THE DEMOS IN GREEK TRAGEDY*

1. Introduction

This paper looks at a relatively neglected character in Greek tragedy: the people.[1] I cannot claim to produce a complete survey of this issue; however, I shall identify some different ways in which a tragic poet could portray a city's population, and discuss some examples.

This is an important and interesting topic for two reasons, which are linked throughout, for behind my argument is the contention that a consideration of the original staging of a tragedy can help us to understand its politics. In the first place, it is instructive to ask how a poet could meet the challenge of representing the population of a city on stage; in the second, this exercise is likely to shed light on the political function of Greek tragedy. More specifically, it will shed light on the relationship between tragedy and democracy – a vexed question in recent years – for no consideration of democracy in drama can neglect the role of democracy's central player.[2]

What do I mean by the 'people'? Given the political emphasis of this paper, I am predominantly interested in the demos, that is, the totality of free male adults native to a city.[3] This demos took political form as a popular assembly, which had real power

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[1] Two very brief recent discussions are West (2006) and Brock (2010).

[2] The prevalent view that tragedy is closely linked to Athenian democracy owes much to Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1988, French originals 1972 and 1986). See also Goldhill (1987/1990); Saïd (1998); Meier (1993); P. Wilson (forthcoming). Recent work that counsels against making too close a connection between tragedy and democracy includes Griffin (1998), (1999); Rhodes (2003); Henderson (2007). Goldhill responds to Griffin in Goldhill (2000), and is defended by P. Wilson (2009), cf. Wilson and Hartwig (2009). My own position (close to Rhodes) is that the central political phenomenon in tragedy is the Greek polis in general; democracy features prominently in a handful of tragedies but most political tragedies had a broader political appeal (Carter (2004), (2007)); the Athenianness in tragedy is felt principally in its culture of debate (Carter (forthcoming a)).

[3] On the polis defined as its citizens (*politai*) rather than the location or its buildings, see Arist. *Pol.* 1274b39 ff.; cf. S. *OT* 56–7, Thuc. 7.77.7; Osborne (1985) 8–10. Aristotle defines a citizen as someone who has a share in the *politeia*, hence 'often somebody who is a citizen in a democracy is not a citizen under an oligarchy' (Arist. *Pol.* 1275a3–5). In this paper, however, I am interested in all free adult men, whatever the constitution.

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in a democracy but in other cities still had an important function in validating the decisions of kings or ruling councils.[4] There are several Greek words used in tragedy to refer to the citizen body, of which demos is just one, although I shall use it for convenience in this paper. To do so might seem to presuppose the importance of democracy to tragedy. However, a non-democratic city had a demos too, even if this demos did not have *kratos*; in Homer, for example, the word δῆμος can be used for the subjects of hereditary monarchies.[5] Other words used in tragedy for the citizen body include ὄχλος, πλῆθος, λαός/λεώς, πολῖται, ἀστοί, and the various city-ethnics of different *poleis* ('the Athenians', 'the Thebans', etc.).[6] ὄχλος usually has a pejorative sense (the 'mob'), and is used by critics of democracy for popular assemblies that are easily pleased by rhetorical performance (Thuc. 4.28.3, 7.8.2; Pl. *Euthd.* 290a1–5, *Plt.* 304c10–d2, *Grg.* 455a2–6). λαός (Attic λεώς) is used in Homer for the gathered people – on the field of battle or in assembly, and therefore generally a gathering of men.[7]

This demos – the citizen body – is my principal focus. However, I shall need to modify this definition, at times, in three respects. First, there is another meaning of demos: the mass of citizens as opposed to the elite. Much of this paper will be concerned with the interaction between elite characters and ordinary citizens. These elite characters include named figures, often kings, but also choruses of elders, discussed in some detail below. There are some scenes I shall discuss in which one member of the elite, perhaps a tyrant figure, alienates himself from the rest of the demos; and others where a political leader shows himself acutely aware of the power of public opinion. There are, equally, scenes in which a political leader identifies

[4] *IACP* 84. On the assembly at Corinth: Plut. *Dion.* 53.2; Thuc. 5.30.5 (ξύλλογον); Salmon (1984) 231–2. At Thebes: Hdt.5.79.1 (ἀλίην). At Sparta: Thuc. 1.67.3 (ξύλλογον), 87.1, 6.88.18; Xen. *Hell.* 2.2.19, 3.2.23, 5.2.11. The Spartan assembly appears to have been called δᾶμος in the Rhetra: the text as preserved at Plut. *Lyc.* 6.1 is obviously corrupt but is usually emended to δάμῳ δὲ τὰν κυρίαν ἦμεν καὶ κράτος *vel sim.*, see Wade-Gery (1943).

[5] E.g. *Il.* 3.50, *Od.* 8.157. The word δῆμος in Homer can be taken as an indicator of low social status (*Il.* 2.198 with Thalmann (1988) 11 n. 26, Taplin (1992) 49 n. 6), although it is 'not a technical expression' (Geddes (1984) 21). And few now accept the view of Heubeck (1969) that λαός and δῆμος represent two distinct strata of society: see Kirk (1968) 112; Latacz (1977) 122; and note that at *Il.* 18.500 δῆμος is used interchangeably with λαός.

[6] On the words πολῖται and ἀστοί in tragedy, see Brock (2010).

[7] For the Homeric λαός defined as arms-bearing men of military age, organised under a chief, see: Benveniste (1973) 371–2, cf. Casewitz (1992) 194. This view derives from Jeanmaire (1939) ('les hommes en état de porter les armes ...', p. 57). Some linguists suggest an etymological link with εἰλέω ('force together'): Windekens (1986) 139, cf. Wyatt (1994–5) 169. Equally, δᾶμος/δῆμος may originally be linked to δαίομαι ('divide'): Frisk (1960) 38; Palmer (1963)188; Chantraine (1968) 248. For λαός/λεώς used for 'army' in tragedy, see n. 54 below.

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himself as a member of the demos. For example, Oedipus, in a speech discussed below in section 6, says that he is speaking as 'a citizen among citizens' (ἀστὸς εἰς ἀστούς, S. *OT* 222).

Second, there are times when discussion of the people of a city in tragedy can and must use broader definition than simply the citizen men. Tragedy frequently confronts us with the vulnerability of the city, threatened by war, plague or internal upheaval. This involves the fortunes of the demos in the drama but also the families and indeed slaves of citizens. Therefore for the sake of clarity I shall frame my discussion in terms of the demos (all the citizens) on the one hand, and the 'broader community' (demos plus women, children, metics, slaves, and even the gods they worship) on the other.

Third, I would not want to suggest that all ordinary people in tragedy appear as citizens of a polis: sometimes they simply (and apolitically) represent the local neighbourhood. Further, the classical polis was not the only type of community in ancient Greece. Some areas, particularly in northern Greece and in parts of the northern Peloponnese, reflected more fluid political structures, frequently described as *ethnē* – although polis and *ethnos* should not be treated as completely distinct categories, still less incompatible ones.[8] And even within Attica local deme organisation may have meant as much to the ordinary citizen as central politics (in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, for example, the chorus is loosely representative of the former, King Theseus of the latter).[9] That said, it is striking how many tragedies are set in the context either of a polis or of an army camp, the polis' military analogue. Of the thirty-two surviving tragedies (including the not-particularly-tragic *Alcestis*), over half are set in, or in the territory of, the *megalopoleis* of Argos, Athens, Corinth and Thebes.[10] There are exceptions, of course: plays set away from Greece such as Aeschylus' *Persians* (although Sousa is called a polis in this play: 117, 682, 946), Euripides' *Helen* and *Iphigenia among the Taurians*; plays set apart from any civilised life at all, such as *Prometheus Bound* and Sophocles' *Philoctetes*; and plays that give no strong

[8] *IACP* 42; see essays in Brock and Hodkinson (2000), esp. Archibald, Davies.

[9] On Attic political organisation by deme and city in tragedy, Krummen (1993). Athens is thought to have been unusual among Greek *poleis* in that a high proportion of its population lived in the suburbs of Athens or the Attic countryside (Thuc. 2.16.1). However, any thought of urbanisation in non-Attic Greece must be set against the small size of the vast majority of *poleis*: with Kirsten (1956: 92–3), it may help to think more in terms of *Stadtdorf* than city-state; Bintliff (2006: 25) taking his figures from Ruschenbusch (1985), calculates that 80% of *poleis* had populations of 2,000–4,000 people; the figures in Hansen (2006) 76 are not wildly dissimilar.

[10] Seventeen plays comprising six at Argos/Mycenae (A. *Suppl.*, *Ag.*, *Cho.*; S. *El.*; E. *El.*, *Or.*), four in Attica (A. *Eum.*; S. *OC*; E. *Hcld.*, *Suppl.*), one at Corinth (E. *Med.*), and six at Thebes (A. *Sept.*; S. *Ant.*, *OT*; E. *HF*, *Phoen.*, *Ba.*). Tragic poets are notoriously vague on the location of plays at Argos or Mycenae: see Strabo 8.377; Bond (1981) 66; Willink (1986) 90; and esp. Saïd (1993).

sense of local political organisation. To this last category belongs Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, in which, as we shall see, a vivid picture of the local community is given, but not of a body of citizens. Yet even historical Trachis is considered to have been a polis in the sense that it was a nucleated urban settlement.[11]

These parallel and competing ideas of the people are woven into the sections of my argument that follow. In the next section (2) I attempt to list the ordinary citizens (free, not women or foreigners) that appear as individuals in extant tragedy. I then look at ways in which the demos as a whole can be represented, making comparisons with old comedy (3). I consider the question of audience participation in tragedy (4) as a preliminary to a discussion of the role of the chorus (5). I then discuss the demos in reported space (6) before discussing some examples, with a particular emphasis on the influential unseen demos (7), and drawing conclusions (8).

The modern literature on tragedy and politics is vast and continues to grow.[12] There are two developments that I want to highlight here. The first is a now lengthy tradition of scholarship that considers tragic politics in terms of interaction between the individual and the collective.[13] The very genre of tragic drama had its roots in actor-chorus dialogue: Aristotle (*Poet.* 1449a15–18) tells us that a second actor – and therefore the possibility of actor-actor exchanges – was not introduced until the time of Aeschylus. At the same time, Athenian democracy appears to have operated along a series of elite-mass interactions: most obviously, the interaction between *rhêtores* and their audiences in the assembly or law courts.[14] It is therefore not hard to see how the individual-collective model has been a tempting one for tragic scholarship. I do not intend entirely to reject this approach, although the simple equation of chorus with demos seems to me almost always wrong. Choruses of citizens, usually elders or soldiers, can be addressed in tragedy as if they are the demos, but (as we shall see in section 6) this tends to occur in situations where other citizens are drawn into the address too.

[11] Hdt. 7.199 with *IACP* 685, 713. The Trachinians are described simply as a *meros* of Malia at Thuc. 3.92.2, but also as capable of raising an army: cf. D.S. 12.59.3–5; *IACP* 713.

[12] E.g. Ehrenberg (1954); Dodds (1960b); Zuntz (1955); Podlecki (1966); Thomson (1973); Macleod (1982); Knox (1983); Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1988); Euben (1990); Bierl (1991); Gregory (1991); Rose (1992) 185–330; Meier (1993); Croally (1994); Seaford (1994); Griffith (1995), (1998); Saïd (1998); Loraux (2002); Mendelsohn (2002); Finglass (2005); Hall (2006); Carter (2007); Ahrensdorf (2009). Many contributions have appeared in edited collections, including: Euben (1986b); Winkler and Zeitlin (1990); Sommerstein et al. (1993); Goff (1995a); Pelling (1997b); Carter (forthcoming).

[13] E.g. Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1988), especially the first two chapters; contributions to Winkler and Zeitlin (1990), especially Longo; Seaford (1994); Griffith (1995); Föllinger (2009). Against some of these see Griffin (1998). Seaford (2000: 30) rightly objects to Griffin's tendency to ascribe diverse views to a single 'collectivist school'.

[14] See Ober (1989); essays in Goldhill and Osborne (1999), esp. Goldhill's introduction.

In terms of the broader community, we shall see that a chorus of men or women can represent the community in the limited sense that it speaks occasionally for its concerns, articulates its hopes and fears. Sometimes it pays to consider the neighbourhood of a play as a worshipping community.[15] Participation in and exclusion from ritual can sometimes define the community, as for example at the end of Sophocles' *Ajax*, where Odysseus and others are allowed to witness the burial but only the Salaminians (Teucer and the chorus) and members of Ajax's family can take part;[16] or in Euripides' *Electra*, where Electra deliberately excludes herself from the festival of Hera.[17]

Homeric epic is equally concerned with the relationship between mass and elite.[18] Homeric kings, especially Agamemnon, derive their power and status from the number of men under their command.[19] One thinks also of the trial scene on the shield of Achilles, in which the people spectate while elders issue a judgement (*Il.* 18.497–507), or the games in *Iliad* 23, which are played out by heroes before a popular audience of soldiers. However, we shall see that this relationship is negotiated slightly differently in tragedy. I observe above that the usual Homeric word (also common in tragedy) for the people is λαός, which tends to mean a gathered people. Homeric assemblies are summoned, called to order and dismissed by elite figures or their heralds; the implication is that left to their own devices the people do not gather themselves;[20] when released at the end of assembly meetings they naturally scatter to their homes or (in the *Iliad*) ships (*Il.* 277, 398, *Od.* 258). We shall see in section 7 that the tragic demos, by contrast, is able at times to organise and speak for itself.

