musicality and the nature of early hominid music, see Wallin et al. 2000, Mithen 2006, Tomlinson 2015.

2 Among humans as among animals, 'signals' and 'calls' are often distinguished from 'song' and 'music' by ethnomusicologists and zoologists: see e.g. Wallin et al. 2000, Marler and Slabbekoorn 2004.

3 The first verse and chorus of *La Marseillaise* run: 'Allons enfants de la Patrie, / Le jour de gloire est arrivé! / Contre nous de la tyrannie, / L'étendard sanglant est levé, / Entendez-vous dans les campagnes / Mugir ces féroces soldats? / Ils viennent jusque dans vos bras / Égorger vos fils, vos compagnes! // Aux armes, citoyens, / Formez vos bataillons, / Marchons, marchons! / Qu'un sang impur / Abreuve nos sillons!' Less bloodthirsty, but even more self-righteous, are the lyrics of *Rule, Britannia!* (lyrics by James Thomson, music by Thomas Arne, 1740): 'When Britain first, at Heaven's command / Arose from out the azure main; / This was the charter of the land, / And guardian angels sang this strain: / 'Rule, Britannia! Britannia, rule the waves: / Britons never will be slaves.'' The melody has since been often borrowed and reworked by other composers. Another British war-song, familiar to many and more militaristic in tone, is the *British Grenadiers*: 'Some talk of Alexander, some talk of Hercules / Of Hector and Lysander and such great names as these./ But of all the world's great heroes, there's none that can compare/ With a tow-row-row-row-row-row-row, to the British Grenadier(s), etc.'

4 At the time, it was highly successful and a big money maker for Beethoven. Later critical assessments have been less positive.

5 Famous theme tunes from war movies (or from movies with strongly military aspects) are celebrated on various online websites: e.g. http://www.allmusic.com/album/the-greatest-war-movie-themes-mw0002026735, and http://www.denofgeek.com/movies/18373/the-all-time-greatest-war-movie-themes (accessed 21/7/16).

6 The next step was to massacre every single inhabitant of the city: men, women, and children – except for one, Rahab the harlot. Biblical war was no less brutal than ancient Greek war and had a tendency to be more ethnically inflected.

7 Aeschylus, according to his own epitaph, himself fought at Marathon; one of his brothers, Cynegirus, was killed in that battle; and Aminias, honoured for exceptional military brilliance at Salamis, may have been another of his brothers. See the extensive *Testimonia* in Radt's edition of Aeschylus' fragments: *TrGF* 3 T 11–51.

8 On innovations and the competitive desire for novelty in Greek music, see esp. Barker 1984:93–8 and Index *s.v.* 'novelty'; Csapo 2002, D'Angour 2011, LeVen 2014, Gurd 2016.

9 Barner 1971 (and cf. Rode 1971); Hall 1999, 2002, Csapo 2002.

10 Most Anglophone scholars, myself included, are convinced that in the original Aeschylean version of the play the two daughters did not appear at all and that the final scene with the herald is spurious. The additions are believed to have been made later in the fifth or early fourth century BCE in response to Sophocles' and Euripides'

extremely successful *Antigone* plays, which dealt with the same subject. Among French and Italian scholars belief in the authenticity of the daughters' presence and of that whole final scene is more widespread. See e.g. Torrance 2007:19–20, Sommerstein 2010a:90–3 (with further refs) for fuller discussion.

11 For detailed description and analysis of the types of melodies composed for tragedy at various dates, see esp. West 1992:277–326, Pöhlmann and West 2001, Hagel 2010; and for post-fifth-century performances and re-performances, see also Prauscello 2006, Griffith 2017a. The choral dochmiacs of Euripides' *Orestes* 338–44, partially preserved with musical notation on a third-century BCE papyrus (discussed on p. 126 with n.56), provide a tantalizing taste of typical late-Euripidean melodies. No surviving papyrus text from any Aeschylean play contains musical annotation.

12 For the dances of Greek tragedy in general, see the images reproduced in e.g. Pickard-Cambridge 1968 and the sources collected in Csapo and Slater 1995:360–8; and discussion in Lawler 1964, Naerebout 1997:174–289. We are better informed about the dance-steps of satyr-drama than about tragedy: Krumeich et al. 1999 (Tafeln), Seidensticker 2008.

13 Our uncertainty is caused partly by the fact that we have just been told a few lines earlier (21e2–8) that 'Aeschylus himself used to invent many dance-steps and pass them on to the members of his chorus. . . . Chamaeleon says that he [Aeschylus] was the first to set the dance-steps for his choruses himself without using a dance-teacher (*prōton . . . schēmatisai tous chorous orchēstodidaskalois ou chrēsamenon*).' Chamaeleon was a student of Aristotle, i.e. late fourth century BCE, and thus much closer to Aeschylus' era that the source (Aristocles), who says that Telestes was 'Aeschylus' dance-teacher.'

14 Papastamati-von Moock 2015, with further references; cf. too Taplin 1977. Probably the orchestra was rectangular or trapezoidal in shape (rather than circular), and the (wooden) seats in the auditorium were likewise arranged in rectilinear rather than curving configuration.

15 See e.g. Taplin 1977, Gruber 2008:166–7; *contra* Hutchinson 1985:56–7, arguing for a unified choral entrance. Other likely examples of 'sporadic' choral entrance are: Aesch. *Eumenides*; Soph. *Ajax* 866–78; [Eur.] *Rhesus* 674–91; and cf. Pollux 4. 109.

16 So Aristotle, for example, observes in the *Politics* (Book 8) that different types of music serve several different social purposes without mentioning war specifically. He would presumably classify war-music within the general category of 'practical, action-oriented' music (*Pol*. 8. 6.1341b32–4, 7.1342a1–15). It may be observed that among musical animals (birds, gibbons, humpback whales, for example) songs – as distinct from 'calls' – are never apparently deployed for directly aggressive and violent purposes but instead for attracting a mate or collaborating with others within the group: see the essays in Wallin et al. 2000; also Marler and Slabbekoorn 2004, Kroodsma 2005.

17 Thuc. 5.70, Plut. *Lyc*. 21.4, 22.4–5; Hdt. 1.17.1; etc. See further Pritchett 1971:105–8, West 1992:29–30 (with refs also to visual representations, including the well-known Chigi Vase).

18 West 1992:15–16; cf. Aesch. *Persians* 386–97 (discussed earlier).

19 Barker 1984:289–90, West 1992:158, Lonsdale 1993, Ceccarelli 1998.

20 Actually, a war paean is mentioned twice in the course of the play (218, 633–5), as well as a war cry (217 *ololugmos*); but these references are made by individual characters who are *speaking* iambic trimeters, not actually singing.

21 The majority of the choruses in our surviving Greek tragedies are comprised of women (though Sophocles' choruses in *Antigone* and *OC* are senior citizen men); cf. Foley 2003. As we shall see, this difference is important in musical terms as well as having other dramatic implications. For extensive discussion of the composition and roles of Aeschylus' tragic choruses, see Gruber 2008 (including full discussion of previous scholarship); but Gruber himself generally downplays gender difference and concentrates more on the chorus' role as representative of the whole *polis*/community. The

(fascinating) question, to what degree did the Athenian citizen-men-dressed-as-women who constituted a tragic chorus attempt – and succeed – in singing like actual women (let alone, like Trojan/Phrygian, Theban, or Egyptian women . . .), cannot, alas, begin to be answered on the available evidence.

22 The names of these harp-type instruments are not certain: probably the triangular-shaped *trigōnon* was one; and the *pēktis* may have been another: see West 1992:71–9, Landels 1999:73–7, Mathiesen 1999:235–8, 270–86; for illustrations, see esp. Bundrick 2005. After the mid-fourth century BCE, we have documentation also for a lute-type (necked) string instrument, perhaps called *pandoura*, likewise apparently restricted to female players (West 1992:79–80). Lutes were common in neighbouring societies but are curiously absent from the surviving remains of sixth- and fifth-century Greek culture.

23 West 1992:122–8, Landels 1999:81–5, Mathiesen 1999:162–76, Bundrick 2005, Kolotourou 2011, Griffith in progress.

24 Non-citizen men too seem to have enjoyed greater freedom than Athenian citizen males in their use of different instruments and various musical ‘colours’. See further Griffith in progress.

