

ON NOT MANAGING MOURNING: THE RETICENT CHORUSIN SOPHOCLES' *ANTIGONE*

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the reticence of the chorus in the *Antigone's* two scenes of lyric dialogue which are cast as ritual laments (*thrēnoi*): the heroine's interaction with the chorus in the fourth episode, before she marches off to her death, and the final *kommos* of Creon, when he laments the deaths of his son and wife. My discussion illustrates the manner in which Sophocles "manages" the choral response within the larger framework of ritual lament, by either gradually or straightforwardly silencing the expected lamentation of the chorus. In doing so, I contend that the dramatist produces moments of broken antiphony, in which the chorus either partially participates in or simply does not contribute to the lament of a character on stage. My exploration reveals the way collective mourning rituals are able to break down on the Sophoclean stage, in particular focusing on the impact of the chorus' refusal to respond and engage in the communal act of lament, which ultimately works to isolate further the play's protagonists.

Greek tragedy contains an unparalleled soundscape: from Cassandra's anguished cries of *ototototoipopoi da* in the *Agamemnon* to the shouts *euhoi* by the Asian bacchantes in *the Bacchae*, the tragic stage resonates with incredible sounds.¹⁰⁰ Between these screams of horror and cries of ecstasy, the regular song of the chorus additionally punctuates the dramatic auditory experience. In this article, I turn away from tragedy's

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¹⁰⁰ Following recent interest in the senses and materiality, current and forthcoming scholarship on tragedy has explored tragedy's auditory and vocal aspects, e.g. Nooter 2017 and Butler and Nooter 2018. On the broader soundscape of ancient Greece, see also Gurd 2016.

plethora of sounds in order to consider the rarer occurrence of choral reticence.¹⁰¹ I focus on the *Antigone* of Sophocles, which contains two unique scenes of lyric dialogue between a protagonist (both Antigone and Creon) and an increasingly reticent chorus. As I illustrate, these scenes, which are cast as ritual laments (*thrēnoi*), feature a chorus who fail to fulfil their expected role as fellow-mourners.¹⁰² In both cases, as Antigone and Creon attempt to lead the chorus in a ritual lament during their respective final scenes on stage, the communal activity of mourning fragments and collapses around them. My discussion of the manner in which the ritual of mourning as a collective enterprise breaks down on the Sophoclean stage is guided by an exploration of “managing mourning” in a double sense: first, who manages to mourn? What needs to occur between actor and chorus for mourning to be successful, and what transpires when this fails to occur? Second, how does Sophocles manage mourning on the tragic stage? How are these scenes of lyric exchange dramatically organized, and theatrical conventions employed and subverted? In a play that is unusually populated by the dead (Andújar and Nikoloutsos, 2017: 20-4) and which additionally pivots on the very right to perform burial and funerary rites for the dead, these questions take on an added sense of urgency.

In exploring the multiple senses in which mourning is “managed” on the Sophoclean stage, I argue that these scenes constitute moments of broken antiphony, in which the chorus either participates only partially in or simply does not contribute to the lament of a character on stage. The growing chasm between the silent chorus and actor in both scenes reveals the way in which Sophocles works to isolate the solo voice

¹⁰¹ Previous considerations of tragic reticence and silence tend to focus on the phenomenon in individual characters: see, e.g., Montiglio, 2000: 158-250; Chong-Gossard, 2008: 113-154; Goldhill, 2012: 44-6. Chong-Gossard (2008: 155-203) discusses “oaths to silence” made by Euripidean female choruses as a form of reticent solidarity: “although some form of the Greek word *sigāō* is used in reference to virtually all these “silent” female choruses, this does not mean that choruses stop communicating; it means that when they speak to anyone other than their heroine, they do not mention her plot”, (156).

¹⁰² On the antiphonal and collective nature of *thrēnoi*, which required interaction amongst an assembly of mourners, see Alexiou 1974, Holst-Warhaft 1992, Sultan 1993, Derderian 2001, Foley, 2001: 19-56, and Swift, 2010: 298-366. On the representation of lament in tragedy, see also Weiss 2017.

in moments of tragic mourning in moments of what are meant to be communal rituals.¹⁰³ In the first scene, Antigone's dynamic with the chorus illustrates an elaborate process of separation which directly leads to her unique self-lament and underlines the unusual nature of her death. In the second, Creon's inarticulate cries of mourning represent a rare form of male lamentation (Suter 2008), as typically both the leader of the lament and the responding chorus would be female or foreign, but here the solo voice is that of the chief male citizen. As I contend, the chorus' deliberate dramatic reticence in these two moments illustrates the multifaceted nature of tragic choral performance, which could additionally encompass silence.