The second development is a gradual shift in method from intentionalism to reception.[21] While books written in the 1950s or 1960s may have sought to investigate the political views of the poet, modern approaches focus on issues of interest to

[15] E.g. A. *Sept.* 108ff. (discussed below, section 5) with Calame (1995) 139–41 and ff., *Cho.* 23–4; E. *El.* 171–4; also E. *Suppl.* 28–31 with Goff (1995b); and the shared funeral rites of Ajax at S. *Aj.* 1402–15. For Seaford (1994), the community in tragedy is brought together following the tragic hero's demise through the establishment of some or other polis cult; however, this model is far from universal, see Carter (2007) 50–5. If the tragic chorus is not more often engaged in local ritual, that perhaps reflects the outsider status of many choruses, especially Euripidean choruses, in relation to the territory of the drama: see Murnaghan (forthcoming), who builds on the idea of 'choral projection' proposed by Henrichs (1995), (1996) and observes that these displaced choruses frequently feel the lack of, or look forward to, shared ritual back home.

[16] Easterling (1993) 9–17.

[17] Zeitlin (1970) esp. 647–51.

[18] Haubold (2000) *passim*.

[19] Agamemnon's power: *Il.* 2.578–80; Haubold (2000) 60–1.

[20] Haubold (2000) 32–5, 54–5.

[21] Identified in Pelling (1997a) 213–14; cf. Carter (2007) 6, 26–7. For a subtle and varied discussion of possible audience responses in fifth-century Athens, see Griffith (1995) esp. 11ff.

audiences – usually the audience at first performance. This methodological shift has had particular consequences for modern studies that relate tragedy to democracy. In one view, the theatre was effectively a political organ like the assembly, the *boulê* and the law courts, and 'to be in the audience is above all *to play the role of democratic citizen*'.[22] A still stronger version of this position places audience expectation and response in the context of the polis' role as patron of the dramatic festivals.[23] These ideas are plausible and compelling, however literally one takes them; and it seems no accident that, as the festival's patron, Athens tends to be portrayed in positive terms – if not always as a democracy – where she appears in tragedy.[24] However, one should not forget the breadth of the audience to which tragedy appealed.[25] From early in the fifth century tragedies were performed away from Athens; Aeschylus and Euripides produced plays at Sicily and Macedon respectively.[26] At the very least, this forces us to question the idea of democratic patronage: if plays produced for and within the Athenian polis are expected to be in some way democratic, plays produced for tyrants ought to reflect a very different set of political assumptions;[27] the promotion of tragedy by tyrants only goes to demonstrate the exportability of the genre; perhaps there was nothing inherently democratic about tragedy after all.[28] Even in fifth-century Athens the theatre audience contained numbers of foreigners – how many we cannot know, presumably a large minority. We do know that these included foreign notables, ambassadors from allied cities, but we cannot assume that all the foreigners in the audience represented democracies. (For example, the terms of the Peace of Nicias stipulated that the Spartans should come to the Dionysia each year to renew their oath,

[22] Goldhill (1997) 54, his emphasis.

[23] Goldhill (1987/1990); Longo (1990) 13–14, *contra* Griffin (1999) 75.

[24] On the portrayal of Athens in tragedy see e.g. Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1988) 329–59; Zeitlin (1986/1990); Mills (1997); Grethlein (2003). The treatment of Phrynichus by the Athenians, for reminding them of οἰκήια κακὰ in his *Capture of Miletus* (Hdt. 6.21) may be equally instructive: see Rosenbloom (1993).

[25] Pl. *Grg.* 502d, *Laws* 658c-d with Carter (forthcoming a). For surveys of the audience at Athens accommodating various views, see Csapo and Slater (1994) 286ff.; Goldhill (1997); Sommerstein (1997); Revermann (2006). The present discussion does not extend to the question of women's attendance, although I see no reason to suppose they were entirely absent: see Podlecki (1990), Henderson (1991); Carter (forthcoming a); *contra* Goldhill (1994).

[26] Aeschylus in Sicily: Herington (1967) with a useful collection of testimonia; Griffith (1978) 105–6. Euripides in Macedon: Revermann (1999–2000). Many take vase-painting as evidence for the early performance of tragedy in Southern Italy: Dearden (1990); Taplin (1993) 21–9; Allan (2001b); and, for a more sceptical view, Giuliani (1996).

[27] Euripides' *Archelaus* provided a foundation myth for Aegae, and is generally supposed to have flattered, legitimated, Hellenized or otherwise worked in the favour of Archelaus himself: see Harder (1985) 129–31 with further bibliography; cf. Revermann (1999–2000). On the possibility that Aeschylus' *Aetnaeae* provided a foundation myth for Aetna, see Poli-Palladini (2001).

[28] Duncan (forthcoming); cf. Taplin (1999).

see Thuc. 5.23.4.) In the light of this, the view of Rhodes (2003) and others, that the politics of tragedy had to do with the Greek city-state in general, seems the more persuasive. The occasional play – a *Eumenides* or a *Suppliants* – is unambiguously relevant to democracy, but most of the plays we have allow for more flexible interpretation of their politics.[29]

We should therefore exercise caution in linking tragedy too rigidly with democracy. That said, all or almost all of the tragedies that we have were intended for performance at Athens, and hopefully to win first prize there: this was the audience that mattered.[30] And this is the audience I shall assume in the following discussion, which adopts a moderate audience-centred approach: it remains possible that isolated passages of tragic drama carry resonances more likely to have been picked up on by the Athenians than others in the audience of first performance; a discussion of the role of the demos is likely to identify some of these resonances.

2. *Demotic figures*

Before going further it is worth considering – in a necessarily brief survey – the ordinary citizens (or, at least, free men) who appear as individuals in tragedy. Later in this paper I shall consider ways in which the citizens feature *en masse*. I have restricted the search in this section to speaking characters in extant plays.

Frequently ordinary men appear as messengers. A high proportion of tragic messenger speeches are delivered by slaves but plenty are also given by free men. Occasionally these men appear as private citizens, usually small farmers (in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, Eurpides' *Orestes* and *Bacchae*, and – as a Trojan example – *Rhesus*). Frequently they are soldiers from a battlefield: in this category belong both messengers in Euripides' *Phoenissae*;[31] and (probably) the messenger who describes the deaths of Eteocles and Polyneices in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*. The messenger in Euripides'

[29] Some commentators also raise the likelihood that tragic performances at Athens began under tyranny and were only later owned by the democracy, e.g. Griffin (1998) 47, acknowledging, with West (1989), cf. Scullion (2002), that the origins of the festival are unclear. Connor (1989/1990) argues for the institution of tragic performances at the Dionysia following the end of tyranny, a kind of celebration of the new democracy; *contra* Rhodes (2003) 106–7 with further bibliography.

[30] Cf. Sommerstein (1997) 63–4; Taplin (1999) 48. But see also Wright (2009) 158–60, who argues that winning did not matter to the poet so much as being granted a chorus in the first place.

[31] On the status of the first messenger see E. *Phoen.* 1073–4, 1213 with Mastronarde (1994) *ad loc.* For Amiech (2004: 479), differently, 'c'est l'écuyer [squire] d'Éteocle.'

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Suppliants is an Argive who witnessed the battle as a prisoner from the Theban lines (E. *Suppl.* 635ff.). The soldier who reports the battle lines in *Seven against Thebes* is also essentially a messenger, as are the guard in Sophocles' *Antigone* and the Thracian chariot driver in *Rhesus*. A further non-Greek example appears in Aeschylus' *Persians* (249ff.). One other soldier-messenger appears in Sophocles' *Ajax*: he greets the soldier-sailors of the chorus as equals (ἄνδρες φίλοι, S. *Aj.* 719).

Men that appear as guards, as opposed to front-line troops, have a slightly more doubtful status. The guard (already mentioned) in *Antigone* 'could be a slave, or a low-class citizen-soldier'.[32] Perhaps the latter is more likely in view of the fact that he does not think himself obliged to report back to the palace, even with as fearsome a master as Creon, if he does not want to (S. *Ant.* 329, 390), although the threat of execution by hanging (308–9) is appropriate to either class.[33] The man who brings Dionysus to Pentheus in Euripides' *Bacchae* is called a *therapôn* in the manuscripts but a 'soldier' in Dodds' commentary.[34] More telling is the indefinite pronoun by which he is summoned: στειχέτω τις ὡς τάχος ... (E. *Ba.* 346). Pentheus does not care much who it is who fetches Dionysus, and neither should we. In any case the status of a poor man or a common soldier under the more tyrant-like tragic kings is low enough as to blur the distinction, at times, between subject and slave: another commoner in *Bacchae*, the herdsman from Cithaeron, has to negotiate the right to speak freely in front of his king (668–73), as in a way does the guard in *Antigone* (238–45). A different type of soldier is the herald: in the doubtful exodos of Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* and in *Agamemnon*; in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* (Lichas); and in Euripides' *Heraclidae*, *Suppliants*, *Hecabe* and *Troades* (the last two both Talthybius). I return briefly to these heralds below.

There are some remaining peasants: in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Oedipus at Colonus* (see below) and, of course, in Euripides' *Electra*. The Theban shepherd in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* is just a slave (S. *OT* 756, 764, 1123) but his Corinthian counterpart appears to have been in casual employment (κἀπὶ θητείᾳ πλάνης, 1029), the lowest class of free man.[35] The unnamed peasant married to Electra in Euripides' play is described as πένης ἀνὴρ γενναῖος (E. *El.* 253), which plays on the tension, felt throughout the play, between social standing derived from wealth and derived from birth or character.[36] The peasant describes his ancestors as 'illustrious by birth but deprived of wealth, so that being well born counts for nothing' (λαμπροὶ ... ἐς γένος

[32] Griffith (1999) 165.
[33] Griffith (1999) *ad loc.*
[34] Dodds (1960a) 130.
[35] Jebb (1893: *ad loc.*) draws a distinction (with Isoc. 14.48) between θητεία and δουλεία.
[36] E. *El.* 253 with Denniston (1939) *ad loc.* and esp. 367ff.; O'Brien (1964) 32–5.

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γε, χρημάτων δὲ δὴ | πένητες, ἔνθεν ηὐγένει' ἀπόλλυται, 37–8). Here λαμπροὶ could mean 'noble', a leading Mycenaean family, (cf. Hdt. 6.125) or simply 'well known'. We could take him to be the member of the old birth elite deprived of wealth, or (more likely) simply a proud man from a respectable but not wealthy family. Either situation could support his claim to *eugeneia*.[37]

I hope to have produced a more or less complete list of non-elite men in extant tragedy who are not slaves. We can call these men 'ordinary citizens', although this status would have meant different things in different cities; and we have seen that under tragic monarchies it is hard, at times, to distinguish a poor citizen from a slave. Even within the category 'ordinary citizen' there is room for variation: a hoplite soldier was a class above the *autourgos*; heralds are especially important soldiers (or doubtless thought of themselves as such);[38] some metics could be more highly thought of and better off than many citizens; and so on.

The 'ordinary citizen' becomes interesting to the present study if he can in some way be identified with the demos at large. One such figure is the messenger in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*. However, this play comes with no strong sense of a demos, a body of citizens; instead, the messenger is representative of a less well defined community. He has come from the fields around Trachis (S. *Tr.* 188), where Lichas has been telling a great many people (πρὸς πολλοὺς) of Heracles' return. It is as if everyone in Malis (the *ethnos*, not the polis of Trachis) was crowding round him (κύκλῳ γὰρ αὐτὸν Μηλιεὺς ἅπας λεὼς). A similar (the same?) scene is later described by the same messenger at the agora of Trachis: among many townspeople (πολλοῖσιν ἀστῶν, 423, which can include *astai* as well as *astoi*); a great crowd (πολύς ... ὄχλος, 424).[39] He arrives garlanded (178), presumably because he has been sharing in the celebrations; thus he shares the popular feeling in Trachis and distinguishes himself only by his greater haste to relay the information to Deianeira. Another example – from a more political play – is the guard in *Antigone*. It is not clear that he shares the feeling of popular support for Antigone (on which, see below, sections 6 and 7; in any case Haemon has yet to reveal this), but he does share the common fear of speaking up in front of his king (S. *Ant.* 223ff, cf. 690–1).

Commoners from the countryside sit less frequently in the mainstream of public opinion – especially in Euripides. The herdsman in Euripides' *Bacchae* (presumably a

[37] Cf. Cropp (1988) *ad loc.*

[38] On the status of heralds in tragedy, see Griffith (1995) 80 n. 69.

