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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Lyndsay Coo and P. J. Finglass

The study of women in ancient Greek tragedy has become a scholarly mainstay. The subject has launched a thousand undergraduate dissertations and PhD theses, has attracted some of the most eloquent scholars of recent generations, and, particularly through its intersection with gender studies, structural anthropology, and feminist criticism, has been instrumental in keeping tragedy firmly in the vanguard of new critical approaches to ancient literature. Yet unsurprisingly this attention has focussed on those plays that happen to have come down to us in full, with certain characters – such as Aeschylus’ Clytemnestra, Sophocles’ Antigone and Euripides’ Medea – coming to dominate our understanding of the representation of women in tragedy. There have been few systematic attempts to approach the study of female characters from the perspective of fragmentary tragedy. That is what this book attempts to provide.

The prevalent focus on extant tragedy, though hardly difficult to understand or explain, is increasingly difficult to justify. There has never been a better time to be working on fragmentary tragedy, with the last few decades having seen enormous advances in this field.¹ The monumental series *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, whose first volume appeared in 1971, was completed in 2004; its five volumes, expertly edited by three of the greatest philologists of the modern era (Richard Kannicht, Bruno Snell, and Stefan Radt),

¹ For the history of the collection of dramatic fragments see Kassel 1991a = 1991b: 88–98 ≈

McHardy *et al.* 2005: 7–20.

collect together the fragments and testimonia of the ‘big three’ tragedians Aeschylus (1985), Sophocles (1977¹, 1999²), and Euripides (2004, in two volumes), as well as those belonging to other tragic poets (1971¹, 1986², addenda 2004) and the anonymous fragments (1981, addenda 2004). The previous complete text, by August Nauck (1856¹, 1889²), was in only one volume; the massively increased bulk of the modern edition reflects the huge growth in material thanks to the publication of papyri from the late nineteenth century onwards. It has also never been easier to incorporate the fragmentary tragedies into university curricula: we now have Loeb’s of the fragments of the ‘big three’ (Lloyd-Jones 2003, Collard and Cropp 2008, Sommerstein 2008), Budé editions of the fragments of Euripides (Jouan and Van Looy 1998–2000), and commentaries in the Aris and Phillips series on selected fragmentary plays of Euripides (Collard, Cropp, and Lee 1995, Collard, Cropp, and Gibert 2004), Sophocles (Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick, and Talbot 2006, Sommerstein and Talbot 2012), and the ‘minor’ tragedians (Cropp 2019). Introductory chapters on fragments are included in companion volumes to the main tragedians (Hahnemann 2012, Collard 2017). As Pat Easterling has reiterated, ‘there is even less reason now to stick to interpretations of tragedy based on the notion that the thirty-three plays that survive are all that are worth taking into account’.²

Yet despite the increased availability and accessibility of these texts, work on the tragic fragments has tended to remain somewhat isolated. Much excellent scholarship has been accomplished in terms of commentary on individual fragmentary plays, and occasional edited volumes have taken the fragments as their focus.³ But in general, these texts are seldom fully integrated into more wide-ranging interpretative enquiries, and works that purport to examine a particular theme ‘in Greek tragedy’ regularly omit the fragments

² Easterling 2013: 185.

³ Hofmann 1991, Sommerstein 2003, McHardy, Robson, and Harvey 2005, Cousland and Hume 2009.

entirely or only include them as a kind of afterthought or extra.⁴ The reasons for this are not hard to find. The fragments are, simply put, difficult to work with: they are often lacunose or textually obscure, necessitating philological elucidation; the plots of the plays from which they derive are less familiar to a general audience and require laborious exposition (sometimes involving a fair amount of hypothesis); more often than not, their context is unknown, and sometimes wholly unguessable. In some cases, we simply do not have the basic information – such as speaker, addressee, and immediate or wider context – that is fundamental in using these texts in any manner beyond plot reconstruction. At a more practical level, fragmentary plays tend to appear in different series and volumes, sometimes located in different sections of libraries, and by different editors and publishers compared to dramas that have survived complete. For all the achievements of recent scholarship on tragic fragments, there remains a powerful sense that ‘the plays of Sophocles’ (for instance) comprise *Trachiniae*, *Ajax*, *Antigone*, *Oedipus the King*, *Electra*, *Philoctetes*, and *Oedipus at Colonus* – and nothing else.

