

USES AND INTERPRETATIONS OF RITUAL TERMINOLOGY:  
*GOOS, OIMOGE, THRENOS AND LINOS* IN ANCIENT GREEK LITERATURE

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# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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FIGURE 6: Heracles fighting Linos. Munich 2646, Antikensammlung (LIMC Herakles 1671). Published by Perseus Digital Library (2009) Art and Archaeology Artifact Browser [online]



# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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So far as possible I have used the same abbreviations as Liddell, H.G. & Scott, R. *Greek-English Lexicon*.

AC = L'Antiquité classique

AFS = Asian Folklore Studies

AION (filol)= Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli, Dipartimento di studi del mondo classico e del Mediterraneo antico, sezione filologico-letteraria

AJPh = American Journal of Philology

Bernand, Inscr.Métr = Bernand, Étienne. Inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte grégoromane.

Recherches sur la poésie épigrammatique des Grecs en Égypte.

BNP = Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World

CA = Classical Antiquity

CANE = New England Classical Journal

CIG = Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum

CJ = The Classical Journal

CQ = Classical Quarterly

CR = Classical Review

CVA = Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum

HSCP = Harvard Studies in Classical Philology

JAF = Journal of American Folklore

JAMS = Bulletin of the American Musicological Society

JHI = Journal of the History of Ideas

JHS = Journal of Hellenic Studies

JIES = Journal of Indo-European Studies (Lincoln)

JM = Journal of Musicology

IMT = Inschriften Mysia & Troas

LIMC = Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae

LSJ = Liddell, H.G. & Scott, R. Greek-English Lexicon

PGM = Papyri Graecae Magicae

QUCC = Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica

RE = Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft (Pauly-Wissowa)

RHR = Revue de l'histoire des religions

SEG = Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum

TAPA = Transaction of the American Philological Association

TAPhA = Transaction and Proceedings of the American Philological Association

TLG = Thesaurus Linguae Graecae

WJA = Wurzburger Jahrbucher für die Altertumswissenschaft

ZPE = Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik

# INTRODUCTION

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My purpose in this thesis is to study the lament in ancient Greek culture, and to show how its ritual meaning is interpreted by literature. In order to do so I have chosen terms that literature conventionally associates with the ritual lament: the *goos*, the *oimoge*, the *threnos*, and the *linos*. In particular we will examine the Homeric epics, tragedy, comedy and lyric poetry (Pindar, Stesichorus), with occasional openings onto authors of the Hellenistic and Roman periods (Plutarch, Nonnus, Athenaeus). Literature of the first five centuries constitutes the fundamental source for not only reconstructing what the original laments were like but especially how this particular ritual act has been interpreted and understood by different poets. The peculiar meaning of the lament – its relationship with death and also with demons, chthonian gods and souls of the dead – has induced the poets (in particular the tragic ones) to emphasize different aspects of it, sometimes by implicitly adding a negative or positive connotation. Through my thesis I want to show that it is important to read the poets' representation of the lament not only as the mere and unsophisticated reproduction of what the ritual act was but the reflection of certain ideas and/or poetical purposes.

The *goos* is probably one of the most common term in relation with death. In the first chapter we have tried to show that the connection with obscure powers is differently understood by Homer. It is occasionally introduced as a normal practice and its effectiveness is not questioned, such as the one mentioned by Euphorbos in *Il.* 17.35-40 as a request for revenge, the one accompanying Patroclus' and Hector's predictions in *Il.* 16.844-54 and 22.357-60, the Suitors' ill-ominous *goos* in *Od.* 20.349 and Penelope's prophetic *goos* in *Od.* 19.509-553. The link between the *goos* and gods or demons is occasionally stated: a god can raise it (*Il.* 23.14) or stop it (*Od.* 1.102-322, 4.722-57, 19.262-4), and it is difficult to say if this link has been artfully introduced by Homer or reflects ideas about the 'sanctity' of the ritual lament. However, the fact itself that at times a god intervenes to put an end to the *goos* shows

that there is a perception of danger to those uttering it. If the *goos* is ceaseless (*Il.* 25.549-51) it can cause some ill, it can even go against the divine design (*Il.* 6.486-9) or simply be pointless (*Od.* 21.238). The Homeric texts give us the possibility to understand the ritual significance of the *goos* even outside of funerary contexts. Besides, the representation of this act as 'impious' (this is the term I have used in the first chapter) is particularly important to interpret the ritual not only as the reflection and matrix of a religious background but also as a model shaping the social body. Bell in her *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (1992, 81) points out that ritual is able 'to reconfigure a vision of the order of power in the world' and constitutes an instrument of social control. Nonetheless, she also intends the ritual as the production and negotiation of power relations (187-96), by which the dominated class accepts the legitimacy of the values of the dominant class and applies the criteria of these values to its own practices, even when doing so is not favorable to it. The individual might well express his or her resistance to or misunderstanding of this vision of the order of power (such as in the case of Priam's *goos*) but he or she still sticks to those rules and values. The aggressive potential of the *goos* seems therefore an interesting aspect of the Homeric *goos* as it highlights an area of the ritual where the individual challenges the recognized social values, sometimes even by risking his health, although he still does not question their validity.

Does Homer already interpret the *goos* instead of simply reproducing it? In some passages the *goos* is linked with presage, prophecy, or revenge but there is no reference to the fact that the *goos* is violation of the divine and social order. On the contrary in some other passages the gods intervene to stop the *goos*, and not necessarily for narratological purposes. The *goos* still appears in Homer as a relatively normal type of ritual, but we can at least identify a tendency –which cannot be seen as a conscious reflection on ritual activities – to point out the potential danger in the 'excessive' one.

What in Homer is simply a tendency seems to be a more conscious choice in tragedy. In the second chapter we have investigated whether the *goos* in tragedy is exclusively a dysphemic element,

which means an element of disorder designed for making an impact on the audience through the contrast itself to the expected euphemic ritual, or rather the 'aischrologic' manifestation of the presence of Dionysus. The interpretation of how *goos* is interpreted and inserted in the tragic choreia has been possible thanks to Stehle's pivotal work *Choral Prayer in Greek Tragedy: Euphemia or Aischrologia?* (2004). The different types of *gooi* we have identified – by following the categories of the first chapter – show that the general trend is that Sophocles and Euripides introduce the *gooi* as dysphemic elements rather than ritual while Aeschylus treats them as aischrologic. This is certainly true in the case of the *goos* as a request for revenge, the song accompanying the dead's journey to the underworld and the hymn to the Erinyes. However, as for the case of prophecy and oneiromancy Euripides surprisingly introduces the *goeron nomos* in *Hecabe* in a way that unambiguously refers to ritual activities and Stehle's *aischrologia*. Apart from this exception, the use of ritual terminology in the tragic choreia is in most of the cases influenced by poetical purposes or perhaps by the religious and political background (the law itself – the trials for *asebeia* – shows how religion and politics are linked).

The correctness of Stehle's categories is proved by the analysis of the *oimoge* in the third chapter. Literature itself provides us with passages where the *oimoge* is almost synonymous with *dysphemia*. However, it would be limiting refusing to admit its original ritual character: we have identified precise characteristics that somehow isolate it from other ritual activities. Hindsight, sense of guilt, unfulfilled wishes and invective are the themes that mark this prelude to the *goos* (we have tried to show that the *oimoge* belongs to the *goos* and consists in the initial part of it 86-93). These themes do not disappear but they start being detached from the term *oimoge* in Sophocles and Euripides, almost as if they refused to attribute ritual significance to a disputable attitude. Such disapproval becomes more systematic in later literature (e.g. Plutarch) and the word *dysphemia* is replaced by an even stronger word: *blasphemia*. Parker's work *Gods Cruel and Kind: Tragic and Civil Theology* (1997) is particularly interesting from our point of view as it shows how the attribution of cruelty to the gods is typical of

tragedy but not of oratory: public speech is necessarily a censored speech where feelings of bitterness and resentment cannot be expressed. Sophocles' and Euripides' might have chosen to align to the political views of the gods in the fifth century. However, a criticism of the Homeric view of the gods can be already traced back to Xenophanes between the sixth and the fifth century BC, but it is Plato to give a systematic explanation of how *dysphemia* and a 'wrong' view of the gods (we could say ritual and creed) can affect the political balance of a State.

Similarly to the *goos* and the *oimoge*, the *threnos* occasionally falls into the category of *dysphemic* element in the tragic choreia. In this case it has been crucial (although difficult) to carefully use the traditional studies of the Greek lament in order to understand the role of the *threnos* in the antiphonal funerary performance, its survival as a literary genre, its presence in only two passages of the Homeric poems. Derderian's *Leaving Words to Remember: Greek Mourning and the Advent of Literacy* (2001) is particularly significant to point out that while the *goos* is a 'liminal moment of ritual passage' (62) and does not concern the dead's quest for future *kleos* and memory, the *threnos* – the song to be sung by the tomb – is instead a vocal *sema* aimed at guaranteeing future remembrance and glory. The *goos* delivers verbal contents (invectives or requests for revenge in case the *goos* is dysphemic) sometimes with no regard to the *kleos* and the memory of the deceased (such as Achille's *goos* during Patroclus' funeral, *Il.* 23.10-23) and even without real authenticity of feelings. The *threnos* is a musical utterance whose contents are not reported in the Homeric poems, and perhaps provides the euphemic *goos* with musical shape. However, in tragedy the *threnos* and the *goos* start being considered as synonymous and similarly to certain *gooi* the *threnos* is used by tragic poets as a dysphemic element. Parallely, the *goos* is not exclusively a 'dangerous' voice but it can simply be an expression of feelings and is not performed by shouting but at a lower volume and pitch. Is ritual changing? Or are tragic poets more or less consciously reflecting on what the ritual is and must be? Perhaps, archaic rituals were (more or less consciously) perceived by Sophocles and Euripides as elements of social disorder: on the

one hand they introduce the *gooi* (and also the *threnoi*) in tragic choreia as if they violate ritual and on the other hand they transform the *gooi* into something different and socially more acceptable. Euripides goes even forward: in *Helen* he establish a distinction between different types of utterances related to death. Thanks to Barker's *Simbolismo musicale nell'Elena di Euripide* (2007) we have been able to recognize through musical terminology that there are three different attitudes to death, and we should rather say three rituals. The perfect one is related to Demeter's mysteries and implies different ideas of the destiny after death and different music.

On certain occasion it has been particularly difficult to separate the original meaning of the term from its interpretations. As we have shown in chapter 5, the *linos*-song is described in two – or even three – different ways: in Homer it appears as a vintage-song and is detached from any possible funerary context, while in the tragic poets (in particular in Aeschylus and Sophocles) it is called *ailinos* and similarly to the *goos* is related to death. In Euripides, the *ailinos* is perceived as a ritual act aimed at telling stories of gods' and heroes' apotheosis or return to life. In parallel with this complex use of the ritual in tragedy, a character called Linos starts being mentioned in a Hesiodic fragment and is enriched of biographical details in later mythographies (Diodorus, Pausanias). It has been particularly useful to use iconography and above all epigraphy: some funerary inscriptions show that the word *ailinos* is introduced with a different meaning and we have tried to show, although in a speculative way, that a *fil rouge* exists between the Homeric *linos*-song – and the ritual represented through it – and the uses and interpretation of the word in tragedy.

Through all these examples I intended to show that the ritual meaning of the lament was an important issue at least for the poets. The different uses of these terms in tragedy constitute not so much a real change in ritual customs as the increasing tendency to reflect on what is best to keep of the archaic tradition and what is to be rejected or modified in order to not undermine a political and social order.

This analysis is relevant not only to distinguish the different stages which the lament went through but also to separate what is ritual from what is 'meta-ritual', and therefore artificial.

In order to explain this different perspective on the lament it has been necessary to relate to the anthropological discussion on speech-act theory, magic and ritual. The *gooi* can be considered as spells having the force to influence reality: they are believed to put human beings into communication with demons and therefore exercise a supernatural power. Frazer's work *The Golden Bough* has provided a theory that is founded on evolutionist ideas: in the history of humanity magic must be older than religion (53-4) and therefore spells and enchantments performed in order to bend nature arose before prayers and sacrifices to irascible gods. According to this theory the *gooi* would simply correspond to an archaic and therefore less evolved custom (as I tried to show at p. 58) and would be completely separated from what is classified as a prayer. These spells, which would be considered as magical, would be perhaps considered effective because of Frazer's law of contact or contagion, whose application is based on the misconception that things which once have been in contact with each other are always in contact. Magic would be sympathetic for Frazer because of a secret sympathy, 'the impulse being transmitted from one to the others by means of what we may conceive as a kind of invisible ether' (12).

An interpretation of the *goos* might also be given by applying Malinowski's theory, which similarly to Frazer would classify this ritual as belonging to magic. A passage from his *Argonauts of the western Pacific* (1922) can clarify this: 'it can be said without exaggeration that magic, according to their ideas, governs human destinies; that it supplies man with the power of mastering the forces of nature; and that it is the weapon and armour against the many dangers which crowd in upon him on every side. Thus, in what is most essential to man, that is in his health and bodily welfare, he is but a plaything of the powers of sorcery, of evil spirits and of certain beings, controlled by black magic. Death in almost all its forms is the result of one of these agencies [...]. Every belief in a superior power



is at the bottom a belief in magic. Magic gives to these beings the capacity to destroy human life and to command other agents of destruction. Magic also gives man the power and the means to defend himself, and if properly applied, to frustrate all the attempts of the *mulukwausi* [the flying witches]` (392-93). In his *Magic, Science and Religion* (1974) communication between spirits and the living is the result of magic: through trance or in sleep men and women would be able `to take part in the life of spirits and carry back and forth news, items of information, and important messages` (111).<sup>1</sup> Malinowski also highlights three aspects which are believed to make a magical formula efficient: first the phonetic effects imitating natural sounds or expressing emotional states; secondly the use of words which invoke, state, or command the desired aim; thirdly the mythological allusions, the references to ancestors and culture heroes, which gives magic a traditional setting (54-55). This theory would make of the *goos* a perfect example of magical formula.

The use of words in certain laments can be understood in the light of further important scholarly work such as Tambiah's *The Magical Power of Words* (1968) and *Culture, Thought, and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective* (1985). The scholar highlights that certain rituals in Ceylon are based on a variety of verbal forms in particular sequence and that `the very logic of the rituals depends on this order and distinction` (1968, 176). As I said at p.2, we owe him for the idea that magical spells and prayer do not differ for their purpose as they both make use the expressive and metaphorical properties of language. We should therefore identify the *goos* simply as a ritual act by which symbolic forms and expressions act upon reality.

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<sup>1</sup> Another aspect mentioned by Malinowski in *Argonauts of the western Pacific* (401) is the so called `anthropomorphic conception of magic`, which means that magic refers to human activities or to the response of nature to human activities, rather than to natural forces alone. In this perspective, disease is not perceived as an extraneous force, coming from outside and settling on the man, but it is directly `a man-made, sorcerer-made something` (401).

If previous scholarship is important to identify the *goos* as magical but more correctly as a ritual act, Bell's *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (1992) and *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (1997) are relevant to classify the lament in the perspective of the ritual: the classification of ritual into six categories, which she considers 'a pragmatic compromise between completeness and simplicity' (94). She identifies 'rites of passage, which are also called "life-cycle" rites; calendrical and commemorative rites; rites of exchange and communion; rites of affliction; rites of feasting, fasting, and festivals; and, finally, political rituals' (*idem*). In the light of this categorization it has been easier to interpret the meaning and the purpose of lament, to identify where certain purposes prevail over others according to the type of lament, and to recognize and separate several purposes, when more than one is present in a performance. The *goos* can be classified as a rite of exchange and communion, through which the performer 'gives in order to receive' (p. 58). Besides we should also take into account Bell's idea that the ritual is not only an instrument of social control but also the production itself of power relations (p.3). In the light of this theory the *goos* becomes the opportunity for the dominated categories of a society to make their voice heard. It might be an expression of resentment to the gods' cruelty, but also to the social codes of *kleos* (why should Hector gloriously die on the battlefield rather than continuing living with his wife and son? This is probably what Andromache wants to express with her *goos*).

Such a line of interpretation makes the Greek lament an instrument for understanding gender issues. Helene P. Foley's first part of *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy* (2001) explains how funerary lamentation and revenge are intimately connected and how women play a relevant role in awakening it (26). Female laments are described as means to resist or manipulate the status quo and as practices that would violate contemporary Attic restrictions on funerary rites. As an example, through the lamentation the female chorus in *Choephoroi* urges an action and encourages Orestes to kill Clytemnestra. In *Suppliants*, 'the mothers, now childless and thus without a stable identity (955-9), undermine in their lament the central role of women in the classical city-state by doubting the value of marrying and

producing children at all (786-93, 822-23)' (44). In the *Iliad*, the themes expressed in lamentation subtly contradict the dominant ideology of the poem, which celebrate the immortal *kleos* acquired by the warrior in battle. Achilles, by withdrawing from the battle, questions the value of the noble death, and thus shows affinities with the language and attitude expressed in lamentation. 'It is the shared lamentation between Priam and Achilles that helps to bring Achilles back into the cultural mainstream' (44). In Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* the chorus of women are chastised by Eteocles for their ill-omened fears (verse 258) but despite his instruction the women only partially obey their ruler's request, for they do not suppress ill-omened fear (verse 287) and evoke a terrible picture of the fate of women and children in a fallen town. Again the women's attitude is countering the male decision, in Foley's view: they try to dissuade Eteocles not to face his brother at the seventh gate, but he seems not interested in the interests of the city, as the women are, but only in his family's fate (48). When the two brothers' bodies return to be lamented, the women do not praise the dead and their military prowess but explicitly criticize the two brothers for being wrong and impious (verses 831,838,875). Thus laments express reproaches that undermine military praise by countering 'the value of military glory with the sense of loss to the individual' (50). These poetic examples show, according to Foley, that 'the Athenian social system seems to have made a concerted effort to control the public behavior of women, especially in relation to death ritual. Tragedy, however, allows the politics of the past, whether real or imaginary, to reemerge on stage, and to reenact the sort of social scenarios, including tensions between mass and elite, they may well have led to the earlier funerary legislation.[...] Presumably the strains of the war play an important role here. Threats to the empire are perhaps displaced onto an imaginary plane in terms of the needs to exert further control on the public behavior of women' (55). A mourning woman is not simply a producer of pity but dangerous. Yet the message her lament carries is never fully suppressed.

In the same line of studies we should mention Andrea Fishman's recent work *Thrênoi to Moirólógia: Female Voices of Solitude, Resistance, and Solidarity* (2008) who, by confronting ancient Greek laments in tragedy with modern ethnographic evidence, coins the expression of 'sisterhood of pain' (268) by which he introduced the idea of 'a female lament as an expression of individual and collective pain (*ponos*; plural *ponoi*) and as a vehicle for uniting Greek women mourners through social bonding and solidarity in a community'. Fishman finds in Euripides' *Suppliants* (8-17) the idea of shared female identity as mothers and sense of community between Aethra and Ergive women (275). This idea is confirmed by modern Greek laments, eg. the Epirot and Cretan (272-3) and the Maniat laments (281), which helped to convince the scholar that the modern *moirólógia* have their roots in the ancient laments and that the ancient tragic representations accurately reflect the actual practice of ritual lamentation (289).

The relevant role of the lament as a voice for expressing gender issues is also pointed out by Gail Holst-Warhaft's *Dangerous Voices: Women's laments and Greek literature* (1992). This work focuses on the potential power exercised by women through the lament: they were in fact able to communicate directly with the dead people, by disturbing their peace, stirring them to visit the living, and to take revenge for an unjust death. This insight is important for my thesis, since this sinister side fits particularly well my intention to analyze the supernatural power of the lament. The word 'dangerous' mirrors the scholar's precise choice to examine the lament in its perception and consequences in a civil community. Holst-Warhaft points out that the use of the lament in order to communicate with the dead was perceived firstly as a means of inciting an uncontrolled sequence of violence; secondly its use denies the value of death for the community or state, making it difficult for authorities to recruit an obedient army; thirdly, it leaves in the hands of women potential authority over the rites of death.

An interesting perspective is present in Perkell's *Reading the Laments of Iliad 24* (2008) as she seems to focus on aspects of the laments that show a poetic re-elaboration of the ritual repertoire rather than highlighting their ritual elements. Laments in *Iliad 24* would therefore put heroic ideology into question and would be silent about the heroic principle of *kleos* (96). Perkell identifies in Andromache's lament the most relevant objection to glory as it introduces the idea that the purpose of war is not glory but survival and life (99): 'In asking Hektor to fight for survival, to forgo personal honor in exchange for life (6.431-434), she makes the poem's strongest argument for the value of life itself, "unvalidated", over glory'. Hekabe's and Helen's laments (101-106) also introduce, for Perkell, themes that are different from glory as they are concerned with piety and gentleness and would therefore compete with the heroic code. Laments in this passage should therefore not be interpreted as a reflexion of the ritual performance but as the result of the poet's choices. They would rather carry the ideological weight that the poet constructs for them in the course of the text as a whole (108). Perkell's separation between proper laments and their representation in literature is certainly a valid means of interpretation of the subject. However, assuming such a degree of independence of poetry from the conventions of ritual repertoire in the case of the *Iliad* – and therefore in a time of orality – might be risky and considering the lament as the basis for introducing alternatives to traditional values seems to be premature. Besides, the indifference to the heroic code seems to be a characteristic of the *goos* itself, if we consider Derderian's analysis (p. 125).

Despite its connection with the Muses in Homer, the *threnos* in tragic poems is interchangeable with the dysphemic *goos*, which perhaps reflects a general criticism of the traditional ritual lament as a whole. An analysis of the lament *per se* – in all its variations – allows us to better understand the poets' ideas on this ritual act. The purpose of my thesis is therefore to develop an aspect that does not seem to be sufficiently discussed by the main works on the ancient Greek lament. Scholarship tends to reconstruct the *threnoi*, *gooi* and *linoi* on the basis that these rituals in tragedy were close to reality.

In the pioneering and authoritative *The ritual lament in Greek tradition* (1974), Margaret Alexiou highlights continuity between the ancient forms depicted by literature and the present types of lament, for example between the *threnos* and *moirologi* or the *psychagogoi gooi* and the *anaklesis*. This approach is necessary to understand how the lament developed throughout Greek tradition, and to identify reminiscences of it in modern examples of Greek literature and popular repertoire, which supports our idea that certain practices were aischrologic ritual before being dysphemic elements in the tragic choreia. Her work is essential to identify what is artificial from what is real ritual.<sup>2</sup> This is why I have taken further ethnographic study of modern laments into great account: in fact, as already suggested by Fishman, it also provides food for thought in the classical studies. Two works in particular deserve attention: Anna Caraveli-Chaves' article *Bridge Between Worlds: the Greek Women's Lament and Communicative Event* (1980) and C. Nadia Seremetakis *The Last Word- Women, Death, and Divination in Inner Mani* (1991). These works record and interpret modern Cretan and Maniat laments, which seems particularly relevant if we consider that such activities are rapidly becoming extinct.

Caraveli- Chaves points out that 'ritual lamentation as a whole constitutes a dialogue between the mourner and the deceased, the living and the dead' and that 'in this way, both the ritual acts of performance and the specific conventions of language function as bridge' (141). The most striking

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<sup>2</sup> I should also mention the recent work *Lament: Studies in the ancient Mediterranean and beyond* edited by Ann Suter and released in 2008, which is principally based on the analysis of how the lament manifests itself from the Sumerians to the Romans. Suter and Alexiou are therefore particularly useful for our understanding of the lament from an empirical and cross-cultural point of view. Similarly to Alexiou, Christos C. Tsagalis with his *Epic grief: personal lament in Homer's* (2004) shows an empirical, although partial, approach to the subject. He focuses on a single type of lament, the *goos*, in a single source, the *Iliad*. His encyclopaedic analysis of the stylistic and linguistic features of the *goos* usefully identifies common motifs, which again provides us with an empirical view of the matter but is not particularly relevant to the main line of my thesis. Tsagalis' conclusion is limited to how this lament reflects the purpose of epic, which is the representation of the epic world and heroic death.

feature recorded by the scholar is the *effective* and not only *descriptive* or *expressive* nature of the lament (143), to use her exact terminology. Caraveli-Chaves explains this term by mentioning some songs she recorded in a Cretan village, Dzermiathes, which are composed to insult one's enemies, to court lovers, to heal disease, to exorcise the evil eye, to reveal secrets to a public gathering, and so on (143). Women seem to be crucial in such *effective* types of expression: 'as midwives, matchmakers and singers of bridal songs and, finally, as lamenters, they dominate the rites of passage, the perilous moments of transition from one realm to another' (143-44) while men are excluded from these activities. This gender perspective, so to speak, would therefore help to recognize certain lament conventions as elements that function not only within the text but also 'serve to expand (and even originate in) complex patterns of human interaction' (144). 'Laments bridge and mediate between vital realms of existence: life and death, the physical and the metaphysical, present and past, temporal and mythic time. The lamenter becomes the medium through whom the dead speaks to the living, the shaman who leads the living to the under-world and back, thus effecting a communal confrontation with death and, through it, a catharsis. In her capacity as a mediator between realms, the lamenter affects the entire community. Through skillful manipulation of age-old conventions in poetic language she transforms the fact of individual death into "equipment" for all the living' (*idem*). This explains why composition of powerful lament poetry raises the poet to a high, 'near magical' status among her fellow women. Words and language mark the transition of the dead person from life to death and constitutes a remedy for death.

In the Caraveli- Chaves' line, Seremetakis' *Last Word* is the result of an extensive fieldwork aimed at pointing out how in Inner Mani – one of the three peninsulas which extend southwards from the Peloponnese in southern Greece– death rituals have been a performative arena, demarcated by gender, 'where pain (*ponos*) figures prominently as an orchestrating and prescriptive communicative paradigm' (5). Seremetakis noticed how diverse social practices (improvised antiphonic laments,

divinatory dreaming, the care and tending of olive trees and the dead) constitute women's cultural resistance through alternative codifications of their relation to the social order. However she also liberates the analysis of gender from reductive binary models (male/female, public/private, overt/covert), being convinced that the depiction of women's power as confined to the domestic space and to covert discourse as well as the identification of feminine categories, symbolism and rituals with the church would inappropriately define the general image of Mediterranean societies (5). She rather pioneers the alternative perspective of self-reflexive 'native anthropology' in European ethnography by participating herself to the ritual processes and reflecting upon how self and sentiment are invested and constructed.

Seremetakis' work is relevant to our research as this region has better than others conserved Pre-Christian cultural elements. Historian David Howarth states: 'The only Greeks that might have had an almost unbroken descent were the few small clans like the Maniotes who were so fierce, and lived so far up the mountain, that invaders left them alone' (1976, 69). She therefore provides us with information about the meaning that the lament might have in ancient Greece. Although it is difficult to establish what exactly has disappeared and what has survived of the ancient performance, we can however note several elements in common with the modern ones and Seremetakis' valuable interpretation of gestures and forms can be a plausible mean to fill in gaps that ancient Greek literature and evidence inevitably leave. This is true for the meaning of antiphony, the presence of violence in certain passages of the laments, and the perception of the lament as a mean of communication with the dead besides the living people.

If the combination of these studies is particularly useful to understand what the ritual was in ancient Greece, the picture does not seem to be complete if do not take into account the subjectivity of the tragic poets' use of the terms *goos* and *threnos*. Nicole Loraux' collection *La voix endeuillée: Essai Sur La Tragédie Grecque* (1999) raises the question why tragedy presents frequent criticism of the



genre as a whole, as if *threnoi* and *gooi* were the same thing. The scholar (91-5) wants to preserve, as I have done in my research, a neat distinction between the musical *threnos* and the shouted *goos*, although she limits her explanation to their synonymous use in tragedy and their incompatibility with civil regulations, by giving purely musical reasons together with Nietzschean forms of argument: the sound of the *aulos* reminds the audience of a voice moaning and the genre's inappropriateness to Apollo depends on the use of instruments that do not fit Apollinian *logos* and are more related to Dionysian *mania* (102-4).

If we want to understand what is behind the poetic use and interpretation of the ritual it is necessary to investigate the creed and the relationship between the tragic choreia, religion and ritual. If Parker's *Gods Cruel and Kind: Tragic and Civic Theology* (1997) points out that there is no real contradiction between the deities' representation in public speeches and in tragedy, Yunis' *A New Creed: Fundamental Religious Beliefs in the Athenian Polis and Euripidean Drama* (1988) shows that Euripides' *Heracles* is to be read in terms of religious beliefs compared to the Athenian polis and the ideas of divinity in this drama are very different from the archaic ones. Parker's *Early Orphism* helps introducing the hypothesis that Euripides might have adhered to an Orphic 'creed' which might explain Euripides' *linos* as a song that tells about the possibility of a new life for those who practice the virtue. However, Kowalzig's theory – "*And now all the world shall dance!*" (*Eur. Bacch. 114*): *Dionysus' choroi between drama and ritual* (2007) is even more suitable to explain the presence of such a theme when the *linos*-song is used. Behind a ritual there is a political fact: myths such as apotheosis, metamorphosis or reincarnation as introduced by Euripides in *Heracles*, *Helen* and *Orestes* would be determinant for the establishment of a hero's mystery cult and the *linos*-song would consist in a ritual act aimed at providing the cult with a mythical explanation and *aitia*.

If the previous studies have clarified what the lament means for the living people – as individuals and as a society – and its role as a ritual custom, literary genre, or sign of memory for the next generation, my thesis has rather focused on how drama has interpreted it, whether it has been introduced it without significant changes compared to the original meaning or whether the more ‘dangerous’ side of the lament has been accentuated, attenuated or even modified in order to respond to new social values.

In the course of this thesis I have proposed an alternative way of interpreting the lament; and if my conclusions are cogent they evidently provide the basis for further investigation, for instance into the inter-dependence of ritual and music in ancient Greek culture and the impact that musical forms have on ritual performance and *vice versa*; the use of further ritual terminology in drama (such as the *stonache* or the *elegos*) in the light of the approach I have applied through my thesis; the reading of alternative sources such as epigraphy for a deeper analysis of ritual terminology. It is a very rich field of enquiry, which neither my investigations nor those of my predecessors have yet exhausted.

# CHAPTER 1

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## THE *GOOS* in HOMER'S *ILIAD* and *ODYSSEY*

Within the range of vocabulary related to the lament the *goos* is a good place to start from. Its constant presence in early literature shows that it was a deep-rooted custom in Greek culture. The fact that it is a lament is evident in particular in famous passages such as the long utterance accompanying the funeral ritual for Hector (Hom. *Il.* 24.723, 747, 760) and Thetis' outburst of sorrow for Achilles' imminent death (*Il.* 18.51). In *Il.* 23.9 the *goos* is defined as γέρας `...` θανόντων, honour for the dead, which highlights its privileged connection with the funeral rites and the lament.<sup>1</sup> However the objective of the first and second chapters is to investigate meanings that have been undervalued, and still are, by pointing out that the *goos* is connected, specifically, with one particular kind of 'mysterious' and non-natural activity that brings the wailer into communication and interaction with invisible beings (gods, *daimones*, ghosts).

Words such as 'mysterious' and non natural are vague and do not delimit the area we are about to investigate. As a premise, it is necessary introducing the concept of magic, an area that has been largely discussed in the past, as Bell (1997, 46-52) shows in her work about the history of interpretation of ritual. One of the best known scholars on the subject is Frazer who linked magic, religion and science in an explicit evolutionary sequence. Magic would never be a science and would differ from religion for not worshipping and supplicating but rather contriving to make things happen. The main point of his study of magic is the identification of two principles: first 'homeopathy', the law of similarity, or the

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed analysis of the *goos* as a ritual lament can be found in several studies (Alexiou 2002, 12-14, 102-103, 131-134; Holst-Warhaft 1995, 111-13; Barker 1984, 20-21; Tsagalis 2004, 2-7, 16-21, 53-54).

principle the 'like produces like'; second 'contagion', the law of contact, or the principle that 'things which have once been in contact continue ever afterwards to act on each other' (J. Frazer 1894 vol. 1, 52-54) Malinowski has the pivotal merit to abandon Frazer's evolutionary approach to the study of religion and magic and to accept that magic, religion, and a body of scientific knowledge can simultaneously exist side-by side (Bell 1997, 48). What differentiates magic from religion, from Malinowski's point of view, is the manipulative relationship with divine beings. In his view, magic commands, while religion seeks. 'Magic flourishes wherever man cannot control hazard by means of science. It flourishes in hunting and fishing, in times of war and in seasons of love, in the control of wind, rain and sun, in regulating all dangerous enterprises, above all in disease and in the shadow of death' (Malinowski 1974, 1). The function of magic, therefore, was 'to ritualize man's optimism, and to enhance his faith in the victory of hope over fear' (Malinowski 1962, 261). If we adopt this approach the *goos* can be interpreted as a spell aimed at facing the negativity of death for example through the hope of communicating with the deceased.

However, the study of these acts has developed in such a way that interpreting the *goos* exclusively for their magical significance would be reductive if not misleading. We need to take into account Tambiah's work (Tambiah 1968) who attacked Frazer's and Malinowski's presumption that magical spells and prayers differ for their purpose. He first noted that both spells and prayers can be found within a single ritual, and secondly he showed that the so-called magic is not based on a belief in the 'real identity between word and thing' but is based instead on an 'ingenious' use of 'the expressive and metaphorical properties of language' (188, 202). We owe Tambiah the development of a word that we will often use in the course of our research: ritual acts are 'performative' and by this word he means 'the particular way in which symbolic forms of expressions simultaneously make assumptions about the way things really are, create the sense of reality, and act upon the real world as it is culturally experienced' (Bell 1997, 51; Tambiah 1968, 17-59; 1985, 123-66).

Most importantly we should refer to Bell's work (Bell, 1992) who developed the concept of ritual and rejected the distinction between 'liturgy' versus 'magic' which, she points out, 'would imply a desire for esoteric categories accessible only to the cognoscenti' (6-7). She instead focuses on the ritual act practice and identifies the important role of the ritual action in shaping what is called the social body (97-98). This would happen because ritual practice is ' (1) situational; (2) strategic; (3) embedded in a misrecognition of what it is in fact doing; and (4) able to reproduce or reconfigure a vision of the order of power in the world, or what I will call "redemptive hegemony" ' (81).<sup>2</sup> Besides, Bell identifies in ritual practice not only an instrument of social control, which is usually seen as existing before or outside the activities of the rite, but also the very production and negotiation of power relations (187-96).<sup>3</sup> Such ritual empowerment have general tendencies regarding spaces, time, codes, objects, words and gestures combinations that would differentiate the ritual act from any other activity (204-5).

In the light of these studies we should think whether the *goos* performed to communicate with invisible beings can be considered as a ritual act, and whether it falls into categories and interpretations that relate to ritual theories. Furthermore, it is worth investigating whether this type of *goos* can be explained as an instrument of social control or even an act of production of power relations.

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<sup>2</sup> The ritual would be situational because much of what is important to it cannot be grasped outside of the specific context in which it occurs; strategic, because its logic is not that of an intellectualist logic and remains as implicit and rudimentary as possible (81); embedded in 'misrecognition' of what it is doing, of its limits and constraints, and of the relationship between its ends and its means' (82) so that its ambiguity or incoherence of symbols invites speculation or a perception of a mystery (109); linked with 'redemptive hegemony' which is to say that it is characterized by relations of dominance and subjugation. (84).

<sup>3</sup> As for this subject it is interesting remembering Bell's analysis of the concept of ideology, notion that does not require faith but simply consent (190). Besides, ideology implies 'complicity' of the subordinated classes, complicity necessary to the symbolic domination of ideology. This complicity with dominant-class values is neither passive submission on the one hand nor free adoption on the other. It is fundamentally an act of misrecognition by which the dominated class accepts the legitimacy of the values of the dominant class and applies the criteria of these values to its own practices, even when doing so is not favorable to it.

## COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION WITH INVISIBLE BEINGS AS RITUAL ACT?

The *goos*, as we said before, appears sometimes from Homeric poems as an expression of sorrow. However, some scholars (Holst-Warhaft 1995, 146) have already noted that beyond these evident meanings this type of lament hides some sinister elements. Etymology can help, as the scholar highlighted, since the term *goos* shares its origin with γοήτεια. LSJ translates this word as ‘witchcraft, juggling, cheater’ which implies a negative connotation and seems to have little to do with the *goos*. However if we take into account from the same group the word γόης we can easily draw a connection between the wailing and this sort of magical activities. The first definition given by LSJ is *wailer, howler*, simply someone who wails or howls ‘(from the *howl* in which spells were chanted)’ and then *wizard, sorcerer, enchanter*. The wail or lament then takes on a new significance: if at first it was a sound produced purely to express grief – whether as a genuine outburst or a ritual necessity– it became later an utterance aimed at obtaining specific goals. A closer analysis of the passages in Homeric poems will demonstrate that this overlap of meaning was already happening in the eighth century BC. In addition to the monumental examples of *gooi* representing simple laments there are many other passages revealing a mysterious angle of them.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> We cannot avoid thinking that ritual acts were connected with specific beliefs, which makes the subject even more intricate. Sourvinou-Inwood (1995, 12) understands that the Homeric poems involve an especially complex relationship between text and beliefs. ‘For they are the end-product of a long tradition of oral poetry which began probably in the Mycenaean and conceivably in the Early “Dark Age” period; and the world they describe, its material culture and social institutions, does not have a correlative in a real historical society but is a conflated picture made up of elements derived from many societies, each time inevitably perceived, handled, and made sense of, through the perceptual filters of each generation of poets’. Sourvinou-Inwood points out (*idem*, 13) that the Homeric ‘system’ of afterlife beliefs is artificial as it consists in a composite eschatology made up of elements which had originated in different historical societies. The presence of different types of *gooi* in the Homeric poems can be similarly interpreted: the proper lament and the magical act might have been rituals derived from different societies.

Noteworthy studies of magic, sorcery and witchcraft in the Greco-Roman culture are flourishing today, which are uncovering an unexplored world parallel to and sometimes even present in ancient Greek political, social, erotic or daily activities. The *goos* has a mysterious power which is not easy to define and as a start we can describe it as magical, in the sense that it brings the human being in communication and interaction with invisible beings outside traditional religious rites (*euchai*). Still now in certain areas of Greece laments are performed with intentions that cannot be confined to a merely sociological and musical explanation. Seremetakis, when talking of burial procedures, points out that 'the body of the mourner, the dying person, or the dead are margins between self and society, life and death, and function as places of mediation' (67). The scholar also explains that 'when the boundary between life and death is crossed, women initially disseminate the signs of transgression through screaming' (72).

### **Goos and contact with ghosts**

θάπτε με ὅτι τάχιστα πύλας Ἀΐδαο περήσω, 'Bury me with all speed, let me pass inside the gates of Hades'. These are the words that Patroclus addresses in desperation to Achilles from somewhere in the underworld at *Il.* 23.71.<sup>5</sup> And it is not all: ὥς δὲ καὶ ὀστέα νῶϊν ὁ ἡ σορὸς ἀμφικαλύπτοι/ χρύσεος ἀμφιφορεύς, τόν τοι πόρε πότνια μήτηρ, let one coffer enfold our bones, a golden coffer with two handles, the one your queenly mother gave you' (91-2). These words sound like a very clear request and not simply the vague memory of a bad dream. In reply Achilles promises to

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<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that also ethnographic studies of death rituals show the need to follow precise rules to accomplish the burial. Seremetakis explains that in the inner Mani 'when ritual procedures are not observed, the corpse can be retained and enter the domain of the living as an autonomous entity, a revenant, introducing pollution into the social order. The corpse that has not been properly cleansed and subjected to various prophylactic procedures and techniques, including closing the orifices, can "drag" (*soúri*) the living into the domain of the dead.' (64). The process itself of laying out the corpse has the meaning of creating a connection, through the corpse, between the living and the soul (*psihi*).

accomplish all Patroclus has asked and invites him to come closer (97-98): ἀλλά μοι ἄσσον στήθι· μίνυνθά περ ἀμφιβαλόντε/ ἀλλήλους ὀλοοῖο τεταπώμεσθα γόοιο, 'though it be but for a little time, let us clasp our arms about one another, and take our fill of dire lamenting (*olooio gooio*)' (Murray 1963). There is certainly nothing wrong with Murray's translation, but the context described here cannot be intended simply as a lament in the proper sense and we wonder whether the word *goos* has a stronger significance. When Achilles wakes up he is predictably amazed by what has just happened and describes it in this way: 'for the whole night long has the spirit of unlucky Patroclus stood over me, γοόωσά τε μυρομένη τε [...]' (105-6). If the wailing is expressed by the verb *muromai*, it is plausible that the verb *goaō* is not only a synonym but is referred to Patroclus' speech. In other words the action of *goân* does not mean purely to mourn but to supplicate in a form that differs from traditional prayer. Although we are still not sure of what this difference consists in exactly, it is however undeniable first that this prayer brings into communication a living person and a dead and secondly that the *goos* is not only a theoretical dialogue where the two characters bemoan their miserable destiny but an effectual means of communicating through which someone asks for something specific without ambiguities. The *goos* seems therefore to have a performative use and to be able to break the natural law of separation between living and dead. For this reason we can assign to the *goos* features that Malinowski and Frazer would attribute to spells and, following their theories, we can speak of magic.

Other passages in the *Iliad* show that the communication is not unidirectional and does not start necessarily from above: in *Il.* 23.19-23 the *goos* Achilles utters is an example of speech aimed at going beyond the human ear. χαῖρέ μοι ὦ Πάτροκλε καὶ εἰν Αἴδαο δόμοισι·πάντα γὰρ ἤδη τοι τελέω τὰ πάροιθεν ὑπέστην/ Ἔκτορα δεῦρ' ἐρύσας δώσειν κυσὶν ὧ ἀ δάσασθαι, /δῶδεκα δὲ προπάροιθε πυρῆς ἀποδειροτομήσειν / Τρώων ἀγλαὰ τέκνα σέθεν κταμένοιο χολωθείς, 'Hail Patroclus, even in the house of Hades, for now I am bringing to fulfilment all that I promised you before: that I would drag Hector here and give him raw to dogs to devour, and of twelve glorious sons of the Trojans would I cut the



throats before your pyre in my wrath at your slaying' (Murray 1963). Again it is difficult to attribute the contents of Achilles' *goos* to what we normally intend as a lament: he is addressing the dead person and is taking an oath that sounds like a violent need of vengeance rather than an expression of sorrow. The pledge is present a few lines before in 18.324-42. The similarity of this part with the *goos* in Book 23 shows that the act of *stonachein* can be considered as very close to the act of *goân*.

These examples suggest that we need to be careful in defining the *goos* as lament since its mournful nature in sections such as Thetis' lament or Andomache's, Hecuba's and Helen's does not exclude the presence of a different type of utterance under the same name, which is rather similar to magical spells. An interesting passage in *Il.* 24.159-168 might support the idea of such a distinction. Unfortunately Homer does not report any direct speech here which makes our comments purely speculative. However, it is worth noting that when Iris comes to the house of Priam, 'and found there wailing and lamentation' there is a clear separation between *παῖδες μὲν πατέρ' ἄμφι καθήμενοι ἔνδοθεν αὐλῆς* and *θυγατέρες δ' ἀνὰ δώματ' ἰδὲ νοοῖ*. We are not going to emphasize the fact that women and men are separated as we will see that this is not what separates the *goos* = spell from the *goos* = lament. We should instead consider the different gestures accompanying the utterance: while the women are remembering (*μυμνησκόμεναι*) the dead warriors, the men are not simply crying but 'sully their garments with their tears' (*δάκρυσιν εἴματ' ἔφουρον*) being Priam in the middle, and 'on the old man's head and neck was filth in abundance which he had gathered in his hands as he grovelled on the earth', *ἄμφι δὲ πολλῇ / κόπρος ἔην κεφαλῇ τε καὶ αὐχένι τοῖο γέροντος / τὴν ῥα κυλινδόμενος καταμήσατο χερσὶν ἔῃσι*. What we see here is a very precise ritual: the act of *kulindesthai* is not a temporary and instinctual expression of sorrow but is a ritual act accompanying the wailing, as we can see in other passages (*Od.* 4.541, 10.499). Richardson (1993, 150) defines it as a ritual of 'self-pollution', (*kata*)*miainesthai* and reports that such a reaction persisted in later antiquity as suggested by Lucian

*Luct.* 1.2.<sup>6</sup> The different behaviours surrounding the lament might be markers of difference in contents and purpose of the two *gooi*. The men's utterance might plausibly contain an oath addressed to Hector. This is only speculative and far from being evidence. But if we take into account the previous passages they certainly show that the *goos* was applied to contexts that we would define magical.

### Goos as request of revenge from above

Revenge is a recurrent theme in the *goos*, as tragedy will show consistently. In Homeric poems the desire of vengeance appears as the reason provoking the lament, and can be stopped when the wailer can see his desire satisfied. The link between prayer and curse – that is to pray for other people's harm – is pointed out by Pulleyn (1997, 70- 95), in particular when he shows that the verbs ἀράομαι and εὔχομαι are indifferently used in Homer to refer to any type of prayer, be it for good or ill (71).<sup>7</sup> After Homer, in the fifth century, the verb ἀράομαι seems to be used absolutely to mean 'I curse' (75) and it is possible that it develop a more specialized meaning (76).<sup>8</sup>

At *Il.* 17.35-40 Euphorbos tries to threaten Menelaus saying that he will pay the price for having slain his brother. Menelaus made Euphorbos' sister in law a widow and brought ἀρητόν '...' γόον καὶ πένθος on his parents. We should notice that the manuscripts vary – both here and in *Il.* 24.741 – between ἀρητόν and ἄρρητον, which Kirk translates respectively as 'prayed against' and 'unspeakable' (Edwards 1991, 66). Scholarship tends to prefer the second option (Lang, Leaf and Myers 1883, 343),

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<sup>6</sup> See also Parker 1983, 40-41.

<sup>7</sup> Bell (1997, 109) notes that despite the tendency to 'consider manipulative dynamics "magical" and disinterested devotion "religious"' we should instead that 'no act is purely manipulative or purely disinterested' (109).

<sup>8</sup> Pulleyn also investigates the ritual use of these curses and the possibility for them to be accompanied by sacrifices. He points out that tragedy and oratory testify to the presence of curses in civic rituals (78) where sacrifices are offered to reinforce them (77). Curses would therefore depend on χάρις with the Olympian gods (79). Bell (1997, 109) would probably consider these practices as 'rites of exchange and communion, where one gives in order to receive in return – *do ut des* (108). Similarly to the *defixiones*, curses in Greek drama and epic originated in the idea to have been wronged and to be justified in seeking retribution (Pulleyn 1997, 89).

but if we look back at the scholia, the *Etymologycum Magnum*, and *Suda* we realize that the word *aretos* in *Il.* 17.35-40 has a sinister side.<sup>9</sup> The definition in LSJ for *arêtos/aratos* is ‘accursed, unblest’ and is related to the act of praying or even imprecate upon someone, cursing someone, as the verb *araomai* suggests. However, Giordano (1998, 60-63) while proposing an interesting semantic analysis for the passage, suggests the alternative translation ‘lament which curses and asks for revenge’. The scholar points out that objections for this interpretation might be raised because of the passive valence of the verbal adjective in *-tos* but she answers them exhaustively. Not only these special adjectives are used with both active and passive meanings (indicating that the action has been accomplished) but the indo-european equivalent *-to\** was not bound to any idea of tense or diathesis. Besides, in most of the cases these adjectives do not derive from verbs but from nouns and Giordano, following Chantraine (1942, 160), suggests the original derivation from *are* instead of *araomai*.<sup>10</sup> The adjective *aretos* would mean therefore cursing and not accursed. In the light of this, the family described in the Homeric passage appears not only to be wailing but also praying for something to happen. We have to decide if they are praying for something positive or negative. The couple of words γόου κατάπανμα (38) is decisive in understanding the sense of this prayer. ‘Surely for them in their misery should I prove a means of stopping their <goos> if I but bring your head and your armor and lay them in the hands of Panthous and queenly Phrontis [...]’. Murray translates *goos* as grief but this would not render the profound sense of what Euphorbos wants to do. He wants to take revenge on Menelaus and this would not fit the idea of stopping the grief.<sup>11</sup> If instead we intend the *goos* as cursing prayer then the passages discloses a deeper

<sup>9</sup> *Scholia in Homeri Iliadem* D ἀρητόν {δὲ τοκεῦσι}: ἤτοι βλαπτικόν, παρὰ τὴν ἀρὰν τὴν βλάβην, ἢ κατάρaton ἢ ἀπευκτόν. ἢ ἃ εἰ ρητόν, ἀεὶ διὰ μνήμης ἐσόμενον. *EM*: Βλαπτικόν, παρὰ τὴν ἀρὰν, ἢ ἀπευκτόν, ἢ ἀεὶ ρητόν, ἀεὶ διὰ μνήμης ἐσόμενον; *Suid.* (Adler) τὸ βλαβερόν. Ἀρρητόν δὲ λόγον, κακόφημον, μὴ ρηθῆναι ὀφειλόντα.

<sup>10</sup> Chantraine (1942, 160) connects the word *arêton* to *ārê*= ‘malediction’. Beside the linguistic analysis, Giordano proposes a valuable interpretation of the passage by comparing it with other passages e.g. *Il.* 14.482-85 (*idem*, 65): l’idea soggiacente è che la morte violenta sia una “interruzione, sospensione e violazione” del destino assegnato a ciascun uomo, ed una rottura dell’equilibrio; per restituire e ricomporre l’ordine turbato, bisogna restituire ciò che è stato tolto, secondo la legge di reciprocità e di equilibrio di cui nella Grecia arcaica è garante Dike.

<sup>11</sup> Giordano notes (*idem*, 69) that ‘la condizione luttuosa causata dalla morte di un congiunto, considerate in se stessa, non può cessare con la vendetta, data l’irreparabilità dell’evento che l’ha provocata’.

meaning behind Euphorbos' intention. Giordano (*idem*, 69) suggests that 'Euforbo si propone infatti come chi potrà far cessare il *goos* dei genitori tramite l'uccisione di Menelao, tramite cioè la vendetta'. Euphorbos would become the avenger and perhaps would transform the will of some supernatural being – maybe his brother's soul – into a moral obligation (*idem*, 73, 76-7).<sup>12</sup>

### Goos, prediction and presage

The effect of a supernatural influence on the person performing the *goos* manifests itself also through the sudden capacity of foreseeing the future. The link between the *manteia* and the *goos* is more evident in the passages where the participle γοόωσα appears. The passage of the encounter between Achilles' and Patroclus' soul (*goóōsa*) in Book 23 contains prophetic words at 80-81: 'and for you yourself also, godlike Achilles, it is fate to die beneath the wall of the wealthy Trojans' (Murray 1963), καὶ δὲ σοὶ αὐτῷ μοῖρα, θεοῖς ἐπιείκελ' Ἀχιλλεῦ, τείχει ὑπὸ Τρώων εὐηφενέων ἀπολέσθαι. This passage shows that predictions were one of the elements distinguishing the *goos*. Although there is no doubt about the prophetic value of these words – because the person uttering the *goos* says them as certain facts and because we know that they are true –, prophecy does not seem to be the most important feature of this *goos*, as we have shown previously. On the contrary other passages show that prophecy could be essential. It is the case of the *psychai* of dying soldiers such as Hector and Patroclus which fleeing from their limbs and going to Hades, bewail their fate, ψυχὴ δ' ἐκ ρεθέων παμμένη Ἄϊδος δὲ βεβήκει /ὄν πότμον γοόωσα (16.856-7, 22.362-3). The two passages share the fact of being preceded by very clear words at *Il.* 16.844-54 and 22.357-60, which we can identify as the *gooi* themselves. From the verse 849ff Patroclus makes a terrifying promise to Hector: 'And another thing will I tell you, and do you lay it to heart: surely you shall not yourself be long in life, but even now does death stand hard by you, and

<sup>12</sup> A similar meaning can be given to the *goos* in *Il.* 5.156. Revenge can also come from above, and occasionally can create the conditions to utter a *goos* (*Il.* 5.382-415, *Od.* 1.231-51). Telemachus talks to a disguised Athena and says about his father that νῦν δὲ μιν ἀκλειῶς Ἄρπυιαι ἀνθρώπων (241) 'as it is the Harpies have swept him away and left no tidings' (Murray, 1963) and then οἷχετ' ἄϊστος ἄπυστος, ἐμοὶ δ' ὀδύνας τε γόους τε / κάλλιπεν (242-3), 'he is gone out of sight, out of hearing, and for me he has left anguish and weeping (*goous*)'.

resistless fate, to be slain at the hands of Achilles, the incomparable grandson of Aeacus`, ἀλλά με μοῖρ' ὀλοῇ καὶ Λητοῦς ἔκτανεν υἱός, /ἀνδρῶν δ' Εὐφορβος· σὺ δέ με τρίτος ἐξεναρίζεις./ ἄλλο δέ τοι ἐρέω, σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῆσιν·/οὗ θην οὐδ' αὐτὸς δηρὸν βέη, ἀλλά τοι ἤδη /ἄγχι παρέστηκεν θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κραταῖη/ χερσὶ δαμέντ' Ἀχιλῆος ἀμύμονος Αἰακίδαο. Hector's words do not seem different as he says in 358-60 'Take thought now lest perhaps I become a cause of the gods' wrath against you on the day when Paris and Phoebus Apollo slay you, valiant though you are, at the Scaean gates', φράζεο νῦν, μή τοί τι θεῶν μήνιμα γένωμαι/ ἤματι τῷ ὅτε κέν σε Πάρις καὶ Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων / ἐσθλὸν ἐόντ' ὀλέσωσιν ἐνὶ Σκαίῃσι πύλῃσιν. These promises pronounced before dying sound dreadful because they are 'true'. What they say corresponds exactly to what will happen. The prophetic meaning is clear enough in these passages and Hector's words at 16.859 confirm this: 'Patroclus, why do you prophesy, μαντεύεαι, sheer destruction for me?'.<sup>13</sup>

In a different context, but again in form of a participle, the *goos* contains presages or proper predictions of the future: half of Andromache's wonderful speech in *Il.* 22.476-514 (the central part between a proemial section and a conclusive part) is about the orphan's destiny of her son Astyanax (484-507).<sup>14</sup> The length of this description can be explained as a psychological development of Andromache's thoughts, where the description of a child's difficulties, humiliations and sufferings point at Hector's guilt.<sup>15</sup> However Andromache's description of Astyanax' destiny (those taking away his lands, ἄλλοι γάρ οἱ ἀπουρίσσουσιν ἀρούρας, at 489, him plucking one by the cloak and another by the tunic, ἄλλον μὲν χλαίνης ἐρύων, ἄλλον δὲ χιτῶνος, at 493 and then being avoided by other children for

<sup>13</sup> Dying was held to bring precognition (Kirk, 1992, 420): so *X. Cyr.* 8.7.21, *Pl. Ap.* 39c, *Arist. Fr.* 10; *Cic. Div.* 1.63 with Pease's n.; *Ge.* 49. The like belief that dying swans sing from foreknowledge of their death appears in *A. Ag.* 1444f and *Pl. Phd* 84e.

<sup>14</sup> The first lines can be identified as an *oimoge* 473-81 (a part of the *goos* that has a proemial function and will be treated in chapter 3) and the last ones point out the impossibility to burn on the pyre the object that belonged to Hector, as the ritual required.

<sup>15</sup> Apparently this part has been controversial since the Alexandrian period. Aristarchus could not understand why Andromache should speak of an orphan's destiny 'in terms which he saw as quite inappropriate for the princeling of Priam's lineage' and modern critics have been divided over the issue (Richardson 1993, 158).

having no father, τὸν δὲ καὶ ἀμφιθαλῆς ἐκ δαιτύος ἐστυφέλιξε/ χερσὶν πεπλήγων καὶ ὄνειδείουσιν ἐνίσσων, at 496-7) is as detailed as a picture and can represent a prophetic vision.

Similarly the *goos* uttered by Andromache in *Il.* 6.373 and her servants at *Il.* 6.499-500 must have sounded as ill-ominous: at 407-10 Andromache prophesizes Hector's death, δαιμόνιε φθίσει σε τὸ σὸν μένος, οὐδ' ἐλεαίρεις/ παῖδά τε νηπίαχον καὶ ἔ' ἄμμορον, ἢ τάχα χήρη/σεῦ ἔσομαι· τάχα γάρ σε κατακτανέουσιν Ἀχαιοὶ/ πάντες ἐφορμηθέντες· 'Ah, my husband, this prowess of you will be your doom, neither have you any pity for your infant child nor for hapless me that soon shall be your widow; for soon will the Achaeans all set upon you and slay you' while her servants' *goos* seems particularly ominous because Hector is still alive, ἔτι ζῶν (499), and they οὐ γάρ μιν ἔτ' ἔφαντο ὑπότροπον ἐκ πολέμοιο /ἔξεσθαι προφυγόντα μένος καὶ χεῖρας Ἀχαιῶν, 'deemed that he should never more come back from battle, escaped from the might and the hands of the Achaeans'.<sup>16</sup> The meaning of ill-omen is evident in *Od.* 20.349 where the Suitors are clearly laughing as they still do not know what will happen to them in a short while: "... μνηστῆρσι δὲ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη/ ἄσβεστον γέλω ὥρσε, παρέπλαγξεν δὲ νόημα. /οἱ δ' ἤδη γναθμοῖσι γελῶν ἄλλοτρίοισιν, /αἰμοφόρυκτα δὲ δὴ κρέα ἥσθιον· ὅσσε δ' ἄρα σφέων/δακρυόφιν πίμπλαντο, γόον δ' ὤϊετο θυμός, 'but among the wooers Pallas Athena roused unquenchable laughter, and turned their wits awry. And now they laughed with alien lips, and all bedabbled with blood was the flesh they ate, and their eyes were filled with tears and their spirits set on wailing (*goon*)'. Clearly the *goos* is not a lament as the Suitors continue laughing also after Theoclymenus has prophesied their imminent death (351-57). No surprise that Russo, Heubeck and Fernandez-Galiano (1992, 124) define the passage as an odd phrase, and interpret it as 'their heart imagined crying out'. However, the *goos* comes just before Theoclymenus' prophecy and the two things seem strictly related (the seer says: 'Ah, wretched men, what evil is this that you suffer?' as if he could

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<sup>16</sup> We should not forget that Penelope in *Od.* 4.721 and 19.513 is uttering a *goos* because she believes Odysseus to be dead and Telemachus lost in the sea. In these cases the *goos* needs be stopped, probably in order to stop what is ill-ominous in this utterance.

feel the Suitors' anguish). *Goos* can therefore be intended as a 'presentiment' that Athena herself has inspired in Odysseus' enemies. If we intend the word in this sense we can give a more pregnant meaning to Aegialeia's *goos* in *Il.* 5.413: Aegialeia is not lamenting while sleeping but she is having ill-presentiments about her husband.

In *Il.* 18.51-64 Thetis leads a *goos* revealing to the Nereids what will happen to her son at 59-60: τὸν δ' οὐχ ὑποδέξομαι αὐτίς / οἴκαδε νοστήσαντα δόμον Πηληϊὸν εἴσω, 'but never again shall I welcome him back to his home, to the house of Peleus' (Murray 1963),<sup>17</sup> and Achilles' *goos* at 18.324-342 contains a foretelling of what will happen to him 18.324-332 'for both of us are fated to redden the selfsame earth with our blood here in the land of Troy; since neither shall I come back to be welcomed by the old horseman Peleus in his halls, nor by my mother Thetis, but here will the earth hold me fast', ἄμφω γὰρ πέπρωται ὁμοίην γαῖαν ἐρεῦσαι / αὐτοῦ ἐνὶ Τροίῃ, ἐπεὶ οὐδ' ἐ ἐ νοστήσαντα/ δέξεται ἐν μεγάροισι γέρον ἱππηλάτα Πηλεὺς/ οὐδὲ Θέτις μήτηρ, ἀλλ' αὐτοῦ γαῖα καθέξει.

Prophecy is involved also in Penelope's speech in the already quoted *Od.* 19.509-553. Penelope describes her days and nights as full of mourning (513 *odyromene*) and *gooi* (*goóōsa*) and sorrowed by a *daimon* (512). A few verses later she speaks in detail of a dream (535-50) where a great eagle attacks and kills twenty geese that she has in her house. Then the eagle talks with a human voice saying that the dream is a 'true vision of good', since the geese are the Suitors and the bird of prey is Odysseus. It is worth noting that the action of *goai* is daily, ἥματα μὲν γὰρ τέρπομ' ὀδυρομένη γοόωσα (513), and in 547 ὄναρ is a dream, ὕπαρ, as the scholia say, "a dream that appears in the daytime" .<sup>18</sup>

In these passages the *goos* seems to be involved with future events: it is clearly prophetic when uttered by Hector and Patroclus before dying, or by Thetis when talking to the Nereids, or it is a

<sup>17</sup> Edwards (1991, 152) highlights that 'Thetis' ignorance (here and at 1.362) of Akhilleus' troubles, despite her prophetic powers (9-11, 17.408-9), is of course adopted so that Akhilleus may voice them to her himself .

<sup>18</sup> Dreams are often deceptive in Homer (and remind us of the dream sent by Zeus to deceive Agamemnon at *Il.* 2.5ff), but a daytime vision is more likely to be true (Russo, Fernandez-Galiano and Heubeck 1992, 102)

presentiment, such as the one inspired by Athena in the Suitors or the one Andromache and her servants utter before Hector leaves to go to the battle. The difference between presage and prophecy consists probably in the degree of awareness of what is going to happen: it can be a simple feeling that haunts someone's heart or it can be a more definite perception coming from a dream or from being a god (Thetis).

### **Intervention of a god in performing a *goos*:**

#### ***Goos raised by a god/daimon: legitimization of a ritual act?***

The previous paragraph has introduced the concept of presages, if not prophetic visions, being communicated through the *goos*. However, on particular occasions Homer indicates supernatural powers as the origin of presages or ominous feelings: it is the case of the *daimon* mentioned by Penelope in *Od.* 19.512, or Athena in *Od.* 20.349. Occasionally the *goos* is explicitly linked to a god: in *Il.* 23.14 Thetis raises the utterance μετὰ δέ σφι Θέτις γόου ἥμερον ὥρσε. Sometimes the link between the *goos* and a divine power is indirect but still worth mentioning: in *Od.* 8.539-41 Alcinous invites the minstrel Demodocus to stop singing as 'ever since we began to feast and the divine minstrel was moved to sing, from that time our stranger has never ceased from sorrowful lamentation', ἐξ οὗ δορπέομέν τε καὶ ὥρορε θεῖος ἀοιδός,/ ἐκ τοῦδ' οὗ πω παύσατ' οἷζυροῖο γόοιο/ ὁ ξεῖνος. That his music comes from the gods is said explicitly on more than one occasion: he is called the 'divine minstrel' (θεῖον ἀοιδόν, 43, 47, 539) to whom the god has given skills in singing above all others to give delight in whatever way his spirit decides to sing (43-45). He is also the good minstrel (ἐρίηπον ἀοιδόν– 62—where *erieron* means not only beloved but specifically 'trusty' ), whom the Muse loved above all other men, and gave both good and evil: she deprived him of his sight, but gave him the gift of sweet song (ῥεῖαν ἀοιδήν,



64).<sup>19</sup> His blindness is to be coupled with his ability to see the truth, like Tiresias or Oedipus (Shields 1961, 63-73; Johnston 2008, 112), which is confirmed by the fact that Demodocus' song corresponds to what happened even if he did not participate in the war. Murnaghan (1987, 172) points out that 'Demodocus' songs are unquestionably accurate, even though he himself has not been an eyewitness to the events he describes'. His words in fact come directly from the Muse and Apollo (73, 480-481 the Muse, 488 Apollo and Muse, 499 a god). Why is this inspiration from above mentioned only when he remembers the courage of the Achaeans in war and not when he speaks of Aphrodite's and Ares' secret love affair? It seems improbable that this diversity is accidental. Instead we are left with the impression that a god has given Demodocus the mantic ability to see the truth and this is what inspires the *goos* (Johnston 2008, 112). In other words the *goos* represents not only an instinctual expression of sorrow but seems to be the musical/vocal marker that something supernatural is happening: a god is communicating to human beings in order to generate certain effects. From a narrative point of view Odysseus's *goos* has an explanation: it raises Alcinous' attention on Odysseus' identity and causes the hero to reveal it, which would at last help him to go home. From this perspective the *goos* would assume an additional meaning: the effect of a divine plan.<sup>20</sup> If this is true, the *goos* seems to be a legitimate and pious act, whose sanctity and appropriateness as a ritual is probated through the story of its divine origin. But what happens if it is excessive?

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<sup>19</sup> About the distinction between story-telling and *aoidoi* in Homeric poems see Kirk (1962, 108) and about the audience he had (*idem*, 278-79).

<sup>20</sup> Monsacré (1984, 151-55) highlights how the lament increases Odysseus' heroic dimension through the reference to facts that are narrated in the *Iliad*. 'en temps de serait, pour le héros, comme un prolongement de sa faculté de combattre en temps de guerre' (155). An interesting case of *goos* is the one related to an event that has nothing to do with sorrow, but can rather be considered magical: transformation. As odd as it seems, when one sees a person transforming into someone or something else he utters a *goos*: this happens to Eurilocus after witnessing his comrades' transformation into pigs in *Od.* 10.248 (this verse, as pointed out by Russo, Heubeck and Fernandez-Galiano (1992, 124) is identical to *Od.* 20.349 although there is little in common between the two passages. However they both present a prodigy and a supernatural intervention); and to them when Circe return them to their human shape at *Od.* 20. 398. Similarly in *Od.* 16.214-219 Odysseus' and Telemachus' recognition and *goos* comes immediately after the description of a divine trick and Telemachus seems to suggest at 195-96 that his weeping (*odyromenos*) and groaning (*stenachizō*) depend on a godly charm.