[39] For Easterling (1982: 123) this agora scene is not inconsistent with the earlier description of a meadow: 'the details are ... left vague, and ἀγορά can mean both a place where people meet and the assembled people themselves.' On the agora as a space used by non-citizens as well as citizens, cf. Vlassopoulos (2007).

free man, not a slave, judging from his and his fellow herdsmen's freedom of action at E. *Ba.* 714ff.) gives an account that has been described as the more compelling since he does not share the common Theban suspicion of Bacchic cult.[40] Equally, the messenger in Euripides' *Orestes*, a poor farmer from out of town, seems qualified to comment askance on proceedings in the Argive assembly:[41] like another poor farmer he describes in his speech (E. *Or.* 917–30) he does not share the majority view that Orestes must die. He seems in fact to have enjoyed a sort of patron-client relationship with Agamemnon (868–70);[42] the fact that he was part of the household (ἔφερβε σὸς δόμος, 869) but now lives away on his own small farm suggests perhaps that he is freed slave. The peasant we meet in the prologue to Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, by contrast, seems more in tune with the political establishment. He shows piety to the gods (S. *OC* 36–7, 54–63), and deference to local and civic authority (47–8, 77–9).

Heralds characteristically speak for kings but some heralds represent communities as well. The Theban herald in Euripides' *Suppliants* speaks only for Creon – but then he *does* profess to represent a city where one man is the state. By contrast, the Argive herald in *Heraclidae* speaks not only for Eurystheus but for the Argive citizens generally: it is their will that the children be returned (E. *Hcld.* 139–43, cf. 261). At the start of the first and sixth lines of his long speech he is at pains to identify himself as one of these citizens (Ἀργεῖός εἰμι, 134; Ἀργεῖος ὢν, 139). Talthybius is Agamemnon's herald in the Trojan War but in Euripides he speaks also with the more general authority of the Greeks (E. *Hec.* 509–10, *Tro.* 710–11). None of the heralds discussed so far represents the city or country in which the play is set; the herald in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, differently, is only too glad to be home (A. *Ag.* 503ff.). In his dialogue with the chorus he is strongly identified with the rest of the homesick army; likewise, the chorus of elders at this point speaks for the community left behind (538–46, and see section 7 below).

3. Comic and tragic means of portraying the demos

We come now to the presentation of the demos *en masse*. To portray several thousand people together on one stage presents an especially difficult dramatic problem. A useful starting point is to ask how a comic poet, with arguably greater dramatic licence,

[40] Seaford (1996) 204.
[41] West (1987) 243; cf. Willink (1986) 227.
[42] If these terms can be applied in an ancient Greek context: see Millett (1989).

could meet this challenge. Aristophanes does this most memorably in *Knights*, where the Athenian demos is personified.[43] He could just as easily represent different Greek cities as items of food, pounded in War's pestle and mortar (Ar. *Peace* 242ff.). If he wanted to, Aristophanes could address the audience as if it were the citizen population of Athens, for all that it contained metics and (at the City Dionysia) other foreigners. An example is in the parodos of the revised *Clouds* (584–7):

> ὁ δ' ἥλιος
> τὴν θρυαλλίδ' εἰς ἑαυτὸν εὐθέως ξυνελκύσας
> οὐ φανεῖν ἔφασκεν ὑμῖν, εἰ στρατηγήσει Κλέων.
> ἀλλ' ὅμως εἵλεσθε τοῦτον.
>
> And straightaway
> The sun withdrew its wick into itself
> And said it would not shine on you at all
> If Cleon served as general. But you
> Elected him regardless.

A decision of the people is referred to as 'your' decision just as it would be by someone speaking before the assembly or a democratic jury.[44] In the prologue of *Knights* the audience is exploited more indirectly to represent the people of Athens. Here, departing from the allegory, a slave representing the general Demosthenes points out the 'rows of people' (τὰς στίχας ὁρᾷς τὰς τῶνδε τῶν λαῶν;) to the Sausage Seller, telling him that he will rule over all of them (Ar. *Knights* 163–4).[45]

Since the Athenian assembly was conceived rhetorically as the demos in session[46] it is interesting to see how Aristophanes dramatises assembly scenes. There is an obvious difficulty: how to persuade an audience that they are watching an assembly of up to 6,000 largely imaginary citizens when they themselves number in their thousands. The assembly scene in the prologue of *Acharnians* works, I think, because it begins with

[43] On Aristophanes' *Knights* as allegory: Σ Ar. *Knights* 40 with Russo (1994) 79–80; Dover (1972) 93.

[44] On the extent to which Athenian juries could be identified rhetorically with the demos, see Blanshard (2004).

[45] An anonymous reader for *CCJ* suggests to me that 'audience address potentially changes the potential of representation: the audience can see itself as itself in the "you"'. Interestingly, this potential for self-consciousness is not achieved in tragedy, with the probable exception of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, discussed below.

[46] Most obviously in the way laws and decrees were framed (ἔδοξε τῷ δήμῳ, etc.): see Rhodes (1997) 18–24. Also frequently in assembly speeches: see Hansen (1978) 128–31; cf. Ober (1989) 134, 145.

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Dicaeopolis sitting alone: any addition to this will seem by comparison more busy. The women's assembly in *Thesmophoriazusae*, although it closely parodies the male equivalent, does not need to be as large.[47] (Of course, smaller assemblies, for example deme assemblies, were not infrequent in Athens.) In the second half of *Knights* the character Demos, already an allegory for the whole people, appears as the assembly in session. He states his intention to sit on the Pnyx (*Knights* 749–55), which was probably represented by a rock or pile of rocks in the orchestra, and hears the rival claims of political orators.[48] A meeting of the assembly could be reported, as in *Ecclesiazusae* (376ff.) or as the *boulê* is in *Knights* (624ff.). In *Ecclesiazusae* the report is the more vivid since we have already seen the women rehearsing for the meeting.

So Aristophanes meets the challenge of dramatising the demos with characteristic invention. How does tragedy compare? The tragic poet did not enjoy the same licence as his comic counterpart: he could not represent Megara as a clove of garlic; and he could not acknowledge the audience.[49] But there is still invention in the tragic approach to this problem. For instance, without doing what Aristophanes does in *Knights* it was still possible, in a sense, to represent the people of a city through one man. We have already seen how a single citizen (for example, the messenger in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*) can be a representative of the community. Another example is Theseus, a representative not just of Athens but of Athenian virtues, in Euripides' *Suppliants* and *Heracles* and Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*.[50] Further, in two of these plays Theseus makes decisions for and on behalf of the Athenian people.[51] The exception is *Suppliants*, where he defers to the people, confident that they will in any case support his view (E. *Suppl.* 349–53, see section 7 below); and even here the Athenians' decision to support Adrastus is associated with the authority of Theseus and proclaimed to the Thebans in his name (385–7). It has been noted that where Theseus' actions are less fortunate, as in Euripides' second *Hippolytus*, the action takes place away from Athens.[52]

Nor could a tragic assembly meeting be allegorised: when assemblies meet in tragedy they are held off stage and reported afterwards. An assembly meeting is reported in Aeschylus' *Suppliants* (600–24) and (as less positive examples) in Euripides'

[47] Ar. *Thesm.* 277–8, 295ff. with Sommerstein (1994), Austin and Olson (2004) *ad loc.*

[48] On the staging of this scene, see Sommerstein (1980) 53–4; Russo (1994) 85–6. At Ar. *Knights* 42 the Pnyx is given as Demos' deme.

[49] Bain (1975); Taplin (1977) 129–36, 394–5, (1986) 166. But see section 4 below.

[50] Mills (1997). On Theseus and Athens in Euripides' *Heracles*, see Tarkow (1977).

[51] E. *HF* 1322–39; S. *OC* 636–41, cf. 666–7. He associates himself closely with the city at S. *OC* 557–8, 63.

[52] Mills (1997) 193–4; cf. Hall (1997) 103.

Hecabe (108ff.) and *Orestes* (884ff.).[53] As we have just seen, the decision of a democratic assembly is anticipated in Euripides' *Suppliants* (349–50, 454–5) and later reported (393–4). Now, we have noted that the assembly can be conceived as the people in session, so to report an assembly meeting in drama is to report the demos; an embodiment of the people in a different context is the army or navy, and battle scenes – like assembly scenes – can be reported in tragedy. Armies are referred to as (for example) 'the Athenians' (E. *Hcld.* 839) or 'the Argives' (E. *Phoen.* 1191). In addition, the army, or divisions of the army, can be described using some of the same vocabulary – ὄχλος, πλῆθος, λαός or λεώς – that can be used of the whole people.[54]

In the next three sections I discuss three other possible means of locating the demos in tragedy. The first is the possibility that the audience can be recruited into the portrayal of the demos (section 4); the second is the use of the chorus (5); and the third (by far the most promising) is a more literal reference to an off-stage demos (6).

4. *The audience and public space*

The audience could not be acknowledged under tragic stage conventions; but their presence, and the open-air nature of the performance, contributed to the sense of tragic drama as public rhetoric. This is most obviously true of public speeches and proclamations made in tragedy. Two good examples are S. *OT* 216ff. (discussed below in section 6) and the prologue of Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* (this section). In these scenes the audience very nearly (but not quite) becomes the demos.

[53] On the problematic nature of the Argive 'democracy' in Euripides' *Orestes*, see Euben (1986a), esp. 236–7; Hall (1993) 265–71. For Hall 'the description of the assembly is modelled in every detail on the Athenian assembly' (p. 266, cf. Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1988) 335); however, Pelling (2000) 165 underlines the confusion in this scene between the procedures of the Athenian assembly and law-courts. Rawson (1972) 155 describes the scene as 'a sort of distorting-mirror reflection of the trial and absolution at Athens in the *Eumenides*'. The assembly scene in *Orestes* (*pace* Hall) does not exactly replace the trial on the Areopagus, which is predicted at the end of the play: E. *Or.* 1648–52 (although here gods will vote, not men).

[54] λεώς: A. *Pers.* 127, 789, *Septem* 80, *Ag.* 189, 825; E. *Hec.* 532. λαός: S. *Ph.* 1243, *Aj.* 565; E. *Suppl.* 654, 664, 669, *Phoen.* 733, 1460, 1467. πλῆθος: A. *Pers.* 40, 803; [E.] *Rh.* 309. As for ὄχλος, we have observed (above, section 1) that its sense is usually derogative; hence in a military context it can be used of enemy forces (A. *Septem* 234; E. *Phoen.* 148) or of large numbers of soldiers that pose no military threat but are a potential danger to women in the camp (E. *Hec.* 521, 533, 605, 607, *IA* 735). At E. *Andr.* 605 the remark is derogatory, not of the Greek army itself, but of Menelaus for mustering it. Elsewhere the word is used of not-necessarily hostile forces of which nevertheless the speaker is in awe: A. *Pers.* 42, 53, *Suppl.* 182; E. *IA* 191, [E.] *Rh.* 312, and possibly E. *Suppl.* 660, 681. See Hall (1996) 24–5 on πλῆθος and ὄχλος in Aeschylus' *Persians*.

There is no trouble accepting that the audience participated in Greek tragedy in the limited sense that the plays were performed 'for their benefit'; but tragedy never '*explicitly* refers to or recognises the existence ... of the audience.'[55] My initial aim here is to identify examples of audience address that lie between these two possibilities. The audience can be recruited into the performance without breaking the theatrical illusion. I shall then look at some examples where the presence of a mass audience helps in the representation of the demos.

What would it mean to break the theatrical illusion? One way would be to address the audience directly. This never happens in tragedy: there is no 'you plural', no vocative noun, that is used unambiguously of the audience. However, there are verbs in the second person plural that could be construed as taking the audience as their subject. A promising example comes in the prologue of Euripides' *Orestes*. Electra, alone on stage, is referring to Helen, who has just left (E. *Or.* 128):

> εἴδετε παρ' ἄκρας ὡς ἀπέθρισεν τρίχας,
> σῴζουσα κάλλος; ἔστι δ' ἡ πάλαι γυνή.
>
> You saw how she shore her hair at the tips,
> Preserving her beauty? That's her of old.

One can compare two other abrupt switches to the second person plural imperative, exhortations to observe matters relating to individuals. In Sophocles' *Ajax* (1028) Teucer invites whoever it is to compare the fates of Ajax and Hector. In Euripides' *Hippolytus* (943–5) Theseus asks whoever it is to regard Hippolytus (who is on stage) with disgust. These two examples are most easily explained as rhetorical addresses to the chorus – to whom (one assumes) the speaker turned.[56] The difference in *Orestes* is that the chorus has not yet entered.