In the field of ancient Greek drama, patterns of transmission have made this problem particularly pressing in the case of tragedy. With Old Comedy, the survival of complete plays by only one writer, Aristophanes, means perforce that anyone wanting to advance a generalisation about the genre can hardly avoid taking fragmentary evidence into consideration. And in the case of satyr play only one example, Euripides’ *Cyclops*, has survived in full, again meaning that any study of that dramatic form must adopt a perspective that includes the fragments; it helps that the largest fragment of satyr drama, the papyrus of

⁴ Notable exceptions include Alan Sommerstein’s *Aeschylean Tragedy* (2010a), which fully integrates the fragments into its discussion, partly as a result of using the trilogy as its structuring principle, and Jacques Jouanna’s *Sophocle* (2007 ≈ 2018), which includes a detailed appendix with summaries of the fragmentary plays.

Sophocles' *Ichneutae* (*Trackers*), is substantial, containing roughly half the play. Tragedy, on the other hand, offers us thirty dramas from the three most prominent authors in that field (plus two more whose attributions are unknown, *Prometheus Bound* and *Rhesus*), whose production dates stretch from 472 into the fourth century; these plays provide ample material for scholars to approach all kinds of issues across different axes without the need to take fragmentary evidence into account. But the failure to do this can lead to the impoverishment of those debates, based as they are on less than the totality of the material that has come down to us; it has resulted in the establishment of scholarly modes of enquiry that rarely depart from the grooves laid down by the fully extant plays alone.

It remains true that the analysis of fragmentary drama, as of fragmentary evidence of any kind, needs to proceed with caution. However, while the texts that we call tragic fragments do present particular problems to interpreters, we must remember that *all* of the evidence that we have for Greek tragedy is fragmentary to one degree or another, as can be seen in several ways. First, the thirty-two 'complete' plays that we have today are known to us not by autograph copies written by their authors, but from manuscripts written more than thirteen centuries after their original composition. During the long process of transmission many, perhaps all, of those dramas have lost lines; so the opening of Aeschylus' *Choephoroe* (*Libation Bearers*) is missing its opening lines (some of which can be restored from other sources which quoted them before the passage was lost), the endings of Euripides' *Bacchae*, *Children of Heracles*, and probably Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* are mutilated, and occasional lines are missing from within dramas as well. The scripts that we possess are therefore themselves 'fragmentary' – admittedly, far larger fragments than we are used to dealing with, but nevertheless incomplete, and sometimes in ways significant for their overall interpretation. Many will also have been afflicted by textual additions made by actors and

other sources during the period of their transmission that can be difficult to detect.⁵ Second, most, probably all, of the ‘complete’ plays were intended to be performed as part of a larger unit, which in most cases was a *didascalia* made up of three tragedies followed by a satyr play. Whether or not a given sequence of plays had a connected storyline (as with Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*), dealt with distinct episodes of a broader mythical history (as with Euripides’ ‘Trojan trilogy’ of 415), or had no particular mythical coherence (as with Euripides’ plays of 431, where *Medea* was performed with *Dictys* and *Philoctetes*, the name of the satyr play being unknown), each play was designed to be experienced in that context, a context which for most dramas has totally disappeared. A third way in which even our ‘complete’ plays show fragmentary characteristics arises from our ignorance of so many of the basic conditions of their performance. The actors’ gestures and tones of voice, the dancing, the staging, the music, the weather conditions, the hubbub of the audience, the ceremonies before the performances, the sights, sounds, and smells of the theatre – all this is lost to us.⁶

The fully extant plays may, then, convey a comforting impression of completeness, but this too is illusory. There is therefore a certain contradiction if we confidently put forward interpretations of the extant plays while simultaneously professing our inability to include any analysis of the fragments on the grounds that so much is unknown. Indeed, even those wary of overly positivist approaches to the interpretation of extant tragedy are often reluctant to engage with fragments precisely on account of the constant need to acknowledge the precariousness of any conclusions reached and the slenderness of the evidence that one can accumulate. This is a wariness that must be overcome if we are to begin to use these texts in more sustained and meaningful ways in our readings of the genre. It may well be that we have to adjust our notion of the roles that ‘certainty’ and ‘provisionality’ should (or could)

⁵ Finglass 2015a, 2015b, Lamari 2015, 2017.

