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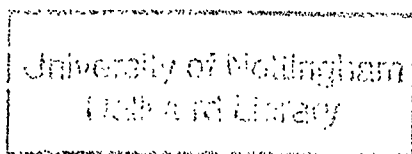
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THE WEDDING SONG IN GREEK LITERATURE AND CULTURE

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Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

November 2008



ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the Greek wedding song and its function in literature and culture. The genre, *hymenaios* or epithalamium, has received little scholarly attention, particularly in English (cf. Muth, *WS* 1954; Tufte, Los Angeles 1970; Contiades-Tsitsoni, Stuttgart 1990, *ZPE* 1994; Swift, *JHS* 2006 & DPhil diss.). Yet an examination of the poetry of marriage, a crucial aspect in the study of the ancient world, contributes to our understanding of gender and social relations, as well as literature.

Using elements of genre theory, gender studies, anthropology and cultural history, I argue that the epithalamium was part of a ritual of transition; for both the bride and for the community.

The archaic epithalamium enacts this transition in lyric; tragic adaptations of the genre explore the consequences when this transition is unsuccessfully performed. In contrast, the wedding songs of Attic comedy represent a 'happy ever after' ending for the communities of the protagonists, and portray these unions as a Sacred Marriage of man and goddess. The Hellenistic epithalamium takes elements of these literary predecessors, and uses them to articulate a transition in marital relations, and literary politics, in the *oeuvre* of Theocritus. *Philia* relations in this era evolve to depict a more prominent mutuality between husband and wife, which also underpins the erotic writings of Plutarch. But more importantly, this author develops epithalamial *topoi* to present marriage as an 'initiation' for the bridal couple, which brings the thesis full-circle to the concept of transition while laying the foundation for one of the central concepts of Menander Rhetor's prescripts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project could not have been completed without a PhD grant from the School of Humanities, University of Nottingham.

Further thanks are due to Prof. Judith Mossman, who provided stimulating and diligent supervision during this project. Dr Betine Van Zyl Smit and Prof. Alan Sommerstein reviewed chapters of this work in 2006 and 2007 respectively; their comments were gratefully received and considered. Dr Patrick Finglass, Dr Helen Van Noorden, Cressida Ryan, and Rosie Harman read various chapters and made helpful comments.

Material from a number of sections was presented at the Annual Meeting of Postgraduates in Ancient Literature in Manchester, 2006; the Nottingham Classics Research Workshop in 2006; 'Gender and the Sacred', a conference in 2008 at the University of Roehampton; the International Plutarch Society Congress in Coimbra, 2008; the Archaic Song graduate symposium in Oxford, 2008; and various sessions of *Oistroi*, the Nottingham Classics Graduate Workshop. These elicited stimulating discussion and helped me to structure my material effectively in the Introduction, chapters on Sophocles, Aristophanes, and Plutarch, and sections on *Phaethon* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*.

The Classical Association provided a bursary in 2007 for a stay at the Fondation Hardt, Geneva, where the section on *Troades* was produced and many sparkling polyglot conversations were had over dinner about the epithalamium. The Graduate School awarded a generous travel prize to allow me to attend the Plutarch congress.

Dave Heaton proof-read the entire thesis (any mistakes are therefore my own), and James Osborn put up with me for the three years of its production and the year of applying for the PhD position. I would like to thank my friends, family, and colleagues for their support during this time.

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INTRODUCTION

HYMENAIOS: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Then first they washed and put their tunics around them, and the women made themselves ready. And the godlike bard (θεῖος ἄοιδός) took up his hollowed lyre, and stirred in them the desire for sweet song (μολπῆς τε γλυκερῆς) and noble dancing (ἀμύμονος ὀρχηθμοῖο). And the great house echoed all around to the footsteps of the men (ἀνδρῶν), celebrating, and the fair-girdled women (γυναικῶν). And so someone would say (τις εἶπεσκε) who heard them (ἀκούων) outside the house: ‘surely someone has married (τις ἔγημε) the much-courted queen’.¹

This scene from the *Odyssey* shows that even in the earliest Greek texts, music and matrimony were closely associated. But what is a wedding song, and what is its function in Greek literature and culture? Hymenaios appears as a catch-all term for this song from our earliest examples until well into the fifteenth century AD. It can mean ‘wedding song’, refer to the god of marriage, or even be used as a synonym for ‘wedding’ or ‘marriage’ itself,² and can be sung at any stage of the ceremony: at the nuptial bath, gamos feast, the procession to the groom’s home, or outside the bridal chamber during the wedding night,³ as Muth states:

¹ Hom. *Od.* 23.142-49.

