Introduction

The Song at Work

> She was the single artificer of the world
> In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea,
> Whatever self it had, became the self
> That was her song, for she was the maker.
>
> Wallace Stevens, "The Idea of Order at Key West" (1934)

In Wallace Stevens' poem "The Idea of Order at Key West," two men stand by the sea and listen to a woman sing. Through her song the woman becomes the maker of her own world. She binds the disparate elements of emotion and sensation together in a formal composition. This anonymous, unaccompanied singer shapes, orders, enlarges, and even creates experience not only for herself but also for those who hear her.

Why does the individual voice raised in song move us so powerfully? To explain why song functions as it does is necessarily speculative. For the purposes of this project, the question may be considered from both linguistic and aesthetic perspectives. As an adaptive strategy for communication, song is a concentration of those elements of human speech that are heightened when emotion itself is high: variations in pitch and volume, rhythmical emphasis, and the repetition of sounds and syntactical units. From the standpoint of aesthetics, song draws upon a set of conventions and variations. Every song arises within a particular tradition and is heard by its audience based on prior encounters and expectations. This inevitably conditioned reception is notably prominent in the case of Greek tragedy, a stylized genre built up of a set of recognizable conventions, performed before an audience highly attuned to these conventions.

This book reveals Euripides' groundbreaking use of monody, or solo actor's song, in his late plays: in his hands, it is shaped into a potent and flexible instrument for establishing new narrative and thematic structures. At the same time, Euripides uses solo song to explore the realm of the interior and the personal in an expanded expressive range. Contributing to the current scholarly debate on music, emotion, and characterization in Greek tragedy, I examine the role of monody in the musical design of four plays of Euripides, all produced in the last decade of his career, between 415 BCE and his death in 406 BCE: *Ion*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*,

Phoenician Women, and *Orestes*. These plays are marked by the increased presence of solo actor's song in proportion to choral song. The lyric voice of the individual takes on an unprecedented prominence with far-reaching implications for the structure and impact of each play. The monodies of Euripides are a true dramatic innovation: in addition to creating an effect of heightened emotion, monody is used to develop character and shape plot. These singing actors become the "artificers," to borrow Wallace Stevens' word, of the world in which they sing.

In *Ion*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, *Phoenician Women*, and *Orestes*, Euripides experiments against the backdrop of monody's traditional connection with lament. In contrast to the work of Aeschylus and Sophocles, where solo actor's song is predominantly connected with grief and pain, in these four plays monody conveys varied moods and states of mind. Although resonances of lament may still be present, monody in the late plays of Euripides can also express joy, hope, anxiety, bewilderment, accusation, and deliberation. Often, and simultaneously, it moves forward narrative exposition. As the scope of monody grows, its forms and dramatic functions change: passages of actor's lyric become longer, more metrically complex, more detached from the other characters onstage, and more intensely focused on the internal, emotional experience of the singer. In the four plays under discussion, we see a steadily increasing refinement and expansion of monody as a form, a development that rests upon changes in the style and function of contemporary music in the late fifth century.

My argument stands at the crossroads of two paths of inquiry: the study of dramatic form, on the one hand, and, on the other, the synthesis of affect, emotion, and character. These terms require some clarification. In modern literary criticism of Greek drama, "form" is employed in a number of different ways: to refer to the structural units of a play (e.g., ode or episode), or to the typical elements that recur from play to play (e.g., the *agōn*), or more broadly to the overall construction of the dramatic plot in a sequence of scenes.[1] Recent scholarship has emphasized the relationship between aesthetic form and politics and the cross-fertilization between the artistic structures of Greek tragedy and historical reality.[2] Victoria Wohl, in particular, has explored the ways in which the formal structures of Euripides' plays exert a "psychagogic force" on the audience, prompting emotional engagement with the dilemmas and contradictions of life in the