### ***Goos stopped by a god or a daimon: violation of a predefined order?***

The creation of a myth regarding a god's or a *daimon*'s intervention to raise a *goos* seems to be the legitimation and consecration of an act as a ritual act. On the contrary when there are stories about a god's intervention to stop it there might be an unconscious social disapproval for it, when it does not stick to certain rules. The divine intervention in Homer has a narratological explanation in some cases but in some others it is aimed purely at this purpose, as we will see in a few passages in the *Odyssey*.

The first case we are going to discuss is still of the first type. In *Od.* 1.102-322 Athena appears to Telemachus disguising herself as Mentès, the king of the Taphes (105), in order to convince him to leave in search of information about his father. The verse 242-3 is helpful because it reveals the incidence and meaning of the *goos* in Telemachus' life and therefore the importance of its end.<sup>21</sup> His *goos* can be perceived as a lament lasting for years, from infancy to adult age, and its interruption would mark the passage into adulthood. In 296-7 Athena herself would remind him of his being no longer a child: οὐδέ τί σε χρὴ / νηπιῖας ὀχέειν, ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι τηλίκος ἐσσί, 'for it does not beseem you to practice childish ways, since you are no longer of such an age'.<sup>22</sup> In this context the *goos* represents something belonging to childhood, something that needs to be left and be replaced by adult action, and most importantly something that can be stopped only by a god.

If we accept the meaning of *goos* as 'prayer asking for revenge', Athena's intervention is particularly significant. In 253-69 the goddess reveals her daydream about the return of Odysseus the avenger: she says at 265-66 τοῖος ἐὼν μνηστῆρσιν ὁμιλήσειεν Ὀδυσσεύς/ πάντες κ' ὠκύμοροι τε

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<sup>21</sup> οἷχεται ἄϊστος ἄπυστος, ἐμοὶ δ' ὀδύνας τε γόους τε / κάλλιπεν, Odysseus' disappearance has left anguish and *goous* for Telemachus.

<sup>22</sup> De Jong (2001, 33) points out that 'Athena's remark will later prove to be of vital importance to the main story, too: his "starting to grow beard", i.e., **coming of age** [bold in the text], is the natural moment for him to become the new master of the *oikos* and hence for Penelope to remarry (cf. 18.269-70)'. Athena's intervention seems to define his initiation into adult maturity. De Jong again (2001, 34) highlights the importance of the epithet in verse 324 'godlike man': it would give the signal that 'something in the youth has changed; it leads into the next scene, in which he will assert himself'.

γενοίαιτο πικρόγαμοί τε, 'Would, I say, that in such strength Odysseus might come among the suitors; then should they all meet with a swift death and a bitter marriage'. De Jong (2001, 32) comments saying that 'The fact that this \*prolepsis of Odysseus' revenge on the Suitors is voiced by Athena is important; the revenge is divinely sanctified'. If this interpretation is correct, the goddess' apparition would cause the end of the *goos* simply because there is no need for Telemachus to ask for revenge again, as it is something approved by her, and therefore being about to happen. Athena knows that Odysseus is about to arrive in Itaca and now she needs to address Telemachus' anger to action so that he becomes himself instrument of revenge.

This is not the only example where divine interventions determine the end of the *goos*. Some passages show that this happens with no apparent narratological meaning. Penelope's *goos* in 4.722-41 is ended by Eurycleia (743-57) who invites her not to despair for Telemachus' departure and to pray to Athena who may then save him from death, ἀλλ' ὕδρηναμένη, καθαρά χροὶ εἵμαθ' ἐλοῦσα/εἰς ὑπερῶ' ἀναβᾶσα σὺν ἀμφιπόλοισι γυναιξίν /εὔχε' Ἀθηναίη κούρη Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο·/ἢ γάρ κέν μιν ἔπειτα καὶ ἐκ θανάτοιο σαώσαι. Eurycleia's words have an immediate effect: τῆς δ' εὔνησε γόον, σχέθε δ' ὅσσε γόοιο (758), and Athena's indirect intervention changes Penelope's psychological state and gives her relief and hope. Similarly, and even more evidently, in 4.795-801 Athena sends Penelope a phantom in mortal disguise (Iphtime) 'to bid her cease from weeping and tearful *goos*', παύσειε κλαυθοῖο γόοιό τε δακρυόεντος, by telling her that Telemachus will return (805-807) and Athena herself will stand by her son's side (825-27).

There are more passages where Homer emphasizes the necessity to stop Penelope's *goos*. Not only does Athena manifest herself as Hypnos to appease her distress (at 19.603-604: ὄφρα οἱ ὕπνον ἡδὺν ἐπὶ βλεφάροισι βάλε γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη), but in *Od.* 19.262-64 Odysseus himself tells Penelope: 'O woman, whom Laertes' son, Odysseus, has honored, do not mar your loveliness or sap your spirit with unending sadness, with tears (*goos*) for your dear husband' (Mandelbaum 1990) ὦ γύναι αἰδοίη

Λαερτιάδεω Ὀδυσῆος, /μηκέτι νῦν χροῖα καλὸν ἐναίρεο μηδέ τι θυμὸν / τῆκε πόσιν γοώωσα, and at 268 stop your *goos*, ἀλλὰ γόου μὲν. Similarly in *Od.*17.8 Telemachus, referring to his mother, tells Odysseus: ‘she will not cease from woeful wailing and tearful lamentation (*goioio*) until she sees my very self’, οὐ γάρ μιν πρόσθεν παύσεσθαι οἴω / κλαυθμοῦ τε στυγεροῖο γοοῖό τε δακρυόεντος,/ πρὶν γ’ αὐτόν με ἴδῃται·.

Why is Athena so keen on stopping a lament? Are the gods so caring as to worry even if one laments exceedingly? Or is there anything in their *goos* that makes a god feel uneasy? We should reconsider what Penelope says at 19.257-60: τὸν δ’ οὐχ ὑποδέξομαι αὐτίς/ οἴκαδε νοστήσαντα φίλῃν ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν./ τῷ ῥα κακῇ αἴσῃ κοίλῃς ἐπὶ νηὸς Ὀδυσσεὺς/ ὥχετ’ ἐποψόμενος Κακοῖλιον οὐκ ὀνομαστήν, ‘But my husband I shall never welcome back, returning home to his dear native land. Wherefore it was with an evil fate that Odysseus went forth in the hollow ship to see evil Ilios that should never be named’ (Murray 1963). That Penelope says such a thing in front of Odysseus is not only ironic, but probably hides the deep reason for causing Athena’s intervention through Odysseus’ words. The *goos* in these cases is not appropriate as it is excessive. And now we will try to explain why.

### ***The impious side of the goos***

The emphasis that all these passages put on the necessity to stop the *goos* shows that it does not consist of only a simple human expression of sorrow but it is closely related to a divine design. Penelope’s and Telemachus’ *gooi* (4.722-24 and 1.102-322) need to be interrupted because there is no more correspondence between their perception of the divine plans and the real divine will: blaming the gods arbitrarily – Odysseus’ death in both cases and Telemachus’ inglorious disappearance in the sea in

Penelope's – must have meant far more than a simple expression of pessimism and grief. It must sound offensive or at least unjust to the gods and deserving of a prompt reaction from the Olympians.<sup>23</sup>

An impious side of the *goos* – we will say dysphemetic in the next chapter – seems to be implicit in other passages, although it is necessary to inform the reader that from now on we are purely speculating. In *Il.* 24.524 Achilles tells Priam that no profit comes from a chilly lament, ὥς γὰρ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι/ ζῶειν ἀχνυμένοις· αὐτοὶ δέ τ' ἀκηδέες εἰσὶ, 'for so have the gods spun the thread for wretched mortals, that they should live among sorrows; and they themselves are without care' (Murray 1963). The fact that a ceaseless *goos* can have dreadful effects is resumed a few verses later 549-51: ἄνσχεο, μὴ δ' ἀλῖαστον ὀδύρεο σὸν κατὰ θυμόν/ οὐ γάρ τι πρήξεις ἀκαχήμενος υἱὸς ἑῷος/ οὐδέ μιν ἀνστήσεις, πρὶν καὶ κακὸν ἄλλο πάθῃσθα, 'Bear up, and do not grieve ever ceaselessly in your heart; for nothing will you accomplish by grieving for your son, and you will not bring him back to life; before that you will suffer some other ill'. Leaf (1902, 576) explains the passage by saying that Priam would sooner die himself before raising his son from the dead and Richardson (1993, 333) points out that 'it will not do any good'. Having said before that ills and blessing are distributed by Zeus (527-28), we should expect that the ills coming from an excessive *goos* correspond to a divine punishment and we should investigate why the Olympian wants to chastise a person for lamenting ceaselessly. We are only hypothesizing an explanation for this passage but it is possible the inappropriateness of Priam's

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<sup>23</sup> Versnel devotes an entire section to religious mentality in ancient prayer and identifies a group of prayers that he names as 'offensive, indecent and improper' (1981, 21-26). He recognizes that some prayers show dangerous and negative aspects because of their request for revenge – such as the ones written on lead and placed near, on or under the image of Demeter (21-22) – and sometimes even curse gods, such as the revenge text from Pessinus (23). Epicurus' words, quoted by the scholar, well represent how common this practice was in antiquity: 'If God were to grant all wishes and prayers, mankind would soon disappear from the face of the earth, so much evil are men for ever wishing on one another' (25).

*goos* lies in the fact of not corresponding to the divine truth or even accusing the gods and rejecting their decisions.<sup>24</sup>

It is worth also commenting on an apparently meaningless detail in *Il.* 6.385: Andromache is described as γοόωσά in 373 standing on the wall. At 383-86 Hector is looking for her and asks Helen and the servants where she is, and he will be answered that οὔτε πη ἐς γαλόων οὔτ' εἰνατέρων ἐϋπέπλων/οὔτ' ἐς Ἀθηναίης ἐξοίχεται, ἔνθα περ ἄλλαι /Τρῳαὶ ἐϋπλόκαμοι δεινὴν θεὸν ἰλάσκονται,/ ἄλλ' ἐπὶ πύργον ἔβη μέγαν Ἰλίου, οὐνεκ' ἄκουσε [...] ἢ ἐν δὴ πρὸς τεῖχος ἐπειγομένη ἀφικάνει/ μαινομένη ἐκκυῖα, 'neither is she gone to any of your sisters or our brothers' fair-robed wives, nor to the shrine of Athene, where the other fair-dressed Trojan women are seeking to propitiate the dread goddess; but she went to the great wall of Ilios [...]' (Murray 1963).<sup>25</sup> Andromache *goōōsa* (373) on the wall seems to be in stark contrast with the other women who ἰλάσκονται, pray to Athena. She is in eager haste ἐπειγομένη (388) and 'like one beside herself', μαινομένη ἐκκυῖα (389) whereas they are ἐϋπλόκαμοι, fair-haired (LSJ). This would make Andromache and the women contrast not only for the way they look (she resembles a maenad – see also 22.460ff – while the women are composed), but also for the place of their utterance (a shrine on the one hand and a place from which it was possible to see the fighting and deaths on the other). This might mean that the addressee itself was different although we cannot prove it: the women invoke Athena but we cannot say if Andromache is addressing someone in particular. We only have the reference to a *mania*, a word that has also religious meaning, which can fit with the idea of supernatural origin of the *goos*, but this is pure conjecture. Hector's words in 486-89

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<sup>24</sup> The root itself of such ceaseless *goos* can be retraced in passages where the *goos* is clearly referred to as expression of self-destroying attitude: occasionally the *goos* is linked with the *mania* (for example Andromache *Il.* 6.389, Priam 22.413); in other passages Homer seems to suggest that if the *goos* does not reach a surfeit (*koros* *Od.* 4.103) its desire continues torturing the person: here in *Il.* 24.226 Priam risks transforming his desire for a *goos* in presence of his son's body in evil for himself, in *Od.* 4.103 and *Od.* 16.142-45 Menelaus and Laertes respectively refuse to sleep and eat, in *Od.* 11.212 Odysseus would embrace his mother Anticlea endlessly, in *Od.* 19.213 Penelope longs ceaselessly for her husband.

<sup>25</sup> Kirk (1990, 208) adds elements to the characteristic of the place basing himself on 3.149: 'Andromache is on the tower above and to the side of the Scaean gate' and calls this position as 'a place of ill omen' for it is from there that Priam will see Achilles approaching at 21.526f.

are enlightening to understand the meaning of Andromache's words and the reason why it can be considered impious: δαίμωνι μή μοί τι λήν ἀκαχίζεο θυμῷ·οὐ γάρ τίς μ' ὑπὲρ αἶσαν ἀνὴρ Ἄϊδι προΐαψαι· /μοῖραν δ' οὐ τίνα φημι πεφυγμένον ἔμμεναι ἀνδρῶν,οὐ κακὸν οὐδὲ ἐν ἐσθλόν, ἐπὶν τὰ πρῶτα γένηται, 'Dear wife, in no way, I beg you, grieve excessively at heart of me; no man beyond what is fated shall send me to Hades; but his fate, say I, no man has ever escaped, whether he is base or noble, when once he has born.' Murray translates δαίμωνι as 'dear wife' but we should not forget that the original meaning of this word is 'of or belonging to a δαίμων: properly *miraculous, marvelous*' (LSJ) but this is no prove anyway if we consider all the passages where this adjective is used merely to address people.<sup>26</sup> It is worth suggesting that further research can be done on why this adjective has developed such a different meaning and what is the link between them. Instead what is clear from the passage is that fate is decided *a priori* above and there is no way to change it, since such a prayer would go against the divine design. Andromache's prayer is therefore impious as far as it would set the human desires up against the gods' will. It is worth noting that occasionally the *goos* is not impious in the strictest sense but still preserves elements that point at the human mistake towards the gods. In *Od.* 21.238 Odysseus asks Eumaeus to stop uttering the *goos*, παύεσθον κλαυθμοῖο γοοῖό, and we find out a few verses earlier that he has made a prayer to Zeus and all the gods that Odysseus comes back to his home -“Ζεῦ πάτερ, αἶ γὰρ τοῦτο τελευτήσῃας ἐέλδωρ, /ὥς ἔλθοι μὲν κεῖνος ἀνὴρ, ἀγάγοι δέ ἐ δαίμων [...]” (200-1), and ὥς δ' αὐτως Εὐμαιος ἐπεύξατο πᾶσι θεοῖσιν/ νοστήσαι Ὀδυσῆα πολύφρονα ὄνδε δόμονδε (203-4). The invocation is not irreverent for the gods but still it is pointless as Odysseus is already there (and again ironically he is standing in front of the mourner). This explanation seems to fit well also for the passage that we quoted before in *Od.* 19.262-264: Penelope's *goos* expresses a

<sup>26</sup> LSJ: in *Hom.* only in voc., δαίμονι, -ίη, *good sir*, or *lady*, addressed to chiefs or commoners, *Il.* 2.190,200, al., *Hes. Th.* 655: pl., *Od.* 4.774: esp. in addressing strangers, 23.166,174; used by husbands and wives, *Il.* 6.407,486 (Hector and Andromache), 24.194 (Priam to Hecuba): later c. gen., “δαίμονι ἀνδρῶν” *Hdt.* 4.126, 7.48, 8.84: freq. in *Com.*, in an iron. sense, “ὦ δαιμόνι ἀνδρῶν” *Ar. Ec.* 564,784, etc.; “ὦ δαίμονι” *Id. Ra.* 44,175; “ὦ δαίμονι ἀνθρώπων” *Id. Av.* 1638, cf. *Pl.R.* 344d, 522b, *Grg.* 489d, etc.

misjudgment about the gods that needs to be stopped. The *goos* in these passages can be interpreted therefore as a prayer including a fault of will or simply of judgment: it can be a misinterpretation of the gods' decisions or refusal to accept them. We can even say that it has got a provocative mood to the gods as it puts the human being on the same level of knowledge and power of the deities.

This probably explains also the nature of some adjectives often paired with the *goos*. We have already said about the adjective *arêton* at *Il.* 17.37, but we can find more examples of similar terms: *krueros* in *Il.* 24.524, *Od.* 4.103, icy, cold, chilly; *oloos* in *Il.* 23.10, destructive, deadly (LSJ). These adjectives seem to highlight the unpleasant feeling that the *goos* generated in the listener, but the reason of such a psychological impact can be traced in the perception of something impious or disrespectful to the gods.

This point has been well explained by Swift (2010, 298-366) although he concentrates on tragic *kommoi*. Through the characters of Aeschylus' *Persians*, Sophocles' *Electra* and Euripides' *Admetus* in *Alcestitis*, the scholar shows how the heroes' extreme mourning evokes not only Homeric models but also the aristocratic and socially disruptive grief of the pre-Solonian funeral (365). 'Restrictions on mourning were important to the coherence of the *polis*, and Solon's regulations suggest that the Greek were well aware of the negative consequences that uncontrolled and lavish mourning could have. Moreover, the restrictions tie in with the ideology of fifth-century democracy, and the importance of remaining *metrios*' (365).

## CONCLUSION

Through the analysis of Homeric passages we have pointed out that the *goos* is not merely intended as a 'lament' or at least not as an expression of sorrow aimed simply at psychological and social purposes. We have isolated another feature consisting of its connection with the divine and the



invisible world. The *goos* must therefore be considered as a ritual act even when a ghost asks for favours to the living (Patroclus) or a living makes an oath to a dead person (Achilles), when it is a prayer asking an indefinite force for revenge (Euphorbos and family) or is the effect of a divine or demonic revenge on a human being (Aegeseia and Telemachus) and even when Hector's and Patroclus' *psychai* have a sudden and brief vision of the future. The gods themselves approve this activity in the Homeric poems, which gives the *goos* a social legitimation. However, in a few passages the *goos* is stopped by a god, which reveals that occasionally this ritual was perceived as disputable. Its contents often reveal a hazardous attitude toward the gods, either because the person uttering it draws a spontaneous conclusion without questioning its validity, or because the mourner stands up in front of a divine design not accepting his fate.

By using the term 'impious' we interpreted the *goos* by using 'religious' frames as from within Greek society, but we also need interpret the *goos* independently from a religious point of view and see if this ritual act shows links with what Bell defines as 'redemptive hegemony' (1992, 84). Indeed, the *goos* seems to challenge, although in Homer not as systematically as in tragedy, the hierarchy of powers (the Greek idea of the gods) and it therefore seems to fall in what Bell considers the limit of ritual practice as a means of domination and control. 'The power relations constituted by ritualization also empower those who may at first appear to be controlled by them' (207). 'A participant, as a ritualized agent and social body, naturally brings to such activities a self-constituting history that is a patchwork of compliance, resistance, misunderstanding, and a redemptive personal appropriation of the hegemonic order' (208). The ceaseless and excessive *goos* can also be an individual's expression of resistance or misunderstanding to the cruel law of war and the indecipherable plans of the gods.

In the next chapter we are going to investigate how these 'germs' of impiety released by the *goos* – or we may simply say contamination of a predetermined social order – are codified by tragic

poets (Sophocles and Euripides in particular) as dysphemic, that is as a violation of the euphemic prayer.

# CHAPTER 2

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## THE *GOOS* in TRAGEDY

Homer's poems show that not only does the *goos* consist in a lament accompanying the last greeting to a dead person but also a vocal expression aimed at putting human beings in contact with spirits or gods and *vice versa*. Requests for vendetta addressed to souls in the underworld, ability to foresee future events, contacts with dead people, often occur when a *goos* is sung. Malinowski would probably interpret these phenomena as magical rituals, because of their social function of alleviating anxiety (Bell 1997, 28). Hence, the *goos* contains meanings and uses that are linked to a precise area of ritual theories: magic and the power of words.

We cannot address this subject without mentioning Austin (1962). He coined a new word in order to identify a particular type of language which does not just *say* something but performs an action (6): he calls it 'performative'.<sup>1</sup> Besides, Austin (121-23) distinguishes between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, intending by illocutionary a type of act having certain *force* (as exemplified by the sentence: In saying I would shoot him I was threatening him) and by perlocutionary the one by which one achieves certain effects (as shown by the phrase: By saying I would shoot him I was threatening him). We could say, following Austin's theory, that in the Homeric poems the *goos* appears to be an illocutionary act, while we would like to show that in tragedy it is used by poets to mean a perlocutory act.

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<sup>1</sup> We also should remind Austin's six conditions for making a performative work: procedure, appropriateness of person and circumstances, participation of all the participants, completeness of the performative, presence of thoughts and feelings which are consistent to the procedure (sincerity), a certain conduct after the performative (Austin 1962. 14-15).

Before doing so, it is necessary to understand whether the chorus of tragedy is a reliable means to describe ritual facts, and therefore whether the tragic *goos* mirrors the ritual one. Stehle (2004, 126) focuses on frames and conventions in tragic *choereia* and to do so she first identifies two civic modes of approaching the gods: the 'euphemistic rituals' and the 'aischrologic rituals'. By the term *euphemia* Stehle means auspicious speech: it was aimed at stopping someone from continuing to articulate an offensive thought or an ill-omened one in a tense situation; in collective approach to the gods it warned everyone present to avoid any statement or noise that could be construed as negative.<sup>2</sup> The introduction of anything referring to pollution and violence connected with death would be a dysphemic element (143) that the playwright would use to make an impact on the audience through the contrast itself to the expected *euphemia*.<sup>3</sup> Stehle suggests in fact (124) that the choral ritual is metaphorical and might be distorted: 'the markedly non-euphemic chorus can *evoke* ritual only to succumb to the tragic disturbance and violate *euphemia*. Thus the audience might be emotionally engaged by ritual-like song but is protected from thinking that bad ritual has actually been performed in its name'. On the other hand Stehle cautiously introduces another interpretation for what is not euphemic in choral ritual by suggesting that tragedy can be analysed as *aischrologic* in an extended sense and its choral odes as including *aischrologic* speech. *Aischrologic* ritual was associated to Dionysus and Demeter 'and involved calling out obscenities and insults to or about members of the community' (154). It mainly manifests itself in comedy through mocking but it also appears in tragedy by exposing 'hidden disorder at the level of community and cosmos rather than of individual: pollution, curse, disease, violence, the arousal of the dead, sexuality, women's power in reproduction and magic.' The portrayal of failed or perverted ritual in tragedy as symptomatic of human disorder was part of the tragic 'license to speak the

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<sup>2</sup> In Stehle's analysis, euphemistic speech contains three elements: honorific clauses and epithets for the gods or goddesses, affirmation of the ideology of community structure, and attachment of it to local cult and ritual (142).

<sup>3</sup> The euphemistic elements would draw the audience in 'through an emotionally charged *idealization* of the ritual [...] and the more intense a spectator's identification with the choral "I", the more sharply the outburst of violence at the end would intrude on the illusion' (Stehle 2004, 150).

normally unspeakable` (155) but perhaps it also constitutes, Stehle concludes, the peak moments of tragedy's `aischrologic` manifestation of the presence of Dionysus.

If we develop this theory and adapt it to our study, we can first identify the *goos* as belonging to what is defined as `unspeakable` or dysphemic in tragedy. Secondly we need to understand if the *goos* is only a poetic license to violate euphemia or it can be interpreted as a ritual element itself, for bringing on the stage Dionysus. The analysis of the *goos* in the Homeric poems suggests that, when is not excessive, it genuinely consist in a ritual and it is even legitimated by the gods.

In Homer the relation between the vocal performance and the aischrologic facts (the presence of a *daimon*) seems clear in a few passages but whether this relation is one of cause and effect is rarely explicit, while this ratio is more visible in tragedy. Through the analysis of some Aeschylus', Sophocles' and Euripides' passages we will show that tragedy not only confirms the original ritual character of the *goos* (even if Sophocles and Euripides tend to introduce it as a dysphemic element) but also its perlocutionary – or performative – function. It precipitates certain events: the *goos* persuades, enchants and hypnotizes, and therefore exercises a force that acts on minds and souls. In tragedy it is not only in concomitance with the *goos* but also through it that one summons the soul of a dead person, requests a divine or demonic revenge, binds supernatural forces. Similarly, through the *goos* divine powers or spirits communicate a future disaster or the realization of a divine vengeance. The presence of such contexts does not exclude the parallel existence of *gooi* functioning as simple dirge and being an expression of sorrow. However a significant number of cases show that the *gooi* often use a `vertical` type of communication rather than a `horizontal` one, where by vertical communication we intend a contact between `superior` and `inferior` beings.<sup>4</sup> The *goos* sung by a human being could resemble a

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<sup>4</sup> This interpretation fits with the sets of oppositions Bell uses to show a systematic dimension of ritualization (Bell 1992, 125): the first set consists in the `vertical opposition of superior and inferior, which generates hierarchical structures` (the second consists in `the horizontal opposition of here and there, or us and them, which generates

prayer, but the strict link of this utterance with death, violence and pollution makes it more similar to what recent theories of ritual would define as an aischrologic ritual or – in less modern terms – a spell and a magical incantation.

In this chapter we will also consider that the *gooi* are particularly revealing about religion and a change of perception of the *gooi* reflects in fact a change of perception of the deities, at least from the playwrights' point of view. In Aeschylus' plays the *goos* is sometimes called 'paean'. How can a sorrowful expression be associated to a victory song? To explain this apparent contradiction we should point out that the poet perceives vengeance as a socially recognized rule and even as a divine law symbolized by the Erinyes.<sup>5</sup> The *goos* is therefore the term used from a human perspective while the paean is the term representing a divine viewpoint. If revenge has a victim and an agent, in the same way the song representing revenge is a lament for the human being/victim and a song of victory for the Erinyes/agent. In Sophocles and Euripides the synonymy of *goos* and paean seems to disappear, as if to say that retaliation loses divine favour. What does this mean? Is the archaic tit-for-tat principle being replaced by new ideas? Or are new philosophies starting spreading among groups of intellectuals and coexisting with the old creed? And how can the *goos* help in showing these facts?

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lateral or relatively egalitarian relationships'; the third in 'the opposition of central and local, which frequently incorporates and dominates the preceding oppositions').

<sup>5</sup> The presence of vengeance and retaliation as a principle of life, beyond tragedy, is clearly expressed by Visser (1984, 195): '*Poine*, for the Athenians, was part of a honor/shame system, with all the implications which stem from it; and "satisfaction" was an explicit aim of a murder trial. The Law and the State took a hand by forcing the family to submit to the decision of an impersonal jury, but care was taken not to remove the family prerogative to accuse and thereby express outrage'. The Erinyes would be born 'from the merging and intertwining of the normally distinct mechanisms of honor and pollution, of *poine* and *miasma*' (201) and would represent 'the Semnai and settle beneath the Hill of Ares in order to keep the conscience of the people awake with *to deinon*' (206). Parker (1983, 110) explains that 'For Plato too, pollution "comes round to" kinsmen of the victim who fail to bring a prosecution' and 'the victim's kin would have been exposed to supernatural danger as well as public scorn if they failed to seek revenge' (134).

We will try to answer these questions by continuing our analysis of the *gooi* in tragedy. We will divide them into two groups: first the ones uttered by human beings in order to bind supernatural beings; secondly the ones uttered by the spirits of dead people or gods affecting human beings. After this analysis we will discuss how law and oratory speeches portray cursing and revenge and what they condemn of certain practices.

## **GOOS AS A SPELL USED BY HUMAN BEINGS TO BIND SUPERNATURAL POWERS**

### **Goos to summon a ghost**

The first group of *gooi* addressed to ghosts is related to the practice of raising a soul from Hades. We saw that contact between living and dead people is often mentioned in literature. This exceptional event does not happen only when a ghost wants it (e.g. Patroclus appears to Achilles through a dream), but also if a living person intends to communicate with a soul (Odysseus meeting the soul of Tiresias), although this experience requires a guide to do it in a safe way.

Aeschylus links unambiguously the *goos* with this type of experience: the *gooi* are described as *psychagogoi* in *Pers.* 687, an adjective which clearly highlights their active force in summoning a soul from Hades and their persuasive power to make it communicate with the living. At 686-88 the ghost of Darius answers the chorus' summoning prayers: 'and you are standing round my tomb singing songs of grief (*threneit'*), lifting up your voices in wailing (*goois*) to summon my spirit, and calling on me in piteous tones', ὑμεῖς δὲ θρηνεῖτ' ἐγγὺς ἐστῶτες τάφου/ καὶ ψυχαγωγοῖς ὀρθιάζοντες γόοις/ οἰκτρῶς καλεῖσθέ μ' (Sommerstein 2008). Scholars like Lawson (1934, 80-82) and Belloni (1988, 198) do not

want to attribute to these invocations any trace of magic. Broadhead (1960, 305-9) seems cautious on this issue and focuses on Aeschylus' choices to make the *psychagogia* convincing on the stage.<sup>6</sup>

However many other scholars see in this scene a clearly magical ceremony or at least believe in the possibility that Aeschylus' literary choice to use it has some relation with reality (Bruit Zaidman 2005, 109). On a general ground Sourvinou-Inwood (2003, 220-27) points out that this tragedy appears to have been shaped by a ritual matrix and 'The fact that the ritual of the invocation of the ghost of Dareios structures a significant part of the tragedy adds ritual weight to the religious dimension of the tragedy –despite the fact that this is Persian ritual' (226). Furthermore, not only did Headlam (1902, 57) recognize more than a century ago that the prayers sung by the chorus must be regarded as *epoidai*, magic spells, but also Hall (1997, 157) explicitly speaks of necromancy and gives a list of verbs present in the passage that unarguably show a rituality of gestures that must have some foundation in reality.<sup>7</sup>

The Aeschylean interest for these rituals has been recently treated by Bardel in her article 'Spectral traces: ghosts in tragic fragments' (Bardel 2005). Here she analyzes scenes of necromantic practices in fragments of tragedies and also vase-paintings. She mentions Aeschylus' *Psychagogoi* (frs. 273-8 Radt) and contests Headlam's view (1902, 58 when he says that 'no one ever raised a ghost by dancing') by explaining that 'ritual incantation *can* be very effective, for song and dance *can* raise the dead as it does in the *Persae*' (*idem*, 87). In her point of view, this passage – and others, such as Paus. 3.17.7, the scholion on Euripides' *Alkestis* 1128, a (possible) Euripidean fragment (fr. 379a Kannicht), Ar. Av. 1553-64 – 'suggests that necromancy was not perceived as being an exclusively barbarian

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<sup>6</sup> Broadhead (1960, 305-9) points out in particular that differently from the similar scenes in *Odyssey*, 'in Aeschylus the spirit is the traveller, and the tomb is the natural place for his appearance' (306) and that 'Atossa's voice might have alternated with that of the Chorus, but then, as Lawson points out, the scene would have too closely resembled a kommos- Aeschylus was doubtless concerned to keep the scene of evocation enacted by Atossa and the Chorus as different as possible from the scene of lamentation enacted by Xerxes and the Chorus "...'" (306).

<sup>7</sup> From an ethnological point of view it is particularly interesting noting that this type of lament corresponds to the modern *anaklesis* (Alexiou 2002, 109-10), the practice of evoking the dead to rise again. It was used in popular Byzantine laments but also in modern Cypriot dirges.



practice'.<sup>8</sup> A few lines later she adds: 'the consultation of the dead, from the witch of Endor (1 *Sam.* 28.6-25) to a modern individual's consultation of a medium, is a prominent motif that transcends time and space' (*idem*, 87) which shows a certain inclination of the scholar to a magical explanation of the passage. In these fragments we have no direct reference to *gooi* or music of some sort: *fr.* 273a (Radt) contains anapaestic instructions for a sacrifice to the dead, spoken by the chorus to Odysseus (89) and *fr.* 275 (Radt) is part of the raised Tiresias' speech prophesying Odysseus' death. However the passage in *Persians* is revealing about the musical implications of the *gooi* and therefore the link between music and necromancy. In 686 we find θρηνεῖτ' and in 687 the participle ὀρθιάζοντες which can be interpreted as clear reference to the use of the voice. Holst-Warhaft (1995, 130-33) treats this passage from a musicological perspective and understands that 'the relationship between the lament and magic, *goos* and *goeteia*, will become clearer in the *Oresteia*, but here, in the first extant Greek tragedy, we have what seems to be a recognition of the specific magical powers ascribed to the *goos* as a musico-poetical double of Hermes. We are reminded that Hermes was credited with inventing the lyre, and passing it on to Apollo and Orpheus. Orpheus' playing is said to move the psyche, a power he demonstrates by literally moving a psyche from the underworld'.

A link between necromancy and the *gooi* is present in another tragic fragment, again presented by Bardel: Sophocles' *Polyxena* (frs 522-28 Radt). A ghost appears in the play saying: 'I have come, leaving the cheerless and darkly deep shores of the lake, the mighty stream of Acheron echoing with weeping (*goous*) from fierce blows', ἀκτὰς ἀπαίωνας τε καὶ μελαμβαθεῖς/ λιποῦσα λίμνης ἦλθον, ἄρσενας χοὰς / Ἀχέρωντος ὄξυπλήγας ἠχούσας γόους. About the identity of the ghost Bardel (2005, 93-96) reports the previous discussions and she accepts the hypothesis that the ghost is Achilles demanding the sacrifice of Polyxena. Similarly to Darius' ghost, Achilles appears because the nether regions still echo to the sound of wailing that accompanies fierce blows. The force of music as the cause of the

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<sup>8</sup> A detailed explanation of these passages can be found also in Johnston (2005, 287-92).

*nekuomanteia* is very clear in all these passages. In any case we consider these practices –to be reality or simply literary *topoi* as Johnston (2005, 291-92) suggests–, we can still see that in early literature the *gooi* are unarguably perceived and used as both musical and apt to raise the soul of a dead person.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps there is a deliberate contrast between the lake that has no paeans (*apaiōn*) and the echoing streams. Looking closely at the verses containing the evocation in the *Persians* we can see that the old men of the chorus define their prayer as *hymnoi* (625) – Sommerstein translates the verse ‘we in song will beseech those with power [...]’. Aeschylus uses various markers for the noisy nature of these hymns: the *βάγματα* are *δύσθορα* (637), the old men use the verb *διαβοάσω*, ‘to voice loudly’ (638), and occasionally they refer to the hearing *κλύει μου* (639).<sup>10</sup> Particularly interesting is the presence of odd interjections such as *ἦέ* at 651, 656, *οἶ* at 664, 671. LSJ does not provide much help about the meaning of *ἦέ*, but this apparently meaningless repetition of vowels might mask a musical and ritual significance.<sup>11</sup>

It is worth noting the importance of the *Peitho*, as Darius’s words suggest at 697, *σοῖς γόοις πεπεισμένος*, but also the structure itself of the invocation. The persuasive force of the *gooi* consists also of their tribute to the underworld gods: it is for them to decide whether to release a soul, *ἔστι δ’ οὐκ εὐέξοδον/ ἄλλως τε πάντως χοῖ κατὰ χθονὸς θεοὶ/ λαβεῖν ἀμείνους εἰσὶν ἢ μεθιέναι* (688-90).<sup>12</sup> The chorus know this principle and start their invocation addressing the *φθιμένων πομπούς* (626), elsewhere

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<sup>9</sup> It is again Johnston (2008, 97-98) to say that the Greeks ‘had troubles even conceiving of direct contact with the ghosts as either desirable or beneficial. Instead, when they needed to find something out about the world of the dead, they used Delphic Apollo, and to a lesser degree other oracular gods, as their conduits. These gods, who acted as mediating buffers in their difficult situations as well, were far more pleasant interlocutors than the dead could ever be’

<sup>10</sup> Barker (1984, 89) translates the verses 633-39 ‘Does he hear me, the blessed, god-equaling king, as I give forth my clear, barbaric, intricately quivering, everlasting, ill-sounding utterances?’.

<sup>11</sup> It seems worth mentioning that the interjection *ἦέ* appears in *A. Th.* 965 in concomitance with a *goos* and in 979, and then in *Supp.* 831. These utterances occur in sinister contexts: they appear in *Suppliants* in concomitance with a verse that sound like a prophecy and in *Seven against Thebes* they are used respectively immediately after and before verses containing a reference to the *Arai* and *Erinys* and both to the *daimon* of Oedipus (*potnia skia* at 976 and *daimon* at 960). Such elements, as we will see in detail later, are typical of the *goos*.

<sup>12</sup> See also Pulleyn (1997, 122-5): such invocations aimed at begging the permission of the underworld deities to allow the spirits to leave Hades ‘may something that only applied to necromancy’ (124).

called χθόνιοι δαίμονες ἄγνοί (628): Γῆ τε καὶ Ἑρμῇ, βασιλεὺ τ' ἐνέρων, πέμψατ' ἔνερθεν ψυχὴν ἐς φῶς (629-30). Their prayer to Earth, Hermes and the god whose name they are afraid even to name, Hades, points out the priority given to the deities even in businesses where they are not directly involved; the devotees behave as if they cannot obtain any help if they first do not ask permission from the 'masters'. Prayers to the gods occur until the second antistrophe – Γᾶ τε καὶ ἄλλοι χθονίων ἀγεμόνες, / δαίμονα μεγαυχῇ (641- 2) , Αἰδωνεὺς δ' ἀναπομπὸς ἀνείης, Αἰδωνεύς, (650) – and only from 658 they address Darius directly.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Goos to ask for revenge***

The typology of *goos* we are now going to analyze is still addressed to a ghost but aimed at asking for vengeance. This type of prayer was founded on the idea that the dead are like the gods, at least the chthonic ones, in the cult that they received, although they have more restricted sphere of influence. What is most significant is that they are perceived as part of the network of χάρις as much as the gods (Pulley, 131). Literature has provided us with abundant material on the theme and has made possible to understand how revenge and *goos* are linked, but also how the perception of this type of *goos* and concomitantly the portrayal of gods has changed from Aeschylus to Euripides.

### ***Goos and revenge in Aeschylus' Choephoroi***

We will start by taking into account a passage that is not explicitly called *goos* but, in our opinion, works well to introduce the theme of revenge as ritual prayer. A. *Ch.* 124-51 is in fact not

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<sup>13</sup> It is worth remembering Pulley (1997, 96-115). The scholar examines how important it was for the Greeks to know the name of the gods in order to communicate with them. However, he points out that they need to utter the names of the gods, and enumerate as many details as possible about their life and works, not because they thought that otherwise prayers would not arrive to the recipients, but because this practice would delight them (106). Reciting the god's attributes is a hymnic tradition that can be traced back to Indo-European tradition.

lyrical and it is not called *goos*. However, we have two reasons to think that the passage is an important element in understanding the *goos*.

As for the first issue, the fact of not being sung, we should remember that in Aeschylus' tragedies monodies were not as common as in the later plays.<sup>14</sup> Solos were probably unconventional and used only if necessary. Garvie (1986, 82) suggests that the verses 124-51 are recited, and not sung, for internal structural reasons.<sup>15</sup> However, besides this explanation, we should consider that in this passage a solo performed by Electra would sound unsuitable for the simple fact that Aeschylus places a long *kommos* at 306-478 that resumes the same theme and is sung by three characters (for the first time in tragedy). A choral performance would not be appropriate either for the plot itself because Electra plays a central role in calling her father's help and punishing the murderers. Despite the not lyrical nature of this section Aeschylus makes it solemn enough by adding a short lyrical part sung by the chorus at 152-63. As for the second issue, the absence of terminology referring to the *goos*, we can find other expressions (specifically: *παῖνα τοῦ θανόντος* at 151) whose link – or even synonymy – with the *goos* will be analyzed closely and possibly proved.

Analogies with the *psychagogoi gooi* can also be easily identified. a) Electra's prayer is addressed to the chthonian deity Hermes Ἑρμῆ χθόνιε 124b so that the god aids her by making proclamation on her behalf ἄμφω τοῖς γῆς ἔνερθε δαίμονας (125) who watch over my father's house, that they should hear my prayers, and to Earth herself γαῖαν αὐτήν (127),

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<sup>14</sup> For an analysis of the history of monodies, see Battezzato (2005, 153): 'In Aeschylus and Sophocles we do not find any self-contained section where a single actor sings alone'. In *Agamemnon* Cassandra sings a long lyric passage, but as a part of a dialogue with the chorus. In the prologue of *Prometheus Bound* the protagonist alternates spoken and sung sections (88-127) and later in the play Io recites some anapests and then sings a long lyric section (561-608).

<sup>15</sup> About Electra's prayer and the chorus' song Garvie points out that they are framed 'on one side by rhesis + stichomitia, on the other by stichomitia + rhesis, and 167 parallels 108. The 18 lines of stichomitia (106-23) are symmetrically balanced by the same number (164-82), while the 29 lines of Electra's speech (183-211) correspond to the 29 lines of her prayer (124a-151). It is impossible to tell whether this is mere coincidence'.

(Pulleyn 1997, 123). b) After this, similarly to the passage in the *Persians*, Electra makes her holy water libations χέουσα τάσδε χέρνιβας νεκροῖς (129), invokes her father (130 -148) and addresses him by using the second person ἐποικτιρόν (130), σὺ κλῦθί μου (139) δὸς (140) σοῦ (143) ἴσθι (147).<sup>16</sup> c) The memory of the betrayal and the crime functions as *captatio benevolentiae* of Agamemnon – or as a means to taunt him, as Pulleyn says (1997, 127) –, similarly to the praise in the song addressed to Darius in the *Persians*. This would work to captivate the dead king's favour – and his anger. d) The imperative form is used frequently (130, 139, 140, 147, similarly to κλύει μου in *Pers.* 639, ἴθι ἰκοῦ in 658, βάσκε in 663, 671, φάνηθι in 666-7) in the prayer to Agamemnon and again expressions connected with the hearing are present, which makes us think that the use of a powerful voice was probably necessary in the ritual in order to call the dead's attention. Pulleyn points out that these imperatives were especially associated with prayer (148) and although he rejects the idea that these are to be interpreted as magical, he also notes that contexts such as psychagogy, or at least the invocation of a hero, can safely be called magical (140).

After the *captatio benevolentiae*, the requests follow and one in particular is clearly expressed (145: ταῦτ' ἐν μέσῳ τίθημι): that an avenger comes and the murderers die, ἐλθεῖν δ' Ὀρέστην δεῦρο σὺν τύχηι τινὶ (138) λέγω φανῆναι σοῦ, πάτερ, τιμᾶορον,/ καὶ τοὺς κτανόντας ἀντικατθανεῖν δίκηι (143-45).<sup>17</sup> Further evidence that this section can be identified as a *goos* is at 150-151 where Electra refers clearly to a ritual lament: 'the custom is for you to adorn them (the libations) with wailing, uttering a paeon to the deceased' (Sommerstein, 2008), ὃ ἄς δὲ κωκυτοῖς ἐπανθίζειν νόμος, / παῖᾶνα τοῦ θανόντος ἐξαυδωμένας.<sup>18</sup> The following verses (152-63) constitute the choral hymn, alias the *kokutos* or the paeon

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<sup>16</sup> About the use of these imperatives see also Pulleyn (1997, 136-55).

<sup>17</sup> Garvie (1986, 80) points out that 'Electra keeps her two prayers separate, that for the vengeance and that for the return of Orestes', and 'is reluctant to name Orestes as the avenger' as well as to name Clytemnestra as the killer (τοὺς κτανόντας 144),

<sup>18</sup> Garvie (*idem*, 81) points out that the verb ἐπανθίζειν = to crown with flower of lamentations occurs metaphorically at *Sept.* 951, *Ag.* 1459

This lyrical section has raised a lot of discussions among the scholars, on account of interpretative difficulties in verses 152-56, ἴετε δάκρυ καναχῆς ὀλόμενον/ ὀλομένωι δεσπóται/ πρὸς ῥέυμα τόδε κεδνῶν κακῶν τ’/ἀπότροπον, ἄγος ἀπεύχετον /κεχυμένων χοᾶν.<sup>19</sup> The problem starts in particular from the combination of the words ἀπότροπον, averting the evil, ἄγος, pollution, ἀπεύχετον, abominable, and κεχυμένων, offerings. The central question is *what* is impure, whether the tears, the tomb or the libations. Nenci and Arata (1999, 191-2), besides reporting the controversy, point out that Aeschylus himself could have deliberately presented these libations as an ambiguous act.<sup>20</sup> In that case the word *agos* is in apposition with a noun (libations) that contains nothing negative. Instead, what is negative is the ritual itself, `giacchè in realtà fare libagioni contro Clitemnestra non è ritualmente normale` (*idem*, 192). The abnormal nature of the libations is that they are made *against* someone. This would explain why at 145-6 Electra speaks of a κακὴν ἄραν, a full-blown prayer for evil, having *ara* not only the meaning of `curse` but also that of `prayer`, as Corlu points out (1966, 261).<sup>21</sup> The *ara* consists therefore in something different from a simple outburst of anger: Electra and the chorus expect revenge, and therefore action, against Clytemnestra. In other words the plea has a performative and not only a descriptive meaning and, what is more, is fully justified by the idea that the mind of the dead person

<sup>21</sup> E. Or. 1241, perhaps *Ph.* 1364. See also *LSJ*: the first meaning is prayer, *Il.* 15.378, 598, 23.199, *Hes.Op.* 726, *Pi. I.* 6(5).43.

continues existing and preserving feelings of rage and vengeance. A few verses later in the same play (324-325) Aeschylus seems to say that the mind of a dead person is still very strong, φρόνημα τοῦ θανόντος οὐ δαμάζει πυρὸς μαλερὰ γνάθος, φαίνει δ' ὕστερον ὀργάς, 'the spirit of the dead is not subdued by the ravaging jaws of fire and in the end he makes his anger manifest'.<sup>22</sup>

Now we are going to observe closely the long *kommos* at *Ch.* 306-476, a section that Sourvinou-Inwood (2003, 233) considers as a 'sophisticated deployment of a ritual'. Our intent is to prove that the *kommos*, besides being a lyrical dialogue between the chorus, Electra and Orestes, is a proper binding spell aimed at making revenge come about.

References to the word *goos* (321, 330, 449) and to performances such as the *threnos* 336, 342 and the *oimoge* 433 should help us to identify the performance as a *goos*. The whole lyric seems to be orientated to express anger and desire of revenge and from the very beginning the song manifests itself as a prayer addressing the 'mighty Fates', ὦ μεγάλοι Μοῖραι (306), and referring to τὸ δίκαιον (308) and τοῦφειλόμενον (310).<sup>23</sup> Moirai (306), Zeus (306, 382) or Justice (311) are not only symbols for eternal and absolute revenge but are the powers who will allow the vengeance to happen. 'Now you mighty Fates, by the will of Zeus let things end in the way in which Justice is now in pursuit! "For

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<sup>22</sup> For the meaning of *phronema* see Fraenkel (1950) on verse 739. We should mention the importance of the *orge* of the dead in the choral stanza in *Ch.* 323-31: nobody can escape the anger of a soul. Some translations (e.g. Johnston and Lloyd-Jones) consider ὁ βλάπτων at 328 as the person who committed the murder but there are some objections to this interpretation. Garvie already pointed out that the subj. of *phainei* is the dead man and that the murdered man reveals his anger later. Although soften, the idea that the mind of the dead person is still strong is suggested by *E. Or.* 675: the intimidation that Orestes addresses to Menelaus is 'an extravagant mixture of ideas' to use Willink's words (1986, 190), and certainly frightening: θανόντ' ἀκούειν τάδε δόκει, ποτωμένην ψυχὴν ὑπὲρ σοῦ, καὶ λέγειν ἀγὼ λέγω [ταῦτ' εἰς τε δάκρυα καὶ γόους καὶ συμφορὰς] 'Uncle, my father's own brother, imagine that the dead man beneath the earth hears all this! Imagine him as a soul hovering over you, speaking my words!' (Kovacs 2002).

<sup>23</sup> and later in the lyric also τὸ μόρσιμον ... πάλαι (464) 'Moira is the goddess who sees to it that this connection between cause and effect, i.e., in the sphere of moral or legal obligations, between debt and payment, or between guilt and atonement, is safeguarded against any disturbance; in this capacity Moira is nearly related to Erinys, and it is no accident that Dike, too, is her companion' (Fraenkel on *Ag.* 1535ff).

hostile words let hostile words be paid” – so Justice cries out aloud, demanding what she is owed- “and for a bloody stroke let the payment be a bloody stroke” For him who does, suffering – that is what the old, old saying states` (Sommerstein 2008), ἀλλ’ ὃ μεγάλοι Μοῖραι, Διόθεν /τῆιδε τελευτᾶν/ἦι τὸ δίκαιον μεταβαίνει·/ ἀντὶ ἐν ἐχθρᾷς γλώσσης ἐχθρὰ/ γλῶσσα τελείσθω· τοῦφειλόμενον / πρᾶσσουσα Δίκη μέγ’ ἀντεῖ·/ ἀντὶ δὲ πλὴγῆς φονίας φονίαν/ πλὴγὴν τινέτω. δρᾶσαντα παθεῖν,/ τριγέρων ὕθος τάδε φωνεῖ. Holst-Warhaft (1992, 146) already pointed out that this *kommos* is the manifestation of the power of the lament as a ‘bridge between the upper world of light and the darkness of the underworld’. It preserves elements that we are familiar with, and that at this point we can consider as conventional of the *goos*, such as the insisting addressing of the father through the vocative and through verbs in the imperative form, prayers and invocations to deities,<sup>24</sup> arguments that have the objective to attract the favour of the deceased by raising his anger,<sup>25</sup> and by remembering the past majesty of the dead and his family.<sup>26</sup>

The verses 330-31 communicate the essence of the *goos* as a lamentation that when ‘is stirred up in full abundance tracks down vengeance’ (Sommerstein 2008), γόος ἔνδικος ματεύει/ ποινὰν ἀμφιλαφῶς παραχθείς. The *goos* – as Holst-Warhaft explains (1992, 147) – is ‘not only performing a bridging function between the two worlds, but actively involved in the process of revenge’. The verb παραχθείς itself at 331 would stir up the emotions of the living and the dead, drawing them out of their

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<sup>24</sup> Vocatives: ὦ πάτερ αἰνόπατερ at 315, ὦ πάτερ at 332, πάτερ at 346, 364, 456; imperatives: κλῦθί at 332, γράφου at 450, συντέτραινε at 452, ὄργα μαθεῖν at 454, ξυγγενοῦ at 456, ἄκουσον at 459, ξὺν δὲ γενοῦ at 460; invocatons to deities Ζεῦ Ζεῦ at 380-385, κλῦτε δὲ Γᾶ χθονίων τε τιμαί at 399, καὶ πότ’ ἂν ἀμφιθαλῆς Ζεὺς ἐπὶ χεῖρα βάλοι, φεῦ φεῦ, κάρανα δαΐζας at 394-396, πόποι δᾶ νερτέρων τυραννίδες at 405, τις τράποιτ’ ἄν, ὦ Ζεῦ at 409, ἰὼ θεοί, κραίνετ’ ἐνδίκως <λιτάς> at 462, θεῶν <τῶν> κατὰ γᾶς ὅδ’ ὕμνος at 475, ἀλλὰ κλύοντες, μάκαρες χθόνιοι, τῆσδε κατευχῆς πέμπετ’ ἄρωγὴν at 476-477.

<sup>25</sup> His son and daughter suffer for their condition of exile and suppliant 332-340, his power is now in Clitemnestra’s and her lover’s hands 376-378, the glory of Atreides has been reduced to nothing 406-408, the funeral that Agamemnon received from his wife was without cortege and lament 429-433, his wife also cut his hands and his feet in order to avoid his anger 439-443, his daughter has been segregated, despised and left without honor 444-445

<sup>26</sup> γόος εὐκλεῆς Ἀτρεΐδαις 321-322, the memory of Agamemnon’s sovereignty (354-362); the desire that thing had gone differently (345-353; 363-371).



inertia'. A crescendo of rage and desire for revenge indeed is visible through the strophes.<sup>27</sup> The superior personality of the chorus – which is in neat contrast with the desperate condition and the weaker dramatic presence of Electra and Orestes – seems in fact to point out a precise strategy, a thread leading directly to an aim: arousing in them the will of taking revenge. However the performance does not involve only brother, sister and the chorus because it seems that a fourth mute character is there, the demon of Agamemnon: 'The spirit of the dead is not subdued by the ravening jaws of fire, and in the end he makes his anger manifest' (324-26), τέκνον, φρόνημα τοῦ θανόντος οὐ δαμά-/ζει πυρὸς μαλερὰ γνάθος, /φαίνει δ' ὕστερον ὀργάς; 'hearken, rise to the light, and be with us against our foes' (459-60), ἄκουσον ἐς φάος μολών,/ξὺν δὲ γενοῦ πρὸς ἐχθρούς. The combination of these two elements – the insistent attitude of the chorus and the perception of the presence of Agamemnon's ghost – makes this performance similar to a long spell. According to 420-22, Electra is the first to respond to the chorus' provocation at 400-4 (Holst-Warhaft 1995, 148): 'She may fawn on us, but they cannot be soothed; for like a savage-hearted wolf, we have a rage, caused by our mother, that is past fawning', πάρεστι σαίνειν, τὰ δ' οὔτι θέλγεται· /λύκος γὰρ ὥστ' ὠμόφρων ἄσαντος ἐκ/ ματρός ἐστι θυμός. 'The monstrous imagery associated with Clytemnestra in Agamemnon has passed down to the female line, through the medium of the lament' (*idem*, 149) while Orestes is still full of despair. Then the second section starts and from

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<sup>27</sup> It starts with Orestes' prayer addressed to Zeus in order to receive Ate from the world below and 'to pay back the wickedness brought on by human hands' (382-385). Then the chorus themselves say that they will intone a cry of triumph when they will see the murderers stabbed, being too much their resentment and grudge (386-392). Electra is waiting for Zeus' intervention on their head and says 'when will mighty Zeus strike them with his fist—split their skulls apart!' and seeks for her land receives 'some sign of faith' and the "rights of justice" (394-399), while Orestes invokes directly the dead' Arai, the goddesses of destruction and revenge, and ask them to watch the remnant of the line of Atreus (400-404). Interesting is also the presence of animals which make these picture even more concrete and efficacious, for example at 420-422 ('like a fierce-hearted wolf the temper we have acquired from our mother is implacable'), and especially reveal the 'angry' nature of the *goos*, as well as at 446-449 'kenneled in my room as if I were a vicious cur, I gave free vent to my streaming tears'. At 436-438 all these feeling are expressed very clearly by Orestes: he himself want to be the one who converts in action the deities' will by taking revenge on his mother and then he will be ready to die: 'yet with the help of the gods, and with the help of my own hands, will she not atone for the dishonor she did my father? Let me only take her life, then let me die!'. It is only pointing out the vindictive nature of the *goos* that we can understand why Clytemnestra rejects any sort of ritual lament for her husband (432-433): fear is always justifiable and comes to the point of cutting off a murder victim's hands and feet and tying them around his elbows – this practice is called *maskhalismos* – in order to prevent the ghost from pursuing the murderer.

now on the chorus succeed in rousing also his fury. The memory of the absence of proper mourning rites (430-33) and the mutilation of Agamemnon's body (440) touch off Orestes' wrath: 'You tell a tale of utter degradation! Well, she shall pay for degrading my father, with the help of the gods and with the help of my hands' (435-37), τὸ πᾶν ἀτίμως ἔρεξας, οἴμοι,/ πατρός δ' ἀτίμωσιν ἄρα τείσεις/ ἕκατι μὲν δαιμόνων, /ἕκατι δ' ἄ ἄν χερῶν. The *goos* becomes therefore the memory of the sufferings that needs to be registered in Orestes' mind: 'such is the tale you must hear: record it in your mind', τοιαῦτ' ἀκούων < > ἐν φρεσὶν γράφου (450) and 'yes record it, and let the words pierce right through your ears to the quiet depths of your mind', <γράφου>, δι' ὧτων δὲ συν/τέτραινε μῦθον ἡσύχῳ φρενῶν βάσει (451). The *goos* is like a seal on the *phren*, that internal part of the person which will appear again in the curse tablets as the force to be kept distant from Faraone (1985, 152).<sup>28</sup> After this point Orestes seems to be possessed by Agamemnon's spirit and the three characters are now in unison in invoking his help from the underworld. This is therefore the objective of this incredible performance: to force the only male survivor to be the agent of revenge. However, before this happens, the chorus need to work hard to convince – we would rather say to enchant – Orestes to do so. This passage is a kind of precursor to the 'binding song' in the *Erinyes* (331-32, 344-5), the *hymnos desmios* that the Furies sing 'to bind the wits of their opponent to prevent him from mounting a strong defense' (Faraone 1985, 152). The song performed by the chorus in *Choephoroi* and by the Furies in *Eumenides* is a speech act whose function is not to describe but to carry out a performance (Prins 1991, 184): it is a song 'in which to say something is to do something; or in which by saying or in saying something we are doing something' (Austin 1962, 12). The introduction of this performance implies, as in the case of Darius' summoning in the *Persians*, Aeschylus' idea that a communication with the deceased is possible (Bruit Zaidman 2005, 109).

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<sup>28</sup> Faraone notes that 'The Erinyes, as portrayed by Aeschylus in *Eumenides*, are litigants in a forthcoming murder trial who have recourse to a judicial curse. They attempt to bind the wits of their opponent in order to prevent him from mounting a strong defence. This is clear from the explicit mention of the φρένες as the target of their binding song'.

As a corollary, we wonder if the strong link with death, violence and more in general with pollution can be interpreted as the aischrologic presence of Dionysus in the choreia of the *Choephoroi*, to use Stehle's argument. Indeed, the study of the Dionysiac dimension in Greek tragedy has moved into an important new phase: tragic chorus is not perceived as a simple replica of some remote ancestors but is studied in the contemporary framework of the *polis* religion and of actual Dionysiac cult. Henrichs (1994-95, 60) points out how choral self-referentiality marks the chorus' Dionysiac identity. Sophocles and Euripides tend to endow their self-referential choruses with a distinct Dionysiac identity while Aeschylus seems to make less use of them. *Choephoroi*, despite the distinct ritual role of the chorus, do not make reference to the choral dancing and singing. However the scholar points out that at *Ch.* 458 the reference to *stasis*, similarly to *A. Eum.* 311, can be interpreted as "a collective self-reference" to the chorus in this case performing the conjuration of Agamemnon's ghost (62). This would show that ritual performance and choral self-referentiality go hand in hand and Aeschylus might well, according to the scholar, foreshadow this trend for the kind of frenzy that connotes Dionysiac ritual.<sup>29</sup>

### ***Goos and revenge in Sophocles' Electra***

The theme of revenge of Orestes and Electra is treated by Sophocles in *Electra* 86-250 and we can also realize that the younger poet changes a bit his perspective about the practice, at least if we consider the role of the chorus. It is undeniable that the performance includes *goos* (104, 139, 244), *threnos* (88, 94, 104, 232), *stonache* (133, 141) and *oimoge* (123) as well as the conventional elements to ask for vengeance, such as the invocation to the deities of the underworld (Hades, Persephone,

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<sup>29</sup> What in Homer was simply 'demonic' (as indicating the presence of a *daimon*) might be codified by Aeschylus as Dionysiac, that is indicating the presence of Dionysus.

Hermes, Curse and the Erinyes) at 110-12, ὃ δ᾽ ᾿Αΐδου καὶ Περσεφόνης, / ὃ χθόνι ᾿Ερμῇ καὶ πότνι Ἀρά, / σεμναί τε θεῶν παῖδες ᾿Ερινύες.

The desire for revenge is still very strong in Electra's words. She remembers Agamemnon's death at 97-100 ( 'but my mother and her bedfellow, Aegisthus, split his head with a murderous axe, as woodmen split an oak', μήτηρ δ' ἡ ἡ χῶ κοινολεχῆς/ Αἴγισθος ὅπως δρῦν ὑλοτόμοι/ σχίζουσι κάρα φονίῳ πελέκει) and bemoans his condition of being unmourned at 101-2 ( 'And from none but me does his due of lamentation come, though his death was so dreadful and so pitiful', κοῦδεὶς τούτων οἶκτος ἀπ' ἄλλης / ἢ ᾿μοῦ φέρεται, σοῦ, πάτερ, οὕτως/ αἰκῶς οἰκτρῶς τε θανόντος); then she makes an explicit request at 113-17 ( 'revered children of the gods who look upon those wrongfully done to death, who look upon those who dishonor the marriage bed in secret, come bring help, avenge the murder of our father, and send to me my brother!', αἱ τοὺς ἀδίκως θνήσκοντας ὀρᾷθ', / αἱ τοὺς εὐνὰς ὑποκλεπτομένους, / ἔλθετ', ἀρήξατε, τείσασθε πατρὸς / φόνον ἡμετέρου, / καὶ μοι τὸν ἐὼν πέμψατ' ἀδελφόν) and later at 209-12 ( 'May the great god of Olympus give them suffering in return, and may they never have joy of their splendor, they who did such a deed!', οἷς θεὸς ὁ μέγας Ὀλύμπιος/ ποίνιμα πάθεα παθεῖν πόροι, / μηδέ ποτ' ἀγλαΐας ἀποναΐατο/ τοιάδ' ἀνύσαντες ἔργα) (Lloyd-Jones 1994).

However it is worth noting a detail that has not been commented on enough by previous scholars about the role of the chorus, e.g. March (2001, 143-55) and Paduano (1982, 234-250). The women are not playing the part of those who want to arouse Electra's fury but they are doing the exact opposite.<sup>30</sup> Their intent is somehow to reduce her vengefulness and rage against her mother. They even

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<sup>30</sup> Foley (2001, 36) points out that 'Sophocles's *Electra* deliberately separates Orestes from the tempting, emotive sphere represented by his sister's lamentation, whereas Aeschylus chose to dramatize Orestes' move to revenge in a far more emotional and ritual context in which women traditionally played the leading role.[...] Sophocles shows an Electra attempting and ultimately failing to carry out her Aschylean role in stirring vendetta through lament. The chorus and Chrysothemis respond but fear to help; Orestes' appearance is long-delayed and he is motivated to act decisively not by Electra but by the pedagogue' (36).

belittle the power of the *gooi* by saying at 137-39: 'But you will never raise up your father from the lake of Hades, to which all must come, by weeping (*gooisin*) or by prayers!', ἀλλ' οὔτοι τόν γ' ἐξ Αἶδα/παγχοίνου λίμνας πατέρ' ἀν-/στάσεις οὔτε γόοισιν, οὐ λιταῖς. Then they call Electra's attitude 'beyond due limits', ἀπὸ τῶν μετρίων, (140) and even show better understanding of Chrysothemis' and Iphianassa' attitude to the loss at 153-57 ('not to you alone among mortals, my child, has sorrow been manifest, a sorrow that you suffer beyond others in the house with whom you share your lineage and our blood, such as Chrysothemis and Iphianassa', οὔτοι σοὶ μούνα, /τέκνον, ἄχος ἐφάνη βροτῶν,/ πρὸς ὃ τι σὺ τῶν ἔνδον εἶ περισσά, /οἷς ὁμόθεν εἶ καὶ γονᾶ ξύναιμος,/ οἷα Χρυσόθεμις ζῶει καὶ Ἰφιάνασσα).

The chorus show a very different attitude to the divine compared to the chorus in Aeschylus: in the *Libation Bearers* the *are* – as Aeschylus calls the prayer for revenge – is considered undeniably just and pious which probably means that the gods are believed to satisfy someone's desire for retaliation. On the contrary, the properness and justice of this desire seems to be questioned here: at 127 the chorus says something that we would never hear in the Aeschylean one 'May the doer perish, *if it is right for me to speak this word!*', ὥς ὁ τάδε πορὼν/ ὄλοιτ', εἴ μοι θέμις τάδ' αὐδᾶν. They address the gods in a softer way, saying 'Zeus is still great in heaven, he who surveys all things and rules them' (174-5), ἔτι μέγας οὐρανῷ/ Ζεὺς, ὃς ἐφορᾷ πάντα καὶ κρατύνει· as if they were afraid that Electra's feelings would offend the Olympian god, and even introduce an unconventional god – we should say the personification of a concept –: Chronos, the god who brings relief (179), χρόνος γὰρ εὐμαρῆς θεός. The binding spell is not choral anymore since the chorus seems to perceive this prayer as a dangerous practice, as their outburst shown by 233-35 'Well, I speak as a well-wisher, like a mother in whom you can have trust, telling you not to create misery by means of misery!', ἀλλ' οὖν εὐνοίᾳ γ' αὐδῶ, / μάτηρ ὥσεί τις πιστά,/ μὴ τίκτειν σ' ἅταν ἄταις and 177 'do not be angry in excess against your enemies', μὴθ' οἷς ἐχθαίρεις ὑπεράχθεο μήτ' ἐπιλάθου. This different perspective might be one of the reasons, besides a stylistic choice, for choosing to avoid formulas like the imperatives *kluthi* that we have found in the

previous cases of *goos* or the several allusions to the hearing sense and the use of the voice.<sup>31</sup> It seems that Sophocles deliberately avoids endorsing the ‘dysphemic’ – to use Stehle’s term – side of the *goos*. Swift emphasizes this point by saying that the chorus’s reservations and moralizing platitudes ‘remind the audience of the socially approved attitude towards grief and mourning, and hence underscore Electra’s isolation from the norms of Greek society’ (2010, 339). Furthermore, the whole play uses grief and mourning to explore the issue of justice: ‘excessive mourning is portrayed as inextricably linked to tit-for tat violence’, as Swift says (2010, 349-50). Sophocles therefore raises a new concern, which was absent in Aeschylus, about the destructive effects and disturbing nature of the link between grief and vengeance. He therefore breaks the tradition (if we can consider Aeschylus as such) by introducing new lighter themes, such as elements of nature (φάος, the sunlight and ἀήρ, the air, are invoked at 86-87, or her bed and her house participating in her desperation and lament at 92-3)<sup>32</sup> and the comparison with the nightingale (107-109).<sup>33</sup>

This different perspective seems to us important in order to show a difference between Aeschylus and Sophocles on a religious field. This divergence however does not necessarily show a change in the way death must be perceived, but rather the coexistence of an old creed – which is confirmed by the presence of dysphemic *gooi* – with new ideas.<sup>34</sup> As a conclusion we should remember

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<sup>31</sup> Swift points out (2010, 343) that perhaps in a sort of ironic contrast with the ones used in Aeschylus, the imperatives in this *kommos* are used by the chorus to warn Electra to be silent (213) and endure (220) and by Electra to ask the chorus to leave her in peace (229).