² LSJ s.v. ὑμέναιος.

³ Bathing song: Aesch. *PV* 556-57; processional hymenaioi: Hom. *Il.* 18.491-92, [Hes.] *Scut.* 270-285, Sappho fr. 44 V, Eur. *Tro.* 308-34, possibly *Pha.* 227-44 (cf. Ch.4, p.145-48), Ar. *Pax* 1316-59, Av. 1720-65; banquet song: Eur. *IA* 1040-44: ὅτ’ ἀνὰ Πήλιον αἰ καλλιπλόκαμοι / Πιερίδες ἴεν δαιτὶ θεῶν† / χρυσεοσάνδαλον ἴχνηος / ἐν γὰρ κρούουσαι / Πηλέως ἐς γάμον ἦλθον (though the exact wording ‘at the banquet of the gods’ is a conjecture of Diggle, other editors also print some form of δαίς); songs at the thalamos: Sappho fr. 30 V, Aesch. *PV* (above), Theoc. 18, Ap Arg. 4.1159-60, Men. *Rhet.* 409.8-14.

Tatsächlich sind auch Hymenaios bezeugt, die zu anderen Teilen der Feier gehörten als zur *νυμφαγωγία*. Hymenaios war also von Anfang an die Bezeichnung der Litteraturgattung des Hochzeitslieds schlechthin und einen anderen Terminus gab er dafür in der ältesten Zeit noch nicht. Allerdings wurde dieses Lied, um es nochmals hervorzuheben, mit Vorliebe bei der *domum deductio* der Braut gesungen.⁴

The term *hymenaios* has a long literary history, in which the god of marriage is inextricably connected with the song, but it is uncertain how that association came about. Muth offers the most plausible explanation: that, like *Paeon*/the *paeon*, the song took its name from the refrain, and the god became personified from the song⁵ – but the origin of the refrain itself is lost to us. Jolles collects a number of references to *Hymenaios*,⁶ under four categories: as the son of a Muse; as a boy who died in the bloom of youth; as a young man who rescued virgins from the hands of abductors; and as a son of *Dionysus* and *Aphrodite*.

The first category lends itself well to the marriage song. In *Pindar* (fr. 128c = 139 S-M), he is the brother of *Linus* and *Ialemus*, all of whom are mourned by their unnamed mother. The refrain ‘*Hymen!*’ or ‘*Hymenaios!*’ is similar to ‘*ai, Linus!*’ and ‘*Ialemus!*’, and may have a similar origin in the antiphonal responsion of folk-song. By the time of *Pindar*, *Hymenaios* has met a similar end to his brothers, *ἐν γάμοισι χροῖζόμενον* / [Μοῖρα] *σύμπρωτον λάβεν* (7-8), and having achieved personification, may also have become the wedding god as well as the name of the song.⁷ The development of the refrain as a lament for

⁴ Muth (1954) 36.

⁵ Muth (1954) 8-9.

⁶ Jolles (1916) 126-30.

⁷ Schol. Eur. Rhes. 895, which quotes this fragment, names the youths’ parents as *Apollo* and *Calliope*, and *Orpheus* as their brother. Schol. Pind. P. 4.313a debates the divine parentage of *Orpheus*, but repeats the genealogy (19-21, cf. Schol. Eur. Rhes. 895.1-4, *Asclep. Tragil.* 8a). The *Suda* (θ 41) gives him as the son of *Calliope* and *Magnes* (cf. *Cornelius Balbus* in *Serv. ad Virg. Aen.* 4.127, *Anton. Lib. Transform.* 23); *Catullus*

the god who died on his wedding-night (an extreme case of marital ‘separation’ rites) or as an apotropaic exclamation (to ward off a similar fate) is possible, but is not supported by the extant evidence.