ANTIGONE AND THE CHORUS, 801-882

In the play's first lyric dialogue, Sophocles stages the gradual silencing of the choral voice, at the precise moment when a joint song of lament and consolation might be expected. Rather than a communal lament and funeral song honoring the soon to be dead Antigone, Sophocles gives us a moment that is rather fraught and contested between the heroine and the chorus. On a formal level there are frequent verbal echoes, addresses and responses between chorus and actor, but such close formal engagement between Antigone and the chorus ultimately emphasizes the failure of actual ritual collaboration. This half-sung half-chanted lyric dialogue in fact represents a severe disjunction between the two groups, which is partly expressed through meter. Here, not only do the chorus' spoken trimeters clash with the singing protagonist's words, but their initial answers in chanted anapests also stand in contrast to Antigone's sung lyrics, as it becomes clear that they refuse to follow her lead in song. In the second half of this scene, the chorus do shift into lyrics that metrically match those of Antigone, but their remarks nevertheless constitute heavily condemnatory rebukes. Even when echoing each other metrically, protagonist and chorus speak in markedly different registers throughout the exchange. The metrical contrast illustrates

¹⁰³ On the isolation of Sophoclean heroes, see Knox 1964; on their propensity to sing, Nooter 2012.

a serious chasm between a chorus and the protagonist, who has been cast into the role of their supposed leader (*exarchos*). In this light, I contend that the role of the chorus is far from consolatory or compassionate as many scholars have proposed (e.g., Knox, 1964: 176-7; Burton, 1980: 118-27; Winnington-Ingram, 1980, 137-40; Gardiner, 1987: 91-3, Goldhill, 2012: 111).

The opening of this scene builds the expectation that a joint lament or (at the very least) a shared song of consolation will take place. The chorus, who had prior to this scene sung a hymn to Eros — a scene that scholars have read as a substitute for the wedding song of Antigone and Haimon (Seaford, 1987: 108) — now shift to a more funereal setting. They declare that they are unable to hold back their stream of tears as they see Antigone approaching:

But now I myself am carried
beyond the laws as I see these things,
and I can no longer restrain the stream of tears
when I see Antigone here passing to the bridal chamber
where all are lulled to sleep.¹⁰⁴ (801-5)

The chorus express their emotional involvement with Antigone's suffering. As they announce her entrance on stage the Theban elders specifically speak in terms of a funereal bridal chamber (*παγκοίτην θάλαμον*), introducing the new motif of the Bride of Hades, a figure which intertwines funeral and marriage, ceremonies ritualistically similar in ancient Greece (Rehm 1994: 11-29 and Seaford 1987).¹⁰⁵ The chorus' words here indicate that they sympathise with her situation, introducing the expectation that they will provide her with consolation in the exchange that follows.

¹⁰⁴ All translations of *Antigone* are adapted from that of Lloyd Jones (1994).

¹⁰⁵ In parts of modern Greece, funeral laments continue to bear close resemblance to wedding songs. Danforth (1982: 74) writes that the two types of songs shared so much similar iconography, musical form and narrative structure that many songs are sung at both funerals and weddings. See also Alexiou, 1974: 120-22 and Danforth, 1982: 86-9 for examples of songs that are sung at both weddings and funerals.

In next strophe, calling upon the chorus as witnesses, Antigone attempts to draw them in as participants in a new type of song that she begins, precisely by echoing the very language they had previously used as they announced her entrance:

See me, citizens of my native land,
as I make my last journey,
and for the last time look on the light of the sun
and never more. Hades who lulls all to sleep
is taking me, still living,
to the shore of Acheron,
not with the wedding song that was my due,
nor has any song been sung for me at my marriage,
but I shall be the bride of Acheron. (806-16)