<sup>32</sup> Seaford (1994, 276) points out that the ideas expressed through these invocation can be found in the mysteries. ‘The appearance of (torch)light in darkness marked the transition of the initiands from ignorance and suffering. There are fifth-century BC indications that Eleusinian torchlight as identified with a deity – whether Dionysus-Iakchos or Ploutos, who were in the Eleusinian context also by this time it seems identified with each other’.

<sup>33</sup> It is however worth noting how Swift interprets the presence of ‘the child-killer, nightingale’ here: ‘Casting Electra as Procne is therefore troubling for it undermines her self-presentation as a pitiful victim and instead portrays her as a murderous figure, foreshadowing the killing of Clytemnestra. The nightingale simile thus alludes to destructive potential inherent in Electra’s grief, and encourages us to perceive it not simply as an understandable response to her situation but as a problematic attitude which may lead to violence’ (Swift 2010, 338-9).

<sup>34</sup> The democratic reforms of Kleisthenes in 507 BC and then the development of Athens’ empire in the fifth century are believed to have had an impact on religious aspects (Price 1999, 79). On the one hand the division into villages (*demes*) would encourage the individual choice to participate to local cults (108) and probably the

Electra's words at 239-44: 'May I never enjoy honour among such people, and never may I live contentedly with any good thing I may have, if I restrain the wings of loud lamentation (*oxytónōn góōn*), dishonouring my father', μήτ' εἶην ἔντιμος τούτοις/ μήτ', εἴ τῳ πρόσκειμαι χρηστῷ, / ξυνναίοιμ' εὐκηλος, γονέων/ ἐκτίμους ἴσχουσα πτέρυγας/ ὀξυτόνων γόων. The tremendous effects of the *goos* are so frightful that Clytemnestra herself –Electra reports at 291-292 – reacts to her daughter's *goos* by saying 'Accursed, hateful creature, are you the only one that has lost a father? Does no other mortal mourn a loss? May you perish miserably, and may the gods below never release you from your lamentation!', ὦ δύσθεον μίσημα, σοὶ μόνῃ πατὴρ/ τέθνηκεν; ἄλλος δ' οὔτις ἐν πένθει βροτῶν;/ κακῶς ὄλοιο, μηδὲ σ' ἐκ γόων ποτὲ/ τῶν νῦν ἀπαλλάξαιαν οἱ κάτω θεοί.<sup>35</sup> Similarly Chrysothemis refers to Electra the murderers' intentions, 'if you do not leave off these lamentations, they pain to send you where you shall no longer see the light of the sun [...], 'μέλλουσι γάρ σ', εἰ τῶνδε μὴ λήξεις

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diffusion of elective cults. These cults had the peculiarity to create a religious sanctioned way of life. Price mentions the initiates at Samothrace who 'were formally described as pious', and Eleusinian initiates who 'were expected to live their lives piously in relation to foreigners and ordinary people' (122). Particularly important are Orphics and Pythagoreans, who both held that the souls of the dead were later reborn in this world (122). On the other hand the tribute to Athens, the transfer of the Delian League's treasury from Delos to Athens and the participation of the allies to festivals and drama representation, the exploitation of the religious value of Eleusis contributed to open the initiation in the Eleusinian Mysteries to all Greeks, and to Greek-speaking non-Greeks (80).

A change in religion is also pointed out by Parker (1996, 152-98). He describes the religious situation in the fifth century as changing because of the diffusion of 'foreign' cults. However, he also notes that 'foreignness can be a metaphor, a way of indicating the strangeness of the experience associated with the god.' (160). There are archaeological evidence that the Magna Mater entered Greece from Asia, but we cannot say the same in Dionysus' case. Although the unlicensed gods are exposed to suspicion and hostility, Parker thinks of their arrival as a fact within the context of a perpetual change, rather than an isolated phenomenon (163). This happened through syncretism, which is described by Parker (idem, 189) as a means of assimilating and domesticating the potentially disquieting foreign power. This happened in Cybele's case, which was assimilated to Rhea, Earth and Demeter. As the scholar points out 'The Greek sense of order [...] curbed the ugliest excesses of the original devotion' (191). This is how gods such as Bendis of Thrace, Egyptian Ammon, Heavenly Aphrodite, Sabazius and Adonis entered Greek Olympus without necessarily being expelled from the state despite being worshipped through unconventional and orgiastic rituals ('homeopathic ritual in which madness is cured by music and ecstatic dancing' 194). Parker wonders whether a turning to Sabazius or Mother entail in any degree a turning away from other gods and admits that the question rests (198). However a deep change in religious attitude and rituality is evident. We should also mention Yunis (1988). If a system of fundamental beliefs is attested in Athenian Polis – the gods pay attention to the affairs of men and there is a reciprocity between men and gods (38-58).

<sup>35</sup> Swift (2010, 345) also notices that 'while the Chorus offer this moral as a form of consolation Clytemnestra appropriates it as a form of abuse. We therefore see traditional threnodic consolation perverted to be a means of making the addressee suffer more rather than less.

γόων,/ἐνταῦθα πέμψειν ἔνθα μή ποθ' ἡλίου /φέγγος προσόψῃ (379-80). The *goos* appears therefore frightening and dreadful not only for the chorus but even more clearly for the enemies.

### ***Goos and revenge in Euripides' Electra and Suppliant Women***

To complete our analysis on how the myth of Orestes and Electra has been treated through tragedy we will analyze also E. *El.* 112-212, a section where again we can find reference to the *goos* at 125, 141, 144 and the *threnema* at 285. Conventional elements are present such as vocatives ὦ πάτερ (122), and an accurate description of the violent death of Agamemnon (154-66) and her miserable condition (184-89), 'look at my filthy hair and these tatters that are my clothes, see if these befit a princess, Agamemnon's daughter, and Troy, which remembers that my father once captured her!' (Kovacs, 1998) working to captivate the deceased's benevolence. However Euripides introduces new features compared to Aeschylus and Sophocles: besides the insistence on Orestes' absence (130-34) and the self-reference of music (140-52) the chorus seems to invite Electra to replace her angry prayers with other expressions of religiosity (172-74).

Again the chorus seems to distance themselves from the aggressive *goos*. However, if in Sophocles such distance is only at the stage of an expression of doubt, in Euripides it seems to be more explicit: the chorus praises explicitly not a personified Chronos but Hera herself (190). Their words appear unambiguous at 193-97: 'Do you think that by your tears alone, giving no honor to the gods, you can best your enemies? If you worship the gods not with groans but with prayers you will have prosperity, my child', ἡ τιμῶσα θεοὺς κρατή/σειν ἐχθρῶν; οὗτοι στοναχαῖς /ἀλλ' εὐχαῖσι θεοὺς σεβί/ζουσ' ἔξεις εὐαμερίαν, ὦ παῖ. Electra does not seem to believe what the chorus says and replies 'None of the gods pays heed to this luckless (*dysdaimonos*) woman's prayer or to my father's murder long ago' (198-200), οὐδείς θεῶν ἐνοπᾶς κλύει/ τᾶς δυσδαίμονος, οὐ παλαι/ὦν πατρὸς σφαγιασμῶν.



Euripides plays with the contrast between what Electra believes – that the gods do not care – and what reality is – Orestes is already there and the gods have decided to listen to her prayers.<sup>36</sup> Although Euripides and Sophocles disguised somehow the supernatural power of the *goos*, still Electra's words reveal its sinister nature.

In *Suppliant Women* 1145 Euripides continues describing the *goos* as a song for revenge although he betrays uneasiness about its nature and contents. The heroes' children address their deceased father asking if he hears their *gooi*, πάτερ, ἔσθ' ἐν σῶν κλύεις τέκνων γόους; (1142), and then wondering if they will be his avenger: 'Shall the day ever come when I take up my shield and avenge...', ἄρ' ἀσπιδούχος ἔτι ποτ' ἀντιτείσομαι (1143). Their words leave no doubt about the nature of the *goos*, here as well as in 1145-46: 'If heaven wills it, a father's vengeance shall one day come', ἔτ' ἄν θεοῦ θέλοντος ἔλθοι δίκαια πατρῷος. Through the chorus' words Euripides confirms the idea that the promise of vengeance expressed through the *goos* will cause other sufferings: 'This trouble is not yet (*ourpō*) laid to rest. I have enough of tears (alas for my lot!), enough of griefs!' (Kovacs 1998), οὐπω κακὸν τόδ' εὔδει/ αἰαῖ τύχας· ἄλλας γόων (1147-49). Mendelsohn asserts that the boys' 'cries for justice (1151) are contrasted with, yet ultimately overwhelm, the protests of their despairing grandmothers, who alone understand that peace will only come if the cycle of vengeful violence is at last broken' (Mendelsohn 2002, 218). Morwood (2007, 203) contests this view saying that 'the mothers are not necessarily condemning the renewal of violence'. We do not intend to take a position about the issue; however, scholars seem implicitly to agree about Euripides' uneasiness about the *gooi*, feeling that we cannot find in Aeschylus. This impression is confirmed by the already mentioned verse 1145 where the

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<sup>36</sup> In a larger perspective Sourvinou-Inwood (2003, 346) highlights that this is not 'Euripides the rationalist sceptic putting rationalist, cynical, sceptical thoughts in the mouth of the chorus. Whether or not the incredulity was directed at the harshness of divine justice, which brought misfortune to mortals by changing the course of the sun, the passage affirms the god's intervention in human affairs on the side of justice'.

first half of the verse shows 'a proper piety', as Morwood notes (2007, 232). Euripides seems to soften the anger and the desire of revenge, by saying indirectly that vengeance is not justice *a priori* but it is appropriate only if the gods want it.

### ***Goos, revenge and the nightingale***

One myth in particular deserves a special place in this paragraph about the vengeful essence of the *goos*: the one of Procne and Tereus. This tale is mentioned in many passages related to the *goos* Hom. *Od.* 19 518, A. *Suppl.* 57-72, *Ag.* 1140-55 and *fr.* 291 1 (Radt), in S. *Aj.* 624-34, *El.* 107, 147-9 and *Trach.* 963, in E. *Hel.* 1107-16 and *fr.* 773 23-6 (Nauck). The fascinating presence of the nightingale has been interpreted in most of the cases as synonym of a motherly lament for her child's death. But let us see how the story goes: Procne and Philomela were sisters, Athenian princesses; Tereus, king of Thrace, married Procne, by whom he had a son Itys; Tereus afterwards, on some pretext, fetched Philomela from Athens, violated her and cut out her tongue. Managing to communicate with her sister by means of a piece of embroidery which she sent her, on which she had portrayed her story, she was helped to escape from the prison where Tereus had put her; by way of revenge, Procne served to Tereus at a banquet the flesh of their child, and when he pursued the women, all three were turned into birds, Procne becoming a nightingale, Philomela a swallow, Tereus a hoopoe.<sup>37</sup> This is why the nightingale's song is mournful (she is lamenting for Itys) and the swallow chatters and does not sing (she has no tongue).<sup>38</sup> If we read the story in light of what we are trying to reconstruct about the *goos*,

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<sup>37</sup> Suter (2004, 382) interprets this myth as the symbol of a cooperative, and utterly subversive, 'effort of the usual patriarchal ethos of Greek myth' and recognizes (2004, 380) that the male figure is absent in the earliest iconographic representations.

<sup>38</sup> Nonn. *D.* 4 320-330, 2 131-13 is a later source but makes explicit what is presupposed in the version to which the tragedians refer. It is interesting that in the last passage the nymphs fears to be chased by some god, like Syrinx by Pan (this story is mentioned also in Euripides' *Helen* in occasion of a *goos*), and desires to be transformed into

we are able to recognize that this is a case of vendetta rather than simple disgrace and sadness, very similar to the plot of the tragedy of Medea – beside the Thyestes' banquet–: unfaithfulness and murder of children. The desire for revenge can be so extreme as to damage also the person avenging himself/herself.

Literature confirms the link between the nightingale/Philomela and revenge by relating the bird to the Erinyes, the goddesses of vengeance: in S. *O.C.* 15-18 the χῶρος ἱερός – identified a few verses later as sacred to the Erinyes (38-39: θεαί σφ' ἔχουσι, Γῆς τε καὶ Σκότου κόραι) – is described as a place where the nightingales sing πυκνόπτεροι δ' / εἴσω κατ' αὐτὸν εὐστομοῦσ' ἀηδόνες. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the Furies appear before Procne and Tereus marry (430-435) and their presence seems ominous, then they are invoked by Tereus at 662 and seem to be symbol of revenge.<sup>39</sup>

It is worth noting that this myth was popular already in early literature: not only does Homer mention the nightingale in Book 19 of the *Odyssey* but also Sophocles devotes a tragedy to Tereus – of which we are unfortunately left with only a few fragments (Lloyd-Jones, 1996). Although we do not have any reference to the *goos* or to the Erinyes in these few passages, we can note the same concerns as in S. *El.* 86-250 about the theme of revenge and the way the gods are perceived in relation to it. In *fr.* 589 (Radt) we can read 'He is mad! But they acted still more madly in punishing him by violence. For any mortal who is infuriated by his wrongs and applies a medicine that is worse than the disease is a doctor who does not understand the trouble', ἄνους ἐκεῖνος· αἱ δ' ἀνουστέρως ἔτι/ ἐκεῖνον ἡμόναντο <πρὸς τὸ> καρτερόν. / ὅστις γὰρ ἐν κακοῖσι θυμωθεὶς βροτῶν / μείζον προσάπτει τῆς νόσου τὸ φάρμακον, / ἱατρός ἐστιν οὐκ ἐπιστήμων κακῶν, a passage that scholars normally interpret as words

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a swallow like Philomela. Then she says 'And, you, Procne, after your bitter sufferings, – you may weep for your son with mournful notes, and ἐγὼ δ' ἐ' ἅ λέκτρα γοήσω - I will groan for my bridal'.

<sup>39</sup> 6.430-34: *Eumenides tenuere facies de funere raptas, / Eumenides stravere torum, tectoque profanes/ incubuit bubo thalamique in culmine sedit./ hac ave coniuncti Procne Tereusque, parentes/ hac ave sunt facti [...]*; 4.661-62: *Thracius ingenti mensas clamore repellit/ vipereasque ciet Stygia de valle sorores*; (Goold 1999)

from a *deus ex machina* (Fitzpatrick 2001, 99), and at fr. 590 'Human nature must think human thoughts, knowing that there is no master of the future, of what is destined to be accomplished, except Zeus', θνητὴν δὲ φύσιν χρὴ θνητὰ φρονεῖν,/ τοῦτο κατειδόμενος ὥς οὐκ ἔστιν / πλὴν Διὸς οὐδείς τῶν μελλόντων / ταμίας ὅ τι χρὴ τετελέσθαι. In these passages we can see that Sophocles gives considerable amount of attention to the theme of revenge and wants to provide an explanation on a religious ground. The changed role of the chorus in performing the *gooi* in *Electra* fits particularly well Sophocles' rejection of human vendetta in *Tereus* and gives a more complete portrayal to this type of *goos*. Aeschylus is not afraid and does not even question the justice of the request for revenge from a god or a demon. On the contrary Sophocles and Euripides express more and more assertively their fear that the *goos* is not a pious utterance and must be replaced by a proper prayer.

In this section we have seen that revenge is an important content of the *goos*. The relevance of the theme manifests itself directly in some lyrical part of tragedy, but also through a web of relationships between the *goos* and the Erinyes, the Erinyes and the nightingale, the *goos* and the nightingale. Last but not least, poets like Sophocles and Euripides must have given certain weight to this theme even if (I would say since) they question the appropriateness of prayers for revenge and therefore of the *gooi*.

### ***Goos* to accompany the sailing through the Acheron and to bind Charon**

In this section we are going to talk about a special group of *gooi*, aimed at accompanying the journey of the dead through Acheron to Hades. The importance of crossing Acheron safely is shown in S. *O.C.* 1556-1578, a prayer addressed to powers of the underworld, Persephone, Hades, the Erinyes, Cerberus, and a figure that has been identified as Thanatos: 'I pray that the stranger may arrive at the

plain of the dead that holds all below and at the house of Styx without pain and with no grievous fate' (Lloyd-Jones 1994).<sup>40</sup> The moment of the passage is therefore crucial, and requires the conditions to make the souls arrive at their final destination. Singing the lament after someone's death is essential to this purpose and serves as a fee to pay. Similarly to the obol due to Charon (e.g. in Ar. *Ra.* 139-41; Stevens 1991, 215-29), the *gooi* represent the fare enriching the underworld, e.g. in S. *O.T.* 30,<sup>41</sup> or the ideal and spiritual tribute to Hades.<sup>42</sup>

In particular, the *gooi* seem to be particularly suitable for creatures or spaces that stay between the earth and a godly space. We have already pointed out the link between the *goos* and creatures that have a status of messengers between the gods and the human beings (Iris, p.11, Hermes, p.33, the Erinyes p.56ff). Charon is the ferryman of the Acheron, a place that separates the world of the living and that of the dead.<sup>43</sup>

In A. *Th.* 854-60 the chorus encourage to singing collectively over the two dead brothers by saying 'But come my friend, adown the wind of your sighs (*gooi*), ply with your hands about your heads the speeding stroke, which always over Acheron wins passage for the dark and sable-sailed mission-ship unto the shore whereon Apollo sets not foot nor sunlight falls, unto the shore invisible, the bourne of all', ἀλλὰ γόων, ὦ φίλοι, κατ' οὖρον/ ἐρέσσειτ' ἀμφὶ κρατὶ πόμπιμον χεροῖν / πίτυλον, ὅς αἰὲν δι'

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<sup>40</sup> Paduano (1982, 819) in alternative to Thanatos proposes a generic funereal demon : 'Sarà comunque un demone funerario, appartenente cioè a un contesto mitico e misterico che non è perfettamente noto'.

<sup>41</sup> μέλας δ' Ἀϊδης στεναγμοῖς καὶ γόοις πλουτίζεται, where the verb *ploutizo*, besides remembering the name of Pluto, the god of the nether world, means 'to make wealth' (Dawe 2006, 74).

<sup>42</sup> In E. *Or.* 960-964 the lament (called στεναγμός at 959, 960 and γόος at 959) and the beating of one's head κτύπον κρατός 963 are described as the portion for Persephone (ἔλαχ' 963),<sup>42</sup> while in E. *Supp.* 71-78 the antiphonal *gooi* - ἀγὼν ὅδ' ἄλλος ἔρχεται γόων γόοις / διάδοχος - have the specific function to 'honour' Hades-Ἀϊδας σέβει. The fact that a combination of singing (ξυνωιδοὶ at 73), rhythm (the beating of breasts στέρνων κτύπον at 87 and clapping their hands ἀχοῦσι προσπόλων χέρες 72) and dancing (χορὸν at 75) represents a κόσμος also for the living does not undermine the idea that the lament was a tribute to pay to those in the underworld. 'the rite we owe the dead adorn the living' τὰ γὰρ φθιτῶν τοῖς ὀρώσι κόσμος at 78 (Kovacs, 1998).

<sup>43</sup> About Charon see Sullivan (1950, 11-17); Hermann (1954, 1056-60); Lincoln (1980, 41-60); Cantilena (1995, 165-7). It is worth mentioning that also in Inner Mani in the spoken and sung discourses of the mourning ritual the imagery of the road is central (Seremetakis 1991, 83-4) and that 'composing and singing the *moirólói* is making a journey and confronting fate' (*idem*, 84).

Ἀχέροντ' ἀμείβεται/ τὰν ἄστολον μελάγκροκον θεωρίδα,/ τὰν ἀστιβῆ Ἀπόλλωνι, τὰν ἀνάλιον,/ πάνδοκον εἰς ἀφανῆ τε χέρσον (Smyth 1988). The chorus's *gooi* seem to help the souls in crossing the Acheron. The song stands for the wind of *gooi*, γόων [...] κατ' οὔρον, and the beating, ἐρέσσειν, of their heads by their hands are the strokes of the oars, πίτυλον. The *goos* gives the rhythm to the oarsman –who is not named here – allowing the passage of the souls from one place to another. Furthermore the *goos* has the physicality of the wind: this beautiful metaphor makes us think of the lament as a great air flow coming from many sides and merging into one direction and propelling a sailing boat.

The presence of wind in relationship with the *goos* and the underworld cannot be ignored in A. Ch. 315-322 where Orestes is addressing his father asking 'by what word or deed of mine can I succeed in sailing from far away to you, where your resting-place holds you?', τί σοι /φάμενος ἢ τί ῥέξας / τύχοιμ' ἄγκαθεν οὐρίσας /ἐνθα σ' ἔχουσιν εὐναί;. The definition of the verb *ourizein* in LSJ is 'to carry with a fair wind'.<sup>44</sup> Garvie (1986, 128) points out that the verb 'may not be entirely metaphorical' as 'the soul has to sail across Oceanus or the rivers of the underworld'. The γόος εὐκλεῆς at 321 is the answer to Orestes' question: it brings mutual joy to Agamemnon and his children alike (as it corresponds to a tribute – χάριτες – for those in the underworld). Groeneboom (1949, *ad loc.*) makes an interesting comment about this adjective by saying that just as light and darkness are opposed, so a *goos* of this world will turn into its opposite and become a *charis* in the underworld. If we stay in the

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<sup>44</sup> As the context of this passage allows it, we can try to push the idea of the sailing a bit further even if we continue accepting the canonical translation. Instead of intending εὐναί as 'bed' or grave we might intend it as 'anchors' (this being the usual translation for the word in the plural), which would suggest an alternative translation: 'By what word or deed of mine can I succeed in carrying you with a fair wind from the place you are anchored?'. Agamemnon did not receive the expected funeral tribute and the lament (429-433) and therefore we expect that, similarly to Patroclus before receiving the public honors, he has not arrived yet to Hades. Cassandra herself in her *goos* in A. Ag. 1160-61 implies a similar destiny: after her prophecy she imagines herself ἄμφι Κωκυτόν τε καὶ Ἀχέρουσιους / ὄχθους[...] θεσπιωιδήσειν, which sounds like a synecdoche for Hades (Aeschylus creates a correspondence between the Scamander and the Acheron) but also a specific reference to the place she is going to be. As Agamemnon, she will not receive the deserved funeral honors and the lamentation; therefore will be wandering by the shore of Acheron until she will not have been vindicated.

metaphor of 317 the *goos* is the wind that allows the soul to sail. Aeschylus seems therefore to imply that the *goos* can have positive meanings and be a proper tribute for the dead.

A link between the lament and the safe and successful crossing of the Acheron is still present, although indirectly, in Sophocles' *Antigone*. The long *kommos* sung by Antigone and the leader of the chorus at 781-882 is called *goos* at 883 by Creon. Antigone starts her lament at 806 by saying 'Behold me, citizens of my native land, as I make my last journey, and look on the light of the sun for the last time, and never more; Hades who lulls all to sleep is taking me, still living, to the shore of Acheron, without the bridal that was my due, nor has any song been sung for me at my marriage, but I shall be the bride of Acheron', ὁρᾷτέ μ', ὦ γᾶς πατρίας πολῖται / τὰν νεάταν ὁδὸν/ στείχουσιν, νέατον δὲ φέγ/γος λεύσσουσιν ἀελίου,/ κοῦποτ' αὖθις· ἀλλὰ μ' ὁ παγ/κοίτας Ἄιδας ζῶσαν ἄγει/ τὰν Ἀχέροντος ἀκτάν, οὔθ' ὕμεναίων/ ἐγκληρον, οὔτ' ἐπὶ νυμ/φείοις πῶ μέ τις ὕμνος ὕμνησεν, ἀλλ' Ἀχέροντι νυμφεύσω (Lloyd-Jones 1994). The theme of the journey to Hades is presented here in an unusual way: she will become Acheron's spouse at 816 – Ἀχέροντι νυμφεύσω – as a consequence of being brought to the shore of the deadly river while she is still living. The reference to Acheron might be symbolic, and the river can be simply a synecdoche for Hades, used to accentuate Antigone's condition of unmarried woman (reference at the verses 867 and 876, besides her name itself which seems to announce her childless destiny– *anti* + *gone*) (Del Corno 1982, 311). However it is possible that Sophocles genuinely intends to refer to the river. Griffith points out that 'marriage of women to river gods is not uncommon in Greek mythology' (Griffith 1999, 267).<sup>45</sup> At 850-52 Antigone bemoans her condition by saying: 'Ah, unhappy one, living neither among mortals nor as a shade among the shades, neither with the living nor with the dead!', ἰὼ δύστανος, βροτοῖς/ οὔτε  $\leq$ νεκρὸς $\geq$  νεκροῖσιν / μέτοικος, οὐ ζῶσιν, οὐ θανοῦσιν. Antigone is *metoikos*, in a 'in-between' status, as Griffith notes (1999, 266), 'not truly "resident" among

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<sup>45</sup> Griffith (1999, 266) points out that 'Here the Underworld "River of Pain" adds to the grim conceit, emphasized by the dragging clausular rhythm'.

the dead yet disenfranchised from the upper world`. It is interesting to note the link that Antigone makes in this lyrical section between being *metoikos*, being spouse of Acheron and later with being unwept. She will be ἄκλαντος 876 and `and my fate, unwept for, is lamented by no friend`, τὸν δ' ἐὼν πότμον ἀδάκρυτον / οὐδείς φίλων στενάζει 881-882. Although there is no explanation about how these facts are linked together, however we can understand how important the lament must be for the souls. Literature provides us with plenty of evidence for the dreadful effects of being unwept: the souls are condemned to wander restlessly in a place different from Hades without reaching their final destination. The lament would guarantee the dead a place on the boat and a safe journey. The word Acheron itself tells a lot and confirms this idea: in the *Etymologicum Magnum* the river is the stream of woe, ὁ ἄχεα ῥέων [cf. Ἀχέρων], while the name of its affluent, the Cocytos, has both the meanings of lament and infernal river: τὸν θρήνον, καὶ γίνεται ἐκ τοῦ κωκύω· ὅθεν καὶ <κωκύματα>, τὰ πένθη τῶν στεναγμῶν· καὶ <κωκυτός>, ὁ κατὰ ἄδην ποταμός [cf. Κωκυτός]. The presence or not of the lament is therefore determining factor in the Acheron crossing and in giving rest and peace to the souls.<sup>46</sup> Antigone is therefore singing a *goos* for herself, as if she wanted to provide herself with some sort of equivalent ritual. From this passage we can understand that Sophocles represents this type of *goos* differently from Aeschylus. If the latter unmistakably gives the *goos* positive meanings and attributes (he defines it as εὐκλεής and considers it as χάρις for both the dead and the living), Sophocles only introduces it as substitute for the missing ritual mourning. Does this happen incidentally? It seems that the playwright introduces the *goos* not as a ritual and choral act, but as an unconventional monody.

Let us see what happens in later dramas. The youngest Euripides and Aristophanes introduce a new element in relation with the Acheron crossing: Charon, the famous ferryman of the souls. Ar. *Ra*.

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<sup>46</sup> The idea that certain funeral rituals were thought to aid the dead soul in its passage from the world of the living to the world of the dead is also present in Bremmer (1987,89). These rites are identified as rites of passage, for their importance in helping ritualizing `the transition of the dead from the community of the living to the underworld and especially the transition of the living to the new situation after the departure of one of their members` (92-93).



180-208 is a perfect example of surreal humour where the lament is described by Charon's words as a mellifluous singing. When Dionysus asks 'And how am I supposed to be able to row, unexperienced, unseamanlike, unSalaminian as I am?', Κῆτα πῶς δυνήσομαι / ἄπειρος, ἀθαλάττευτος, ἀσαλαμίνιος / ὦν εἴτ' ἐλαύνειν; Charon explains 'You'll hear some most beautiful singing (*mele kallist*') as soon as you bend to the oar', Ρῆστ' ἀκούσει γὰρ μέλη / κάλλιστ', ἐπειδὴν ἐμβάλης ἅπαξ. Dionysus again: 'Who from?', Τίνων; and the ferryman 'from the Frog Swans. Marvellous stuff', Βατράχων κύκνων θαυμαστά. 'All right, give me the stroke', Κατακέλευε δῆ, 'Awww-op-op! Awww-op-op!', Ὡοπόπ, ὠοπόπ (Sommerstein 1996). The *mele kallist* must have had a tremendous comical effect on the audience and must have reminded them of the *goos*. Aristophanes stages the comedy in the underworld, and expresses his talent and imagination in describing it as the hearth in reverse: the beautiful song mentioned here by Charon is the ironic reverse of the dreadful song uttered by the chorus in *Seven against Thebes* for Eteocles and Polyneikes. 'Frog Swans' sounds also as a sardonic name for the choruses that normally sing the lament. Sommerstein (1996, 176) points out that the swan 'implies "melodious singers"'. That swans could, and sometimes did, sing melodiously, for divine if not for human ears, was a universal belief in antiquity, due perhaps to their beauty and their association with Apollo'. The divine ear is here represented by Charon, a clumsy and bad-looking creature to whom tradition attributes no particular power except the role of *psychopompos*. The comical side of the scene consists of the fact that this creature, whose only *raison d'être* is transporting dead people on his boat, gives vent to his musical taste and expresses an opinion about a song, which is probably the only one he has ever heard. If we trust Aristophanes' sense of humor we should expect that this type of music must be considered anything but pleasant. This makes us think that Aristophanes is referring to the same songs we found in Aeschylus: the *gooi* used to accompany the souls in crossing the Acheron.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> It is worth remembering that the rowers on Greek ships were kept in time by the music of *auloi*; for some references see West (1992, 29 n.83).

The link of the lament with the crossing of the Acheron after death and Charon is present, and sublimated, in E. *Alc.* 252-256 where Alcestis sings 'I see the two-oared boat in the lake. Charon, the ferryman of the dead, his hand on the boat pole, calls me now: "Why are you tarrying? Make haste, you hinder my going?"' He speaks impatiently, urging me on with these words', ὁρῶ δίκωπον ὁρῶ σκάφος ἐν /λίμναι· νεκύων δὲ πορθμεὺς/ ἔχων χέρ' ἐπὶ κοντῶι Χάρων/ ᾧ ἤδη καλεῖ· Τί μέλλεις;/ἐπεῖγ'· σὺ κατείργεις. τάδε τοί με/ σπερχόμενος ταχύνει (Kovacs 1994). She is still alive, but she can see Charon's boat and the Acheron. Parker recognizes the similarity between this passage and the one we have just mentioned from Aristophanes' *Frogs*: it is the Acheron that the dead have to cross, and Charon uses oars in the deep water in the middle and a pole to punt the boat to land through the shallows (Parker 2007, 108).

This similarity is resumed later at 435-76 in another lyrical section sung by the chorus and named by Admetus a 'hymn (*paiâna*) to the god below', παιᾶνα τῶι κάτωθεν [...] θεῶι, at 424 and not a *goos*.<sup>48</sup> This lyrical section is presented by the chorus as a tribute (*charis*) to the dead (at 435ff we read: 'O daughter of Pelias, farewell, and may you have joy even as you dwell in the sunless house of Hades!', ὦ Πελίου θύγατερ,/χαίρουσά μοι εἰν Αἶδα δόμοισιν/ τὸν ἀνάλιον οἶκον οἰκετεύοις), and contains again, from 439, a reference to Charon, the γέρων νεκροπομπὸς sitting ἐπὶ κόπαι πηδαλίῳ τε (439-440), and rowing its skiff (ἐλάται δικώπῳι at 444) across the λίμναν Ἀχεροντίαν. By mentioning the ship, the oars, and Acheron, Euripides implicitly refers to the *goos* in *Th.* 854-60, but gives the song a new meaning: it is not a song of sufferings and desperation (e.g. πόνοι πόνων 851, μελάγκροκον 857, ἀφανῆ 860) but it is rather a song of hope (436 χαίρουσά μοι εἰν Αἶδα δόμοισιν). We wonder whether Euripides' choice not to use the word *goos* is determined by the idea that this ritual act is not anymore

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<sup>48</sup> It is worth noting that the word *antecheô*= 'to sound in answer to' has raised doubts of interpretation. Parker (2007, 140) points out that the *anti-* of the compound 'carries its common implication of opposition'. Since the paean is 'strikingly inappropriate' for the god of death, Parker (2007, 141) and Barbantani (2007, 83) agree on the fact that Admetus seems to be telling the chorus to sing a song of challenge in the face of death.

considered a proper farewell and tribute to the dead. Perhaps Aristophanes' irreverent association of the *goos* with the singing of the frogs originates in the shared opinion that it sounds unpleasant. Euripides is more helpful as he not only gives information about the ritual act accompanying the funeral but also about the destiny of the dead. The paean is a means to give the deceased immortal memory (in *Alc.* 445-54) or even an instrument to guarantee the souls bliss in the underworld (*Alc.* 435-44) by remembering the moral probity of the deceased.<sup>49</sup> The absence of the term *goos* has therefore an explanation. The *goos* fits the archaic creed and Aeschylus' (and Homer's) sad vision of the underworld while it would not be appropriate for a creed based on the idea that souls can be joyful after death.

From this collection of passages we can draw some conclusions about the use of the *goos*. First we should point out that the real recipients of the lament are to be searched among 'superior' creatures rather than among the living. We mentioned ghosts in *gooi* aimed at summoning a soul or asking for revenge, deities of the underworld in those aimed at helping the souls in their journey to Hades. Even when performed during funeral practices (e.g. in *Seven against Thebes*), the *goos* cannot be therefore defined simply as a lament and expression of sorrow. Similarly to the one-obol fare to Charon, the *goos* represents a *passe-partout*, a coin to pay (a *charis*, to use an anthropological term) in order to guarantee

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<sup>49</sup> A discussion about the different approaches to death and the different uses of music in relation to this event will be done in the fifth chapter. The use of music in relation to the journey to the underworld is attested also among the Egyptians. The famous *Book of the Dead* was a description of the ancient Egyptian conception of the afterlife and a collection of hymns, spells, and instructions to allow the deceased to pass through obstacles in the afterlife which were chanted by the priest in charge for the funeral rites. For more about music in ancient Egypt see Farmer (1957, 255-282); Anderson (1976); Anderson (1995); Manniche (1991, 24-39). Also for the Nile-dwelling people, the natural vehicle for joining the gods among the stars was a boat and the typical pose of the oarsman Mahaf appears the same of Charon on a fifth-century Attic white-ground lekythos, looking over his shoulder (Griffith 2001, 215, 222, 223). The link between chanting and the conveyance of the dead people on a boat in order to be brought in the world of the gods is therefore present from long time before the Greeks and it contributes to validate our theory. On the other hand this imagery keeps being used in Byzantine and more recent times (Alexiou 2002, 189-193).

the souls a successful passage through the Acheron and a quiet existence in Hades.<sup>50</sup> This meaning implies first that the *goos* is a ritual act and second that it is not a descriptive but a performative utterance; in other words it is aimed at obtaining favours from the gods. This would make it a rite of exchange and communion, to use Bell's terminology (1997, 108-14), otherwise explained as 'the gift theory', according to which 'one gives in order to receive in return' (108). We can say that the *goos* corresponds to a prayer but differs from the traditional one in the type of request. One possible request was revenge on someone, and therefore perniciousness. Here there is no evil requested, but still the prayer has to do with realities like death and all the creatures linked with it, which archaic creed would depict as terrifying. Frazer would probably separate the *goos* and the traditional prayer in the name of his distinction between magic and religion. We would rather interpret these phenomena as ritual acts – although artfully introduced by the tragic poets – and identify their peculiarity by using Stehle's 'frames': the *goos* would represent an aischrologic ritual in Homer and Aeschylus, because it is 'the manifestation of the god in uninhibited speech' (Stehle 2004, 123) while it would be introduced (or consciously avoided) by Sophocles and especially by Euripides as a dysphemic element, that is a violation of euphemia.

## **GOOS AS A SPELL USED BY DAIMONES OR GODS TO BIND HUMAN BEINGS**

The request for favours to the gods can be explained as the natural expression of the human weakness. The *goos* was one of the possible ways of making such requests. However, we should not ignore that the *goos* was not limited to this but it was considered also as the human response to a divine

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<sup>50</sup> The presence itself of the *goos* in choral parts of tragedy would also make it a form of addressing the gods: Kowalzig 2004, 44) points out that in Plato's *Laws* 'The Athenian's advice is to spend one's whole life sacrificing, singing, and dancing (*thuonta kai adonta kai orchoumenon*), so that it "may be possible to make sure the gods are favourably inclined"

intervention. This new and striking feature is present in a few passages of tragedy, in particular where a supernatural intervention is recognisable as coming from demons and especially gods.

### **πατέρων δὲ καὶ τεκόντων/ γόος**

We will follow the hierarchy and will start from *gooi* coming from demons, although we should inform the reader that this part is limited to introduce different interpretations to well-known passages, which makes our analysis rather speculative. The choral stanza in A. *Ch.* 324-331 is a powerful description of the sinister power of ghosts. Modern scholars (e.g. Garvie 1986, 131) attribute anger to the dead Agamemnon himself (at 328). The verses 329-31 change subject and speak of the *goos*: πατέρων δὲ καὶ τεκόντων/ γόος ἔνδικος ματεύει / ποινὰν ἀμφιλαφῶς ταραχθεῖς.<sup>51</sup> The song is here described as personified (through the action of ματεύειν = to make search): Garvie points out that ‘the *goos*, which secures the help of Agamemnon, is thought of as if itself bringing the murderer to justice’ (Garvie 1986, 132). This personification has induced Wilamowitz, following the scholion Σ 330a, to think that the *goos* was uttered by Agamemnon and has raised different opinions about the genitive πατέρων δὲ καὶ τεκόντων at 329: some interpret it as an objective genitive of *goos* – the song *lamenting* fathers and parents –, and others as subjective (the song that father and parents utter).<sup>52</sup> The latest might be a brave interpretation, and we cannot say if it is the best one since it is difficult to understand whether the ambiguity in the passage was deliberately created by Aeschylus. However it seems fair to report the difficulties in interpreting this passage and at least suggest the possibility that the *goos* is the voice through which the *phronema* of a demon communicates.

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<sup>51</sup> We give here two translations according to the different interpretation of the genitive πατέρων δὲ καὶ τεκόντων: ‘Justified lament for fathers and for parents, when raised loud and strong, makes its search everywhere’ (Lloyd-Jones 1983); ‘A father’s funeral lament, strong and clear and just, searches far and wide, confounding those who killed’ (I. Johnston 2007).

<sup>52</sup> A similar discussion might be done also about the genitive *goneôn* in S. *El.* 241.

## Oneiromancy

If the *goos* in Aeschylus' passage cannot be univocally interpreted, another passage shows more directly that the *goos* is linked with supernatural phenomena: the appearance of a ghost through dreams. The presence of similar facts in literature has already been treated in the previous chapter while describing the soul of Patroclus' and Achilles' encounter in *Iliad*. However we should mention Seremetakis' account of Maniat women's dreams (1991,54-5). She first explains the word 'warning' (48-50), a term already introduced by Ariès, meaning 'a knowledge of future events and processes that are manifested in the present through a conventional system of sign' and linked by Seremetakis with the model of miasma advanced by Vernant (1980, 122). These phenomena would take three forms in Inner Mani, one of which is *ónira* or *onírata* (dreams) 'seeing in dreams signs that foretell death' (50).<sup>53</sup>

A similar occurrence is depicted by Euripides in *Hecabe*.<sup>54</sup> The first character appearing on the stage is Polydorus' ghost. His status is proclaimed at the initial verses (1-2): Ἦκω νεκρῶν κευθμῶνα καὶ σκοτοῦ πύλας/ λιλῶν, ἵν' Ἄιδης χωρὶς ὄικισται θεῶν, 'I have come from the hiding place of the dead and the gates of darkness, where Hades dwells apart from the other gods' (Kovacs 1995). Similarly to Elpenor in Hom. *Od.* 11 57-78 he has been condemned to wander as a consequence of being unwept, ἄκλαυτος, and unburied, ἄταφος (30). Now he is claiming a tomb (47, 50) and his mother's care, which he obtained by asking the powers of the underworld (49) –'I have won permission from the powers below to pass into my mother's hands and receive burial', τοὺς γὰρ κάτω σθένοντας ἐξιτησάμην/τύμβου κυρῆσαι καὶ χέρας μητρὸς πεσεῖν. He is appearing in Hecuba's dreams (at 70-72

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<sup>53</sup> The scholar also explains how the externalization of warning dreams is believed to amplify pollution and negativity (56-57) and specifies that 'Dream interpretation takes the form of quick recitations which omit or underemphasize the narrative action of the dream while specifying telltale conventional signs'. Seremetakis also points out that 'there is an economy of dreaming formed by a relation of debt and payment that links the message of the dream (the sign) to its actualization in social life (the referent)' (61).

<sup>54</sup> For a detailed analysis of the religious background of *Hecabe* see Sourvinou-Inwood (2003, 339-45).

Hecuba speaks about *deimata*, *phasmata*, *oneira* and *opsis*),<sup>55</sup> but differently from Patroclus' *psyche* (*Il.* 65ff) he does not communicate directly with her but only sends visions of his body rescued in Thracia and of her sister's sacrifice demanded by Achilles' ghost (74-75).<sup>56</sup> The visions are described even more in detail at 90-97 and their mantic nature is introduced by verses 83-89, ἔσται τι νέον, 'some new sorrow shall come to pass'. At 84 Hecuba mentions a μέλος γοερὸν, a song that comes as the consequence for a presentiment of grief, and originates from feelings that she is not able to define: οὐποτ' ἐν ἀφρηὶν ὄδ' ἀλίσστον/φρίσσει ταρβεῖ, 'Such ceaseless thrills of terror never wrung my heart before' (85-86). The reference to Helenus and Cassandra, both famous for being soothsayers, as possible interpreter of Hecuba's dreams add further evidence to the divinatory nature of the experience: ποῦ ποτε θείαν Ἑλένου ψυχάν/ καὶ Κασσάνδραν ἐσίδω, Τρωιάδες,/ ὥς μοι κρίνωσιν ὀνείρους; 'Oh! where, you Trojan maidens, can I find inspired Helenus or Cassandra, that they may read me my dream?'. The *goeron melos* comes at 84 as the result of a divinatory experience that we can call oneiromancy and whose musical nature is undeniable. Links between music and demons is straightly expressed a few verses later at 684-725 when she is informed by the servant of her son's death and utters a desperate song: 'the melody of frenzy, now I begin it learning only now of disaster sent upon me by an avenging spirit!', αἰαῖ, κατάρχομαι νόμον/ βακχεῖον, ἐξ ἀλάστορος/ ἀρτιμαθῆς κακῶν (Diggle 1994).<sup>57</sup> We should concentrate on the definition of the song νόμον/βακχεῖον (685). Murray's edition presents the word *goos*: αἰαῖ, κατάρχομαι γόων,/ βακχεῖον ἐξ ἀλάστορος/ ἀρτιμαθῆ νόμον, which would make the melody of frenzy – νόμον/βακχεῖον – an apposition of the *goos*. However we decide to interpret the passage, the meaning of *gooi* and νόμον/βακχεῖον do not seem to clash. On the contrary the *nomos baccheios*

<sup>55</sup> It is worth remembering Gregory's comments on the epithet for Earth (Gregory 1993, 53), 'mother of black-winged dreams'. 'Dreams are often described as "winged" (*Od.* 2.222; *A. Ag.* 426; *IT* 571, *Ph.* 1545), and Greek color-words regularly refer not only to hue and to sheen (Irwin 1974, 18) but also to emotion or mood (Irwin 1974, 135-56). μέλας either alone or in compounds is "a favourite 'atmospheric' term in Euripides" Stanford (1958) on *Ar. Ra.* 1333-34a. Here its connotation must be "ominous, sinister".'

<sup>56</sup> For an analysis of this section and an explanation for the function of Polydorus' appearance from the point of view of playwriting see also (Bremer 1971, 232-50).

<sup>57</sup> *Ag.* 1501; *Med* 1333, *Ph.* 1556.

seems to be an appropriate definition if we remember Andromache uttering her *goos* like a maenad – *μαινομένη ἔϊκυῖα Il. 6.386*– and Stehle’s definition of aischrologic ritual as manifestation of Dionysus (2004, 155). Here we have one more detail: the *nomos* is inspired by an avenging spirit, *ἐξ ἀλάστορος*. Hecuba’s musical utterances in this tragedy are strictly connected with a communication between her and Polydorus: if the *melos goeros* is the result of oneiromancy, through which her son tries to inform her that he is no longer living, the *nomos baccheios* (maybe = *goos*) expresses the dead son’s desire for revenge, which will not fail to come. Polymestor, guilty of murdering the young guest Polydorus, will be blinded and his sons will be killed by Hecuba and her companions.

### **Prophecy**

The *goos* is therefore linked with divination, where the person uttering the song is receiving a message from a supernatural force, in a more or less direct way. Oneiromancy is an indirect form of communication as the signs received through dreams need to be interpreted by special diviners and on some occasions, like in *Hecuba*, the meaning of the dream is intelligible only after other facts have occurred. In Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* Cassandra is an enlightening example of one of the most salient forms of divination: prophecy, which according to Sourvinou-Inwood (2003, 241) is the only possible access to the divine for the audience of that time. The distance between the world of tragedy and the world of the audience was somewhat deconstructed ‘First, because Cassandra was perceived as someone apart in the world of the play. And second, the fact that the chorus evoked the Delphic oracle, and implicitly compared Cassandra to the Pythia, would have evoked the perception that there is a correlative to Cassandra’s inspiration in the world of the audience, prophecy by the Pythia – and one which had credibility and could be acted upon’ (Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 241).



Also in this case the meaning of the words is unintelligible at a first stage and manifests itself as a series of enigmas (Johnston and Struck 2005, 160-64). The process of understanding the riddle takes some time and shows the dialectic relationship between the prophetess and the chorus, where one speaks more and more clearly and the others gradually understand and accept the meaning of the prophecy.<sup>58</sup> We should note that Cassandra's utterance is attributed to a δαίμων (1175) καί τίς σε κακοφρονῶν τίθη/σι δαίμων ὑπερβαρῆς ἐμπίτνων /μελίζειν πάθη γοερὰ θανατοφόρα·`and some divinity that wishes you ill is assailing you very heavily and causing you to sing of woeful, deadly sufferings` (Sommerstein 2008). The chorus in the final part of the long lyrics recognizes a non-human presence, a demon that reminds us of the *aliastor* in the previous example. The reader knows that the *daimon* is more than a spirit: it is in fact Apollo himself as Cassandra says at 1073, 1077, 1080, 1085, but the chorus `are soon offended by her ambiguity and propose that her symptoms are caused by the attack of a hostile *daimôn* (1173-36)` (Smith 1965, 424).<sup>59</sup>

### Erinyes bringing justice and vengeance

The Erinyes, euphemistically called Eumenides, were famous for being hideous creatures and avengers of the crimes of murder, non-filial conduct, impiety and perjury.<sup>60</sup> We have already mentioned

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<sup>58</sup> At 1083 the chorus is hesitant in describing what Cassandra is saying χρήσειν ἔοικεν ἀμφὶ τῶν αὐτῆς κακῶν·, and when she starts making prophecies about the future the chorus find them obscure τούτων αἰδρίεις εἰμι τῶν μαντευμάτων (1104) and οὐπω ξυνῆκα· νῦν γὰρ ἐξ αἰνιγμάτων /ἐπαργέμοισι θεσφάτοις ἀμηχανῶ (1112-1113) and express their incapacity to understand with questions (1119-20). The meaning of her words starts becoming clear but still the chorus refuse to understand (1130-35, 1140-45, 1150-55), and only from 1162 they accept the truth.

<sup>59</sup> It is worth mentioning Sourvinou-Inwood (2003, 240): `The audience knows that prophecies in tragedy come true, their knowledge and assumptions tell them so, but in the world of tragedy the characters do not; it is not very different from the world of everyday reality, in which people know that the god speaks the truth, but human fallibility may intervene and distort the message`.

<sup>60</sup> We should mention for crimes like patricide, matricide, betrayal of parents and family, murder, manslaughter, the breaking of oaths and crimes against the gods A. Ag. 638 (a paean of the Erinyes is quoted); *Orph.* 69 to the Erinyes, *Orph.* 70 to the Eumenides, *Orph.* 29 to Persephone, Paus. 7.25.5; for curses levelled against a family

how important revenge was in inspiring the *goos*, and how these feelings were projected on an avenging spirit (*alastôr*). In many cases the avenging force had an identity and a name: the Erinyes, the ancient upholders of justice, assigned to that role by the Fates. Explicit reference to the link between the Erinyes and the *gooi* is in E. *Or.* 316-20 where they belong to a ἀβάκχευτον θιάσον ἐν δάκρυσι καὶ γόοις (316-320).<sup>61</sup> The other passages linking Tisiphone, Megaira and Alekto – this is the name of each of them – to music show an interesting terminology, which has been explained captivately by Barker.<sup>62</sup> He pointed out as a start that in A. *Ag.* 644-5 ‘a messenger has been describing what it is like to bring bad news to a city; when the message is so full of pain and grief, he says, “it would be right to call it a paean of the Erinyes”’. Through the comparison with the passage at 988-94, he argues that the θρῆνον Ἐρινύος ‘the dirge of the Erinyes’ corresponds to the ‘paeon of the Erinyes’, παῖνα Ἐρινύων. Barker explains that ‘the fact that the chorus’s θυμός, without any external prompting, is singing the Erinyes’ dirge is simply another way of saying that something inside them is making them worried and fearful, just as would happen if they heard the sound of the spirits of vengeance chanting as they approach’. The *threnos* and the paean would be related to the same experience but would originate from different perspectives: a παῖν is a song of celebration and therefore corresponds to ‘the song the Erinyes sing to

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member as punishment for an act of betrayal, the myth of Ouranos and Kronos in Hes. *Th.* 176 ff (they were the Daimones who, it was implied, drove Zeus to avenge the crime by deposing Kronos and casting him into the Tartarean pit. The Erinyes were the embodiment of the curses of Ouranos against his son), Oedipus and his sons in Pin. *Ol.* 2 str3, A. *Th.* 69, 570, 654, 691-790, 833, 864-855, 991, 1060, Paus. 1.28.6, 9.5.15, Althaia and Meleagros in Hom. *Il.* 9.565, Paus. 10.31.3, Penelope and Telemakhos in Hom. *Od.* 2.136, Amynthos and Phoinix in Hom. *Il.* 9.450; for curses levelled against a family member as punishment for an act of betrayal, in the myth of Zeus and Poseidon in Hom. *Il.* 15.200, Phrixides and Aeetes in A.R. 3.775, in Khalkiope and Medea in A.R. 3.401; for curses inflicted for the crimes of patricide or matricide in the story of Laïos and Oedipus in Hom. *Od.* 11.280; Clytemnestra and Orestes in A. *Ch.* 924, 1048 and the whole tragedy of Eumenides; for curses inflicted for crimes of fratricide and soricide in Absyrtos and Medea in A.R. 4.473, 4.700; for curses levelled against filicide in Tereus and Prokne in Ov. *Met.* 6.428, 6.663, Nonn. *D.* 44.198; Nephele and Ino in Nonn. *D.* 10.67, children and Athamas in Nonn. *D.* 10.1; for curses against oath-breakers in Hom. *Il.* 19.257, Hes. *Op.* 802, A.R. 4.1042, Paus. 9.33.3, Pi. *Pae.* 8, A. *Ag.* 69, 737, in Medea and Jason A.R. 4.383.

<sup>61</sup> Euripides definition of *gooi* as *abakcheuton* fits our interpretation of this playwright’s choice to introduce the *goos*: it is not an aischrologic element (which would imply the presence of the god) but is a dysphemic element that simply would violate euphemic prayers. Perhaps the fact itself that the Erinyes belong to an *abakcheuton thiason* informs us about Euripides’ refusal of Erinyes and what they represent.

<sup>62</sup> We take the opportunity to thank Prof. Barker for giving me the opportunity to use the contents of the talk: ‘Music, magic, madness and death’ held in Corfu’ in July 2007.

celebrate their privileges or the sufferings they have caused'; 'a θρήνος is a musical lament, and we cannot imagine that the Erinyes would be sorrowful when faced with mortal misery; it is not a lament from their perspective but from the human point of view, since the sinister qualities and associations of their chanting prompt the same kind of anxiety and fear in their audience' (Barker).<sup>63</sup> The Erinyes' music is mentioned also in a passage of *Seven against Thebes* where the chorus have just heard of the deaths of Eteocles and Polyneices, and Antigone and Ismene have just made their entrance. The chorus say to them that before any further talk, 'it is right for us to utter aloud (ἄχεϊν) the ill-sounding hymn of the Erinys, τὸν δυσκέλαδον θ' ὕμνον Ἐρινύος and the cruel paean of Hades, Αἶδα τ' ἐχθρὸν παιᾶνα' (*Th.* 866-70). Barker identifies the lyrics at 871-1004 as that hymn and that paean and points out that 'Ares and the Erinyes are mentioned several times in the course of the lament, where they are depicted as the victors whose force has overcome the Theban warriors and destroyed the family of Oedipus; in this sense the lament counts as a celebration of their power and their victory'.<sup>64</sup> In *Ag.* 1186-92 the Erinyes are depicted as a σύμφθογος οὐκ εὐφωτος (1187) and as a κῶμος (1189) and differently from the passage in *Seven against Thebes* the *hymnos* 'is the origin of human disaster, πρῶταρχον ἄτης, not a song that marks its completion' (v.1192).

Hence, the 'music of the Erinyes', as Barker calls it, manifests itself in different ways: the song they sing and which terrorizes human hearts; the frenzied singing and dancing of the heart itself which they inspire; and the musical celebration of their power, sung by human voices. If we resume our discussion about the lament, tragedy has a few examples of *gooi* that represent songs praising the

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<sup>63</sup> Barker identifies in A. *Choeph.* 1023-25, 1048-61 an internal process which causes fear. The terror in Orestes's heart 'will perform the metaphorical music of singing and dancing'.

<sup>64</sup> Verses 953-60 have particular relevance to show that the song of victory is attributed to the Erinyes/Arai: 'At the end,' sing the chorus, 'the Arai shouted their victory-cry (ἐπηλάλαζαν), the piercing song (τὸν ὄξυν νόμον), when the race of Oedipus had been completely routed; and having defeated both champions the δαίμων ceased, and set up the trophy of Atê in the gates where they were struck down'.

sinister power of the Erinyes by the memory of crimes perpetuated for long time. In E. *Supp.* 833-6 the chorus attributes to the Erinys the tragic end of Oedipus' family: *πικροὺς ἐσεῖδες γάμους,/ πικρὰν δὲ Φοίβου φάτιν· ἐς ἣ ἄς ἂ πολύστονος λιποῦσ' / Οἰδιπόδα δώματ' ἦλθ' Ἐρινύς*, 'Bitter the marriages you witnessed, bitter the oracle of Phoebus! The curse of Oedipus, full of sorrow, after desolating his house, has come on you'. This song of praise for the Erinyes is included in a chant explicitly called *goos* by Theseus (839). The *gooi* and *stenagmoi* (as called 959) sung by Electra at E. *Or.* 960-1012 represent well the meaning of lament as song that marks the end of a cycle of human tragedies. Here the Erinyes are not named explicitly but other elements remind us of the paeon described by Barker: we have already mentioned the tribute to Persephone at 963-64 *κτύπον τε κρατός, ὃν ἔλαχ' ἂ κατὰ χθονὸς/ νεπτέρων* †Περσέφασσα καλλίπαις θεά† while at 997 Electra speaks of a *ἄρὰ πολύστονος* a woeful curse upon her house the Pelopidai. She quotes all the episodes that destroyed the family, starting from Pelops killing his friend Myrtilus (989-94) and then remembering the banquet of Thyestes (1008) and the unfaithful love of Aerope for Atreus (1009-10) to finish with Agamemnon's death (1010-12).

This section helps us to understand two aspects of the *goos*. First the identification of the *goos* with the paeon for the Erinyes closes the circle of relationships – that we introduced before – between the *goos* and the nightingale, the nightingale and the Erinyes, and now of the *goos* with the Erinyes. Secondly it completes the picture of how the tragic poets perceived the *gooi* and their vengeful nature. Revenge as a divine principle seems to belong to the old creed: Aeschylus describes the Erinyes as powerful creatures and enrich them of imaginative details – to the point that he devotes an entire play to them – while Euripides refers to them in relation to the *goos* only when treating traditional myths like the Theban cycle and Orestes' and Electra's matricide (the link is totally absent in Sophocles as far as we can tell). Aeschylus perceives vengeance as a socially recognized code and even as a divine law symbolized by the Erinyes. His insistence on calling the song of revenge both as *goos* and paeon points out that the poet perceived vengeance unambiguously as a two-face phenomenon: negative from human

perspective but positive from the gods' point of view. Sophocles and Euripides on the contrary question the positivity and the divine origin of revenge and do not almost present the connection between paean and lament.

In the next paragraph we intend to show that cursing a person in the name of revenge was perceived as just until the fifth century. Furthermore it is worth pointing out how certain ritual practices (that are believed to be magical) are not condemned per se by law unless they betray an 'impious' attitude to the gods.

## INTERPRETING THE LAW: CURSING OR OFFENDING THE GODS?

As a start we should mention a group of fifth- century BC inscriptions coming from Ionia and generally called 'Teian Curses' as they represent proper curses and not a simple law code pronounced by the state against the rebels (Ogden 2002, 276).<sup>65</sup> The text defines itself as a curse, τὴν ἐπαρῆν,<sup>66</sup> and has raised several scholars' attention, such as Parker (1983, 193-94), Collins (2008, 134), Ogden (2002, 275). The *dirae* are addressed to those who prepare harmful spells/poisons (*pharmaka dêlêtêria*), those who obstruct the importation of corn into Teian territory, to the rebels against Teian examiners or chief executive, to whoever betrays the city and the territory, commits piracy, or damages the state in general.<sup>67</sup> Collins (*idem*, 135) points out that the target of Teian proscriptions was only what could be a threat to order in the city. However, from our point of view it is particularly interesting that cursing

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<sup>65</sup> Curse against rebels, etc.; 469/459 BC; found at Hereke: CIG 3044; SEG 19, 686.

<sup>66</sup> 'If anyone in office does not perform this curse at the statue of Dynamis [...], he is to be the object of the curse'. (Ogden 2002, 275). 'If anyone breaks the inscription on which this curse has been written [...], he is to die, himself and his family with him.' (*idem*, 276).

<sup>67</sup> Strubbe (1991, 37) refers to them as *dirae Teiae* and points out that they were 'imprecations probably making part of a *Bürgereid* at Teus in Ionia (c. 480-450 BC)'.

someone, and therefore involving gods in chasing and punishing someone, was not only tolerated but even official practice in the fifth century BC.

In Athens sorcery was punished only when premeditation to kill was proved, such as in the case described by Antiphon in his speech *Against the Stepmother*.<sup>68</sup> The trial is whether the *pharmakon* causing the death of two people was a simple love charm (*philtron*) or was effectively used as a poison. According to Parker (2005, 133) 'the case is surprising, as one might expect any unsolicited use of *pharmaka* against another for whatever motive to be highly objectionable. But there is no sign that, acquitted of murder, the woman could then have fallen victim to a charge of *pharmakeia*'.

Two cases of prosecution taken into serious account by scholars are worth being remembered: Theoris of Lemnos and Nino. They were both famous for practicing sorcery and were convicted for *asebeia*.<sup>69</sup> Again, scholars seem to agree on the fact that the expertise in spells and philters may have been 'a symptom of a broader impiety rather than the core of the case' (Parker, 2001, 133).<sup>70</sup> Collins (2008, 138) and Dickie (2001, 52-53) in particular points out that Nino, according to a scholium to Demosthenes (19.281), was executed for participating in Bacchic rites and one commentator reports that she was prosecuted because her Bacchic rites mocked the true mysteries and the historian Josephus (*Ap.* 2.267) adds that she conducted initiations into the cults of unknown or foreign gods. Even being

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<sup>68</sup> Antiphon was born either shortly before or shortly after the year 480. He died at about the age of seventy in 411BC (Maidment 1953, 2). Collins (2008, 133) refers to the type of magic dealing with the so called *pharmaka* which according to Arist. *Ath.* 57.3 and Dem. 23.22 (*Contra Aristocratem*) fell under the Aeropagus' jurisdiction. *Pharmaka* are therefore mentioned in capital cases, but it is not the *pharmakon* itself but the intent and the context behind it that is illegal (Collins 2008, 134). Collins (2008, 133) also explains that this term is surrounded by ambiguity: in fact it can be used to mean 'medicines', 'poisons', in magical contexts can refer to drugs and, in some instances, spells.

<sup>69</sup> The Lemnian Theoris is described as an expert in drugs (*pharmaka*) and incantations (*epôdai*) by Demosthenes (*Against Aristogeiton* 25.79-80), as a seer by Philochorus (*FGrH* 382 F 60), and as a priestess (*hiereia*) prosecuted 'for committing many misdeeds and for teaching the slaves to deceive' by Plutarch (*Dem.* 14.4): she was condemned for impiety (Collins 2001, 136-38). The priestess Nino was a leader of *thiasoi* and a specialist in love philters, and like Theoris she was convicted for *asebeia*.

<sup>70</sup> Collins (2001, 138), Parker (Law and Religion 2005, 67-68; Polytheism and Society at Athens 2005, 132-34) and Dickie (2001, 50-54).

cautious in trusting later sources such as the Scholium and Josephus, we should evaluate these trials as proofs that *asebeia* consists not simply in magical practices but in offending religion in certain way.<sup>71</sup>

Athens was indeed particularly sensitive to impiety intended as an offense to the gods. Phillips III (1991, 261) mentions in particular three cases – the prosecution of Anaxagoras for his astrophysical observations,<sup>72</sup> Alcibiades' profanation of the mysteries (415B.C.)<sup>73</sup> and the trial of Socrates (399 B.C.)<sup>74</sup> – relating to profanation but not necessarily involving accusation of magic. These are the most exemplary ones but there are a few more that have received less scholarly attention (O'Sullivan 1997, 136). Aristotle's pupil Theophrastus (O'Sullivan 1997, 136-39) was accused of *asebeia* and O'Sullivan

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<sup>71</sup> Another similar character is mentioned in a fable of Aesop (56 Perry): she is a *gunê magos* making her living dispensing spells to stop the anger of the gods. Even in this case there has been discussion (Collins 2008, 138-139; Dickie 2001, 52; Parker 2005, 135) both about the historical accuracy of the case – which was first collected by Demetrius of Phalerum in the fourth century BC (Dickie 201, 51-52; Collins 2001, 404) – and the cause of the charge of impiety. Dickie considers the accusation as related to her will to innovate in divine matters and Parker affirms that 'the story can become, a little precariously, an emblem of the kind of measures against unlicensed religion which the Athenians did not take, and of the limits of their suspicion of religious professionals' while Collins (2008) points out that 'it is hard to accept that, granted such common and frequent activity, our only surviving "case" that turns on this issue serves as the background to a fable, which may or may not actually date to the fourth century BC.' Furthermore, the comment from a spectator -asking her why, if she could appease gods, she could not also appease the jurors- would reveal the absurdity both of the claim to divine control and magical ability, which would suggest that we should be cautious in interpreting this case to prove the illegality of magical practices.

<sup>72</sup> Plu. *Per.* 32, D.L. 2.12-15, Diod. S. 12.39.

<sup>73</sup> Thuc. 6.27-29.

<sup>74</sup> X. *Mem.* 1.1.1, Pl. *Ap.* 24b, X. *Ap.* 10. See also Parker (1996, 199-217). The scholar here analyzes the reasons behind the official charge of impiety. He mentions the possibility of political anxiety (202) and Socrates' religious position in favour of his personal divine voice (203). Furthermore, Socrates' behaviour is what Parker defines as 'kainotheism', a reverence for other gods and the constant idea that the traditional ones do not intervene in the world (204-5). –The harm in this attitude is that it angers the gods and subvert social morality. 'Promises, covenants and oath, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist' (205) –. In addition we must remember the accuse of corrupting the young (the names of Alcibiades and Critias were probably spoken at the trial). Parker investigates the possibility of a 'religious crisis' in the second half of the fifth century, although not in the sense that traditional religion was seriously undermined but in the sense that speculative thought was perceived by some as a threat (210). One position on particular was feared, that of the 'atheist' scientist, who 'substitutes change and necessity for the gods as an explanation of celestial phenomena'. Although the natural philosophers were not a new phenomenon in the fifth century, it was in this time that they became common and influential, and their association with the sophists worsen their reputation: natural philosophy 'became offensive only once it was felt to be combined with moral relativism or antinomianism' (212). The question remains whether the introduction of new gods was a formal offence or a real guilt. Parker explains that new gods could be introduced by the city but only with the authorization of the people. However only when religious associations proved objectionable a trial would occur. In Socrates' case the accusation of 'acknowledging new powers' is only a counterpoise to that of 'not acknowledging the gods the city believes in' (216-7).