Possibly more illuminating are several gnomic pronouncements found in Euripides. Many of these are made to imaginary, discrete groups of people, addressed in the vocative case;[57] others to nobody in particular (e.g. E. *Or.* 804: τοῦτ' ἐκεῖνο· κτᾶσθ' ἑταίρους, μὴ τὸ συγγενὲς μόνον – unless he can be said to be quoting a proverb and speaking to Pylades alone). Most commentators are content to suggest that such

[55] Taplin (1977) 130–1, his emphasis; cf. Bain (1975) 13.

[56] Kamerbeek (1953), Garvie (1998) *ad loc.*; *contra* Fraenkel (1967) 192.

[57] E. *Andr.* 622–3 (suitors), 950–1 (people with sense, husbands: see Stevens (1984) *ad loc.*; Allan (2003) 144); *El.* 383–5 (people with misconstrued views); *Or.* 976–7 (suffering, ephemeral mankind); *Suppl.* 744–9 (the over-ambitious), 949–52 (wretched mankind); fr. 609 (young men).

statements are meant for an 'imaginary audience'.[58] Now consider how it would sound if somebody made one of these pronouncements in private or in front of just a few people, addressing some imaginary group: they would sound silly at worst, grandiloquent at best. But such grandiloquence is perfectly natural in tragic drama, just as much as it is inappropriate indoors. Part of what makes it sound natural is the public nature of the performance: in other words, the very presence of the audience. Rhetorical speech only works in public. So in a shadowy sense the theatre audience is implied in these addresses.

In the prologue of *Orestes* no other characters are on stage, not even mutes,[59] and the remark is not a gnomic generality but a specific comment about someone nearby (as in the examples from *Ajax* and *Hippolytus*). In the absence of anyone else these words must be addressed to the shadowy presence of the theatre audience.[60] However, Electra stops short of saying, 'Hey spectators, did you see ...', and thus more or less maintains the theatrical illusion.

The prologue of *Seven against Thebes* begins with a speech addressed by Eteocles to some Theban citizens (Κάδμου πολῖται, A. *Septem* 1). The question here is whether he is addressing *all* the Thebans. In the absence of the chorus (who in any case will be a chorus of women) there seem to be two possibilites: he is addressing the audience as the Theban demos; or he is addressing some silent actors (fully armed and sent to their posts at 30–5). As tragic convention precludes the first option, it appears that, with Taplin, we must accept the second.[61] However, it is possible to accommodate something of both views. Although much of what Eteocles has to say is advice and exhortation for his soldiers, two considerations point to a greater number of people. First, the implied audience is broad: citizens of *all* ages (10ff.). Second, he delivers three lines after he has sent the soldiers away and before the Scout arrives (36–8). These lines function to cover the Scout's entrance, but it seems odd if he is suddenly left talking to himself.[62] As a more satisfying solution, his speech is made *both* to a specific body of soldiers *and* to the Theban citizens more generally. (Compare S. *OT* 216ff, discussed in section 6, where Oedipus addresses more than just the chorus.)

[58] E.g. Stevens (1984) *ad* E. *Andr.* 950–1. Contrast Halleran (1995) *ad* E. *Hipp.* 943, for whom the theatre audience is addressed implicitly.

[59] Bain (1975) 20.

[60] Cf. West (1987) *ad loc.*: 'In some cases we may say that the address is to "the world at large", but in the present passage it seems pedantic to deny that it is to the audience.' For Willink (1986) the case for audience address is strengthened if we read ἴδετε for εἴδετε, a variant that West does not support.

[61] Taplin (1977) 129–34. He suggests just three to twelve mutes.

[62] *Pace* Taplin (1977) 136–7.

The silent actors cannot represent both these groups on their own: in the Theatre of Dionysus a crowd of twelve would have looked smaller than in the Elizabethan theatres that Taplin uses for comparison, and insignificant next to the thousands seated around. Rather, the location in the public spaces of Thebes gives the sense of a speech meant for everyone; and the presence of silent actors keeps Eteocles from having to speak into thin air. This sense of public space is enhanced, one might say created, by the presence of a huge audience.[63] Eteocles' first words do not only draw the fifth-century audience immediately into the world of heroic Thebes; they also exploit the public circumstances of the festival to dramatic ends. To this extent the audience is recruited into the drama, implicated in the representation of the demos.

One further example comes at the end of Aeschylus' *Eumenides* – perhaps a special case given the close identification of the Areopagites, as ancestors, with real Athenians in the audience (note also that this is the only surviving tragedy to be set in the very city of Athens, very near where the audience was sitting).[64] We cannot exactly reconstruct the original staging of the play, still less how it was received, but towards the end of the drama references to the people of Athens are made with increasing frequency (A. *Eum.* 927, 991, 997, 1015–16); so it seems hard to imagine that the Athenian majority in the audience did not increasingly find that they themselves were being addressed. Two final addresses go as follows (1035, 1039):

> εὐφαμεῖτε δέ, χωρῖται.
> Speak fair, men of the land!
>
> εὐφαμεῖτε δὲ πανδαμεί.
> Speak fair throughout the demos!

The former, says Sommerstein (1989) *ad loc.*, is 'presumably addressed to the male Areopagites ... as the only male Athenians dramatically present'; in the latter 'πανδαμεί is hardly appropriate if addressed only to a dozen or so Areopagites, and is therefore probably directed mainly to the audience'.[65] In other words, χωρῖται *might* refer to the Areopagites, but πανδαμεί simply cannot; assuming that line 1035 is

[63] The size of the audience is unknown. The tendency has been to extrapolate back from the surviving fourth-century theatre and assume an audience of 17,000 in the fifth. In another view, the fifth-century *theatron* was rectilinear in form, like some deme theatres: see most recently Goette (2007), who argues for an audience of no more than 6,000. This is a vast reduction on the usual estimate but still a mass audience, roughly equivalent to the maximum attendance of an Athenian assembly meeting.

[64] Cf. Wiles (1997) 211.

[65] Cf. the footnoted stage directions in his 2008 Loeb edition.

addressed to people on stage, then 1039 ought also to be addressed to people in view, and that only leaves the audience. Another possibility, however, is that both lines are directed generally at the people of Athens/Attica (some connotations of χωρῖται are a little rustic for a supposedly aristocratic council), but still the audience – particularly at this climactic moment in the drama – may well have found themselves drawn in.

5. *The chorus as demos?*

One is tempted to look for the demos in the chorus of a tragedy, for here is a collective body that observes events rather in the way that the real people in the audience do. We are faced here with what we might call 'the collective fallacy': it is easy to assume that, since twelve or fifteen is more than one, the chorus more naturally resembles a mass of people than it does the small group that it really is. This fallacy is often associated with the view (which, as I have said, has been overstated) that the political context of tragedy is democracy.

The collective fallacy in recent scholarship can be traced back to Vernant's idea of 'a polarity' between

> on the one hand the chorus, an anonymous and collective being whose role is to express, through its fears, hopes, and judgements, the feelings of the spectators who make up the civic community; on the other the individualized figure whose action forms the centre of the drama and who is seen as a hero from another age, always more or less alien to the ordinary condition of a citizen.[66]

This model (which appears to have its roots in the older idea of the chorus as ideal spectator) works best for a play like Sophocles' *Ajax*, whose hero does seem unsuited to civic society,[67] and least well in, for example, Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, where the Greek generals rather more ordinary in their unheroic politicking.[68]

It appears to help if we consider the men who performed the choruses as Athenian citizens who not only competed for their *choregoi* but also took part in a public festival and so, in a sense, represented the real demos of Athens (just as members of dithyrambic choruses at the same festival represented their tribes). These choruses as

[66] Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1988) 24 (essentially repeated at 34).

[67] Sorum (1986); Evans (1991); cf. Meier (1993) 176–9; Carter (2007) 99–102. For discussion of this view with further bibliography see Garvie (1998) 16.

[68] Cf. Wasserman (1949) 176–7; Michelakis (2006) 80; Carter (2007) 68–9; and see section 7 below.

they reflected on events were arguably well placed to connect with their audience. All this would appear to help the case for tragedy as a democratic medium, for example:

> *Oedipus* becomes a political play when we focus on the interaction of actor and chorus, and see how the chorus form a democratic mass jury. Each sequence of dialogue takes the form of a contest for the chorus' sympathy, with Oedipus sliding from the role of prosecutor to that of defendant, and each choral dance offers a provisional verdict.[69]

My interest here, however, is not in the community of the audience at first performance – which is any case was international or at least panhellenic in its composition – but in the fictional community within the drama. This is admittedly to drive an artificial wedge between what we might call the reflective and dramatic roles of the chorus, which can certainly overlap in the choral odes. However, for a proper examination of the chorus-as-demos model it is necessary to tease these two categories apart since, more often than not, the fictional identity of the chorus is at odds with the actual identity of the men who played it. This tension is in fact readily apparent in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the members of whose chorus appear to step out of role at line 896 in the second stasimon (τί δεῖ με χορεύειν;).[70] This temporary slipping of the mask puts into perspective the distance between 'a democratic mass jury' and their dramatic role as elders: a jury of fifteen men, which sounds very nearly right to a modern audience, would have seemed ludicrously small to the Athenians. They were more likely to associate such a small body with the narrowest of oligarchies or (as in this play) an advisory clique to the king.

Vernant's model appears in one form or another in a wide range of tragic scholarship; many go beyond his idea of expressing 'the feelings of the spectators who make up the civic community' and claim that the chorus actually *represents* the community in which the play is set. This is to make a leap rather too easily from the actual identity of the choreuts, as described above, to the fictional roles that they play. Further, some replace 'civic community' with 'citizen body'.[71] In the following

[69] Wiles (2000) 62. Cf. Hawthorne (2009) 27: the Sophoclean chorus can be a 'rhetorical audience ... not simply an observer of words and actions but ... in fact the reason for these words and actions ... Thus through the choral presence, a playwright can create a *mimesis* of public performance dynamics, versions of which were seen and felt in Athenian political life in the Assembly and the courts.'

[70] On this and similar examples, see esp. Henrichs (1995).

[71] E.g. Longo (1990) 16–17: 'the essence of the chorus ... must be recognized in its role as "representatives of the collective citizen body"'; cf. Föllinger (2009) 40–1. Specifically on choruses of men: Mastronarde (1999) 93: 'The tragic chorus was most clearly representative of the political community when it consisted of free adult males in a city'; Hawthorne (2009) 27 on male choruses as 'representatives of a community'.

discussion the idea of the chorus *representing* the demos, or even the broader community, will be found to be very slippery indeed.

The collective fallacy is attacked efficiently by John Gould (1996). He rightly emphasizes the marginality, in their dramatic role, of most or all tragic choruses; if these choruses have a capacity to reflect on events, he argues, this is because of the perspective that their marginal status affords them. Gould's view is most applicable to Euripidean tragedies such as *Phoenissae*, where the presence of the women in Thebes at a time of great crisis seems almost incongruous; or *Iphigenia at Aulis*, where the Euboean women's presence in the male world of the Greek camp is initially surprising.[72] There is more to be said (below) about plays, especially by Aeschylus and Sophocles, that have citizen choruses.

The reply to Gould, in the same volume, comes from Simon Goldhill. Goldhill praises Gould's independence from the hackneyed ideas of the chorus as 'ideal spectator' or 'poet's voice' but he goes on to emphasise similarities in texture, as he sees them, between 'collective authority' in the city and the 'collective voice' of the chorus.[73] I am not myself sure that these two things are the same: collective authority in the democratic city had to do with decision-making and the exercise of power; choral authority lies in the reflective role of the chorus, an ability to set events in their proper mythological, religious or ethical context. There is (as we shall see in section 7) such a thing as collective *political* authority in tragedy, but it is rarely found in the chorus.

For the time being I want to isolate the chorus' dramatic role, making two points in particular. First, the democratic system typically worked on the model of single, speech-making advisors to a mass decision-making body, whether the assembly or a jury. Citizen choruses in tragedy, by contrast, tend to advise their decision-making kings. Political discourse therefore runs in exactly the opposite direction. The near-exception to this proves the rule nicely: the jury in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* is a decision-making body and acquits Orestes on Athene's casting vote; but this jury is not, of course, the chorus of the play – they do not even speak, let alone sing.[74]

Second, and less briefly, one thing that can be said with certainty about the Greek tragic chorus is that it is composed of people all of one type. More specifically, the chorus members are all of one social position; a tragic chorus can be defined by age, gender, nationality and class.[75] Now, a foreign, female or enslaved chorus cannot in

[72] Cf. Michelakis (2006) 41–2.

[73] Goldhill (1996) esp. 252–3; cf. Mastronarde (1999).

[74] The closing lines (A. *Eum.* 1032–47) are probably not sung by the Areopagites: see Brown (1984) 275 n. 91; cf. Sommerstein (1989) *ad loc.*; *contra* Taplin (1977) 411.