25 For discussion of the apparent paucity of female choruses in Athens, as compared with other Greek communities, see Budelmann and Power 2015 (showing that female ‘Bacchic’ choruses of various kinds were not uncommon in Athens, though institutionalized, polis-organized female choruses of other kinds were indeed less prevalent than elsewhere). See in general Calame 1997, Stehle 1997, Dillon 2002, etc. More ‘exotic’ divinities (such as Adonis, Sabazius) seem to have been celebrated musically by women more than by men; likewise various kinds of ‘Corybantic’-style performance: Goff 2004, Kolotourou 2011, Reitzammer 2016, Griffith 2017b.

26 Karanika 2014.

27 Holst-Warhaft 1992, Alexiou 2002, Suter 2008.

28 Plutarch *Life of Solon* 21.4; cf. Dipylon vases. For this issue in Athenian tragedy, see Foley 2001. One may compare also the recommended restrictions on musical lamentation in Magnesia proposed by the Athenian Visitor in Plato’s *Laws* (800e).

29 Hall 1999, pointing out that Greek men in tragedy rarely are given singing roles: actors’ singing is confined largely to female characters (Electra, Cassandra, Hecuba, etc.) or to foreign potentates (Xerxes, Polymestor, etc.). Our play maintains this convention, as Eteocles does not sing at all.

30 Hypoth. Aesch. *Pers*. = *TrGF* 1 3 T 5, F 8–12. For Phrynichus’ musicality and choreographic expertise as a playwright, see Aristoph. *Wasps* 219–20, 269, *Thesm*. 1614–67, *Frogs* 1298–301, and other *Testimonia* at *TrGF* 1 3 (pp. 69–72).

31 For further discussion of this final scene, see Hopman 2013 with references.

32 Aristotle here uses the term *pathēma*, whereas elsewhere in the *Poetics* he mostly uses *pathos*; but most scholars think (rightly) that the meaning is basically the same, that is, an ‘affection’ or (in non-technical contemporary English parlance) ‘emotion’ experienced by the audience. (I will not discuss alternative interpretations here.) For careful discussion of Aristotle’s ideas about *mimēsis* and affect/emotion, see esp. Halliwell 1998, 2002.

33 For discussion of these processes of identification/empathy/shifting subject position in ancient Greek theatre audiences, see e.g. Zeitlin 1996 (on ‘playing the other’, esp. with regard to gender), Griffith 1995:72–81 (with reference to film studies as well as theatre), 1999:34–8, 58–66, 2006 *passim*, 2015 *passim*, Visvardi 2015:19–46 (focusing on ‘collective emotion’ in tragedy, esp. with regard to ‘civilizing the passions’ through representations of group discussions and socio-political actions in drama). For the audience’s relation to the chorus in particular, see esp. Henrichs 1994–1995, 1996, Mastronarde 1998, 1999, Foley 2003, Gruber 2008 (with extensive bibliography), Murnaghan 2011, Gagné and Hopman 2013, Visvardi 2015 (esp. 147–78 focusing on *Seven*), Griffith 2015:6–10, 14–6, 22–57, 76–9, 91–6 [drawing from Griffith 1995, 2002, 2005, 2006], with further references.

34 Music is intrinsically 'corporeal' and visceral in terms both of the physicality of the impact made by musical sounds on the ear and nervous system and of the common affective responses of listeners to music, which more often than not involve rhythmic and other bodily reactions, including hormonal changes that may include the release of oxytocin, dopamine, and other endorphins. Most audiences move, consciously or unconsciously, when listening to music and watching dance. (See also Meineck, in this volume, on kinesthetic empathy.) The modern Western habit of sitting silent and motionless in a concert hall (or wearing headphones or earbuds) to listen to music or watch, for example, ballet, is not typical of most societies throughout history. For further discussion of these issues, see Becker 2001:136–8, 141–50, Nettl 2005:16–26, 50–9, Peponi 2012, Griffith in progress; also Aristotle *De Anima* 2. 8, *Pol*. 8, and [ps. Aristotle] *On Things Heard*, *Problems* 19, writing about the 'movements' in the air (generated by voices or instruments) that cause equivalent 'movement, reaction' (*kinēsis, pathos*) and 'alteration' (*alloiōsis, metabolē*) in the soul of a listener.

35 See Meyer 1956 for a classic (and still generally accepted) account of the formal/aesthetic elements that provide pleasure to people as they listen to music; similarly, for example, Keil and Feld 1994, Levitin 2006, Patel 2008, Bicknell 2009 (these last three all discussing recent neuroscientific research as well).

36 For good descriptions of the *auloi* (and *tibia*), see esp. West 1992:81–107, 366–7, Hagel 2010, Moore 2012:26–63; and see further nn. 49 and 74 below.

37 Henrichs 1994–1995, Calame 1997, 2013, Mastronarde 1998, 1999, Kowalzig 2007, Gruber 2009, Murnaghan 2011, Visvardi 2015; and see n.33 above. Thousands of Athenian men would themselves have experience singing and dancing in choruses (to *aulos*-accompaniment), for example in the annual dithyrambic contests in the Theatre of Dionysus, which involved 20 choruses of 50 each: see further Revermann 2006.

38 See e.g. Levitin 2006, Bicknell 2009, with further references; also Peponi 2012.

39 The word *Erinys* itself is an exotic-sounding and evocative word: non-Greek in origin, rare in normal discourse and in prose of any kind, but especially favoured in tragedy for its eery and chilling associations; see Sommerstein 1989:6–10. The Latin *Furia* (from which the English translation 'Fury' comes) lacks these exotic associations.

40 For detailed discussion of this chorus' language and attitudes in the first half of the play and also the sound effects activated by their singing, see Judet de La Combe 1998, Bruit-Zaidman 1991, Goff 1995, Byrne 1997, Ieranò 1999, Edmunds 2002, Stehle 2005, Torrance 2007, Gruber 2009:164–88, Visvardi 2015:147–50, 157–9, as well as Hutchinson 1985.

41 Alexiou 2002, Suter 2008.

42 Dué 2002.

43 The phrase is taken from Gayle Ruben's classic article (Rubin 1975), though war is not her focus there; see too Wohl 1998. In the twenty-first century, scores of thousands of sex workers around the world come from communities and families ravaged by invasion, civil war, or other forms of military violence; see e.g. Nikolic-Ristanovic 2003. For ancient Greek practices of warfare, rape, and enslavement (*andrapodismos*), see Raaflaub 2001, 2014, Gaca 2010, 2015, and Meineck in this volume (with further references).

44 See Loraux 1998, Wohl 2015:39–49 (with further references), Weiss 2017:ch. 2.

45 Obviously the loss of the first two plays of Aeschylus' Theban trilogy means that we cannot be absolutely sure that the invading army and its champions are indeed as unjustified and sacrilegious, and the six defending Theban champions as virtuous, as they are presented in *Seven*. But the shield symbols described in the Scout's and Eteocles' speeches seem pretty conclusive as to the greater degree of justice and divine approval belonging to the defenders of the city. In the cases of *Ag*. and *Supp*., the rights and wrongs of Cassandra's and of the Danaids' predicaments are less easy to untangle.