⁶ UHLIG, pp. YYY.

play in the formulation of a literary interpretation. For example, Matthew Wright, in a recent discussion of the methodology of working with tragic fragments, has highlighted the ‘fragmentariness’ of all our evidence more widely, and has outlined a mode of reading fragmentary texts that is not afraid to engage (albeit with due caution) with creativity, imagination, and multiple, exploratory, and simultaneously-held interpretations – approaches that would usually be considered undesirable when working with a ‘complete’ text.⁷ Engaging with fragments is thus not only worth doing in its own right, but also has the potential to sharpen our methodologies for interpreting ancient literature more generally. As Douglas Olson has put it, with reference to the study of dramatic fragments, ‘the recognition of what we do not know or cannot know about our texts, and an explicit acknowledgment of the degree to which our readings merely represent an agreement to work in a consensus environment forged by previous scholarship going back to the Hellenistic world, is a significant contribution this tiny subfield, with its difficult and puzzling material, can make to the modern discipline of classical studies’.⁸

We believe that the benefits of incorporating fragments into our regular discussions of tragedy in this way considerably outweigh any drawbacks. We look forward to a world where there are no ‘fragments scholars’ at all because everyone with an interest in this field, or any field for which the evidence is partially ‘complete’, partially fragmentary, discusses fragmentary evidence alongside less-fragmentary evidence as a matter of course.

⁷ Wright 2016: xi–xii, xxiii–xxvi. See also the dialogue of Baltussen and Olson 2017 for two contrasting approaches to the study of literary fragments, particularly in relation to the possibility and implications of the activity of recovering a lost ‘whole’.

⁸ Olson 2017: 138.

In this volume, we bring some of the least-studied texts in the tragic genre into dialogue with one of its most-studied areas of modern scholarly enquiry: the representation of female characters. Our aim in doing so is twofold. From the perspective of the fragments themselves, we wish to re-examine them in the light of modern critical approaches, showing how they can open up insightful new ways of reading and interpreting these texts. And conversely, from the perspective of current trends in approaches to Greek tragedy, we ask how these neglected plays and characters might offer fresh perspectives on familiar questions, since turning to the fragments exposes the extent to which our ways of studying tragedy have been directed by a near-exclusive focus on the extant dramas. In other words, if tragedies such as *Agamemnon*, *Antigone*, *Hippolytus*, the *Electra* plays, and *Medea* had not survived in full – but Aeschylus’ *Nereids*, Sophocles’ *Eurypylos* and *Tereus*, and Euripides’ *Antigone*, *Cretans*, *Hypsipyle*, *Ino*, and *Protesilaus* had, what kind of traditions of thinking about tragedy would we have inherited, and what would it now mean to study ‘women in tragedy’? In both respects, we hope to show how the under-used resources of the fragmentary tragedies have the potential to reshape the field, not only with regard to subjects that may appear more immediately connected to the theme of female characters (such as gender, sexuality, marriage, and the family), but also by contributing to a better understanding of many issues central to the interpretation of ancient drama, including characterisation, ethical agency, politics, space and staging, and *mousikê*.

In addressing the tragic representation of women, this volume intervenes in a field that has witnessed some of the most exciting and provocative scholarship of recent decades. The study of women and female experience in Greek tragedy was particularly reinvigorated from the 1970s onwards by the application of feminist interpretative frameworks to the texts; and the topic has been further enriched by readings and approaches that draw on, *inter alia*,

psychoanalysis, structural anthropology, and sociolinguistics.⁹ Individual female characters from Greek tragedy have loomed large in debates in political and ethical philosophy: in particular, Sophocles' *Antigone* has been and remains a central figure in the discussion of kinship, ethics, and, more recently, feminist politics.¹⁰

But in general, the engagement of this capacious and particularly fertile field of scholarship with the fragmentary plays has been restrained. This is partly down to the difficulties of dealing with fragments, as outlined above. But it is also due to the fact that the extant plays offer such a varied and complex range of characters that even restricting ourselves to these means that we already seemingly have 'enough' to be getting on with. One contribution in this area is illustrative: in his paper 'Sophocles and women', delivered in 1982 at the Fondation Hardt Entretiens on Sophocles, R. P. Winnington-Ingram begins his analysis of that tragedian's female roles with a fragment: *Tereus* fr. 583, Procne's lament on the miseries of marriage. After summarising its content in one sentence and hypothesising that the play might be dated to a relatively late period of Sophocles' career, his sole and concluding comment on the text itself reads:

There is no lack of appropriateness to the dramatic situation, but we do not have the context and cannot say whether this speech bore on the total picture of the heroine. We had better turn to extant plays.¹¹

⁹ Zeitlin 1978 ≈ 1996: 87–119, 1985 ≈ 1996: 341–74 = Winkler and Zeitlin 1990: 63–96, Foley 1981b, 2001, Loraux 1985 ≈ 1987, des Bouvrie 1990, Rabinowitz 1993, Segal 1993, Seidensticker 1995, Wohl 1998, Ormand 1999, Mendelsohn 2002. For women's speech, song, and communication in tragedy see McClure 1999, Mossman 2001, 2005, 2012, Griffith 2001, Dué 2006, Chong-Gossard 2008.