[75] Bacon (1995) 9; Foley (2003) 13.

any literal sense represent the demos.[76] In fact in many cases it will be sharply *differentiated from* the citizens: for example, in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* (236–8) Eteocles criticises the behaviour of the female chorus on the grounds that it is bad for citizen morale. That said, we shall see in the next section that a tragic chorus can represent the broader community in the limited sense that it says what people might want to say. This applies to choruses composed of women from the community where the play is set, just as much as men. In *Seven against Thebes* the chorus' first entry is motivated by the desire to supplicate the gods of the city (A. *Sept.* 108ff.). Hence, inasmuch as they speak for the city's concerns and fears,[77] they represent a worshipping community with shared gods. And in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* (859–65) the slave women from the palace celebrate the end of tyranny for Argos, although here their sympathy is voiced more with the house of Atreus than with the Argive citizens.[78] Paradoxically, even in Euripides' *Trojan Women*, a drama in which the city – both as a set of buildings and the sum of its citizens – has been obliterated, the women of the chorus continue both to speak for the city and to function as a worshipping (lamenting) community.[79]

Choruses of men are equally sharply defined. In extant tragedy these almost always consist of citizens (the exceptions are all subsidiary choruses: Aegyptians in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*; slaves in Euripides' *Hippolytus*; Argive boys in Euripides' *Suppliants*). However, citizen choruses are more closely defined than simply 'Men of ...'; they are given additional status. We can usefully compare old comedy. The eleven surviving plays of Aristophanes give us six citizen choruses (or five and a half: the chorus of *Lysistrata* is split). They may sometimes take the opportunity to speak for the poet but we are never, as far as I am aware, asked to think of them as representing the Athenian demos. Rather, they represent factions within the citizenry, whether war-loving veterans (*Acharnians*), well-to-do young men (*Knights*), jury-service-loving old men (*Wasps*), peace-loving farmers (*Peace*, although at first they represent all of Greece[80]), conservative old men (*Lysistrata*) or impoverished old farmers (*Wealth*). In tragedy it is equally helpful, I would suggest, to think of a citizen chorus as a subset of the demos.

Citizen choruses in non-military tragedies consist, in some sense of the word, of elders: either members of a political elite or elderly citizens (frequently both). Helene Foley has observed that choruses of men of military age do not feature in fully extant

[76] Cf. Gould (1996) 220.

[77] Cf. Föllinger (2009) 84: '... der Sorge um das Kollektiv der Stadt, repräsentiert durch den Chor der jungen Frauen'.

[78] On female tragic choruses that speak for the community, see further Foley (2003) 21–2.

[79] Easterling (1993) 19–20.

[80] Ar. *Peace* 292, 296–8, 302. See Sifakis (1971) 29–32; Dover (1972) 137–9; Sommerstein (1985) xviii.

tragedies except for ones set in the Trojan War (in which they appear to be the norm).[81] Now, elders *qua* members of the elite cannot literally be representative of the entire mass of the population, merely a small group of influential citizens. Elite choruses of this kind are found in Aeschylus' *Persians* and *Agamemnon* (where they are elders in both senses[82]), Sophocles' *Antigone*, *Oedipus Tyrannus* and (probably) *Oedipus at Colonus*.[83] Euripides, by contrast, gives us three examples of elderly-yet-ordinary citizen choruses, in *Heraclidae*, *Heracles* and (according to a scholion) *Alcestis*.[84] Although he overwhelmingly favours female choruses, Euripides seems also to have had an interest in choruses of old men: among his fragmentary plays old-man choruses feature in *Antiope*, *Erechtheus* and *Cresphontes*.[85] (*Telephus* may also have had a chorus of elderly citizens, but they were more likely elders *qua* members of the elite.[86]) Given that Euripides often prefers outsider choruses – choruses whose status allows them to look askance at events – these old men can be assumed to be of marginal status through old-age.[87] However, for the present purpose we should also note that age was no bar to political service, certainly at Athens: Sophocles became a *proboulos* at around the age of eighty-three and Socrates is known to have served on the *boulê* in his mid-sixties; in comic drama, several elderly Aristophanic heroes are politically active as dikasts. So it is arguable that an aged citizen chorus can be representative of ordinary citizens. That said, in *Heracles* the demos of Thebes is divided by *stasis* (as we shall see in section 7) such that the chorus members cannot and do not speak for the people: they represent one faction within the Theban citizenry.

[81] Foley (2003) 13, referring to Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, the pseudo-Euripidean *Rhesus*, and Aeschylus' fragmentary *Myrmidons* (The suggestion of an additional chorus of Argive soldiers in Aeschylus' *Suppliants* would present an exception: see Friis Johansen (1966) 61–4). Even these military choruses do not necessarily speak for the whole, allied army: in *Ajax* the loyalty of the Salaminian chorus can be contrasted with the treatment of Teucer at the hands of other soldiers (S. *Aj.* 719ff.); in *Philoctetes* the chorus members are loyal to Neoptolemus and at times sympathetic to Philoctetes, while Odysseus claims to have the whole of the army at Troy on his side (S. *Phil.* 1243, 1250, 1257–8, 1293–4).

[82] Old-age: A. *Ag.* 72–82; cf. E. *HF* 107–30, fr. 48a; Collard, Cropp and Lee (1995) 140–1. Status as elders: A. *Ag.* 855 (quoted below, n. 99), 1393.

[83] The chorus members of *Oedipus at Colonus* appear to be local elders: see Gardiner (1987) 110; cf. Dhuga (2005) 336; *contra* Burton (1980) 295. For Burton (1980) 251–3, they are the people responsible for the shrine; but see Gardiner (1987) 110 n. 38. They are introduced as old men (S. *OC* 111–12), but referred to earlier as demesmen of Colonus who have the power to decide if Oedipus can stay (78–9, although 294–5 they defer to the king in the city). Hence Oedipus at 145 addresses them, ὦ τῆσδ' ἔφοροι χώρας (see Jebb (1900) *ad loc.*, and cf. 728, 831). For a balanced discussion of these problems, see J.P. Wilson (1997) 108–16.

[84] Σ E. *Alc.* 77. On the chorus of *Heraclidae*, see Allan (2001a) 138–9; on *Heracles*, Bond (1981) 91.

[85] *Antiope*: see n. 88 below. *Erechtheus*: E. frr. 369, 370K.7. *Cresphontes*: E. fr. 448a.73b.

[86] E. fr. 703; Collard, Cropp and Lee (1995) 20.

[87] Gould (1996) 220; cf. Foley (2003) 1; contrast Hawthorne (2009) 25 n. 3, for whom 'social marginality is relative.'

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So, almost without exception, choruses of men in extant tragedy appear as narrowly defined groups within the demos – as can be confirmed by a brief survey of fragmentary plays. One frequent pattern is an Attic context for Euripidean old-man choruses: exclude the problematic *Heracles* and the pro-satyric *Alcestis* and this is established in three of the four remaining examples, that is *Heraclidae*, *Erechtheus* and *Antiope*.[88] Some fragmentary plays of Euripides appear to have had male choruses defined not by old-age but by youth: a chorus of athletes in *Alope* and a mixed chorus of Athenian youths in *Theseus*.[89] Other tragic choruses were narrowly defined as priests (Sophocles' *Prophets* and *Meleager*) or mystics (Euripides' *Cretans*).[90]

If there were tragedies whose choruses more broadly represented the demos, they may well have been by Sophocles, who of the three canonical tragedians prefers male choruses.[91] Sophocles seems to have produced several dramas named after choruses of men from specific localities, whether foreign (*Ethiopians*, *Men of Camicus*, *Mysians*, *Scythians*, *Phaeacians*, *Phrygians*) or Greek (*Dolopians*, *Men of Larissa*, *Men of Scyros*). The titles of this second set of plays may lead us to identify the chorus of each with the demos of a Greek polis.[92] However, two points suggest otherwise. First, there is no need for (for example) 'Men of Larissa' to equal all the men of Larissa: we might have made such an assumption if we had only the title of *Trachiniae*, but we know the chorus to be specifically *unmarried* women of Trachis. Second, if Foley's rule holds, they are most likely choruses of elders.

If, however, these choruses do broadly represent the demos, here is a third point. In each of these plays the chorus is local, while the principal character is in exile or on the run. *Dolopians* may be the same play as *Phoenix*;[93] if so, here we have an outsider set up as king over the Dolopians by Peleus (cf. Il. 9.484). In any case we have one fragment from *Dolopians* that suggests a state of exile: εὐναῖος ἄν που δραπέτιν στέγην ἔχων ('... in my lair, where I would have the home of a runaway', S. fr. 174, tr. Lloyd-Jones). *Men of Scyros* dramatised the fetching of Neoptolemus to Troy, just as Euripides' play of that name dramatised the fetching of Achilles; neither of them were native to that

[88] The evidence on *Antiope* is in a scholion to E. *Hipp.* 58 (= *TrGF* T v), which refers to a chorus τῶν Θηβαίων γερόντων; Collard, Cropp and Gibert (2004) 262, infer that this should read Ἀθηναίων. The same scholion tells us of an additional female chorus.

[89] *Alope*: E. fr. 105; Webster (1967) 94. *Theseus*: E. frr. 385, 386; Webster (1967) 107.

[90] Sophocles' *Prophets* is generally held to be the same play as *Polyidos*: see Pearson (1917) 2.57. On the possibility that this was a satyr play, its chorus disguised as prophets, see Lloyd-Jones (1996) 207.

[91] Based on surveys of all his known plays: Hose (1990–91) 1.227; Castellani (1989) 1–3 with nn. 4, 5 and 8; Sommerstein (1996) 53–70 with a summary on p. 70; Mastronarde (1998) 62–3; Foley (2003) 13 with a summary on pp. 26–7.

[92] Although Dolopia is called an *ethnos* at Hdt. 7.185.2, Thuc. 5.51.1, and is not listed as a polis in *IACP*.

[93] For this view: Lloyd-Jones (1996) 68–9. Against: Pearson (1917) 1.119–20.

island. *Men of Larissa* probably showed the last day of Acrisius, an Argive, now living in Thessaly.[94] This does not fit the pattern seen in four of the five extant Sophoclean tragedies with male choruses, of soldiers loyal to their captain or elders advising their king; it is more like *Oedipus at Colonus*, in which a figure from abroad has entered the chorus' world. The same could be said of the Aeschylean or the Euripidean *Philoctetes*, where (as we know from Dio 52.7) the deserted hero interacted with a chorus of local men. It is remotely possible, therefore, that Sophocles (and to a lesser extent Aeschylus and Euripides) wrote tragedies in which the chorus is broadly representative of the demos; but, if so, these choruses represented communities interacting with an outsider. One common pattern has an exiled figure from the Greek mainland now resident elsewhere in the Greek world (often an island, sometimes northern Greece). The usual type of citizen chorus is more closely defined than this.

6. *The demos in reported space, and slippage in the role of the chorus*

Now for the more literal presentation of the demos. Greek tragedy is frequently concerned with the life of the polis, and yet the polis, taken to be its entire citizen population, could not entirely appear on stage. But it could be talked about. This could occur in the most casual terms: two reasonably frequent formulations in Euripides are 'I have come to the people of X,' meaning, 'I have come to the city of X' (e.g. E. *Ion* 29–30) and, 'the people of Y call me Z,' meaning, 'my name is Z' (E. *Hcld.* 86–7, *Phoen.* 290, cf. *And.* 19–20). To speak in these terms is to refer the generality of citizens as a cohesive body, speaking with one voice. We shall see from examples discussed in the next section that the reported demos in tragedy is not always as unanimous as that, but one political example – from Sophocles' *Antigone* – does at least claim to present the demos speaking with one voice.

Just after the second stasimon of *Antigone*, when Antigone has already been condemned to death, Haemon enters with a shocking revelation: Creon has no popular support (S. *Ant.* 692–700, 733). Haemon's claim of unanimous popular opposition to Creon's style of rule seems false: political opinion is never uniform; there will always be dissent from the majority view; and he is in any case biased for romantic reasons towards Antigone. However, we have no more accurate polling than this of the (in any case fictional) Thebans. My interest here is in the dramatic characterisation of the

[94] S. frr. 378 and 380 appear to refer to the games in which Perseus accidentally kills his grandfather. See further Pearson (1917) 2.47–8.

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demos, and at least Haemon *claims* to represent the united view of the people (ὁμόπτολις λεώς, 733).

This specific reference to the demos of Thebes puts the role of the chorus of this play into perspective. The chorus members themselves are anything but demotic: they are elders of the city, repeatedly described or addressed in terms that underline their elite status;[95] and they are selected specifically (and exclusively: ἐκ πάντων δίχα, 164) for their track record of loyalty to previous kings.[96] Haemon's report leaves us with a sense of two different groups of Theban citizens: the elders on stage and the rest, a much larger group, in reported space.

Nevertheless, in Antigone and other plays with citizen choruses there is room for slippage between the literal idea, of a chorus composed of a subset of the demos, and the notional idea, of a chorus speaking for the community. There are two ways in which this slippage can work: the chorus can speak for the people; and a male chorus can addressed as the people. In the former case the chorus tends to speak for the broader community rather than simply the demos; in the latter, they can stand in rhetorically for the demos itself. No tragic chorus occupies either of these positions consistently; rather, choruses can slip in and out of role.