Her opening command, “see me” (ὄρᾶτε, 806) builds on the chorus’ “seeing” (ὄρω) at 802 and “I see” (ὄρω) at 804; likewise, παγκοίτην (804) is echoed in παγκοίτας which she uses of Hades (811). She also elaborates upon what the chorus had hinted, when they spoke of seeing her approach the funereal bridal chamber at 804-805, by drawing attention to the fact that she is walking her last journey and also looking upon the light of the sun for the last time. Antigone additionally emphasizes that she will not have a share in the *hymeneia* (ὑμεναίων / ἔγκληρον, 813-14) and will generally be without any song (ῥυμνος) at her marriage (815-816). Conspicuous repetitions (such as last...last [νεάταν...νέατον] at 807-808) furthermore underline these absent rituals.¹⁰⁶ In these few lines, she evokes ritual in language that is itself ritualistic in its repetitions. The impression given by such close and emphatic engagement with the chorus’ words is that she hopes to lead them in a funeral song, and that they will reply in a manner that will echo and complement her words in similar fashion.

¹⁰⁶ Later she will continue to invoke her “unwed” status: ἄγαμος (867), ἀνυμέναιος (876), ὦ τύμβος, ὦ νυμφεῖον (891).

Sophocles quickly subverts these expectations. Instead of responding to Antigone's lyric grievances, the chorus reinterpret her condition as praiseworthy in their response at 817-22. Though they acknowledge her as being the subject of song using words such as renown (κλεινή) and praise (ἔπαινον) at 817 (Kitzinger, 2008: 51), the chorus here deny that she is a figure worthy of lamentation. They additionally do so in anapests, a chanted and restrained meter (Brown 1977), which contrasts directly with Antigone's more impassioned lyrics. Their lack of a matching lyrical response suddenly transforms Antigone's song into a monody or solo song, as the chorus fail to enter into a process of lamentation and instead offer an alternative understanding of her situation. At the formal level the structure of the chorus' answer somewhat mimics Antigone's: they also order their replies around the repetition of the word "not" (οὔτε...οὔτε, 819-20), which match those from Antigone's stanza (813-4). Though their response contains some intentional verbal parallels that are at a formal level engaging with Antigone's lyric stanza, they nevertheless disagree that she is a subject worthy of lament. The chorus instead assert her singularity, namely, that of all mortals she will descend to Hades of her own will, alive, and alone (ἀλλ' αὐτόνομος ζῶσα μόνη δὴ θνητῶν Αἴδην καταβήσῃ, 821-22). Their response initiates an elaborate process in which the chorus contest Antigone's claim to lament. The chorus' words suggest the potential for collaborative lament to dissolve into competing understandings of the subject of lamentation.

Forced to continue her song without an antiphonal reply from the chorus, in the antistrophe, Antigone immediately takes up the chorus' claim and attempts to argue her case as a lamentable subject:

I have heard that the Phrygian stranger,
Tantalus' daughter,
died the saddest death near lofty Sipylus;
her did the growth of the rock,

like clinging ivy, subdue,
and as she melts away rain,
as men say,
and snow never leave her,
and with her ever—weeping eyes
she soaks the mountain ridges;
as the god sends me to sleep I am most like her. (823-33)

She points out the clear parallel between her death and that of Niobe, who is transformed into stone following the slaying of her children by Apollo and Artemis. Her petrification, in Antigone's view, resembles her own imminent stony death. This antistrophe is framed by two superlatives: Niobe's death is described as "saddest" (λυγροτάταν, 823) and Antigone herself is "most like her" (ὁμοιοτάταν, 833). Both superlatives directly contend with the chorus' view of Antigone as possessing glory and praise in 817 (οὔκουν κλεινὴ καὶ ἔπαινον ἔχουσ'). The chorus then counter Antigone's parallel by demonstrating a crucial difference between the two cases: Niobe, in their view, was of divine ancestry (ἀλλὰ θεός τοι καὶ θεογεννής, 834), in direct contrast to their own humanity (ἡμεῖς δὲ βροτοὶ καὶ θνητογενεῖς, 835). Where Antigone seeks to present herself as singular and perhaps divine, the chorus immediately insist that she belongs with them on the side of the mortals through the pronoun "we" (ἡμεῖς). Again, far from simply *being* isolated, it is the very status of her isolation that we see contested. In the place of a communal song of lament, Sophocles stages an elaborate process of negotiation in which Antigone's status is continually challenged, through both contrasting meters and competing points of view.