¹⁰ Lacan 1986: 283–333 (lectures delivered 1960), translated in Lacan 1992, Irigaray 1974 ≈ 1985, J. Butler 2000, Honig 2013.

¹¹ Winnington-Ingram 1983: 237.

This reluctance to even attempt to engage with the fragments – to try to read them as literature, rather than a puzzle waiting to be reconstructed – is by no means untypical, even in a critic as insightful as Winnington-Ingram.¹² Strikingly, his structure and phrasing are echoed some thirty years later in Judith Mossman’s chapter on women’s voices in Sophocles for the Brill Companion: she also begins by looking at Procne’s speech, but offers only a brief paragraph of discussion before concluding: ‘Tantalizing though the fragments may be, it seems best to concentrate on the extant plays for the remainder of this chapter.’¹³ In a pattern replicated in many other works, we find a tension here between the evident enticement and appeal of the fragment (which both scholars have, after all, elected to place first in their discussions), and its ready dismissal in favour of concentrating on the extant plays, where the chosen themes can be traced more fully, and with less need for uncertainty and speculation.

On the other end of the spectrum, the over-confident use of the fragments could be equally damaging to their acceptance into the scholarly mainstream. In his 1967 monograph on Euripides, T. B. L. Webster attempted to incorporate all the known plays, including the fragmentary ones, into his analysis, and his approach (typical of the period) relied on over-interpretation of the evidence in order to piece together detailed outlines and reconstructions of the lost works. In relation to the study of women in Euripides he at least attempted to draw together the totality of the evidence, but his main hypothesis to emerge from this endeavour – that in his early trilogies, Euripides followed the pattern of producing one play about a ‘bad

¹² Similarly, Winnington-Ingram’s great monograph on Sophocles (1980) is largely a fragment-free zone, with his reflections on humanity’s relationship with the gods unaffected by the remarkable papyrus of Sophocles’ *Niobe*, in which Apollo and Artemis slaughter the title character’s terrified daughters, published only a few years before: Finglass 2019: .

¹³ Mossman 2012: 492.

woman' (by which Webster generally means a woman who acts out of sexual desire), one play about an 'unhappy woman', and one play 'of a different kind' – has not aged well.¹⁴

There are other instances of the inclusion of fragmentary plays in discussions of gender and women in tragedy. For example, Froma Zeitlin's 'The politics of Eros in the Danaid trilogy of Aeschylus' takes the whole trilogy into account, although given the exiguous remains of both *Egyptians* and *Danaids*, its focus is mainly on the single extant play, *Suppliants*.¹⁵ The fact that the fragmentary tragedies preserve certain plot patterns that are not as well represented in the extant dramas has also led to their use in elucidation of those themes. In relation to the study of female characters, one notable example is the mythical pattern termed the 'girl's tragedy' by Burkert,¹⁶ in which an unmarried girl is raped by a god and subsequently threatened or punished by her family when it is discovered that she is either pregnant or has given birth. Scholars have analysed this theme in fragmentary works such as Sophocles' *Tyro* and Euripides' *Antiope* and *Melanippe the Wise* alongside the extant *Ion*.¹⁷ One fragmentary tragedy that has enjoyed more substantial critical attention is Euripides' *Erechtheus*, and the centrality of female characters to its plot – which includes a long and memorable speech by the Athenian queen Praxithea, in which she volunteers her daughter for sacrifice on behalf of the city – has helped the play find its way into scholarship on the representation of women's roles in Athenian civic and ritual identity.¹⁸ But in the

¹⁴ Webster 1967: 116. For the unfortunate afterlife of Webster's coinage of the phrase 'bad woman' in studies of tragedy see Mueller 2017: 502; for further criticism of his book see Burnett 1968.

¹⁵ Zeitlin 1992 = 1996: 123–71.