The first idea is simpler, and we have already seen it work with choruses of women in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* and *Choephoroi*. In the parodos of *Antigone* the elders celebrate the removal of the threat of war from Thebes. Similarly in *Oedipus Tyrannus* a chorus of elders hopes for an end to the plague on the city (especially at S. *OT* 179) and prays to the gods for this deliverance; hence, as in *Seven against Thebes*, they represent a worshipping community.[97] In the next section I look in more detail at the chorus in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, which intermittently speaks for the people.

The second idea, of the chorus being addressed as if it were the demos, needs rather more discussion. At the end of the prologue of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* Oedipus instructs the suppliant children who have gathered before the palace to make way so that another person can summon 'the people of Cadmus' (Κάδμου λαὸν, S. *OT* 144). The chorus of elders then enters. These men cannot represent the entire Theban demos: they are specifically defined as elders and in a later scene (see below) we are

[95] S. *Ant.* 159–60 with Jebb (1888), Griffith (1999) *ad loc.*, 843 (πολυκτήμονες ἄνδρες), 940 (οἱ κοιρανίδαι), 988 (ἄνακτες); cf. Gardiner (1987) 83. The messenger at 1155 addresses them as neighbours (πάροικοι) of the royal house.

[96] S. *Ant.* 164–9, although Antigone doubts their loyalty at 509. Even when she is about to be led away they hint strongly that it was her mistake to go against political authority (853–5, 873–5). Perhaps it matters whether Creon is still on stage at this point, to encourage statements of loyalty: see Griffith (1999) 261. Hawthorne (2009: 34–9) concludes, differently, that the chorus 'has found a way to negotiate between Antigone and Kreon with a divided commitment to the claims of both'.

[97] Easterling (1993) 8.

able to distinguish them from a mass of ordinary citizens off-stage. However, their entry-song does give voice to popular fears for the plague-affected city. Oedipus' speech following the parodos is, judging from its first word (addressed in the singular to the chorus leader?) given in response to their prayers (S. *OT* 216–18, transl. Grene):

> αἰτεῖς· ἃ δ' αἰτεῖς, τἄμ' ἐὰν θέλῃς ἔπη
> κλύων δέχεσθαι τῇ νόσῳ θ' ὑπηρετεῖν,
> ἀλκὴν λάβοις ἂν κἀνακούφισιν κακῶν·
>
> For what you ask me – if you will hear my words,
> And hearing welcome them and fight the plague,
> You will find strength and lightening of your load.

But this speech also introduces the proclamation that Oedipus has summoned the people to hear. He knows that the killer of Laius is present among the citizens of the Thebes and so his proclamation, and the accompanying threats, are made to a crowd that he identifies as the whole of the city (ὑμῖν προφανῶ πᾶσι Καδμείοις τάδε, 223). Now, the chorus members themselves, numbering only fifteen, are only a tiny subset of the Theban citizenry. It may be that in the original production some silent characters walked in also to represent other Thebans. It can certainly be said that the chorus' protestation of innocence and ignorance (276–9) speaks for the people at large. But the reason that this scene works has as much to do with Sophocles' use of dramatic space as it has with the identity of the chorus as citizens. Oedipus makes his proclamation in front of the palace, in other words, in one of the public spaces of the city. (As an audience we know that this is a public space since the children and the priest came here to supplicate Oedipus.) In the real world it is quite unlikely that, even if all the people of Thebes were summoned to be in one place at one time, they could all without exception have turned up. But this does not matter. Oedipus' proclamation is made to the whole people by dint of being made in public: not only before the citizen members of the chorus; but also to any other citizen who is free to walk past and hear it.

Here perhaps we can involve the audience, who, I argue above (section 4), could be recruited into the drama to provide an instant sense of public space. Simply by sitting in large numbers in font of Oedipus they made his proclamation seem more public. In this very limited sense the audience members mimic the people of Thebes. I do not mean that the protagonist in *Oedipus Tyrannus* (or, in my earlier example, Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*) consciously involved the audience, merely that that is how the dramatics of the situation would have worked. And this is not to pronounce with any

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certainty on the staging or dramatic values of the original productions of these plays; but I do hope to have shown that, even where the chorus appears to be elided with the citizens, it cannot be reduced to an allegorical representation of the demos. Rather, there is a useful vagueness created by a temporary slippage between our idea of the chorus as a small body of elders and our idea of a citizen body of whom they are part.

Three examples from Sophocles can illustrate the scope and limits of this occasional slippage. An apparently promising example comes later on in *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Just after the first stasimon Creon enters, outraged at the news that Oedipus has accused him of treason. The chorus members are for the moment the only people on stage with whom he can share his indignation. He addresses them as ἄνδρες πολῖται (S. *OT* 513); but this cannot be taken to be addressed to the citizens as a whole. He appears to have entered from the side, not the house, having heard about Oedipus' allegations from citizens elsewhere in the public spaces of the city.[98] So, as in *Antigone*, we are aware of citizens located in two spaces: the chorus of citizens on stage; and other citizens, unseen and off stage. Creon's choice of words can be explained in two ways. First, he is speaking in public and therefore to any citizen that happens to be around. Second, and more likely, he is speaking to the elders and (in order to gain their support) defining them on this occasion as his fellow citizens.[99]

My second and third Sophoclean examples come again from *Antigone*, and show progressively greater degrees of slippage. In Antigone's last scene she appeals to the citizens of Thebes to look on her as she goes to her death. Her form of address, ὦ γᾶς πατρίας πολῖται (S. *Ant.* 806), might be taken to indicate the chorus, whom we would then take to be the Theban people, but I do not think that the people are represented as rigidly as that. Antigone is appearing in the public space of the city for the last time and so addresses her words to anyone who happens to be there. The most immediate examples of this public are the chorus members; she might also have in mind the Thebans who will see her presently as she is led through the city. If the chorus members do fill this role for Antigone, they remain in it only momentarily: in the exchanges to follow they stick more closely to the role of loyal advisers (see n. 96 above); Antigone complains that they are mocking her (839), and casts them rhetorically as a minority within the populace: ὦ πόλις, ὦ πόλεως | πλυκτήμονες ἄνδρες ('O city; O city's | very wealthy men', 842–3).[100]

[98] Carter (2006) 152.

[99] On elders addressed as citizens, cf. A. *Ag.* 855: ἄνδρες πολῖται, πρέσβος Ἀργείων τόδε.

[100] Cf. Griffith (1999) *ad loc.*

The third example comes when Eurydice enters from the palace. She addresses the chorus and the messenger, ὦ πάντες ἀστοί (1183): an address that really does seem to identify the chorus members with the people of Thebes. Again I think it may help to consider the use of dramatic space. Eurydice has entered (for the first and only time in the play) from within; now she is speaking in public, outdoors, to anyone who might be there: hence ὦ πάντες ἀστοί.

None of this is meant to diminish the chorus' role in *Antigone*. Their dramatic role as elders reflects the political status of Creon, who is ultimately the tragic hero of the piece.[101] The choral odes include the parodos, which, we have seen, gives voice to the hopes and fears of the community; and a series of rightly famous stasima that enlarge on the meaning of the play.[102] The voice of this chorus, as in any in tragedy, is highly flexible.[103] So, for example, their sympathetic announcement of Antigone on her final entrance (801–5) need not be at odds with the tension between them and her later in the same scene. However, the particular aspect of this flexibility that has concerned me here is an oscillation between their literal role as elite, loyal advisers and the possibility momentarily to be addressed as if they were the city.

We have seen (section 5) that one is highly unlikely to find a Greek tragic chorus that simply represents the demos of the city in which the play is set; there is a minority of tragedies with citizen choruses, especially favoured by Sophocles, but even these tend to represent subsets of the demos. That said, choruses can either be addressed as if they were citizens, or they can speak for the broader community (section 6). No tragic chorus adopts this political role consistently. Rather, the chorus can slide in and out of the role in interesting ways.

7. The people's voice

We can now look at some examples, and I shall begin by returning to Haemon's description of public opinion in Sophocles' *Antigone*. Teiresias' claims in a later scene

[101] Carter (forthcoming b); cf. Torrance (1965) 298–9, Winnington-Ingram (1980) 117–18, Griffith (1999) 27; *contra* e.g. Knox (1964) 67–8.

[102] On some or all of which, see Easterling (1978); Burton (1980) 95ff.; Winnington-Ingram (1980) 91–116; Segal (1981) 152ff.

[103] Esposito (1996) 89–90. For a different view, see Gardiner (1987) 82–97, who sees the chorus members as rigidly in character throughout, and interprets the odes in these terms. The ability of tragic choruses to step out of role and speak or sing with broader authority is addressed well by contributions to the *Arion* double issue on the chorus (1995, 1996) esp. Segal (1996) 20–1.

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about the religious folly of Creon's actions will influence him more than Haemon's claims on the political folly: only after Teiresias leaves the stage does Creon change his mind and hope to bury Polyneices and rescue Antigone. But Haemon's revelation does have an important effect, forcing the audience, and perhaps the characters on stage, completely to re-evaluate the nature of Creon's rule. Until now it has been assumed that, since Creon is on the side the city, the people are on the side of Creon: Ismene makes this assumption in the prologue;[104] Haemon's revelation undermines it.[105]

This kind of demos, unseen and potentially critical of its leaders, features in several extant tragedies. The next two examples I shall discuss come from Aeschylus.[106] Both are set in Argos, although the constitution of the city differs greatly. Nevertheless, each of these kings must be concerned about public opinion (A. *Suppl.* 485, *Ag.* 938):

> κατ' ἀρχῆς γὰρ φιλαίτιος λεώς.
> The people love to fault the government.
>
> φήμη γε μέντοι δημόθρους μέγα σθένει.
> And yet the people's voice is very strong.

I shall take the example from *Agamemnon* first.

> 'In Agamemnon the demos of Argos are strikingly absent, or at least silent for ... the citizen-body have all been led off to fight a long, costly and ultimately profitless war, leaving behind only the women, the weak and the elderly (cf. 72ff.) We are reminded how insubstantial the demos is by the occasional reference to their (somewhat shadowy) existence: βαρεῖα δ' ἀστῶν φάτις ξὺν κότῳ, the chorus sing in the first stasimon, δημοκράντου δ' ἀρᾶς τίνει χρέος (456–7).'

Thus Podlecki (1993) at pp. 76–7. He goes on to discuss the Argive citizens' 'feeble, ineffectual' response to the beginning of tyranny at Argos – which appears to assume that the chorus comes to represent the people later in the drama. I have already given reasons to be cautious in making such an assumption; however, Podlecki's argument demonstrates two ways in which the chorus of this play at least *speaks for* the people of

[104] S. *Ant.* 78–9. Antigone echoes Ismene's words as late as 907, but she cannot be expected to know that the citizens support her: she was not on stage to hear from Haemon.

[105] Carter (2007) 110–11.

[106] For a third Aeschylean example, see A. *Septem* 4–9 with West (2006) 34.

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Argos.[107] First, they introduce themselves as people too old to have gone to war (A. *Ag.* 72ff.); and adopt the 'we' of people left behind in their dialogue with the herald, who speaks for those who went (544–6). And, later, the chorus speaks for the people more generally in response to the tyranny of Aegisthus (1615–16, cf. 1665):[108]

> οὔ φημ᾽ ἀλύξειν ἐν δίκῃ τὸ σὸν κάρα
> δημορριφεῖς, σάφ᾽ ἴσθι, λευσίμους ἀράς.
>
> I say your head will justly not avoid
> Curses like stones – note well – the people hurl.

Podlecki correctly identifies these as 'empty threats'.[109] But a closer examination of the demos – generally speaking a reported demos – in this play gives a different picture. Although the people have no real influence on events, they are not quite as ineffectual as Podlecki suggests: their opinion still matters.[110]

Let us look at those lines from the first stasimon. In the third strophic pair the chorus tells of how the cremated bodies of soldiers have been sent home from Troy (438–44), leading to lamentation at home and the complaint that these men fell 'because of someone else's wife' (Sommerstein's translation of 448–9). Grief soon becomes resentment (φθονερὸν, 450) at the Atreidae. Then (456–60):

> βαρεῖα δ᾽ ἀστῶν φάτις ξὺν κότῳ,
> δημοκράντου δ᾽ ἀρᾶς τίνει χρέος.
> μένει δ᾽ ἀκοῦσαί τί μοι
> μέριμνα νυκτηρεφές.
>
> The townsmen's voice when charged with wrath is weighty:
> It has the value of a public curse.
> And my anxiety anticipates
> Hearing something that happens in the night.

[107] Cf. Griffith (1995) 76 n. 55. In this footnote and elsewhere he notes the elders' implicit 'upper-class status', which gives them a sense of 'moral and social superiority' (p. 80) over other non-royals; but also 'extreme fluctuations ... of mood and degree of authority' (81) so that on occasion they speak like 'typical citizens' (n. 55). There is a certain elasticity in the status of this chorus.