46 Zeitlin 1990a. See also Edmunds in this volume.

47 Increasingly too, as the years went by, the actors – whose singing roles steadily increased in tragedy after the introduction in the 440s BCE of a prize for actors at the City Dionysia – tended to be non-Athenian.
48 Berlinzani 2004, Griffith in progress.
49 Hence, perhaps, the various attempts at anti-*aulos* propaganda mounted by elite Athenian writers of the mid-fifth and early fourth centuries, including the newly invented tradition of Apollo's defeat of the pipe-playing satyr Marsyas: see Wilson 1999, Martin 2003, Griffith in progress. For Theban musical expertise, see further Barker 1984:ch. 13 (on Theophrastus' account of reed production and manufacture for *auloi* in Boeotia), West 1992:366–7; and for the extensive records of Boeotian music festivals, see Manieri 2009. On the Theban poet Pindar's engagement with the Seven against Thebes myth, see Foster in this volume.
50 One vivid confirmation of this is of course the so-called Pronomos Vase (*ARV2* 1336,1), a late-fifth-century Athenian painted pot that features the Theban piper Pronomos as its centrepiece: see Taplin and Wyles 2008.
51 For discussion of the formal structure, meters, and rhythmical dynamics of our play's lyrics, see esp. Scott 1984:158–65, Hutchinson 1985, Judet de La Combe 1998, Torrance 2007.
52 See above, n.15.
53 For extended discussion of this chorus's group identity and its relationship to Eteocles, to the gods, and to the *polis* as a whole, see Zeitlin 1990b, Torrance 2007:14–16, 51–5, 93–107, Gruber 2008:164–78, 185–96, Visvardi 2015:147–78.
54 Dochmiacs are not found in choral or monodic lyric. (By contrast, almost all the other lyric metres found in extant tragedy are also found in one or both of those earlier lyric contexts.) For extended discussion of the characteristics of the dochmiac metre, see esp. Dale 1968, West 1982, Medda 1995.
55 The question of whether/how music (without words) can 'express' emotion is much debated nowadays, as it was also in antiquity: see esp. Aristotle *Politics* 8.5.1339b11–40b18, 7.1341b32–42b33 (also *Problemata* 19), with Sifakis 2001, Halliwell 2002, and (with more focus on Plato) Peponi 2012; for modern debates, see e.g. Meyer 1956, Kivy 1990, Juslin and Sloboda 2001, Davies 2003, Patel 2008, Bicknell 2009, Juslin 2011. But there has been general agreement on all sides that music can 'arouse' feelings and emotions (or 'affect') in listeners and can contribute to altering their mood and mental state in many different ways: Aristotle uses such terms as *pathos*, *kinēsis* ('movement'), *metabolē* ('change'), and *alloiōsis* ('alteration') for the responses of the human soul (*psychē*) to listening to affective music.
56 Pap. Vienna G 2315, containing parts of lines 338–44; see West 1992:277–8, 283–5, Pöhlmann and West 2001:12–17, Prauscello 2006. The papyrus seems to date from the third century BCE, and the melody (in either Lydian or Phrygian *harmonia*, and either enharmonic or chromatic *genos* – all fairly standard for fifth-century tragic music) is likely to be actually the one composed by Euripides rather than a subsequent composition by a later recitalist or adaptor/performer of the play. In this passage the chorus are expressing in dochmiac metre their dismay and sympathy at the spectacle of Orestes, lying on his sickbed, sleepless, tossing and turning, and crazed with guilt about the murder of his mother.
57 *Threomai* is used only of women speaking or shouting (LSJ *s.v.*). Related words such as *throeō, throos* often refer to the murmur or confused babble of a multitude or occasionally of the sound of a choral hymn (Pindar *Nem*. 7. 81) or the musical pipes (Pindar *Paean* 9.36 = fr. 52k. 36).
58 My thanks to Mario Telò for pointing this out to me.
59 It is possible that some of these exclamations could have been metrical, whether in iambic or dochmiac rhythm. The scansion of such interjections in tragedy is often doubtful, esp. because of the unreliability of the MS tradition.

60 It is an on-going (small but not insignificant) conundrum for all critics whether to refer to the 'spectators' or to the 'audience' of a Greek tragedy. In this chapter I will mostly use 'audience' or 'listeners'.

61 Ieranò 1999, Edmunds 2002, Butler and Purves 2013.

62 For discussion of ancient testimony about the choreography for this play (designed by Telestes? in collaboration with Aeschylus?) which apparently made the external action 'appear vividly' (*phanera*) to the audience, see n.13 above.

63 We know almost nothing for certain about the performance conventions of tragic choruses; but real-life choruses – especially choruses of women – frequently employed castanets or clappers (*krotala, krembala*), and occasionally even cymbals (*kumbala*) as well as clapping of hands, beating of parts of the body, and foot-stamping as additional percussive effects to enhance their singing and dancing. See further West 1992, Peponi 2009, and the passage from Aesch. *Persians* discussed above (p. 121). I see no good reason for supposing that men playing the role of a female chorus in tragedy would not have employed these same instruments, as seems esp. obvious in the cases of e.g. Aeschylus' *Lykourgeia* tetralogy and Euripides' *Bacchae*.

64 See above n.56, on the melody of the *Orestes* musical papyrus, and p. 126, and cf. Meineck p. 66 in this volume, on the highly affective properties of the *auloi*. Western opera provides another context in which extreme human misery can be transformed into exquisitely beautiful music. I will return to this issue at the end of this chapter.

65 Again, I am grateful to Mario Telò for several of the observations and formulations in this paragraph.

66 There is apparently no central palace or temple or house employed in this play, and modern scholars have conjectured that such possibilities for set construction were not yet available to playwrights; see above n.14 (and specific discussion of our play in Taplin 1977); but for a contrary argument (again focused specifically on *Seven*), see Seaford 2012:337–9.

67 In this last phrase ('be mindful of our rites!') the word *orgiōn* (from *orgia* = 'rituals, rites') is etymologically related to *erga*, the Greek word for 'actions', just as in the reciprocal process of prayer to the gods one 'act' of human devotion is expected to be repaid by another 'act' of divine assistance.

68 Polynices, a Theban, has married the daughter of the King of Argos and has mustered a 'foreign' army of allies to help his bid to regain the throne. As many critics have observed, the analogy with the expelled Athenian tyrant Hippias, who accompanied the invading Persian army at Marathon (Hdt 6.102–8), would not have been far from the minds of some of the older audience members, even though the 'foreignness' of Aeolic (Theban) versus Argive (Doric) dialect would not have been so extreme as that of the Persian troops versus the Attic Greek-speaking Athenians.

69 I need not here get into the interesting but vexed issue of the ritual correctness, or otherwise, of the chorus's behaviour in this opening scene; see e.g. Stehle 2005, Torrance 2007:51–6, with further references.

70 See Dale 1968; on the metrical patterning of the *Oresteia*, see esp. Scott 1984.

71 The first words of strophe and antistrophe echo one another, both grammatically and rhythmically: 321 *oiktron* . . . 353 *klauton*.

72 That is to say, the young women (*parthenoi*) of a captured city – such as these chorus women – will suffer 'a fate worse than death'.

73 The term used here for 'captured, subdued', *damasthēi,* is also used for 'subduing' a new bride, and *damar* is a standard Greek term for 'wife'.

74 The associations of these *auloi*-pipes must have been manifold among the theatre audience. Not only did soldiers and sailors often fight battles to the sound of *auloi* (see above, pp. 118–19) – and might even hear them played while a captured city's walls were being demolished (cf. Xenophon *Hell*.2.2.23) – but everyone would also be familiar with the sound of *auloi* playing as a bride was led away from her father's house into her new husband's bedroom on her wedding night. Contrastingly, *auloi*

would often be played as people gathered to mourn the dead (as e.g. 500 years later, at Matthew 9:18–25). So in the Theatre of Dionysus the evocative effect of a noisily wailing/singing chorus plus *aulos*-player could greatly enhance the immediacy of this moment of fantasizing/recollection/'imagining' (356 *eikasai*) the realities of war and its 'music', weirdly blended with the music of marital consummation.

75 The Greek text here is uncertain in places, but the general sense is not in doubt.

76 Sommerstein translates line 368: 'the climax of . . . their afflictions.' Cf. Briseis in Homer *Iliad* 19. 282–303, discussed above (p. 124), with Dué 2002; and further Byrne 1997, Loraux 1998.

77 See e.g. Berman 2002, Torrance 2007, Zeitlin 2009 [1982].

78 For the shift in the chorus's relationship to Eteocles and their adoption of a less deferential and more assertive and critical manner as the play proceeds, see Thalmann 1978, Winnington-Ingram 1983, Torrance 2007, Gruber 2008, with further references.

79 For good discussions of this ode, see Manton 1961, Burnett 1973, Thalmann 1978. In certain respects – though by a completely different technique – this choral ode accomplishes, I suggest, some of the same effect that Jean Anouilh's chorus achieves in his cool (solo, spoken) remarks at an early point in *Antigone* (written and first performed in 1944): 'The spring is wound up tight. It will uncoil of itself. That is what is so convenient in tragedy . . . The machine is in perfect order; it has been oiled ever since time began, and it runs without friction . . . etc.' (tr. L. Galantière). Aeschylus uses flamboyant, imagistic song to convey this sense of deadly – yet strangely fascinating – shutting down of all possibility of escape, mixed with a curious relish for the imminent and vividly envisioned disaster, while in Anouilh this is conveyed by a sober, quasi-clinical and metatheatrical monologue. In both cases, the contemplation of impending human misery is rendered strangely enjoyable for the audience – a point to which I will return at the end.