The fact that Antigone herself is deeply disappointed as evident in her response substantiates my claim that the audience would have recognised the chorus' failure to fulfil their expected role as fellow mourners of Antigone. Once she has realised that

the chorus will not participate in a joint lament, Antigone construes the chorus as enemies in a new strophe at 838-852. Interpreting the chorus' words as mockery (οἴμοι γελῶμαι, 839), she suggests that they do her outrage (με...ὑβρίζεις, 840). She draws attention to their identity for the first time in 843, as rich men of the city (ὤ πόλεως / πολυκτῆμονες ἄνδρες), thus underlining the distance between them in terms of gender and status. In increasing agitation (as evidenced by the dochmiacs and iambic lyrics in 845-852), Antigone then appeals to the Theban waters and soil to be her witnesses to her position as "unwept by friends" (φίλων ἄκλαυτος) at 847. As Antigone furthermore claims, the chorus' unwillingness to recognise her pitiable state has alienated her in such a way that she gives herself a liminal status: at 851 she describes herself as a metic (μέτοικος) who belongs neither among the living nor the dead. It is only after she has vehemently rejected their view and their friendship that they begin to rebuke her, for the first time joining her in song at 853-6: "Advancing to the extreme of daring, against the lofty altar of justice, you stumbled my child! And you are paying for some crime of your fathers". From 802-838, the chorus had responded to Antigone's lyrics with anapests; at this point they finally join her in lyrics that mimic some of the iambic meters she had been employing in her previous strophe, particularly at 848-52. It is significant that the moment at which they choose to likewise respond in lyrics is the moment when they most disagree.¹⁰⁷ Kitzinger, who reads the *kommos* as a "struggle between the chorus and Antigone to control the use of song" (Kitzinger 2008: 50) sees this moment as a "lyric competition" (Kitzinger 2008: 56). In the remainder of this scene, while there is the form of dialogue, each is in fact singing and responding to themselves: instead of antiphonal song where one sings a strophe that prompts a similar metrical response from the other in an antistrophe, or

¹⁰⁷ Ditmars 1992: 118 sees a continued contrast in "the greater regularity of their iambs over hers".

even a song with internal resposion where the chorus and actor share each strophe, this *kommos* features what are effectively two competing songs, which are performed within the context of a *communal* ritual act.

Towards the end of the “dialogue” Antigone increasingly draws attention to her unwept status that was mentioned at line 847, once again illustrating *her* expectation of conducting a joint lament with the chorus. The epode she sings begins with the word “unwept” (ἄκλαυτος) at 876 and ends with a statement that she lacks friends who would lament her unwept fate (τὸν δ’ ἔμὸν πότμον ἀδάκρυτον / οὐδεὶς φίλων στενάζει, 881-2). The chorus’ tears at the beginning of this lyric dialogue, however, had suggested that such a song would actually take place. When the chorus fail to provide the pity that she seeks and instead choose to interrogate her situation, Antigone, who had been seeking a community of grief, responds by stressing her singularity and ultimately her isolation.

The many formal parallels and close echoing of words set up the expectation of joint action and communal song, yet the lyric dialogue stages a gradual but certain process of separation that leads to Antigone’s isolation. In this scene, a mourning song which should have been expressed through lyric dialogue fragments at what should be the moment of its validation. Instead of uniting the two groups in harmonious song, Sophocles illustrates the way in which both parties misunderstand and misinterpret one another, and stages the removal of the choral voice at a moment when a communal song of lament and consolation is expected. There is no resolution; both parties have reached an impasse immediately preceding Antigone’s death. Through the interaction of Antigone and the chorus, Sophocles suggests that mourning is a collaborative process that requires the recognition and participation of others. The playwright reveals the necessity of this collaboration precisely by staging the results of its failure.