[1] Rutherford 2012: 7; Dubischar 2017.
[2] Vernant 1988; Zeitlin 1990; Rose 1992; Griffith 1995; Hall 1997; Wohl 2015; Levine 2015.

democratic *polis*.[3] In all of these senses, Euripides has a highly developed and sophisticated sense of form. Although I will at times discuss the political and social context of Athens in the late fifth century, in this book I will principally be concerned with form as it functions within the plays themselves, focusing on the typical elements, such as the *agōn*, iambic *rhesis*, stichomythic exchange, messenger speech, and monody, which appear in combinations and re-combinations from play to play. By 415 BCE, these formal features of tragedy had become highly conventionalized and determined a set of expectations in the contemporary audience. As I hope to show, monody in the late plays of Euripides is always placed in self-conscious relation to these other formal elements of Attic tragedy.

Turning to the second set of terms, I argue that monody in the late plays of Euripides does represent a qualitative shift in concepts of individual emotion, sensation, causation, and subjectivity in tragedy, a new set of representations of what we might tentatively call "character." This is an especially fraught term in critical discourse. The ancient Greeks referred to the *dramatis personae* of a play as *prosopa* (πρόσωπα, "masks"), emphasizing outward appearance and presentation rather than an inner stamp. In recent work on characterization in Greek tragedy, scholars have discussed the difficulty of defining or evaluating character and the artificiality of divorcing it from other aspects of a literary work.[4] Figures in Greek tragedy are idealized and fictionalized constructs, distinct from "real-life" people; the vision of the playwright is at all times shaped by social, cultural, and literary conventions.

In what follows, I adopt the inclusive definition of characterization put forward by Koen de Temmerman and Evert van Emde Boas, which includes the ascription not only of psychological and social traits but also outward appearance and physiology, habitual actions, circumstances, and relationships.[5] I do not intend the word "character" to convey the modern Western notion of a consistent, lifelong pattern of reactivity and of moral stature that above all constitutes the essence of a specific human being. Nonetheless, Euripides does seem particularly interested in exploring conflict *within* the *dramatis personae* of his plays, and in staging the conflicts, decisions, and reversals that take place in

[3] Wohl 2015.
[4] Easterling 1973, 1990; Gould 1978; Gill 1986; Pelling 1990; McClure 1995; Worman 2002; Budelmann and Easterling 2010; de Temmerman and van Emde Boas 2018.
[5] De Temmerman and van Emde Boas 2018: 2–3.

their interior worlds. Within this broader context, I propose that monody allows what is most distinctive about the singer at that moment to be brought out with particular strength and clarity of outline. Through solo song, Euripides reveals the inner state of the figure onstage and gives to it a place of central interest and importance.

Monody, like choral song and dance, takes Greek drama beyond storytelling and expands the art into a multimodal and multidimensional space. In the case of Euripides' musical craft, we are fortunate to have the comprehensive study of Naomi Weiss, who examines the role of *mousikē* (music, song, and dance) and *choreia* (choral song and dance) in four plays from the last fifteen years of Euripides' career: *Electra*, *Trojan Women*, *Helen*, and *Iphigenia in Aulis*.[6] Weiss demonstrates that Euripides combines contemporary musical innovations with the styles and motifs of traditional lyric poetry and contends that this mix of old and new is a central element of the poet's experimentation with the language and performance of *mousikē*. I share Weiss' interest in musical innovation in the late plays of Euripides and employ a similar methodology of close textual and metrical analysis. Yet there is almost no overlap in the material we consider or in the direction of our arguments. Weiss examines plays where most song is choral and discusses tragic choral poetry in reference to other, nondramatic genres. My own project, by contrast, focuses on plays where music is significantly the province of actors and puts monody in conversation with the other structural forms *within* Greek tragedy such as the *agōn* and the messenger speech.