[108] Cf. Föllinger (2009) 128.

[109] Podlecki (1993) 77.

[110] On the following cf. Dodds (1960b) 19–20, who concludes 'Argos is not yet a democracy ... but the opinions of the δῆμος are already important'; quoted with approval by Podlecki (1986: 93). Cf. also West (2006) 37–8.

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What exactly it is that the elders fear is not clear (cf. 547–50).[111] They do not know exactly what is going to happen, nor that public curses will in fact be aimed at Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, not Agamemnon (1409, 1413, 1616). What we can say is that, in their view, popular discontent is a condition (if not a cause) of political upheaval.[112] (Compare Clytemnestra's own remark at 883–4, in which δημόθρους ἀναρχία is placed in opposition to βουλήν.) And the person who has the most to lose from any upheaval is the man who has recently gained most – this is the implication of the next few lines (461–74), in which the elders state a personal preference for happiness without envy (ἄφθονον ὄλβον, 471).[113]

Now let us focus on the scene in which Agamemnon appears. Again φθόνος (resentment, envy, directed at the more powerful or fortunate) is a central idea. In almost their first words to the returning king the chorus members express anxiety over how to address him (784–6):

> πῶς σε προσείπω, πῶς σε σεβίξω
> μήθ' ὑπεράρας μήθ' ὑποκάμψας
> καιρὸν χάριτος;
>
> How should I address you, how shall I honour you
> Neither overshooting, nor falling short
> Of the opportunity to please?

This reflects an anxiety about how one should think about someone greater or more fortunate than oneself, and how to express these thoughts. It therefore relates to the chorus' earlier views on the comparative merits of the envied and the unenvied life. This matters since, as they are about to hint (787ff.), not everyone has been loyal while the king was away: this may be an allusive reference to Aegisthus and Clytemnestra

[111] We do not need to take δημοκράντου δ' ἀρᾶς too literally. There is no reference here, *pace* Fraenkel (1950), Denniston and Page (1957) *ad loc.* to a formal assembly in which a curse was pronounced. See the useful discussion by Bollack and Judet de la Combe (1981–2001) *ad loc.*, for whom the phrase provides 'la valeur d'une formale rhétorique'.

[112] Cf. Griffith (1995) 77: 'the play conveys a vivid, though vague and indeterminate, sense of Argos as an unstable community torn by dissension and fear.' Gagarin (1976: 110) makes a close connection between the anti-war party at Argos and the plotters against Agamemnon.

[113] Cf. S. *Aj.* 154–7:

τῶν γὰρ μεγάλων ψυχῶν ἰεὶς	For strike against the mighty souls and you
οὐκ ἂν ἁμάρτοις· κατὰ δ' ἄν τις ἐμοῦ	Won't miss, but anyone who says such things
τοιαῦτα λέγων οὐκ ἂν πείθοι·	Against the likes of *me* would not persuade:
πρὸς γὰρ τὸν ἔχονθ' ὁ φθόνος ἕρπει.	Because resentment stalks the man who has.

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(although they cannot know the extent of the plot); or it may refer more broadly to resentment among the Argives; or we could say it is a bit of both. On the one hand, the chorus members' reference to people who join in welcoming Agamemnon home with the pretence of loyalty (792–3) puts one in mind specifically of Clytemnestra; on the other, their own admission that they were previously highly critical of their king (799–804) reminds us that this Argos is a city where dissent can flourish more generally.[114]

Whatever the chorus members' precise meaning, Agamemnon understands it differently. He is certainly unaware of the threat posed by his wife, or he would not be about to enter the house. Agamemnon assumes that the insincere people to whom the chorus refers are motivated by φθόνος at his royal status and wealth (832–7), and promises to set up κοινοὺς ἀγῶνας – common assemblies – in order to clear the air in a public meeting (ἐν πανηγύρει, 845) and, if necessary, remove any threatening voice. There is no hint of democracy here – ἀγών is a word used for assemblies in Homeric epic[115] – and his proposed solution is harsh (848–50):

> ὅτῳ δὲ καὶ δεῖ φαρμάκων παιωνίων,
> ἤτοι κέαντες ἢ τεμόντες εὐφρόνως
> πειρασόμεσθα πῆμ᾽ ἀποστρέψαι νόσου.
>
> And where there's need of healing remedies
> By cautery or by incision we
> Shall sensibly attempt to turn aside
> The misery of illness.

The medical metaphor suggests a solution to be applied to the citizen-body, which means death or exile for individuals. The implication, as in the chorus' preceding speech, is that public opinion is fragmented; some are more loyal than others.

[114] A selection of views: Denniston and Page (1957), cf. Kitto (1961) 72–3, find 'no clear hint that danger is specially to be expected from Clytemnestra', and rightly recall mention of public discontent in the first stasimon (A. *Ag.* 447ff., discussed above); for Bollack and Judet de la Combe (1981–2001) 2.186–7, 'le langage est uniquement politique', giving general comment on relations between kings and subjects; Fraenkel (1950) also considers it 'a general maxim' but adds that 'there is implied in it a hint of Clytemnestra and a warning against her'. For Headlam (1910) the whole speech is a series of coded warnings about Clytemnestra.

[115] Specifically the crowds at athletic contests: Il. 23.258, 24.1; Od. 8.200, cf. Fraenkel (1950) *ad* A. *Ag.* 845. Fraenkel adds that 'Agamemnon is just as much at pains to emphasize the constitutional checks to his authority as is Pelasgus [in *Suppliants*],' an assessment that slightly over-values the political clout of this assembly: like a Homeric assembly (on which, see Redfield (1990) 319) it is probably there to validate decisions, not make them.

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Importantly, it is Agamemnon's fear of envious subjects that gives Clytemnestra an opening in her attempt to persuade him to walk on the red tapestries (937–9):

> ΚΛ. μή νυν τὸν ἀνθρώπειον αἰδεσθῇς ψόγον.
> ΑΓ. φήμη γε μέντοι δημόθρους μέγα σθένει.
> ΚΛ. ὁ δ᾽ ἀφθόνητός γ᾽ οὐκ ἐπίζηλος πέλει.
>
> CLYTEMNESTRA: Now's not the time to balk at human censure.
> AGAMEMNON: And yet the people's voice is very strong.
> CLYTEMNESTRA: But unresented is unenviable.

Therefore, while there is no apparent uniformity of the opinion among the Argives, it is possible here to characterise them – rather as the Sophoclean Haemon characterises the Thebans – as a single, resentful voice, an unseen threat to Agamemnon's rule. And, however ineffectual the people may be in practice, members of the elite take their views seriously; they can certainly influence a king's decisions.

Turning now to the example from *Suppliants*, Pelasgus' constitutional position is ambiguous. When Danaus and his daughters first catch sight of Pelasgus and his impressive retinue, they assume that these are the 'leaders of this land' (τῆσδε γῆς ἀρχηγέται, A. *Suppl.* 184), and this is confirmed in as many words by Pelasgus when he arrives (τῆσδε γῆς ἀρχηγέτης, in the same metrical position, line 251). In this, his first speech, Pelasgus is quite clear on the extent of his dominion (246ff.), although he ends by hinting at his awareness of popular opinion: μακράν γε μὲν δὴ ῥῆσιν οὐ στέργει πόλις ('the city does not love a lengthy speech', 273). Hence the chorus members are taken back by Pelasgus' later insistence that he must consult the people before leading his people into war (365–75). Pelasgus explains his anxiety as follows (397–401, tr. Benardete):

> οὐκ εὔκριτον τὸ κρῖμα. μή μ᾽ αἱροῦ κριτήν.
> εἶπον δὲ καὶ πρίν, οὐκ ἄνευ δήμου τάδε
> πράξαιμ᾽ ἄν, οὐδέ περ κρατῶν, μὴ καί ποτε
> εἴπῃ λεώς, εἴ πού τι μὴ τοῖον τύχοι,
> "ἐπήλυδας τιμῶν ἀπώλεσας πόλιν."
>
> The choice is not easy: choose me not as a judge.
> I said before that never would I act
> Alone, apart from the people, though I am ruler;
> So never may the people say, if evil comes,
> 'Respecting aliens the city you destroyed'.

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So Pelasgus' Argos is not a pure democracy: he feels compelled to consult the people but he remains the ruler.[116] This consultation takes the form of an assembly that hears speeches and votes, by a show of hands, much like the one in democratic Athens. The language used to describe the process is markedly Athenian, too.[117] The promised result is *eleutheria* for the Danaids, who will live in Argos as metics (μετοικεῖν τῆσδε γῆς ἐλευθέρους, 608).

Except of course that it will not turn out quite like this. We know that the Argive initiative announced here must fail, since the Danaids will agree to marry their cousins, only to murder them, with one exception, on their wedding night.[118] One possible implication of this is that the process of democratic consultation is flawed. The people have made an unsuccessful decision, which appears to contradict the ideology of the 'wisdom of the masses'.[119] One can contrast suppliant dramas situated at Athens, where the city tends to prevail in battle over suppliants it has accepted: consider Euripides' *Heraclidae* or *Suppliants*. It is therefore tempting to see the fictional Argos as a place where concerns about popular influence can be played out on the tragic stage while staying on the right side of a largely Athenian audience: we have seen that the Argive demos in *Agamemnon* is portrayed as opinionated and unpredictable; and one later play, Euripides' *Orestes* (on which, see below) certainly takes the presentation of a troublesome Argive demos to another level. But kings do not always have an easier time of it in tragedies set at Athens, as we shall now see.

In the following two Euripidean examples the king of Athens receives a suppliant or suppliants on behalf of the city and (as in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*) risks war as a result. Given the stakes, we should not be surprised if the people show concern at the decision, whatever constitutional power the popular assembly might have. In

[116] Burian (1974) 7–9; Friis Johansen and Whittle (1980) *ad loc*; Podlecki (1986) 82–5; Rohweder (1998) 53–4; West (2006) 35–7; *contra* Garvie (2006) xvi, who suggests that οὐδέ περ κρατῶν (A. *Suppl.* 399) could equally mean 'even if I had the power'. My view here is the same as in Carter (2007) 87 but revised from (2004) 14 n. 47.

[117] δήμου δέδοκται (A. *Suppl.* 601), ἔδοξεν Ἀργείοισιν (605). And of course δήμου κρατοῦσα χεὶρ (604) gives us essentially the earliest appearance of the word democracy in Greek literature. Cf. Podlecki (1986) 84–5, (1993) 75.

[118] For different reconstructions of the trilogy, see Winnington-Ingram (1961); Friis Johansen and Whittle (1980) 1.40–55; Garvie (2006) 163–233; Sommerstein (1996) 141–51. For Burian (1974) 12–13, the prominent role of the demos in *Suppliants* should not force conclusions about what happens in the other two plays.

[119] On which, see e.g. Ober (1989) 163–5. One way out for the Athenian demos when its decision turned out to be wrong was to blame the man who talked them into it: for example Miltiades at Hdt. 6.136, and see further Ober (2005) 135–41. In real life such a *rhêtor* exposed himself to a range of legal procedures (on which see MacDowell (1978) 167–74, 179–81; Ober (1989) 108–12). If any such procedure was available to the Argive demos in the Danaid trilogy, Pelasgus appears to have escaped it through his probable death in battle: Lesky (1966) 80; Garvie (2006) 199.

Euripides' *Suppliants* Theseus takes the decision to the assembly but has no doubt that he will be supported. He is confident in his own authority; however, public opinion matters even to him (E. *Suppl.* 350–1):

> δόξει δ᾽ ἐμοῦ θέλοντος· ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου
> προσδοὺς ἔχοιμ᾽ ἂν δῆμον εὐμενέστερον.
>
> They will agree because I want it, but
> By giving them my reasons I should make
> The people more in favour.

Theseus' desire to have his people on board echoes Pelasgus in Aeschylus' play (τὸ κοινὸν ὡς ἂν εὐμενὲς τιθῶ, A. *Suppl.* 518),[120] with the difference that Theseus is unconcerned about the risk of losing popular support. Other Athenian kings in tragedy, faced with requests for asylum, show even greater personal authority: Theseus in Sophocles' *Oedipus Colonus* acts on his own authority, which – we have seen – is synonymous with the authority of the city;[121] so do Aegeus (E. *Med.* 719ff.) and Theseus (E. *HF* 1322ff.).