80 Wilamowitz 1921:201–4, Lupaş and Petre 1981, Judet de La Combe 1998, Ieranò 1999, etc.

81 The alternative colometries and dovetailing technique are well discussed by Fraenkel 1954, Dale 1968:128–30, Cole 1988.

82 At 698–704 (in lyrics) the chorus had attempted to reassure Eteocles that 'the Erinys will leave the house, once the gods receive a sacrifice from <your> hands'. But in that stanza they seem not yet to have grasped the nature of the 'sacrifice' (701 *thusian*) that will be required.

83 The chorus' expressions of fear and pity for their royal family mirror and enhance the audience's feelings, while also (we might say) aestheticizing these feelings and containing them. In Aristotle's terms, the plot of *Seven* seems perfectly to exemplify a pattern of 'events that occur contrary to expectation <yet> in a direct causal chain' (*para tēn doxan di' allēla*, *Poet*. 9. 1452a4), a pattern that he sees as the most perfect for providing the proper tragic pleasure (*oikeia hēdonē*). See further below, pp. 137–8.

84 As I noted, I am myself (like most Anglophone Classicists) fairly confident that we should excise Antigone and Ismene from the play completely, deleting 864–74, and assigning lines 875–1004 to the chorus, singing antiphonally. (Lines 1005–78 should also be deleted entirely.) But many scholars in Europe and elsewhere believe in the authenticity of the scenes as they are transmitted; so I will not claim certainty. In what follows, however, I will continue to employ the term 'the chorus' (rather than 'Antigone and Ismene') when referring to the singers of those lyric passages.

85 See the example of Aesch. *Persians*, quoted above (p. 121), and further Kranz 1933, Foley 2001. For the Spartans' ongoing habits of lamentation for deceased kings, see, e.g., Hdt. 6.58–9; and cf. in general Holst-Warhaft 1992, Alexiou 2002, Suter 2008.

86 For fuller discussion of the chorus's role in these closing scenes, see Bruit-Zaidman 1991, Gruber 2008, Visvardi 2015:170–8.

87 Becker 2001, Juslin and Sloboda 2001, Sacks 2008, etc. See also Meineck and Konstan 2014.

88 So e.g. Bertolt Brecht argued, in his promotion of a more distanced, alienating, 'epic' kind of theatre in place of reactionary 'Aristotelian' theatre. For Brecht's treatment of the Theban war, see Cairns in this volume.

89 See e.g. Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1988, Meier 1993, Seaford 1994, Hall 1997, for such an approach to Athenian tragedy, emphasizing its democratic tendencies and preoccupations, though none of these critics focuses specifically on the music (which Hall does brilliantly in Hall 1999, 2002).

90 See Torrance 2007 with further refs.

91 So, more or less, Nussbaum 1986, Segal 1996; see Wohl 2015:1–8, 39–49, 132–41.

92 Large-scale slaughter, expulsions (even of a whole city population), and enslavement (including rape and forcible concubinage) were commonplace and often observed. (This was not like the American population learning from news reporters and photographers for the first time about atrocities committed by US troops in Vietnam and Cambodia in the 1960s.) Although Thucydides, in his (post-Aeschylean) portrait of Athenian, Spartan, and Theban behaviour at Mytilene, Plataea, and Melos, as well as his account of stasis at Corcyra and elsewhere, goes to some lengths to show that the Peloponnesian War led to greater brutality and lower moral standards than any preceding Greek war, there is no good reason to believe or disbelieve him. We have no way of assessing the accuracy of his opinion and his account. The recently discovered corpses of 80 Athenian men, apparently some of those captured and executed (illegally, and impiously) after the failed Cylonian conspiracy of the seventh century BCE, is but one of many reminders of the routine bloodiness of Greek (and other ancient Mediterranean) war making, civil strife, and punishment of political dissidence. On all of this, see Meineck in this volume.

93 See e.g. Mastronarde 2010:77–9, 109, Wohl 2015:42–9.

94 I hasten to add: I do not myself share these views. I just want to emphasize that there is virtually no evidence of an anti-war or non-violent philosophy to be found anywhere in archaic or classical Greece, just as there is no promotion of the idea of abolishing slavery.

95 Anderson 1997; and cf. Virgil *Aen.* Book 2.

96 There have been relatively few modern productions of *Seven* that have made much impact. One is Will Power's *The Seven* (2001/2006), with extensive use of hip-hop and rap music and choreography by Bill T. Jones. See further Meineck 2006, Wetmore 2015.

97 Zeitlin 1996, Griffith [2005] 2015:89–103.

98 So Aristotle (*Poetics*, *passim*) and Nietzsche (*The Birth of Tragedy*); and cf. Eagleton 2003 for trenchant discussion of the 'sweet violence' of tragedy as composed and consumed in its various forms over the millennia.

99 Roselli 2011; cf. Lech 2011.

100 Occasionally a chorus does end up suffering: e.g. Eur. *Tro*. But usually they emerge safe and sound from the protagonists' catastrophes, just like the audience. See further Griffith 1995, 1999:11–2, 17–19, 353–4, Hall 1997, Murnaghan 2011, Visvardi 2015.

101 Edmunds in this volume, 95–6, also discusses this passage.

102 As Halliwell 1998:323 remarks, 'The dominant modern view is that the *Poetics* is essentially formalist and, in the unfortunately narrow sense, aesthetic in its spirit'; cf. too Ford 2002.

103 Halliwell 1998, 2002. Aristotle mentions several different kinds of 'pleasure' (*hēdonē*) that are intrinsic to the watching of tragedy, including visual and acoustic pleasures (see e.g. Halliwell 1998, Sifakis 2001:38–49, 72–96); but the pleasures associated with emotional disturbance (pity, fear, and 'such *pathēmata*') are crucial. For Aristotle, as for an increasing number of modern philosophers and neuroscientists, 'cognition', 'emotion', and consciousness are recognized as occurring with and in the body, not simply in 'the mind/soul' or 'the brain': see e.g. Noë 2013.

104 *Hēdusma* in classical Greek seems primarily to be used in culinary contexts: so tragedy is a 'spiced-up' mode of expression/representation, unlike the blander textures and taste of for example epic or sculpture. See further Sifakis 2001:56–8.

105 Here and elsewhere Aristotle seems to think that the experience of performing mimetically and that of watching and listening to such performances (with varying degrees of critical sophistication) are not radically different – an opinion that is confirmed in the modern era by a number of studies of the responses of listening to music by musicians versus non-musicians.

106 See esp. Sifakis 2001, Halliwell 2002, Griffith 2017b.

107 *Poetics* 26.1462a14–17 'Tragedy has all the elements that epic has . . . and then also, as not a small extra factor, music and visual effects, through which <an audience's> pleasures are most vividly produced.'

108 For good recent discussion, see Wohl 2015:6–8, 39–62.

109 The play also contains a scene in which the chorus necromantically conjure up the ghost of Darius from the Underworld.

110 Nettl 2005:262–3.

111 See e.g. Winnicott 1971 for further discussion, from a psychological 'object relations' perspective, of the interconnectedness between human impulses to 'play' (create/enjoy artistically) and to behave religiously ('worship/believe in god', etc.).

112 Composers such as J. S. Bach, G. F. Handel, and W. A. Mozart were adept at switching tunes and arrangements back and forth between secular and religious contexts. Likewise the gospel-derived sounds of Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, Al Green, James Brown, and innumerable others have aroused similar responses in their audiences to those of a Pentecostal church congregation.

113 See Bernays 2015 [1857] for a full discussion (emphasizing the temporary nature of this quasi-cathartic process, in Aristotle's theorizing: i.e., this is not an 'ethical' but an aesthetic/religious musical-mimetic affect). For further discussion of the particular affective characteristics of the Greek *auloi* (with their double-pipes and reed characteristics) played in conjunction with singing voices, and analogies with the modern Hammond B3 organ played through Leslie speakers – the instrument around which most of the accompaniment to American gospel and soul vocal music has been built – see http://classical-inquiries.chs.harvard.edu/the-voice-of-the-pipes-and-a-third-leslie/ (with some musical clips for exemplification).

114 Stravinsky/Cocteau/Taymor 1992; Breuer/Telson 1983, published 1989. On these productions see e.g. McDonald 2001:159–77, Wetmore 2003, and E. Rothstein (*New York Times*, March 31, 1993) at http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9F0CE1DC17 3AF932A05750C0A965958260. Both productions were well filmed and initially quite widely distributed, though they each seem currently to be unobtainable. Clips from both of them are intermittently available on YouTube.