Indeed, no single published work discusses monody in Euripides from a literary standpoint, although there do exist stimulating discussions of the monodies in individual plays. As in the case of formalism and characterization, this book draws together several strands of analysis. The philological tradition has produced important books about the metrical and structural elements of tragedy.[7] Other scholars have approached the role of lyric in drama from a variety of critical perspectives that consider its language and imagery, its links to established poetic and philosophical traditions, and its resonances with the political, social, and cultural developments of the Athenian *polis*; their writing on the songs of tragedy has focused on issues of gender, group identity,

[6] Weiss 2018a.

[7] Discussed further in the next section; compare Jens 1971. Work on lyric includes Kranz 1933; Conomis 1964; Dale 1968; Nordheider 1980; West 1982; Hose 1990; Lourenço 2011. De Oliveira Pulquério 1967–8, Brown 1972, and de Poli 2011 and 2012 deal specifically with meter in Euripidean monody.

democracy, religion, and myth.[8] Finally, recent work on music has enhanced our understanding of the style and ideological implications of the "New Music" – the catchall term used by modern scholars to describe the changes in musical style, language, and performance in the fifth and fourth centuries – for which Euripides was both celebrated and criticized by his contemporaries.[9] Drawing on these quite different schools of criticism, what I offer here is an integrated study of the aesthetic qualities of monody: how actor's song contributes to the unity of each play as a self-contained and self-referential dramatic work. Attention to such elements as prosody, meter, diction, syntax, setting, wordplay, imagery, and theme as well as to the more advanced techniques of irony, ambiguity, and internal tension can make available to us a richer set of readings – and of stagings – for a particular text. For a full appreciation of their complex role in Euripides' dramatic art, monodies must be considered both as formal poetic compositions and as expressive vehicles for emotion and character.

Monody, by its synthesis of lyrical structure and emotional expression, brings together the formal and affective dimensions of tragedy. As Eugenie Brinkema has written, "The turning to affect in the humanities does not obliterate the problem of form and representation."[10] Scholars have discussed the radical nature of Euripides' formal experimentation; they have also remarked on the complexity of the figures, particularly female ones, in his plays.[11] These are not separate assessments, but need to be taken together. As in all art, form and content shape each other. Euripides' use of monody in his late plays provides a means to the creation of more complex characters; and his desire to dramatize the internal emotional states of these characters in turn drives him to expand the boundaries of monody as a dramatic form.

[8] The bibliography is of course vast, and I mention here only works that I have found particularly stimulating: on myth, Conacher 1967; March 1987; on religion, Foley 1985; Mikalson 1991; Lefkowitz 2016; on gender and society, Zeitlin 1996; Foley 2001; Chong-Gossard 2008; Olsen and Telò 2022; on civic ideology, Goldhill 1986; Hall 1989; on social context, Winkler and Zeitlin 1990; Hall 2006; on Euripides' allusions to earlier works of literature, Torrance 2013; and on performance culture, Silk 1996; Wiles 1997; Goldhill and Osborne 1999; Easterling and Hall 2002; Peponi 2012; Butler 2015; Gurd 2016; Franklin 2016.

[9] This area is rich in recent studies, all of which include earlier bibliography; compare Pintacuda 1978; Murray and Wilson 2004; d'Angour 2006; Budelmann 2009; Levin 2009; Csapo 2010; Hagel 2010; Power 2010; Swift 2010; LeVen 2014, 2021; Weiss 2018a; Lynch and Rocconi 2020. The subfield now has a dedicated journal, established in 2013: *Greek and Roman Musical Studies*.

[10] Brinkema 2014: xiv. On the interdependence of affect and form, see further Gregg and Seigworth 2010.

[11] Foley 1981, 2001; Zeitlin 1996; Rabinowitz 1993; Blok 2001; Mossman 2005; Karanika 2014.