CREON'S SOLITARY THRĒNOS, 1257-1353

The chorus' interaction with Creon in the play's second and final lyric dialogue once again illustrates the manner in which Sophocles subverts conventions by staging an exchange between an actor who tries to lead a choral song with an uncooperative and reticent chorus. In this case, however, Sophocles goes even further. He does not simply have the chorus offer an alternative interpretation but has them not participate in the communal mourning process at all. Here the chorus refuses to interact with the grieving Creon, as he mourns his deceased son and wife, at the precise moment when the ritual is most needed, in a scene of *prothesis*, when their bodies adorn the stage.¹⁰⁸ The solo song of Creon is filled with the characteristic tropes and stylistic features of ritual lament — such as inarticulate cries, direct address to the dead, repetition and exclamations (Griffith, 1999: 342) — but the absolute lack of response from the chorus of elders marks a severe disjunction in the mourning ritual. It is Creon alone who employs these stylistic features while lamenting first the death of his son and then that of his wife: his rousing laments receive no response from the group of elders who witness his cries. In other words, Sophocles showcases two corpses which are surprisingly mourned by a single isolated voice. On one level, the chorus' silence denotes a thematic transition that underscores Creon's final debasement. The lack of antiphony in this threnodic context not only drastically isolates Creon's mourning voice but it also directly recalls the earlier dialogue between Antigone and the chorus, in which the chorus similarly refrained from their expected role as fellow mourners. Now, however, we have the opposite phenomenon: silence instead of constant interrogation and refutation. As the scene progresses and the king's laments are repeatedly met with silence, Creon increasingly begins to rely on repetition to provide the sense of antiphony that the chorus fail to offer. In this way, Sophocles stages a corrupted ritual

¹⁰⁸ The *prothesis* was a key part of ancient Greek burial rituals, during which the body would be mourned; see Kurtz and Boardman 1971, Vermeule 1979, Garland 1985, Morris 1987 and 1992, Seaford 1994, and Sourvinou-Inwood 1995.

lament that is led and answered by the same man: Creon, previously the chief political voice in the city, takes on the role of both lead mourner and chorus (Griffith, 1999: 342). In other words, Sophocles stages Creon's failure to *lead* the chorus in a collaborative performance.

As with the previous scene, the actor initiates contact with the chorus and attempts to begin the song. Creon's lyrics at 1261-1269 are direct response to the chorus' announcement of his entrance at 1257-1260, in which they propose that his ruin came from his own error (ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ἄμαρτῶν, 1260). In the previous scene, the chorus was moved to tears by the sight of Antigone; the chorus here, however, does not offer any words of pity, despite the "conspicuous monument" (μνημ' ἐπίσημον, 1258) of Haimon's body present on stage, but rather single out Creon for blame. Considered in isolation, Creon's first lyrical utterances constitute a miniature lament for the dead Haimon, with many of the formal features that define lament: cries, direct address, exclamations, anadiplosis, polyptoton, redundancy and the topos of a dead child (Wright 1986: 81). In particular, Creon's frequent repetition (e.g. φρενῶν δυσφρόνων, 1261 and νέος νέω, 1266) creates an atmosphere of quasi-ritual intensity that is appropriate to a funereal context. Yet the focus of many of these stylistic features are not on Haimon but on Creon himself, who laments his own rash decisions which led to the death of his son. In doing so, he echoes the verdict of the chorus, further elaborating on the idea of his own error (αὐτὸς ἄμαρτῶν): he begins with "woe for the errors of my mindless mind" (ὼ φρενῶν δυσφρόνων ἄμαρτήματα, 1261), and he ends by once again reemphasising the chorus' point that he is to blame: "through my folly, not through your own!" (ἐμαῖς οὐδὲ σαῖσι δυσβουλίαις, 1269). By choosing to lament his errors and the disaster caused by his

decisions, he deliberately engages with the chorus on their terms. In these lines it is thus clear that Creon, throughout his lament for his son, is in direct dialogue with the chorus. He is, in other words, attempting to establish contact with the chorus on their own terms in order to elicit their response, which is necessary for successful communal mourning to occur.

Yet the powerful exchange which Creon seeks and the *prothesis* scene demands soon fragments. In their reply to Creon, the chorus merely offer a terse statement expressing the notion that he has learned too late (οἴμ' ὡς ἔοικας ὀψὲ τὴν δίκην ἰδεῖν, 1270). Once again Sophocles employs a different meter so as to underscore the vast difference in emotions: the chorus' spoken iambic trimeter denotes a sharp contrast to Creon's impassioned sung dochmiacs. Not only do the chorus' spoken trimeters counteract Creon's frenzied lyrics, but also their refusal to engage in antiphonal lyric singing forcefully detains Creon, preventing him from delivering the corresponding antistrophe. What the king then utters at 1271-1276 in response instead of the expected antistrophe can only be considered some sort of a quasi-lyrical mixture, one that wavers between fervent sung dochmiacs and spoken iambic trimeters:

Alas,
I have learned, unhappy as I am;
then it was, then, that a god bearing a great weight
struck my head, and hurled me into ways of cruelty,
overthrowing my joy so that it was trodden under foot!
Ah, ah, woe for the troubling troubles of men!