(1997, 138) hypothesizes that the pretext was some alleged disavowal of the traditional deities.<sup>75</sup>

Demetrius of Phalerum was apparently prosecuted on one 'not overly political pretext', but still for unambiguous political motivation (O'Sullivan 1997, 140). He was guilty for having honoured his brother, who had suffered the death penalty, with some secret rites (Athen. 542e). Theodorus, the atheistic philosopher of Cyrene, was perhaps accused for 'pure' *asebeia* because he repudiated the gods of traditional Greek religion in a work *On the gods* (O'Sullivan 1997, 145) although this is still matter of speculation.<sup>76</sup> There is however a true 'unequivocal case of pure *asebeia*' (*idem*, 147): Stilpo was brought before the Areopagus for his argument that the Athena of Phidias was not a god, since Zeus made Athena (D. L. 2.116).

From what we have tried to show briefly, magic was not the target of law, or at least not *per se*. In the fifth century, as the Teian Curses show, practices such as cursing even belonged to official ceremonies. Besides, practices such as magical charms and spells were not banished by the law, unless their purpose was to kill. It is from the fourth century that literature mentions cases of prosecutions for sorcery, but also in this case it is possible that the real objective of the prosecution was any attempt to change religious traditions and ideas. This is indeed proved by the numerous cases of trials for *asebeia*, where the accused was charged for offending the gods. The cases we have introduced show that there is a continuity between Euripides' view of the gods, and what is just or unjust, and the civil law. Euripides

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<sup>75</sup> Ael. *VH* 8.12 'Demosthenes in Macedonia was not the only person to have this experience, despite is great eloquence; it happened also to Theophrastus of Eresus. He failed in a speech before the Areopagus, and made the excuse that he was struck dumb by the prestige of the assembly. A tart and prompt reply was made by Demochares, who said "The jury were Athenians, Theophrastus, not the Twelve Gods"' (Wilson 1997). O'Sullivan (1997, 138) comments the passage by saying that 'Demochares' response plays upon a questioning of these Olympian gods, and this jibe might have had even more sting had Theophrastus indeed been on trial for some alleged disavowal of the traditional deities'. However the question remains whether Aelian can be treated as a reliable source.

<sup>76</sup> 'Theodorus' religious ideas, from which he earned his title *ho atheos*, may have given just grounds for the charge of impiety' (*idem*).



openly condemns blasphemies and criticizes ideas and practices that imply gods are vindictive and unjust. The law seems to be particularly interested in punishing anyone who mocks mystery cults (it is the case of Alcibiades and perhaps Nino), despises traditional religion (as Theodorus and Theophrastus) and whoever introduces new doctrines that are incompatible with the traditional gods (such as Anaxagora, Socrates).

## CONCLUSION

This chapter presents some representative examples of *gooi* in tragedy. Not only do the passages analyzed here reveal the objective presence of reference to demons and sinister forces, to mantic events (oneiromancy, prophecy), or to the journey of the souls in the underworld. A more careful investigation highlights also a change of perspective about the *gooi* and what they represent. If Aeschylus, like Homer, introduces the *goos* as a powerful and positive ritual act (because it implies a positive view of revenge or it is perceived as a proper means to mourn a dead person), in Sophocles and Euripides it is deployed as a dysphemic element, that is a violation of the traditional prayer. Interpreting this particular use of a ritual act is possible by reading inscription and oratory speeches as they show that magical practices and cursing were not condemned until they turn into a threat for the traditional creed, and therefore social order.

In the following chapter we will analyze more terminology related to the lament, in particular the *oimoge*, and we will see that it is often used by literature as synonym of *goos* although it is possible to identify some typical characteristics. The *oimoge* is particularly helpful to shows the original aischrologic nature of certain laments and to understand how some of their peculiar characteristics fall within the prejudice of being dysphemic.



## CHAPTER 3

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### THE *OIMŌGE* AND THE *DYSPHEMIA*

Our previous investigation about the *goos* in Homeric poems and tragedy has pointed out the presence of more vocabulary signifying 'lament'. We have mentioned in particular two terms besides the word *goos*: *oimoge* and *threnos*. We will resume our discussion about the *threnos* in the fourth chapter. Now we will analyze the *oimogai* by investigating their degree of synonymy with the *goos* but also the peculiar qualities that make them different from it. We will see that the *oimoge/oimogmos* presents peculiarities in contents and shares with the *goos* qualities related to the supernatural. The *oimoge* manifests itself as an uninhibited utterance and at a certain point starts being perceived as outrageous to the gods. In the previous chapters we have suggested that the *goos* could contain elements of 'hidden disorder' such as requests for revenge, the arousal of the dead, prophetic visions, funeral tributes for the deceased. In Sophocles and Euripides such elements are generally used differently from the Homeric poems and Aeschylus (with the exception of the prophetic visions), and show to be perceived no more as normal ritual acts but as the transgression of a religious code (and as such they are introduced in tragedy for dramatic effects). The *oimoge* seems to correspond fully with this side of the lament as its contents show clearly. Later, literature itself codifies this character of the *goos* and *oimoge* as *dysphemia*, and through the following analysis we will show how close these three concepts were.

Despite the prejudice shown by tragedy against the *oimoge*, we will also try to explain that it must be considered as a ritual act. Invective is conserved by the *epodos*, which shows that in this case elements of 'disorder' are still used without being considered inappropriate. The perception of them as

dysphemic comes probably by ideas that relate to the divine: Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* contribute to a full understanding of this phenomenon.

## THE *OIMOGE/OIMOGMOS*

Before investigating the essence and the qualities of the *oimoge/oimogmos* it is necessary to understand its general meaning and its degree of connection with the *goos*.<sup>1</sup> In Homer the word *oimoge* is synonymous with the *goos* on a few occasions: at *Il.* 22.447 Andromache hears the *oimoge* and the *kokutos* coming from the tower, which can be identified both as Priam's *oimoge* (408), the citizens' *stonache* (429) and Hecuba's *goos* (430); the *oimoge* and the *goos* seem to be synonyms also in the famous passage at *Il.* 23.10-23 (*oimoge* at 12, *goos* at 10, 14, 17); the *oimoge* at *Il.* 23.179-183 repeats almost the same words contained in the *goos* at 23.19-23 (and the *oimoge* at 24.592-595 looks similar to these ones). Also tragedy shows that the words *goos* and *oimoge/oimogmos* are used with similar meaning: in *S. El.* 123 the chorus name Electra's performance as *oimoge*, while she previously defines her lament as a *goos* (104) and a *threnos* (88, 94, 104) and in addition she says at 133 that she is singing the *stonache*; in *E. Med.* 1204 Creon is described uttering a *oimoge* and the same speech is called *threnos* and *goos* at 1211; the two actions are complementary in *S. Ant.* 426-28 – γόοισιν ἐξώμωξεν – and *E. Andr.* 1159 – κατοιμῶξαι γόοις.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For scholarly reference see also Arnould (1990, 155-6).

<sup>2</sup> A resemblance of meaning between the *stonos* and the *oimoge* is also implied by Arnould (1990, 20-22).

## Features of the *oimoge*

### *Instantaneous and instinctual nature of oimoge*

The *oimoge* can therefore be considered with confidence as synonymous with the *goos*, but is there any specific quality that can be attributed to it in particular? Spatafora (1997, 11-14) in his analysis of the physiology of the lament in Homer describes the *oimoge* and the *kokutos* as the immediate reactions to a physical or psychological pain: it often accompanies the act of dying on the battlefield (*Il.* 4.450, 8.64, 5.68, 16.298, 20.417, *Od.* 20.357) or a pain (*Od.* 18.35 and 398, 9.395).<sup>3</sup> This constitutes already a relevant difference from the *goos*: the *oimoge* sounds like an instantaneous and instinctual expression while the *goos* as a whole, at least in Homer, is somehow curative and cathartic (*idem*, 4-7).<sup>4</sup> This characteristic says a lot about the nature of the *oimoge*: we might identify several phases in one's own reaction to pain, the first stage being less controlled while the next ones tend to show a certain degree of control, awareness and also acceptance. The *oimoge* can be placed at the very beginning in this sequence of expressions of feelings. Let us see why.<sup>5</sup>

### *Contents*

It is useful to identify the contents of the *oimoge* as they can be illuminating about its nature. We can distinguish in particular three thematic groups: 1) the idea that a mistake – it doesn't matter how

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<sup>3</sup> Spatafora suggests that 'alla percezione di qualcosa che provoca un forte dolore fisico o psichico l'immediata reazione è l'*oimogein* o il *kokyein*.[...] L'*oimoge* e il *kokytos* sono pertanto una sorta di urlo istintivo ed incondizionato, viene fuori senza volontà da parte dell'uomo, proprio quando l'uomo non riesce a dominare il suo corpo posseduto da una forte emozione' (Spatafora 1997, 13). Tragedy confirms this function of the *oimoge* in A. *Ag.* 1346, 1384; *Pers.* 426; *S. Phil.* 190; *E. Heracl.* 833.

<sup>4</sup> Spatafora says that the *goos* consists in 'il lamento che permette il definitivo ristabilizzarsi del complesso viscerale' (*idem*, 4) and 'l'impiego della musica per il *goos* non è perciò casuale ma risponde all'esigenza di ristabilire l'equilibrio fisico e psichico. Il *goos* sotto forma di discorso o, nei casi di crisi più acute, di canto accompagnato da musica indica precipuamente il lamento terapeutico' (*idem*, 6).

<sup>5</sup> We should remember that in *Odyssey* the *oimoge* corresponded to an articulate speech/chant (the contexts where it is used often present words like *muthos* *Od.* 9 506, 11 50, *epos* *Il.* 12 162, and the action is usually described with the expression *hos ephato* *Il.* 21 284, 22 429).

conscious it is – has been made, in particular an unconditional reliance on the gods' favour ; 2) a wish that things could have gone differently; 3) an outburst of anger against someone and a curse directed to a god. The difference between these themes is only apparent as they reveal the same mental attitude towards a negative experience and, as we will point out later, an impious view of the deities.

### Exclamations about one's own disgrace

Relatively often the *oimoge* manifests itself as an exclamation over one's own misfortune. The exclamations Agamemnon utters when he is murdered by Clytemnestra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* are called *oimogmai* and start with ὦμοι both at 1343 and 1345 and the action of οἰμώζειν in S. *O.C.* 820 corresponds to the utterance οἶμοι. Similarly in S. *Aj.* 940 οἱ ὤξαι is referred to ἰώ μοί μοι at 939 and in S. *El.* 788 to οἶμοι τάλαινα. The link between the word *oimoge* and the interjection ὦμοι, besides being pointed out by Suda,<sup>6</sup> seems quite obvious and makes it easy to identify as *oimogai/oimogmai* other utterances that are not explicitly called so in Homeric poems and tragedy. Thetis starts her *goos* by saying ὦ μοι ἐγὼ δειλή, ὦ μοι δυσαριστοτόκεια (*Il.* 18.54), and Hecuba by ὦ μοι (*Il.* 22.432); also Andromache's utterance, ἐγὼ δύστηνος at *Il.* 22.477, although not starting with the conventional ὦμοι, can be included in this type of interjection for the link between the pronoun and an adjective expressing a miserable condition.

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<sup>6</sup> [Σκορακίζειν] τὸ οἰμώζειν ἀπὸ τοῦ οἶμοι

## Hindsight and sense of guilt

In Hom. *Il.* 18.35 Achilles' *oimoge* has to be considered as a generic reaction to great sorrow for having lost Patroclus,<sup>7</sup> but the story itself would suggest that the hero's shout probably comes also from a sense of guilt for allowing his friend to go to the battlefield in his place. Polyphemos in *Od.* 9.506 is admitting his mistake for expecting his enemy to be 'large, handsome, and forceful' (De Jong 2001, 248), and now he is paying the consequences for having underestimated Odysseus.<sup>8</sup> Elpenor in *Il.* 11.60-65 explains through his *oimoge* that an evil decision of some god, in addition to measureless wine, was his downfall, and instead of going to the ladder he fell down from the roof and died;<sup>9</sup> similarly Odysseus in *Od.* 12.371 recognizes that Zeus and other gods made him fall asleep for his ruin while his comrades killed the cattle of Helios Hyperion;<sup>10</sup> Hippocoon at *Il.* 10.522 must have experienced the same or a worse feeling when he woke up and realized that the place where the horses had stood was empty, and many comrades had been slain by the Achaeans. Patroclus at *Il.* 15.397 realizes that he has lost control of the situation on the battlefield because of his devotion to Eurypylos, similarly to Priam in *Il.* 21.529 when he sees the Trojans driven in headlong rout without help.

Even though there is nothing explicit, it seems to me that the *oimoge* is not only uttered to express sadness for what is happening but in most cases it shows remorse. This is certainly true for

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<sup>7</sup> Edwards (1991, 147) quotes Leaf on this passage (1902, II 268): 'It is needless to dwell on such obvious beauties as the profound truth of Achilles' grief—note how he first receives the cruel blow in silence, and only breaks out with groans (33) and wails (35) after the less-afflicted slave-women have been roused to shrieks at the first word'.

<sup>8</sup> We should remember that again prophecy is somehow connected with Polyphemos' disgrace: ἔσκε τις ἐνθάδε ἀντίς ἀνὴρ ἡὺς τε ἐγας τε, / Τηλέμοις Εὐρυμίδης, ὃς μαντοσύνη ἐκέκαστο / καὶ μαντευόμενος κατεγύρα Κυκλώπεσσιν (508-10), 'there lived here a soothsayer, a good man and tall, Telemus, son of Eurymus, who excelled all men in soothsaying, and grew old as a seer among the Cyclops' (Murray 1995). Polyphemos complains therefore that 'the prophecy has been fulfilled in a quite unexpected way' (Heubeck and Hoekstra 1989, 39).

<sup>9</sup> De Jong (2001, 275) notes that Elpenor excuses his stupidity by ascribing his death 'not only to his drunkenness (as Odysseus had done: 10.555) but also to bad luck' and points out the fact that a *daimon* is mentioned: ἄσέ με δαίμονος αἴσα κακὴ καὶ ἀθέσφατος οἶνος (61) which reminds us of the presence of *daimones* in relation with the *goos*.

<sup>10</sup> Heubeck and Hoekstra (1989, 139) on the passage say that 'The paratactic structure of 372-3 clearly expresses how divine decree and human responsibility combine to bring disaster'.

Polyphemus, Odysseus, Elpenor and Patroclus and it is plausible also in Achilles', Hippocoon's and Priam's cases. The person *oimoxas* has the perception – no matter how true it is – of being personally involved in what is happening, for he is not doing what he is expected to do (Patroclus) or is sleeping instead of being awake (Hippocoon and Odysseus) or is undervaluing his enemy (Polyphemus) or is not suspecting that giving his armor to Patroclus would lead to his death (Achilles).

This collection of passages shows an important aspect of the *oimogai*: the tendency of the mourner to reproach himself for what happened. The mistake that the mourners seem to blame themselves for has much to do with their propensity to rely on the benign eyes of the gods, which then suddenly turned against them: the *oimoge* tells the story of someone who has fallen into misfortune in the exact moment he felt safe and confident: in other words someone who has not fully understood that certain events cannot be controlled. The *oimoge* is somehow the response which allows this human attitude to surface and also the instrument for regaining consciousness of being powerless in front of the gods. Feelings appearing here can be described as a mix of regret for being ingenuous, unguarded, and careless about the consequences of one's own confidence.

Tragedy confirms this idea: Xerxes ἀνώμωξεν when faced with the ruin of his people, κακῶν ὁρῶν βάθος, in A. *Pers.* 465;<sup>11</sup> Creon utters an *oimoge* after hearing his son crying desperately for Antigone's death in S. *Ant.* 1226;<sup>12</sup> Heracles groans for regretting the moment he decided to marry Deianira in S. *Tr.* 790 and people mourn while watching Lichas being killed by Heracles at 783;<sup>13</sup> Ajax

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<sup>11</sup> For a discussion about the genuineness of this passage see Broadhead (1960, 272).

<sup>12</sup> Griffith (1999, 336) speaks of 'pity, remorse, dismay, remonstrance' that 'would go some way towards mitigating an audience's disapproval of him'.

<sup>13</sup> The verse 783 -ἄπας δ' ἀνηυφήμεν οἰμωγῇ λεῶς- is particularly important for the next section of this chapter because of the link of the word *oimoge* with the verb *aneuphemein*. This is in fact an interesting term that has much to do with some sort of blasphemy and impiety. LSJ only gives the meaning of 'to cry aloud, shriek', and also of 'to receive, celebrate with auspicious cries' in Josephus. This difference may depend on how we intend the *an*, whether it is the negative prefix, or whether it is an abbreviated *ana*. Easterling (1982, 170) points out that this is a rare verb, used for example by Pl. *Ph.* 60a, and it is an appeal for silence to avoid ill-omened words. Segal (1975, 39-40) say that 'Le cri d'horreur et douleur [...] n'est pas seulement un renversement du silence rituel.[...] Par cette description, Sophocle suggère un anéantissement total de la civilisation, car l'acte de Polyphème viole les



‘groaned out sorrowful groans’ (Stanford 1981, 102) after raging against cattle, bulls and dogs and being informed by Tecmessa about what happened in *S. Aj.* 317; Philoctetes utters the *oimoge* after realizing that he had been deceived and abandoned in *S. Phil.* 278; Hippolytus does it because he feels sorry for Theseus’ misery in *E. Hipp.* 1405;<sup>14</sup> the chorus bemoans Clytemnestra for being killed by her own offspring in *E. El.* 1168, Orestes seeing himself and Pylades in danger of death at *E. IT.* 318, Jocasta arriving too late on the battlefield and finding Eteocles and Polynices dead in *E. Ph.* 1432. All these characters express bitterness through their *oimoge* and, to different degree, even remorse for being ingenuous towards the fate and the gods’ will. We often find reference to a *daimon* and on many occasions it is blamed through this utterance for causing sorrow: its presumed responsibility seems to justify the use of blasphemous words in addressing it.

### Unfulfilled wishes

The majority of the *oimogai* presents a very distinctive feature: unfulfilled wishes.<sup>15</sup> Some examples are in *Il.* 7.132-135, 157-158;<sup>16</sup> *Il.* 22.41-43;<sup>17</sup> *Il.* 22.426-28;<sup>18</sup> *Od.* 13.204-207<sup>19</sup>. Following

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deux distinction fondamentales entre l’homme et bête, cannibalisme et manger cuit’. A link between the *oimoi* and this verb can be found also in *Emp. Fr.* 139 DK. About similar Aeschylean exploitations of a ‘blasphemous paradox’ see Fraenkel on *A. Ag.* 645.

<sup>14</sup> ὦ μωξα τοῖνυν καὶ πατρὸς δυσπραξίας. A few verses before the οἶμοι is followed by φρονῶ δὴ δαίμον’ ἦ ἀπώλεσεν ‘now I learn the power that has destroyed me!’ (1401) and at 1406 Artemis even says that ἐξηπατήθη δαίμονος βουλευμάσιν ‘he was deceived, a god contrived it so’ (Kovacs, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Alexiou (2002, 178-81) mentions this characteristic as a theme of the lament and gives some more examples in more modern dirges.

<sup>16</sup> ‘O father Zeus and Athene and Apollo, I wish I were young’ (Murray 1999), αἶ γὰρ Ζεῦ τε πάτερ καὶ Ἀθηναίη καὶ Ἄπολλον / ἥβῳ [...] ‘I wish that I were as young and my strength were as firm, then should Hector of the fleshing helmet soon find one to face him’ (*idem*), εἴθ’ ὥς ἡβώοιμι, βίη δέ μοι ἔμπεδος εἴη / τῷ κε τάχ’ ἀντήσειε μάχης κορυθαίολος Ἑκτώρ.

<sup>17</sup> ‘I wish that he were as much loved by the gods as he is as by me! Then would the dogs and vultures speedily devour him as he lay unburied; so would dread sorrow depart from my heart’ (Murray 1999), αἶθε θεοῖσι φίλος τοσσόνδε γένοιτο / ὅσσον ἐμοί· τάχα κέν ἐκύνες καὶ γυῖπες ἔδοιεν / κείμενον· ἦ κέ μοι αἰνὸν ἀπὸ πραπίδων ἄχος ἔλθοι.

<sup>18</sup> ‘How I wish he had died in my arms; then we would have taken our fill of weeping and wailing, the mother who bare him to her sorrow, and I myself’ (Murray 1999), ὥς ὄφελεν θανέειν ἐν χερσὶν ἐ ἧσι / τῷ κε κορεσσάμεθα κλαίοντέ τε μυρομένω τε / μήτηρ θ’, ἦ μιν ἔτικτε δυσάμμορος, ἦδ’ ἐγὼ αὐτός

these passages we would be able to identify as *oimogai* also Andromache's exclamation, 'How I wish he had never begotten me!' (Murray 1999), ὥς ἡ ὄφελλε τεκέσθαι at *Il.* 22.481, and Helen's, 'I wish I had died before then!' (*idem*), ὥς πρὶν ὄφελλον ὀλέσθαι at *Il.* 24.764.<sup>20</sup> Tragedy has plenty of examples of such 'unfulfilled wishes' and even though they are not named with the word *oimoge*, nonetheless they are most of the times contained in *gooi* and their structure seems too similar to the previous examples not to be taken into account. We should mention Xerxes' first words in his lament (called Μαριανδυνοῦ θρηνητῆρος ἱαχάν at 939-940 and *goos* 947) in A. *Pers.* 915-917;<sup>21</sup> Iō's lamentation in A. *Pr.* 747-51 (starting with a ἰὼ μοί μοι· ἔξ. 742) that has been compared by Griffith (1983, 221) to Prometheus' utterance at 156-57;<sup>22</sup> Oedipus' utterance in S. *OT* 1349,<sup>23</sup> and the chorus' in *Aj.* 1192-5,<sup>24</sup> in E. *Supp.* the long *goos/stenagmos* (according to 839 and 798) presents more than one passage with similar wishes at 786-8,<sup>25</sup> 821,<sup>26</sup> and again after a ἰὼ ἰὼ μοί μοι 829-31,<sup>27</sup> Hermione in *Andr.* 861-5,<sup>28</sup> and Peleus' *goos* at 1182,<sup>29</sup> and 1189-96,<sup>30</sup> Electra's verses in Eur. *Or.* 982-987.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>19</sup> 'Would that I had remained there among the Phaeacians, and had then come to some other of the mighty kings, who would have entertained me and sent me on my homeward way' (Murray 1966), αἶθ' ὄφελον μείναι παρὰ Φαίηκεσσιν / αὐτοῦ· ἐγὼ δέ κεν ἄλλον ὑπερμενέων βασιλῆων / ἐξικόμην, ὅς κέν μ' ἐφίλει καὶ ἔπεμπε νέεσθαι

<sup>20</sup> Achilles' verses can also be an *oimoge* at *Il.* 18 86-87 and 107-111 while he is *stenachôn*.

<sup>21</sup> 'Would to Zeus that the fate of death had covered me over too together with the men who are departed' (Sommerstein 2008), εἴθ' ὄφελε, Ζεῦ, καὶ ἐμεῦ· ἀνδρῶν / τῶν οἰχομένων / θανάτου κατὰ μοῖρα καλύψαι.

<sup>22</sup> 'What good does life do me? Why do I not straight away throw myself from this rugged rock, so that I can crash to the ground and be rid of all my troubles? It is better to die once and for all than to suffer terribly all the days of my life' (Sommerstein 2008), τί δῆτ' ἐμοὶ ζῆν κέρδος, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐν τάχει / ἔρριψ' ἐμαυτὴν τῆσδ' ἀπὸ στύφλου πέτρας, / ὅπως πέδοι σκήψασα τῶν πάντων πόνων / ἀπηλλάγην; κρεῖσσον γὰρ εἰσάπαξ θανεῖν / ἢ τὰς ἀπάσας ἡμέρας πάσχειν κακῶς. About the verses 157-58 'so that no god nor any other being could gloat over these afflictions!' (*idem*), ὥς μήτε θεὸς μήτε τις ἄλλος / τοῖσδ' ἐγγέθῃ Griffith (1983, 118) quotes Goodwin (1900, 333) and Smyth (1920, 2185c) by saying that a past tense of the indicative in a final clause denotes that 'the purpose is dependent upon some unaccomplished action or unfulfilled condition, and therefore *is not* or *was not* attained'.

<sup>23</sup> 'A curse upon the shepherd who released me from the cruel fetter of my feet, and saved me from death, and preserved me, doing me no kindness! For if I had died then, I would not have been so great a grief to my friends or to myself' (Lloyd-Jones 1994), ὅλοιθ' ὅστις ἦν ὃς ἀγρίας πέδας / νομᾶς ἐπιποδίας μ' ἔλαβ' ἀπὸ τε φόνου < '> / ἔρυτο κἀνέσωσεν, οὐδὲν ἐς χάριν πράσσων./ τότε γὰρ ἂν θανὼν / οὐκ ἦ φίλοισιν οὐδ' ἐμοὶ τοσόνδ' ἄχος. [...] οὐκ οὐκ πατρός γ' ἂν φονεὺς / ἦλθον, οὐδὲ νυμφίος / βροτοῖς ἐκλήθην ὧν ἔφυν ἅπο

<sup>24</sup> 'That man should first have entered the mighty sky or Hades, common to all, who first showed to the Greeks how to league in war with hateful weapons!' (*idem*), ὄφελε πρότερον αἰθέρα δύναι μέγαν ἢ τὸν πολύκοινον Ἄϊδαν / κείνος ἀνὴρ, ὃς στυγερῶν ἔδειξεν ὄπλων Ἑλλασιν κοινὸν Ἄρη

<sup>25</sup> 'Would that old Time, father of our days, had made me ever unwedded to this day!' (Kovacs 1998), ἄγαμόν μ' ἔτι δεῦρ' ἀει/ Χρόνος παλαιὸς πατήρ/ ὄφελ' ἀμερᾶν κτίσαι. About this verse Collard (1975, 307) says that 'the

From all these passages we can identify some recurrent elements: apart from a few exceptions in Sophocles, these ‘if’ clauses present **εἴθε/ αἴθε/ ὥς** + a verb in the optative mood and very often the verb **ὄφελεν/ ὄφελον**, a verb that can be used in the aorist to express a wish that is not accomplished, corresponding to the Latin *utinam* + past perfect. All these passages shows that the person *oimoxas* tends to detach himself/herself from reality. The *oimoge* is a moment of non-acceptance, in which one’s own mind imagines that things have gone completely differently from the beginning, even denying someone’s whole existence or death or old age.<sup>32</sup> Willink (1986, 246) speaks of wishes for μετοικήσεις, where for change of abode the poets (Euripides in particular) intend sometimes simply an escape, but it is usually inserted in ‘contexts of imminent death (variously threatened or suicidally desired), and with a mythical “out of this world” destination associable with one of more of the μετοικήσεις of the (winged)

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wish to have avoided marriage or parenthood in order to be spared the misery they brought is a Tragic cliché, but a natural one `.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Would that the Cadmean ranks had felled me in the dust’ (Kovacs 1998), **εἴθε** με Καδμείων ἔναρον στίχες ἐν κονίαισιν.

<sup>27</sup> ‘May the earth swallow me up, the whirlwind rend me in two, the flash of Zeus’s fire fall on my head! (Kovacs 1998), κατὰ με πέδον γᾶς **ἔλοι**, / διὰ δὲ θύελλα σπάσαι, / πυρός τε φλογμὸς ὁ Διὸς ἐν κάραι πέσοι

<sup>28</sup> ‘O that I could soar out of the land of Phthia to the place where the ship of pine, firstbark that ever sailed, passed through the Symplegades! (Kovacs 1995), Φθιάδος ἐκ γᾶς/ κυανόπτερος ὄρνις **εἴθ’ εἴην**,/ πευκάεν σκάφος αἰ διὰ κυανέας ἐπέρασεν ἀκτάς,/ πρωτόπλοος πλάτα.

<sup>29</sup> ‘[...] would that a god had killed you beneath Troy’s walls by the bank of the Simois!’ (Kovacs 1995), **εἴθε** σ’ ὕπ’ Ἰλίοι ἦναρε δαίμων/ Σμοεντίδα παρ’ ἀκτάν.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Would that you had not cast upon our family and house this ill-famed marriage and on yourself a union with Hermione that was death, my son! Would you had perished ere then by the lightning-bolt! And how I wish that you, a mortal, had never fastened upon Phoebus, a god, the death by his murderous archery of your Zeus-descended father!’ (Kovacs 1995), **μήποτε** σὼν λεχέων τὸ δυσώνυμον /**ὄφελ’** ἐὼν γένος εἰς τέκνα καὶ δόμον / ἀμφιβαλέσθαι/ Ἑρμιόνας Αἶδαν ἐπὶ σοί, τέκνον,†/ἀλλὰ κεραυνῶι πρόσθεν ὀλέσθαι·/**μηδ’** ἐπὶ τοξοσύναι φονίῳ πατρὸς/αἷμα τὸ διογενὲς ποτὲ Φοῖβον /βροτὸς ἐς θεὸν ἀνάψαι.

<sup>31</sup> ‘O that I might go to the rock hung aloft between heaven <and> earth from golden chains, a rocky mass from Olympus borne on the heavens’ rotation! There in lamentation would I loudly proclaim to old Tantalus, my ancestor, who sired, who sired my forefathers, what ruin I have seen in the house.’ (Kovacs 1995), **μόλοιμι** τὰν οὐρανοῦ /μέσον χθονός <τε> τεταμέναν / αἰωρήμασιν πέτραν ἀλύσεσι χρυσέαις, φερομένην δίναισι, /βῶλον ἐξ Ὀλύμπου, /ἦν ἐν θρήνοισιν ἀναβοάσω / γέροντι πατέρι Ταντάλωι, / ὃς ἔτεκεν ἔτεκε γενέτορας ἐμέθεν, δόμων /**ἄς** κατεῖδον ἄτας· About these verses Willink (1986, 246) notes that Euripides was fond of lyric wishes, ‘sometimes simply with “escape” as the idea uppermost in the singer’s mind, but usually in contexts of imminent death (variously threatened or suicidally desired) and with a mythical “out of this world” destination

<sup>32</sup> Some passages do not have conditional sentences but still reveal this meaning in relationship with the *oimoge*. See S. OC. 820 ‘You shall soon have greater cause to say Alas!’ (Lloyd-Jones 1994), **τάχ’** ἔξεις μᾶλλον οἰμῶζειν τάδε, Aj. 963 ‘now that he is dead they may lament him in the urgency of battle’ (Lloyd-Jones 1994), θανόντ’ ἂν οἰμῶξειαν ἐν χρεῖα δορός. E. Hipp. 1314 ‘Does this tale sting you, Theseus? Hold your peace so that you may hear the rest and groan the more’ (Kovacs 1995), δάκνει σε, Θησεῦ, ὕθος, ἀλλ’ ἔχ’ ἡσυχος, /τοῦνθένδ’ ἀκούσας ὥς ἂν οἰμῶξῃς πλέον.

ψυχῇ given by ancient poetic tradition or more recent ὕθοϋ: “beneath the Earth” [...].<sup>33</sup> We should mention that also modern examples of lament present this feature. Caraveli-Chaves (1980, 134) documents a famous lamenter’s performance and we can read at the verses 27 and 28 ‘Oh Holy Trinity of mine, oh newly throned and holy. If only you had healed my mother, I would have brought you offerings’.

### Outburst of anger against someone

Another characteristic element of the *oimoge* is the expression of anger. This has been already introduced by Versnel (1981, 37-42), in particular when he says that ‘if gods and saints refuse to do what men want them to do, men get angry and odd things happen. This goes for Antiquity too’ (39). Similar feelings at a first view seem to be differently addressed but even in this case, like in the *goos*, we can perceive a definite change in the recipient of the *oimoge* from the Homeric poems to Euripides. At the beginning anger targeted gods and later aimed only at people or indefinite demons. Since this change seems to be systematic it is important to investigate the reasons behind it and to test whether such a choice depends on a different perception, through the decades, of certain ritual acts.

In Homer the *oimoge* is directed to the gods and the strict link between the Olympians and the anger expressed by the utterance is clearly stated by Homer in *Od.* 12.369 where Odysseus says that he groaned and cried aloud to the immortal gods, οἰμώξας δὲ θεοῖσι μετ’ ἀθανάτοισι γεγώνευν, and then gives vent to his resentment towards Zeus and the other deities for making him falling in a νηλεῖ ὕπνῳ. In *Il.* 3.365 Zeus is called ‘baleful’ ὀλοώτερος,<sup>34</sup> and in *Il.* 12.164 ‘lover of lies’, φιλονευδής.<sup>35</sup> In *Il.*

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<sup>33</sup> See also West (1987, 252).

<sup>34</sup> For Kirk (1985, 319) ‘such an expression of annoyance did not call down thunderbolts, because despite the heavenward reproachful glance of 364 it was more like swearing than serious rebuke’. This would explain why these utterances are quite usual (the one who addresses Zeus in these terms most often is not surprisingly Herē, *idem*, 111).

21.273 Achilles does not use any colorful adjective to express his anger against Zeus, but his question sounds very provocative. Furthermore he does not seem troubled by the fact that he is insulting his mother when he calls her αἴτιος (275) and liar, ἥ με ψεύδεσσιν ἔθελγεν (276); a veiled criticism is present also in Priam's *oimoge* at 22.41 about the deities' will to protect Achilles, αἴθε θεοῖσι φίλος τοσσόνδε γένοιτο / ὅσσον ἐμοί.

In tragedy this explicit resentment is predominantly addressed to people: to Deianira in *S. Tr.* 790 and to Creon in *S. Ant.* 1224 – here reported in indirect speech –, to Medea's children called κατάρατοι in *E. Med.* 112; however we can still find anger against superior entities, although they are rarely called deities – and even less addressed by name as in Homer – but they are preferably called *daimones*. In *Med.* 1208 feelings come out through a question τίς σ' ὧδ' ἀτίμως δαιμόνων ἀπώλεσεν. In *Hipp.* 1416 we can identify an *oimoge* even if it is not called explicitly by that name: the *daimones* are here the target for curse 'Would that the race of men could curse the gods!', εἴθ' ἦν ἀραῖον δαίμοσιν βροτῶν γένος, but Artemis immediately asks him not to say that, as a punishment from Aphrodite will be given to him;<sup>36</sup> in *E. Tr.* 469 again there is no mention of the *oimoge* but Hecuba's cue can be easily considered such 'Gods of heaven! small help I find in calling such allies', ὦ θεοί· κακοὺς μὲν ἀνακαλῶ τοὺς συμμάχους: also in this case Euripides wants to cushion the violence of these words against the deities and at 470 'yet is there something in the form of invoking heaven, whenever we fall on evil days', ὅμως δ' ἔχει τι σχῆμα κικλήσκειν θεοῦς, / ὅταν τις ἢ ὦν δυστυχῇ λάβῃ τύχην.

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<sup>35</sup> Hainsworth (1993, 335) speaks in this case of an 'excessive language' used to exemplify Asios' exasperation. Like Kirk, he points out that at this stage these utterances are not perceived as hubristic in the sense that calls for punishment, and Zeus reacts at 173 with indifference.

<sup>36</sup> 'Let be! For though you are in the gloom under the earth, even so you will get revenge for the wrath that has fallen against you by Cypris' design, and this will be the reward of your piety and goodness' (Kovacs 1995), ἔασον· οὐ γὰρ οὐδὲ γῆς ὑπὸ ζόφον/ θεᾶς ἄτιμοι Κύπριδος ἐκ προθυμίας/ ὄργαι κατασκήψουσιν ἐς τὸ σὸν δέμας,/ σῆς εὐσεβείας κάγαθῆς φρενὸς χάριν· Barret (1964, 411) notes that 'Hipp., conscious now that his death is the penalty for his denial of Aph., remains unshaken in that denial: punishment has called forth not repentance but a curse. And now his own goddess confirms him in the denial: defend him she cannot, but avenge him she can and will'.

We have the impression that also in this case – as in the case of some *gooi* we have analyzed in the previous chapter – the act of cursing a god was a ritual act, although less frequent, and tragic poets tend to use it in different ways. If Homer preserves the memory of this habit, tragedy seems to reject it as a convention: cursing some deities is not identified with the word *oimoge* anymore – perhaps not to suggest associations between this act and ritual – and the mourner laments his condition of being hated by the deities instead of addressing his anger against them. Euripides is again a poet who directly reproaches customs that attack the image of the gods. In the previous chapter we have noted that Euripides, e.g. in *Electra*, seems to feel uneasy with the *goos*: through the words of his characters the poet shows a certain disapproval of this custom as impious and offensive to the gods and introduces it as a dysphemetic and not an aischrologic element (Stehle 2004). As for the *oimoge* Euripides seems to use it in his dramas in similar way, evidently because the main features of the *oimoge* – curses and verbal abuses – would fall into Stehle’s definition of ‘hidden disorder’ (155). The way the *goos* and the *oimoge* are treated in literature shows that they were acceptable and accepted as normal practices in earlier times while they started to be rejected or at least considered inappropriate for the euphemetic prayers already by Euripides. But why is the *oimoge* dysphemetic? What can in particular be considered disputable of the *oimoge*? Is this inappropriateness believed to be a threat to a certain creed?

Xenophanes already between the sixth and the fifth century BC criticises the Homeric view of the gods as it attributes to the gods ‘all sorts of things which are matters of reproach and censure among men’, πάντα θεοῖσ’ ἀνέθηκαν Ὀμηρός θ’ Ἡσίοδος τε, / ὅσσα παρ’ ἀνθρώποισιν ὀνείδεα καὶ ψόγος ἐστίν (fr. 10 Diehl), and illicit deeds, ἀθεμίστια ἔργα (fr.11 DK).<sup>37</sup> His rejection to the theistic antropomorphism in fr. 13 and 14 DK is well known,<sup>38</sup> however a direct reference to the

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<sup>37</sup> For a discussion about the link between these fragments and Xenophanes’ rejection of theistic anthropomorphism see Leshner (1992, 82-83).

<sup>38</sup> ‘But if horses or oxen or lions had hands or could draw with their hands and accomplish such works as men, horses would draw the figures of the gods as similar to horses, and the oxen as similar to oxen, and they would make the bodies of the sort which each of them had’ (Leshner 1992), ἀλλ’ εἰ χεῖρας ἔχον βόες <ἵπποι τ’> ἢ ἐλέοντες

misrepresentation of the gods' mind – and not only the body – appears in fr. 19 'one god is greatest among gods and men, not at all like mortals in body or in thought', εἷς θεὸς ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος, οὗ τι δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοίος οὐδὲ νόημα. Xenophanes testifies to the existence of alternative ideas about the divinities. The vindictive and unjust nature of the gods is in fact questioned and rejected as it would not correspond to reality and, what is more, it would offend the gods.

It is worth mentioning an interesting passage in Plutarch's *On superstition* in which he compares two possible reactions to bad fortune: the atheist's and that of a superstitious person. At 168a he says that the latter would assail with every sort of lamentation and moaning: 'he puts the responsibility for his lot upon no man nor upon Fortune nor upon occasion nor upon himself, but lays the responsibility for everything upon God, and says that from that source a heaven-sent stream of mischief has come upon him with full force; and he imagines that it is not because he is unlucky, but because he is hateful to the gods, that he is being punished by the gods, and that the penalty he pays and all that he is undergoing are deserved because of his own conduct' (Babbitt 1962), παντὶ θρήνῳ καὶ παντὶ στεναγμῷ καθαπτόμενος and οὔτε γὰρ ἄνθρωπον οὔτε τύχην οὔτε καιρὸν οὔθ' ἑαυτὸν ἀλλὰ πάντων τὸν θεὸν αἰτιᾶται, κάκεῖθεν ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἤκειν καὶ φέρεσθαι ῥέϋμα δαιμόνιον ἄτης φησί, καὶ ὥς οὐ δυστυχὴς ὢν ἀλλὰ θεομισὴς τις ἄνθρωπος ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν κολάζεσθαι καὶ δίκην διδόναι καὶ πάντα πάσχειν προσηκόντως δι' αὐτὸν οἶεται.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the criticism showed by Plutarch, it seems that such feature of the lament has survived over the centuries. Chrysa Kalliakati's lament for her mother, documented by Caraveli-Chaves (1980, 134), addresses the Holy trinity, all the saints and the Virgin Mary with anger. Despite the change in terms of religious faith from the pagan to the Orthodox religion, the lamenters refer to the gods in a

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/ἢ γράψαι χεῖρεσσι καὶ ἔργα τελεῖν ἅπερ ἄνδρες, ἵπποι μὲν θ' ἵπποισι, βόες δὲ τε βουσὶν ὁμοίας/καὶ ≤κε≥ θεῶν ἰδέας ἔγραφον καὶ σώματ' ἐποίουν/τοιαῦθ', οἷόν περ καὶ οἱ δέμας εἶχον ≤ἕκαστοι≥'; 'Ethiopians say that their gods are snub-nosed and black, Thracian that theirs are blu-eyed and red-haired' Αἰθιοπὲς τε ≤θεοὺς σφετέρους≥ σιμούς μέλανάς τε/Θρηκὲς τε γλαυκοὺς καὶ πυρρούς <φασι πέλεσθαι>.

<sup>39</sup> For an analysis of the passage see Lozza (1980, 111-12).

similarly aggressive way. 'I vowed offerings to all the saints, even to Virgin Mary/ so her grace would cure her; yet, I saw no improvement./ I vowed offerings to all the saints, mother, and to holy Tinos/ so her grace would cure her and I would give her offerings'.<sup>40</sup> Seremetakis (1991, 75) records, of a Maniat lament, the verses 'I began mourning/ and like a madwoman/ I screamed, "God is a merciless criminal/ to have killed/ the orphan [her son]!" Relatives advised me, with friends and covillagers together, not to curse God, for it's sinful and bad'.

Before deepening the analysis of this phenomenon, it is useful to point out a structural characteristic of the *oimoge*. This is necessary to provide further information about what the *oimoge* is, what its contents are and how to recognize it even when not explicitly called so.

***Structural feature: oimoge = prelude of the lament***

From a psychological point of view the first reaction to something negative and tragic is rage and anger, which only after a while is tempered by other feelings like resignation and acceptance of reality. If we consider the contents of the *oimoge* we can recognize elements such as anger and incapacity to understand and accept reality. Indeed the *oimoge* gives a person the opportunity to create in his mind an alternative, an escape from reality. The 'if' clauses represent this option, no matter if they create an unreal situation: they are the first way to deal with a cruel fate and constitute a barrier, a sort of defense, against the negative experience. The *oimoge* can be therefore placed at the first stage of human reaction to grief as it represents the most distant moment from reality. However, the refusal of reality is not expressed by *oimoge* only in this way. In fact two more aspects are linked to the same psychological condition.

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<sup>40</sup> 'Anger against institutionalized religion is a frequent theme in laments which, in their pagan attitude against death and the quasi-ecstatic elements in performance, themselves provide an alternative religious expression' (Caraveli-Chaves 1980, 142).



The *oimoge* reveals another interesting attitude: the mourner's tendency to feel involved in what happened and a sort of regret. Spending words to describe how unrelenting the plans of the deities are and how differently one could have behaved represents a psychological condition of being unable to think of something different. Besides, the tendency to curse a god mirrors that state of anger and rage that belongs to the first stage of grief. The person reacting so violently is in a state of denying reality: he/she refuses to acknowledge the truth and rebels against all that is involved in what happened, himself/herself or those who establish the human beings' lot. Deities are possibly the recipients of prayers, but as soon as their will turns against someone then that person accuses them of injustice and even dares challenge them. The victim of this change feels as if there is nothing more to lose and in consequence of this does not fear a superior reaction.

From a psychological point of view the *oimoge* can be therefore associated with the initial state of desperation and grief. From a structural point of view too, the *oimoge* seems to occupy the first part of the *goos*. Let us consider a few examples in Homer: Achilles' *goos* at *Il.* 18.324-342 starts with the regret of his promise to Patroclus' father at 324-325,<sup>41</sup> Hecuba starts her lamentation with the regret of being alive at 22.431-2, Andromache with the desire not to be born at 22.481, Helen with her wish to have died before Hector at 24.764,<sup>42</sup> Penelope expresses her anger against her servants who hid Telemachus' leaving at *Od.* 4.729 and her regret at not being informed at 732-734. Even in modern examples of *moirologia* we can notice the initial position of the *oimoge*. The already quoted Maniat lament (Seremetakis 1991, 75) places the screaming to God at the very beginning of the performance.

From all these cases we can identify the position of the *oimoge* at the beginning of the *goos*. It is worth noting that literature links the *oimoge* with the proem: Eteocles imagines that in case of defeat then he will be the one to be mourned ὕμνοϊθ' with φοριμίους πολυρρόθοις and οἰμώγμασιν in *Th.* 8.

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<sup>41</sup> The detachment from reality is noted in verses 324-332 is noted by Edwards (1991, 185)

<sup>42</sup> Richardson (1993, 151-52) see in this initial questions a typical way of opening a lament

Why does Aeschylus consider the *oimogai* and the *prooimioi* so close to one another? Is the *oimoge* comparable to a proem? Sommerstein (2008, 154-155), besides the official translation, reports the literal one ‘with loud-surgings preludes and wailings’ and explains that the loud surges of wailing ‘will precede and anticipate the horrors which the conquered population can expect to suffer’, probably following Hutchinson’s explanation of the passage (Hutchinson 1985, 43-44).<sup>43</sup>

However, besides this metaphorical use of the word proem, we wonder if the *oimoge* – as ritual act – has been formalized into proems – which is to say literary forms.<sup>44</sup> Scholars normally intend the proem as a particular poetic prelude that serves to introduce the kind of poetry Homer and Hesiod produced (Ford 1992, 24).<sup>45</sup> Rodriguez Adrados (2007, 51-53, 161) identifies in the proem an example of the earliest popular monody: he says that the proem consists in ‘una breve monodia dell’ἐξάρχων prima dell’esibizione del coro di tipo innico o trenodico’. The features of this monody can be traced in the proem of Hesiod’s *Theogony* (the first 104 verses) and the *Homeric Hymns* (Ford 1992, 24-25). In particular these features are identified in its divine subject matter, its language and meter, and the function of allowing the poet to say ‘I’ and to refer to himself. Ford emphasizes the latter feature – that he calls ‘ethos’ of the proem (*idem*, 25) – and points out that ‘at the end of the proem this “I” is transformed into a “thou” and the individual poet is fading from view, so that by the end of the invocation the poet’s individual personality is submerged (*idem*, 26)’. Whether the *oimoge* corresponds to a type of proem is probably matter of speculation; however it seems worth-while pointing out that the

<sup>43</sup> ‘I suppose συμφορά to hint, with appropriate vagueness, at the capture of Thebes. The lamentations are preludes to this event as the lamentation of Lycus is a prelude to his death (E. *HF* 753)’.

<sup>44</sup> Battezzato (2005, 149) points out how lyric in tragedy is not spontaneous but follows the literary tradition of archaic choral songs (Pindar and Bacchilides). We wonder whether a continuity can exist between original ritual acts, archaic choral songs and lyric in tragedy in the case of the *oimoge*. For detailed analysis of the characteristics of the proem in Pindar see also Rodriguez Adrados (2007, 248).

<sup>45</sup> However we should not forget that the *prooimion* became also a poetic-musical genre (Ps.-Plutarch mentions Terpander’s proems in *De Mus.* 6) in which it was again possible to identify a structure, and to identify part of the *prooimion* as its own *prooimion* (Rodriguez Adrados 2007, 119-20). ‘Non sappiamo esattamente se certi inni brevi che ci sono stati trasmessi sotto forma di proemio sono la totalità di un proemio oppure l’inizio (sempre proemio) di una composizione lirica più estesa. E’ chiaro che più l’inno è esteso più chiara diventa l’autonomia delle parti iniziali e finali’.

*oimoge* does not contradict any of the aspects we have just mentioned. It precedes the proper lament; it presents references to the divine sphere, in most of the cases it refers directly to the individual uttering it, as the lament proper does not.<sup>46</sup>

The link between the *oimoge* and the proem is confirmed by a few passages where at least one of the elements described before as specific features of the *oimoge* are called *prooimion*. In A. *Ag.* 1214-1216 Cassandra starts mourning with the usual exclamation on her own tragic destiny 'Iou, Iou! Oh, oh, the pain! The terrible agony of true prophecy is coming over me again, whirling me around and deranging me in the fierce storm of its onset' (Sommerstein 2008), *ιοὺ ἰοῦ, ὦ ὦ κακά· /ὕπ' αὖ με δεινὸς ὀρθομαντείας πόνος/στροβεῖ ταρασσὼν φροιμίους δυσφροιμίους* where 'onset' is the translation for *φροιμίους δυσφροιμίους*.<sup>47</sup> Equally in E. *Ph.* 1335 a messenger appears saying 'O misery, what word shall I utter, what lament?' (Kovacs 2002), *ὦ τάλαις ἐγὼ, τίς εἴπω μῦθον ἢ τίνας γόους;* in this verse we can recognize three elements of the *oimoge*: the reference to the *goos*, the canonical exclamation and a rhetorical question. Creon replies saying 'We are undone; it is with joyless prelude that you begin your tale', *οἰχόμεσθ' οὐκ εὐπροσώποις φροιμίους ἄρχηι λόγου* (1336) and confirms the idea that the *oimoge* has a proemial function.<sup>48</sup> Also in E. *El.* 1060-1061 Electra's proem: 'I shall speak, and this wish shall be the beginning of my speech' (Kovacs 1998), *ἀρχὴ δ' ἦδε μοι προοιμίου* consists not – or not only – in denigration of the opponent's character, as Denniston (1973, 183) suggests, but in a wish in the past 'how I wish, mother, that you had a better sense!' (Kovacs 1998), *εἴθ' εἴχες, ὦ τεκοῦσα, βελτίους φρένας*, a verse that immediately follows the introduction.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Wilce (1998, 4) interestingly pointed out that the madness of Latifa, a young Bangladeshi woman bewailing her husband, was believed to consist in, among other aspects, the use of 'grammatically unnecessary first-person pronouns [...]'

<sup>47</sup> Fraenkel (1974, 557-8) explains that 'the context here, as well as Aeschylus' use of the word in other passages where it occurs, leaves no doubt that in it the idea of a beginning, a prelude, predominates. The expression is readily intelligible here at the start of a new access of trance'.

<sup>48</sup> Mastronarde (1994, 523) defined the proems as what first greets the listener. Cf. E. *HF.* 538.

<sup>49</sup> Certainly also in E. *HF.* 1179 the word *prooimion* seems to be used with a technical meaning in relation with the dirge.

If these conclusions and the previous analysis are valid, it is possible to identify as *oimogai* certain passages in tragedy and therefore recognize a structure in the lament. It is not our intention to deepen this section as this is not the goal of the chapter. However since there are no relevant studies about the *oimoge* – as far as we know – it is worth-while at least introducing how the themes previously analyzed are used, although in different order, by the tragic poets and become conventional. In A. *Pers.* 908-1077 it is possible to distinguish two parts: the *oimoge* and the proper *goos*. The first part at 907-948 is evidently an *oimoge* because it includes a) exclamations over one's own tragedy;<sup>50</sup> b) the condition of being hated by the gods, the assertion that it is a *daimon* that causes the Persians' ill-fate;<sup>51</sup> c) an unfulfilled wish,<sup>52</sup> followed by d) a section, that we can define as metamusic, consisting of a bridge to the proper *goos*.<sup>53</sup> In S. *OT* 1297-1368 the lament consists of only an *oimoge* including: a) Oedipus' interjections pointing out his ill-fate,<sup>54</sup> followed by rhetorical questions and by the description

<sup>50</sup> The *oimoge* is sung both by Xerxes: 908-10: 'Io io! Hapless that I am, to have met this dreadful fate, so utterly unpredictable!' (Sommerstein 2008), *ιώ/ δύστηνος ἐγὼ στυγεράς μοίρας/ τῆσδε κυρήσας ἀτεκμαρτοτάτης*, 913-14: 'The strength is drained out of my limbs when I see these aged citizens', *λέλνται γὰρ ἐμοὶ γυῖων ῥώμη/ τήνδ' ἡλικίαν ἐσιδόντ' ἄστῶν*, and then by the chorus who extend the disgrace to the whole Persian empire and army (918-30): 'Ototoi, my king, for that fine army, and for the great honour of Persian empire and the men who adorned it, whom now the god has scythed away! The land laments its native youth killed by Xerxes, who crammed Hades with Persian: many men who were marched away, the flower of the land, slayers with the bow, thronging myriads of men, have perished and gone. Aiai, aiai, for our brave defenders! King of our country, the land of Asia is terribly, terribly down on her knees!' (Sommerstein 2008), *ὁτοτοῖ, βασιλεῦ, στρατιᾶς ἀγαθῆς/ καὶ περσονόμου τιμῆς μεγάλης/ κόσμου τ' ἀνδρῶν, / οὓς νῦν δαίμων ἐπέκειρεν./ γὰρ δ' αἰάζει τὰν ἐγγαίαν / ἤβαν Ξέρξαι κταμέναν, Ἄϊδου σάκτορι Περσῶν· †ἀγδαβάται† γὰρ/ πολλοὶ φῶτες, χώρας ἄνθος, / τοξοδάμαντες, πάνυ ταρφύς τις/ μυριάς ἀνδρῶν, ἐξέφθινται./ αἰαὶ <αἰαῖ> κεδνᾶς ἀλκᾶς/ Ἀσία δὲ χθών, βασιλεῦ γαίης, / αἰνῶς αἰνῶς ἐπὶ γόνυ κέκλινται.*

<sup>51</sup> 911-12: How cruelly the god has trodden on the Persian race! What am I to do, wretched me? *ὥς ὠμοφρόνως δαίμων ἐνέβη/ Περσῶν γενεᾷ· τί πάθω τλήμων;* (*idem*). We should note again the conventional use of a rhetorical question.

<sup>52</sup> 915-17: 'Would to Zeus that the fate of death had covered me over too together with the men who are departed!', *εἴθ' ὄφελε, Ζεῦ, καὶ ἐμετ' ἀνδρῶν/ τῶν οἰχομένων/ θανάτου κατὰ μοῖρα καλύψαι* (*idem*).

<sup>53</sup> 935-947: 'In response to your return I shall send forth, send forth with many tears the shout of woeful words, the cry of woeful thoughts of a Mariandynian dige-singer. XE: Utter words of grief and sorrow, full of lamentation; for this divinity has turned right round against me. Cho. I shall do so indeed, I tell you, honouring the sufferings of the army and the grievous blows struck at sea to the city and the nation: truly I shall cry forth the tearful wail of a mourner', *πρόσφθογγόν σοι νόστου ταύταν/ κακοφάτιδα βοάν, κακομέλετον ἰάν/ Μαριανδυνοῦ θρηνητῆρος/ πέμψω πολὺδακρυν ἰαχάν Ξε.ῖετ' αἰανῇ πάνδурτον / δύσθροον αὐδάν, δαίμων γὰρ ὅδ' αὖ/ μετὰ τροπος ἐπ' ἐμοί. Χο. ἦσω τοι †καὶ < >† πάνδурτον/ λαοπαθεᾶ σέβων ἀλίτυπά τε βάρη/ πόλεως γέννας πενθητῆρος/ κλάγξω δ' αὖ γόον ἀρίδακρυν.*

<sup>54</sup> 1307: 'Alas, alas, miserable I am!' (Lloyd-Jones 1994), *αἰαὶ αἰαῖ, δύστανος ἐγώ.*

of his unfortunate condition spaced out by many other οἱμοι/ οἶμοι;<sup>55</sup> b) the theme of being hated by the gods;<sup>56</sup> c) the unfulfilled wish.<sup>57</sup> The *kommos* in E. *Supp.* 778-836 can be again divided into two parts, an *oimoge* (778-804) and a *goos* (805-36). The first part is in fact characterized by the presence of conventional themes such as a) interjections about their sorrow in front of their dead sons, although here the sufferings are tempered by the joy of having received the corpses back;<sup>58</sup> b) the unfeasible wish to have been unmarried and sterile with the usual rhetorical questions and the wish to die;<sup>59</sup> the self-reference to music as introduction to the proper *goos*.<sup>60</sup> Elements of the *oimoge* are present also in the proper *goos* when Adrastus expresses the desire to have been killed by the Thebans and the chorus, again, to have been childless.<sup>61</sup> A few verses later his words contain the typical *ιὼ ιὼ μοί μοι* followed

<sup>55</sup> 1309-10 'Where am I being carried in my sorrow? Where is my voice borne on the wings of the air?', ποῖ γὰς φέρομαι τλάμων; πᾶ μοι/ φθογγὰ διαπωτᾶται φοράδαν; 'Ah cloud of darkness abominable, coming over me unspeakably, irresistible, sped by an evil mind! Alas, alas once more! How the sting of these goads has sunk into me together with the remembrance of my troubles!' (Lloyd-Jones 1994), *ιὼ σκότου/ νέφος ἐ ὃν ἀπότηρον, ἐπιπλόμενον ἄφατον/ ἀδάματόν τε καὶ δυσσούριστον <ὄν>./ οἶμοι/ οἶμοι μάλ' αὖθις· οἶον εἰσέδου μ' ἅμα/ κέντρων τε τῶνδ' οἴσθημα καὶ μνήμη κακῶν*

<sup>56</sup> Oedipus blames Apollo for his condition (1329-32): 'It was Apollo, Apollo, my friends, who accomplished these cruel, cruel sufferings of mine' (*idem*), Απόλλων τάδ' ἦν, Απόλλων, φίλοι, ὁ κακὰ κακὰ τελῶν ἐ ἅ τάδ' ἐ ἅ πάθεα. / ἔπαισε δ' αὐτόχειρ νιν οὐ/ τις, ἄλλ' ἐγὼ τλάμων and at 1340-46 says that he is the one whom the gods hate: 'Take me away as soon as you can, take me, my friends, the utterly lost, the thrice -accursed, and moreover the one among mortals most hated by the gods! ἀπάγετ' ἐκτόπιον ὅτι τάχιστα με, / ἀπάγετ', ὦ φίλοι, τὸν μέγ' ὀλέθριον./ τὸν καταρατότατον, ἔτι δὲ καὶ θεοῖς/ ἐχθρότατον βροτῶν.

<sup>57</sup> At 1349-55 Oedipus expresses his wish that the person who was going to save him had died and that he himself had died according to his parents' will 'A curse upon the shepherd who released me from the cruel fetter of my feet, and saved me from death, and preserved me, doing me no kindness! For if I had died then, I would not have been so great a grief to my friends or to myself', ὅλοιθ' ὅστις ἦν ὃς ἀγρίας πέδας/ νομᾶς ἐπιποδίας μ' ἔλαβ' ἀπὸ τε φόνου < > / ἔρυτο κἀνέσωσεν, οὐ-/ δὲν ἐς χάριν πρᾶσσω./ τότε γὰρ ἂν θανῶν/ οὐκ ἦ φίλοιςιν οὐδ' ἐμοὶ τοσόνδ' ἄχος.

<sup>58</sup> 778: 'Some things are well, others ill', τὰ ἐν εὖ, τὰ δὲ δυστυχή. 782-83: 'But for us to look on the bodies of our sons is painful', ἐμοὶ δὲ παίδων μὲν εἰσιδεῖν μέλη/ πικρὸν (Kovacs 1998).

<sup>59</sup> 786-91: 'Would that old Time, father of our days, had made me ever unwedded to this day! What need had I of children? I would have thought that I had suffered some strange fate, if I had been deprived of marriage' (*idem*), ἄγαμόν μ' ἔτι δεῦρ' αἰεὶ/ Χρόνος παλαιὸς πατὴρ/ ὤφελ' ἀμερᾶν κτίσαι./ τί γάρ μ' ἔδει παίδων;/ τί μὲν γὰρ ἤλπιζον ἂν πεπονθέναι/ πάθος περισσὸν εἰ γάμων ἀπεζύγην; and 795-97: 'I wish I could die with these children, treading with them the downward path to Hades!', μελέα/ πῶς ἂν ὀλοίμην σὺν τοῖσδε τέκνοις/ κοινὸν ἐς Ἄϊδην καταβᾶσα;

<sup>60</sup> 798-804: 'Utter, speak aloud, mothers, a groan for your sons below the earth! Listen to my groans and answer! Ch: O my son, a word that gives pain to a loving mother, I speak to you in death!', στεναγμόν, ὦ ματέρες,/ τῶν κατὰ χθονὸς νεκρῶν/ ἀπύσατ' ἀντίφων' ἐ ὦν/ στεναγμάτων κλύουσαι./ [Χο.] ὦ παῖδες, ὦ πικρὸν φύλων/ προσηγόρημα ματέρων,/ προσαυδῶ σε τὸν θανόντα.

<sup>61</sup> Adrastus says at 821: 'You lament both your woes and mine!' εἶθε με Καδμείων ἔναρον στίχας ἐν κονίαισιν, while the chorus at 822: 'And I, would that I had never been brought to a man's bed!', ἐ ὃν δὲ μήποτ' ἐξύγη/ δέμας ἐς ἀνδρὸς εὐνάν.

by a desiderative optative.<sup>62</sup> Euripides therefore uses the elements of the *oimoge* more freely as he places them not necessarily at the beginning of the performance and does not separate so clearly the elements belonging to the *oimoge* from those of the *goos*. However, he confirms the presence of structures. In E. *Andr.* 1166-1230 for example the structure he uses seems very similar to the one in *Suppliants*: the *oimoge* includes a) the typical interjections ὦ μοι ἐγώ (1173), ἰὼ μοί μοι, αἰαῖ (1175) and rhetorical questions;<sup>63</sup> b) the unfeasible wishes;<sup>64</sup> and c) the bridge to the *goos*.<sup>65</sup> Then again the *goos* consists of the description of the ritual action,<sup>66</sup> the assertion that the gods hate Neoptolemus (and Achilles),<sup>67</sup> and Peleus' revelation of his wish to die.<sup>68</sup> In *Orestes* 960-1012 the lament starts immediately with a) a reference to music and to the ritual (Willink 1986, 240)—therefore the *goos* has

<sup>62</sup> 828-31: 'Ah me! ah me! May the earth swallow me up, the whirlwind rend me in two, the flash of Zeus's fire fall on my head!' ἰὼ ἰὼ μοί μοι/κατὰ με πέδον γᾶς ἔλοι/διὰ δὲ θύελλα σπάσαι, /πυρός τε φλογμὸς ὁ Διὸς ἐν κάραι πέσοι.

<sup>63</sup> 1179-80: 'To what friend shall I look for consolation?' ἔεις τίνα/δὴ φίλον αὐγὰς βαλὼν τέρψομαι; (Konacs 1995).

<sup>64</sup> Peleus wishes that Neoptolemus had died at Troy (1182-83): 'would that the god had killed you beneath Troy's walls by the bank of the Simois!', εἴθε σ' ὑπ' Ἰλίοι ἦναρε δαίμων/Σιμοεντίδα παρ' ἀκτάν, that he had not married Hermione 'Would that you had not cast upon our family and house this ill-famed marriage and on yourself a union with Hermione, that was death, my son! Would you had perished ere then by the lightning-bolt' (1186-93), ὦ γάμος, ὦ γάμος, ὃς τάδε δώματα/καὶ πόλιν ὤλεσας ὤλεσας ἀμάν./αἰαῖ, ἔ ἔ, ὦ παῖ·/μήποτε σὼν λεχέων τὸ δυσσύνυμον/ῶφελ' ἔ ὃν γένος εἰς τέκνα καὶ δόμον/ἀμφιβαλέσθαι/Ἑρμιόνας Αἶδαν ἐπὶ σοί, τέκνον,/ἄλλα κεραυνῶι πρόσθεν ὀλέσθαι, and that he had not gone to the temple of Apollo where he was killed by Orestes while he was praying 'And how I wish that you, a mortal, had never fastened upon Phoebus, a god, the death by his murderous archery of your Zeus-descended father!' (1195-96), μὴδ' ἐπὶ τοξοσύναι φονίῳ πατρὸς/αἶμα τὸ διογενὲς ποτε Φοῖβον/βροτὸς ἐς θεὸν ἀνάψαι.

<sup>65</sup> 1198-1203: 'O grief! In my turn I shall begin my lament for my perished lord with the strain reserved for the dead'. Pel. 'O grief! In my turn I, unhappy man, old and luckless, take up the lament'. Chorus: 'A god caused this doom, a god made this disaster', ὅττοτοτοτοῖ, θανόντα δεσπότην γόοις/νόμῳ τῷ νεπτέρων κατάρξω. Πη. ὅττοτοτοτοῖ, διάδοχα <σοι> τάλας ἐγὼ/ γέρων καὶ δυστυχῆς δακρύω.

<sup>66</sup> 1209-1211: 'Shall I not rend my hair, not strike upon my head a hand's destructive blow?', οὐ σπαράζομαι κόμαν/οὐκ ἐ ὦι 'πιθήσομαι/ κάραι κτύπημα χειρὸς ὀλοόν.

<sup>67</sup> 1212-14: 'O my city, of two offspring has Phoebus bereft me', ὦ πόλις/διπλῶν τέκνων μ' ἐστέρησε Φοῖβος and earlier at 1203 'A god's was this doom, a god made this disaster', θεοῦ γὰρ αἶσα, θεὸς ἔκρανε συμφορὰν.