Monody and Dramatic Form

Every artistic tradition develops its own set patterns of repetition and variation and generates expectations built upon them. From cave-painting to the contemporary pop song, an art form is a specialized language with its own rules and regularities. A language depends for its intelligibility on its grammar – that is, on predictable morphology and on rules for the arrangement of units of signification. In particular, as Eduard Fraenkel writes in his commentary on Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, "For Greek tragedy there exists also something like a grammar of dramatic technique."[12] Every Greek tragedy is constructed of discrete parts differentiated in form and style, which follow one another in a regular order. Innovation, modification, even subversion of these conventions are all possible; Greek tragedy was by its very nature a hybrid genre, which included and appropriated a wide variety of nondramatic subgenres from lyric poetry to forensic oratory and integrated them within a dramatic narrative.[13] But there is always a consciousness, shared between the artist and the audience, of the tragic theatrical tradition and its formal expectations.

The Greeks did not have a comprehensive general term for the different poetic forms of tragedy, which Aristotle in the *Poetics* names only as "parts" (τὰ μέρη).[14] In modern scholarship they are usually referred to by the German word *Bauform* (plural: *Bauformen*), a structural "building block"; the metaphor, drawn from architecture, imagines tragedy as a grand edifice built up of smaller units. The German philological tradition has generated valuable criticism of these *Bauformen*, with statistical detail and documentation. Much of this work is synthesized in the collection *Die Bauformen der griechischen Tragödie,* edited by W. Jens and published in 1971, which remains a valuable reference book.[15] The *Bauformen* recognized by Jens and his collaborators include the prologue, *parodos*, episode, choral ode, stichomythic exchange, messenger speech, *agōn*, *rhesis*, monody, supplication scene, and *exodos*.

This work is ongoing. Since the publication of Jens' collection, many of these individual *Bauformen* have been the subject of articles and monographs, while additional type scenes in tragedy, such as the *deus ex machina*, have been identified and studied. For example, the messenger speech has proven particularly fruitful, inspiring three books in as many

[12] Fraenkel 1950: ad 613. [13] Swift 2010; Weiss 2018a, 2019.
[14] Aristotle, *Poetics* 12.1452b.14–25. [15] Jens 1971.

decades, by Irene de Jong, James Barrett, and Margaret Dickin, respectively.[16] The choral ode – obviously of great interest for our study of monody, as the dominant musical *Bauform* of tragedy – has also received extended treatment for all three tragedians.[17] Useful synthetic works include a chapter on tragedy as a genre by Donald Mastronarde as well as a monograph on tragic style by Richard Rutherford, who discusses the varied handling of spoken dialogue and lyric song alongside topics such as vocabulary, rhetoric, and imagery, with illustrations from a broad range of plays.[18]

Nor is analysis of the formal structure of tragedy a phenomenon of modern times alone. The names of the different parts of tragedy seem to have been established already by the mid-fifth century. We can gather as much from the tragedies themselves, which sometimes explicitly display an awareness of their own preeminent patterns and governing rules. For instance, in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, produced in 458 BCE, the chorus of Furies introduce the scene of stichomythic dialogue about to commence, enjoining their opponent Orestes to "exchange line for line, in alternation" (ἔπος δ' ἀμείβου πρὸς ἔπος ἐν μέρει, 585–586). In Euripides' *Medea,* produced in 431 BCE, Medea refers to the *agōn* in process as a "conflict of words" (ἄμιλλαν λόγων, 546). Likewise, in Euripides' *Suppliant Women*, produced in 423 BCE, at the beginning of the *agōn* scene Theseus accuses the Theban Herald of "contending in this contest" against him (ἐπεὶ δ' ἀγῶνα καὶ σὺ τόνδ' ἠγωνίσω, 427) and of entering into a "conflict of words" (ἄμιλλαν λόγων, 428).[19] And by the time of Plato a generation later, the phrase "a god from the machine" had become a proverb, reflecting the conventional scene that ends more than half of Euripides' extant plays.[20]