115 Likewise the thunderous music that accompanies battle scenes in modern movies (discussed earlier) is aimed at heightening the audience's feelings, not at recapturing the realities of combat.

116 My thanks to Isabelle Torrance and the other participants and audience members at the conference in Notre Dame, and to Mario Telò for helpful criticism and comments.

9 Aeschylus and the destruction of Thebes

What did Apollo's oracle mean?

Alan H. Sommerstein

It is one of the most basic data of Greek heroic saga that the unsuccessful attack on Thebes by Adrastus, king of Argos, and his seven champions, one of whom was the exiled Theban prince Polynices, was followed in the next generation by the capture and destruction of the city in a renewed attack by the sons of the Seven, known as the Epigonoi. The story is already taken for granted in the *Iliad*, in which two of the Epigonoi, Diomedes and Sthenelus – and probably a third, Euryalus (2.565–6, 23.677–8) – are characters. When Agamemnon upbraids Diomedes for being inferior in valour to his father Tydeus, one of the Seven (*Iliad* 4.368–400), Diomedes makes no reply, but Sthenelus angrily retorts that, on the contrary, the Epigonoi are better men than their fathers, because they captured Thebes when the Seven had failed to do so, though their army was smaller and Thebes better fortified than before (4.403–10). Likewise, the Boeotian entry in the Catalogue of Ships (2.494–510) does not mention Thebes in its list of twenty-nine Boeotian towns but includes the 'well-built citadel' of Lower Thebes (*Hypothebai,* 2.505), evidently envisaged as a suburb which escaped destruction or was settled by survivors, Thebes itself not yet having been rebuilt. When the Theban part of the Epic Cycle was created, it included an *Epigonoi*;[1] and just as the Trojan saga had a pendant in the subsequent career of Odysseus, right down to his death at the hands of his unrecognized son in the *Telegony*, so the Theban saga had its pendant in the subsequent career of Alcmaeon, the matricidal son of Amphiaraus, who had been the leader of the Epigonoi, presumably narrated in the *Alcmaeonis* (though none of the surviving fragments of that poem is actually concerned with Alcmaeon).[2]

Aeschylus wrote a tragedy *Epigonoi*, but we know virtually nothing about it except that it included a wedding (fr. 55). Prospectively, however, the destruction of Thebes played a vital role in the trilogy centred on the house of Laius, which he produced in 467 BCE. Starting with an oracle given to Laius at Delphi at a time which must be decades before the action of the first play, *Laius*, the threat of destruction hangs over Thebes and its people until the city is saved (or so we, and the chorus of Theban maidens, are told) by a victorious battle in which, however, the two sons of Oedipus die at each other's hands. After that – but we are getting ahead of ourselves. Let us go back to the beginning, as the chorus do in the ode (*Seven* 720–91) which they sing while the fatal combat between Eteocles and Polynices is in progress beyond the city walls.

Laius, say the chorus, was told by Apollo at Delphi ‘to die without offspring and save his city’ (748–9); he was told this three times (746), meaning that on receiving this response he asked twice for a more favourable one and each time was merely given the same answer again. We do not know whether it was explained anywhere in the trilogy why Laius went to Delphi in the first place. Perhaps, as in Euripides’ *Phoenician Women* (13–16), he went to ask what he should do in order to have children, his marriage having been long barren; he would have been utterly taken aback to be told, in effect or perhaps explicitly (cf. Eur. *Phoen.* 17–20), to make sure he never had any.

If Thebes was to survive, then, Laius had to accept the wretched fate of dying childless. He deliberately defied the oracle (*Seven* 746 Ἀπόλλωνος . . . βίαι ‘in despite of Apollo’, 842 βουλαὶ . . . ἄπιστοι ‘a disobedient decision’) in what both the chorus and the messenger call an ‘ill-counselled’ act (*Seven* 750, 802) and made his wife pregnant. Some time in the next nine months he repented of this folly, and when the baby was born it was exposed in a pot (Aesch. fr. 122); but the child was rescued, grew up, and eventually met Laius, neither knowing who the other was, and killed him, apparently at a road junction at Potniae, just south of Thebes (Aesch. fr. 387a).

Laius had thus died leaving a child behind him, though he never knew it. And immediately Thebes was in danger of destruction; for it was just at this time that the Sphinx, ‘the man-snatching death-demon’ (*Seven* 776–7), came to the city, seemingly intent on destroying its population one by one, until Oedipus ‘removed [her] from the land’, presumably (as in artistic representations and later literary texts) either by killing her or by inducing her to kill herself.[3] Terrible things happened in Thebes thereafter (cf. *Seven* 753–7, 778–90), but they did not threaten to destroy the city (unless the plague of Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* had an Aeschylean precedent – on which there is no evidence, either for or against) until after Oedipus’ death, when Adrastus’ army, with Polynices as one of its leading members, marched on Thebes. When *Seven* begins, the city has been under siege for a considerable time (21–3), and for nearly 800 lines we are not allowed to forget that its people are in fear lest today may see the fulfilment of Laius’ oracle.

Eteocles begins the play by urging the Theban citizen-soldiers to rally to the defence of their city and its gods ‘so as never to let their rites be obliterated’ (15). The Scout then reports that the Seven (including, as we later learn, Polynices – though he is never mentioned until 576) have sworn to sack and destroy the city or perish in the attempt (42–8); when he has completed his report and departed, Eteocles, left alone, prays to Zeus, Earth, the gods of the city, and the Erinys (or Curse) of his father Oedipus, that the city may not be extirpated, destroyed, enslaved (69–75). A panicked chorus enters and makes frenzied appeals to the gods to save them from slavery (110, cf. 253), asking, ‘what is happening, and what will happen, to our city?’ (156). Eteocles rebukes them, telling them that they are doing the enemy’s work for them and ‘sacking the city from within’ (194, cf. 254); their response includes a fervent wish that they may not see ‘this city stormed through by the enemy, and its people devoured by their fire’ (220–2). When Eteocles prays in their presence (271–6) he strikes a very different note: he vows rich offerings

and dedications in the event of victory, and in his entire speech (264–86) he makes only one veiled reference to the possibility of defeat (he calls it 'what is fated', 281). It makes no difference. As soon as Eteocles has gone, the chorus sing a long ode, four of whose six strophes (321–68) are entirely devoted to the horrors that can be expected to follow the city's capture: the buildings destroyed by fire (321–5, 341), the males slaughtered (340–1, 346–7), including young children (348–50), the women dragged off as booty (326–37) into forced concubinage (363–8), the property plundered or, if not worth taking, scattered to the winds (351–62). There is another significant little feature in this song, generally overlooked, which I shall mention later.

There follows the long scene in which, six times over, the Scout describes one after another of the attacking Seven, Eteocles nominates a Theban to oppose him, and the chorus sing a short stanza. Most of the attackers boast of their intention to destroy, sack, or burn Thebes (427–8, 434, 465–7, 531, 582–3); Eteocles is careful throughout his first six speeches not to utter any word of ill omen, but the chorus, though they control their utterances rather better than hitherto, still picture Capaneus 'plundering me by arrogant armed force from my maiden abode' (454–6). Then the Scout reveals that the attacker at the seventh gate is Polynices. His desire is to rule the city (647–8), not to destroy it, but even if we have forgotten the oath in which he took part, we may reasonably doubt whether in the event of victory he would be able to restrain his mostly brutal, ruthless colleagues. On learning whom he will be opposing, Eteocles thinks no longer of the city, which he never mentions again, but only of the curse of Oedipus (and its causes going back to Laius, 692) and his hatred of his brother; and the chorus too, in their reaction, think of nothing but how they can dissuade him from incurring the irremediable pollution of fratricide. But when he departs on his last journey, they reflect on the oracular nexus that binds the fate of Laius' family to the fate of the city (746–9). The city was to be safe if Laius died without offspring. Laius did leave offspring behind him, but his two grandsons are fighting each other, and the chorus are already sure (as, of course, the audience are) that they will kill each other, reflecting on what the consequences will be *when* (not *if*) they do so (734–6). Will that satisfy the demand of the oracle? Laius is dead, and he has (now), or will have very shortly, no (living) offspring (or will he? we shall have to come back to this). Is that enough, or did he have to be childless at the moment of his death? Who can tell?[4] 'I fear', sing the chorus, 'that together with the princes the city may be laid low' (764–5).