<sup>68</sup> 1216-25: 'Childless and bereft, with no limit set to misfortune, I shall drain misery to the dregs until my death. [...] All that blessedness is flown, sped beyond the reach of high-flying boasts. [...] O city, I am dead! Farewell, my scepter! And you, Nereid in your dark cave, shall see me fallen into utter destruction', ἄτεκνος ἔρημος, οὐκ ἔχων πέρας κακῶν/διαντλήσω πόνους ἐς Αἶδαν./[...] ἄ πτάμενα φροῦδα πάντ' ἐκείνα/κόμπων μεταρσίων πρόσσω./[...] οὐκέτ' ἐστὶ μοι πόλις/σκῆπτρά τ' ἑρρέτω τάδε/σύ τ', ὦ κατ' ἄντρα νύχια Νηρῶος κόρα./πανώλεθρόν μ' ὄψεται πίτνοντα.

no introduction –,<sup>69</sup> followed by b) the theme of hating the gods, this time without naming the deity but speaking about the gods' envy;<sup>70</sup> c) the unfulfilled wish to speak with Tantalus.<sup>71</sup> From this analysis we can draw the conclusion that the distinction between *oimoge* and proper *goos* is not always evident in the same way, but still the poets show they know the themes that belong to the *oimoge* and to use them as structural parts of the lament. This digression has the goal of introducing what can be therefore identified as *oimoge* in a *kommós* or a lament, although it is not called explicitly so. Every time we find for example unfulfilled wishes, a suicidal desire, interjection falling into the patterns *oi moi*, *ai ai*, *ototototoi*, and expressions of resentment to the gods, we should at least wonder if they belong to this specific category of lament.

<sup>69</sup> 960-70: 'I lead off the lamentation, o Pelasgian land, drawing my white nails along my cheeks in bloody disfigurement and beating my head, an act that falls to the lot of her below, the fair-child goddess who rules the dead, Let the Cyclopean land loudly proclaim, sheering its tresses with iron blade, the house's woes! Lamentation, lamentation here comes forth for those doomed to die, who once led the hosts of Greece!' (Konacs 2002),  
κατάρχομαι στεναγμόν, ὦ Πελασγία, /τιθεῖσα λευκὸν ὄνυχα διὰ παρηΐδων,/αἵματηρόν ἄταν,/κτύπον τε κρατός, ὃν  
ἔλαχ' ἅ κατὰ χθονὸς/νερτέρων †Περσέραςσα καλλιπῆαις θεῇ/ἰαχεῖτω δὲ γῆ/Κυκλωπία, σίδαρὸν ἐπὶ /κάρᾳ τιθεῖσα  
κούριμον, /πῆματ' οἴκων, /ἔλεος ἔλεος ὃδ' ἔρχεται/τῶν θανουμένων ὑπερ,/στρατηλατῶν Ἑλλάδος ποτ' ὄντων

<sup>71</sup> 982-1012: ‘Oh that I might go to the rock hung aloft between heaven ,and. Earth from golden chains, a rocky mass from Olympus borne on the heavens’ rotation! There in lamentation would I loudly proclaim to old Tantalus, my ancestor, who sired my forefathers, what ruin I have seen in the house [...]’, μόλοιμι τὰν οὐρανοῦ /μέσον χθονός ≤τε≥ τεταμέναν /αἰωρήμασιν /πέτραι ἀλύσει χρυσέαις, /φερομένας δίνειαι, / βῶλον ἐξ Ὀλύμπου, /ἴν’ ἐν θρήνοισιν ἀναβοᾶσω /γέροντι πατέρι Ταντάλῳ./δς ἔτεκεν ἔτεκε γενέτορας ἐμέθεν. δόμων /ἄς κατείδον ἄτας.[...].

## Goos, oimoge and dysphemism

The *oimoge* seems to be a ritual act, at least if we think of its position within the lament or the use of certain conventions. What is more difficult for us to accept is that expressing feelings about the gods' behavior can be a ritual act. The mourner pronounces words that are offensive *per se*, such as a curse, or are outrageous because they accuse the deities for being deceptive, mean and harmful.

In this section we will draw a link between the *oimoge* and the *dysphemism* and we will see that there is a correspondence that is significant for our study. It provides information about ethical and religious ideas but also encapsulates the *oimoge* in frames that have been built by modern ritual theories. We have already introduced Plutarch's treatise *On Superstition* and we resume here more passages about *blasphēmia*. At 170d Plutarch wonders: 'Is it, then, an unholy thing to speak meanly of the gods, but not unholy to have a mean opinion of them? Or does the opinion of him who speaks malignly (*blasphēmountos*) make his utterance improper? It is a fact that we hold up malign speaking (*blasphēmia*) as a sign of animosity, and those who speak ill of us we regard as enemies, since we feel that they must also think ill of us' (Babbitt 1962), Ἄρ' οὖν τὸ ἐν λέγειν τὰ φαῦλα περὶ τῶν θεῶν ἀνόσιον, τὸ δὲ δοξάζειν οὐκ ἀνόσιον; ἢ καὶ τὴν φωνὴν ἄτοπον ἢ δόξα ποιεῖ τοῦ βλασφημοῦντος; καὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς τὴν βλασφημίαν ὅτι δυσμενείας σημεῖόν ἐστι προβαλλόμεθα, καὶ τοὺς κακῶς ἢ ἄς λέγοντας ἐχθροὺς νομίζομεν ὡς καὶ κακῶς φρονοῦντας. In this passage he introduces the link between thinking and verbalization, and seems to suggest the necessity of an inner coherence (Lozza 1980, 137). Then he explains 'You see what kind of thoughts the superstitious (*deisidaimones*) have about the gods; they assume that the gods are rash, faithless, fickle, vengeful, cruel, and easily offended; and, as a result, the superstitious (*deisidaimona*) man is bound to hate and fear the gods. Why not, since he thinks that the worst of his ills are due to them, and will be due to them in the future? As he hates and fears the gods, he is an enemy to them', ὁρᾷς δ' οἷα περὶ τῶν θεῶν οἱ δεισιδαίμονες φρονοῦσιν, ἐμπλήκτους ἀπίστους εὐμεταβόλους τιμωρητικούς ὤμους μικρολύπους ὑπολαμβάνοντες, ἐξ ὧν ἀνάγκη καὶ μισεῖν τὸν



δεισιδαίμονα καὶ φοβεῖσθαι τοὺς θεοὺς. πῶς γὰρ οὐ μέλλει, τὰ μέγιστα τῶν κακῶν αὐτῷ δι' ἐκείνους οἰόμενος γεγονέναι καὶ πάλιν γενήσεσθαι; μισῶν δὲ θεοὺς καὶ φοβούμενος ἐχθρὸς ἐστὶ. This attitude towards the gods reminds us of Odysseus', Achilles' and Priam's utterances in Homeric poems (*Il.* 3.365, 12.164, 22.41, 21.273; *Od.* 12.369). Fear and hate are both present and manifest themselves through words and in particular through the *oimoge*. The difference between the previous examples and Plutarch consists of the fact that this sort of approach to gods was acceptable and normal in Homeric times, while in the Plutarchian treatise it seems questioned and is considered synonymous with blasphemy and superstition, δεισιδαιμονία (whose etymology is fear of the gods).<sup>72</sup> Why did this ritual act attract so much criticism? And when did such criticism started being detectable? Does Sophocles' and Euripides' avoidance of the term *oimoge* in concomitance with the act of cursing gods testify to the presence of alternative view of the gods?

We should remember that a perception of the gods as cruel and a consequent aggressive attitude to them was vertically present in every aspect of a citizen's life. Parker (1997, 143-60) points out that there was an anthitesis between gods cruel and kind. This is exemplified by the fact that tragedy and oratory show divergent views of the gods: the first one 'requires' cruel gods for narratological reasons (145) while the latter address them as benevolent and never hostile. Parker's explanation for this apparent divergency is the common idea that gods love Athens and divine wrath is exercised only outside Athens. Furthermore, where tragic gods appear harsh, they are punisher of individuals in order to save a city. The contrast between tragedy and oratory lies therefore in the way in which the two genres treat the theme of revenge, not in the believe itself. In public speech sufferings are just, while in

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<sup>72</sup> According to Meijer (Versnel 1981, 260) the word *deisidaimon* itself has a 'favourable' meaning throughout Antiquity, especially in inscriptions as it simply referred to the fear of the gods, while it seems to have obtained its unfavourable significance in Theophrastus' days. Plutarch would then develop Theophrastus' formula *atheótēs*, *eusébeia*, *deisidaimonía* and would conclude that the *deisidaimon* would say there are gods but they do not help us- on the contrary they harm us (261). This type of person can be described as a psychopath who is not clever enough to be atheist (262).

tragedy a victim of divine punishment `very seldom seems merely to have got what he or she deserved` (152) and this is because the purpose itself of tragedy is the identification with the person represented. It is however interesting mentioning that even public speeches presented a break of the rule: `Athenian defeats are laid at the door of a *daimon*` and in funerary speeches and epitaphs `the Solonian rule of “don’t blame the gods” is violated` (155). A disfavour of a god was therefore acknowledged in oratory but never reaches the degree of reproachfulness and bitterness that we instead find in tragedy. The first reason for this, as Parker concludes (157), is that all public speech is censored speech. `The gods do not exist, the gods are indifferent to mortal affairs, the gods are indifferent to justice: these are three propositions about the divine that were certainly thinkable in fifth century Athens, but were certainly not speakable in a civic context`. Tragedy, on the contrary, reproduces the more immediate play of emotions. The second reason for this different approach to divine revenge is the theological `opacity` of oratory and `transparency` of tragedy: while tragedy is somehow the repository and vehicle of myth in Athens, oratory was a means the political classes used to assure the *demos* that the god’ goodwill was always there (159).

Parker seems therefore to imply that any criticism to the gods in tragedy is limited, legitimate though it might be, to a private expression (157). Sophocles’ and Euripides’ choice not to call the *oimoge* by its name seems to be an implicit refusal of its ritual nature. They do not insert it in tragedy as an aischrologic element, that is to say as a curse which is ritual and valid per se, but they treat it as if it was a violation of the euphemic prayer. Perhaps Sophocles and Euripides slightly align with the political view of the gods in the fifth century. However we should note that criticism of the archaic `antropomorphic` view of the gods appears not only in tragedy, although only among intellectual elite (Pulley 1997, 196-216).<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Pulley shows that in the Homeric poems, as well as in Theognis (373ff) and later in tragedy, this criticism is formulated not only as a simple apostrophe but sometimes as a part of a prayer. Words of complaint seem to

Pulleyn points out that these prayers might have been in essence a literary phenomenon, but they probably mirror a real perception of the gods, that is that they are obliged to respond to the human *cháris* (215). Furthermore, prayers in Euripides imply different ideas: when the gods are told that they ought to display more *sophía* or *sunésis* – some characters (*Cyc.* 60f, 354ff, *Tro.* 469ff, 1280f) seem to suggest ‘that the gods or Zeus ought to have ordered human life differently, implying that they or he had created it in the first place’ (216) – probably there is a reflection of more narrowly intellectual concerns. Pulleyn notes: ‘We know, for example that the Greeks of Homer’s days did not think that the gods had created the world. However, by the end of the fifth century, we find that there had evolved an idea that the gods did create men and the world and that a divine providence (*pronoia*) is at work in the world. This, of course, represents a radical swing away from traditional ideas’ (216).

With the following discussion, we intend to suggest that the words *dysphemia* (word of ill-omen) and Plutarch’s *blasphemia* (profane word) refer to the same fact and maybe belong to the same interpretative scheme of the ritual act. Before being dysphemic the *oimoge* was simply ritual, and only in tragedy it has been interpreted as dysphemic and later even as blasphemous. The difference between *dysphemia* and *blasphemia* would consist in a further change in mentality.<sup>74</sup> The idea that pronouncing words of ill-omen is a profane attitude reveals a change in religious and theistic view, although probably only among a circle of intellectuals. Ritual acts such as the *goos* and the *oimoge* would therefore reflect, if not shape, a creed. A change in the perception of the gods would be parallel to a change in the perception of the *oimoge* – and maybe *vice versa*.

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involve the implied request that the god ought to acknowledge the justice of the criticism and change behavior accordingly (197), otherwise he will no longer be worshiped because he is unjust.

<sup>74</sup> Alexiou (2002, 28) points out that John Chrysostom denounces dyrges as ‘blasphemies’ because they are ‘self-centered and self-indulgent’.

### *Dysphemism/blasphemia = goos*

The first aspect that we should consider is the fact that *blasphemiai/dysphemiai* could be performed during religious rituals: Hesiod in *Op.* 735-6 speaks of ill-omened (*dysphemos*) burial opposing the festivals of the gods as a fact: μηδ' ἀπὸ δυσφήμοιο τάφου ἀπονοστήσαντα / σπερμαίνειν γενεήν, ἀλλ' ἀθανάτων ἀπὸ δαιτός. West explains the contrast between the word δυσφήμοιο and the verb εὐφημεῖν by suggesting that a funeral may be ill-omened because of the inauspicious sounds of mourning which attend it (West 1978, 337). However it is possible that not the lamenting *per se* was ill-omened but only some types of laments. Euripides in *Hec.* 663-4 says that using words of good omen when in sorrow is not easy ἐν κακοῖσι δὲ/ οὐ ράϊδιον βροτοῖσιν εὐφημεῖν στόμα, but implies that it is not impossible. In fact literature provides us with examples of good-omened laments, e.g. the *threnos* sung by the Muses at Achilles' funeral. Besides, Aeschylus already implies a distinction in Fr. 40c 450 (Mette) between εὐφήμοις γόοις and δυσφήμοις, κατὰ ἀντίφρασιν. A later passage, which uses the word *blasphemia* instead of *dysphemism*, introduces the presence of ill-omened utterances in funerals as hypothetical and therefore avoidable.<sup>75</sup> Pl. *Lg.* 800b-c says: 'Suppose that, when a sacrifice is being held, and the sacred offerings have been burned, some person without official standing, a son, perhaps, or a brother, were to stand beside the altar and the offering and utter (*blasphēmoi*) blasphemies of every description (*pâsan blasphemian*); would we not say that his utterances would fill his father and the rest of his family with despondency and forebodings of evil (*manteian*)?' (Barker 1984, 159), θυσίας γενομένης καὶ ἱερῶν καυθέντων κατὰ νόμον, εἴ τῷ τις, φαμέν, ἰδίᾳ παραστάς τοῖς βωμοῖς τε καὶ ἱεροῖς, υἱὸς ἢ καὶ ἀδελφός, βλασφημοὶ πᾶσαν βλασφημίαν, ἅρ' οὐκ, ἂν φαῖμεν, ἀθυμίαν καὶ κακὴν ὅτταν καὶ μαντείαν πατρὶ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἂν οἰκείοις φθέγγοιτο ἐντιθείς. Plato's passage is complex and we will

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<sup>75</sup> The ritual described here is not explicitly called funeral but the fact that the author refers to members of family (son, brother, father) suggests that the offerings are somehow related to a ritual of the family. Besides Plato, while treating of the same issue, mentions funerals explicitly at 800e.

resume its deeper meanings later.<sup>76</sup> This collection of passages shows that the laments could be both ill-omened and good-omened: *blasphemia* does not consist in laments themselves but in certain features contained in some of them.

### *Dysphemism/blasphemia = oimoge*

It is worth considering a few passages where the *oimogai* are explicitly associated with words of ill-omen. In A. *Ag.* 1072-73 and 1076-77 Cassandra uttering simple words such as ὅτοτοτοτοῖ πόποι δᾶ·/ ὥπολλον ὥπολλον is called δυσφημοῦσα. It is interesting to note how the association of an untranslatable interjection and the name of a god, belonging to the performance of the *goos* (1079), constitutes by itself a *dysphemism*.<sup>77</sup> The *dysphemism* is in this case a prelude to a prediction of something bad that will happen soon and is based on the connection between an ill-destiny and Apollo. In E. *Hec.* 180-81 the *dysphemism* τί με δυσφημεῖς; is attributed to an *oimoge* pronounced by Hecuba (οἴμοι τέκνον) and, similarly to Cassandra, Hecuba is simply uttering an interjection. The ill-omened nature of these utterances consists of using unarticulated sounds to introduce the contents of a prophecy. Later the character would use words and concepts, but at this stage only unintelligible words are pronounced. Their meaning is still unclear for the listener but the use of certain formulas might have already been decoded as a bringer of ill-fate.

In many cases the *dysphemism* consists of a simple curse addressed to the gods, which is one of the main features of the *oimogai*. LSJ gives the verb *oimôzein* the meaning of cursing: 'in familiar Att.,

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<sup>76</sup> Plato treats this issue to demonstrate the necessity to establish laws regulating music, and he criticizes music that generates fear in a society. 'This tragic religiosity, the Athenian seems to suggest, not only obscures the truth; it ultimately makes political life less confident and less independent, and renders men prey to fanatic hopes and fear' (Pangle 1980, 482).

<sup>77</sup> Fraenkel (1974, 491) sees in δᾶ nothing but an exclamation. 'Such half-barbaric cries may have had their place at Athens, for example in the ritual of the Carian mourning-women'.

οἰμῶξε, as a curse, *plague take you* ! Ar. *Ach.*1035 ; οἰμῶζετε Ar. *Ra.*257 ; οἱ ὠξῆρα σύ Ar. *Pl.*876 ; οἰμῶξεσθ' ἄρα Ar. *Nu.*217 ; οἰμῶζεν λέγω σοι Ar. *Pl.*58 [...]`. This type of utterance is very similar to the ones described by Euripides in *Andr.* 1144 in a scene of killing and death κραυγὴ δ' ἐν εὐφήμοισι δύσφημος δόμοις/ πέτραισιν ἀντέκλαγξ'· `In those holy halls an unholy cry arose and smote the rocky cliffs`. Stevens (1971, 233) comments on the passage by saying `the juxtaposition brings out the special horror of the scene in which shouting and the clash of arms is heard where holy silence should reign`. However it is possible that the unholy cry corresponds to the *oimogai* – in Iliad we have many examples of *oimogai* in scenes of fighting and death – and the non-holiness depends on the fact that these utterances are offensive to the gods not only for the loudness of the sound. This contrast between these utterances and the holiness of certain places and rituals is described also in S. *Phil.* 10 `Neither libation nor burnt sacrifice could be attempted by us in peace, but with his wild, ill-omened cries he filled the whole camp continually with shrieking, moaning`, ὅτ' οὔτε λουβῆς ἢ ἰν οὔτε θυμάτων/ παρῆν ἐκήλοισ προσθιγεῖν, ἀλλ' ἀγρίαίς/ κατεῖχ' ἀεὶ πᾶν στρατόπεδον δυσφημίαις. The *oimogai* and the *dysphemiai* seem therefore to be very similar and sometimes correspondent. Whether it is the fact of being loud in a context where silence is required or implying thoughts that are not holy and pious or both these features, *oimogai* fall into the category of the ill-omened *gooi*. The fact of being *dysphemos* might have become *blasphemos* in later interpretation because of the potential aggressiveness of the utterance to the gods.

## INTERPRETING THE PREJUDICE: IDEAS OF THE GODS IN PLATO

If the previous analysis of the passages in epic and tragedy show that a ritual fact has been early perceived as inappropriate, impious and dysphemic, it is now worth considering why this happens. To

do so we should take into account a source in particular: Plato's philosophy. We will be able to understand how certain types of rituals (that are identified as belonging to sorcery and wizardry) are criticized inasmuch as they attack the gods.<sup>78</sup> Plato treats programmatically subjects such as the representation of gods, sorcery and certain rituals, and takes a clear position about them.

### About magic

In *Laws* 909a-d Plato explicitly disapproves of practices related to sorcery and has them punished by law: 'But as to all those who have become like ravening beasts, and who, besides holding that the gods are negligent or open to bribes, despise men, charming the souls of many of the living, and claiming that they charm the souls of the dead (*psychagôgein*), and promising to persuade (*peithein*) the gods by bewitching them, as it were, with sacrifices, prayers and incantations (*epôidais*), and who try thus to wreck utterly not only individuals, but whole families and States for the sake of money,—if any of these men be pronounced guilty, the court shall order him to be imprisoned according to law in the mid-country jail', ὅσοι δ' ἂν θηριώδεις γένωνται πρὸς τῷ θεοῦς μὴ νομίζειν ἢ ἀμελεῖς ἢ παραιτητοὺς εἶναι, καταφρονούντες δὲ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ψυχαγωγῶσι μὲν πολλοὺς τῶν ζώντων, τοὺς δὲ τεθνεῶτας φάσκοντες ψυχαγωγεῖν καὶ θεοῦς ὑπισχνούμενοι πείθειν, ὡς θυσίαις τε καὶ εὐχαῖς καὶ ἐπωδαῖς γοητεύοντες, ιδιώτας τε καὶ ὅλας οἰκίας καὶ πόλεις χρημάτων χάριν ἐπιχειρῶσιν κατ' ἄκρας ἐξαιρεῖν, τούτων δὲ ὃς ἂν ὀφλὼν εἶναι δόξη, τιμάτω τὸ δικαστήριον αὐτῷ κατὰ νόμον δεδέσθαι μὲν ἐν τῷ τῶν μεσογέων δεσμοτηρίῳ. The practices mentioned here constitute a synthesis of the practices that we have analyzed through our research. Plato introduces the theme of the *peitho* used in a sinister way upon

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<sup>78</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, the law is particularly representative because it shows that sorcery was tolerated by the *polis* and considered relatively inoffensive, unless it profaned and offended religion (or involved any clear illegal intent such as murder). Science is also a relevant source (the Hippocratic *On the Sacred Disease* in particular) as it explains that sorcery is to be avoided because of its impious attitudes to the gods (6.358, 362-4).

living people, the dead and gods and uses words such as *goeteia*, *psychagogia* and *epoidoi*, practices which destroy 'root and branch individuals and entire houses for the sake of money' (Odgen 2002, 21).

In *Lg.* 11.933a-b Plato shows how to deal with this matter in a modern perspective as he considers the psychological and social effects of the *goeteia*. 'Distinct from this is the type which, by means of sorceries and incantations and spells (as they are called), not only convinces those who attempt to cause injury that they really can do so, but convinces also their victims that they certainly are being injured by those who possess the power of bewitchment. In respect of all such matters it is neither easy to perceive what is the real truth, nor, if one does perceive it, is it easy to convince others. And it is futile to approach the souls of men who view one another with dark suspicion if they happen to see images of moulded wax at doorways, or at points where three ways meet, or it may be at the tomb of some ancestor, to bid them make light of all such portents, when we ourselves hold no clear opinion concerning them'. Sorcery appears as a form of suggestion that generates anxiety and fears in its victims.

Plato therefore considers sorcery as harmful and illegal as other crimes, and for this reason he would punish it, according to the outcome and the competence of the practitioner, in all cases (11.933d-e).<sup>79</sup> Whether these passages reveal Plato's concern about men 'whom he assumes to have unworthy political or social ambitions' (Collins 2008, 141) or his criticism of Athenian law in this matter we

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<sup>79</sup> 'Whosoever shall poison any person so as to cause an injury not fatal either to the person himself or to his employes, or so as to cause an injury fatal or not fatal to his flocks or to his hives,—if the agent be a doctor, and if he be convicted of poisoning, he shall be punished by death; but if he be a lay person, the court shall assess in his case what he shall suffer or pay. And if it be held that a man is acting like an injurer by the use of spells, incantations, or any such mode of poisoning, if he be a prophet or diviner, he shall be put to death; but if he be ignorant of the prophetic art, he shall be dealt with in the same way as a layman convicted of poisoning,—that is to say, the court shall assess in his case also what shall seem to them right for him to suffer or pay. In all cases where one man causes damage to another by acts of robbery or violence, if the damage be great, he shall pay a large sum as compensation to the damaged party, and a small sum if the damage be small; and as a general rule, every man shall in every case pay a sum equal to the damage done, until the loss is made good; and, in addition to this, every man shall pay the penalty which is attached to his crime by way of corrective.' Collins (2008, 140) deduces that Plato criticizes Athenian law which determines a capital punishment only if magic results in death (or in harm that falls short of death) and if the defendant is a professional.



cannot say with absolute certainty, nor it is our intention to say here. However it is evident, as Collins notes (2008, 141), that Plato clearly admits the harmful effects of binding curses, incantations and spells: at 11.933d-e the person using spells, incantations, or any such mode of poisoning is described as an injurer (βλάπτοντι).<sup>80</sup>

### About gods

Deities cannot be considered as cause of pollution and controllable by human beings. These ideas are traceable in Plato, whose criticism to the representation of the gods concentrates on the falsehood of a) the gods' responsibility for pollution and sufferings; b) the gods' deception; c) the gods' corruptibility.<sup>81</sup>

a) In *R.* 379c he explicitly condemns the principle of the god being αἴτιος of all things: in fact, Plato says 'for mankind he is the cause of few things' καὶ τῶν μὲν ἀγαθῶν οὐδένα ἄλλον αἰτιατέον, τῶν δὲ κακῶν ἄλλ' ἅττα δεῖ ζητεῖν τὰ αἴτια, ἄλλ' οὐ τὸν θεόν 'and for the good we must assume no other cause than God, but the cause of evil we must look for in other things and not in God'.<sup>82</sup> Asserting the responsibility of the gods in human suffering would be impious, unprofitable and contradictory, ὥς οὐτε

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<sup>80</sup> In *Republic* he resumes the same ideas: at 365 a-c he points out that these practices are dangerous because through them a wicked person is able to convince the deities that he should not be punished. At *R.* 364b-c whoever claims to have such powers is simply motivated by private interest.

<sup>81</sup> Yunis (1988, 34-35) identifies the following three beliefs: '1) that the gods "prescribed by law" exist, 2) that they take thought for men, and 3) that they cannot be appeased contrary to justice by sacrifices and prayers'. This would not only represent the foundation of the polis religion but also civil order.

<sup>82</sup> Plato blames poetry explicitly (376-383). He accuses Homer and Hesiod in 377d (Οὐς Ἡσίοδος τε, εἶπον, καὶ Ὅμηρος ἡ ἴν' ἐλεγέτην καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ποιηταί. οὗτοι γὰρ που μύθους τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ψευδεῖς συντιθέντες ἔλεγον τε καὶ λέγουσι) and lyric and tragic poets in 380a and 381d because they invented mendacious stories about the gods and depicted them as moody and vindictive beings. About Plato's criticism of the content of poetry see also Benson (2006, 245, 390) and Thayer (1975, 3-26). In particular he discusses the way Plato puts Simonides' words 'seeming overpowers the truth' (Pa. 598, Ed. 76, DL. 55) in relation with *skiagraphia*, scene painting, which is a sort of sorcery (*goeteia*) and wondermaking (Pl. *R.* 602d). About the false stories that Plato attributes to the poets see also Belfiore (1985, 47-57).

ὅσια ἂν λεγόμενα εἰ λέγοιτο, οὔτε σύμφορα ἢ ἴν οὔτε σύμφωνα αὐτὰ αὐτοῖς (380b-c) (Benson 2006, 247-50).

b) The second aspect Plato refuses to attribute to the concept of divinity is transformation. The god is not a wizard (acc. γόητα) 'capable of manifesting himself by design, now in one aspect, now in another, at one time himself changing and altering his shape in many transformations and at another deceiving us and causing us to believe such things about him' (380d). The gods' perfect nature would in fact be inevitably unable to coexist with the tendency to alteration (Οὐκοῦν ὑπὸ ἐν ἄλλου τὰ ἄριστα ἔχοντα ἥκιστα ἀλλοιοῦνται τε καὶ κινεῖται;) because neither the deities nor the daimones (382e) would wish to change – as the transformation would be into something worse– nor would they wish to engage in deceit and sorcery, ἐξαπατῶντες καὶ γοητεύοντες (381e), because this would correspond to a lie ψεύδεσθαι θεὸς ἐθέλοι ἂν ἢ λόγῳ ἢ ἔργῳ φάντασμα προτείνων; (382a) which is contradictory with perfection. These seem to us the main characteristics of the gods that sorcery believes in.

Plato's criticism of these two aspects, causing suffering and transformation, seems therefore to point directly to what is the basis of magical practices: the perception of divinity as something altering his nature and provoking illness. In 382e Plato clearly refuses to attribute to the gods features that the *goetai* would instead take for granted: the deities would neither deceive others by visions (φαντασίας) or words or the sending of signs (σημείων πομπάς) in waking or in dreams (382e) –phenomena that can be called magical– nor would they be wizards (*goetes*) in shape-shifting (383a). By denying the link between a god's will and human sufferings Plato disconnects items that magic considers bonded as causes and effects. We certainly cannot say whether Plato intended to criticize magic in this passage as the ideas he expresses here are inserted in a larger perspective. However it is possible to understand what the disapproval of magic – expressed elsewhere explicitly – is based on.

c) The third aspect Plato criticizes is the corruptibility of the gods, an element that explicitly links sorcery and perception of the gods.<sup>83</sup> In *R.* 364b the ἄγύρται and the μάντιες are described as opportunists using their persuasion (πείθουσιν) to ask people that can afford to pay (ἐπὶ πλουσίων θύρας ἰόντες) money –even in small quantity μετὰ σμικρῶν δαπανῶν – by giving in exchange expiation for their misdeeds. Their mastery in spells and enchantments constrain the gods to serve them, τοὺς θεοὺς “...” πείθοντές σφισιν ὑπηρετεῖν. It is worth noting that men can easily persuade deities through incense and libation even when they have sinned and made transgression (λίστοι δέ τε καὶ θεοὶ αὐτοί, καὶ τοὺς μὲν θυσίαισι καὶ εὐχολαῖς ἀγαναῖσιν λοιβῇ τε κνίσῃ τε παρατρῶπῶς ἄνθρωποι λισσόμενοι, ὅτε κέν τις ὑπερβῇ καὶ ἀμάρτη, 364 d-e).<sup>84</sup>

However, besides the criticisms of dishonesty, we should not lose sight of the author’s general purpose, that is a definition of justice and injustice starting from the points of view that he wants to prove wrong (363e-364a): ‘For if we are just, we shall, it is true, be unscathed by the gods, but we shall be putting away from us the profits of injustice; but if we are unjust, we shall win those profits, and, by the importunity of our prayers, when we transgress and sin, we shall persuade them and escape scot-free’ (366a). In this perspective magic seems particularly dangerous because it gives the opportunity for injustice, as long as the deities are considered corruptible.<sup>85</sup> Plato confutes some of the widespread ideas about the gods: one of them postulates their existence but contests their interference in human matters (899d-900c), another one –which interests us – claims that ‘the gods can be won over by wrongdoers,

<sup>83</sup> Yunis (1988, 45-58) explains this third point in detail and points out, as we are suggesting that Plato rejected the type of worship that includes ‘private dedications, curse tablets, rites of communication with the dead, various initiation rites of Greek or foreign origin, the use of charms, incantation, etc’ (48). These practices would be conceived without regard to justice.

<sup>84</sup> He even mentions that the *manteis* use books that they attribute to Orpheus and Musaeus and practice their rituals both for the living and the dead (364e-365a).

<sup>85</sup> This idea is resumed in *Lg.* 10.905c and is inserted in the discourse on the necessity for the legislator to convince people that gods and absolute values exist (890d: ‘if persuasion can be applied in such matters in even the smallest degree, no lawgiver who is of the slightest account must ever grow weary, but must (as they say) ‘leave no stone unturned’ to reinforce the ancient saying that gods exist, and all else that you recounted just now’, ἀλλ’ εἴπερ τυγχάνει γε οὐσα καὶ σμικρὰ πειθῶ τις περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα, δεῖ μηδαμῇ κάμνειν τὸν γε ἄξιον καὶ σμικροῦ νομοθέτην, ἀλλὰ πᾶσαν, τὸ λεγόμενον, φωνὴν ἰέντα, τῷ παλαιῷ νόμῳ ἐπίκουρον γίγνεσθαι λόγῳ ὥς εἰσὶν θεοὶ καὶ ὅσα νυνδὴ διήλθες σύ.

on the receipt of bribes', τὸ δὲ παραιτητοῦς αὖ θεοὺς εἶναι τοῖσιν ἀδικοῦσι, δεχομένους δῶρα, οὔτε τινὶ συγχωρητέον παντί τ' αὖ κατὰ δύνάμιν τρόπῳ ἐλεγκτέον.<sup>86</sup>

By establishing the rules of his ideal city (μήτε τινὰ λέγειν ταῦτα ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ πόλει εἰ μέλλει εὐνομήσεσθαι), Plato dismantles programmatically the humanizing representation of the gods. The idea of deities avenging and willing to inflict sufferings or playing tricks on people like wizards or being persuaded to accept human wickedness by bribes would destabilize a society and would create wrong models for the citizens. In this perspective certain ritual acts would be impious, because they are based on impious religious ideas.

## CONCLUSION

In this section we have identified terminology related to the lament other than the familiar *goos* and *threnos*. The *oimoge* is in fact often mentioned in literature, starting from Homer, and besides an apparent synonymy with the *goos*, it shows peculiar characteristics that permit its identification even when not explicitly called so. This type – or part – of the lament serves, most importantly, to confirm the link with supernatural or at least magic that we previously analyzed about the *goos* and therefore its ritual significance. The *oimoge* is in fact an individual utterance, preceding the proper *goos*, that in its contents reveals ideas and intentions that early in tragedy would be considered dysphemic, that is opposite to what is expected as appropriate to ritual and prayers. The elements contained in this utterance are a sense of guilt, an incapacity to accept the gods' will and even a direct rebuking of their

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<sup>86</sup> Through the Athenian's speech, Plato expresses his vehement disapproval of this concept and at 906b-c calls this mistake injustice: 'but there are certain souls that dwell on earth and have acquired unjust gain which, being plainly bestial, beseech the souls of the guardians--whether they be watch-dogs or herdsmen or the most exalted of masters--trying to convince them by fawning words and prayerful incantations that (as the tales of evil men relate) they can profiteer among men on earth without any severe penalty: but we assert that the sin now mentioned, of profiteering or "over-gaining," is what is called in the case of fleshly bodies "disease," in that of seasons and years "pestilence," and in that of States and polities, by a verbal change, this same sin is called "injustice."' "

decisions or their personality itself. The interpretation of this ritual as *dysphemia* and later *blasphemia* mirrors new ideas about the divine nature but especially proves that ritual and creed are strictly connected to politics and social order, as Plato shows. Challenging (and offending) the gods through the ritual is perceived at some point as destabilizing for the social order and the hierarchy of powers.

In the next chapter we will analyze another example of lament, the *threnos*, and we will see how its evolution cannot be separated from that of the *goos*. The *threnos* itself, although considered an acceptable form of dirge, as literature and law show, nonetheless preserves elements that confirm again the importance of supernatural in music.

# CHAPTER 4

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## THE *THRENOS*

It is now time to evaluate the meaning of the *threnos*, probably the best known example of lament in the ancient Greek world. Literature depicts it as a formal dirge performed in specific contexts involving a community. Swift (2010, 298-304) points out that thanks to Pindar's third *threnos* (fr. 128c 5-M) we are able to demonstrate that *threnos* was considered a genre as early as the fifth century. In particular it has been considered mainly as a funeral song, with a high degree of musicality. Alexiou (2002, 11-14) points out in particular that *goos* and *threnos* were both 'improvisations inspired by the grief of the occasion' (13) and the difference between them in Homer is related to their different degree of artistic quality. She reconstructs the original lament as 'an antiphonal singing of two groups of mourners, strangers and kinswomen, each singing a verse in turn and followed by a refrain sung in unison' (13), the first ones performing the *threnos* and the other ones the *goos*. The presence of very famous lyric poems by Pindar and Simonides called *threnoi* – corresponding to the absence of *gooi* as poetic genre – and the terminology used by Homer to describe the *threnos* certainly orientate scholars to emphasize the musical relevance of the *threnos*.<sup>1</sup> However does it mean necessarily that the *goos* always represented the reverse of the *threnos* and was the unprofessional and unmusical reply to the *aoidoi*'s singing? In other words does it imply that the *goos* and the *threnos* belong to the same ritual and differ only because the latter was musical?

This conclusion would probably be simplistic and would not really point to the real ritual significance of the *threnos*. We are dealing with two types of lament that had completely different destiny: if the *threnos* survived in literary form, the *goos* has not. The analysis of the *goos* in chapter 1

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<sup>1</sup> 'Early instances point to the *threnos* as more ordered and polished, often associated with divine performers and a dominant musical element. This is reflected in the extant choral *threnoi* of Pindar and Simonides [...]' (Alexiou 2002, 103)

and 2 has pointed out that the aischrologic elements contained in the *goos* have been used with a different approach in tragedy and converted into dysphemic elements. This can already provide an explanation for its disappearance from literature as a genre. However, we cannot refrain from noting that the *threnos* and the *goos* are sometimes used interchangeably in tragedy and the former does not coincide with the polished and ordered song we find in the Homeric poems. In other words, the *threnos* is as dysphemic as the *goos*. On the other hand the *goos* does not always correspond to a curse, an invocation of a dead person, etc. but it is sometimes introduced as a simple expression of sorrow, which reminds us of the *gooi* sung by Andromache, Hecuba and Helen during Hector's funeral. These facts need an explanation because they might shed light on new ritual elements of these two laments.

After investigating the original ritual difference between the *threnos* and the *goos* it is important to point out how the tragic poets evaluated these two rituals, how many varieties they introduced of them and especially which they considered appropriate or not. We can summarize the stages *threnos* and *goos* went through by interpreting their use in tragedy:

- a first stage where the *threnos* and the *goos* belong to different traditions, the *aoidoi*'s tradition on one hand and a mantic/magic and not necessarily musical utterance on the other.
- a second stage where the overlap occurs: since they were performed together during funerals, the *threnos* incorporated elements of the *goos* and –proportionally to the increasing perception of the *goos* as dysphemic – it absorbed dysphemic elements itself; the *goos*, which could have already had some melodic elements itself on particular occasions, became even more musical thanks to the overlap with the *threnos*. The two traditions may have therefore crossed at a certain point and exchanged some characteristics with one another.
- a third stage consisting of the presence of three types of lament: 1) an euphemic *threnos* to be sung by the tomb (this type of *threnos* becomes a literary genre); 2) a dysphemic

lament called by *both names* and characterized by the presence of a *daimon* and a disharmonious nature; 3) an euphemic *goos* consisting in a simple expression of sorrow and characterized by more gentle sound. We will show also that the presence of harmonious music is marked by the nightingale and is in inverse proportion to the presence of dysphemic elements. The *threnos* for example, when intended simply as a ritual expression of sorrow for the deceased, was characterized by musical articulation. Later, when the *threnos* started sharing dysphemic elements with the *goos*, it was instead accompanied by terminology referring to disharmonious music and never associated with the nightingale.

If our reconstruction stands, *dysphemia* affected the use of the *threnos* in tragedy. However, its original meaning – evident from Homer and from etymology itself – saved the *threnos* from the obscurity to which the *goos* was condemned after its appearances in 5<sup>th</sup> century tragedy.

## **FIRST STAGE: *THRENOS* AND *GOOS* = SEPARATE TRADITIONS**

It is not easy to make a comparison between the *goos* and the *threnos* in the Homeric poems because of the numerical disproportion between their quotations: while the *goos* is mentioned very frequently the *threnos* is referred to only twice, as also Swift notices (2010, 301). But this numerical difference too must have had some reason that we hope to discover. Let us now read Homer's two references to *threnos* in the poems: *Il.* 24.720-23 about Hector's funeral 'and by his side set singers, leaders of the dirge, who led the song of lamentation – they chanted the dirge, and to it the women added their laments' (Murray 1995), *παρὰ δ' εἴσαν ἀοιδοῦς/ θρήνων ἐξάρχους, οἳ τε σπονόεσσιν ἀοιδὴν /οῖ ἐν ἄρ' ἐθρήνεον, ἐπὶ δὲ στενάχοντο γυναῖκες*; *Od.* 24.58-62 about Achilles' funeral 'then around you stood the daughters of the old man of the sea wailing piteously, and they clothed you about with immortal clothing. And the Muses, all nine, replying to one another with sweet voices, led the dirge. There could you not have seen an Argive but was in tears, so deeply did the clear-toned Muse



move their hearts` (Murray 1995), ἀμφὶ δέ σ' ἔστησαν κοῦραι ἁλίοιο γέροντος /οἴκτρ' ὀλοφυρόμεναι, περὶ δ' ἄμβροτα εἵματα ἔσσαν. /Μοῦσαι δ' ἐννέα πᾶσαι ἀμειβόμεναι ὅπῃ καλῇ / θρήνεον· ἔνθα κεν οὐ τιν' ἀδάκρυτόν γ' ἐνόησας / Ἀργείων· τοῖον γὰρ ὑπώρορε Μοῦσα λίγεια. Let us now explain the reason of only two *threnoi*.

## Two parts in antiphony?

Scholars (e.g. Richardson 1993, 352; Russo, Fernandez-Galiano and Heubeck 1992, 366; Alexiou 2002, 11-14; Nagy 1994, 362 n 126) point to differences in musical quality between the *aoidoi*'s singing and the women's utterance also because the antiphony gives the idea of a separation rather than a union between the two performances. But do the *threnos* and the *goos* strictly correspond to these two parts in antiphony? Let us consider the structure of the performance. In *Iliad* there are three elements: the *aoidē* sung by set mourners, a solo intoned by the women (Andromache, Hecuba and Helen) and the *stonache* uttered by the rest of the people. In Achilles' funeral we can identify a part in which the Danaans shed their tears over Achilles' corpse, δάκρυα θερμὰ χέον Δαναοὶ (*Od.* 24.46) and οὐ τιν' ἀδάκρυτόν γ' ἐνόησας (*Od.* 24.61), and also utter a *goos* (*Pi. P* 3.100-2); a lament from Thetis and the Naiades who are described ὀλοφυρόμεναι (58) and a beautiful singing responding each to each (ἀμειβόμεναι) from the Muses.

Antiphony seems therefore a relevant element in the performance during the *prothesis* as it is clearly shown by Andromache's, Hecuba's and Helen's antiphonal responding in the *Iliad* and from the Muses' singing in the *Odyssey*.<sup>2</sup> But is antiphony the reason why *goos* and *threnos* were – or we should rather say became – so different? Is it for structural reasons that the *threnos* became a literary genre while the *goos* did not? Scholars like Alexiou seem to identify their essential nature in their being separate parts of the antiphony, in other words the *threnos* and the *goos* were different because

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<sup>2</sup> Antiphony in Inner Mani is not understood by Seremetakis as an aesthetic device but rather as `(1) the social structure of mortuary ritual; (2) the internal acoustic organization of lament singing; (3) a prescribed technique for witnessing, for the production/reception of jural discourse, and for the cultural construction of truth; and (4) a political strategy that organizes the relation of women to male-dominant institutions` (Seremetakis 1991, 100).

performed by different groups of people and, as a consequence of this, they had different musical qualities. The *threnos* would be played and sung by hired professionals, and the *goos* a spontaneous weeping. This idea can indeed appear reasonable considered that the two groups were so clearly distinct: one of them is explicitly treated as external to the family. However, if we follow the texts carefully we realize that the antiphony is not between *threnos* and *goos*, or at least this is not the main one. In the *Iliad* Andromache, Hecuba and Helen are intoning their *goos* and the *stonache* sung chorally by the women – and not the *threnos* – is its antiphonal reply; similarly the *threnos* does not constitute a strophe *Ax* with the *goos* but again with a *stonache*, the women’s response (722). We can represent the structure as it follows:

*Ax Threnos → stonache*

*A<sup>1</sup>x<sup>1</sup> Andromache’s goos → stonache*

*A<sup>2</sup>x<sup>2</sup> Hecuba’s goos → stonache*

*A<sup>3</sup>x<sup>3</sup> Helena’s goos → stonache*

The structure of strophe-antistrophe is therefore slightly different from the one depicted by scholars: even if we cannot deny the presence of an antiphony, in a larger perspective, between the *threnos* and Andromache Hecuba and Helen’s *gooi*, however we should identify in the first instance that the group playing the main role in singing responsorially is the group of women uttering the *stonache*. *Goos* and *threnos* are rather in the same position (as strophes) while the *stonache* seems to correspond to the antistrophe. The *threnos* appears in this case as a musical introduction aimed at guiding the whole performance, and therefore both the solos and the utterance of the women.

In the *Odyssey*, the scenario changes slightly, as this time it is the Muses’ *threnos* that is antiphonal and in particular the different parts of the antiphony constitute all together a *threnos* (as the participle ἀμειβόμεναι suggests). Again, we are not denying that responsoriality existed between the *threnos* of the Muses and the other elements, like the Danaans’ response and the Naiades’ and Thetis’

utterance. However, we cannot infer, as Tsagalis did (2004, 5), that the action of ὀλοφυρόμεναι is synonymous with *goos* especially if we bear in mind that a later – but not too late – tradition like Pindar's (*P.* 3.100-2) attributes the *goos* not to the Naiades but to the Danaans: 'But the other's son, the only child immortal Thetis bore him in Phthia, lost his life to an arrow in war, and as he was consumed by the fire, he raised a lament from the Danaans' (Race 1997), τοῦ δὲ παῖς, ὅνπερ μόνον ἀθανάτα/τίκτεν ἐν Φθίᾳ Θέτις, ἐν πολέμῳ τόξοις ἀπὸ ψυχὰν λιπὼν /ῶρσεν πυρὶ καϊόμενος ἐκ Δαναῶν γόον. The difference between *threnos* and *goos* does not seem determined by antiphony. Scholars implied in fact that since the Naiades are kinswomen like Andromache, Hecuba and Helen, they sing the *goos*, but then why does Homer not use the word *goos* explicitly, considering how formulaic his language was? Besides, as Swift points out (2010, 302), 'the fact that the *threnos* is joined by the lamentation of the women [...] suggests that the distinction between the two forms of lament is not viewed as absolute'. The two Homeric passages show therefore that what differentiates the *threnos* from the *goos* is neither the fact of being parts of a responsorial lament nor the fact of being performed by different groups of people (kinswomen and hired musician). The *goos* can be uttered by the kinswomen but also by male friends and the antiphony can be between the *goos* and the *stonache* but also between parts of the same *threnos*. Let us summarize the two passages:

Hector's funeral:

Aoidoi's *threnos* (musical performance) → women's *stonache*

Andromache's *goos* → *stonache*

Hecuba's *goos* → *stonache*

Helena's *goos* → *stonache*

Achilles' funeral

Thetis and Naiades *olophyromenai*

*Threnos*: 1<sup>st</sup> Muse's → 2<sup>nd</sup> Muse's → 3<sup>rd</sup> Muse's → 4<sup>th</sup> Muse's → 5<sup>th</sup> Muse's → 6<sup>th</sup> Muse's → 7<sup>th</sup> Muse's  
 → 8<sup>th</sup> Muse's → 9<sup>th</sup> Muse's (or 1<sup>st</sup> group of Muses → 2<sup>nd</sup> group of Muses)<sup>3</sup>

Danaans' wailing (*goos*)<sup>4</sup>

We neither intend to deny that *threnos* and *goos* could have been somehow sections of a performance, nor that the *threnos* has musical qualities that the *goos* does not show so clearly. However, we cannot think that the essential difference between *goos* and *threnos* was the fact of being sections belonging to a certain ritual. Such an explanation of their different nature would be limiting, if we consider that in most of the cases represented by Homer the *goos* was not a 'part' of a whole, but was an autonomous and well-identified practice, clearly independent from the *threnos*.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore there are too many variables in the two Homeric passages to found the difference between *threnos* and *goos* only on their role in the antiphony and on the groups of people performing them.

<sup>3</sup> It is necessary to remember that the passage has caused a number of questions, reported in detail by Russo, Fernandez-Galiano and Heubeck (1992, 366-7). First Aristarchus objected that the reference to nine Muses is un-Homeric. The question is whether Hesiod, who refers always to nine Muses (*Th.* 60, 77-9, 916-17), was influenced by *Od.* 24.60, or whether in fact both poets were drawing on material from an older source. However the scholars lean to the former possibility (Erbse 1972, 194-7). The second important issue is how to intend the verb ἀμείβεσθαι, whose meaning is not possible to determine exactly. Russo, Fernandez-Galiano and Heubeck base their interpretation of this verb on the comparison with the passage in the *Iliad*, and attribute the Muses the same function as the *oidoi* in Hector's funeral.

<sup>4</sup> It is helpful mentioning Seremetakis' analysis of antiphony in Maniat lament: she in fact identifies several elements in the antiphony that she calls 'techniques': (1) the *moioloi*, that is the improvised singing of the soloist; (2) the refrains of the chorus; (3) the stylized sobbing of both soloist and chorus; (4) the multiple corporeal gestures of soloist and chorus; (5) the improvised prose monologues of individual mourners (usually of close kin), which function as counterpoints to the singing and screaming; and (6) the screaming, that is, both a specific technique of mourning and a general designation of mourning.' (Seremetakis 1991, 106-7). The modern *moioloi* seems to have the same function as the *threnos*, while the close kin's monologues remind us of Andromache's, Hecuba's and Helen's *gooi*. In particular Seremetakis explains that the monologue can occur either by itself as an ouverture to *moioloi*, in simultaneity or in its aftermath and adds that 'screaming and monologues are not transgressive of the *moioloi* but largely function as amplifications and verifications of it, moving the entire ritual towards emotional peaks with the soloist's performance' (Seremetakis 1991, 112). The analogy of the monologues with the *gooi* is confirmed by the presence of disorder, catharsis, screaming (what the ancients would identify as a status of *mania*). The power of the emotions are described by the scholar as such: 'A woman can actually impose death on herself. This is the female challenge to Death' (*idem*, 110). 'When the violence of singing becomes too dangerous for the singer, when the self is seen to have passed over into the autonomy of "screaming" [...] members of the chorus will attempt to retrieve the singer from abjection through another *moioloi*' (119). This intervention is also musical in the sense that the intervening singer takes the melodic scale of the previous singer, which in the meantime has moved to higher pitches, but at a lower pitch.

<sup>5</sup> Swift (2010, 302-3) takes into account other pieces of evidence to show that we should be careful in rigidly subdividing among types of funerary performance: Solon's funerary legislation (Sol. 21.6.1) and Sappho fr. 150 V. 'Speakers of a language are inevitably less rigorous than scholars in how they use terminology' (303). This is undeniably true, especially if we consider how the word *threnos* has been used in tragedy, as we will see later, but we either cannot deny that at least in the Homeric poems the word *threnos* is used only in one way. It is probably the use of this word as a genre-term that may have retained an association with formal performance (*idem*, 303).

Tragedy can come to our aid to confirm what we said. Antiphony does not disappear. On the contrary, the funeral dirges represented in tragedy are mostly antiphonies between a character and the chorus (A. *Pers.* 908-1077, *Th.* 848-1004, E. *Supp.* 778-836, E. *Andr.* 1166-1230).<sup>6</sup> Besides, the original difference of roles seems to be kept. In most cases the chorus leads the singing and corresponds to a group of people outside the family.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand the rule of using the word *threnos* to mean the professional singing and the *goos* to identify the closer relatives' utterance seems gradually to fade. In A. *Pers.* the *threnos* seems still to be identified as the choral utterance – Μαριανδυνού θρηνητήρος [...] ἱαχάν (935-40) – and words etymologically close to *threnos* such as δύσθορος (942, 1077) are referred to the chorus' singing. However the words *threnos* and *goos* are used indifferently to identify the choral part (947, 1050, 1073, 1077). In *Seven against Thebes* 863 it is even the other way round as each of the sisters' solo is called *threnos* and in E. *Andr.* 1197 the chorus' performance is called *goos* while the choral piece in *Alcestis* 435-75 is not named either as *goos* or as *threnos*. Tragedy would therefore confirm the presence of antiphony in funeral laments with a solo (or occasionally a sequence of solos) alternating with the chorus' utterance that would correspond to the part of the *aoidoi*.<sup>8</sup> However, it is not possible to clearly identify as *threnos* the part including music and as *goos* the one without it.

We can therefore distinguish two main problems in attributing the difference between *threnos* and *goos* only to their structural role. There is first of all the fact that in early literature the association of the

<sup>6</sup> Occasionally we can find a chorus leader instead of the chorus, as in *Hec.* 681-725 where the lament in the presence of Polydorus' corpse is performed by Hecuba, the servant and the chorus leader, but only Hecuba's part is sung; in S. *OC* 1670-1719 the antiphony is conducted by the two sisters' solos and the chorus leader - and in *Phoen.* 1480-581 by two characters: Antigone and Oedipus. About antiphony in tragic *kommoi* see also Swift 2010, 306-7.

<sup>7</sup> In A. *Pers.* 908-1077 the chorus refer clearly to music, meanwhile Xerxes does not describe himself singing but only asks repeatedly the chorus to sing loud and implies that his utterance is dependent on the chorus (1042). In E. *Andr.* 1166-1230 the chorus singing in antiphony with Peleus in the presence of Neoptolemus' corpse use the verb *kataarchein* in reference to the *goos* 1196-9. The chorus are therefore the group leading the singing, possibly like the *aoidoi* for the funeral dirge. In *Seven against Thebes* 848-1004 the choral part seems in fact very relevant and again explicitly related to some form of music (*melos* 835), however we decide to interpret the parts at 961-74 and 989-1004 – if sung by Antigone and Ismene or by the chorus. Even more interesting is the musical role of the chorus in *Alcestis* 435-75 is: here the chorus refers directly to the *aoidoi* at 453-4 but certainly this reference to musicians cannot be disconnected from themselves (Cf also E. *Hel.* 164ff)

<sup>8</sup> But in some cases the role of the chorus seems to be not only musical but also psychological like the women *stonachousai*. We should not forget also that Plato in *Lg.* 799-802e speaks of 'a crowd of choruses' and mentions the presence of 'hired mourners with their Carian music'.

*threnos* with a musical and choral part, performed by people outside the family, and of the *goos* with the kinswomen's solo utterance is not so clear anymore. There is another point that casts doubt by itself on the definition of the *goos* as 'part' of the funeral dirge: the fact that there are many passages in the Homeric poems where it is uttered independently. A structural/musical distinction would not be enough to explain the presence of only two occurrences of the word *threnos* in Homer among the multiple references to the *goos*.<sup>9</sup>

### Difference in context

Why then is the *goos* mentioned so often and the *threnos* only twice in Homer? The passages in *Iliad* and in *Odyssey* would suggest that the *threnos* was a dirge sung during the funeral as a tribute to the deceased. The *goos* could also have had the same function, for example in *Il.* 23.9 –Achilles and his comrades bemoan Patroclus' death in a ritual before the burial–, in *Il.* 24.664 –Priam explains to Achilles that the Trojans will perform the *goos* for nine days before the funeral–,<sup>10</sup> but these examples represent only one of its possible uses.<sup>11</sup> We have seen in chapters 1 and 2 that the *goos* was used by human beings, for example as means to summon a ghost or to raise a dead person's revenge, or by a god/demon to give a prophecy or to communicate the gods' revenge. On the contrary the *threnos* in the Homeric poems is *only* sung during funerals. Probably this is the reason why Aeschylus often names the *threnos* as a song performed by the tomb or the deceased: the ἐπιτύμβιον αἶνον in *A. Ag.* 1547 seems to be the explanation

<sup>9</sup> It is interesting noting that the *threnos* tends to absorb meanings that probably belonged to the *goos*. Plutarch's statement that Solon's funerary legislation included the banning of 'set-piece *threnoi*.' Here the *threnoi* do not correspond to professional laments but evidently to dysphemic utterances. Plutarch is probably paraphrasing without reading 'subtle overtones into the choice of the verb' (Swift 2010, 302-3). Similarly, the *threnos* in Sappho fr. 150 V is used in the same sense as it is described as not suitable for the Muses' house. Terminology, as Swift suggests, does not provide valuable evidence for genres. However, it must be noted that the term *threnos* had the upper hand over the term *goos* and was used indistinctly to mean lament.

<sup>10</sup> In *Od.* 24.190 the context seems to be similar to *Il.* 23.9: Amphimedon's soul explains Agamemnon how Odysseus killed him, while slaughtering the Suitors. But the victims' parents still do not know what happened and cannot give their tribute to the dead, ὃ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ θανόντων (190) –sentence that is identical to 23.9.

<sup>11</sup> We might think that among the different magical functions of the *goos* the one accompanying the last journey (therefore a *psychagogos goos*) was appropriate to accompany the funeral dirge.

of the action of *threnoin* at 1541,<sup>12</sup> and at *Ch.* 335 the *threnos* is explicitly called ἐπιτύμβιος θρήνος, and again at 342, θρήνων ἐπιτυμβιδίων, and similarly the attribute of θρηνεῖν at the verse 926 is πρὸς τύμβον,<sup>13</sup> at *Pers.* 686 the chorus are depicted performing the *threnos* (θρηνεῖτ') ἐγγὺς ἐστῶτες τάφου and in *Th.* 861-66 it is the lament that Antigone and Ismene are expected to sing in presence of the deceased brothers. Euripides also seems to remember this characteristic: in *Ph.* 1302 the *threnos* will be sung in presence of the dead brothers, βοᾷ βαρβάρῳ στενακτὰν ἰαχὰν /μελομένην νεκροῖς δάκρυσι θρηγήσω,<sup>14</sup> and in *Ph.* 1635 and *Suppl.* 88 we read θρήνους νεκρῶν (in the *Phoenicians* not only these verses but also the play itself creates the situation of a ritual in front of the deceased); Pindar confirms this idea in *I.* 8.58 when he describes the *threnos* as the πολύφαιμον song that the Muses intone staying παρά τε πυρὰν τάφον.<sup>15</sup>

One of the original differences between the *threnos* and the *goos* was therefore the employment of the first one in a specific context, which involved society, while the *goos* could have been employed in a range of contexts and the funeral could have been only one of them.<sup>16</sup> However this element in common

<sup>12</sup> Fraenkel (1974, 732-3) gives a detailed account of the different interpretations of the two words. Scholars discuss whether the ἐπιτύμβιον αἶνον is a speech at the grave, distinct from the *threnos* (1541). Some scholars such as Paley (1871, ad loc.) point out that 'Aeschylus mentions also the ἐπιτάφιος λόγος, carrying back into the heroic age the custom introduced after the time of the Persian wars'. The most important innovation in the ritual of Athenian funerary celebrations for the killed in war was the custom of 'substituting the speech of a citizen to the assembled people for the sacral ceremony, viz. songs of the mourning women or θρήνοι such as those composed by Pindar' (Wilamowitz 1902, 136). However Fraenkel says that 'the passage in the *Agamemnon* does not give a terminus *ante quem*, since it is highly improbable that here any spoken address is referred to.' He points out in fact that the ἐπιτύμβιον θρήνος in *Libation Bearers* is an indication that the ἐπιτύμβιον αἶνον forms a part of the θρήνος without being distinguished from the rest by the mode of its delivery.

<sup>13</sup> At 150-1 there is no mention to the *threnos* but we can say with certainty that the παιῖνα τοῦ θανόντος is a *threnos*: here the lament has the function to ἐπανθίζειν the libations on the tomb; at 925 Clytemnestra says that she seems to θρηνεῖν πρὸς τύμβον: although the context is different from the previous ones – as here lamenting by a tomb has the meaning of speaking uselessly- we still can imply that the *threnos* was considered as a lament to be sung by the tomb.

<sup>14</sup> μέλομαι has the meaning of 'belonging to, dedicated to' (Mastronarde 1994, 1303).

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion about the adjective πολύφαιμον, and whether it should be understood as active 'of many voices' or passive 'famous' see Carey (1981, 201).

<sup>16</sup> We should not forget what Parker says about the importance of the tombs of heroes: 'There is a connection between the cult newly paid to heroes and what were (to judge from grave-goods) the novel splendours of the aristocratic funerals of the eighth century. A recently dead aristocrat could even perhaps be added to the ranks of the heroes by his successors, [...]. Or the commemorative rites performed by a particular family could grow into a hero-cult – one shared by the community at large – [...]. Thus the heroes arise (as did the Saints, or so it has been argued)

could have contributed to the overlap between these two words. This is confirmed by the way their meaning evolved, as we will see shortly.

### **Difference in musical qualities and function**

Derderian (2001, 44) suggests that the original difference between the *threnos* and the *goos* was not limited to the structure of the lament: she points out that 'The performers of the *gooi* come to represent performers of a genre without continuity, except perhaps as an inverse version of the epic, signifying the end of the hero's quest for *kleos*. As a women's account of the heroic narrative, lament is represented both as a derivative genre subordinated to the epic frame narrative and as a language that remains isolated to individual performers or to the single , without influence on the ongoing speech, action, and memory of the heroes'.<sup>17</sup> She notes (2001, 48) that the *goos* thematizes 'both the social relationship between the dead and the mourner and the cause of their separation in death' and, on the contrary, 'the Homeric epic privileges its own narrative of heroic *kleos* and the heroes' material memorials'(49). In this prospective the *tymbos* and the *sema* represent the locus for future remembrance of the dead and would create lasting *kleos* (50), while the female *goos* performs the immediate familiar mediation of death (51).

Derderian makes therefore an important point by saying that the female *goos* is a 'liminal moment of ritual passage' and the written form of lament consciously obscure this aspect (62). Similarly, we want to show that also *threnos* and *goos* were dissimilar in their substance and goal. We should reconsider the structural division between *threnos* and *goos* in Homer's passages not as the *reason* for

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not as champions of the poor, but as clients of the great and good' (1996, 37). In this way the cults would represent a means by which a community takes symbolic possession of its territory (38).

<sup>17</sup> This suggestion is given in a footnote (31, n 64) as she does not want to leave the traditional interpretation. She follows Alexiou and says that 'the *threnos* is a professional lament performed in public by non-kin specialists, while the *goos* is a private genre performed by an individual among relatives or close friends, but often also in a larger public context'.



their difference but rather as a *consequence* of the difference in their essence. What is their essence then? And what does 'liminal moment of ritual passage' exactly mean? The whole performance during Hector's funeral shows that Homer does not report any text for the *threnos* while the *goos* delivers important contents. If we admit that this is not a pure coincidence we should think that the essence of the *goos* was in its words. The word is the means of communication among human beings and, in a society where words are mostly spoken rather than written, we should imagine that it can have an impact on reality, as a spell does. Such ideas are largely discussed by Tambiah (1968, 176) who points out how the effectiveness of the ritual consists in its words. His work is particularly relevant because he tries to explain what the interconnection between the words and the action is (184). Previously (p. 58) we described the *goos* as a performative utterance, that is a vocal practice aimed at obtaining some change in reality. However Andromache's, Hecuba's and Helen's *gooi* do not present much of this side and not even Pindar comes to our aid by reporting the contents of the Danaans' *goos*. Should we therefore conclude simply that these elements were not involved in funeral rituals and therefore were not essential to the *goos*? Actually we should anticipate what we will say in a future article about the *stonache*: this type of lament is the response to a sort of incantation that forces someone – or something – to mourn even when not involved in the grief. This would be a plausible reason to accept the magical nature of the *goos* even in Hector's and Achilles' funerals: the kinswomen in *Iliad* exercise a force of persuasion that induces the women to respond with their *stonachai*'. Furthermore, we should mention here what the ethnographer Caraveli-Chaves points out in her study of the modern Cretan lament (1980, 151): 'lament language is magical language seeking to remedy death and heal the living. By commemorating the past life of the dead person and using the community as witness, poetic language is utilized as a weapon against death and as a vehicle for ensuring immortality for community members'.

However there is one more aspect to consider. If the *gooi* performed by Andromache, Hecuba and Helen do not present the performative features we analyzed in chapters 1 and 2, the case of Patroclus' funeral does, as it contains a promise of revenge on Hector addressed to Patroclus' soul (*Il.* 23. 10-23,

179-83). However, in this case, differently from the two other funerals, the *goos* is not accompanied by the *threnos*.<sup>18</sup> How should we explain this combination of facts? Why does not music intervene when words are harmful and are used *against* someone? Can we draw any conclusion about the essence of the *threnos*?

We should remember that there is a substantial difference between Hector's and Achilles' souls on the one hand, and Patroclus' on the other. If the first two cases seem appeased souls, as they do not need to disturb anybody's sleep with their scary appearance, on the contrary Patroclus seems to be restless, still wandering in a sort of limbo and in need of communication with Achilles. Patroclus' soul is held on the shores of Acheron and not allowed to make his journey through the Acheron (23,71-4). 'Bury me with all speed, let me pass inside the Gates of Hades. Far do the spirits keep me away, the phantoms of men that have done with toils, and they do not yet allow me to mingle with them beyond the river, but vainly through the wide-gated house of Hades' (Murray 1999), θάπτε με ὅτι τάχιστα πύλας Αἴδαο περήσω./ τῆλέ με εἵργουσι ψυχαὶ εἰδῶλα καμόντων, / οὐδὲ μέ πω μίσγεσθαι ὑπὲρ ποταμοῖο ἐῷσιν./ ἄλλ' αὖτως ἀλάλημαι ἂν' εὐρυπυλῆς Αἴδος δῶ). Hector's and Achilles' souls, by contrast, do not interfere with the living (at least not in Homer)<sup>19</sup> as probably they are ready to embark on Charon's boat. Patroclus needs to ask Achilles to bury him, but even when the funeral rites have been accomplished according to the ghost's will, the *threnos* is not mentioned. There is something more: the pyre of dead Patroclus does not kindle, Οὐδὲ πυρὴ Πατρόκλου ἐκαίετο τεθνηῶτος (192), and Achilles needs to pray the North Wind and the West Wind and promise them fair offerings in order to make them rouse the pyre to burn Patroclus' corpse (194-95). How could we explain this? Why even when Achilles has finally satisfied his friend's requests does the situation seem still in suspense? It seems in fact that the deities are not on Achilles' side.<sup>20</sup> Let us consider his behaviour: he is dominated by anger and desire for revenge. His only

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<sup>18</sup> We should not doubt the rituality of this scene as suggested e.g. at 13 by the word *tris*.

<sup>19</sup> See p.30 about Sophocles' *Polyxena* (frs 522-28 Radt).