¹⁶ Burkert 1979: 6–7.

¹⁷ Scafuro 1990, Sommerstein 2006a.

¹⁸ See Goff 2004: 322–3 on ritual identity, Calame 2011 on the role of the male and female in the play's construction of Athenian autochthony.

majority of those works that have been broadly influential in the study of gender and female characters in tragedy, it is fair to say that more often than not any mention of the fragmentary plays is brief, fleeting, or simply absent.

In this volume, our contributors have approached the fragments under the directives outlined above: both to reveal new ways of reading and interpreting them, and to show how these plays might prompt a re-evaluation of the kinds of questions and approaches that are current in tragic scholarship. We here offer a brief outline of the major findings of each chapter and their contribution to the broader landscape of the study of women in Greek tragedy.

One productive line of scholarly enquiry has been the attention given to the dynamics and symbolism of marriage. Viewed as a social transaction between men that transfers women from one household (the natal *oikos*) to another (the marital *oikos*), in tragedy the institution of marriage is particularly adept at exposing rifts and moments of tension in its surrounding social structure, and at providing opportunities for female characters to voice their own subjective experiences and assert themselves as agents within their marital relationships.¹⁹ In the extant plays, marriage rarely (if ever) manifests itself as a positive and straightforward transaction or state of affairs, and notably it is the women whose interventions generally help to bring things to a catastrophic end: so we find characters who cause death and destruction after their husbands introduce a mistress into the household (Clytemnestra, Deianira) or abandon them for another woman (Medea), wives who take or desire to take an adulterous lover (Clytemnestra, Phaedra), and women who commit suicide

¹⁹ For tragic marriage see Seaford 1987 = 2018: 257–99, Rehm 1994, Ormand 1999.

because of some aspect of their marriage (Deianira, Evadne, Jocasta, Phaedra). In addition, the overlapping imagery and symbolism of marriage and death means that we also find strong nuptial associations even in the cases of unmarried girls who die by suicide, sacrifice or murder (Antigone, Cassandra, Iphigenia, Polyxena, the daughter of Heracles).

The extant plays thus offer a rich variety of female roles in relation to their experience of marriage and sexual desire, but without taking the fragmentary plays into account, the picture is incomplete. Several contributions to this volume demonstrate how the fragments reveal variations and refinements of these well-known tragic models. In her chapter, Helene P. Foley ('Heterosexual bonding in the fragments of Euripides') provides a thorough survey of the theme of heterosexual love in the fragments of Euripides, demonstrating how many of these plays – particularly *Andromeda*, *Oedipus*, *Protesilaus*, and *Antigone* – offer glimpses of a different permutation of tragic marriage. These plays dramatise marital or premarital relationships in which the female partner could play an active and sometimes assertive role, and which, even when placed within dramatic contexts that render the union itself problematic, may be termed reciprocal and even romantic. Foley's widening of the scope of enquiry demonstrates that the more positive portrayal of spousal bonds that we find in Euripides' *Helen* is not an anomaly within the genre: tragic marriage did not always have to be portrayed a site of friction and disaster, and in fact it was some of Euripides' most overtly erotic and romantic plays that left a distinctive mark on their original and later audiences.

Euripides did not, of course, restrict his portrayal of female sexual desire to that between husband and wife, or suitor and unmarried virgin; as is well known, he was lampooned in Aristophanes' comedies for creating characters such as Phaedra and Stheneboea, married women driven by desire for a man who is not their husband. By contrast, the picture of Sophocles that we glean from the extant tragedies seems to characterise him as a playwright comparatively less interested in depicting female erotic

expression and its consequences. Alan H. Sommerstein ('Women in love in the fragmentary plays of Sophocles') shows that this picture is flawed: in at least three plays – *Phaedra*, *Oenomaus*, and *Women of Colchis* – Sophocles did portray 'women in love' who experienced sexual desire for a male character and whose actions in pursuit of that desire resulted in the deaths of others. Sommerstein's chapter not only draws attention to this overlooked aspect of Sophoclean characterisation, but also deftly exposes the main differences between the typical Sophoclean and Euripidean models of such women: in Sophocles, none is deliberately betraying a husband, and this may be one reason as to why the playwright appears to have escaped the accusations of immorality and misogyny that comedy heaped upon Euripides.