Enter a messenger, and his first word is θαρσεῖτε 'take courage', 'have no fear' (792); his second sentence declares that Thebes has 'escaped the yoke of slavery' (793), and he repeats this message twice in different words (795–6, 815; 820 is probably spurious). The city's safety and the death of the two brothers are presented as independent events: we are not encouraged to view the latter as a necessary condition for the former – though we are also not positively discouraged from doing so. The choral anapaests 822–31 take the same line, the chorus asking whether they should rejoice in the safety of the city or weep for the two princes; but these lines too have been widely, and probably rightly, thought spurious on unrelated grounds (see Dawe 1978:88–9; West 1990:119–20 could

defend the passage only in part and only by drastic emendation), and certainly from 832 onwards (with probably one exception to which we will return) the chorus sing only of the two dead brothers, both before and after their bodies are brought on stage; and correspondingly, except for brief references to the oracle (844) and to Laius' defiance of it (842), the catastrophe is no longer ascribed to Apollo (as at 692, 800–1, and probably 812–14) but to the curse or Erinys of Oedipus (832–3, 841, 886–7, 897–9; cf. 954–5, 977–8, 987–8), or to Ares the spirit of violent strife (910, 945), or to the iron that was destined to settle the brothers' quarrel (788–90, 911–4, 941–3), or to *Atē* (Ruin) (958), or to Moira (Destiny) (976, 986), or – once – to the supreme god Zeus, mentioned indirectly as part of a compound adjective (948).

There can be no doubt that during this last part of *Seven*, the overwhelmingly predominant concern is that of mourning for Eteocles and Polynices. The dominant view in recent scholarship has been that this is the *sole* concern and that previous anxieties over the fate of the city are entirely forgotten.[5] The mention of the oracle at 844 is held to be a recognition that it has now been fulfilled. In a certain sense, of course, we, the audience, are aware that Thebes will in fact be destroyed in the next generation; but we are expected, as it were, to park that awareness and think, as the chorus do, only of the present. But there is a certain illogic here. The oracle was that Laius should save his city by dying without offspring. This could mean either that Laius should never have a child, or that he should have no surviving child at the time of his death, or that his descent line should at some point be extinguished. If the oracle is understood in either of the first two senses, then the city was already beyond saving either at the moment of Oedipus' birth or at the moment of Laius' death, and the death of Oedipus' sons had nothing to do with the oracle. If this day's events are to count as the fulfilment of the oracle, then the oracle must be taken in the third and most lenient sense, and moreover the death of Eteocles and Polynices must mark the end of the descent line of Laius.

Well, *has* that descent line in fact been extinguished? In the play as we have it, of course, the answer turns out to be no, as Antigone and Ismene appear and join in the lament; but it has long been generally and rightly accepted that their involvement, and the passages that require their presence (861–74, 1005–78, and probably 996–7), formed no part of the play as Aeschylus wrote it.[6] On the other hand, the explicit statement (828) that the brothers were 'childless' also comes in a passage suspect for other reasons and cannot be relied on. What can be said is that, in the genuine text, no member of Eteocles' and Polynices' family appears to mourn for them, and that a good many expressions are most naturally taken as implying that the house is extinct. When Eteocles is resisting the chorus' pressure to refrain from fighting his brother, he speaks of 'the waves of Cocytus' as the allotted portion of 'the whole race of Laius' (689–91). The messenger, reporting the death of the two brothers, says that a god has destroyed or is destroying (ἀναλοῖ) 'that ill-starred race'. At 877 the brothers are described as having captured or killed (ἑλόντες can mean either[7]) their father's house with the point of the spear; to which another part of the chorus responds (878–9) that they have found wretched deaths 'to the ruin (λύμηι) of their house'. A moment later they are described as having demolished

the walls of their house (δωμάτων ἐρειψίτοιχοι, 881) and then as having struck a blow that pierced the house, as well as their bodies, right through (διανταίαν . . . δόμοισι καὶ σώμασιν, 895–6). The Curses/Erinyes have raised a cry of triumph after putting the family (γένους) completely to flight (954–6). It would appear that by destroying each other, the two brothers have simultaneously destroyed the house of Laius. It would also appear that the god-powered process that brought this about is now complete: Dawson (1970:24) notes the prominence of the theme of finality in the strophic pair 933–60 (936 νείκεος ἐν τελευτᾶι 'in the ending of their strife', 938 πέπαυται . . . ἔχθος 'the hatred is ended', 941 λυτὴρ νεικέων 'resolver of strife', 959–60 δυοῖν κρατήσας ἔληξε δαίμων 'the divine power has defeated two men and ceased acting').

As for Antigone and Ismene, these expressions imply either that they do not exist or perhaps that they are already dead. We know that Mimnermus (fr. 21) said that 'Ismene on the one hand (μέν) was killed by Tydeus, on the instructions of Athena, because she was having an affair with Theoclymenus', an episode for which there is other mythographic and artistic evidence[8] (and which must, of course, have happened before the final battle in which all the Seven, including Tydeus, perished), and that μέν implies that Mimnermus also had something to say about the fate which (on the other hand) befell Antigone. We do not know whether he got rid of Antigone also before the death of her brothers, but it is striking that our source, the Sallustian hypothesis to Sophocles' play, contrasts Mimnermus' treatment with that of Ion of Chios (*PMG* 740), according to whom both sisters survived the war and were later burned to death in the temple of Hera by Laodamas, son of Eteocles (more about him in a moment). Symmetry would suggest that if in Ion both sisters died substantially later than their brothers, then in Mimnermus they both died substantially earlier. Antigone and Ismene, at any rate, are, as it were, spare parts; they can be disposed of without harm to the core story. But there are two members of the family who, *prima facie*, are harder to get rid of. In almost all versions of the saga, Eteocles and Polynices each left a son (Laodamas and Thersander respectively), and these played crucial roles in the war that led to the final destruction of Thebes. Has Aeschylus abolished them? And if he has, what might that imply for the story of the destruction?

Well, he does seem to have done something that ought logically to be tantamount to abolishing Laodamas. The Eteocles who wishes, in the optative mood, that he may never, in bad times or in good, share a home (ξύνοικος εἴην, cf. ξυνοικεῖν 'be married to') with any woman can hardly already be a married man, and there are other indications that he is quite young (Sommerstein 2010b:82–8). As a matter of fact, we hear nothing about Laodamas before Ion of Chios, but Herodotus (5.61) saw at Thebes an inscription, which at least to him looked ancient, purporting to have been composed by Laodamas, so we need not doubt that already in archaic times he was normally assumed to have been king of Thebes when it was attacked by the Epigonoi and, no doubt, as in the later accounts, to have been killed in the battle that decided that war. However, it would in principle be possible to dispense with him and suppose that the kingship was given to a member of another family. And yet, as we shall see, Aeschylus does not allow us to forget about Laodamas completely.

Polynices' wife and son are still more firmly fixed in the saga. His marriage to a daughter of Adrastus is fundamental to the story of the Seven, and their son Thersander, who is included in all listings of the Epigonoi,[9] not only survives the war but takes part in the early stages of the expedition against Troy, being killed by Telephus during the abortive attack on Teuthrania (*Cypria* Arg. 7 West). In Aeschylus, Polynices is significantly paired with Adrastus' other son-in-law, Tydeus, in the denunciation of Amphiaraus (*Seven* 571ff.). In real life, of course, then as now, many a marriage will have remained childless; but it is a rare thing in Greek heroic saga, and if one was going to take the even more unusual course of assuming a marriage to have been childless when this had not been so in the earlier tradition, one would need to make this perfectly clear – as indeed the author of 822–31 tried to do. Aeschylus could have done this, and thus firmly warned us that we were to regard the catastrophe of this day as a final one and not to look into the future; he apparently chose not to.

I shall now show that Aeschylus has done more than this: that at two moments in the play he has taken special measures to remind his audience of the coming destruction of Thebes. In the *stasimon* 287–368, as the chorus imagine the horrors of a sack, they sing (343–4) of 'raving Ares' blowing a sooty blast over the burning city, 'defiling piety', and they give the fearsome god the epithet 'subduer of hosts', *laodamas*. It can hardly be a coincidence that this adjective is used in connection with the feared destruction of a city that was in fact destroyed not long afterwards when, according to the usual tradition, Laodamas was its ruler. The epithet, moreover, as a vocabulary word, appears to have been coined for the occasion; to the scholiasts – and most likely to Aeschylus' audience – *laodamas* was otherwise known only as a proper name. By bringing it in like this, Aeschylus is making us think of the destruction of Thebes even though his portrayal of Eteocles leaves no room for the existence of this son of his.