The second, different example is Euripides' *Heraclidae*. Here Demophon makes the decision on his own authority (E. *Hcld.* 236ff., cf. 262) but comes to regret it later. Hearing from a convention of oracle chanters that the daughter of a noble man must be sacrificed to Demeter in order to secure victory (403ff.), he prevaricates over the decision he has already made (410ff.). He chooses this moment to reveal how vulnerable he really is to public opinion (415–24):

> καὶ νῦν πυκνὰς ἂν συστάσεις ἂν εἰσίδοις,
> τῶν μὲν λεγόντων ὡς δίκαιος ἦ ξένοις
> ἱκέταις ἀρήγειν, τῶν δὲ μωρίαν ἐμοῦ
> κατηγορούντων· εἰ δὲ δὴ δράσω τόδε,
> οἰκεῖος ἤδη πόλεμος ἐξαρτύεται.
> ταῦτ᾽ οὖν ὅρα σὺ καὶ συνεξεύρισχ᾽ ὅπως
> αὐτοί τε σωθήσεσθε καὶ πέδον τόδε,
> κἀγὼ πολίταις μὴ διαβληθήσομαι.
> οὐ γὰρ τυραννίδ᾽ ὥστε βαρβάρων ἔχω·
> ἀλλ᾽, ἢν δίκαια δρῶ, δίκαια πείσομαι.

[120] Cf. Podlecki (1993) 74.

[121] Athens in this play is no democracy, as is made clear at S. *OC* 65–6; cf. Walker (1995) 171–2; *contra* Blundell (1993), Easterling (1997a) 34–5.

And now you may see densely packed assemblies,
In which some argue it was just for me
To help the foreign suppliants; while others
Condemn my folly. If in fact I do
The deed, a civil war is on the way.
Consider then these things and help me find
A way to save yourselves and this land too,
And me, from blame among the citizens.
I don't hold kingship like barbarians,
But, acting justly, I'll be treated justly.

We should not read democratic practice into this speech: the πυκνὰς ... συστάσεις are not plenary assemblies but a series of tight-knit factional groups; and (unlike Pelasgus or Theseus in other plays) Demophon has led his city into a likely war without consultation of any kind.[122] The contrast drawn in 423 is therefore not between tyranny and democracy, but barbarian and Greek models of monarchy: it is under the latter that public opinion really counts.

In several of the plays discussed so far the voice of the people is described as if it were unanimous, even where there is evidence of underlying disagreement. A still more factionalised demos is found in Euripides' *Heracles*, in response to the tyranny of Lycus: the chorus of old citizens of Thebes, who clearly object to the tyranny (E. *HF* 252–7); the apathetic citizens, who have failed to protect the children of Heracles (217–21); various hidden elements of the population that actively support the tyrant (588–92).[123] The Argives in Euripides' *Orestes* provide a different picture again, a mixed example. They have already passed a provisional decree to deny the matricides food and shelter (E. *Or.* 46–8); and they are seemingly united in their hatred of the title-character (427–8, cf. 446). But the report of the assembly meeting reveals a set of competing factions (consider, for example, the range of responses to Diomedes' proposal of exile, 901ff.).[124]

The final play I wish very briefly to discuss is Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, a drama highly preoccupied with the relationship between leaders and led. The circumstances are interesting in two respects: first, it is a military play, so instead of a demos we have a Greek army; second, it is a combined army, made up of Greeks from a number of city-states. Nevertheless, the army in this play is usually presented as a single entity, or else a contingent such as the Myrmidons can be supposed to share the concerns of

[122] Cf. Wilkins (1993) 106.
[123] See further Carter (2004) 22–3.
[124] On this reported assembly meeting see de Romilly (1972); Barker (forthcoming) 155ff.

the entire force. A powerful influence in the background of this play is an army characterised as restless and hungry for battle (consider the Myrmidons' complaints to Achilles, E. *IA* 813–18).

The plurality of city-states in *Iphigenia at Aulis* gives us a plurality of generals; as a result we can observe a range of elite reactions to a single, influential mass of people. Agamemnon is characterised as a general all too conscious of the need to maintain his reputation among the common soldiers. He envies the more secure position of 'lesser' men (446–50). Menelaus is at first more cynical and self-interested: he is well aware of the influence of the soldiers but despises it.[125] The real friend of the army, though we never see him on stage, is Odysseus, consistently described in this play as a rabble-rouser, able to harness the discontented crowd and lead it, if necessary, against a weakened Agamemnon.[126] Almost at the opposite extreme is Achilles, who (we have just seen) is badgered by his own men. He later attempts to use rhetoric to persuade the army against the sacrifice of Iphigenia and risks violent reprisals as a result (1349–53). The portrayal of the army in *Iphigenia at Aulis* is ugly at times, almost contemptuous.[127] In other dramas, too, the army can be a particularly dangerous thing: insulting and very nearly assaulting Teucer in Sophocles' *Ajax* (719ff.); agreeing – again in response to the demagoguery of Odysseus – to the human sacrifice of Polyxena in Euripides' *Hecabe* (98ff.).

A Greek tragic king must therefore be conscious of the good or bad will of his subjects, regardless of the precise constitutional nature of his rule. A decision that takes his people into a war, or which risks invasion from another city, is particularly prickly. This is perhaps an unexciting conclusion to draw, one that that reveals more about kingship, or politics more generally, than tragedy. However, the attitude of the people to their king is not the same everywhere in Greek literature.

A comparison with Homer's *Iliad* may be instructive. The Greek or Trojan people (λαός) in Homer is, like its tragic counterpart, markedly vulnerable, especially to the decisions of its leaders in time of war;[128] and a common worry among Homeric kings is that they may have lost/destroyed their people.[129] Odysseus in the *Odyssey* loses all of his men (e.g. ὤλεσε μὲν νῆας γλαφυράς, ἀπὸ δ' ὤλεσε λαούς, *Od.* 24.428); Agamemnon at *Il.* 9.22 has lost a large proportion (πολὺν ὤλεσα λαόν); and Hector anticipates the fall of Troy in the *Iliad* (22.104–7 tr. Lattimore):

[125] E. *IA* 366–9, lines that, however, are considered *vix Euripidei* in Diggle's edition.

[126] E. *IA* 1361–6. See also 522–35, especially 526, considered *fortasse Euripidei* by Diggle though not included by Kovacs (2003) 87–8 in his reconstructed first-performance text.

[127] Cf. Michelakis (2006) 79.

[128] Van Effenterre (1977) 51–2; Haubold (2000) 2.

[129] Haubold (2000) 28–32; cf. Taplin (1992) 50. Haubold lists instances of ὤλεσε λαόν and similar stock phrases at p. 198.

νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ ὤλεσα λαὸν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ἐμῇσιν,
αἰδέομαι Τρῶας καὶ Τρῳάδας ἑλκεσιπέπλους,
μή ποτέ τις εἴπῃσι κακώτερος ἄλλος ἐμεῖο:
Ἕκτωρ ἦφι βίηφι πιθήσας ὤλεσε λαόν.

Now, since by my own recklessness I have ruined my people,
I feel shame before the Trojans and the Trojan women with trailing
robes, that someone who is less of a man than I will say of me:
'Hector believed in his own strength and ruined his people.'

Here Hector, like several tragic kings, is keenly conscious of public opinion, and this affects his decision to fight Achilles. However, this kind of elite susceptibility to popular criticism is unusual in Homeric epic. The people in Homer may make their views felt in assembly meetings, but usually to voice assent to decisions and speeches made by kings;[130] and even Hector in the example just quoted is clear that his critics are inferior to him.

Another difference lies in the way in which popular feeling is explained. As Most (2003) has shown, the *phthonos* that motivates the demos in many tragedies is strikingly absent from Homer. (Not that this quality in public feeling is exclusively tragic: Most goes on to show that popular *phthonos* is important in, for example, Hesiod and Pindar.) Perhaps this reveals more about tragic leaders than about their people: they use *phthonos* to explain popular discontent, especially when they are under pressure;[131] it is thus an emotion ascribed to others, not claimed for oneself. (Consider Oedipus' accusations against Creon at S. *OT* 380ff.; Creon in response protests that as king he would lose his current popularity among the people.) I do not mean to say that the people in tragedy are never actually motivated by envy – perhaps they are, but we cannot easily identify motives in large, unseen crowds. The more important tendency that I want to identify here is the influential, critical voice of the tragic demos.

[130] *Il.* 2.333–5, 394–7, 23.539; and also 2.270–7, where the Argives, talking among themselves, are united in approval of Odysseus' treatment of Thersites (ὡς φάσαν ἠὲ πληθύς, 278). Popular assent is also implied in the response to Achilles' opening speech in the assembly at 19.74–5; whereas in the lines following (78–82) Agamemnon's opening remarks imply that he is being heckled.

[131] Cf. Most (2003) 135–6, who demonstrates that Pindar's *phthonos*-language is more frequent in odes composed for tyrants or other figures living with the threat of political upheaval. Goldhill (2003), in the same volume as Most, argues that tragedy has little to do with 'envy, spite and jealousy', 'except as brief tokens in rhetorical battles' (p. 178); none of these emotions 'motivates the plot' (169). Goldhill limits his enquiry to emotions felt by heroes and gods, however, and does not really consider the topos of popular *phthonos*.

8. Conclusion

To draw the threads of my argument together, here are four observations.

1. Tragic poets show nearly as much imagination as comic poets in their approach to the dramatic challenge of portraying the people. Regular citizens can appear individually in minor roles.[132]

2. The chorus can be used to speak for the broader community, and can be addressed as the demos, but there are explanations for this that go beyond crudely allegorical representation.

3. More literal reports of the people are frequent in tragedy. The demos can in fact be a significant player even though it does not appear on stage. On occasion it is characterised as a cohesive unit with a single voice and unanimous views. Elsewhere it is more uneven, factional.

4. One aspect of the significant role of the demos is its acknowledged influence on political leaders. This can apply as much in tragic monarchies as in tragic democracies. It also applies in a tragic military camp.

We can add a fifth point, which has been made elsewhere.[133]

5. The demos, and with it the broader community of the polis, is generally a survivor in a literary genre marked by suffering and death. The people may be threatened, perhaps by war or plague, but the audience could usually expect to be spared the shocking spectacle of an entire city being wiped out. Troy is usually doomed where it appears in tragedy, but the only tragic example that we have of the destruction of a *Greek* city is the fictional Oechalia in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*.[134]

What does all this tell us about tragedy as a political art form? The tragic demos emerges as something precious and not to be harmed but at the same time a potential threat to the political establishment. One assumes that this would have flattered a largely democratic audience, whether the drama they were watching was set in a democracy or a monarchy. But one must make this assumption with caution, given the size and diversity of the original audience. When Agamemnon says 'the people's voice is very strong', these words will have been interpreted in different ways by different people. All sorts of factors could affect this interpretation, including the following two: if one was the citizen of a democracy watching the drama during one of the city's

[132] Geddes (1984), in an equivalent study, finds the Homeric demos frustratingly hard to pin down (p. 27), and demotic figures few and far between; Thersites in *Iliad* 2 is the exception, not the rule (23). Not so here.

[133] E.g. Easterling (1989) 11; Seaford (1994) xiv; Budelmann (2000) 204–5; Carter (2006) 141, (2007) 78.

[134] Easterling (1989) 14–16 on Troy, (2005) 71 n. 43 on Oechalia.

principal festivals; if one was a foreign visitor, conscious of the traditions of the host city. The vulnerability of the political elite to popular opinion would have been particularly obvious to the Athenians. Within the fifth century many of its most influential and successful citizens were variously put on trial, fined, deposed, ostracised or sent into voluntary or forced exile: Miltiades, Themistocles, Cimon, Thucydides son of Melesias (and his namesake two decades later), Pericles, Andocides, Alcibiades.

However, if ideas of democracy had popped into the spectator's head while watching Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, these ideas would have competed with assumptions about the political shape of heroic Argos. There was no prompt, as in his *Suppliants*, to consider Argos as a democracy. The fist-shaking, curse-pronouncing influence of the people in *Agamemnon* falls short of the real power held by the Athenian demos (or, for that matter, by the fifth-century Argive demos). In addition, the motive of *phthonos*, which Agamemnon and other tragic kings ascribe to potentially awkward subjects, is supposed to have been absent from a democracy, where power was theoretically shared.[135]

M. L. West concludes a recent overview of the demos in Aeschylean tragedy as follows:

> 'For Aeschylus, living at a time and place where democracy was a matter of pride, one means of characterizing a king as good was by presenting him as a ruler with democratic instincts. We see this especially with Pelasgos in the *Supplices*, but there is a hint of it with Agamemnon too.'

and usefully contrasts the lack of 'an independent-minded or critical Demos' in the foreign setting of *Persians*.[136] However, another way of looking at the same material, given the broadly Greek composition of the audience, is to say that respect for public opinion was seen as necessary in Greek cities *of various types*, even heroic monarchies. Hence the Euripidean Demophon, concerned about his reputation among his subjects, explains: 'I don't hold kingship like barbarians' (E. *Hcld.* 423, quoted and discussed above).

I hope to have shown how the demos can be located in Greek tragedy and what some of the political implications might be. In particular, the unseen tragic demos can be characterised as a source of censure or even potential insecurity for the ruling class. It is here, if anywhere, that a tension between the individual and the collective lies.

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[135] On the ideal avoidance of *phthonos* at Athens, see Fisher (2003).
[136] West (2006) 40 for the quotation, 33 on Aeschylus' *Persians*.

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