Beginning with the exclamation οἴμοι, he first admits to having learned his lesson in standard conversational trimeter, but then Creon, who had earlier in the play rejected the guard's suggestion of a divine force at work in the burial of Polyneices, unexpectedly introduces the idea of "a god bearing a heavy weight" in dochmiacs in 1273, where he employs a dense cluster of short syllables that produce a frantic effect.

This contrasts more with the regular beat of the conversational iambic trimeter at 1272 and 1274. Ultimately, he reverts to dochmiacs in his last two lines 1275-6, with exclamations such as οἴμοι and φεῦ φεῦ inserted at the beginning of each line.

Creon ends with repetition “troubling troubles” (πόννοι...δύσπονοι) at 1276, in an attempt to once again invite the chorus to engage with him and his suffering.

However, the addition of the messenger to the scene decisively alters the dynamic between Creon and the chorus. The messenger becomes the other voice on stage during the bulk of Creon’s laments, a voice which is furthermore contrasted from that of Creon: he delivers all his lines to the king in the iambic trimeters of speech, against Creon’s heavily expressive dochmiac laments. It is his news in 1281-3 which provokes the antistrophe of Creon’s lament in 1284-92. Creon’s antistrophe is a series of questions, the first of which is addressed to Hades, but the rest are addressed to the messenger. Though he has asked a number of direct questions of the messenger, Creon does not immediately receive a full account of her death; instead the messenger points out the *ekkyklema* which carries the body of the queen at 1293: “you can see it! It is no longer hidden indoors” (ὁρᾶν πάρεστιν· οὐ γὰρ ἐν μυχοῖς ἔστι). Modern editors, including Hugh Lloyd-Jones and Nigel Wilson (following Richard Jebb), have assigned these pivotal verses to the chorus, and not to the messenger, on the basis of maintaining symmetry: the chorus had spoken at 1270, immediately after the strophe, so they must speak here as well despite the manuscripts assigning this line to the chorus (Kamerbeek, 1978: 206; Lloyd Jones and Wilson, 1990b: 148; cf. Jebb 2004, Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990a, and Griffith 1999, at verse 1293). Yet given the silence and lack of exchange between the king and the body of elders thus far as well as the predominant role of the messenger, it seems to me prudent to follow the manuscript assignation. Furthermore, given the various subversions that are taking place in this scene, symmetry is not guaranteed, nor should it be expected.

The chorus' silence continues even during the messenger's brief description of Eurydice's death at the altar and in particular at the mention of her dying curses. The singing collective maintain their silence even while Creon delivers another lyric strophe fraught with more repetitive word-play at 1306-11, such as the repetition of αἰαῖ αἰαῖ (1306) and polyptoton with "wretched" (δειλῆιος...δειλῆία) at 1310-11. It is at this point of intense repetition but still no proper antiphony that Sophocles provides a glimpse of another mourning voice: according to the messenger, in stabbing herself Eurydice mimicked the death of her son, an experience which the messenger describes as "loudly to be lamented" (ὄξυκώκυτον πάθος, 1316), which furthermore underscores the lack of a proper lament in the following scene.

Apart from this brief suggestion of the lamenting voice of Eurydice, Creon is the only prominent mourning voice exclaiming ἰὼ, οἴμοι, αἰαῖ, ὦ μοι throughout this *kommos*. Once he is on stage, the chorus replies only at 1270, where they suggest that he has seen too late, but nowhere else until 1326, when Creon requests to be led off and more importantly, where he declares himself to be the living corpse the chorus sang of earlier. Given the prominence of women in ancient Greek lamentation practices (Alexiou 1974, Holst-Warhaft 1992), one could argue that in depicting Creon as a frantic mourning figure Sophocles aims to feminise him. In this final lyric dialogue, Creon *does* perform the predominantly female role of highly emotional lyric lamentation over a dead child. Yet looking at this scene alongside the previous one with Antigone another allows us to see how Creon is constructed as the counterpoint to Antigone's assumption of the role of mourner and the one who buries. Now there is literally no one but him to mourn the members of his family. In this lyric dialogue he also enters in a funeral procession that reverses Antigone's departure to death/marriage. He is led away like a bride or prisoner, which is a dramatic mirroring of Antigone's own last exit.