<sup>20</sup> Richardson (1993, 191) comments on the passage by saying that 'we have just heard of the care of Aphrodite and Apollo for the body of Hektor, which prevents Akhilleus' intention from being fulfilled. The failure of the pyre to burn is another check, and this in turn leads to further divine action'. He also mentions (and rejects) the theory of

apparent concern is to punish Hector even in the afterlife. Is he raging against Hector to appease Patroclus or to satisfy his fury?<sup>21</sup> Patroclus' intervention from the underworld seems to be intended to suggest to him implicitly that what he needs is nothing like dragging Hector and give him raw to dogs to devour, Ἑκτορα δεῦρ' ἐρύσας δώσειν κυσὶν ὃ ἂ δάσασθαι (21), but simply a dignified farewell, οὐ μὲν μεν ζώνοντος ἀκήδεις, ἀλλὰ θανόντος·/θάπτέ με ὅτι τάχιστα πύλας Αἴδαο περήσω (70-1), and the promise that their bones will be enfolded in the same coffer, ὥς δὲ καὶ ὅστέα νῶϊν ὃ ἡ σορὸς ἀμφικαλύπτου/ χρύσεος ἀμφιφορέυς, τὸν τοι πόρε πότνια μήτηρ (91-92). But even after this, Achilles continues restating his promise (179-83) clearly in discord with what the deities want –Aphrodite and Apollo themselves try to preserve Hector's body (184-91).<sup>22</sup> He is in fact forgetful of the deities: he does not mention them in the ritual, whereas Hecuba is very keen to remember that Hector was dear to the gods, and thankful that they had care of him even in death (749-50). No surprise if Apollo declares that Achilles is challenging the gods' patience – Apollo says `` “Let him beware lest we grow angry with him, valiant though he is” (*idem*), ἡ ἀγαθῷ περ ἔόντι νεμεσσηθέωμέν οἱ ἡμεῖς·(24.53) –:<sup>23</sup> he is fouling the man's nature itself `the

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Kakridis `that the scene is modelled on one in a poem about Akhilleus' own funeral, where the Winds might be unwilling to come because of their grief at the death of Memnon their brother, and so they must be summoned`. (Kakridis 1949, 75-83).

<sup>21</sup> Derderian (2001, 53-4) already points out that Achilles' way of mourning is exceptional as his ritual activities deviate from the typical funeral and, rather, includes movements that belong to the gestural code of female mourning. `Achilles' individual activity is aimed less at generating or preserving Patroclus' memory than at taking revenge on Hector. Achilles' abuse of Hector is to be read as an inverse of his ritual glorification of Patroclus; it is a behavior which diminishes the future of his opponent and bypasses the form of the by suspending funeral ritual and anticipating the epic of his friend through his own martial activity rather than through the usual ritual closure (55)`.

<sup>22</sup> `Hail, Patroclus, even in the house of Hades, for now I am bringing to fulfilment all that I promised you before. Twelve noble sons of the great-hearted Trojans, all these together with you the flame devours; but Hector, son of Priam, I will not give to the fire to feed on, but to dogs`, χαῖρέ μοι ὦ Πάτροκλε καὶ εἰν Αἴδαο δόμοισι·/πάντα γὰρ ἤδη τοι τελέω τὰ πάροιθεν ὑπέστην./δώδεκα μὲν Τρώων μεγαθύμων υἱέας ἐσθλοὺς /τοὺς ἅμα σοὶ πάντας πῦρ ἐσθίει· Ἑκτορα δ' οὐ τι/ δώσω Πριαμίδην πυρὶ δαπτέμεν, ἀλλὰ κύνεσσιν, and `So he spoke threatening, but no dogs were busy with Hector, but the daughter of Zeus, Aphrodite, kept dogs from him by day and by night alike, and with oil she anointed him, rose-sweet, ambrosial, so that Achilles might not tear him as he dragged him. And over him Apollo drew a dark cloud from heaven to the plain, and covered the entire place on which the deadman lay, lest before time the might of the sun should shrivel his flesh around his sinews and limbs` (Murray 1999), Ὡς φάτ' ἀπειλήσας· τὸν δ' οὐ κύνες ἀμφεπένοντο, /ἀλλὰ κύνες μὲν ἄλαλκε Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἀφροδίτη /ἤματα καὶ νύκτας, ῥοδόεντι δὲ χρῖεν ἐλαίῳ/ ἀμβροσίῳ, ἵνα μὴ μιν ἀποδρῦφοι ἐλκυστάζων./τῷ δ' ἐπὶ κυάνεον νέφος ἤγαγε Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων /οὐρανόθεν πεδίον δέ, κάλυψε δὲ χῶρον ἅπαντα/ ὅσσον ἐπείχε νέκυς, μὴ πρὶν μένος ἡελίοιο /σκήλει' ἀμφὶ περὶ χροῖα ἵνεσιν ἢ δὲ μέλεσσιν.

<sup>23</sup> Richardson (1993, 282) points out that the scholia `bT record that this verse was athetized on the ground that Apollo could not describe Achilles as ἀγαθός after he had called him ὀλοός, and then they give the alternative explanation that the word means “brave” here`.

enduring heart` τλητὸν [...] θυμὸν received from the Fates (24.49) and at the same time the senseless clay /κωφὴν γὰρ δὴ γαῖαν ἀεικίζει μενεαίνων (54).<sup>24</sup>

That no *threnos* is performed in the context of Patroclus' funeral appears particularly significant. It seems that when the executor of the funeral is not in the deceased's and, above all, in the gods' complete graces, this ritual act cannot be involved in the ritual.<sup>25</sup> We have already mentioned the passages in tragedy where the *goos* is performed to accompany the last journey through the Acheron (A. *Th.* 854ff., *Ch.* 315-322) and to help Charon's rowing with its rhythm. How could the *goos* reach the deceased and the gods' ears if the person performing it is not seriously interested in their will but only in his own feelings? A similar situation appears in A. *Ag.* 1541-50, where being impious and guilty cannot accompany the singing of a *threnos*: genuine sorrow and not only a dignified form as Fraenkel says (1974, 733) would be the requirement to benefit the memory of a great king ('Who will bury him? Who will sing (*thrênêsôn*) his lament? Will you dare to do it – after slaying your own husband, to wail for him and to perform, without right, a favour that will be no favour to his soul, in return for his great deeds? Who that utters praises over the tomb of a godlike man, accompanied by tears, will do that task with sincerity of heart? ` τίς ὁ θάψων νιν; τίς ὁ θρηνήσων;/ ἢ σὺ τόδ' ἔρξαι τλήσῃ, κτείνασ' / ἄνδρα τὸν αὐτῆς ἀποκωκῦσαι/ ψυχῇ τ' ἄχαριν χάριν ἀντ' ἔργων / μεγάλων ἀδίκως ἐπικρᾶναι;/ τίς δ' ἐπιτύμβιον αἶνον ἐπ' ἀνδρὶ θείῳ / σὺν δακρύοις ἰάπτων/ ἀληθείαι φρενῶν πονήσει;). The authenticity of feelings as requisite to perform a ritual song is a theme expressed also in A. *Th.* 873-74 when the chorus say 'I weep, I groan, and there is no deceit about it– I am raising my voice sincerely from the heart', κλαίω στένομαι, καὶ δόλος οὐδεὶς/ ἢ 'κ φρενὸς ὀρθῶς με λιγαίνειν. In A. *Ch.* 335-9 it is the tomb itself that has welcomed those who are suppliants and exiles alike (Electra and Orestes) singing a *threnos*, δίπαις τοί σ' ἐπιτύμβιος / θρῆνος ἀναστενάζει. /τάφος δ' ἰκέτας δέδε/κται φυγάδας θ' ὁμοίως. Their lament is accepted by the tomb/altar (Garvie 1986, 134) not because it follows formal rules that Clytemnestra does not apply but

<sup>24</sup> Again Richardson (*idem*, 282) notes that τλητὸν occurs only in this passage in Homer, and nowhere else in the active sense of 'enduring', but such verbal adjectives can be either active or passive. 'As Apollo is protesting at the gods' failure to intervene it would have been less appropriate for him to ascribe endurance to the gods' favour'.

<sup>25</sup> We will resume this concept in chapter 5. Apropos of this subject it is worth mentioning Barker (2007).

because their sorrow is sincere. The *threnos* cannot be sung without ἀληθείαι φρενῶν or with carelessness to the gods: this is probably the reason why there is no mention of it (the *threnos*) in Patroclus' funeral.<sup>26</sup> Similarly to Helen's unmusical lament in E. *Hel.* 167-79, that we will mention in chapter five, Achilles' *goos* contains elements that Euripides would codify as dysphemic. This characteristic of the *goos* is not new if we remember what we said in chapters 1 and 2 (and also 3 considering that the *oimoge* is part of the *goos*), but what needs to be highlighted here is the fact that this dysphemia has the side-effect of never being supported by music.

The *threnos* seems to be the effect of some gods' presence and benevolence – and it is in fact embodied by the Muses' singing during Achilles' funeral. Cases such as the funerals for Eteocles and Polynices in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* or Euripides' *Alcestis* show that the presence of music keeps pace with the contentment of the gods and the ἀληθείαι φρενῶν of the mourners. In the former case (*Th.* 863) the chain of revenge has come to an end, the paean to the Erinyes is sung and a *threnos* is performed. In the second case Alcestis is virtuous and willing to accept her death, the chorus do not forget to give their tribute to the gods in 217-22, and they mention articulated music in 443-54, no matter whether it is sung 'to the seven-stringed tortoiseshell or in hymns without the lyre'. Ritual music is therefore inserted by the poets in scenes of funerals only when there is no trace of offence to the gods. On the contrary, it does not appear when there are elements of 'disorder', such as Achilles' desire for revenge.

Hence Homeric *threnos* is only compatible with what is euphemic. What does this imply? It probably means that the *threnos* complies with what the Greeks believe in – be it gods, human destiny after death or both – and does not display anything that might challenge their social and religious system. The fact of being euphemic would probably guarantee the soul of the deceased permission to undertake his last journey through the Acheron, like Alcestis and Eteocles and Polyneices. It remains to decide

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<sup>26</sup> This example applies to what Austin says (1962, 39-41): a performative speech would not be successful if it does not comply with the six rules which have been already mentioned (28, 1) and in this particular case with sincerity. Stehle (2004, 130) identifies three elements in what she calls 'euphemic prayer': 'words that suggest a well-disposed deity, a pious community, and a favourable outcome'.

whether the *threnos* delivers contents of any kind or it mainly provides the euphemic *goos* with musical shape. In the latter case the *goos* would provide the contents of the prayer and destroy the barriers between human beings and supernatural entities. Music would testify for the *aletheia phenon*, the sincerity of heart, and would help the soul of the deceased in his journey.<sup>27</sup>

In the ancient Greek world music is present in funerals only occasionally and we have tried to explain this phenomenon by linking facts that are not traditionally considered related: a) music, b) authenticity of feelings of the mourners, c) euphemia. The truth of heart would have the effect of being euphemic and this would create the perfect context for music, the art of the Muses. Speculative though it might be, the combination of these elements could guarantee the soul of the dead a safe journey in Hades.

## THE OVERLAP

### The dysphemic *threnos*

Instead of becoming separate entities the *threnos* and the *goos* appear very often as synonymous in tragedy.<sup>28</sup> Such overlap is visible in two more aspects: the *threnos* starts being perceived as an utterance provided with supernatural power and the *goos* as a more harmonious type of lament.

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<sup>27</sup> This link between music and the souls of the deceased seems almost forgotten, at least in its meaning, in western society but ethnomusicology can provide us with enlightening examples of such a combination. Among the Hmong, an ethnic group in the mountainous regions of southern China, music has a key role in funeral ceremony. The free-reed mouth organ, or *qeej* – an instrument that in principle is very similar to the Greek *aulos* – ‘instructs the soul of the deceased about death and the journey to the ancestral world. In between its didactic duties, it entertains both the living participants and an invisible audience made up of the deceased, the spirits and the ancestors, all of whom are said to enjoy its music very much’ (Tapp 2004, 125). Morrison (1998, 3) points out that ‘For the Hmong, the indisputable difference between their instrument and those of other ethnic groups is that the Hmong *qeej* “speaks.” To the Hmong, the *qeej* is not an instrument designed to produce music; it is a bamboo voice that intones a highly stylized and ritualistic language. Thus “music” and “speech” are inseparable. The *qeej* is an instrument that communicates with the spirit world’. Nonetheless if we go back to societies geographically and chronologically closer to the Greeks we can see that Egyptians used to have music in combination with spells during the funerals in order to help the soul of the deceased through his journey in the underworld (Wilson 1901, 183).

<sup>28</sup> The *threnos* in *A. Ag.* 1076 and 1322 is called *goos* at 1080 and 1445, in *Ch.* 336 and 342 it is a *goos* at 321, 330 and 449, in *Pers.* 686 it is a *goos* at 687, the *boan mariandinou threneteros* 936 is described as a *goos* at 946, in *Th.* 863 the *threnos* is a *goos* at 852, 917, 965, 968, in *S. OC* 1751 and 1778 it is again a *goos* at 1668, in *El.* 88, 94, 104 it is linked to the *goos* at 104, and in *El.* 232, 255, 530 it is called *goos* at 244 291 353 375 379, in *E. Med.* 1211 and

As for the *threnos* we can find several examples proving a change of meaning from ritual expression of sorrow to a chant with mantic/magic meanings. At times this type of lament is linked with prophecy. The *threnos* mentioned in A. Ag. 991 becomes at 979 an unbidden and unpaid song ἀκέλευστος ἄμισθος ἀοιδά whose mantic value is shown clearly by the verb 'to prophecy' (LSJ) μαντιπολεῖ.<sup>29</sup> The *threnos* in Ag. 1322 is preceded by verses that Sommerstein renders in this way: 'I am not shying away out of empty terror, as a bird does from a bush. Bear me witness of this after my death, when a woman dies in return for me, a woman, and a man falls in return for a man who had an evil wife. As one about to die, I claim this as my guest-right' (1317-19), οὔτοι δυσοίζω θάμνον ὥς ὄρνις φόβῳ/ἄλλως: θανούση μαρτυρεῖτέ μοι τόδε,/ ὅταν γυνή γυναικὸς ἀντ' ἐμοῦ θάνῃ,/ἀνήρ τε δυσδάμαρτος ἀντ' ἀνδρὸς πέσῃ./ἐπιξενούμαι ταῦτα δ' ὥς θανουμένη, and he mentions Hesychius' explanation of the verb δυσοίζω, 'ne significationem quidem lamentandi habet sed potius mala ominandi' (Fraenkel 1961, 610). Through these words, Cassandra alludes to legal proceedings (Fraenkel 1961, 615), providing testimony that the punishment will happen according to some divine justice.<sup>30</sup> 'The punishment is the expression of the fact that a trial has taken place and has issued in a verdict' (*idem*, 615), a trial that may have taken place in the realm of the gods. After the explicit reference to the *threnos* at 1322 Cassandra addresses her prayer to Helios, ἡλίῳ δ' ἐπέυχομαι/ πρὸς ὕστατον φῶς, asking that her enemies may pay to her avengers the penalty for her murder, †τοῖς ἐμοῖς τιμαόροις ἐχθροῖς φονεῦσι τοῖς ἐμοῖς τίνειν ὁμοῦ† δούλης θανούσης, εὐμαροῦς χειρώματος (1323-25). Prophecy is therefore mixed to vengeance, themes that in Homeric poems would not belong to the *threnos* but rather to the performance of the *goos*. However, these are not isolated examples, as the *threnos* starts as early as in Aeschylean times being paired with other mantic

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*Andr.* 92 they are mentioned together, in *Supp.* 88 the *threnos* is related to the *goos* at 71, 79, 87, in *Hec.* 298 to the *goos* at 297, in *Hel.* 166 *threnoi* are close to the *goos* at 165, and as *threnemata* at 173-4 seem to correspond to the *gooi* at 169, the *threnamata* in E. *El.* 215 refer to the *goos* at 125, 141, 144, in *Ph.* the action of *threnein* at 1303 is associated at the *goos* 1309, in Fr. (Nauck) 773 26 and Fr. 12 (Page) 92-98 the *threnos* is related to the *goos*.

<sup>29</sup> Fraenkel (1961, 444) points out that the verb is present only here, while the word *mantipólos* (first found in E. *Hec.* 121) was probably formed after the pattern of *oiótopólos*, *oneiopólos* (both Homeric) and the like. This pattern shows that the nature of the song is altogether supernatural since it gives words and music to a message coming from a god/demon. As for the spontaneity of this song, the scholar notes also that it is different from the song which is sung at meal-times or on some festal occasion. A professional singer sings neither unbidden nor unrewarded.

<sup>30</sup> 'Orestes assures himself of witnesses for the future proceedings in court.

practices such as *psychagogia* (*Pers.* 686-87).<sup>31</sup> We also do not lack for references showing that the act of *threnoin* happened in concomitance with the presence of demons (or *vice versa*): in *A. Pers.* 939 the lament of the Μαριανδυνού θρηνητήρος anticipates the verses where Xerxes reveals the presence *there* of a *daimon*, δαίμων γὰρ ὅδ' αἶ / μετάρπος ἐπ' ἐμοί;<sup>32</sup> in *E. Med.* 1211 the *goos* and the *threnos* are both mentioned in reference to Creon's *oimoge* (1207-10) where he addresses an evil *daimon*;<sup>33</sup> in *Med.* 1409 Jason's *threnos* consists in a prayer – ἐπιθεάζω means 'to invoke the gods against someone' – to have a *daimon* as witness of the evil suffered from Medea;<sup>34</sup> Helen's and the chorus' performance in *E. Hel.* 167-251 is defined a *threnos* and a *goos* and shows that 'the Chorus see H.'s life ruled by a power (δαίμων; '...') and an apportioned lot (μοίρας) that are equally full of sorrow πολυστόνου (211-12)' (Allan 2008, 175).<sup>35</sup> At times the *threnos* is mentioned in relation to oneiromancy: in *E. IT* 144 Iphigenia indicates that one night she dreamed of her brother's death;<sup>36</sup> thence the chorus sing a song that remembers the afflictions against the house of Tantalus and attribute Orestes' presumed death to an ill δαίμων (199-202) that later Iphigenia would identify as Moirai (207).<sup>37</sup> Revenge appears often in concomitance with the *threnos*: the *threnemata* at *E. El.* 215 refer to the already seen performance at 112-214 where Electra is clearly addressing her father's soul in order to send Orestes to take revenge on

<sup>31</sup> ὅμεις δὲ θρηνηῖτ' ἐγγὺς ἐστῶτες τάφου/ καὶ ψυχαγωγοῖς ὀρθιάζοντες γόοις/ οἰκτρῶς καλεῖσθ' ὅ

<sup>32</sup> 'The Mariandyni, a tribe that lived in the northern part of Bithynia, near the Euxine, were noted for their dirges, esp. in connection with the mourning for a youth called Bormos or Mariandynos' (Broadhead 1960, 228)

<sup>33</sup> "Ω" δὴ στήναι παῖ, τίς εἴς' ὧδ' ἀτίμως δαίμονων ἀπώλεσεν; τίς τὸν γέροντα τύμβον ὀρφανὸν σέθεν/τίθησιν; οἶμοι, συνθάνοιμί σοι, τέκνον. 'O unhappy child, which of the gods has destroyed you so shamefully and has bereft me of you, me, an old man at death's door? Oh, may I die with you, my child!' (Kovacs 1994)

<sup>34</sup> calling the heavenly powers μαρτυρόμενος δαίμονας ὥς μοι / τέκνα κτείνας' ἀποκωλύεις / ψαῦσαι τε χερσὶν θάψαι τε νεκρούς 'to witness that you killed my sons and now forbid me to touch them or to bury their bodies'. This prayer is then followed by an *oimoge* οὐς μήποτ' ἐγὼ φύσας ὄφελον / πρὸς σοῦ φθιμένους ἐπιδέσθαι 'Oh that I had never begotten them, never seen them dead at your hands!' (1413-14) (*idem*).

<sup>35</sup> αἰαῖ αἰαῖ/ὦ δαίμονος πολυστόνου/μοίρας τε σᾶς, γύναι.

<sup>36</sup> ἰὼ δμωαί, /δυσθρηνητοῖς ὡς θρήνοις/ἐγκεῖμαι, τᾶς οὐκ εὐμούσου/μολπᾶς [βοᾶν] ἀλύροις ἐλέγους, αἰαῖ, αἰαῖ, κηδείοις οἴκτοισιν:/αἶ μοι συμβαίνουσ' ἄται./σύγγονον ἄ ὃν κατακλαιο ἐνα/ζῶᾶς, οἶαν <οἶαν> ἰδόμαν/ὄψιν ὀνείρων/νυκτός, τᾶς ἐξῆλθ' ὄρφνα. 'O servants, in what painful lamentations am I enmeshed, in elegies that no lyre accompanies and the muses do not love, alas, amid the keening of grief! It is disaster, disaster that has come upon me, and I mourn for my brother: such is the dream vision I saw in the night whose darkness has just departed!' (Kovacs 1999).

<sup>37</sup> Kyriakou (2006, 98-99) points out that the *daimon* 'is not so much Iphigenia's personal fate as the collective fortune of the Tantalids. This is virtually identical with the curse which, though never mentioned explicitly in this play, plagues and ultimately brings low each generation of the Pelopid family' cf. Platnauer (1960, 78) 'the nemesis springing '... from the misdeeds of Pelops and others of the family still haunts the house of their descendants'.



Clytemnestra and Aegisthus; Clytemnestra's *threnos* at 1176 does not sound less threatening (1177-1179), Ἀπώλεσέν σ', ὃ τέκνον, ὁ φυτεύσας πατήρ, / αὐτὸς κτανὼν, οὐκ ἄλλος οὐδ' ἄλλη χερί, / †τοιόνδε μισθὸν καταλιπὼν πρὸς τοὺς δόμους†. The theme of revenge and therefore of a divine justice in connection with the *threnos* explains the presence of invocations to gods such as the Erinyes or to chthonic divinities such as Hermes, Thanatos, Hades and Persephone, e.g. in S. *Aj.* 852 the *threnos* refers to the invocations to the Erinyes (835-844),<sup>38</sup> Hermes (831-34),<sup>39</sup> and Thanatos (854-55)<sup>40</sup>; in S. *El.* 104 it refers to the invocation to Hades, Persephones, Hermes, Ara and the Erinyes (110-120).<sup>41</sup> It is also worth remembering that Sappho in *Fr.* 150 LP states the incompatibility of the *threnos* with the Muses, which is in neat contrast with the passage in the *Odyssey*. This contradiction might show a change of meaning of the word itself and imply that *threnos* could have incorporated elements of the *goos*.<sup>42</sup> All these passages show how the *threnos*, after being a ritual lament to be sung at a tomb, encompassed features that originally belonged to the *goos* and started being aischronologic or even dysphemetic.

<sup>38</sup> καλῶ δ' ἄρωγους τὰς αἰεὶ τε παρθένους/αἰεὶ θ' ὀρώσας πάντα τὰν βροτοῖς πάθη./σεμνάς Ἐρινύς τανύποδας, μαθεῖν ἐπ' ἑπρὸς τῶν Ἀτρεϊδῶν ὡς διόλλυμαι τάλας,/καὶ σφας κακοὺς κάκιστα καὶ πανωλέθρους/ ξυναρπάσειαν, ὥσπερ εἰσορώς' ἐπ' αὐτοσφαγῇ πίπτοντα, τὼς αὐτοσφαγεῖς/πρὸς τῶν φιλίστων ἐκγόνων ὀλοίατο.]/ἴτ', ὃ ταχεῖαι ποίνιμοί τ' Ἐρινύες,/γεύεσθε, ἢ φείδεσθε πανδήμου στρατοῦ 'And I call for help upon those who are ever maidens and see ever all the sufferings of mortals, the dread Erinyes with long stride, so that they witness my destruction at the hands of the sons of Atreus. [And may they snatch them up, with evil that befits their evil, and utterly destroy them, as they see me fall by own hand, through their most beloved offspring]. Come, Erinyes, swift o punish, take our fill, do not spare the host entire!' (Lloyd-Jones 1994)

<sup>39</sup> τοσαῦτά ζ', ὃ Ζεῦ, προστρέπω, καλῶ δ' ἄμα/πομπᾶν Ἑρμῆν χθόνιον εἴ με κοιμίσαι,/ξὺν ἀσφαδάστῳ καὶ ταχεῖ πηδήματι/πλευρὰν διαρρήξαντα τῷδε φασγάνῳ. 'So much, O zeus, I ask for you, and at the same time I call on Hermes who escorts men below the earth to lull me fast to sleep, without writing, with one rapid bound, when I have pierced my side with this sword' (*idem*).

<sup>40</sup> ὦ Θάνατε Θάνατε, νῦν ἐπίσκεψαι μολῶν./καίτοι σὲ ἐν κάκει προσαιδήσω ζυνών. Death, death, come now and look upon me! But to you I shall speak when I am with you!' (*idem*).

<sup>41</sup> ὦ δῶ Ἀΐδου καὶ Περσεφόνης,/ὦ χθόνι Ἑρμῇ καὶ πότνι Ἀρὰ/σεμναί τε θεῶν παῖδες Ἐρινύες,/αἱ τοὺς ἀδίκως θνήσκοντας ὀρᾷθ',/αἱ τοὺς εὐνάς ὑποκλεπτομένους,/ἔλθετ', ἀρήξατε, τίσασθε πατρὸς/φόνον ἡμετέρου,/καὶ μοι τὸν/ἐὼν πέμψατ' ἀδελφόν:/μούνῃ γὰρ ἄγειν οὐκέτι σωκῶ/λύπης ἀντίρροπον ἄχθος 'O house of Hades and Persephone, O Hermes of the underworld and powerful Curse, and Erinyes, revered children of the gods who look upon those wrongfully done to hearth, who look upon those who dishonour the marriage bed in secret, come, bring help, avenge the murder of our father, and send to me my brother! For I have no longer strength to bear alone the burden of grief that weighs me down' (*idem*).

<sup>42</sup> 'For it is not right that there should be lamentation in the house of those who serve the Muses. That would not be fitting for us' (Campbell 1982). For a detailed analysis of this fragment see also Palmisciano (1998) who seems to suggest the idea of the equation *threnos* = *goos* (187-89).

## The euphemic *goos*

If the *threnos* starts being used with a new connotation in tragedy, the *goos* seems not always to correspond to the performative utterance that we have described in chapter 1 and 2. The first evidence we are going to discuss is that showing the presence in literature of two contrasting *gooi* – or occasionally a *goos* contrasting with another type of lament –: the most interesting reference is certainly A. *Pers.* 540-5 ‘And the Persian wives, indulging in soft wailing (*abrogooi*) through longing to behold their lords and abandoning the daintily wrought coverlets of their couches, the delight of their youth, mourn with complainings that know no end’ (Smyth 1988), αἱ δ’ ἄβρόγοι Περσίδες ἀνδρῶν/ ποθέουσαι ἰδεῖν ἄρτιζυγίαν,/ λέκτρων εὐνὰς ἄβροχίτωνας,/ χλιδανῆς ἥβης τέρψιν, ἀφεῖσαι,/ πενθοῦσι γόοις ἄκορεστοτάτοις. Here the Persians’ brides are described in two different conditions: *potheousai*, desiring to see their grooms, and mourning –*penthousei*– after leaving their nuptial bed because of their husbands’ death. Broadhead (1960, 145) recognizes two separate moments ‘*Then*, in their longing for their absent lords they flooded the couches with tears; *now*, in their hopeless yearning for those they know will never return, they abandon the couches – a pathetic touch – and give themselves up to transports of grief’. The condition of hope (and desire, *pothos*) is associated with the *habrogooi* while desperation is expressed by insatiable laments, *gooi akorestotatoi*.<sup>43</sup>

The presence of two types of *gooi* is also proved by the presence of two distinct groups of adjectives (and verbs) showing that the *goos* can be a musical song or an aggressive and unmusical utterance. Let us see what the musical attributes are. 1) The swan-like *goos* that Clytemnestra attributes to Cassandra is associated with the verb μελεῖν at the already quoted verse Ag. 1445 and the chorus uses

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<sup>43</sup> Hall (1997, 147) notes that ‘Insatiability and abandoned emotionalism are two of the hallmarks of the barbarian psyche as constructed in this play’. We should add the reference to two different type of song in E. *Alc.* 445-7 where a music played by the *heptatonos chelys* is in contrast with *alyroi hymnoi*. As for the meaning of *ailinos*, see ch. 5. Also in the already quoted S. *Aj.* 630 the *goos* of the nightingale is in contrast with the *ailinos* and the *oxutonous odas*.

the verbs 'to strike up a strain, chant' (LSJ), μελοτυπεῖς (1153);<sup>44</sup> the *gooi* are considered like αἰοιδᾶς in S. *Ant.* 883, and in E. *Her.* 109-10 the chorus call themselves αἰοιδῶς of *gooi*. 2) On the other hand the frenzied *goos* is even better represented and this probably depends on the fact that the magical/aggressive nature of the *goos* becomes very common in tragedy: the birds' prayers to the deities in order to ask for revenge is an οἰωνόθορον / γόον ὀξυβόαν in *Ag.* 56-7, the *gooi psychagogoi* that the old men perform ὀρθιάζοντες (687) in *Persians* are δύσθορα βήγματα at 636, Xerxes asks the chorus to lift up, ἐπορθιάζε, their voice at 1050 and to sing also with a δύσθορον αὐδάν as a *daimon* has turning round upon him at 942 and the chorus indeed utter δυσθρόις γόοις at 1077, in S. *Ant.* the *gooi* uttered by Antigone at 427 are described as an ὀξὺν φθόγγον a few lines before (423), and in E. *Hel.* 185-90 the γοερὸν *nomon* is an ἄλυρον ἔλεγον – which does not refer to the lack of musical instruments but is equated with lack of joy (Allan 2008, 173) – and its aggressive nature is revealed by the verbs ἰεῖσα and 'shout aloud' ἀναβοᾷ,<sup>45</sup> the unmusical *goos* is often related to madness: in *Th.* 967 the *gooi* are related to the verb μαίνεται, and Electra's *goos* which is linked to the act of ἀλύειν (135) is ὀξυτόνων in S. *El.* 243; in the same type of passages we should identify also the references to a bacchic frenzy such as the ἀχὰν γόων in E. *Med.* 204 – which is associated with an ill-sounding λιγυρὰ voice – and the *goos* coming ἐξ ἀλάστορος which is a νόμον βακχεῖον in E. *Hec.* 684-7.

Another relevant aspect for our analysis is the nightingale, which is used as marker of music on one hand and reveals also that the lament was simply expression of sorrow and not a bringer of aischrologic or dysphemic meanings. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Cassandra's *goos* is linked to the nightingale's lament, but the comparison itself seems to point out the differences between the two utterances and therefore the features of the bird's singing. As already said previously while speaking of the musical terminology in relation with the *goos*, Cassandra is described uttering (*throein*) a νόμον

<sup>44</sup> Fraenkel (1962, 529) follows one of Blomfield's rendering μελοτυπεῖς as 'carmina excudo'. For an explanation of the comparison of Cassandra with the swan see also Fraenkel (1962, 684).

<sup>45</sup> In A. *Ag.* 990-1 the *threnos* is a prophetic song and is called ἄνευ λύρας '...' θρῆνον Ἐρινύος. The hymn of the Erynues is normally described as unaccompanied by musical instruments -see also A. *Eum.* 330 and E. *Ph.* 1028 - and ill-sounding *Th.* 868

ἄνομον at the verses 1141-2 and μελοτυπεῖν imminent disasters with ὀρθίοις νόμοις (1153) and the chorus compare her to the nightingale 1142-5.<sup>46</sup> However, Cassandra immediately wants to point out that her destiny is different from that of the nightingale: if the bird has received a pleasant life with no cause to grieve γλυκύν τ' αἰῶνα κλαυμάτων ἄτερ (1148), she is destined to be killed by a double-edged weapon ἀμφήκει δορί (1149). Does it mean that also their laments are different? Some scholars explain this contrast by saying that Cassandra, in speaking of the nightingale, brings forward an interpretation of the story completely different from the known-one, according to which the bird would not lament and mourn at all (Thomson 1966, 91-92).<sup>47</sup> However we prefer Fraenkel's interpretation of the passage as he points out that 'the life of the little songstress, blessed by the Muses, is full of mourning. Mourning, it is true, but is nevertheless a γλυκὺς αἰὼν; she does not utter cries of pain since she was mercifully rescued at the last moment from the most terrible fate, death by the sharp blade' (Fraenkel 1962, ii.526). The text seems to suggest so. Whereas Cassandra is described as prophesying, θεσπιωιδῆσιν (1161), and getting the direction of a path of prophecy, θεσπεσίας ὁδοῦ (1154), – as the swan traditionally does before dying–<sup>48</sup> the bird in the bush at 1316 is lamenting ἄλλως, pointlessly, and for fear, φόβῳ.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> φρενομανής τις εἴ θεοφόρητος, ἃ /φί δ' αὐτᾶς θροεῖς/νόμον ἄνομον, οἷά τις ξουθᾶ/ἀκόρετος βοᾷς, φεῦ, ταλαίνας φρεσίν/Ἴτυν Ἴτυν στένους' ἀμφιθαλῇ κακοῖς/ἀηδὼν βίον 'you are out of your mind, divinely possessed, you cry forth about yourself a song that is not a song, like a vibrant-throated bird wailing insatiably, alas, with a heart fond of grieving, the nightingale lamenting "Itys, Itys!" for a death in which both parents did evil' (Sommerstein 2008).

<sup>47</sup> Thomson says that it seems clear 'that these birds were the subject of two contrary traditions. The Chorus has likened Cassandra to the unhappy nightingale, mourning for Itys; and the comparison is apt, because both are servants of Apollo. And Cassandra, rejecting the comparison, recalls the alternative tradition: the Gods gave the nightingale a sweet life without lamentation, while she is confronted with a violent death'.

<sup>48</sup> It is worth remembering Fraenkel's interpretation of the word as ἀλλ' ὥς instead of ἄλλως. The conjunctions would certainly change the meaning of the sentence but do not lower the meaning of the contrast between the nightingale's singing and Cassandra's utterance. Besides, we should compare Cassandra to Plato's swan at Pl. *Phd* 85 a-b: 'But men, because of their own fear of death, misrepresent the swans and say that they sing for sorrow, in mourning for their own death. They do not consider that no bird sings when it is hungry or cold or has any other trouble; no, not even the nightingale or the swallow or the hoopoe which are said to sing in lamentation. I do not believe they sing for grief, nor do the swans; but since they are Apollo's birds, I believe they have prophetic vision, and because they have foreknowledge of the blessings in the other world they sing and rejoice on that day more than ever before' (Fowler 1966) οἱ δ' ἄνθρωποι διὰ τὸ αὐτῶν δέος τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τῶν κύκνων καταψεύδονται, καὶ φασιν αὐτοὺς θρηνοῦντας τὸν θάνατον ὑπὸ λύπης ἐξῆδεν, καὶ οὐ λογιζονται ὅτι οὐδέν (5) ὄρνεον ἄδει ὅταν πεινῇ ἢ ῥιγῇ ἢ τινα ἄλλην λύπην λυπῇται, οὐδὲ αὐτὴ ἢ τε ἀηδὼν καὶ χελιδὼν καὶ ὁ ἔποψ, ἃ δὴ φασὶ διὰ λύπην θρηνοῦντα ἄδειν. ἀλλ' οὔτε ταῦτά μοι φαίνεται λυπούμενα ἄδειν οὔτε οἱ κύκνοι, ἀλλ' ἄτε οἶμαι τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος ὄντες, μαντικοὶ τέ εἰσι καὶ προειδότες τὰ ἐν Ἄιδου ἀγαθὰ ἄδουσι καὶ τέρπονται ἐκεῖνην τὴν ἡμέραν διαφερόντως ἢ ἐν τῷ ἔμπροσθεν

In *A. Supp.* 62 the chorus liken their lament to Procne's: in this case the lament –which is neither a *goos* nor a *threnos* but a generic οἶκτον – seems similar to the inoffensive *goos*. At 73 the chorus describe it as a lament that has a pleasant side by using the expression γοεδνὰ δ' ἀνθεμίζομαι: they are plucking flowers of *gooi*. No matter how ambiguous the verse looks,<sup>50</sup> Aeschylus with this image creates an immediate association with something serene, pleasant and fresh as it reminds the spectator of spring (an idea that certainly comes from Homer). This reference – and the context itself – might suggest that the lament mentioned here does not contain any dysphemetic meaning. A contrast between two types of lament is present also in *S. Aj.* 628: as soon as Ajax' mother will hear about her son's madness, she will not sing a nightingale-like *goos*, οὐδ' οἰκτρᾶς γόνον ὄρνιθος ἀηδοῦς/ σήσει δύσμορος, but an αἶλινον and ὀξύτόνους μὲν ᾠδὰς / θρηγήσει (Kamerbeek 1963, 131). A clear case where the *goos* is related to feelings and not to sinister intentions is *S. Trach.* 105 where Deianira, compared to a mournful bird, οἷά τιν' ἄθλιον ὄρνιν, is depicted ποθουμένα, longing.<sup>51</sup> Besides, the chorus' *stonache* at 963 does not present any relationship with mantic meanings but is only an expression of sorrow and sympathy. Euripides confirms *in toto* our idea: in *E. Hec.* 336-8 Hecuba asks Polyxena to use all the notes that a nightingale is able to sing in order to stay alive, σὺ δ', εἴ τι μείζω δύναμιν ἢ μήτηρ ἔχεις,/ σπούδαζε πάσας ὥστ' ἀηδόνος στόμα/ φθογγὰς ἰεῖσα, μὴ στερηθῆναι βίου.<sup>52</sup> This prayer is therefore nothing more than an entreaty whose variety of expedients to convince Odysseus is compared to the nightingale's assortment of

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χρόνω. (J.Bournet, 1900); Cassandra has in common with the bird the fact of being consecrated to Apollo and therefore her performance does not come from grief but from the *manteia*.

<sup>49</sup> D.L.Page reports 1316 φόβωι but even in this case the contrast between the two types of lament is evident. The nightingale therefore represents in itself a moment of separation between two different attitudes to the death: the legend of Procne killing her son for revenge is the representation through the myth of a violent behaviour in relation to grief and death; its melodious singing on the other hand symbolizes a detachment from what is dangerous for the soul. From this point on the nightingale has been represented mostly in this second way, which means that this second feature of the bird has prevailed over the first one. However, a memory of the original magical side of the nightingale seems to be preserved in medical practices: its flesh was eaten as a magical cure for sleeplessness (Ael. 1, 43). '[...] reverse magic was in operation since the nightingale was a wakeful bird' (Pollard 1977, 133).

<sup>50</sup> For recent comments see Sandin (2005, 86), Whittle (1980, 70).

<sup>51</sup> Davies (1991, 82) notes that 'the epithet suggests that this bird is the nightingale'. The verb *potheō* verb seems to us quite significant especially if compared with all the words related to the mania that mark the other type of lament.

<sup>52</sup> See Collard (1991, 148) 'the simile's point is the hoped effectiveness of varied tones such as the nightingale famously possesses or its melancholy'.

sounds. E. *Hel.* 1107-16,<sup>53</sup> and Ar. *Av.* 210-20,<sup>54</sup> 658-60,<sup>55</sup> 1380-81 λιγύφθογγος ἀηδών, one inspired by the other (Dover 1972, 148-9; Dunbar 2004, 205; Allan 2008, 272), reveal that the nightingale, beside being musically characterized, is related to expressions of pure pity and grief.

From these passages we can infer that tragedy uses the *goos* in two different ways, whose musical characteristics depend on (or at least are somehow related with) the intention behind the performance itself: on the one hand there might be a *goos* aimed at expressing grief and sympathy, which was mellifluous and harmonious to hear, and therefore associated with the singing of the nightingale; on the other hand there is an aggressive type of *goos*, the one that we described in the previous chapter, whose harsh and shrill-toned sound might depend on the intention of the mourner of harming or at least calling on some supernatural power.

Are these passages reliable to evaluate if these types of *gooi* indicate real rituals? We have already said in the second chapter that the *goos* is introduced in tragedy as a dysphemic element when referring to practices such as prophecy, request for revenge or accompanying the journey of the dead to Hades. This means that they are considered as anti-ritual, a violation of ritual. The presence of a *goos* expressing feelings and associated with the singing of the nightingale can be explained as the poets'

<sup>53</sup> σὲ τὰν ἐναύλοισ ὑπὸ δεινροκόμοις/μουσεῖα καὶ θάκουσ ἐνί/ζουσας ἀναβοάσω,/σὲ τὰν αἰδοτάταν ὄρνιθα μελωδὸν/ ἀηδόνα δακρυόεσσαν,/ἔλθ' ὃ διὰ ξουθᾶν/γενύων ἐλελιζομένα/θρήνων ἐμοὶ ξυνεργός,/ Ἑλένας μελέας πόνους/τὸν Ἰλιάδων τ' ἀειδούσῃ δακρυόεντα πότμον/ Ἀχαιῶν ὑπὸ λόγχαις `You that in your steading among the leaves keep your house of song, I call aloud to you, most gifted in music, bird of song, nightingale of tears: come, you that through tawny throat trill your lay of woe, share in my lamentation as I sing of Helen's grievous troubles and the sorrowful fate of the daughters of Troy at the hands of Greek spearmen' (Kovacs 2002)

<sup>54</sup> Ἄγε σύννομέ μοι, παῦσαι μὲν ὕπνου, /λῦσον δὲ νόμους ἱερῶν ὕ νων, /οὓς διὰ θείου στόματος θρηγεῖς/τὸν ἐ ὄν καὶ σὸν πολὺδακρυν Ἴτυν, /ἐλελιζομένη διεροῖς μέλεσιν/γένυος ξουθῆς. Καθαρὰ χωρεῖ /διὰ φυλλοκόμου μίλακος ἡχώ/ πρὸς Διὸς ἔδρας, ἵν' ὁ χρυσοκόμας/Φοῖβος ἀκούων τοῖς σοῖς ἐλέγοις/ἀντιπνάλλων ἐλεφαντόδετον /φόρμιγγα θεῶν ἴστησι χορούς:/διὰ δ' ἀθανάτων στομάτων χωρεῖ /ξύμφωνος ὁμοῦ /θεία μακάρων ὀλολυγὴ `Come my songmate, leave your sleep, and loosen the strains of sacred songs, that from your divine lips bewail deeply mourned Itys, your child and mine, trilling forth fluid melodies from your vibrant throat. Pure the sound that ascends through green-tressed bryony to Zeus' abode, where gold-tressed Phoebus listens to your songs of grief and, strumming in response his ivory lyre, stirs the gods to their dance; and from deathless lips arises in harmonious accord the divine refrain of the Blest' (Henderson 2000)

<sup>55</sup> Τοῦτους μὲν ἄγων μετὰ σαιτοῦ/ ἀρίστισον εὔ· τὴν δ' ἡδυμελῆ ξύμφωνον ἀηδόνα Μοῦσαις/ κατάλειψ' ἢ ἴν δειρ' ἐκβίβασας, ἵνα παίσωμεν μετ' ἐκείνης `Do take these men with you and give them a good lunch; but that mellifluous nightingale, singer in the Muses' choir, bring her out here and leave her with us; we'd like to play with her' (*idem*).

intention to promote an euphemic *goos* which does not present, in their opinion, elements of pollution and archaic musical styles.

## FROM LOW TO HIGH DEGREE OF PERFECTION

At this point of our reconstruction the traditional division between the musical *threnos* and the non-musical *goos* seems to have been replaced by an alternative scenario: interferences between *threnos* and *goos* from Odyssey on– and more clearly from post-Homeric poems – show that the traditional separation does not fit anymore and we should rather identify three types of lament. The first one (called *threnos*) is the song uttered by the tomb, is musical and correspond to a genuine tribute to the deceased. A second one (which is indifferently called *goos* and *threnos*) seems to be related to an aggressive utterance connected with a ‘mania’ and often related to magical elements especially in tragedy: this type would be characterized by the use of an ill-sounding voice and the absence of musical instruments. The latter one (that we can identify as an euphemic *goos*) is rather a melodic and musically elaborated expression, probably sung with a lower volume of the voice and aimed at expressing feelings. However it is essential to our investigation to see in detail in what music consists within these different stages, whether music is parallel to, or maybe a marker of, deeper meaning.

Barker’s enlightening work on symbolism of music in Euripides’ *Helen* pioneers a methodology that unveils meanings of music that have never been analyzed (Barker 2007). His analysis will provide the most appropriate foundation for the present section. We need to take into account passages where the *threnos* or the *goos* are explicitly related to some musical instruments and Euripides’ *Helen* seems to offer clear evidence for this link. In 167-78 the Sirens are invoked in order to make Helen’s utterance – the ἄλυρον ἔλεγον (185) – more musical through Λίβυν /λωτὸν ἢ σύριγγας ἢ /φόρμιγγας (171-72) and similarly the chorus at 1106-16 prays to the nightingale, ἐλελιζομένα /θρήνων ἔμοι ξυνεργός (1111-12).

Thanks to Barker's investigation about the subtle relations of these two passages with one another – Helen's *kommos* and the chorus' *stasimon*– and of both with Demeter's hymn at 1301-1368, we can identify different types of lament. One betrays an incautious behavior to the death ('un atteggiamento incauto nei confronti della parola' (Barker 2007, 21) while the other is in agreement with Demeter's mysteries. Musical references would therefore symbolize themes related to death and the underworld. In the light of Barker's analysis our previous investigation's results are more complete. In fact beside the aggressive dysphemic lament and an euphemic one Euripides testifies to the presence of another form of musical ritual related to death, that can be considered as the 'must be' of the lament, the final and perfect stage of the evolution of the lament (Barker 2007, 21). If we follow Euripides' historiography of the lament we can then distinguish three 'levels' or phases – not necessarily in chronological order – of the lament:

1) ἑμοῖς /†γόοις (169), αἰλίνους κακοῖς† (171) θρηνήμα/σι (174), clearly lacking music, ἄλυρον ἔλεγον (185), and of positive purpose but only being addressed against someone – like the Nymph who 'cries out that she is being ravished by Pan' (Kovacs 2002), Πανὸς ἀναβοᾷ γάμους (190);

2) at a higher level we can recognize a) a lament inspired by some god. The Sirens intervene through some instruments, Λίβυν/λωτὸν ἢ σύριγγας ἢ/φόρμιγγας; in this case the Sirens' intercession can guarantee that the lament is appropriate to Persephone, παρ' ἐμέθεν ὑπὸ /μέλαθρα νύχια παιᾶνα /νέκυσιν ὀλομένους λάβηι (176-78); b) the nightingale-voiced lament seems to belong to the same group, although τὰν αἰδοτάταν ὄρνιθα μελωιδὸν (1109b) is not a proper deity: like the one inspired by the Sirens this lament becomes an euphemic utterance and a proper homage to the dead people (1122-36; 1151-60) as the intervention of the bird allows the chorus to sing not only Helen's grievous troubles, Ἑλένας μελέους πόνους (1113), but also 'the sorrowful fate of the daughters of Troy' (*idem*), τὸν Ἰλιάδων τ' [...] δακρυόεντα πότμον/Ἀχαιῶν ὑπὸ λόγχαις (1114- 16), and the sad destiny of many Greeks who 'died by the sword and from great boulders hurled at them' (*idem*), πολλοὶ δ' Ἀχαιῶν δορὶ καὶ πετρίναις /ρίπαῖσιν



ἐκπνεύσαντες Ἄνδραν μέλεον ἔχουσιν (1122-24).<sup>56</sup> These two species share the same purpose but seem to differ from a musical point of view: if the Sirens' lament needs to be accompanied by the *phorminx*, the *libyn loton* or the *syrinx*, the nightingale *goos* is rather to be likened to pure music (Barker 2004, 192).<sup>57</sup>

3) at the third and last level, we should say at the level of perfection, we can place the hymn to Demeter where the goddess's ire for Persephone's loss is softened by the Muses' choirs, Μοῦσαι θ' ὕμνοισι χορῶν (1345), by Cypris' χαλκοῦ δ' αὐδὰν χθονίαν (1346) and τύπανά βυρσοτενῆ (1347) to which she replies βαρύβρομον αὐλὸν /τερφθεῖς': the instruments used here are clearly associated with a different attitude to death as they embody hope, consolation and even joy. Differently from those described in Helen's first *stasimon*, the instruments here are rhythmical and percussive (*tympana*, *crotala*, *kymbala*) and are related to the so-called 'mysteries' 'i riti attraverso i quali gli iniziati riuscivano a placare quei poteri e assicurarsi una vita felice dopo la morte' (Barker 2007, 21).<sup>58</sup> The difference between the second and the third type of lament is the nature of the consolation offered. If the *aedonion nomos* gives the mourners the awareness that death is an inescapable reality – common to everyone –<sup>59</sup> and comforts them with the thought that the dead person's soul is appeased, the mystery song provides the mourner with something more: the certainty that there is a pleasant future in the underworld for those who

<sup>56</sup> We should not forget that they have a divine inspiration in common: if the first comes from the Sirens, the nightingale devotes her suffering to the Muses μονότεκνον Πρόκνης φόνον ἔχω λέξαι/ θυόμενον Μούσαις (E. *HF* 1021-22).

<sup>57</sup> We should also mention Plinius' reference to the nightingale *HN* 10, 29, 43 (81-85) (Barker 2002, 83-104) where the birds' voice is described as 'modulatus'. (Barker 2002, 87, 99).

<sup>58</sup> We can recognize in this distinction the reason why at E. *Or.* 316-20 the Erinyes belong to a θιάσον [...] ἐν δάκρυσιν καὶ γόοις that is ἀβάκχευτον. The *goos* of revenge and anger cannot be related to the Dionysian mysteries.

<sup>59</sup> See also the gnomic sentence is at E. *Or.* 339-44 κατολοφύρομαι κατολοφύρομαι./ἀνὰ δὲ λαῖφος ὧς/τις ἀκάτου θοᾶς τινάξας δαίμων/κατέκλυσεν δεινῶν πόνων ὡς πόντου/λάβροις ὀλεθρίοισιν ἐν κύμασιν. 'I weep, I weep for you. Great good fortune among mortals is not lasting; some god shaking it like the sail of a swift ship, overwhelms it in waves of fearful trouble, deadly and boisterous like those of the main'; (Kovacs 2002). E. *Or.* 976-81 ἰὼ ἰὼ, πανδάκρυτ' ἐραμέρων/ἔθνη πολύπονα, λεύσσειθ', ὡς παρ' ἐλπίδας/μοῖρα βαίνει./ἕτερα δ' ἕτερος ἀμείβεται/πήματ' ἐν χρόνῳ μακρῷ./βροτῶν δ' ὁ πᾶς ἀστάθμητος αἰὼν. 'Ah, ah, you race of mortals, full of tears, trouble-laden, see how fate defeats your expectations! Different woes come by turns to different men over the length of days, and beyond our power to reckon is the whole course of human life.' (*idem*) West (1987, 206) points out that 'the idea that prosperity never lasts does not appear before the 5<sup>th</sup> century' and that 'daimôn is the divine agent responsible for one's fortunes at any given time'.

deserve it. The *aedonion nomos* is the song of separation while the hymn to Demeter is the song of happiness in the underworld.<sup>60</sup>

The distinction of these types of lament in Euripides' *Helen*, where music changes according to the ritual described and the meanings implied, raises the obvious question whether this distinction is confirmed by other plays and authors. Let us see if this is true.

## THE LITERARY *THRENOI*

We should not be surprised to find a further stage in Euripides's evolution of the lament: the mystery lament to be performed in cults devoted to Demeter represents the level of perfection. Differently from the *goos*, the *threnos* survived in literature through the centuries and possibly integrated elements of the third type of lament mentioned by Euripides, on account of the simple fact that this one represented the 'ideal' lament, the one that embodies the highest degree of piousness. Pindar's and Simonides' *threnoi* seem to validate our idea: if from one side Simonides' dirges are famous to be poetic tributes to the deceased, from the other Pindar's *threnoi* resemble mostly the third type of lament, we should say the one performed in mystery cults. In other words they would be the literary examples of these two laments, and keep being called *threnoi*. Let us see them in detail.

The best known dirge from Simonides is certainly the one devoted to the soldiers who fell at Thermopylae (Fr. 26 Page) where the poet speaks of an eternal glory as they were destined for a tomb for an altar, lamentation of remembrance, pity for praise, βωμὸς δ' ὁ τάφος, πρὸ γόων δὲ μνᾶστις, ὁ δ' οἶκτος

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<sup>60</sup> Perhaps there is a link with Dionysus at *Hel.* 1358-1365: ἐγα τοι δύναται νεβρῶν/παμποίκιοι στολίδες/κισσοῦ τε στεφθεῖσα χλόα/νάρθηκας εἰς ἱερούς,/ρόμβου θ' εἰλισσομένα/κύκλιος ἔνοσις αἰθερία,/βακχεύουσά τ' ἔθειρα Βρομίῳ καὶ παννυχίδες θεᾶς. 'Great is the power of the dappled garb of deerskin, the ivy shoots wound about the sanctified hollow reed, the din in the air of the bull-roarer whirled in a circle, the long hair leaping in bacchic joy for Bromius' (*idem*). Allan (2008, 308) comments that the verses 1358-65' assert and enhance the power of the Mother's cult through syncretism with the ecstatic *orgia* of Dionysus. (At *Ba.* 120-34 a similar process of assimilation enables the music of Mother Rhea to be incorporated in the cult of Dionysus: "..."). The passage corresponds (thematically as well as metrically) with 1342-49, where the origins of the goddess's rites and music were described'.

ἔπαινος· (3). Simonides approaches the death mostly in a ‘human’ perspective, as he does not perceives it as a passage to another state but only as a condition that shows the limits of being human.<sup>61</sup> His dirges seem in fact mainly concentrated on the shortness of life : in Fr. 15 (Page) death is an implacable destiny that makes no distinction between good and bad people, ὁ δ’ ἄφυκτος ὁ ὧς ἐπικρέμαται θάνατος·/κείνου γὰρ ἴσον λάχον μέρος οἱ τ’ ἀγαθοὶ /ὅστις τε κακός (4-6), and in Fr. 16 the dirge becomes an occasion to remember the precariousness of happiness, ὠκεῖα γὰρ οὐδὲ τανυπτερύγου μυίας /οὔτως ἅ μετὰστασις, and the inevitability of an end also for great achievements and riches, πάντα γὰρ μίαν ἰκνεῖται δασπλήτα Χάρυβδιν / αἱ μεγάλοι τ’ ἀρεταὶ καὶ ὁ πλοῦτος (Fr. 17). The deities in these dirges seem nothing but inconstant and moody gods θεὸς ὁ πάμμητις (Fr. 21) against which human beings are fragile and powerless, ἀπὴ /μαντον ἄδ’ οὐδέν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς.† (Fr. 21), οὐκ ἔστιν κακὸν /ἀνεπιδόκητον ἀνθρώποις (Fr. 22). Simonides’ *threnoi* correspond therefore to the traditional *epitymboi* laments.

On the contrary Pindar’s surviving *threnoi* show an eschatological perspective: they often refer to Elysium and to the immortality of the soul (*Thr.* 129, 131, 133, 134, 137, Page).<sup>62</sup> Through these dirges Pindar offers consolations to the mourner by describing the progress of the soul through the future ages. After death, everyone receives his own due reward, and the spirits of the just are purified, until they are free from all taint of evil. In this perspective the lament becomes something comparable not only to the homage to the deceased but also to the hymn to Demeter in Helen, at least in its purpose: the *threnos* is

<sup>61</sup> But it is worth mentioning Yatromanolakis (1998, 9) who considers the fragment as a *threnos*, where the person speaking is a woman feeling the longing to see and even touch a dead loved. According to his interpretation, ‘the woman [...]expresses her wish to travel across the sea, and her longing to meet her dead husband, even in the afterlife, which is imagined as a fertile and beautiful island, perhaps the Island of the Blest or Elysium’.

<sup>62</sup> Cannatà Fera notes (1990, 167) that in fr. a the vital functions in the underworld are bettered and the earthly life continues there in ideal conditions. This seems not to be new in Greek view of the underworld but, for Cannatà Fera, it is the first time that ethical canons determin the condition of the souls (168). However this does not mean for the scholar that Pindar was referring to Orphic doctrines. Fr. 131 constitutes an exceptional passage because only Plato would treat systematically the issue of the immortal nature of the soul (Cannatà Fera 1990, 185). Although this conception was already spreading in the fifth century, this *threnos* is the first text asserting the divine origin of the soul, the dualistic conception of the human being and the dream as product of the soul (*idem*, 186). Fr. 133 resembles a fragment from Empedokles (115 DK). Fr. 137 is clearly connected to the Eleusinian mysteries (Cannatà Fera 1990, 204): in fact the comparison with *H.Dem.* 480ff and *S.fr.* 837 Radt would reveal not a literary influence but most importantly the cultural nature of the *makarismos*. The adjective *olbios* is recognized by the scholar as technical term for the Eleusinian mysteries.

consolatory as it offers an alternative to the traditional idea of a shadow-like existence in the underworld . This alternative comes certainly from the new mystic religions and the *threnos* seems to represent poetically and musically religious meanings.<sup>63</sup> The applicability of the concepts expressed – a future of happiness – to the human being in general is shown by the fact that the *threnos* is not addressed personally any more but is rather focused on a common destiny:<sup>64</sup> in *Thr.* 129 Pindar speaks of an indefinite τοῖσι, in *Thr.* 133 we can read an equally generic οἷσι, and in 131 the condition described is extended even to πάντων and to the genitive plural εὐδαιμόνων at 134. However, beyond these new themes we can find elements that sound already familiar. One of them is the presence of musical references such as the musical instruments played by the souls τοὶ δὲ φορμίγγεσσι] τέρποντα[ι (130) or the songs aimed to ‘rest the bodies’ of Linus, Hymenaeus and Ialemus (139).[... .. ][αἰόμεναι· τὸ δὲ κοῖ[...αν] / τ[ρ]εῖς [desunt ca. 15ll.] σώματ’ ἀποφθιμένων· / ἅ ἐν ἀχέταν Λίνον αἴλινον ὕμνει, / ἅ δ’ Ὑμέναιον, <ὄν> ἐν γάμοισι χοροῖζόμενον / [Μοῖρα] σύμπρωτον λάβεν, / ἐσχάτοις ὕμνοισιν· ἅ δ’ Ἰάλεμον ὠμοβόλῳ / νούσῳ ἔστι πεδαθέντα σθένος `but (other songs) put to sleep three sons of Kalliope, so that memorials of the dead might be set up for her. The one sang *ailinon* for long-haired Linos; another sang of Hymenaios, whom the last of hymns took when at night his skin was first touched in marriage; and another sang of Ielemos, whose strength was fettered by a flesh-rending disease` (Race 1997). This passage is very important because for the first time the link between musical genres and religious contents is shown clearly. Linus, Ialemos, and Hymenaios’ legends tell about how they died and how a goddess cried upon them, which has much to do with Demeter and Proserpina’s myth. We are not able to say if Pindar invented these stories for a specific purpose or he only translated into poetry an already widespread tradition.<sup>65</sup> However we recognize a sort of ratio that we can express as following: the three

<sup>63</sup> For a detailed analysis of the references to mystic practices in Fr. 129 S.-M see Brillante (1987, 35-51).

<sup>64</sup> See also Swift 2010, 312.

<sup>65</sup> Cannatà Fera (1990, 142-143) explains the presence of these mythic characters by their consoling function: ‘Come in Saffo una festa nuziale è paragonata a nozze mitiche, nel threnos la situazione attuale è ricollegata ai rispettivi momenti mitici, cioè alla morte dei giovani Lino, Imeneo, Ialemo. Mentre però in composizioni quali gli epinici o gli epitalami il riferimento mitico ha in genere la funzione di amplificare la lode del destinatario, nel threnos in generale e

goddesses bemoaning the death of Linus, Ialemos and Hymenaeus can be compared to Demeter mourning for Persephone's death and the *linos*-song, the *ialemos* song and the *hymenaios* song might depend on the example of Demeter's hymn. The mystery cults to Demeter might have inspired Pindar to create personifications from minor genres like the *linos*-song, the *ialemos*, and the *hymenaios*.<sup>66</sup> We will deepen this subject when we examine the case of the *linos*-song.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the many intersections of meaning between the *goos* and the *threnos*, as revealed by tragedy, the *threnos* in literature seems to resemble the melodious and pious lament while the *goos* seems to be forgotten as a musical genre. This is probably because the word *goos* was too clearly related to aischrologia, and its name was keeping the memory of what poets like Sophocles and Euripides tried to fight and relegate as dysphemic utterances. The formulas aimed at ritual such as summoning ghosts or requests for revenge might have ended up in other rituals and doctrines (the Greek Magical Papyri), and become more and more extraneous to a properly musical tradition.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, the euphemic elements of the lament might have survived in a 'purified' form through myths of shaman-philosophers like Orpheus, Musaios and Linos and through the so-called orphic doctrines that guarantee a happy life in

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in questo pindarico in particolare, la funzione del mito doveva essere soprattutto consolatoria: anche i figli di una Musa sono stati seppelliti e compianti, non possono sfuggire a questa sorte i mortali'.

<sup>66</sup> Although the *hymenaios* does not belong to the group of the dirges it presents elements in common with them as it represents the song of the separation between a bride and her original family (Alexiou 2002, 58). Cannatà Fera (*idem*, 140-42) points out that the *hymenaios* often contain notes of sadness: it is the case in Sapph. *Fr.* 104a Voigt and Erinn. *Fr.* 4 Diehl (see also Levaniouk 2007, 200-206). Some *hymenaios* in tragedy show that this genre was close to the lament: the hope of getting married becomes certainty of death in E. *Tr.* 308ff., *Phaet.* 227ff. This song is also transformed into a song of death in Ael. *fr.* 50 Hercher (See also Mathiesen 1999, 127-131). It is interesting to note that in E. *IA* 1036ff the *hymenaios* for Peleus' wedding is accompanied by the same instruments that have been associated with the *threnos*: διὰ λωτοῦ Λίβυος /μετά τε φιλοχόρου κιθάρας/συρίγγων θ' ὑπὸ καλαμοῦ/σᾶν ἔστασεν ἰαχάν. It is also worth remembering what Fraenkel says about the *hymenaios* (Fraenkel 1962, 73): the refrain *hymen hymen* used in wedding-songs, in its reduplication, resembles the repetition of *ailinon ailinon*.

<sup>67</sup> The main source to read the Greek magical papyri is Betz (1986).

the underworld (West 1983, 3-7). It is certainly worth remembering that in Aristophanes' *Birds* the musical chorus of birds sing a theogony (685-735),<sup>68</sup> and Herodotus (1.132.3) mentions the practice of singing a theogony as an *epode* – a spell – before any sacrifice to the gods: Μάγος ἀνὴρ [...] ἐπαεῖδει θεογονίην, οἷν\* δὴ ἐκεῖνοι λέγουσι εἶναι τὴν ἐπαιδίην.<sup>69</sup> These are just a few examples to show that the theogonies were not only philosophical systems but formulas to be sung in precise rites and provided with music. Their connection with the lament can be understood only intuitively at this stage and it is not our intention to investigate the complex subject of the Orphic theogonies. In the next chapter we will treat the *linos*-song as an example of lament not only including euphemic elements but also becoming gradually the song for a person. The character Linos then is transformed by literature and mythography into a philosopher and creator of a cosmologic doctrine. As suggested by Pindar, the *linos*-song includes meaning related to Eleusinian or Orphic doctrines and its euphemic power, after a stage where it is related to ill-omens, becomes a message of a new life after death.

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<sup>68</sup> ‘At the beginning there was only Chaos, Night, dark Erebus, and deep Tartarus. Earth, the air and heaven had no existence. Firstly, blackwinged Night laid a germless egg in the bosom of the infinite deeps of Erebus, and from this, after the revolution of long ages, sprang the graceful Eros with his glittering golden wings, swift as the whirlwinds of the tempest. He mated in deep Tartarus with dark Chaos, winged like himself, and thus hatched forth our race, which was the first to see the light.’ (Dunbar 2004)

<sup>69</sup> Murray and Moreno (2007, 168) comment on the passage by saying that the theogony seems to be an *epaoide*, or liturgical hymn, or yast, of the type preserved in the Gathas, ‘but Herodotus certainly understood θεογονίη theogoniê as an account of the “origin of the gods”’. For a discussion about theogonic poetry and ritual magic see West (1966, 1-16).

# CHAPTER 5

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## THE *LINOS*-SONG

At the end of the last chapter we mentioned figures of shaman-philosophers like Orpheus, *Linos* and Mousaios. Despite all the references to episodes of their lives throughout literature, we should accept that they were only mythological creations invented to attribute philosophical-magical doctrines to an author. The word *linos* is in fact used in most cases to identify a genre of lamentation but it also corresponds to the name of a person to whom tradition attributes the creation of a theogony and doctrines that are generally considered as Orphic (BNP 7, 622-3). In the present chapter we intend to show the stages this word went through and the gradual variations which opened up a wide gap between its meanings in earlier and later literature. In the *Iliad* the *linos*-song is not related to death or mourning, but to vintage. In passages from Aeschylus and Sophocles the *linos*-song – named also *ailinos* – is introduced as a ritual formula and it is not detectably different from the *goos*. In Euripides and Herodotus the *linos*-song seems to be more oriented towards alternative doctrines about death. If the historian links it with the theory of metempsychosis, Euripides uses it as a song that accompanies rituals where death is represented as a passage to another life and precedes rebirth. This experience seems to be exemplified in different ways by gods and heroes: Heracles, Helen, Kore, and Dionysus overcome death through apotheosis or return to life. Euripides introduced the *linos*-song as an euphemic prayer and as an alternative to the other ways of approaching death: this is not the end of life but perhaps the moment preceding a new life in a cycle of lives. However, Euripides' interpretation does not prevent us from noting that in later literature the *ailinos* is linked to Adonis, Hyakinthos and Ampelos and metamorphosis. The connection between the *linos*-song/*ailinos* and metamorphoses can be found in the aetiologic nature of the ritual song: the account of a hero transforming into a flower or into wine – and

therefore the use of myth – was probably aimed at providing mystery cults with an *aition*, an explanation that could be universally understood and accepted. In other words, the *linos*-song was a ritual act performed in mystery cults and aimed at explaining and keeping the memory of the existence of the cults themselves.