As noted, in the extant plays we find examples of wives who react intensely and/or with violence to the introduction of a sexual rival into the *oikos* or to their abandonment by their partner for that rival. In her contribution, Fiona McHardy ('Female violence towards women and girls in Greek tragedy') fills in the gaps in our understanding of this pattern by taking into account the fragmentary plays in which women enact violence upon other women and girls. As she demonstrates, this most often occurs in the case of married women who perceive the introduction of a (younger) rival into their household as a threat to their own position and status, and it frequently takes the form of an attack upon this rival's physical beauty. McHardy shows that we should place less recognised figures such as Sidero, Dirce, and the wife of Creon alongside the widely-cited examples of Clytemnestra and Medea as tragic wives whose desire to maintain or restore their status leads them to violently target other women.

P. J. Finglass ('Suffering in silence: victims of rape on the tragic stage') focuses on women who have themselves been the object of violence and who are linked by the theme of silence. The episode in *Trachiniae* in which Deianira is struck by the appearance of Iole has long been compared to the scene between Clytemnestra and Cassandra in Aeschylus'

Agamemnon: in both cases, a silent woman, a target of male sexual lust, arrives at the home of her new master and is met by his wife. Finglass highlights the relevance of a third play for this pattern: Sophocles' *Tereus*, in which the mutilated Philomela, her tongue cut out, will have arrived at the palace of Tereus and his wife, her sister Procne. Finglass draws out the structural and thematic parallels between these three tragedies, showing how each offers a related but distinct configuration of the connection between female voice and voicelessness, suffering, and power.

A further victim of rape – here, though, one who gives an account of her experience – is the subject of Niall W. Slater's chapter ('*Europa* revisited: an experiment in characterisation'), which addresses the extensive fragment attributed to Aeschylus' *Carians/Europa*, in which the speaker Europa describes her rape by Zeus, the births of her three children, and her fear for the safety of her son Sarpedon; this speech allows the audience 'to contemplate the sufferings of Europa over a woman's full lifecycle, culminating in her role as aged mother awaiting her only surviving son's return' (p. YYY). Considering issues of lexicon and dramatic technique, Slater supports a date for the play in the 420s, noting with sympathy Martin West's argument this play's author was Aeschylus' son Euphorion.

The tragedians employed not only speech and silence in the creation of their female characters, but also song. Usually marking moments of elevated emotion, tragic song is used to powerful effect in the characterisation of both male and female (non-choral) characters, but is more strongly associated with the latter, in part owing to the associations of ritual lament as a women's genre.²⁰ In his chapter, Caleb Simone ('The music one desires: Hypsipyle and Aristophanes' "Muse of Euripides") analyses a notable instance of female song in Euripides,

²⁰ Hall 1999 ≈ 2006: 288–320.

the titular figure's monody in *Hypsipyle*. This character's song came to be viewed as so representative of the playwright's New Musical tendencies that she was parodied in Aristophanes' *Frogs* as 'the Muse of Euripides'. Simone's detailed reading of both the monody itself and *Hypsipyle*'s Aristophanic reception blends the study of *mousikê*, aesthetics, synaesthesia, and cult to show how Euripides' singing heroine absorbs the audience into her desire for a form of music that is marked as Asian, Orphic, and citharodic, and which forges a continuous chain between the musical culture of Lemnos and Euripides' contemporary Athens. In this interpretation, *Hypsipyle*'s song showcases not just the playwright's skill in the creation of a virtuosic female voice, but also his use of female song to create a link to the political realities of the world of the audience.

Greek tragedy often centres on families, and its female characters are viewed in their roles as mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters. Given the particularly fraught and violent relationships that mark the families of Greek myth, it is no surprise that these tragic women often face scenarios where the articulation and enactment of these different roles involve a conflict of loyalties, and that their ethical choices play out against a backdrop of social expectations determined by these familial roles and structures. In particular, the tension between their duty to their natal families and that owed to their (potential) marital families emerges as a key theme, and extant tragedy provides us with powerful paradigms of women who take decisive stances with regard to their own positioning within the family.