But by far the most important evidence for the conventional building blocks of tragedy comes from Aristophanes, especially his comedy *Frogs*, produced in 405 BCE, one year after the death of Euripides. It was because of his deep appreciation for tragic poetry that Aristophanes could be so sharp and witty a satirist. In *Frogs*, the god Dionysus journeys to the Underworld to resurrect a tragic playwright and save the city of Athens. While in Hades, Dionysus agrees to judge a contest of poetic excellence

[16] De Jong 1991; Barrett 2002; Dickin 2009.
[17] Foley 2003; Kowalzig 2007; Swift 2010; Billings, Budelmann, and Macintosh 2013; Gagné and Hopman 2013; Andújar, Coward, and Hadjimichael 2018; Weiss 2018a; Steiner 2021; Andújar forthcoming.
[18] Mastronarde 2010: 44–62; Rutherford 2012.
[19] This self-referential agonistic language also appears in the *Ion*, as we shall see in Chapter 1.
[20] Plato, *Cratylus* 425d, *Clitophon* 407a.

between the ghosts of Aeschylus and Euripides. The play culminates in a long and brilliant showdown between the two dead playwrights, who vehemently disagree on issues of language, character, and theme as well as on more technical matters such as how to compose music for the stage.[21] First Euripides performs a parody of Aeschylus' choral songs, lambasting their repetitive rhythms and ponderous language; then Aeschylus brings out the younger poet's "Muse" and proceeds to mock his choral lyrics and then his monodies.[22] Comic exaggeration and distortion notwithstanding, this presentation of the rival tragedians must bear some relation to the experience of the audience. Aristophanes displays a sophisticated awareness of critical terminology: he differentiates between prologue (πρόλογος, 1119), *rhesis* (ῥῆσις, 151), and monody (μονῳδία, 944). In other passages, Aristophanes uses the names of specific poetic meters such as iambics, anapests, and tetrameter.[23] We may conclude that at least some of Aristophanes' original audience would have been familiar with the chief characteristics and even the names of the constituent parts of tragedy and would have been able to distinguish between them in performance. Greek drama aimed to please both *hoi polloi* and the *cognoscenti*.

To summarize the discussion thus far, the Greek tragedians were professional artists working in a highly regulated and conventional medium. Many aspects of each play were already set: the number and gender of actors, the use of masks, the series of entrances and exits, the portrayal of violence onstage, and the mythological stories from which the plot could be drawn. In addition, the audience would have come to the theater with expectations about the *Bauformen* from which the play was composed. They would have expected an alternation of spoken scenes and scenes set to music, with a singing and dancing chorus; in addition, a play might or might not include an *agōn*, a deliberative *rhesis*, a messenger speech, or a monody delivered by an actor. Within these constraints, poets could exercise tremendous creativity. In the late work of Euripides, one aspect of this creativity consisted of playing with the expectations of the audience by unexpected and unusual combinations of different *Bauformen*.

In the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, *Bauformen* tend to follow one another in an ordered sequence without combination or overlap. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, for instance, produced in 458 BCE, the play moves relentlessly forward to its denouement: a watchman hints at the dark truths within the palace in a prologue *rhesis*, the chorus explore the mythological

[21] On the contest, compare Hunter 2009: 10–54; Halliwell 2011: 93–154; Weiss 2018a: 3–14.
[22] Aristophanes, *Frogs* 1329–1363. On the parody of monody, compare de Poli 2012: 11–15.
[23] Aristophanes, *Frogs* 1204; *Acharnians* 627; *Clouds* 642, 645.

past of the house in their majestic *parodos*, a messenger delivers news of what has happened offstage, Clytemnestra and Agamemnon debate his decision to tread the crimson carpet in a taut, highly charged stichomythic exchange. Such a tightly organized structure, with a single rhythm of rise and fall, gives the impression of totality and unity. The late plays of Euripides are very different. They rarely proceed in a predictable linear fashion. Instead, these late plays spiral outward, following multiple plot threads and privileging the perspectives of multiple agents.