The *linos*-song is variously used and interpreted by epics, tragic poets and later sources but a problem remains unsolved: why did this word change its meaning from vintage-song into lament and then mystery-cult song? Funerary epigraphy might provide a useful means to fully understand what the word means. Indeed in a few inscriptions the word *ailinos* does not mean ‘song’ and is introduced as the element of comparison with the dead person: these texts require an interpretation that can be given by investigating a few more literary passages and by interpreting the word *ailinos* as the epigraphic (misspelled?) version of *elinos*, grape. This is pure hypothesis, but it can provide us with a key to interpret the apparently incomprehensible change of meaning the *linos*-song went through, and the creation of a legendary figure such as Linos.

This character appears in later literature and has much to do with Orphism. He is associated with characters such as Orpheus and Mousaios; furthermore, philosophical knowledge and cosmogonies are attributed to him. The suggestive image reported on by Stobaeus of nature as an immortal whole –whose various elements do not die but simply change form– seems to be the philosophical development of myths of metamorphosis and life after death and constitutes the last stage the word *linos* went through.

## LINOS IN HOMER

The word *linos* appears for the first time in Homer (*Il.* 18.570) in the famous description of Achilles’ shield and it seems different from a lament: τοῖσιν δ’ ἐν μέσσοισι πάϊς φόρμιγγι λυγείῃ / ἱμερόεν κιθάριζε, λίνον δ’ ὑπὸ καλὸν ᾄειδε/ λεπταλή φωνῇ· τοὶ δὲ ῥήσσοντες ἁμαρτῇ / μολπῇ τ’ ἰυγμῶ



τε ποσὶ σκαίροντες ἔποντο` and in their midst a boy made pleasant music with a clear-toned lyre (*phormiggi*), and to it sang sweetly the *Lin*os-song (*linon*) with his delicate voice; and they beating the earth in accompaniment followed on with skipping feet and dance and shouting` (Murray 1999). The realistic description of the vintage, and maybe the grape-squeezing, introduces the word *linos* that has been traditionally considered as a gentle song.<sup>1</sup> The environment surrounding the scene seems serene and even cheerful, not certainly funereal.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand the *linos* is never quoted by Homer in descriptions of funerals or lamentations for the dead where we find instead, as said before, words like *goos* and occasionally *threnos*.<sup>3</sup> We therefore need to explain on which basis Ps.-Hesiod has linked the vintage-song with a lament.

## LINOS IN PS.-HESIOD

A Hesiodic fragment (fr. 305 West & Merkelbach) already provides us with *Lin*os' genealogy, and if on the one hand he elaborates elements that were already present in Homer, such as instrumental music, he introduces new themes such as the presence of professional musicians, and – more importantly – the action of lamenting: Οὐρανίη δ' ἄρ' ἔτικτε Λίνον πολυήρατον υἱόν· ὃν δὴ, ὅσοι βροτοὶ εἰσιν ᾄδοι καὶ κιθαρισταί,/ πάντες μὲν θρηνεῦσιν ἐν εἰλαπίναις τε χοροῖς τε, / ἀρχόμενοι δὲ Λίνον καὶ λήγοντες καλέουσιν , `Ourania bore Linus, her lovely son, whom all mortals, as many are

<sup>1</sup> The passage mentions the vintagers, φορῆες (566), and then the maidens and the youth, παρθενικαὶ δὲ καὶ ἡῖθεοι (567), who besides carrying the baskets might also be squeezing the grapes with their feet, which would fit the dance and the presence of a song to accompany this practice.

<sup>2</sup> Kirk (1985, 225) admits that `the song is always referred to as a dirge, and it seems odd to sing it here on what is obviously a cheerful occasion`.

<sup>3</sup> It is important mentioning this passage for our reconstruction as the creation of a character called *Lin*os might come from the misinterpretation of this passage, as Silva pointed out (2002, 115-28). A discussion about the meaning of the word *linos* in Iliad, be it *chordè* or song, is present in scholia Σ 570 already: Zenodotus considers the *linos* as subject and treats it as referring to a string of the *kithara*, λίνος δ' ὑπὸ καλὸν ᾄειδε – a hypothesis that Silva and van der Valk accept (1963-4, I:153-4) – ,while Aristarchus prefers considering it as a type of song. For a similar association of the verb *aedein* with a string see *Od.* 21.411. It is worth pointing out that if the word means `string` and is subject of the sentence, the noun must presumably be *linos*. The neuter form is in any case much commoner than the masculine in contexts where it refers to something made of flax; see LSJ.

bards and lyre-players, lament at banquets and dances, and beginning and ending they call upon Linus` (Most 2007). If we accept Silva's ideas (2002), Ps.-Hesiod might have misinterpreted the word *linon* = *chorde*; consequently he needed to create or report a story to explain the meaning of *linos*.<sup>4</sup> The *linos* became therefore a song addressed to a figure called *Linus*, sounding like a lament for his death, and executed in feasts called *eilapinai* where wine was usually poured and drunk.<sup>5</sup> Besides, the Hesiodic fr. 306MW describes him as a kitharist and as 'skilled in all manner of wisdom', Ἡσίοδος γὰρ τὸν κιθαριστὴν Λίνον «παντοίας σοφίας δεδαηκότα» (Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1 4 25), making the link between *linos*, music and knowledge even more explicit, a link that was only implied in the previous passage by the presence of *aoidoi* and *kitharistai* and by *Linus*' descent from a Muse (Ourania). Whether or not Ps.-Hesiod has created a character because of a misinterpretation, we cannot consider this invention as totally random. Later we will investigate the meaning of *ailinos* in two funerary inscriptions and we might be able to suggest an explanation for this change of meaning.

The traditional interpretation of the passage was based on Frazer's attempt to explain the link between the 'song of the vintage' and the 'song of death': the joy of the grape-harvest was related to the sorrow at the 'death' of the fruit or of the vine's leaves and shoots at the end of the summer.<sup>6</sup> Frazer explains myth as a secondary remnant or survival of ritual activity. Hence, for him ritual is the original source of most of the expressive forms of cultural life. *The Golden Bough*, Frazer's famous work,

<sup>4</sup> Nothing excludes the possibility that Hesiod might have created this myth deliberately.

<sup>5</sup> In Hom. *Il* 18.491, H. Hom., *HH* 5, Pi. *Pyth.* 10 38, E. *Med.* 193 the *eilapinai* look like occasions of joy and feast, where music was performed and rituals were included, if we consider the presence of libation-pourings for the goddess Hestia in the Homeric hymn or of the celebration of weddings in the *Iliad*.

<sup>6</sup> See Frazer (1894, 365, 398-99, 404): 'In Phoenicia and Western Asia a plaintive song, like that chanted by the Egyptian corn-reapers, was sung at the vintage and probably (to judge by analogy) also at harvest. This Phoenician song was called by the Greeks Linus or Ailinus and explained, like Maneros, as a lament for the death of a youth named Linus. According to one story Linus was brought up by a shepherd, but torn to pieces by his dogs. But, like Maneros, the name Linus or Ailinus appears to have originated in a verbal misunderstanding, and to be nothing more than the cry ai lanu, that is "Woe to us," which the Phoenicians probably uttered in mourning for Adonis; at least Sappho seems to have regarded Adonis and Linus as equivalent' (365). Farnell follows the same principles in interpreting the character Linus (1920, 23-32). West (2003, 262-3) introduces an explanation for the word *ailinon* or *ailinos* as ai Linon 'alas for Linus', 'Linus being apparently a periodically dying nature-figure of Aegean type'. The scholar hypothesizes that Linus derives from a god belonging to the north-west Semitic area called Lim and conceivable as some sort of year-deity. In that case the *ailinon* would go back to \* (w)ai Lim, 'alas for Lim'.

developed the notion of the ritual sacrifice of the divine totem into a complex new theory (totemism), that the universally diffused pattern underlying all ritual is an enactment of the death and resurrection of a god or divine king who symbolized and secured the fertility of the land and the well-being of the people. This theory is out-dated but still its influence on the interpretation of many rituals, among which the *linos*-song, is very strong. It is therefore necessary to use new theories, as we shall see later, in order to better understand the specific case of the *linos*-song.

Coming back to the Hesiodic passage, it is possible that practices such as the grape cutting and the winemaking started being included in religious festivals. The death of the grape and its transformation into wine perhaps were symbolically associated with religious meanings, such as a god's death.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the presence in Ps.-Hesiod of the verb *threnein* in connection with the word *eilapinai* seems to imply that laments were performed in contexts where wine was drunk.

Let us proceed in order and consider what happened to the *linos* afterwards.

## **LINOS/AILINOS IN TRAGEDY**

### ***Ailinos as 'promise of destiny'***

If in Ps.-Hesiod the lamenting nature of the *linos* is implied only by the verb θρηνεῦσιν, in tragedy the *linos* – we should rather say *ailinos* – seems to absorb meanings that belong to the types of laments we previously analyzed. The earliest quotation of the *linos* appears in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*

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<sup>7</sup> Otto (1995, 98) points out that in a number of places, but most famously at Parnassus, miracles of the 'one-day vines' occurred (*efemeroi ampeloi*) in Dionysian festivals. These vines 'flowered and bore fruit in the course of a few hours during the festivals of the epiphany of the God'. Sophocles in his *Thyestes* records that in Euboea, one could watch the holy vine grow green in the early morning. By noon the grapes were already forming, and by evening the dark and heavy fruit could be cut down, and a drink made from them, ἔστι γάρ τις ἐναλία / Εὐβοίῃς αἶα· τῇδε βακχεῖος βότρυς/ἐπ' ἡμᾶρ ἔρπει. πρῶτα μὲν λαμπρᾶς ἔω/κεκλημάτωται χλωρὸν οἰνάνθης δέμας· εἴτ' ἡμᾶρ αὖξει μέσσον ὄμφακος τύπον, /καὶ κλίνεται τε κάποπερκοῦται βότρυς· /δείλη δὲ πᾶσα τέμνεται βλαστουμένη/ὀπώρα †καλῶς† κἀνακίρνεται ποτόν (fr. 255 Radt).

where the first *stasimon* is spaced out by the verse αἶλινον αἶλινον εἰπέ, τὸ δ' εὖ νικάτω for three times: at the end of the first strophe, the antistrophe and the epode (121,138, 159). Even in this tragic context, we should notice that the *linos/ailinos* has meanings that do not normally belong to the dirge. The repetition of this sentence sounds in fact like a premonition of an imminent disaster. The section we are going to analyze is delimited by the verses 104 and 159,<sup>8</sup> and seems to explain more and more explicitly how the Atreidae have been cursed after succeeding against the Trojans. This part is a very representative example of the multi-voicedness that a choral part can have: as Fletcher (1999, 32) says 'there are several different voices in this ode: the voice of the poet, the chorus in its persona as Argive elders who narrate events connected with the Trojan expedition, and the words of characters in the chorus's narrative' and in particular she identifies the voice of the *domôn prophētai* and Calchas. Through the seer's words the chorus move from joy for Agamemnon's victory to fear that he 'might be caught in the web of justice himself', but they seem reluctant to believe it, just as they will be unable to accept the truth later on in the tragedy: 'They refuse to confront the possibility of Agamemnon's impending murder when Cassandra presents it to them; and even when they hear the death cries of their king, they declare that the sound alone is not sufficient evidence of his demise (1366-67)...' (Fletcher 1999, 31). Only if we consider this section as the representation of contrasting feelings, joy and fear, shall we be able to explain our verse: 'cry sorrow, sorrow, but may good prevail!' (Sommerstein 2008).<sup>9</sup> It is worth mentioning the closing section of the chorus, τέχνη δὲ Κάλχαντος οὐκ ἄκραντοι./ Δίκα δὲ τοῖς μὲν παθοῦ/σιν μαθεῖν ἐπιρρέπει· τὸ μέλλον δ' / ἐπεὶ γένοιτ' ἂν κλύοις· πρὸ χαίρετω· ἴσον δὲ τῶι προστένειν· /τορὸν γὰρ ἦξει σύνορθρον αὐγαῖς. πέλοιτο δ' οὖν τὰπὶ τοῦτοισιν εὖ πράξις, ὥς/ θέλει τόδ' ἄγχιστον Ἀπίας γαί/ ας μονόφρουρον ἔρκος (250-7), where on the one hand the chorus reveal to be aware that the art of Calchas was not unfulfilled (*ouk akrantoi*) but on the other they show a certain

<sup>8</sup> A textual analysis of this passage has been made by West (1999, 104-59).

<sup>9</sup> The presence of the double cry *ailinon ailinon* has been explained by Fraenkel (1950, 73) as a ritual to be compared to *hymên hymên* and *iêie*

obstinacy in expecting a happy ending ‘But as for what shall follow, may the issue be happy’. The line αἶλινον αἶλινον εἰπέ, τὸ δ’ εὖ νικάτω can be therefore the synthesis of this mix of feeling, where the first half reveals the fear for the hidden sense of Calchas’ prophecy and the second half is the concise description of the chorus’ blind hope.

But what is the *ailinos* then? If we consider its position in the text we immediately realize its closeness to Calchas’ prophecy reported in direct speech: χρόνῳ μὲν ἄγρῃ Πριάμου πόλιν ἄδε κέλευθος, / πάντα δὲ πύργων / κτήνῃ πρόσθετα δημοπληθῇ / Μοῖρα λαπάξει πρὸς τὸ βίαιον / οἷον μὴ τις ἄγα θεόθεν κνεφά- / σῇ προτυπὲν στόμιον μέγα Τροίας / στρατωθέν· οἴκῳ γὰρ ἐπίφθοнос Ἄρτεμις ἄγνῃ / παανοῖσιν κυσὶ πατρὸς / αὐτότοκον πρὸ λόχου μογερὰν πτάκα θυομένοισιν· / στυγεῖ δὲ δεῖπνον αἰετῶν. / αἶλινον αἶλινον εἰπέ, τὸ δ’ εὖ νικάτω. / τόσον περ εὖφρων ἅ καλὰ / δρόσοις ἀέπτοις μαλερῶν λεόντων / πάντων τ’ ἄγρονόμων φιλομάστοις / θηρῶν ὀβρικάλοισι τερπνά, / τούτων αἰτεῖ ξύμβολα κρᾶναι, / δεξιὰ ἐν κατάμομφα δὲ φάσματα / ἰήιον δὲ καλέω Παιᾶνα, / μή τινας ἀντιπνόους Δαναοῖς χρονί / ας ἐχενῆιδας ἀπλοίας / τεύξῃ σπευδομένα θυσίαν ἑτέραν ἄνομόν τιν’ ἄδαιτον, / νεικέων τέκτονα σύμφυτον, οὐ δεῖ / σήνορα· μῖμνει γὰρ φοβερὰ παλινόρτος / οἰκονόμος δολία, μνάμων Μῆνις τεκνόποινος (127-45). Calchas’ words sound enigmatic but the prophecy (154-59) reminds us of Iphigenia’ sacrifice and Artemis’ revenge on Agamemnon through ‘a treacherous guardian of the home, a wrath that never forgets and that exacts vengeance for a child’ (Fraenkel 1962, 91). The *ailinos* is described at 158 as τοῖς δ’ ὁμόφωνον where *tois* refers to τοιάδε Κάλχας ξὺν μεγάλοις ἀγαθοῖς at 156, therefore it is *in harmony with* Calchas’ prophecies. This connection with the *manteia* cannot be ignored from our perspective especially after all we have said about the *goos* and its link with supernatural. Fraenkel himself (1962, 74) explains the cry *ailinos* as an example of *ep hymnia*, refrains, that ‘belong to the oldest elements of liturgical songs’ and, quoting Müller (1853, 91), were ‘characteristic of incantation and promises of destiny’. Again Fraenkel (*idem*, 74) remarks that even if the refrain in the *parodos* fulfils an artistic purpose ‘the old religions force still survives: the refrain rounds off first the

story of the τέρας and finally the prophecy of the seer, and thus with its cry of alarm and its prayer for a happy issue it serves to heighten the effect of a promise of destiny`.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately the lack of information about the *linos*-song in earlier literature does not allow us to identify its ritual use before Aeschylus. If we decide to trust Aristarchus in his interpretation of the passage in the *Iliad*, and therefore to see a link between the Homeric *linos* and the Hesiodic character, we might think that a promise of destiny was present in ritual songs for the grape-cutting and wine-mixing, but this is only speculative. Indeed Aeschylus' *ailinon* is not a proper lament but a song of ill-omen. The presence of a sinister element might have come from the ideas the tragic poet has of the *goos*. Perhaps at a certain point after Ps.-Hesiod the characteristics of the *goos* switched to the *linos*: this would have happened because of their shared *threnetikos* nature (following Ps.-Hesiod) and the lack of a precise identity of the *linos*. As a confirmation of this hypothesis we should not ignore that tragic poets mention a few times the *ailinos* and the *goos* in the same performance.

The depiction of Ajax' mother in S. *Aj.* 627 highlights the contrast between a gentle song (the nightingale's *goos*) and a shrill-toned utterance (the *oxytonos ódē*) – αἴλινον αἴλινον /οὐδ' οἰκτρᾶς γόον ὄρνιθος ἀηδοῦς /σχήσει δύσμορος, ἀλλ' ὄξυτόνους μὲν ᾠδᾶς/ θρηγήσει – but above all it associates the *ailinos* to the act of lamenting.<sup>11</sup> How can we explain the *ailinos* here? It is necessary to mention the different interpretations of *ailinos*, as object of θρηγήσει, or simple interjection expressing the chorus' own sorrow. Some scholars, like Pearson (1957, *ad loc.*), even prefer to follow the scholium and understand οὐδ' before *ailinon* and translate 'she will utter no *Linos* dirge, nor..., but...' but, despite what Stanford (1963, 140) says, this translation does not seem the most credible as we have no evidence in previous literature that the *linos*-song was not a violent form of lamentation (he quotes *RE* 9, 145-65). We instead prefer considering the traditional translations, which seem both acceptable, for example Jebb

<sup>10</sup> Pulleyn (1997, 146-155) mention Fraenkel while reflecting on the possibility that the Greeks had 'set of words and formulae which they organized as belonging specifically to the language of prayer' (147).

<sup>11</sup> For an analysis of this section in Ajax see Lloyd-Jones (1985, 16-18).

(1962) ‘when she hears that he has been afflicted with the ruin of his mind will raise a loud cry of wailing. It is not the nightingale’s piteous lament that she, unhappy, will sing. Rather in shrill-toned odes the dirge will rise’, with *ailinos* as object, and Barker (1984, 64) ‘when she hears of his mind-destroying sickness, will sing ‘*Ailinson, ailinson!*’ She will not sing the moan of the sorrowful bird, the nightingale, but will wail shrill-stretched songs...’, with *ailinos* as interjection.<sup>12</sup> Fraenkel’s comment on the passage in *Agamemnon* is certainly confirmed by this second translation, as the *ailinos* here echoes a ‘promise of the destiny’, to resume Fraenkel’s words (1962, 74). This time revenge comes from Athena who – as Calchas had explained to Teucer 770-7 – punished Ajax for his blasphemy and excessive pride. The ritual use of the *ailinos* is indeed shown by the position of the word within the verse and its repetition. However, we are not sure if the fact of being a ‘promise of destiny’ is authentic or rather depends on Aeschylus’ and Sophocles’ interpretation of it. Again, it is difficult to decide whether the connection with omen is a characteristic of the *ailinos* or depends on the similarity between the *ailinos* and the *goos*. We personally lean toward the latter explanation, and later in the chapter we will explain why. In other words the *ailinos* might absorb meanings that are not authentic but depend on the poets’ intention of representing it in certain way.

In E. *Ph.* 1514-22 the singing of the bird seems to be unsuitable for Antigone ‘what bird then on oak’s or fir tree’s lofty mane of leaves will come to sing with lonely mother’s plaint in concert with my woes? These my dead I mourn here with woeful cries of “Sing sorrow”(ailinson), I who am doomed to live a life bereft with streaming tears for all time to come’ (Kovacs 2002), τίς ἄρ’ ὄρνις δρυὸς ἢ / ἐλάτας ἀκροκόμοις ἄμ πετάλοις / μονομάτορσιν ὀδυρμοῖς / ἐμοῖς ἄχεσι συνωιδός; / αἰλινον αἰάγμασιν ἃ τοῦσδε προκλαίω μονάδ’ αἰῶνα διάξουσα τὸν αἰεὶ χρόνον ἐν λειβομένοισιν δάκρυσιν. Here the *ailinos* preserves the meaning of Fraenkel’s ‘promise of destiny’ that we found in Aeschylus’ and Sophocles’ passages, as Antigone’s lament sounds like a sad announcement, a message of death for Oedipus,

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<sup>12</sup> See also Golder and Pevear (1999, 49): ‘*ailinos ailinos!* There will be not nightingale’s soft lament for her, ill-fated woman, but a sharp, keening cry, drawn from deep inside...’.

δυστυχὲς ἀγγελίας ἔπος (1546), that results from an unavoidable destiny, σὸς ἀλάστωρ /ξίφεσιν βρίθων /καὶ πυρὶ καὶ σχετλίσσι μάχαις ἐπὶ παῖδας ἔβα σοὺς (1556-58), ‘your own avenging curse, with all its load of swords and fire and ruthless war, came on your sons’ (Mastronarde 1994, 583).

In the already quoted E. *Hel.* 169-178 the Sirens’ musical intervention in Helen’s lyric is separate from the *gooi*, the *threnemata* and the *kakoi ailinoi*. In this case Euripides turns what is simply aischrologic into a dysphemic type of performance. In *Helen* this aspect has been described by Barker (2007, 21), as already said in the previous chapter: the *gooi/kakoi ailinoi/thremata* in the *parodos* ‘esprimono un atteggiamento incauto nei confronti della morte. I lamenti non servono, e forse sono addirittura empi’. It is interesting noting that Euripides specifies that the *kakoi ailinoi* are dysphemic, perhaps implying that another type of *ailinoi* is euphemic.

### ***The ailinon in Euripides’ Heracles***

Before analyzing Euripides’ play it is worth noting that tradition, although from the fifth century, started speaking of *Linos* and Heracles as teacher and pupil. Diodoros of Sicily (3.67.2) writes : ‘*Linos* also, who was admired because of his poetry and singing, had many pupils and three of greatest renown, Heracles, Thamyras, and Orpheus. Of these three Heracles, who was learning to play the lyre, was unable to appreciate what was taught him because of his sluggishness of soul, and once when he had been punished with rods by Linus he became violently angry and killed his teacher with a blow of the lyre’ (Oldfather 1935), τὸν δὲ Λίνον ἐπὶ ποιητικῇ καὶ μελωδίᾳ θαυμασθέντα μαθητὰς σχεῖν πολλούς, ἐπιφανεστάτους δὲ τρεῖς, Ἡρακλέα, Θαμύραν, Ὀρφέα. τούτων δὲ τὸν μὲν Ἡρακλέα κιθαρίζειν μανθάνοντα διὰ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς βραδυτῆτα μὴ δύνασθαι δέξασθαι τὴν μάθησιν, ἔπειθ’ ὑπὸ τοῦ Λίνου πληγαῖς ἐπιτιμηθέντα διοργισθῆναι καὶ τῇ κιθάρᾳ τὸν διδάσκαλον πατάξαντα ἀποκτεῖναι. This



mythological link between the two characters is confirmed by fifth-century iconography, although the age of 'omnipresent' Heracles is over in the decorative arts (Dowden 1992, 9).<sup>13</sup>



Figure 1: Heracles fighting Linos. Munich 2646, Antikensammlung (LMC Herakles 1671). Published by Perseus Digital Library (2009) Art and Archaeology Artifact Browser [online]  
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/image?img=Perseus:image:1993.01.0498> [accessed November 9<sup>th</sup> 2009]

How can we explain this odd story? Diodorus, as Dowden pointed out (2005, 35-36), depended probably 'on a sense of tradition and antiquity' and weakened 'the historical spirit which we attribute to historians such as Herodotos or Ephoros'. 'For Diodoros, as for most Greeks, the heroes of the past were real and so, if somewhat distorted, were the stories about them' and, most surprisingly, he had among his sources Euhemeros, a writer of the second century BC who is now famous for reducing even the most distanced mythology to history' (*idem*). Having said that and taken the necessary distance from Diodorus' reference, we should notice that the iconographical link between *Linos* and Heracles preceded the historian by centuries, which however does not prevent us from thinking that the story reflects an authentic tradition. Does the story limit itself to be a literary invention? If not, does it hide any ritual

<sup>13</sup> The connection between Heracles and Linos is also suggested by an inscription from Phrygia (MAMA 6 247).

meanings? One of the reasons why we propose the story as a proper myth and not only a literary invention is the presence of the *ailinos* in Euripides' *Heracles* –around fifteen years after Sophocles' *Ajax* – and we wonder if Diodorus' reference and iconography depend on the play. The second aspect we need to investigate is whether the connection between Heracles and *Linos* (the *ailinos*, to be precise) in Euripides is only ornamental or implies another purpose. The following sections are aimed at considering the context where *ailinos* is used. To have a complete view on the meaning of *ailinos* at *Her.* 348 it is necessary to compare not only the differences between Euripides and the previous poets in the use of the word but we also need to compare each *stasimon* of the tragedy to the others. It seems that an imperceptible thread runs through them and creates a web of cross-references between the musical performances described. The method used here has been adopted first by Barker (2007) in his analysis of music in Euripides' *Helen*. In a similar way we intend to show through the comparison of the musical references their religious implications.

Before proceeding with the comparison let us analyze the passage itself. The first *stasimon* (348-441) is a choral hymn designed to list Heracles' Labours and closing with the descent to Hades from where the hero is believed not to come back. These are the words that introduce the hymn: `“(ailinon)”, Phoebus sings after a song of good fortune as he plies his sweet-voiced lyre with a plectrum of gold. In like fashion the man gone into the dark of earth, the realm of the dead (son of Zeus shall I call him, or of Amphitryon?) I wish to praise as a coronal to his labors. For high deeds of noble toil are a glory to those who have perished` (Kovacs 1998), αἴλινον μὲν ἐπ' εὐτυχεῖ / μολπαῖ Φοῖβος ἰαχεῖ / τὰν καλλίφθογον κιθάραν / ἐλαύνων πλήκτρῳ χρυσεῷ· / ἐγὼ δὲ τὸν γὰρ ἐνέρων τ' / ἐς ὄρφναν μολόντα παῖδ', / εἴτε Διὸς νιν εἶπω / εἴτ' Ἀμφιτρυόνος ἱνὶν, / ὑμνῆσαι στεφάνωμα μόχθων δι' εὐλογίας θέλω. / γενναίων δ' ἀρεταὶ πόνων / τοῖς θανοῦσιν ἄγαλμα. / πρῶτον μὲν Διὸς ἄλσος / ἠρήμωσε λέοντος, πυρσῶι δ' ἀμφεκαλύφθη. If we compare the passage to the previous examples of *ailinos* in tragedy we can immediately see that there is no mention of an imminent disaster as in Aeschylus' and Sophocles'

passages – of course the disaster comes in the course of the tragedy but there is no feeling of it in this section.<sup>14</sup> Secondly we should note that the *ailinos* does not sound at all like a lament, differently from what Bond says (1981, 150): on the contrary it is accompanied by attributes that suggest rather a joyful celebration. Words like εὐτυχεῖ ('successful', LSJ) and ιαχεῖ ('to cry, shout', LSJ) do not certainly contribute creating the scenario of a funereal utterance. In particular we should reflect upon the contrast between the first part (348-51) and the second one (352-58). Bond (1981, 51) affirms that ἐν ...δὲ at 348, 352 'mark a parallel, not a contrast'. But we should consider that there is an undeniable contrast between Apollo and the chorus. The old men are indeed singing by praising, ὑμνῆσαι, as a coronal, στεφάνωμα, to Heracles' labours. Apollo and the chorus are not singing the same thing because the hymn of praise for someone who has gone to Hades is not joyful. It can be calm, as the Homeric *threnos* is, but not an expression of happiness. Apollo, the god who is almost never mentioned in funereal circumstances, is instead dancing, beautifully playing and rejoicing.

A similar contrast in singing can be found in *Alcestis*, where the opposition is not only marked by ἐν ...δὲ but also by the explicit reference to two sorts of melody, δισσὰ ... ἔλη. Heracles is 'singing, paying no attention to the trouble in Admetus' house, while we servants were bewailing our mistress'. We do not know what Heracles is singing, but we do know what Apollo is singing in *Heracles*: the *ailinon*. Is there any similarity between the two passages?<sup>15</sup> We will see that indeed there

<sup>14</sup> Bond (1981, 177) highlights that there is no reason to suppose 'that the chorus here declares its faith that Heracles will come to save his family' as Wilamowitz (1895, 86) and Kroeker (1938, 35) commented. It is also interesting to note that similarly to Sophocles' *Ajax*, Euripides' *Heracles* passes through the theme of madness but not through suicide as solution for shame (Barlow 1981; Furley 1986).

<sup>15</sup> Conventionally the chorus is believed to think that Heracles knows of Alcestis' death while he drinks and sings because he does not know it. We wonder if Euripides he is not playing with this situation and if we can give an alternative reading: Heracles knows about Alcestis' death and is aware that he can rejoice because she is going to come back to life. His song would be the same as Apollo's because similarly to the god he is the only one knowing what is going to happen. We should also note that Apollo is present in the *Alcestis* from the very beginning and he knows that Heracles will rescue Alcestis from Hades as he prophesies at 64-71 ἢ ἢν σὺ παύσῃ καί περ ὦ δὲ ὦν ἄγαν:/τοῖος Φέρητος εἶσι πρὸς δόμους ἀνὴρ/Εὐρυσθέως πέμψαντος ἵππειον μετὰ/ῶχημα Θρήκης ἐκ τόπων δυσχεμέρων,/δὲ δὴ ξενωθείς τοῖσδ' ἐν Ἀδμήτου δόμοις/βίβη γυναῖκα τήνδε ζ' ἐξαίρησεται./κοῦθ' ἢ παρ' ἢ ὦν σοι γενήσεται χάρις/δράσεις θ' ὁμοίως ταῦτ', ἀπεχθήσῃ τ' ἐμοί, 'I swear to you that, ruthless as you are, you will yet cease from your hateful ways. The man to make you do so is coming to the house of Phereas sent by Eurystheus to

is much more in common than might be expected. If we go back to *Heracles*, Apollo and the chorus are possibly approaching with music the same event but in different ways. The godly way should be regarded as the preferable and the best one. As far as we can understand from this circumscribed passage, the chorus's song is not as appropriate as the '*ailinos*' would be. Now we need to understand why.

### **Heracles' relationship with eschatological meanings in Euripides' *Heracles***

An analysis of the ethical themes would be useful to look at the *ailinos* in a wider perspective. We will start considering the issue from a distance by showing that the character Heracles is used by Euripides in an unconventional way and is linked with a new creed.<sup>16</sup> The programmatic use of certain themes in connection with Heracles makes Euripides an innovator in 'humanizing' him (Conacher 1967, 82; Riley 2008, 24).<sup>17</sup> However the repertoire of themes he uses is probably not new. This is a hero to whom tradition itself attributes cults and rituals similar to those for a god (Woodford 1971, 211-25). He is often worshipped with other deities and some scholars even mention the connection between Heracles and the Eleusinian mysteries, detail that Euripides must have known.<sup>18</sup>

What the poet apparently likes to remember of this hero is not the monsters he killed or his labors: both in *Alcestis* and in this play it is his action in Hades that is particularly significant for the plot. In *Alcestis* he is going to the underworld to take Admetus' wife away from the powers of Pluto, in

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fetch the horses and chariot from the wintry land of Thrace. He, entertained as a guest in this house of Admetus, shall take the woman from you by force. You shall do precisely as I have asked and yet get no gratitude from me but hatred instead'.

<sup>16</sup> 'A new creed' is a definition used by Yunis (1988) in order to explain how Euripides' drama is to be read in terms of religious beliefs compared to the Athenian polis.

<sup>17</sup> Conacher notes that we cannot expect Euripides' *Heracles* 'to conform, with Sophoclean propriety, to the laws of probability and necessity' (1967, 78).

<sup>18</sup> Lloyd-Jones (1967, 206-29); Colomo (2004, 87-94); Croon (1953, 283-99) describe a myth that does not reveal vegetation cults (following Frazer) but rather initiation rites that guarantee a happy continuation of life in the underworld.

*Heracles* he is coming back from his last Labor in Hades after being believed dead: on his return, he is deceived by Lyssa and kills his wife and children but he does not resort to suicide and, having accepted his sufferings, he continues living.

Conacher (1967, 83) already pointed out that 'Euripides devoted a considerable portion of his energies as a dramatist to showing that Greek myth, literally understood, presented a conception of the gods which was unworthy of belief by a civilized people'. We cannot therefore expect that Euripides treats Heracles' descent to Hades as a fairy story to entertain. This is confirmed by the fact that in *Alcestis* the journey to the underworld 'may not have been canonical' (Gantz 1993, 195), and in *Heracles* the canonical myth is used in an unconventional way as it is placed *before* and not *after* the hero kills his family.<sup>19</sup> At this point the number of questions grows. Why does Euripides use this theme differently from the tradition? Is there any particular message that he wants to deliver? It is only trying to answer these questions that we can understand the connections between Heracles Hades and the *linos*-song.

The chorus in *Heracles* passes through different stages showing different attitudes to death. The *parodos* (107-137) shows a hopeless attitude to death: the chorus' song is focused only on their own grief and weakness and limits itself to an echo to Amphitruo's, Megara's and the children's sad destiny as exemplified by 112-14: 'Mere words am I now and an insubstantial vision seen at night, trembling, but full of eagerness' (Kovacs 1998), ἔπεα μόνον καὶ δόκημα νυκτερῶ-/ πὸν ἐννύχων ὀνείρων, /τρομερὰ ἐν ἅλλ' ὅμως πρόθυμ', and Heracles' death is defined at 133 'the ill luck that dogged him', τὸ δὲ κακοτυχές. The first *stasimon* at 348-450 shows a more positive attitude and a relatively greater acceptance of the loss, as we said: the chorus does not concentrate on their own weakness but on Heracles' labours at 359-435. However the old men keep seeing the βίου κέλευθον as forsaken of the

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<sup>19</sup> Traditionally Heracles undertakes the Labors as expiation for killing his children in a fit of madness (Burkert 1979, 94-7), which has been explained by scholars like Sleigh/Wolff (2001, 8) as a relevant change of perspective: it would be 'Heracles' own individual choice to undertake the Labors on behalf of his human foster father'.

gods and of justice, ἄθεον, ἄδικον, and with no return, ἀνόστιμον (430-34).<sup>20</sup> In the second *stasimon* 637-700 the faith in gods is still restrained by the doubt that it is difficult to distinguish the good from the evil at 669-72: 'But as things stand, there is no reliable fixed mark from the gods to judge the good and the bad, but the course of a man's life as it whirls along serves only to glorify his wealth', (*idem*) νῦν δ' οὐδεὶς ὄρος ἐκ θεῶν/χρηστοῖς οὐδὲ κακοῖς σαφές,/ἀλλ' εἰλισσόμενός τις αἰὼν πλοῦτον ὄνον αὔξει.<sup>21</sup> The third *stasimon* 735-821 is a song of joy and gives an answer to the question in the previous choral part: 'the gods, the gods take care to mark the wicked and the righteous', θεοὶ θεοὶ/ τῶν ἀδίκων ἔλουσι καὶ/ τῶν ὀσίων ἐπάειν (772-73), and in particular confirms the righteousness of the gods, 'You are more kingly in my eyes than the ignoble tyrant. His fate makes plain, to anyone who looks at this sword-bearing contest of arms, whether the gods still take pleasure in righteous conduct', κρείσσων μοι τύραννος ἔφυς/ῆ δυσγένει' ἀνάκτων,/ἄ νῦν ἐσορᾷν ἔφανε/ξιφηφόρων ἐς ἀγώνων/ἄμιλλαν, εἰ τὸ δίκαιον/θεοῖς ἔτ' ἀρέσκει (809-814). In these passages Euripides introduces a new conception of divine justice in relation to death.<sup>22</sup> But there is something more.

In the second *stasimon* the chorus say 'if the gods had understanding and wisdom where men are concerned, a double youth would they win as a clear mark of goodness, they who were good, and

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<sup>20</sup> Yunis nicely explains how Amphytrio renounces belief in divine reciprocity (1988, 144): as Zeus has done anything for him and his family, he is compelled to believe that the god is either ignorant or unjust. 'Zeus is ignorant if he does not understand the moral obligation which the bond of *philia* requires, unjust if he knowingly disregards that obligation'. Divine reciprocity is what Yunis identifies as the third important belief stated by Plato: it consists in the idea that 'the gods react to men on the basis of some form of a reciprocal relationship' (53). The reason why Plato insisted on this point probably originates in the need to constitute a minimum level of intelligibility of the world, which would guarantee a greater social stability for his ideal *polis* (53).

<sup>21</sup> However, as Kowalzig points out (2007, 240), this section makes the customary 'joy-before-disaster' offering to a divine amalgamation: victory paeans mix with dithyrambic moves, *kithara* with *aulos*, Apollo with Dionysus in a passage that has entered specialist literature as a paean typically preceding disaster'.

<sup>22</sup> We should also note that Euripides uses unconventional gods, such as the River Ismenus (7781), the 'smooth-worn streets of the city of seven gates' (782-3), the Naiads, daughters of Asopus (785): although speculative, it is worth considering that the recently discovered Orphic tablets unveil an underworld of springs, rivers, paths and gates (Edmonds III 2004, 22, 46-55), a labyrinth that challenge the thirsty soul before arriving at destination. The city with the smooth-worn streets ξεσταί θ' ἐπταπόλου πόλεως (782) has been identified as Thebes. However difficulties remain in interpreting the line: ξεσταί = 'hewn, polished' is applied to stone buildings at *Alc.* 836, *Tr.* 46, *Hel.* 986. Thebes is a muddy place, and even now the lanes connecting houses in Greece are rough; they certainly were not paved or polished in Euripides' time' (Bond 1981, 272).

when they died, they would run back to the light of the sun on the return leg of course. But the ignoble would have but a single life's course to run', εἰ δὲ θεοῖς ἦν ζῦνεσις /καὶ σοφία κατ' ἄνδρας, /δίδυμον ἄν ἦβαν ἔφερον, /φανερὸν χαρακτῆρ' ἀρετᾶς /ᾧσοισιν μέτα, καὶ θανόντες /εἰς αὐγὰς πάλιν ἀλίου/ δισσοῦς ἄν ἔβαν διαύλους, /ἅ δυσγένεια δ' ἀπλοῦν ἄν/ εἶχε ζῶας βίοντον.<sup>23</sup> If we consider this idea independently from the plot, the chorus' suggestion of two lives for the virtuous would sound unrealistic but we should take it as undivided from the story: Heracles, whose *arête* is unquestionable, has just proved that a second life *is* possible. The question about evils people's destiny and the existence of a divine justice against them is given by the plot itself and in particular by the third *stasimon*. When they hear that Lycos is going to be killed, the old men understand that they were wrong (as they imply at 745-6, 712 and 804): 'justice and the tide-turning fate of the gods! You have come at long last to the place where you will pay with your life for the outrages you commit against better men than yourself', δίκαια καὶ θεῶν παλὶρρους πότμος (739) and ἤλθες χρόνῳ μὲν οὗ δίκην δώσεις θανάων, /ῥβρεις ὑβρίζων εἰς ἀμείνονας σέθεν (740-1), 'Yes, for treacherously you slew! You must steel yourself to pay in full for your misdeeds', καὶ γὰρ διώλλυς· ἀντίποινα δ' ἐκτίνων /τόλμα, διδοῦς γε τῶν δεδραμένων δίκην (755-56). The chorus are here aware that it is ἀνομία to proclaim that the gods have no strength, οὐ /σθένουσιν (756-59), and state with decision that the gods take care to mark the wicked and the righteous, θεοὶ θεοὶ /τῶν ἀδίκων μέλουσι καὶ/τῶν ὀσίων ἐπάμειν (771-73).<sup>24</sup> But the situation is about to change: Lyssa has been sent by Hera to provoke Heracles' madness and to induce him to kill his own family. Even in this

<sup>23</sup> It is worth noting that the theme of old age occurs in all the *stasima*. If the *parodos* introduces it through images -like the πολὺς ὄρνις (110), the δόκημα νυκτερωπὸν ἐννύχων ὀνείρων, fancy bred of the visions of sleep by night (111-12), or ποδὸς ἄμαυρὸν ἵχνος the weak footstep (124)- the first *stasimon* refers more explicitly to it at the end of the section (436-41 'If I were young in strength [...] but now I have lost the blessed vigor of youth'). In the second *stasimon* the theme is treated to a greater extent: after following certain conventions (Parry, 365) – like the rejection of wealth in favor of the higher value of youth (643-48)- the poet puts emphasis on youth not as a simple quality but as 'the revelation of the *arête*' (Parry 1965): 655-60 εἰ δὲ θεοῖς ἦν ζῦνεσις /καὶ σοφία κατ' ἄνδρας, /δίδυμον ἄν ἦβαν ἔφερον, /φανερὸν χαρακτῆρ' ἀρετᾶς / ᾧσοισιν μέτα 'If the gods had understanding and wisdom where men are concerned, a double youth would they win as a clear mark of goodness, they who were good, and when they died, they would run back to the light of the sun on the return leg of the course' (Kovacs 1998).

<sup>24</sup> Yunis (1988,146-9) highlights how the theodicy of the chorus is an implicit revision of Amphitruo's belief about the gods. The god is neither ignorant nor unjust, but recognizes and fulfills what he owes his human *philoi*.

second part of the play we can identify Euripides' precise choice to speak of a destiny that is shared by the whole human race. In fact he seems to say that even the virtuous people are destined to suffer because this is congenital in human nature. Heracles is guilty of nothing but being born (1308-10):<sup>25</sup> he was the fruit of Alcmena' and Zeus' intercourse and this is why Hera has been looking for his ruin.<sup>26</sup> But Heracles chooses to persist with life and refuses suicide.<sup>27</sup> Even behind this we can find important meanings, confirmed again by a web of interconnections. In the first episode suicide is in fact discussed by Megara and Amphi-truo and they express two different positions: Megara has no hope (85-86) while Amphi-truo insists on the fact that it is still possible to find an alternative to death (95-106). His last words in the *prologon* are particularly meaningful as they do not refer to their individual case but can be adapted to any human being's life: κάμνουσι γάρ τοι καὶ βροτῶν αἱ συμφοραί, /καὶ πνεύματ' ἀνέμων οὐκ ἀεὶ ῥώμην ἔχει, /οἳ τ' εὐτυχοῦντες διὰ τέλους οὐκ εὐτυχεῖς /ἐξίσταται γὰρ πάντ' ἀπ' ἀλλήλων δίχα. / οὗτος δ' ἀνὴρ ἄριστος ὅστις ἐλπίσιν / πέποιθεν αἰεὶ· τὸ δ' ἀπορεῖν ἀνδρὸς κακοῦ, 'Just as the winds do not always keep the same force, so too, you know, the disasters that beset mortals abate, and those who enjoy good fortune are not fortunate to the end. Everything in the world retires and separates from each other. The bravest man is he who always puts his trust in hope. To surrender to helplessness is the mark of a coward'. *Elpis* is therefore described as the value that distinguishes the *aristos* from the *kakos*.<sup>28</sup>

Amphi-truo's intervention discloses a principle of faith that will be discovered gradually by the chorus –

<sup>25</sup> ἢ γυναικὸς οὐνεκα/λέκτρων φθονοῦσα Ζηνὶ τοὺς εὐεργέτας/Ελλάδος ἀπώλες' οὐδὲν ὄντας αἰτίους, 'Because she felt grudging ill will toward Zeus for his love of a mortal woman, she destroyed a man who had benefited Greece, though he was guiltless'.

<sup>26</sup> So Yunis: 'There is nothing in the play to account for Heracles' madness and suffering other than the anger of Hera. To call Heracles' fate "deserved punishment" (*dike*) is perverse' (151).

<sup>27</sup> This decision however comes after several reasoning, as explained by Yunis (1988, 149-155): he first thinks of suicide, as way to regain dignity. However committing suicide would demonstrate 'the effectiveness of the stigma which makes his life among men futile' (153). As soon as Heracles rejects Hera's stigma, the futility of his life, he is able to reject suicide as well (155).

<sup>28</sup> It is worth mentioning Bond's comment (1981, 89-90): he notes in fact that 'in pre-Christian Greek writers Hope is on the whole a bad thing' because, like *erôs*, it is a power which leads men on to crime and danger (Th. 2.62.5; 4.108.4; 3.45.5; 5.103.1). 'But hope can be good as well as bad [...]: man needs the good sort [...]. Hope was the only gift left in Pandora's box (Hes. *Op.* 96). He comments on this passage in particular by saying that 'Euripides is commonly thought of as a "rationalist". But it may be significant that Amphi-tryon, who irrationally and stubbornly opposes Megara's good sense, is proved by Heracles' entrance to have been right'. Bond notes relevantly (*idem*, 91) that 'the *anêr aristos* is here judged by his sanguine spirit, not by his capacity for action'.



we mentioned before the verses 745-6, 712 and 804 where the old men reach awareness of their fault of being hopeless– and will guide Heracles himself through the help of Theseus (friendship is another value to cope with the difficulties of life, as we can see also in *Alcestis*) to accept living even when the burden of life has become too heavy (Yoshitake 1994, 135-153). Theseus’ words again reveal a truth that can be adapted to all human beings: ‘But no mortal is untainted by fortune, and no god either, if the poets’ stories are true’ οὐδεις δὲ θνητῶν ταῖς τύχαις ἀκήρατος, /οὐ θεῶν, ἀοιδῶν εἴπερ οὐ ψευδεῖς λόγοι (1314-15) and ‘But what will your defense be if you, a mortal, find fault so excessively with your fortune while the gods do not?’ καίτοι τί φήσεις, εἰ σὺ ἐν θνητὸς γεγὼς /φέρεις ὑπέρφεν τὰς τύχας, θεοὶ δὲ μή; (1320-21). With these words Theseus convinces Heracles that the suicide would be a δειλίαν (1348). However, Heracles questions the fact that the gods are as mean as pictured by Theseus.

In agreement with Yunis (1988), we can say that Heracles subtly introduces the Platonic ideas of divinity: they do not commit adultery and criminal violence as Theseus describes them (160) and do not meet the criteria for inclusion in a restricted class of gods (163). Although there is no positive doctrine in the drama that says enough about the hero’s notion of divinity, however we can find an idea of perfection according to which gods do no wrong (166). In this perspective of reciprocity between men and just gods, destiny after death would not be an undifferentiated place where human beings endure a shadowy existence, but the result of one’s conduct in life. The good would therefore receive a ‘second youth’.

### **Musical symbolism in *Heracles***

It is now necessary to go back to the musical reference to the *ailinos* and to contextualize it within the whole play, by comparing the musical references contained in the choral parts and keeping in mind the difference in attitude toward death and *arête* in them.

The *parodos* is characterized by a pure expression of sorrow for the loss of Heracles, with emphasis on the relatives' condition (114-117, 133). The theme of the virtue is not mentioned or linked with life after death: the lament is only made of *ἡλέμων* (110) – or *ἡλέμων γόων* if we follow Murray's edition<sup>29</sup> and the chorus of old men compare themselves to a bird *πολιὸς ὄρνις*, which as we said in the previous chapter is a marker for an expression of grief.<sup>30</sup> The first *stasimon* includes two songs: the mysterious *ailinos* sung by Apollo to the sound of the kithara (350) and the hymn of praise sung by the chorus, where the *arête* of Heracles is exalted through the memory of his labours but with no hope of return (429-30). In the second *stasimon* the chorus are still unaware that Heracles is alive, but they relate to death with a song that symbolizes a precise attitude to it: the old men start wondering if there is any possibility of being rewarded with a new life when one has conducted a virtuous life (655-72).<sup>31</sup> Music is therefore indispensable, Muses are explicitly named and invoked (674), and the song of praise is now characterized by the presence of a god such as Bromius and by the Muses' and Apollo's dance (687-89), accompanied by at least two instruments, the *lyra* and the Libyan *aulos* – *χέλως ἐπτατόνου μολπὰν καὶ Λίβυν αὐλόν* (683-4).<sup>32</sup> This is clearly a song of joy. The hymn sung by the chorus is now in accord with the gods' one: at 692-94 they describe themselves as an old swan, *κύκνος* (692): the *πολιὸς ὄρνις* (110) transforms itself into the bird devoted to Apollo. This song seems to be the *ailinos*. The chorus has now learnt how to sing in concordance with Apollo, the god who intoned the *Linos*-song in the previous section without being followed by them. It seems particularly

<sup>29</sup> ἐστάλην /ἡλέμων γόων ἀοιδὸς ὥστε πολιὸς ὄρνις.

<sup>30</sup> The bird in this passage has been identified as a swan because the white hair of the old men is like the swan's plumage (Bond 1981, 95-96). It might well not be a swan, or at least its lament is very different from the one uttered by the swan (explicitly named) in 692. 'If *polios* means 'white' perhaps it might be a sea-gull; if it means 'grey', maybe a dove.' (pers. comm. Prof. A.Barker).

<sup>31</sup> Although scholars like Bond (1981, 232) and Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1909, 361-3) consider this idea as an Utopian fantasy reflecting sophistic speculation, it is possible that Euripides is introducing more than a fantasy (the principle that 'we may jib at *φανερὸν*' 659 does not seem to us a solution to the problem).

<sup>32</sup> An inspiring analysis of this part has been given by Parry who proved that the second strophe (673ff) is not to be regarded – as many commentators did – as 'unconnected in theme and structure with the thoughts of the previous stanzas' (Parry 1965). He in fact gave evidence of the internal unity of the ode through the explanation of its adherence to the general conventions of encomiastic writing. The coherence of the choral section can be proved also by the many interconnections with the other parts.

interesting that Euripides uses a formula that must have sounded like a clear allusion to another reference to the *ailinos*: in 694 we read τὸ γὰρ εὔ, reminding us of αἶλινον αἶλινον εἰπέ, τὸ δ' εὖ νικάτω in A. Ag. 121. Bond (1981, 246) explains that this neuter from the old adjective εὔς occurred in old prayer formulae and can be used as a sign of good omen. Here we can say that good has prevailed, although the chorus are not aware of it yet.

From this perspective we can now go back to our main objective, that is to understand whether the choral songs in this tragedy – and in particular the *linos*-song in the first *stasimon* – display any particular ritual. We could think of the *linos*-song as a sort of *threnos* as they both represent a *stephanoma*, a tribute to give honour to the deceased. But there is a difference between the *threnos* quoted at 1053 and the *ailinos* at 348, if we consider the underlying meaning. Heracles' journey to Hades is of course different from the normal condition of death, especially if we consider that he is going to come back. If the *threnos* is the tribute performed as a farewell, and corresponds to the song intoned during funerals, the *linos*-song seems rather a song to be sung in rituals devoted to – we should say in preparation for – a hero's return to life. We wonder whether the representation of some god's death and life after death (like that of Heracles') can be interpreted in a wider perspective, that is the representation of human destiny. Pindar's *threnoi*, as we already said in the previous chapter, delineate a brighter perspective after death for some people. Does the *linos*-song extend similar expectations after death to the human race?<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Anthropology testifies to the existence of ritual songs aimed at accompanying the souls from one life to another. One of the most representative is the dance-drama performed during Thai funerals. As Wong points out (1998, 104) 'Buddhism teaches that death is a release from suffering and a gateway to the next life. Entertainment generates an atmosphere of gaiety'. The most elaborate performance – the *piiphaat Mon* – played during funerals, which involves reed instruments called *pui Mon*, creates 'a particular aesthetic of sadness that makes sense to a Buddhist but is probably hard for a Westerner to understand: sadness, happiness, joyfulness, and contentment join powerfully in this music' (*idem*, 124). The musician ensemble is interestingly of foreign origin (the Mon are an ethnic group from Burma) and their music is not perceived as the effect of intercultural exchange but as an event coming from Elsewhere (125), thus enriching an historical phenomenon with esoteric meaning. At another level, music and dance are intended not for the living guests but for the deceased: by the character of its sound, which is often meant to be as noisy as possible ('they didn't sound "good" as much as they sounded powerful'), music and

### *Eschatological meanings of the ailinos in other tragedies*

Symbolism of music in tragedy as a means to communicate certain values is particularly suitable for Euripides' philosophy. The eschatological meaning of the *linos/ailinos* is confirmed in other Euripidean plays, although with different nuances.

### *The ailinos in Euripides' Orestes and Helen's apotheosis*

If in *Heracles* the *ailinos* is related to a death representing a stop on a two-way journey, in *Or.* 1395-99 the same song is mentioned for a death that is just a passage to a divine condition: '*Ailinson*, *ailinson* the outlanders say at the beginning of their lament (*threnos*), ah me, in Asian accents, when kings' blood is shed on the ground by the murderous sword of iron' (Kovacs 2002), αἶλινον αἶλινον ἀρχὰν θρήνου /βάρβαροι λέγουσιν, /αἰαῖ, Ἀσιάδι φωνᾷ, βασιλέων /ὅταν αἶμα χυθῇ κατὰ γᾶν ξίφεσιν /σιδαρέουσιν Ἴδιδα.<sup>34</sup> In a few lines we get to know that Helen has not died, but just disappeared 'either because of drugs or magicians' contrivance or stolen away by the gods', ἥτοι φαρμάκοις/ἥ μάγων τέχναις ἢ θεῶν κλοπαῖς (1497a-b), and Apollo as *deus ex machina* explains this mysterious event at

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dance represent a way 'to connect cosmological spheres' and to make any Thai become an aristocrat for a moment: the dead 'can be sent on his or her way out the chimney of Mount Meru, literally dematerialized through flame and the sound of a foreign music' (126). This meaning is even clearer in 'Lamenting the Seven Sevens', the song sung to the dead passing through the forty-nine days before rebirth by Chinese Buddhists, which has the characteristics to be 'like entertainment', which people would regard 'no differently than theatrical performances' (Chen-Hua 1992, 90). Perhaps the most exemplary parallel is the 'Tibetan Book of the Dead', the famous Tibetan scripture, which deals with death, life after death and rebirth, and through the lama's chanting aims at guiding the person safely through Bardo, the world between death and rebirth.

<sup>34</sup> West (1987, 277) points out that the Phrygian 'does not come out with the aim of telling people the news; the chorus has to guide him into this role. This has the advantage that he need not, like a normal newsbringer, announce at the outset what has actually happened, viz. that Helen is not dead but vanished'. The Phrygian in this way would create suspense and would save up the surprise for the end. Similarly, Willink (1986, 312) suggests that 'this "lamenting" has the essential plot-function of reinforcing the *suggestio falsi* as to the bloody death of (*Queen*) *Helen*'.

1633-35: 'I saved her from under your very swords and spirited her away. Those were the orders of Zeus my father. For she is Zeus's daughter and so must live an imperishable life' [...], ἐγὼ νιν ἐξέσωσα χυτὸ φασγάνου / τοῦ σοῦ κελευσθεὶς ἦρπασ' ἐκ Διὸς πατρός. / Ζηνὸς γὰρ οὔσαν ζῆν νιν ἄφθιτον χρεών. Similarly to Apollo in the first *stasimon* of *Heracles*, the Phrygian slave is not intoning a death-song: he knows that something incredible happened to her, a sort of miracle that does not occur to everyone but he (and Euripides through him) uses the original ill-omened meaning of it to create suspense in the audience.<sup>35</sup> Helen has simply reached a divine status, and in other words – to push our point a bit further – she skipped all the intermediate stages of reincarnations to arrive directly to the last one, thanks to her divine parentage.<sup>36</sup>

### *The ailinos in Helen*

We have already mentioned Barker's work on symbolism in Euripides's *Helen*, which shows how the references to music in different sections of the play suggest that the heroine is guilty of some offence or negligence to Demeter. It seems difficult to identify the nature of this fault; however we intend to suggest an explanation for it. At 1353-4 we read the question in which right and holiness observances Helen has neglected, †ὦν οὐ θέμις οὔθ' ὅσια / ἐπύρωσας ἐν θαλάμοις,†. Now the *ailinoi kakoi* at 172 are far from being a *stephanoma* for the dead – using the word in *Heracles* – or a *παιῖνα*

<sup>35</sup> Arnould (1990, 221): 'Mais curieusement, ce chant, qui est très bien attesté chez les trois Tragiques, est présent dans la monodie du Phrygien d'Oreste (v. 1395-1399) comme un chant barbare et exotique' [...]. 'Intuition chez Euripide des origines de l'exclamation et des obscurités des mythes étiologiques, ou plus simplement desir d'ajouter dans son évocation, à cet ailleurs qu'est la mort, l'ailleurs d'une autre civilisation? Il est bien délicat de trancher'.

<sup>36</sup> The fashion of discovering vegetation deities affected Helen too e.g. Skutsch (1987, 188-93). We should note the Asian origin of the *ailinos*. Later on we will discuss the association between Linos and 'Asian' (or at least alien) figures such as Maneros and Adonis. West draws interesting inferences about the Linos-song in (1992, 45-6) where he notes that 'a constricted vocal style, employed by a solo performer with poorly co-ordinated antiphonal responses from a chorus, has been identified by Lomax as part of a distinctive pattern typical of the area of "Old High Culture" extending from North Africa across Asia to Malaysia'. The same idea is resumed by the scholar in (2003, 44).

νέκυσιν following Helen's speech. The difference between the *ailinos* in Heracles and these ones can be denoted easily in their different musical qualification: Helen's one is ἄλυρον 185 (Barker, 13) while Apollo's *ailinos* – and the chorus' performance in the second *stasimon* in *Heracles* are accompanied by the kithara. Differently from the chorus in the second *stasimon* of *Heracles* – in accord with the Muses Apollo and Bromios and singing like a swan – Helen's lament for all the dead soldiers in Troy is not following certain 'rules'. Her utterance is hopeless, focused only on her desperation (191-211) and her individual condition of unhappiness and bad reputation (229-51). Despite her invocation to the Sirens her lament is in fact nothing like a tribute to the dead: when she remembers her mother, her husband or her brothers she is only focused on *her* being responsible for their death (198-9, 201-2) and even while bemoaning the tragic consequences of the war she is only able to speak of her beauty, no matter how negatively she does it (236-7), and her destiny because of that (240, 249-51).<sup>37</sup> A light allusion to Helen's egocentrism seems even to be present in the choral section at 1161-64 where Hades' majesty and power on the dead is in contrast with Helen's insistence in lamenting 'But now the men are in Hades' care, their walls are overrun by violent flame, like Zeus' lightning, and you endure grief upon grief', νῦν δ' οἱ ἐν Ἄιδαι μέλονται κάτω, / τείχεα δὲ †φλογερὸς† ὥστε Διὸς ἐπέσυτο φλόξ, / ἐπὶ δὲ πάθεα πάθεσι φέρεις †ἀθλία οἷς / συμφοραῖς ἐλεινοῖς†.<sup>38</sup> Helen's fault would be therefore not to have honored the dead as they should have been – for example through the memory of their enterprises or devotion to the gods– and possibly not to have believed in certain doctrines of death and rebirth as the myth of Demeter and Proserpina teaches. The second strophe and the antistrophe (1338-68) create a strong contrast between Demeter's attitude toward Proserpina and Helen's impious behavior. At 1353-4 there is nothing that explicitly identifies Helen's fault, but the verses 1366-69 confirm what we said before about the wrong target of her prayer (†εὖ δέ νιν ἄμασιν / ὑπέρβαλε σελάνα / μορφᾷ μόνον ἠϋχεῖς.†

<sup>37</sup> Allan (2008, 309-10) notes that Helen has complained repeatedly about her beauty and the suffering it has caused: as to rely on, or show pride in, their beauty was thought characteristic of *parthenoi* – thus H.'s alleged misconduct makes sense figuratively as part of the parthenaic motifs surrounding her'.

<sup>38</sup> Murray's edition has † ἀθλίοις συμφοραῖς αἰλίνοις. † and you are bringing woe on woe . . . .

‘You gloried in your beauty alone’).<sup>39</sup> Besides, the position itself of the reproach addressed to Helen follows so closely the description of Demeter’s restored joy despite Proserpina’s death that Helen’s fault seems to be nothing but a wrong perception of death. In confirmation of the similarity to *Heracles* we find again a clear reference to Bromios (1364-5) – and to Dionysiac elements (‘the sanctified hollow reed, the din in the air of the bull-roarer whirled in a circle, the long hair leaping in bacchic joy’ ρόμβου θ’ ειλισσομένα/ κύκλιος ἔνοσις αἰθερία / βακχεύουσα τ’ ἔθειρα) – who seems to be an unavoidable presence for this sort of rituals.<sup>40</sup>

## LINOS IN LYRIC POETRY

Lyric poetry validates, as already suggested in the previous chapter, a connection between this type of song and certain deities. In fr. 128c, mentioned above, Pindar confirms the presence of Dionysus and his attribute, the crown of flourishing ivy, while mentioning the *linos*-song, the *hymenaios* and the *ialemos*. We are not surprised to find in later tradition the explanation for the words *Bôrmos* /*Bôrimos* as the names for laments and at the same time for figures to whom these laments were addressed (Hsch. β 1394: Β ὤ ρ μ ο ν · θρῆνον ἐπὶ Βώρμου νυμφολήπτου Μαρριανδυνοῦ, and Ath. *Deipn.* 14.11.31-41 (619f) ἄδοντες ἀνακαλοῦνται τινα τῶν ἀρχαίων, προσαγορεύοντες Βῶρμον. τοῦτον δὲ λέγουσιν υἱὸν γενέσθαι ἀνδρὸς ἐπιφανοῦς καὶ πλουσίου, τῷ δὲ κάλλει καὶ τῇ κατὰ τὴν ἀκμὴν ὥρα πολὺ τῶν ἄλλων διενεγκεῖν· ὃν ἐφεστῶτα ἔργοις ἰδίοις καὶ βουλόμενον τοῖς θερίζουσιν δοῦναι πιεῖν βαδίζοντα ἐφ’ ὕδωρ ἀφανισθῆναι. ζητεῖν οὖν αὐτὸν τοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς χώρας μετὰ τινος μεμελωδημένου θρήνου [καὶ ἀνακλήσεως], ᾧ καὶ νῦν ἔτι πάντες χρώμενοι διατελοῦσι. τοιοῦτος δ’ ἐστὶ καὶ ὁ παρ’ Αἰγυπτίοις

<sup>39</sup> For comments on the passage see Allan (2008, 309).

<sup>40</sup> We could not avoid noting also the presence of the *eilapinai* in this context (1338), that Hesiod referred to as the contexts for the *linos*-song. In this choral part these feasts are not actually related to the restored state of joy but while describing the stage of Demeter’s sorrow and anger the chorus says that she made an end to banquets for gods and the race of men. We cannot be sure, but the restored condition of joy described at 1345-52 cannot certainly be different from the previous *eilapinai*.

καλούμενος Μάνερος).<sup>41</sup> Frazer's followers (Palmisciano 2003,89; and even Alexiou 2002, 58-59) explained this figure as one of the many gods whose violent death and rebirth was the representation of the vegetation cycle, but it is quite clear that all these mythological details, even about his genealogy (see e.g. Poll. 4 55), come again from the misinterpretation of the word *Bromios*, one of Dionysus' epithets used during rituals where the *linos*-song was performed (Canfora 2001, 3.1599; Kowalzig 2007, 228).

## LINOS-SONG AND NEW LIFE AFTER DEATH

It is worth taking into account Kowalzig's work about the importance of the choroi to understand the drama's ritual dimension (2007). Her perspective is particularly significant from our point of view as she points out how the choros' singing and dancing manifests the presence of the Dionysiac in tragedy and the moment in which ritual and myth merge. She highlights how dithyramb and tragedy have in common 'a feature shared more widely between ritual and drama, their performativity, which has led to their perceived assimilation' (2007, 226). Her analysis of Pindar's fragmented *Dithyramb One* highlights on the one hand that the poems is linked to the so-called mystery cults of Dionysus, which were 'certainly associated with life after death' (226); on the other hand the scholar beautifully explains how Dionysus' choros played an important part in mystery cult 'by virtue of

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<sup>41</sup> 'Similarly one may note some of the songs which they sing during a certain festival that is held in their country, in which they repeatedly invoke on their ancient heroes, addressing him as Bormus. They say that he was the son of an eminent rich man, and that in beauty and perfection of loveliness he far surpassed the other; he when superintending work in his own fields, desiring to supply drink for the reapers, went to get water and disappeared. And so the people of the countryside sought for him to the strains of a dirge with repeated invocation, which they all continue to use to this very day. A similar hero is the one called among the Egyptians Maneros' (Gulick 1937). Athenaeus' explanation of the *maneros*-song is quite interesting: here it consists in the duplication of the *bormos*-song but a much earlier source as Herodotus in 2 79 9-13 says that it corresponds to the Egyptian version of the *linos*-song.



the particular nature of the dithyrambic dance' (228): the entry itself into Dionysiac cult is when one starts dancing (229).