In the extant plays, both *Antigone* (in Sophocles' *Antigone*) and *Electra* (in Sophocles' *Electra* and Euripides' *Electra*) obsessively prioritise the memory of their dead or absent fathers and brothers over relationships with both their living female family members and their actual or potential marital partners; we see this solidarity of sister and brother also between *Electra* and *Orestes* in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Orestes*. The prevalence in the extant plays of this particular model – the girl who is (excessively?) dutiful in her role as

daughter to her father and sister to her brother – has left a strong stamp on our ways of thinking about tragedy, through both the legacy of Hegel’s influential analysis of the family in *Antigone* and Freud’s psychoanalytic theorising about the character of Electra. Lyndsay Coo (‘Greek tragedy and the theatre of sisterhood’) instead draws attention to a familial relationship that has been treated as all but invisible: that between sisters. Although we find examples of this bond in our surviving tragedies (most notably in Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women* and Sophocles’ *Antigone* and *Electra*), it has long been overshadowed by a focus on male-female relations. Coo’s discussion, prompted by the recent productive debate between the fields of classics and political theory over the sisterhood of *Antigone*, employs close readings of Sophocles’ *Tereus* and Euripides’ *Erechtheus* to bring out a feminist interpretation of these texts that places sisterhood front and centre. She shows not only that sisterhood was a more prevalent theme in Greek tragedy than is visible from the extant plays alone, but also that the fragments can be a rich source for scholars working in the area of feminist political theory.

A different focus on the family is found in Robert Cowan’s chapter ‘When mothers turn bad: the perversion of the maternal ideal in Sophocles’ *Eurypylus*’. In this tragedy, known to us from extensive but lacunose papyrus fragments, the Mysian queen Astyoche receives news of the death at the hands of Neoptolemus of her son Eurypylus, whom she had sent to fight at Troy. Extant tragedy, of course, provides us with examples of ‘bad’ mothers, whose actions with regard to their children range from neglect (Clytemnestra) to the extreme of murder (Medea). Cowan reads Astyoche through the intersection of maternal and patriotic values in what he terms the ‘martial mother ideal’, whereby women send the sons whom they have nurtured off to battle for the sake of the city. As he notes, in *Eurypylus* the mother’s motivation is perverted – she sends her son not out of civic duty, but as the result of a bribe – and the outcome is inverted, as Eurypylus’ resulting death does nothing to avert the fall of

Troy. In drawing out the complex portrayal of Astyoche in relation to her role as mother, her manipulation of the categories of natal and marital family, and her violent self-condemnation, Cowan sheds new light on what must have been one of Sophocles' most compelling female characters.

The relationship between women and space in drama has also been a longstanding focus of critical attention. Michael Shaw's characterisation of any woman on the tragic stage (and hence in an outdoor space) as a 'female intruder' was challenged in the 1980s by Helene Foley, Froma Zeitlin, and Pat Easterling, who argued for a more sophisticated conception than the binary that saw 'female' space as the hidden interior of the *oikos*, and 'male' space as the public, outdoor space of the *polis*.²¹ The characterisation of theatrical space as gendered and the roles that female characters are able to play in creating, inhabiting, manipulating, and traversing that space have continued to receive sophisticated analysis.²² In her chapter ('Dancing on the plain of the sea: gender and theatrical space in Aeschylus' *Achilleis* trilogy') Anna Uhlig expands this discussion to encompass the relationship of non-human female characters to theatrical space, and considers how the matrix of gender and topography might have played out across the full span of a tragic production in the case of the conjectured Aeschylean trilogy of *Myrmidons*, *Nereids*, and *Phrygians/The Ransoming of Hector*. Uhlig argues that the chorus of sea-goddess Nereids will have provided a contrasting female presence within the trilogy as a whole, usurping the roles of the male voices central to the plays' Iliadic source material, and her analysis demonstrates how their presence would have rendered the theatrical space unusually fluid, in both senses of the word. Her suggestion

²¹ Shaw 1975; see Foley 1982, Zeitlin 1985 ≈ 1996: 341–74 = Winkler and Zeitlin 1990: 63–96, Easterling 1987.

²² For women and space see Chong-Gossard 2008 (on gender, space, and communication), Mastronarde 2010: 248–54 (on the indoors/outdoors binary).

that other Aeschylean plays with female choruses may have been similarly imaginative in their manipulation of the representation of theatrical space, often involving configurations that move beyond the *oikos/polis* opposition, posits an intriguing new connection between gender and the construction of space in tragedy.

Our volume also addresses the crucial nexus of female characterisation, ethics, and agency. Since the 1980s, a particularly influential theory has argued that the women of tragedy are not meant to represent ‘real’ women, but rather an ‘other’ against whom the male characters (and audience) can construct their own ideas of selfhood and subjectivity. As Zeitlin has phrased it, in tragedy ‘the self that is really at stake is to be identified with the male, while the woman is assigned the role of the radical other’;²³ and along related lines, the seminal work of Helene Foley (2001) has argued that the tragedians’ exploration of female characters permitted them to confront the implications of a subjective and gendered form of ethics.