In the latter part of the play there are two passages that have often been held to allude to the destruction. One of them, 902–3, can safely be discounted. This passage refers to the fate of the possessions of Oedipus, for which Eteocles and Polynices had contended and died. It reads, in most manuscripts, μένει κτέανά τ' ἐπιγόνοις, which would mean 'and the property remains for the Epigonoi'. This must be corrupt, since τ' 'and' has no function; unfortunately strophic responsion is of no help in restoring the text, since the corresponding verse in the strophe is missing. But ἐπιγόνοις also can hardly be right: the scholia know nothing of any reference to the Epigonoi, saying only that the property for which the brothers perished will belong to *others* (ἄλλοις).[10] Presumably ἐπιγόνοις is a gloss attempting to explain who these 'others' are.

But it is otherwise with the other passage, sixty lines earlier (843–4). After reflecting on the efficacy of Oedipus' curse and the consequences of Laius' defiance of Apollo, the chorus sing:

μέριμνα δ' ἀμφὶ πτόλιν·
θέσφατ' οὐκ ἀμβλύνεται.

There are two possible interpretations of the second colon (literally, 'oracles are not blunted', 'oracles do not lose their edge'). (1) It might refer to the present: 'Events have shown that time has not dulled the edge of the oracle: the city has been saved, but the necessary price for this has been the extinction of the house of Laius.' Or (2) it might refer to the future: 'The oracle is bound to be fulfilled eventually: Laius did not die childless, and therefore, depending on how we understand the oracle, though the city has been saved today, it may be doomed nevertheless.' Both of these would be possible interpretations of 844, standing alone; but they require different meanings to be put on the words μέριμνα and ἀμφί in 843. On interpretation (1), 843 will mean 'There is lamentation throughout the city' (so Hutchinson 1985, Sommerstein 2008) or perhaps 'There is grief/despair throughout the city' (so, respectively, Ewans 1996, Collard 2008); on interpretation (2), it will mean 'There is anxiety concerning the city' (so Rose 1957, Dawson 1970). In which direction does Aeschylean usage point?[11]

The answer is unequivocal. The regular meaning of μέριμνα in Aeschylus is 'thought, concern, anxiety' (290, *Pers.* 165, *Ag.* 99, 460, 1531, *Eum.* 132, 360), and he never provably uses the word to mean 'lamentation' or 'grief' or 'despair' (its meaning in the corrupt line *Seven* 849 is unclear), nor indeed does Sophocles.[12] As to ἀμφί – considering only passages where, as here, it governs an accusative – it means 'concerning, about' in *Supp.* 246 εἴρηκας ἀμφὶ κόσμον ἀψευδῆ λόγον 'what you have said about our attire is perfectly true' and in Aesch. fr. 204b9–10 ὕμνον ἀμφὶ τὸν δόντα 'a song about the giver [of fire]', and it never in Aeschylus bears the kind of meaning that interpretation (1) would require – when the same phrase, ἀμφὶ πόλιν, occurs in *Seven* 151 it means '*around* the city' and refers to the besieging army outside the walls, as in epic passages like *Iliad* 9.530.[13]

The chorus, then, and the Theban people generally, are by no means so sure as the messenger that the city is now safe. Before they knew of the outcome of the brothers' fight, they feared (764–5) that their death might not avert the fall of the city; and despite the defeat of the Argive army, that apprehension has not gone away. If Laius' oracle required only that Laius' descent line should become extinct, then its demands have been satisfied (provided we assume Eteocles to have been unmarried and Polynices childless). But if it required that Laius at the time of his death should leave no offspring behind him (or that he should never have had any offspring), then the city's doom was already sealed before today's battle, and victory can have gained only a temporary respite. The Thebans do not know which interpretation is correct; but we do. And they seem to have half guessed that the gloomier interpretation is the more likely; for after this point, as we have seen, the saving of the city is never mentioned again in the genuine text (though the author of the added ending refers to it at 1044 and 1074–8).

Aeschylus is thus having his cake and eating it.[14] Most of the time, as is appropriate to the end of a trilogy, he gives the impression that the story is complete; but he also plays on his audience's prior knowledge that it is not. In *Antigone*, whose action is set on the day after that of *Seven*, Sophocles does something similar. The chorus describe Antigone and Ismene, both just sentenced to death, as the 'last root' of the house of Oedipus (599–600), which implies that no male descendant

of the house remains; later (895, 941), after Ismene has disappeared from the play, Antigone will describe *herself* as the last of the family. But then we are told by Tiresias (1080–3) that 'all the cities are stirred up in hostility' by the denial of burial to the rest of the Seven and perhaps to other enemy dead also; this is usually taken as pointing to the intervention of Theseus, which secured the release of these bodies for burial (by diplomacy, we are told, in Aeschylus' *Eleusinians*; by force in Euripides' *Suppliants*), but the dishonouring of the Seven also provides a powerful motive for their sons to seek revenge (cf. Jebb 1900:191–2, Griffith 1999:308), and the reference to the hostility of 'all the cities' suggests action not by Athens (which had not been involved in the expedition of the Seven) but by the same Argive-led coalition that had fought the war just ended.[15] Like Aeschylus, Sophocles wants to have the house of Laius destroyed, but like Aeschylus, he also wants it not to be completely forgotten that Thebes, having survived one perilous attack, will fall to another before very long. Only, where Aeschylus traced Thebes' doom to Laius' decision to defy an oracle, Sophocles traced it to Creon's decision to defy the unwritten laws.

In *Seven*, then, although the coming destruction of Thebes is never explicitly predicted and is only briefly and vaguely foreshadowed, it will be present to spectators' minds and will colour their response to the latter part of *Seven* and, retrospectively, to the whole play. If the fall of Thebes was unavoidable from the moment of Laius' death (or even earlier), was not the courage and determination of Eteocles (and the other six Theban champions) futile? Or are they after all to be praised on the ground that, as Eteocles himself put it, even an inevitable fate ought to be met nobly rather than ignobly (cf. 683–5, 716–17)? If the chorus' laments are anything to go by, we are encouraged to think of the first answer rather than the second, for they never praise the valour or wisdom of either of the brothers (once again the added ending strikes a different note, at least in the case of Eteocles: 1007–11, 1074–8). On the other hand we may also remember Eteocles' own praise of Amphiaraus, who went knowingly to his death in a cause that he knew to be wrong and disastrous (597–619) – praise, coming from an enemy, in which we were certainly meant to concur. Eteocles was no Amphiaraus: he had wronged his brother,[16] and at the climax, while honour was clearly part of his motivation for insisting on going to fight Polynices, raw hatred was part of it too. But he still had courage, and he had managed the defence of his city well (except for his own role) and successfully.

That *Seven* ends under the shadow of subsequent events that are known to the audience but unknown (or not known for certain) to the characters is a feature it shares with most of the surviving plays of Sophocles.[17] *Antigone* has already been mentioned. In *Women of Trachis* the unknown future event is the apotheosis of Heracles;[18] in *Ajax* it is the anger of Telamon against Teucer, which Teucer himself apprehensively foresees (*Ajax* 1008–20) but which had never occurred to Ajax; in *Oedipus Tyrannus* it is the fate of Oedipus' children (cf. *OT* 1459–1514); in *Philoctetes* it is the crimes of Neoptolemus at Troy, especially the sacrilegious murder of Priam (cf. *Phil.* 1440–4); in *Oedipus at Colonus* it is the fate of Antigone, who pleads with Polynices to abandon his war and then, with her sister,

voluntarily returns to Thebes in the hope of reconciling her brothers. The case of *Electra* is disputed.[19]

There is no comparable 'shadow of the future' in other surviving Aeschylean plays, but then there are, besides *Seven*, only two, *Persians* and *Eumenides*, in which such a thing would even be possible, since all the others have, or had, connected sequels. And both *Persians* and *Eumenides* end with the star of Athens in the ascendant, so that dismal forebodings would be inappropriate. We cannot tell how such matters were handled in lost Aeschylean plays – whether, for instance, Achilles was made aware of his own coming death in *Nereids* or *Phrygians*, as he is in the *Iliad*. In Euripides the future is normally foretold at the end of the play, by a *deus ex machina* or otherwise, but sometimes important facts are concealed. Jason is told by Medea of the inglorious manner of his own death (*Med.* 1386–8); but Aegeus invites her to Athens as a welcome guest, not knowing, as the audience do, that she will later plot against the life of his only son. In *Suppliants* (1213–26) Aegialeus, son of Adrastus, is told by Athena that he will lead the army of the Epigonoi to conquer Thebes but not that he, alone of the leaders, will not return alive.[20] The most striking case of all, though, is *Trojan Women*, in which victorious Greeks and captive Trojan women go to the homeward-bound ships unaware that Athena and Poseidon have already agreed to wreck the fleet; even Cassandra, who knows almost every detail of Odysseus' future wanderings (*Tro.* 431–48), is not allowed to foretell this disaster.