Why is dance so important? 'The frenzied dance would reproduce the experience of Dionysus' "death" (or drowning), the *sparagmos* ("tearing apart")'.<sup>42</sup> The presence of Dionysus in choral part of tragedy is noted by Kowalzig in several passages of tragedy: in Sophocles' *Ajax* (693-705), *Trachiniae* (216-24), *Antigone* (100-61), Euripides' *Heracles* even when the chorus refrains from explicitly stating to be Dionysiac (232-44). Strikingly, the chorus regularly emerges as most Dionysiac when protagonists are about to die, which show that heroic death and Dionysiac frenzied choroi are intertwined, 'as if the dying of heroes were consistently enacted under the auspices of mystic gods' (239). The same link between death, dance, and mystic rites seems to underlie our analysis of the *linos*-song and its occurrences in drama. If the choral dancing marks the hero's participation to Bacchic mysteries— by going through a *mania* and mystic Underworld Dionysism (240)— the *linos*-song is one type of the several dances or songs that were aimed at accompanying the hero on the mystic journey to the underworld before heroisation and perennial existence.

Developing what Kowalzig says about the hero-cult aetiology (242-43), the *linos*-song can be interpreted as the performance in which mythical and ritual sphere merge by signifying a hero's or heroine's perennial existence in ritual. This interpretation would place this particular ritual in Bell' category of 'political rites' (Bell 1997, 128-35), that is 'those ceremonial practices that specifically construct, display and promote the power of political institution (such as king, state, the village elders)

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<sup>42</sup> Although the *sparagmos* is first attested in Hellenistic myths, when the Titans rip apart the god and eat the parts raw, Kowalzig (2007, 230-1) also notes that earlier epithets, such as 'Dionysus the Raw-Meat-Eater' or 'Who Tears Man Apart' ensure that 'the *sparagmos* had long had a place in the process by which Dionysiac myth relates to ritual'. A part from interpreting the dancing as a mystical experience, Kowalzig highlights the social importance of the myth: that Dionysus dies and then reappears as his own chorus is vital to his role in the community because it 'functions as a constant reconstitution of the "exclusive" mystic (polis-) community celebrating the god in the shared choral experience'. Archaic cultic world were in fact dominated by exclusive religious groups of elite status (Kowalzig 2007, 231).

or the political interests of distinct constituencies and subgroups` (128). Greek tragedy is eminently politic, Kowalzig says, and `The key feature of the plays containing elements of heroisation is that the heroes involved all become “Athenian”` (2007, 242).

The question arises whether the *linos*-song limits itself to be related to heroes and heroines – and therefore to be interpreted only as a political `rite`– or it betrays, at least in Euripides, other functions. We cannot omit to mention Frazer’s influence on the interpretation of *linos*. The already mentioned work, *The Golden Bough*, was based on the principle that the old religions were fertility cults revolving around the worship of, and periodic sacrifice of, a sacred king. This king was the incarnation of a dying and reviving god, a solar deity who underwent a mystic marriage to a goddess of the earth, who died at the harvest, and was reincarnated in the spring.<sup>43</sup> A few scholars have fallen into this tantalizing trap and explained the *linos*-song as ‘canto funebre della passione vegetale del lino’ (De Martino, 264-6) or generally ‘un canto che ritroviamo nell’ambito della cerealicoltura, della viticoltura e probabilmente della linicoltura’ (Palmisciano, 91-98) related to the ‘passion’ of a vegetation god.

We need to detach ourselves from this interpretation, that would transform Heracles or Helen in totems, and to take into account new theories. Bell introduces the category of `rites of passage` (94-102), among which she mentions the Hindu life-passage known as *samskaras* (99). These rites can be explained as the attempt to transform physical inevitabilities into cultural regularities (94). The *linos*-song may well fall into this category but requires specification, as any funerary ritual, including the *threnos* or the *goos*, has this function. It is probably better to consider the *linos*-song as Bell’s `rite of affliction` (115-120). By this definition the scholar means rituals aimed at mitigating the influence of spirits thought to be afflicting human being with misfortune. In this category she includes rituals of purification as a way to free a person from demonic possession, disease, sin, or the karmic consequences

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<sup>43</sup> Frazer (1894,214-69) describes specific work-songs as laments devoted to mythical figures who died violently at a young age. Other works following these theories are DeMartino (1958) and Palmisciano (2003).

of past lives.<sup>44</sup> If we develop this ideas, death can be considered as the worst ‘misfortune’ and perhaps the ‘all too human’ side of religion. The formulation of ideas about life after death through a ritual song might be considered as ‘people’s persistent effort to redress wrongs, alleviate sufferings, and ensure well-being’, to use Bell’s words (119). Ideas, if not doctrines, of this sort would redefine ‘the cosmological order in response to new challenges of human needs’ (120) and would help human beings to socially accept death into their life.

If this is a possible complementary explanation for the *linos*-song – having however accepted Kowalzig’s political interpretation of the choral performance – then we need to take into account the milieu where ideas of death and life after death can have originated and developed. Parker (1995) investigates the possibility that Orphic literature was related to ritual practice and in order to do so he tries to explain the meaning of Orphic theogony as explained by the Orphic poems (Descent to Hades, Theogony, Sacred Writings, Hymns, Physics, Rape of Kore (?), Mixing-Bowl, Robe, Net) and developed by later documents such as the Derveni Papyrus and the three Orphic ‘theologies’ (488).<sup>45</sup> The core of these sources is the presence of Dionysus, and the myth of his dismemberment introduces something new compared to Hesiod’s theogony: an account of the origin of mankind. Human beings would be created by the soot of the Titans who ate of Dionysus’ flesh. ‘As offspring of such ancestors we need a “release” (*lusi*) from the burden of ancestral guilt’ (F 232); and the god who can provide it is Dionysus (F 229, 232), who is always a god of “release” – though usually from the burden of care and inhibition – and who as actual victim of the Titans’ crime is (one may suppose) peculiarly fitted to pardon the descendants of its perpetrators’ (Parker 1995, 495). This myth would not only explain the association between ‘Orphic’ and ‘Dionysiac’ but also why the Orphic theogony could be deployed in a context of initiation and mysteries. Parker explains this story as the Orphic ‘arch-myth’, that ‘founds

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<sup>44</sup> In some cases, she notes (119), purification can be effected through music and dance [...].

<sup>45</sup> One recorded by Aristotle’s pupil Eudemos, another which appears in the Orphic Rhapsodies and a third ‘according to Hieronymus and Hellanicus’ (Parker 1995, 488).

Orphism's claim to be a religion of salvation, a religion which, by treating our present condition as a consequence of guilt, offers the hope that if we can efface that guilt we can accede to a condition that is altogether superior' (495). The presence of this prime crime coherently explains the Orphic theory of the body as a prison-house or a place of punishment.<sup>46</sup> However, as Parker points out, there is much skepticism about the existence of this theory before the third century BC, skepticism that he successfully faces by introducing new evidence for salvation theories as early as the fourth century BC.<sup>47</sup> He also puts the emphasis on Empedocles, whose philosophy – that we will resume in a short while – is strikingly similar to the Orphic myth (499): 'The body is indeed alien to the soul or the *daimon* or whatever name should be given to the "I" which pre-exists and enters it; to be in this world and in flesh is a disaster for this "I"; but its ills originated not in the flesh or the world but in a crime it committed before it was ever encased in mortal form' (499). This is the theory of metempsychosis and of course a great deal of cautiousness is necessary, as Parker himself suggests, in tracing it back to early Orphism. However, he says, 'Several indications combine to make a strong case' (500) and notes that passages in Euripides (*Hippolitus* 952) and Pindar (fr. 133) already present reference to metempsychosis.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> The full examination of this topic would be very complicated and certainly would lead us too far from our purpose, but we should at least remember how important the concept of metempsychosis was for certain doctrines. Long (1948); Fritz (1957).

<sup>47</sup> Parker uses literary, iconographic and epigraphic sources to do so: a Pindaric fragment from a 'lament', the golden leaves found in graves in Italy, Crete and Thessaly, a South Italian vase found at Taranto (1995, 496-97).

<sup>48</sup> It is worth mentioning other studies about this theory: Rohde describes metempsychosis through the image of the souls of the dead returning 'to life in new bodies' and resuming 'their life on earth, to this extent being "immortal"' (1925, 263-4). The scholar points out that 'According to Orphic doctrine man's duty is to free himself from the chains of the body in which the soul lies fast bound like the prisoner in his cell. [...] The death of the body only frees it for a short while; for the soul must once more suffer imprisonment in a body. [...] So it continues its journey, perpetually alternating between an unfettered separate existence, and an ever-renewed incarnation – traversing the great "Circle of Necessity" in which it becomes the life-companion of many bodies both of men and beasts.' (idem, 342). Casadio notes that the concept of the transmigration of the soul was introduced by the Orphics and that the Pythagoreans used – and spread – the same ideas in a second time (Casadio 1991, 119-55).<sup>48</sup> Rohde suggests that this doctrine was deeply rooted in the worship of Dionysus and further developed by the Orphic believers (idem, 346), although he does not refuse that it might have been inherited from other cultures, such as the Egyptian (347).

What is relevant to know is whether we can talk about eschatology, in other words a creed aimed at shaping attitudes and behavior (501). After explaining the difficulties in deciding the chronological relation of Orphism to Pherekides and to Pythagoras, Parker points out that the Orphic poets, as well as Pythagoras and Empedocles, have been called the Greek puritans and he advances the possibility that the phenomenon of the new ascetism could be a reaction against the dominant culture of that age and a refusal of the values of the city. 'Is Puritanism a by-product of a self-conscious luxuriousness?' (502). This approach can perhaps explain why Euripides uses traditional ritual – such as the *goos* – as dysphemism and introduces ideas that are probably set in this new Puritanism. We do not intend to attribute any particular creed to the playwright. However, because Orphism 'went out into the world, through poems that circulated freely' and through 'the activity of Orpheus-initiators' (504) we can hypothesize that these ideas had an influence on Euripides. The poet might have therefore chosen to use the *linos*-song as an alternative to traditional rituals related to death, in order to replace older ideas with new ones.

## **LINOS-SONG AND METAMORPHOSIS**

The *linos*-song is also introduced in passages where metamorphosis is described. Our previous investigation shows that the *linos*-song is a very versatile song. It is performed in passages that have in common one element: a hero/god who dies and comes back to life or, on rare occasions, reaches the status of the blessed. This is what Heracles, Helen, Demeter/Kore and Dionysus have in common.<sup>49</sup> The *linos*-song was not related to one of them in particular but it was the song of death before rebirth. A hint of this adaptability seems to be suggested by Herodotus in 2.79.3: κατὰ μέντοι ἔθνεα οὔνομα

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<sup>49</sup> Cults devoted to Helen are mentioned in literature (Herodotus, Isocrates, Pausanias) which has raised discussions about her divine status in Greek culture. Useful bibliography is Clader (1976); Farnell (1920); Lindsay (1975); West (1975).

ἔχει,συμφέρεται δὲ οὗτος εἶναι τὸν οἱ Ἕλληνες Λίνον ὀνομάζοντες ἀεῖδουσι 'Each nation has a name of its own for this, but it happens to be the same song that the Greeks sing, and call Linus'.<sup>50</sup> First we should notice that the *linos*-song is present outside tragedy and it might be a ritual act. Secondly, he mentions the *maneros* in Egypt a few lines afterwards but we should instead consider the more representative cases of Hyacinthos and Adonis, figures to whom tradition attributed a sudden death and metamorphosis into flowers (respectively the iris and the anemone).<sup>51</sup> The *linos*-song could have been performed also in Adonia and Hyakinthia under a different name. Then 'Herodotus mentions 'Phoenicia, Cyprus and elsewhere' as other possible areas where the *linos*-song was used and we have evidence that the Adonia were considered of non-Greek origin (Cyprus and Lesbos are regarded as the most probable conduits) while Hyacinthos has apparently a Cretan origin (Reed 1995, 317-46).<sup>52</sup> If we investigate the nature of the *Adonia* or the *Hyakinthia* we find out many elements in common with the situations described before in Euripides' plays: these cults were somehow separated from the official religion in the sense that they were not organised by the state, but carried out by private individuals, for

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<sup>50</sup> It is worth reporting the whole passage: Τοῖσι ἄλλα τε ἐπάξια ἐστὶ νόμιμα καὶ δὴ καὶ ἄλλοις ἄρισμα ἐν ἐστὶ, Λίνος, ὃς περ ἐν τε Φοινίκη αἰδιδμός ἐστι καὶ ἐν Κύπρῳ καὶ ἄλλῃ, κατὰ μέντοι ἔθνεα οὕνομα ἔχει,συμφέρεται δὲ οὗτος εἶναι τὸν οἱ Ἕλληνες Λίνον ὀνομάζοντες ἀεῖδουσι· ὥστε πολλὰ ἐν καὶ ἄλλα ἀποθωμάζειν με τῶν περὶ Αἴγυπτον ἐόντων, ἐν δὲ δὴ καὶ τὸν Λίνον ὀκόθεν ἔλαβον [τὸ οὕνομα]. Φαίνονται δὲ αἰεὶ κοτε τοῦτον ἀεῖδοντες.

<sup>51</sup> Murray and Moreno (2007, 294) suggest that 'Herodotus has in mind such parallels as the Near Eastern Tammuz/Adonis, the Phrygian Lityerses, and the Bithynian Bormus/Borimus'. Hyacinthos was the youngest son of the Spartan king Amyclas and Diomedes (Apollod. *Bibliotheca* 3.10.3; Paus. 3.1.3, 19.4), but according to others a son of Pierus and Clio, or of Oebalus or Eurotas (Lucianus *D.Deor.* 14; Hygin. *Fab.* 271.) He was a youth of extraordinary beauty, and beloved by Thamyris and Apollo, who unintentionally killed him during a game of discus. (Apollod. *Bibliotheca* 1.3.3) Some traditions relate that he was beloved also by Boreas or Zephyrus, who, from jealousy of Apollo, drove the discus of the god against the head of the youth, and thus killed him. (Lucianus *l. c*; Serv. *ad Virg. Eclog.* iii. 63; Philostr. *Im.* i.24; Ov. *Met.* 10.184.) From the blood of Hyacinthus there sprang the flower of the same name (hyacinth), on the leaves of which there appeared the exclamation of woe AI, AI, or the letter U, being the initial of Hiakinthos. According to other traditions, the hyacinth (on the leaves of which, however those characters do not appear) sprang from the blood of Ajax. (Scholia *Theoc.* 10.28; comp. Ov. *Met.* 13.395, &c., who combines both legends; Plin. *HN* 21.28.) Hyacinthus was worshipped at Amyclae as a hero, and a great festival, Hyacinthia, was celebrated in his honour. About Adonis see Apollod. *Bibliotheca* 1.16, 3.183, Paus. 6.24.6, *Orph. H.* 56 to Adonis, Ath. *Deipn.* 2.69b-d, Ov. *Met.* 10.522 & 705, Nonn. *D.* 3.400, 42.1f, 42.98, 48.264. It is worth remembering that Adonis' rituals seemed to lack priests and priestesses, which might mean that no formal structure existed, but individual simply made arrangements with their friend year by year (Parker 1996, 194). Long about Adonis' transformation into a flower says that there would be no punishment to be incarnated in a lowly plant (Long 1948, 105ff).

<sup>52</sup> If our hypothesis of connection between Hyacinthos and Adonis and eschatologic meanings stands, we would fill up a point missing in aetiological explanations of their story (Forbes Irving 1990, 279-82).

example in their own houses in the case of the *Adonia* (Men. *Sam.* 38-46); they included both occasions for lamentation and for joy and ecstatic dance (Piccirilli 1967, 109), wine was present (Ar. *Lys.* 389-96, Men. *Sam.* 41-42) and they even imply a democratic participation (slaves are mentioned for the *Hyakinthia* (Ath. 139d-f) and prostitutes for the *Adonia* (Diph. *fr.* 43, 38-41), which is a relevant aspect for mystery cults in general. It is interesting noting that Pausanias (9.29.8) mentions Sappho's invocation to both a mysterious *Oitolinos* and Adonis: Σαπφὼ δὲ ἡ Λεσβία τοῦ Οἰτολίνου τὸ ὄνομα ἐκ τῶν ἐπῶν τῶν Πάμφω μαθοῦσα Ἄδωνιν ὁμοῦ καὶ Οἰτόλινον ᾤσεν. An explanation for this use of the word is only speculative: one might guess that Sappho herself used the word *oitolinos*, perhaps as an adjective (meaning 'doomed and lamented') or as a cry comparable to '*ailinos!*'. In the light of this we might read Sappho's verse in *fr.* 140a L-P ('Delicate Adonis is dying, Cytherea; what are we to do?' 'Beat your breasts, girls, and tear your clothes' (Campbell 1982), κατθναῖσκει, Κυθέρη', ἄβρος Ἄδωνις· τί κε θεῖμεν; /καττύπτεσθε, κόραι, καὶ κατερείκεσθε κίθωνα) as a *linos*-song to be sung during the Adonia. Many centuries later we find the description of Apollo crying and singing *ailina* for Hyakinthos' death in Nonn. *D.* 2.80 (Keydell, 1959): φιλοθρήνοισι δὲ μολπαῖς / αἶλινα Φοῖβος ἄειδε δαΐζομένων ὑακίνθων, / πλέξας πένθιμον ὕμνον, 'Phoibos sung a dirge in lamentable tones for his devastated iris, twining a sorrowful song' (Rouse 1956).

Literature introduces the *ailinos* as a ritual song but there are occasional divergences: Bion's *Lament for Adonis* unexpectedly never refers to the *ailinos* but its absence is actually symptomatic of its meaning. It seems in fact that in this case Adonis cannot come back to life: καὶ Μοῖραι τὸν Ἄδωνιν ἀνακλείουσιν, Ἄδωνιν, / καὶ νιν ἐπαείδουσιν, ὃ δὲ σφισιν οὐκ ἐπακούει (94-95), 'And the Fates call up Adonis, Adonis, and sing incantations for him, but he does not heed them' and the failure of this exceptional intervention has a reason: οὐδ' ἂν οὐκ ἐθέλει, Κώρα δὲ νιν οὐκ ἀπολύει (96), 'not that he

does not want to, but the Maiden does not let him go` (Reed 1997).<sup>53</sup> Despite the magical nature of the invocation and the intervention of the Fates, Adonis does not come back because Persephone does not let him go.<sup>54</sup> The *ailinos* would be therefore absent because there is no return to life.

There are other passages to take into account: in Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* 12.119-22 Dionysus utters the *ailina* for his *eromenos* Ampelos' death, φίλιῳ δὲ νόον δεδονημένος οἷστρω/ αἴλινα πικρὰ λίγαινε, ἀκηδέστῳ δὲ σιωπῇ / χάλκεα νῶτα λέλοιπεν ἄδουπήτοιο βοείης· οὐδὲ ἐπηκτίς ἔτερπεν, `shaken to the heart by his loving passion, he sounded bitter laments (*ailina*); he left to uncaring silence the bronze back of the *boeios* unbeaten, and had no joy in the *péktis*`,<sup>55</sup> but a few verses later Atropos announces 142-46: ζῶει τοι, Διόνυσε, τεὸς νέος, οὐδὲ περήσει / πικρὸν ὕδωρ Ἀχέροντος· ἀκαμπέα δ' εὗρε τελέσσαι/ σὸς γόος ἀτρέπτου παλινάγρετα νήματα Μοίρης· Ἄ πελος οὐ τέθνηκε, καὶ εἰ θάνεν· ἡμερόεν γὰρ / εἰς ποτόν, εἰς γλυκὺ νέκταρ ἐγὼ σέο κοῦρον ἀμείψω, `He lives, I declare, Dionysus; your boy lives, and shall not pass the bitter water of Acheron. Your lamentation has found out how to undo the inflexible threads of unturning Fate, it has turned back the irrevocable. Ampelos is not dead, even if he died; for I will change your boy to a lovely drink, a delicious nectar...`. The metamorphosis is therefore an alternative to death that can happen in rare cases: only if `Moira's threads have been turned

<sup>53</sup> We know from Apollod. *Bibliotheca* 3.183 that after Adonis' birth `because of his beauty, Aphrodite secreted him away in a chest, keeping it from the gods, and left him with Persephone. But when Persephone got a glimpse of Adonis, she refused to return him. When the matter was brought to Zeus for arbitration, he divided the year into three parts and decreed that Adonis would spend one third of the year by himself, one third with Persephone, and the rest with Aphrodite.

<sup>54</sup> Reed (1997, 248-49) points out that the verb *anakleiō* (= *anakaleō*) is a technical verb for summoning the dead back to life and the verb *epaeidō* refers to the uttering or singing of incantations. He also notes that `the Greeks pictured the Fates as having power not only over sending people down to death, but over bringing them back up to life as well. They assist at the yearly resurrection of Persephone in Orph.H. 43.7, where the Seasons preside as they preside over the resurrection of Adonis in Theoc. 15.103-4 [...]. Hyg. *Fab.* 251.4 lists Adonis among those "qui licentia Parcarum ab inferis redierunt". Reed again (1997, 250) explains that `Persephone's tenacity [...] recalls the legend – no doubt intended to explain Adonis' annual "death" – that she and Aphrodite divide his year between them`.

<sup>55</sup> We used Rouse (1956) but we omitted the translation for the musical instruments being his terminology (timbrel and cithern) old-fashioned and improper. The *pektis* is defined by West (1992, 71) as a `plucked chordophone with many chords, characterized by the playing of octave concords, or the echoing of the melody at octave intervals, and strongly associated with the Lydians`. *Boeios* is an adjective meaning generally `of oxen` (LSJ): the presence of this material and bronze would suggest that this is a sort of tambourine.



womanish...’, if ‘Hades himself has become merciful’ and ‘Persephone herself has changed her hard temper’ (212-15) the water of Lethe will not cover the deceased, nor the tomb which is common to all, but earth herself shrink from covering one’s form (219-21).<sup>56</sup>

From all these passages we can draw a picture of the *linos*-song/ *ailinos*. Aeschylus and Sophocles introduce it in tragic *choreia* as a ritual formula. From Euripides on, the *linos*-song takes on new meanings and becomes euphemic: it is not sung for an individual – like the *threnos* – but to accompany certain rituals where figures like a hero or a god died. These heroes/gods are destined to continue living: some of them, like the gods, come back to life with the same appearance; some others have changed into other creatures – like flowers – and a few privileged figures like Helen skip all the passages and reach the final status of being god-like. These rituals seem to be related to the issue of hero-cult aetiology. Myths such as apotheosis, metamorphosis or reincarnation would be determinant for the establishment of a hero’s mystery cult and the *linos*-song can be interpreted as an essential ritual act aimed at providing the cult with a mythical explanation and *aitia*. Indeed, at the end of the archaic era many mystery cults flourished and developed: most importantly, the Eleusinian mysteries – which were devoted to Demeter and Persephone/Kore and where ecstatic music was indeed an important element–,<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Shorrock (2001, 176) suggests that other stories besides Ampelos’, such as Tylus and Moria (25.451-552), develop ideas about death and resurrection, and can be related not only to Dionysism but also to the concept of a poetic apotheosis ‘Even if the poet does achieve literary apotheosis, even if people do read his work, will he achieve equal status with Homer? Or is he ever destined to be a cipher, the simple vessel out of which are poured the songs of Troy/India?’ (Shorrock 2001, 176).

<sup>57</sup> Eleusinian Mysteries involve a great deal of studies, that we cannot introduce in this chapter. However, it is worth mentioning Bruit Zaidman (2005, 111-17) to understand the connection between ritual and myth. Dover (1993, 176) emphasizes the importance of the word *paizein* in the parodos of Aristophanes’ *Frogs* and points out that song, music and dance besides being aimed at religious functions (the Eleusinian Mysteries) they also were physically and aesthetically enjoyable. Dover (1994, 31) highlights the importance of the invocation to Iakchos: ‘He was the god who was carried in the procession from his sanctuary in Athens to Eleusis when the Mysteries were celebrated, and his name is the name of the processional song. In the play, it seems that he dwells in the underworld (323-4) and is called upon to come and dance with the worshippers (326-33), brandish his torches and lead them to the flowery plain (343, 350-3); then in 395 he is invoked again and asked to join the procession to the goddess (400)’. Wasson, Hofmann and Ruck (2008, 46) add that ‘through him, they would summon back the queen Persephone into the realm of the living.’ but recent studies identify in Iakchos the god guiding the initiates to Demeter on the Mirthless Rock at Eleusis, while Eubouleus guides Kore back from the underworld and carries torches to light the way up (Clinton 2010, 351).

but also cults devoted to Helen (Wildberg 1999-2000, 237), Heracles (Shapiro 1983, 12-13; Woodford 1971) and later to Hyakinthos (Wycherley 1970, 287) and Adonis (Detienne and Lloyd 1972, 135).

The aetiological and even political nature the *linos*-song can be seen indirectly by confronting two different passages about the *maneros*-song, which is the Egyptian version of the *linos*-song. In Hdt. 2.79 we read that Ἔστι δὲ αἰγυπτιστὶ ὁ Λίνος καλεόμενος Μανερώς which means that the Egyptians version of the *linos*-song was called *maneros*. This song is mentioned in Plut. *Is. et Osir.* 357e-f and is linked with a character. When Isis retired into the desert and opened the chest which contained the body of Osiris, she was followed by the son of the king of Byblos, a child called Maneros. The goddess turning round perceived him and in her ire darted at him a look so terrible that he died of the fright. At 357f Plutarch says that τινὲς δὲ τὸν μὲν παῖδα καλεῖσθαι Παλαιστινὸν ἢ Πηλούσιον καὶ τὴν πόλιν ἐπώνυμον ἀπ' αὐτοῦ γενέσθαι κτισθεῖσαν ὑπὸ τῆς θεοῦ, 'Some say, however, that his name was Palaestinus or Pelusius, and that the city founded by the goddess was named in his honour' (Babbitt, 1936). The song is therefore linked with the foundation of a city.<sup>58</sup>

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Dover (1993, 179-80) points out that Iakchos can be identified with Dionysus and 'both the Eleusinian deities have a firm foothold' in the Lenaia, a festival of Dionysus'. It is speculative but it is worth suggesting that the Demeter's song in Euripides' *Helen* – the *ailinos* – might have some relation with this type of song. They in fact share the presence of Demeter, the frenetic type of music and the link with Dionysus.

<sup>58</sup> However, we should note that both the *linos*-song and the *maneros* are linked with gods to whom Herodotus and Plutarch attribute power over the underworld and the historian even implies a link between Dionysus and Demeter with theories about the transmigration of the soul. In Hdt. 2.123 we read: Ἀρχηγετεύειν δὲ τῶν κάτω Αἰγύπτιοι λέγουσι Διμήτρα καὶ Διόνυσον. Πρῶτοι δὲ καὶ τόνδε τὸν λόγον Αἰγύπτιοί εἰσι οἱ εἰπόντες, ὡς ἀνθρώπου ψυχὴ ἀθάνατός ἐστι, τοῦ σώματος δὲ καταφθίνοντος ἐς ἄλλο ζῶον αἰεὶ γινόμενον ἐσδύεται· ἐπεὰν δὲ πάντα περιέλθῃ τὰ χερσαῖα καὶ τὰ θαλάσσια καὶ τὰ πετεινά, αὐτὶς ἐς ἀνθρώπου σῶμα γινόμενον ἐσδύνει· τὴν περιήλυσιν δὲ αὐτῇ γίνεσθαι ἐν τρισχιλίοισι ἔτεσι. Τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ εἰσὶ οἱ Ἑλλήνων ἐχρήσαντο, οἱ ἐν πρότερον, οἱ δὲ ὕστερον, ὡς ἰδίῳ ἔωυτῶν ἔοντι· τῶν ἐγὼ εἰδὼς τὰ οὐνόματα οὐ γράφω, 'The Egyptians say that Demeter and Dionysus are the rulers of the lower world. The Egyptians were the first who maintained the following doctrine, too, that the human soul is immortal, and at the death of the body enters into some other living thing then coming to birth; and after passing through all creatures of land, sea, and air, it enters once more into a human body at birth, a cycle which it completes in three thousand years. There are Greeks who have used this doctrine, some earlier and some later, as if it were their own; I know their names, but do not record them' (Godley 1999). This passage means that a) that there was a doctrine consisting in the idea that the human soul is immortal and at the end of the body it enters another living thing and encompasses a cycle of three thousand years of reincarnations; b) that some Greeks use the same doctrine (and inherited it from the Egyptians); c) that there are two groups of initiates to these doctrines 'some earlier and some later'; d) that Demeter and Dionysus are the gods ruling the underworld and therefore the destiny itself of the souls. Because of the links with Demeter's and Kore's cult and with Dionysiac elements that

## AILINOS IN FUNERARY INSCRIPTIONS

It is difficult for us to determine how the *linos*-song went through all these stages and especially how Homer's vintage song is linked with Aechylus' 'promise of destiny' and later with myths of

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Euripides attributed to the *linos*-song, we may see Orphic nuances in this ritual act. Murray and Moreno (2007, 328-29) say that the doctrine of transmigration of souls was certainly not Egyptian and his conviction probably arose partly from a misinterpretation of Egyptian beliefs or representations, partly from an obsessive interest in the *prōtos euretēs* of cultural material, and partly through the misguided application of the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy (see also Zabkar 1963). Theories of this sort are indeed present in Greek literature. The Hesiodic fragment 304MW quoted by Plutarch recalls the theory of a cycle of lives through different forms: ἐννέα τοι ζῶει γενεὰς λακέρυζα κορώνη / ἀνδρῶν ἡβώντων· ἔλαφος δέ τε τετρακόρωνος· / τρεῖς δ' ἐλάφους ὁ κόραξ γηράσκειται· αὐτὰρ ὁ φοῖνιξ / ἐννέα τοὺς κόρακας· δέκα δ' ἡμεῖς τοὺς φοῖνικας / νύμφαι ἐνπλόκαμοι, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο. 'A screaming crow lives for nine generations of men who have reached puberty; a deer is four crows; the raven grows old at three deer; then the phoenix at nine ravens; and we at ten phoenixes, we beautiful-haired nymphs, daughters of aegis-holding Zeus' (Most 2007). Empedocles' *Katharmoi* is probably the most interesting work about this belief. In fr. 115 DK the philosopher says: ἔστιν Ἀνάγκης χρῆμα, θεῶν ψήφισμα παλαιόν, / αἰδίων, πλατέεσσι κατεσφρηγισμένον ὅρκοις / εὐτέ τις ἀμπλακίησι φόνωι φίλα γυῖα μῆνι, /  $\leq$  νείκεϊ θ'  $\geq$  ὅς κ(ε) ἐπίορκον ἀμαρτήσας ἐπομόσσει, / δαίμονες οἷτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο, / τρίς μιν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλλάγησθαι, / φουμένους παντοῖα διὰ χρόνου εἶδεα θνητῶν / ἀργαλέας βιότοιο μεταλλάσσοντα κελεύθους. / αἰθέριον μὲν γάρ σφε μένος πόντονδε διώκει, / πόντος δ' ἐς χθονὸς οὐδας ἀπέπτυνσε, γαῖα δ' ἐς αὐγὰς / ἡελίου φαέθοντος, ὁ δ' αἰθέρος ἔμβαλε δίναις· / ἄλλος δ' ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγέουσι δὲ πάντες. / τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης· / νείκεϊ μαινομένωι πίσυνος. 'There is a decree of necessity, ratified long ago by gods eternal and sealed by broad oaths, that whenever one is in error, from fear, (defiles) his own limbs, having by his error made false the oath he swore – daimons to whom life long-lasting is apportioned – he wanders from the blessed ones for three times countless years, being born throughout the time as all kinds of mortal forms, exchanging one hard way of life for another. For the force of air pursues him into sea, and sea spits him out onto earth's surface, earth casts him into the ray of blazing sun, and sun into the eddies of air; one takes him from another, and all abhor him. I too am now one of these, an exile from the gods and a wanderer, having put my trust in raving strife' (Wright 1981, 270). Similarly, in fr. 117 Empedocles mentions some of his previous incarnations – 'For before now I have been at some times boy and girl, bush, bird, and a mute fish in the sea' (Wright 1981, 275). It is worth mentioning that in Empedocles' *Katharmoi* the cycle of reincarnations is a punishment for *daimones* who have offended against divine law by eating meat. They must pass through a (Cancik, et al. 2006) series of incarnations at different levels of nature for 3,000 years (fr. 115 DK), culminating in their incarnations as humans of various sorts; if they remain 'pure' they eventually become semi-divine humans (Empedocles announces in fr. 112 DK that he is now a god, θεὸς ἄμβροτος), and will then be released back into their original condition as 'long-lived *daimones*' (Wright 1981, 69-70). For more details about eating meat in Empedocles' conception see also fr. 139, 136, 137 (Wright 1981, 284-7).

Forbes Irving (1990, 3-6) whose approach to myth can be considered structuralist (although with some distinctions) explains the metamorphosis in tragedy as an 'escape from reality', a mitigation of the harshness of it. The transformation of Philomela into the nightingale is described by Cassandra in *Agamemnon* as preferable to the savage death she will suffer (Forbes Irving 1990, 17). He also remembers (1990, 126) that in early literature and iconography metamorphosis of a dead's soul into a bird was an usual theme and says that 'birds are not the vehicles of the soul of the dead hero, neither do they suggest the immortality of his companion. These are nameless and unimportant in themselves, and it is the eternity of their grief and service rather than personal immortality that is the theme of the story'. The motif of the transformation into a flower or a fruit perhaps was perceived as the development of this theme: the promise of eternity of grief becomes promise of eternity of life. Metempsychosis/metamorphosis and the theme of the bird-souls could be explained as two mythic representations of the same principle: the survival of a person after death.

apotheosis and metamorphosis. It is worth suggesting that further terminology might provide us with an explanation, although this is purely matter of speculation. Before doing so, we should take into account a funerary inscription from Mysia (IMT Gran/Pariane 1067) where the word *ailinos* does not seem to mean 'song' or 'lament': 'Ηλεῖος δ' ὄνομ' ἔσχον, ἄγων δὲ ἔβδομον λυκάβαντα/αἴλιнос ὠκύμορος ἦλυθον εἰς Αἶδαν· 'My name is Eleios, at the age of six as a quickly-dying *ailinos* I went to Ades'. The term *ailinos* is used in the nominative case and is therefore used in apposition with the subject and perhaps as a simile. We should also note that the adjective *okymoros* is an improbable attribute for a song.

The mystery remains in another funerary inscription: τύμβος ταῦτα λέγων κρύπτω νέκυν αἴλινον ὧδε, / ὄν τοκέες θάψαν πολλὰ ἄλ' ἀχνύμενοι (Bernand, Inscr.Métr. 22). Here the accusative *ailinon* and *nekun* form the object, and the relative sentence seems to be referred to the 'dead *ailinon*'. Also in this case the adjective – dead – suggests that the word *ailinos* is not used here with the meaning of lament. It is worth noting that there are affinities between this inscription and Philochorus' fragment (fr. 207): ἐπιγραφὴ ἐστὶν ἐν Θήβαις «ὦ Λίνε, πᾶσι θεοῖς τετιμημένε, σοὶ γὰρ ἔδωκαν / ἀθάνατοι πρότωι μέλος ἀνθρώποισιν ἀεῖσαι / ἐν ποδὶ δεξιτερῶι· Μοῦσαι δέ σε θρήνεον αὐταί / μυρόμεναι μολπῇσιν, ἐπεὶ λίπες ἡλίου αὐγᾶς». ἄλλως· «κρύπτω τὸν θεὸν ἄνδρα Λίνον, Μουσῶν θεράποντα, / τὸν πολυθρήνητον Λίνον Αἴλινον· ἡ δὲ πατρώια / Φοιβείοις βέλεσιν γῇ κατέχει φθίμενον». Similarly to the previous inscription the second part of the passage uses the verb *kruptō* and introduces Linon/Ailinon as accusatives. Perhaps, when the original meaning of the word *ailinos* was lost poets started inventing legends about a mysterious Linos.

In these inscriptions the word *ailinos* is coupled to two interesting attributes: *okymoros* and *nekus*. These adjectives are suitable for living beings and seem to refer to the ephemeral nature of life. Does the word *ailinos* correspond to the person to whom the inscription is dedicated? In IMT Gran/Pariane 1067 it is the child speaking and the word *ailinos* seems to be introduced as a simile. Let

us take into account the meaning of *okymoros*: Suida tells us that it is synonymous with *ταχυθάνατος* and *ἐφήμερος*. This reminds us of the *ephemeroi ampeloi* (one-day vines) grown during festivals in honour of Dionysus (Otto 1995, 98).<sup>59</sup> Is it possible that in this context the word means *elinos*, ‘grape’?<sup>60</sup> Is the child compared to the *ampelos/elinos* whose ‘death’ is ritually represented during Dionysiac rites? We cannot undervalue that despite the similarities between these two words an explanation must be found for the graphic interchange of e- into ai-,<sup>61</sup> and we do not have enough information to prove that this phenomenon happened as early as in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Our suggestion is therefore no more than matter of speculation.

However, we mentioned Nonnus’s reference to the *ailina* as the song through which Ampelos, Dionysus’ *eromenos*, became wine. There is one more reference to the *ailina* at 12.247 – αἴλινα σοῖς πετάλοισι χαράσσεται – and it is inserted in a hymn to the nectar of the grapes.<sup>62</sup> Wine is the only juice

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<sup>59</sup> ‘These flowered and bore fruit in the course of a few hours during the festivals of the epiphany of the god’ (Dionysus). ‘A choral song in Euripides’ *Phoenissae* (226-38) reveals that this vine meant to Delphi. It sings of the twin peaks lit up by the fire of the Bacchic festivals and of the vine which “daily bears its yield of juicy thick grape clusters”. As Sophocles tells us in his *Thyestes* (fr. 255), on Euboea one could watch the holy vine grow green in the early morning. By noon the grapes were already forming, they grew heavy and dark in color, and by evening the ripe fruit could be cut down, and the drink could be mixed. We discovered from the *scholia* of the *Iliad* (13 21b1) that this occurred in Aigai at the annual rite in honor of Dionysus, as the women dedicated to the god performed the holy rites (ὀργαζουσῶν τῶν μυστίδων γυναικῶν). And finally, Euphorion knew of a festival of Dionysus in Achaean Aigai in which the sacred vines bloomed and ripened during the cult dances of the chorus so that ‘already by evening considerable quantities of wine could be pressed’ (Otto 1995, 99)

<sup>60</sup> That the word *okymoros* is conventionally used in inscriptions and in connection with the *ailinon* seems to be confirmed by the *Greek Anthology* (348) although the two words are not in the same case.

<sup>61</sup> The general graphic interchange of [e] and [ai] – which is a characteristic of Modern Greek – began in the Koine in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, but considerably earlier in many of the old Greek dialects (Horrocks 1997, 162, 168). A monophthongization of [ai] into [ɛ:] is evident in Boetian spelling by the mid 4<sup>th</sup> century BC (Horrocks 1997, 33). Horrocks (1997, 179) gives examples of the phenomenon: *sai* for *se* (you), *aikasten* for *ekasten* (each), etc. Christidēs, Arapoglou and Chritē (2001, 696) give further evidence of misspellings in papyri and inscriptions: <*aigrapsa*> for <*egrapsa*> (I wrote), etc.

<sup>62</sup> εἶξον ἐμοί, κλυτότοξε, πολυθρήνων ὅτι φύλλων / πενθαλέῳ μίτρωσας ἀπενθέα βόστρυχα δεσμῶ· / αἴλινα σοῖς πετάλοισι χαράσσεται· εἰ δ’ ἐνὶ κήπῳ/στέμμα φέρει κλυτότοξος, ἐγὼ γλυκὺν οἶνον ἀφύσσω, /καὶ στέφος ἱμερόεν περιβάλλομαι, ἡδυπότην δέ/ἔνδον ἐ ἧς κραδίης ὅλον Ἀμπελον αὐτὸν αἶρω. /εἶξον ἐρισταφύλῳ, κορυθαίολος· αἱματόεις γὰρ /σπένδει λύθρον Ἄρηι, καὶ ἀμπελόεις Διονύσῳ /βότρυος οἰνωθέντος ἐρευθιόωσαν ἔερσην. (245-53), ‘Give me best, Lord of Archery, because you wreathed your unmourning hair with your mourning chaplet of dolorous petals! (*ailina*) is graven on those leaves of yours; and if the Lord of Archery wears his wreath in the garden, I ladle my sweet wine, I put on a lovely wreath, I absorb Ampelos to be at home in my heart by that delicious draught. Brighthelm, give place to Finegrapes! The bloody pours out gore to Ares, the Viny pours to Dionysos the ruddy dew of the winesoaked grape!’ (Rouse, 1956).

able to give delight (254-69),<sup>63</sup> and to rejoice the heart of Bacchos even after death (270). The god will soak it through all his limbs, *πᾶσιν ἐμοῖς μελέεσσιν ἐγὼ σέο πῶμα κεράσσω* (271). After reporting Dionysus' words Nonnus explains that 'That is the song they sing about the grapecluster, how it got its name from the young man' *καὶ τὰ ἐν ἀμπελόεντος αἰεῖδεται ἀμφὶ κορύμβου*, / *πῶς πέλεν ἡβητῆρος ἐπώνυμος* (292-3) and that the poets have another and older legend: 'once upon a time fruitful Olympian ichor fell down from heaven and produced the potion of Bacchic wine, when the fruit of its vintage grew among the rocks selfgrown, untended. It was not yet named grapevine; but among the bushes, wild and luxuriant with many-twining parsleyclusters, a plant grew which had in it good winestuff to make wine, being full to bursting with its burden of dewy juice', *γαῖη/οὐρανόθεν φερέκαρπος Ὀλύμπιος ἔρρεεν ἰχώρ/ καὶ τέκε Βακχιάδος σταφυλῆς ποτόν, ἐν σκοπέλοις δὲ /αὐτοφυῆς ἀκόμιστος ἀέξετο καρπὸς ὀπώρας· /οὐ πῶ δ' ἡμερὶς ἦεν ἐπώνυμος, ἀλλ' ἐνὶ λόχμῃς/ ἀγρίας ἡβώουσα πολυγνάμπτουσιν ἐλίνοις /οἰνοτόκων βλάστησε φυτῶν εὐάμπελος ὕλη, /ὕγρὸν ἀναβλύζουσα βεβυσμένον ὄγκον ἐέρσης·* (294-301). Thus the plant was not known yet as grapevine but simply as a plant with many-twining *elinoi*. Dionysus' hymn besides being the song *amphi korymbou ampeloentos* can be therefore called the song *amphi elinō*. *Elinos* is treated by grammars as synonymous with *ampelos* and we wonder if the original meaning of the *ailinos/linos*-song was that of song sung over the clusters.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> εὐφροσύνην τίκτουσι, καὶ οὐ στάχυς ἀνέρα θέλγει, / ὄγχνη καρπὸν ἔχει μελιιδέα, μύρτος ἀέξει / ἄνθεα κηώεντα, καὶ οὐ φρενοθελγεί καρπῷ / ἀνδρομέας ἀνέμοισιν ἀκοντίζουσι μερίμνας / ὕμειων γενόμην πολὺ φέρτερος· ἡμετέρου γὰρ οἴνου μὴ παρεόντος ἀτερπέα δαίπνα τραπέζης, / οἴνου μὴ παρεόντος ἀθελγέες εἰσὶ χορεῖαι. / εἰ δύνασαι, γλαυκῶπι, τειγὴς πίε καρπὸν ἐλαίης· / σὸν φυτὸν ἀγλαόδωρος ἐ· ἡ νίκησεν ὀπώρα, / ὅττι τεῶν λιπόωντι δέμας χρίουσιν ἐλαίῳ / ἄνδρες ἀεθλητῆρες ἀτερπέες, αἰνοπαθὴς δὲ / εὐνέτιν ἡ δὲ θύγατρα βαλὼν ζυνήονι πότμῳ, / ἢ τεκέων φθιμένων ἢ μητέρος ἢ γενετῆρος / ἀνὴρ πένθος ἔχων, ὅτε γεύσεται ἡδέος οἴνου, / στυγνὸν ἀεζομένης ἀποσεῖσεται ὄγκον ἀνίης. 'Deo, you are defeated with Pallas! For olives do not bring forth merry cheer of heart, corn does not bewitch a man! The pear has a honeysweet fruit, the myrtle grows fragrant flowers, but they have no heart-bewitching fruit to shoot man's cares to the winds! I am better than you all; for without my wine there is no pleasure in the tablefeast, without my wine the dance has no bewitchment. Brighteyes, drink the fruit of your olive if you can! My fruitage with its glorious gifts has beaten your tree. With your oily olive athletes rub their bodies, without delight; but the sadly afflicted who has given a wife or a daughter to the common fate, the man who mourns children dead, a mother or a father, when he shall taste of delicious wine will shake of the hateful burden of ever-increasing pain'.

<sup>64</sup> We should not forget that the word appears as early as in Anacreon (fr. 18 West): Δότε μοι, δότ' ὦ γυναῖκες / Βρομίου πιεῖν ἀμυστί· ἀπὸ καύματος γὰρ ἤδη / προδοθεὶς ἀναστενάζω· / δότε δ' ἀνθέων, ἐλίνοιο.

In the light of these arguments it is worth resuming Il. 18.570: τοῖσιν δ' ἐν μέσσοισι πάϊς φόρμιγγι λιγείῃ / ἱμερόεν κιθάριζε, λίνον δ' ὑπὸ καλὸν ᾄειδε/ λεπταλέῃ φωνῇ· τοὶ δὲ ῥήσσοντες ἀμαρτῇ / μολπῇ τ' ἰυγμῷ τε ποσὶ σκαίροντες ἔποντο. Perhaps, if we push our hypothesis further, instead of having κιθάριζε, λίνον the original text might mean κιθάριζ' ἔλινον because of the phenomenon of elision. Indeed, Reece (2009, 79) points out that 'the ubiquity of elision –the suppression or outright omission in pronunciation of a final vowel or diphthong (ε, ο, short α and ι, αι, οι and very rarely η) before a word beginning with a vowel – is one of the features that has made Homeric Greek particularly susceptible to the kind of acoustic resegmentation, i.e., junctural metanalysis, under consideration'. In term of percentage he highlights that 'there occurs an elision on average in 68.8% of Homeric verses'. Reece also highlights (2009, 80) that in most places word boundaries are easily distinguishable but 'the coincidence displayed by the typography of our modern texts sometimes conceals ambiguities of word boundaries, especially when etymologically obscure words are embedded in the collocations'. This is perhaps the case of the *linon*, a word that never occurred in the Homeric poems and has raised difficulties. The examples given by Reece of vocal elision (79-162) seem indeed very similar to our case. If this interpretation is plausible we can imagine that the boy was playing and singing *to the elinos*, the grape, 'and they beating the earth in accompaniment followed on with skipping feet and dance and shouting' (Murray 1999).<sup>65</sup>

To summarize our hypothesis, the *linos*-song might have been the song to be sung during ritual winemaking as the song *to the grapes (elinoi)*. However, the word was also used in funerary rites in a different form (in funerary inscriptions it was graphically reproduced as *ailinos* instead of *elinos*) and it was probably used to liken the dead person to the grapes before they become wine. Because of this epigraphical use the word *ailinos* lost its original meaning and the song 'over the clusters' became a

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<sup>65</sup> Α ᾠδὴ ἔλινος is indeed mentioned by Tryphon (fr. 18.5), a grammarian of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. However the etymology he suggests is not related to winemaking but to the work at the loom: ἡ δὲ τῶν ἱστουργούντων ᾠδὴ ἔλινος, ὥς Ἐπίχαρμος ἐν Ἀταλάνταις ἱστορεῖ. Unfortunately we are not able to verify what Epicarmus wrote: however the fact that a 6<sup>th</sup>-5th century BC poet might have noted this word seems relevant for our argumentation.

threneticos song. However, the memory of its use in Dionysiac rites – and the association with winemaking– might have caused the reinterpretation of this song as a ritual act telling the myth of various heroes' metamorphosis and return to life.<sup>66</sup>

## THE CHARACTER LINOS

If funerary epigraphy transformed *elinos* into *ailinos*, the Hesiodic fragment shows another interpretative process: through the elimination of the letter *e*, the word convert into *linos* and became the basis for the creation of a legendary figure and the spread of sometimes absurd inventions about *Linus* from the third century BC onwards. However all these literary creations seem a bit more comprehensible if we consider the change of meaning that the *linos*-song went through. Ps.-Plutarch reporting Heraclides Ponticus (*fr.* 157 Wehrli) limited himself to saying that *Linus* 'is said to have composed *threnoi*' (*De mus.* 1132 a) but Diodorus Siculus and Pausanias seem to be more enterprising on the subject. Diodorus pictures him as a technician, providing the lyre with the 'string struck with the forefinger' (3 59 6-7), a composer inventing different rhythms and songs (3 67 1), a poet (3 67 2), a teacher – Heracles, Thamyas and Orpheus were his famous pupils – (3 67 2-3), a mythologist writing

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<sup>66</sup> It is interesting noting that the Egyptian Maneros-song has many similarities with the Greek *linos*-song: the in Plutarch's *Is. et Os.* 357f ὃν γὰρ ᾄδουσιν Αἰγύπτιοι παρὰ τὰ συμπόσια Μανερώτα, τοῦτον εἶναι. τινὲς δὲ τὸν μὲν παῖδα καλεῖσθαι Παλαιστίνον ἢ Πηλούσιον καὶ τὴν πόλιν ἐπώνυμον ἀπ' αὐτοῦ γενέσθαι κτισθεῖσαν ὑπὸ τῆς θεοῦ· τὸν δ' ᾄδόμενον Μανερώτα πρῶτον εὐρεῖν μουσικὴν ἱστοροῦσιν. ἔνιοι δὲ φασιν ὄνομα μὲν οὐδενὸς εἶναι, διάλεκτον δὲ πίνουσιν ἀνθρώποις καὶ θαλειάζουσι πρέπουσαν 'αἴσιμα τὰ τοιαῦτα παρείη'· τοῦτο γὰρ τῷ Μανερώτι φραζόμενον ἀναφωνεῖν ἐκάστοτε τοὺς Αἰγυπτίους, 'for they say that the Maneros of whom the Egyptians sing at their convivial gatherings is this very child. Some say, however, that his name was Palaestinus or Pelusius, and that the city founded by the goddess was named in his honour. They also recount that this Maneros who is the theme of their songs was the first to invent music. But some say that the word is not the name of any person, but an expression belonging to the vocabulary of drinking and feasting: "Good luck be ours in things like this!", and that this is really the idea expressed by the exclamation "maneros" whenever the Egyptians use it' (Babbitt, 1936). There are therefore two versions for the etymology of the term: that the word Maneros is the name of a person and that is an expression belonging to ritual drinking. The story of the word Maneros can give useful information about the Greek *linos*-song: one of the most relevant is the propitious nature of the song. Aeschylus' use of the *ailinos* αἴλινον αἴλινον εἰπέ, τὸ δ' εὖ νικάτω, cry *ailinos* *ailinos*, 'but may good prevail' shares with the exclamation 'maneros' the sense of promise, but is here inverted and is ominous and not propitious. This is probably the result of the already existing relation between the word *ailinos* and death.



about 'the deeds of the first Dionysus' (3 67 4), and even the inventor of Greek language (3 67 1). On the other hand Pausanias complicated the situation even more by using unreliable sources of information and almost playing with them. He mentioned the alternative myth introduced by a source dating from the third century BC, the Argive poet Lobo (fr. 501, Lloyd – Jones and Parsons), that *Linus* was killed by Apollo 'for being his rival in singing' and justified the other version (Heracles killing *Linus*) saying that the Thebans referred to a second *Linus*, and he added details regarding his statue and his corpse (9 29 6).<sup>67</sup> Certainly among all these entertaining aspects there must have been something relevant for our reconstruction. The reference to Homer reveals how determining the memory of wine was for the history of these cults (9 29 5), or the already mentioned passage about Sappho in Pausanias gives us the hint to collocate the *linos*-song in cults like the Adonia. Lobo (fr. 6 Crönert, DL 1 3-4), out of his ability to invent stories, attests that *Linus* became the personification of the highest Greek knowledge: in particular he attributes to him the invention of 'a cosmogony, and of the course of sun and moon, and the genesis of creatures and crops'. A gap of almost eight centuries would provide us with a text: Stob. 1.10.5 quotes from 'Linus *On the Nature of the World*': Ὡς κατ' ἔριν συνάπαντα κυβερνᾶται διὰ παντός· / ἐκ παντός δὲ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἐκ πάντων τόπαν ἐστὶ· Πάντα δ' ἓν ἐστίν, ἕκαστον ὅλου μέρος, ἐν δ' ἐνὶ πάντα· / ἐκ γὰρ ἐνός ποτ' ἐόντος ὅλου τάδε πάντ' ἐγένοντο· (5) / ἐκ πάντων δὲ ποτ' αἴθερ ἐν ἔσσεται ἐν χρόνου αἴθρη· / αἰὲν ἐν ὄν καὶ πολλά· καὶ οὐ κατὰ ταῦτόν ἀθροῖσαι / πολλακίς [δ'] ἔσται ταῦτά· καὶ οὐποτε πείρας ἔπεισιν / αἰεὶ πείρατ' ἔχων· πῆιον γένος ἔλλαχε ταῦτόν· / ὧδε γὰρ ἀθάνατος θάνατος περὶ πάντα καλύπτει (10) / θνητὸς ἐὼν καὶ πᾶν θνήσκει φθαρτόν, τὸ δ' ὑπάρχον / φαντασίαις τ' ἀλλοιοτρόποις καὶ σχήμασι μορφῆς / ἀλλάξει τρόπον, <ὥς> ἀποκρύπτεμεν ὄψιν ἀπάντων· / ἄφθορον ἔσσετ' ἐόν τ' αἰεὶ, καθὼς τῇδε τέτυκται, 'So through discord all things are steered through all, from the

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<sup>67</sup> BNP 7, 762 points out the scarce documentary value of this poet. He used to invent 'bibliographical details regarding ancient verse writers (of every kind: epic poets, lyricists, tragedians, philosophers, etc. Right through to the legendary Seven Sages) [...]. Another characteristic trait was that a whole range of information was based on conclusion that L. Drew high-handedly from allusions by famous poets. Among the sources that L. drew upon not without occasional misuse was Heraclides Ponticus in particular'.

whole are all things, all things form a whole, all things are one, each part of all, all in one; for from a single whole all these things came, and from them in due time will one return, that's ever one and many...Often the same will be again, no end will limit them, ever limited...For so undying death invests all things, all dies that's mortal, but the substrate was and is immortal ever, fashioned thus, yet with strange images and varied forms will change and vanish from the sight of all' (West 1983, 57). This late text, which has been beautifully explained by West, is certainly the result of many philosophical ideas, but we think that the ἀθάνατος θάνατος investing all things mentioned here summarizes as well as possible the meaning of the *linos-song* sporadically assumed after the 5<sup>th</sup> century. After all we have said, the φαντασίαις τ' ἄλλοιοτρόποις καὶ σχήμασι μορφῆς remind us very vividly of the various forms of life the heroes/deities come to after dying. Metamorphosis and new life after death started being considered more than simply aetiologic myths and became matter of a new creed. Hence, the *linos-song* turned to be a sort of symbol for these eschatological ideas and at the end of a long process of transformation the word *linos* became the name of a philosopher who systematized Orphic ideas.

## CONCLUSION

The *linos-song* represents an interesting phenomenon, through which Greek culture shows a complex attitude toward ritual and expresses the capability to reinvent the meaning of a word when it is no longer understood and to adapt it to new contexts and ideas. The discrepancy between the Homeric vintage song and the *ailinos* in tragedy on the one hand and the character Linos in the Hesiodic fragment on the other (as well as in Herodotus and later authors such as Diodorus Siculus, Pausanias, Lobo, Heraclides Ponticus) might be caused by two different uses of the word *elinos*, grape.

Funerary epigraphy might have recorded a graphic change from *elinos* to *ailinos*: this graphic phenomenon as well as the formulaic use of the word might have made its meaning indecipherable at some point. However, the funerary context and the original association of the term with a song have

probably determined the change of meaning of the *ailinos* in 'lament'. This might be the reason why the *ailinos* and the *goos* result in being very similar in Aeschylus' and Sophocles' tragedies.

Euripides uses the *ailinos* with different connotations and again it is difficult to understand how this change happens. In *Heracles* the *linos* is the song that preludes the hero's return to life, in *Helen* the interconnections between the choral parts show that the *ailinos* is the song that correctly addresses the theme of death, perhaps because it gives mythical examples of return to life such as Persephone, in *Orestes* the *ailinos* is used to announce Helen's apotheosis. The Euripidean use of the *ailinos* shows that the song is now perceived as a ritual act aimed at telling stories of gods' and heroes' apotheosis or return to life. How this change happened is not detectable unless we take into account the references to Bromios and to Dionysiac elements in all these passages and consider them as the *trait d'union* between the Homeric song of the vintage (or the Hesiodic song of the *eilapinai*) and the song to be sung in mystery cults. However, already in Euripides the *linos*-song constitutes an occasion to introduce new ideas about death: Euripides might have implicitly expressed a reaction against the dominant culture and a refusal of the values of the city through the allusion to Orphic ideas about death.

As for the second line of interpretation, the Hesiodic transformation of the word *elinos* into *linos* determined the creation of a character called Linos and the invention of various stories about him after the third century BC. These legends do not tell us much about the ritual song because they are simply the result of the authors' ability to invent and entertain. However, some of Linos' features seem to have a common thread. Linos is depicted as Orpheus' teacher, a mythologist writing about Dionysus, a great musician, and even the inventor of Greek language. We can therefore identify a sort of Orphic *fil rouge*, although expanded through the use of myth. The circulation of Orphic ideas about death and perhaps Euripides' interpretation of the *linos*-song as an euphemic act has probably provided this legendary figure with Orphic attributes. All these elements converged on the attribution of philosophical treatises to a mysterious author called Linos.

The *linos*-song shows that a study of ritual in ancient Greece cannot simply be based on literary documents. The initial misunderstanding of the term (*linos* and *ailinos* replacing *elinos*) has accelerated the flourishing of interpretations and uses of it and has probably given the word meanings that are not original. In order to interpret the *linos*-song correctly it is therefore necessary to investigate how the ritual itself might have changed. The *linos*-song was sung during the grape-squeezing but we know from a Hesiodic fragment that it was also performed during symposia at religious festivals (the *eilapinai*). The information given by Homer is probably the most reliable. On the other hand the Hesiodic fragment – although distorting the original word and making it a person's name – is still not contaminated by poetic purposes and provides us with useful information about the religious context in which the *linos*-song was performed.

Tragedy makes a reconstruction of the ritual more difficult because of the poetic purposes behind the choice of the *linos*. It is therefore essential to understand the social and cultural context where an author's idea might have come from. The introduction of many mystery cults in the 5<sup>th</sup> century in Attica might have caused a real change of the ritual meaning of the *linos*-song. Myths about a hero's or god's death and rebirth within the song were probably an essential element for the foundation and continuation of mystery cults: they provided the ritual with an *aition*. This can be said for mystery cults devoted to Demeter, Helen, Heracles, Hyacinthus, Adonis. The presence of myths of death and rebirth must be traced back to the original ritual of grape-squeezing and in particular the 'death' of the grapes and their 'rebirth' into wine, as Nonnus explains through the myth of Ampelos' death.

The circulation of Orphic ideas might have then determined the adaptation of the concepts of death and rebirth to the whole human beings, and the late attribution of Orphic philosophical treatises about a ἀθάνατος θάνατος investing all things.

# CONCLUSION

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In this thesis I have tried to focus on aspects of the Greek lament that seem to have been underestimated. In particular I wanted to point out that what we know of the ritual lament comes from the Homeric poems and later Aeschylus', Sophocles' and Euripides' dramas: this means that the information we have cannot be considered as a neutral record of the ritual but rather as a poetical representation of it. This study should therefore provide significant information on how Greek society perceived and represented not only death but also the ritual acts which are linked with it. The change that the representation of the lament went through shows that Greek society gradually acquired awareness of how ritual affect their creed, their social and political order.

The archaic examples of lament– those mentioned in the Homeric poems– reflect the earlier ideas about death. First of all death is perceived as the end of life and the passage to a shadowy existence in the underworld, where everyone is indiscriminately destined to go. Secondly, death is the result of divine Justice and can be therefore the effect of a cycle of revenge. The *goos* and the *oimoge* reflect this archaic form of religiosity. The gods are represented here as vindictive, unjust – insofar they provoke sufferings–, deceitful. The curses contained in the *gooi* and the *oimogai* against them are relatively acceptable because based on accepted ideas about the gods' anthropomorphic nature. Death is the most important event to which these utterances relate, but there are other contexts where the *goos* is used, which not only present magical meanings but clearly show how gods and supernatural beings were perceived. The psychagogia, the request for revenge for a dead person, oneiromancy and even certain types of prophecy (Cassandra's prediction in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*), besides belonging to practices that Frazer or Malinowski would call magic, imply the same vision of death. The souls are simply shadows whose existence in the underworld is connected with the world of the living: they can be

summoned, take revenge on their murderer, communicate through dreams with the living. Cassandra's prophecy comes from a god and not from a ghost but it is again related to a divine justice that decides on human destiny and intervenes in life and death. The *goos* sung to accompany the souls in their journey to Hades also reflects the archaic perception of death: it is an obol to pay to guarantee peace for the souls. Again the gods are represented indirectly as beings to be pleased by giving them a tribute. In this vision of life and human destiny Justice is represented in many cases by a vicious chastisement and is personified by the Erinyes. What in the human perspective is called *goos* – and synonymous with sufferings – corresponds therefore to the Furies' paeon, a song of victory.

The *goos* seems therefore to mirror an archaic creed and vision of the gods: this justifies a change of perspective from Homer and Aeschylus to Sophocles and Euripides. If the first ones seem to report the contents of the ritual acts with little interest to the 'dangerous' and objectionable sides of the *goos* (although Homer already points out that on some occasions the deities intervene to stop it), Sophocles and Euripides give the impression to give the *goos* a negative connotation. This ritual act is not introduced as such but as the violation of the ritual and therefore as something that is to object or even to replace with different rites.

In addition to the *gooi* and the *oimogai*, archaic poetry preserves also another form of lament: the *threnos*. In this case, death is faced with a different attitude: it is accepted as a normal fact and accompanied by a formalized lament. The *threnos* has no sinister element and is aimed at giving immortal memory to the deceased. However, besides being a tribute to the dead person, this type of lament starts being introduced in tragedy as synonymous with the *goos* and as such represents a violation of the ritual and a disharmonious utterance. Whether this fact is a consequence of Solon's funerary legislation we cannot say exactly, however the passages in tragedy also help us to identify euphemic and dysphemic lament (or we should say what the poets considered as such): Aeschylus himself refers in a fragment to the present of euphemic and dysphemic *gooi*, but it is thanks to

Sophocles and Euripides that we can identify an euphemic *goos* as a simple expression of sorrow and the dysphemic one as a ritual containing mantic elements. It is interesting that the first one is represented as a harmonious utterance (whose symbol is the nightingale) while the second one is instead disharmonious and characterised by shouting and no presence of melody and musical instruments. We cannot forget that more profound eschatological meanings are present in Pindar's fragmentary *threnoi*. The *threnos*, as a literary genre, absorbed and developed the euphemic elements which were attributed to the *threnos* as a ritual lament. Its original link with the Muses and professional musicians (*aoidoi*) probably guaranteed this genre a recognized identity.

Another type of lament, the *linos*-song starts being mentioned by literature but in this case a reconstruction of what it really represented is particularly different as in Homer it is far from being a lament: it is in fact a vintage-song. It is from an Hesiodic fragment that we get to know of its threnodic nature and in Aeschylus and Sophocles it starts being called *ailinos* and becoming something similar to the *goos*. In Euripides the *linos*-song starts being surprisingly associated to myths of apotheosis and return to life (Heracles, Helen, Persephone): death seems to be introduced in tragedy as a moment of passage rather than a journey to a shadowy world. Although an Orphic interpretation of Euripides' passages can be given, we should think of the political function of drama to endorse the introduction of new cults in various areas. The introduction of rituals such as the *linos*-song can be interpreted as the need for aetiology: the account of myth of death and rebirth is the *aitia* of a cult and the choice of the theme of apotheosis or return to life might be explained by the original link with Bromios. All these stages merge into the origin of the character Linos and even to the attribution of Orphic cosmogonies to him. A possible explanation for this controversial change of meaning the term went through can be found in epigraphy and through the reading of Ampelos' myth in Nonnus. Perhaps the formulaic comparison of the dead person with the grape caused the loss of meaning of the word and the association of the word with funerary contexts. The necessity to utilize rituals in order to found new

cults must have encouraged Euripides to resume the original link with Dionysiac contexts and to give it new meanings.

From what we have tried to show, the use of terms such as the *goos*, the *oimoge*, the *threnos* and the *linos*-song points out that Greek society was particularly attentive to how ritual could affect social and political balance: the criticism to the *goos* come from a society that does not accepts revenge as a divine principle any more, the refusal of curses to a god as a ritual act originates in the conception that gods are not guilty of ill, the preference of a *threnos* providing the dead with glory to a psychagogos *goos* (that puts a human being in communication with the dead) comes from a change into the way of conceiving the underworld and the destiny of the soul after death. The fact that Euripides even introduces alternatives to these archaic rituals (which we have identified as the *linos*-song) suggests that a discussion about the ritual lament become stronger and stronger from Solon's legislation to Plato discussions on music and ritual.

I have based my research mainly on a textual analysis of the references to the lament in its various manifestations and I have drawn conclusions on its ritual meanings, although verification from scholars of ancient Greek ritual would add relevant information to my limited work. The research of the relationship between ritual and literature in ancient Greek culture – introduced and developed by Stehle and Kowalzig – has seemed to me particularly interesting and fertile and I hope that applying this method to the special case of the lament can open new discussions about the interpretation of other rituals.



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