Three of our contributors extend these explorations of female characterisation and agency to key figures in the fragmentary plays. In his contribution (‘Fragmented self and fragmented responsibility: Pasiphae in Euripides’ *Cretans*’), Luigi Battezzato analyses the particularly complex representation of responsibility and selfhood present in the speech of Pasiphae in Euripides’ *Cretans*, in which the queen defends her act of falling in love with the bull. Battezzato shows how Pasiphae is able to dissociate herself completely from her past actions by appealing to divine intervention, the role of her husband Minos, and an understanding of human morality and motivation that is rooted in hedonistic principles. Pasiphae’s defence thus relies on a concept of the fragmentation of the self that reveals her as one of Euripides’ most philosophically sophisticated female speakers.

²³ Zeitlin 1985: 66 = 1996: 346 = Winkler and Zeitlin 1990: 68.

James H. Kim On Chong-Gossard's chapter 'Female agency in Euripides' *Hypsipyle*' restores this play to a central place in discussions of female agency in tragedy by demonstrating how the intricacies of its plot result from a series of interconnected decisions made by women. At critical junctures both before and within the timeframe of the play itself, it is the female characters Hypsipyle, Eurydice, and Eriphyle whose actions determine the course of the plot and have far-reaching implications for each other. Chong-Gossard's analysis shows how the play's happy ending – which sees Hypsipyle finally re-united with her twin sons – is made possible only because of a long series of choices enacted by these three women. In particular, Eurydice's decision to exercise forgiveness and spare Hypsipyle, whose neglect of her son Opheltes has led to his death, marks a powerful departure from the vengeful mothers that we find in other tragedies. Through these characters, Euripides articulates a view of women's experience and subjectivity that is no less rich and engaging than the male world of the unfolding expedition against Thebes, which forms this play's backdrop.

The influence of the extant plays has been so immense and far-reaching that it is easy to forget that other tragic versions of these characters existed. This is true above all in the case of Euripides' *Medea*, whose terrible, tortured act of infanticide is to many modern readers and audiences the single defining aspect of her tragic characterisation. In the final chapter ('Making *Medea Medea*'), Matthew Wright destabilises this preconception by drawing together evidence for the full range of tragic *Medeas*, including a play in which she is not guilty of the act that has come to define her, the killing of her own children. He recovers a more accurate picture of *Medea* on the tragic stage, and suggests that what 'made *Medea Medea*' for the ancient audiences was not her infanticide, but rather the sheer range and malleability of stories in which she featured. Wright's survey offers an important corrective to widespread conceptions of this iconic figure, and powerfully demonstrates how

the legacy of a single surviving version has distorted our understanding of the kinds of female characters with which ancient tragic audiences would have been familiar.

We are aware of how much is left out. Important characters such as Ino, Melanippe, and Niobe receive little or no attention here. And while Wright's contribution broadens the focus beyond the 'big three' tragedians (and Slater's raises the possibility that a major fragment attributed to Aeschylus could be by his son Euphorion), our volume does not do this systematically: female characters in plays by other classical tragedians, or in tragic fragments whose authorship is unclear, receive little coverage. In a discussion of fragmentariness which spans several disciplines, Glenn Most remarked of Rainer Maria Rilke's poem 'Archaic torso of Apollo' (1918) that the object which it describes, 'precisely by being incomplete, . . . stimulates our imagination to try to complete it, and we end up admiring the creativity that would otherwise have languished within us.'²⁴ So too we hope that the inevitable fragmentariness and incompleteness of our enterprise will stimulate the creativity of other scholars to fill the many gaps that we have left. Our hope is that this volume provides a starting point for further enquiry, and more important than any individual hypothesis advanced in its chapters is our overall conviction that the fragmentary plays need to be taken into account in any general theory of tragedy. Much of what we have outlined here could apply to the importance of fragmentary evidence for the discussion of any theme or idea in this extraordinarily rich genre. This is deliberate, as we are aiming to plot a course that others will follow in their interpretations. The regular, thorough, and imaginative integration of the

²⁴ Most 2009: 12.

fragmentary plays can lead to nothing less than a realignment of how we do scholarship on Greek tragedy.