Here Donald Mastronarde's distinction between "closed" and "open" forms in tragedy may be useful.[24] A "closed" form depends on overt causal connections and focuses narrowly on a few main figures. In an "open" form, by contrast, some or all connections must be supplied by the audience of the play. The "open" form allows for the development of alternate structures of relatedness both formal and personal. As Mastronarde writes,

> Event (what happens because of outside forces) becomes as prominent as, or more prominent than, action (what occurs because of the deliberate choice of a figure). The number of figures involved in the action is increased and their separate influence on the course of events reduced. The rhythm of complication and resolution is varied and multiplied. The interconnection of the acts or scenes is to be understood by an inductive movement that notes juxtapositions and implicit parallels and contrasts rather than by a deductive movement that recognizes a causal connection in terms of "probability or necessity."[25]

As Mastronarde emphasizes, "the open structure is not to be viewed as a failed effort at closed structure, but rather as a divergent choice that consciously plays against the world-view of closure and simple order."[26]

Euripides is a master of the open form: his late plays demand interpretive effort from the audience. Like his predecessors, Euripides takes advantage of the all-encompassing capacity of tragedy to embrace, combine, and transform multiple genres and forms.[27] Rather than employing each *Bauform* as an element standing distinct and separate from what precedes and follows, Euripides creates composite orders. This drive toward formal experimentation is especially apparent in Euripides' novel use of monody in his late plays. In addition to strongly expressing a specific state of mind through song, a monody may simultaneously serve as part of an *agōn*, or as a deliberative *rhesis*, or as a messenger speech. In the plays I discuss,

[24] Mastronarde 2010: 63–87. [25] Mastronarde 2010: 64. [26] Mastronarde 2010: 64.
[27] Weiss 2019.

Euripides combines monody with other *Bauformen* to create hybrid structures, just as a collapsing telescope can be expanded or contracted, its parts nestled within each other. This is not a collapse into chaos, but a more concentrated order. One might also call the procedure Euripides employs in his monodies a liberation of form, as when the few simple shapes in a kaleidoscope are repositioned and reflected, such that while the individual elements are still recognizable, even disarmingly familiar at first glance, they transform into patterns wholly new.

The Emergence of Monody

The term "monody" in its etymological sense – "solo song," from μόνος and ᾠδή – refers only to a mode of vocal delivery and is not restricted to tragedy. The word was occasionally used in this wider sense in antiquity. For instance, Plato, in a passage from the *Laws*, discusses the regulation of musical contests in the education of children; in this section he also examines μονῳδία and χωρωδία, "solo performance" and "choral performance," without making any explicit connection to tragedy or even to theater.[28] But monody became over the course of the fifth century BCE a specialized technical term for one of the constituent *Bauformen* of Greek tragedy, indicating an extended song delivered by an actor, as opposed to by a collective chorus.

Today solo song is ubiquitous in musical drama. Works of musical theater aimed at a wide audience – from opera to Broadway musicals to Disney movies – are based around the showstopping arias of individual singers.[29] These solo songs are often the most popular and memorable parts of the dramas from which they are drawn. But this was not always the case. Greek tragedy emerged in the late sixth century; one of its sources was group songs associated with the dithyramb, a ritual musical celebration in honor of the god Dionysus.[30] Choral lyric was thus central to early tragedy. Tragic songs were predominantly composed for performance by a group of twelve or perhaps fifteen adult male Athenian citizens who sang and danced in unison.[31] A chorus might rehearse for weeks or months before the premiere, but the individual members probably continued their other, usual trades during this period.[32] As we know from the surviving plays of Aeschylus,

[28] Plato, *Laws* 764d; compare 765a.
[29] For a comparison of American musical theater and Greek drama, see Moore 2022.
[30] For ancient sources, see Csapo and Slater 1994: 89–101.
[31] On the size of the chorus, see Sansone 2016. [32] Wilson 2000.