Immediately preceding this lyric dialogue, Sophocles stages a brief conversation between the chorus and the messenger, who discuss Eurydice's departure and unnatural silence. The messenger naively believes that she has retreated indoors so as to mourn privately in the house. The chorus, on the other hand, offers the following view: "I do not know; but to me both excessive silence and loud crying to no end seem grievous" (οὐκ οἶδ' · ἐμοὶ δ' οὔν ἢ τ' ἄγαν σιγὴ βαρὺ / δοκεῖ προσεῖναι χή μάτην πολλή βοή, 1251-2). A few verses later, the messenger repeats the idea that excessive silence is dangerous (εὔ γὰ ρ οὔν λέγεις. / καὶ τῆς ἄγαν γάρ ἐστί που σιγῆς βάρος, 1255-6). This final scene, which follows this curious exchange, is indeed characterised by an "excessive silence" from the chorus and an abundance of lament from Creon, a lament which remains necessarily incomplete as a result of the silence of the chorus. The nature of the interaction between the chorus and Creon in this last lyric dialogue, particularly when compared to its pair in the play, thus suggests a powerful reading of the play: the complete lack of antiphonal response underscores and brings about Creon's utter isolation from society, far more than that experienced by Antigone, who, as I have previously suggested, was at least previously able to maintain a prolonged and animated negotiation with the chorus.

By depicting disjunctions between the protagonists and the chorus at precisely the moments the protagonists are tasked with leading the communal lament, Sophocles takes measures to exploit the thematic and performative aspects of ritual lament in order to isolate the protagonist as a soloist and to depict him as a failed leader of the chorus. In both cases the ritual formalities are disrupted in order to reveal the terrifying ease with which collective expression can give way to a deserted voice. The antiphonal response of the accompanying mourning group is fundamental to ritual lament; it is precisely the chorus' refusal to respond and take up their role as full participants in the ritual that initiates the process of isolation, and emphasizes the

need for rituals not only to be collectively performed but also collectively validated if they are to succeed. In the case of Creon, the vision of the prominent voice of reason now engaged in inarticulate solitary grieving reveals the reliance of even the city's chief political male on these larger processes of communal validation.

In moments of ritual laments and mourning in ancient Greece, the response of a group was absolutely essential: the inarticulate grieving of women is transformed into an ordered song, into music, precisely at the point when others appear to echo and to share the pain of the lead mourner (Ford 2010: 285). Yet antiphony is not just an aesthetic or dramaturgical device, but also serves a significant social purpose. The work of anthropologists and ethnographers who study modern lament underscores the important role that antiphony plays in validating the laments of the leaders. Nadia Seremetakis, for example, highlights its function among Maniot women in the southern Peloponnese: “the truth claims that arise from the ritual...depend on the emotional force of the pain, and the jural force of antiphonic confirmation. By stating that they cannot properly sing laments without the help of others, Maniot women reveal that pain, in order to be rendered valid, has to be socially constructed in antiphonic relations” (Seremetakis, 1991: 120). In the *Antigone*, Sophocles allows us to experience two solo laments that are witnessed but not validated, thereby drawing attention to the conditions on which such laments depend. This is not a simple case of singing actors taking a more engaged musical role in the drama, but rather the demonstration of the failure of collaboration which lies at the heart of successful choral performance. In the case of the first lyric dialogue, the dramatist leads us to believe that the chorus will respond and take up Antigone's call for a song, yet their time is rather spent in contention with Antigone. With Creon the chorus passively witness his lament as he increasingly begins to assume the choral role in a futile attempt at self-validation. In the *Antigone*, Sophocles thus removes the antiphony and collaboration between actors and chorus that might be expected, especially when

faced directly with death. Both Antigone and Creon ultimately fail to lead the chorus in a functioning and mutually beneficial performance, and the deaths on stage are thus left unwept and unvalidated by the broader community and polis.

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