In *Seven*, as in *Ajax*, the dark future appears to have been *known* to the audience but only *feared* by those within the action (in this case the chorus, who after the departure of the messenger are the only dramatis personae who have a voice). After giving expression to that fear, they mourn only for the two brothers; but the depth of their grieving could well have been described, changing only the name of the city, in the words Homer uses when speaking of the Trojans' grief on witnessing the death of Hector and the maltreatment of his body:

> It was very like what it would have been if all of beetling Ilios were smouldering in fire from top to bottom.
>
> (*Iliad* 22.410–11)

One day, not too far in the mythological future, Thebes will burn like that. Then the consequences of 'the disobedient decision of Laius' (*Seven* 842) will have finally worked themselves out. In the meantime, that decision has already been fatal to Laius himself, to Eteocles and Polynices, to the rest of the Seven, to at least two more of the champions who opposed them (Melanippus and Megareus, who according to the common story did not survive the battle,[21] and whose death is significantly envisaged as a possibility in *Seven* 419–21 and 477), to countless ordinary soldiers on both sides (*Seven* 922–5), and presumably also to Oedipus' mother-wife – as well as to the eyes (though not, so far as we know, to the life) of Oedipus himself. None of those who featured, on or off stage, in the three plays of the Theban trilogy will have lived to see the fall of Thebes, with two exceptions. One is Adrastus, who will lose his son. The other, a collective character, is the

chorus of unmarried Theban girls, who will be wives and mothers when Thebes is destroyed. According to the only full narrative we have ([Apoll.] 3.7.3–4), which may well derive from the epic *Epigonoi*, they will not have to endure or witness the scenes they described in anticipation in *Seven* 287–368: the Thebans evacuated their city after their defeat in battle and the death of their king, leaving a deserted town to be entered, sacked, and burnt by the victors. They will not, as they feared, become captive concubines; but they will become homeless refugees. Laius was given a choice between the end of his family and the end of his city. He made the wrong choice; and the result was the end of both.

Notes

1. West 2003:9–10, 54–9, Cingano 2015.
2. West 2003:10–1, 59–63, Debiasi 2015. On Pindar's representation of Alcmaeon and Amphiaraus as an intertextual response to Aeschylus' *Seven*, see Foster in this volume.
3. Details in Gantz 1993:497–8.
4. I see no reason to hold, with Garvie 2014:24–5, that the oracle as reported in 748–9 *unambiguously* states that 'if Laius had a son Thebes would be destroyed'. If that, and that alone, was what Aeschylus wanted us to understand the oracle as meaning, he had ways of making this clear; he chose not to adopt them.
5. So e.g. Hutchinson 1985:167, 187, 195–6, Gantz 1993:523, Conacher 1996:72–4, Sommerstein 2010a:94n.20.
6. See Dawe 1967, 1978, Taplin 1977:169–91, Sommerstein 2010a:90–3.
7. For ἑλεῖν in the sense 'kill' see LSJ αἱρέω A.II. In *Agamemnon* (689–90) Helen is punningly called ἑλέναυς, ἕλανδρος, ἑλέπτολις: she may have caused the *capture* of a city, but she caused the *destruction* of ships (in the storm on the homeward voyage, of which we heard in 650–70) and the *death* of many men.
8. Details in Gantz 1993:513–14.
9. Details in Gantz 1993:523–4.
10. The points made in this and the preceding sentence are ignored in the discussion of this passage by Garvie 2014:30–1.
11. The following analysis is in broad agreement with that of Garvie 2014:26–9.
12. In *Ant.* 858 μερίμνας means 'thought' as usual; the idea of grief is brought in by the powerful adjective ἀλγεινοτάτας 'most painful'. The earliest passage in which μέριμνα itself seems to mean 'grief' is Eur. *Ion* 244. As to the three passages in which Hutchinson claims that μέριμνα refers to an *expression* of grief: in Bacchylides 19.11 the poet apostrophizes the 'much-praised Cean mind' (εὐαίνετε Κηΐα μέριμνα) and bids it weave a new song in Athens: the μέριμνα, that is, is not the song but the mental processes of its maker. In Eur. *Hipp.* 1428–9 Artemis promises Hippolytus that there will always be songs sung by maiden choruses (μουσοποιὸς . . . παρθένων . . . μέριμνα) in his honour; here again, μέριμνα can denote not the songs themselves but the mental effort that goes into performing them well. In [Eur.] *Rhes.* 548–50 ὑμνεῖ . . . παιδολέτωρ μελοποιὸν ἀηδονὶς μέριμναν the word does seem to denote the actual song of the 'child-killing nightingale' (though Liapis 2012 ad loc. renders 'puts into song her music-making cares'), but the phrase is probably a slightly inaccurate imitation of the *Hippolytus* passage.
13. Though Hutchinson reasonably cites, as a parallel for the sense of ἀμφί that he favours, *Iliad* 11.706–7 where the Pylians make sacrifices ἀμφί . . . ἄστυ, i.e. on all or many of the city's altars.
14. Such in effect is also the conclusion – reached by a somewhat different route – of Garvie 2014.

15 Some editors (e.g. Brown 1987) have adopted a nineteenth-century proposal to delete lines 1080–3; the passage is strongly defended by Griffith 1999. Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990:143–4, contrariwise, suggest that something has been lost between 1080 and 1081. See now the powerful arguments of Brown 2016 for deleting the passage.

16 Polynices claimed that Dike (Justice) was bringing him home (642–8), and the virtuous Amphiaraus does not dispute this but only says that no cause however just can excuse an attack on one's motherland (584–6).

17 See Garvie 2014:33–6.

18 See March 1987:72–7, Holt 1989, Finkelberg 1996:139–41, Hahnemann 1999. To fifth-century Athenians Heracles was a god, and he appears to have described his own apotheosis from the pyre in Aeschylus' *Heracleidae* (frr. 73b, 75a). If Sophocles wished us to forget about it, it was extremely careless of him to mention three times (76–81, 164–8, 1164–73), and probably to invent, an oracle according to which Heracles, at a certain time which has now arrived, would *either* die *or* have for the future a *life* (βίος, βίοτος) that was happy (81) and free from grief (168) – which, proverbially, no mortal could have, only a god. Heracles himself, to be sure, takes 'freedom from grief' itself to mean death (1172–3); but he reaches this interpretation by suppressing the fact that the oracle treated freedom from grief as an *alternative* to death (he reports it not as an 'either/or' but as a single prediction without alternatives) and also suppressing the word 'life'.

19 Jebb (1894:xxxii) famously asserted that for Sophocles 'the deed of Orestes is simply laudable, and therefore final' and that we are not meant to think of an impending pursuit by the Erinyes as in Aeschylus and Euripides; Sheppard 1927 argued otherwise, and the matter has been debated ever since. Finglass 2011:8–10, 525–8 argues that while Sophocles has not encouraged us to envisage an intervention by the Erinyes (or any other *specific* continuation of the story), he has also 'deliberately eschewed any attempts at a satisfying conclusion which ties up all loose ends' and left us feeling strongly that 'all is not well within the house'.

20 See e.g. [Apoll.] *Bibl.* 3.7.3; Sommerstein 2012:26–7.

21 Melanippus: Pherecydes fr. 97 Fowler, [Apoll.] *Bibl.* 3.6.8. Megareus is not elsewhere named in connection with the battle, but Soph. *Ant.* 1303 implies that there was a well-known story that he perished before or during it (and that his father Creon was somehow responsible for this).