Servius (ad Virg. Aen. 1.651) rejects Hymenaios as both the god of marriage and as a youth who died on his wedding day, whose name was invoked *expiationis causa*. He argues instead that this figure was a young Athenian, a liberator of virgins during a war. When the girls were married, they invoked his name *quasi liberatoris virginitatis*, as Thalassio was invoked at Rome. Elsewhere, Servius discusses him as a son of Venus and Liber (4.127), or the inventor of marriage, and relates the tradition preserved by Cornelius Balbus: that Hymenaios, an expert, beautiful musician, died singing at the wedding of Liber and Althaea, on account of which honour was attributed to him in marriage. Latin sources, however, remain attached to Hymenaios, rescuer of virgins: Lactantius Placidus (ad Stat. Theb. 3.283) tells of a young Athenian in love with a noble maiden; being of lowly parents, he despaired of marrying her. Following her when she and the other women went to celebrate the rites of Demeter, he was caught with them when they were abducted by pirates. He killed the pirates and restored the girls to Athens, thus winning the maiden. Because such a happy marriage came out of these events, *placuit Atheniensibus nomen Hymenaei nuptiis miscere*. The Vatican Mythographer (1.74) reiterates this story,⁸ but the romantic aetiology is unattested in the early, Greek sources. Tzetzes (Chil. 596-606) tells the same story (omitting the Eleusinian Mysteries), but also includes an Argive tale of Hymenaios, the son of Terpsichore, who disappeared from his marriage chamber (13.593-94).

Photius (Bibl. 293 = p.321 Bekker) discusses the first three categories in combination: that the song was sung *κατὰ πόθον καὶ ζήτησιν* for Hymenaios, the son of Terpsichore,

61.2 and Nonnus Dionys. 24.88, 33.67 as the son of Urania, with no father listed; and Alciphron Ep. 1.16.2 as the son of Terpsichore (again, with no father named).

⁸ Myth. Vat. 2.263 gives the same account, with Servius’ (1.652) arguments at the beginning and end.

who disappeared on his wedding day, or else in honour of the Attic Hymenaios, who went after girls stolen by pirates. Eustathius (ad Hom. Il. 18.493) calls him an Argive, who rescued Athenian girls from Pelasgian pirates. When they were given in marriage, they sang a song for him, ἦν ὁμωνύμως ἐκάλουν ὑμέναιον. Alternatively, a young man called Hymenaios πρὸ ὥρας θανόντα, about whom there is a story in the wedding, which is called ‘hymenaios’. The tradition of a dying Hymenaios is a strong one: Schol. Pind. P 3.96, Schol. Eur. Alc. 1.18, and Apollodorus (Bibl. 3.121.4) record that he was resurrected by Asclepius.

The invocation of a dead or dying god, especially one who is then raised to life, may associate Hymenaios with Adonis or Persephone. Like Hymenaios, for both gods the experience of mature sexuality is analogous to death. Both are said to rise again (and their anodoi are connected with plant fertility): Persephone for one third of the year; Adonis for the night of his annual marriage to Aphrodite. While Persephone may be associated with the experience of the bride, Adonis may be a closer parallel to the male Hymenaios. Such gods, sons and/or consorts of divine mothers, have their origins in Near Eastern cults of the grieving Great Mother. The renewal of life they represent, in keeping with their connection with mystery religion, is more spiritual than earthly – the most obvious example being Jesus Christ, son of the paradigmatic mater dolorosa, Mary. Christian conceptions of marital symbiosis (expressed also in Plutarch)⁹ may be responsible for Photius’ alternative etymology of hymenaios: οἶον ὑμενάειν καὶ ὁμονοεῖν τούτους ἀεὶ ὁμόσε νοίοντας (Bibl. 293),¹⁰ but are too late to be responsible for the tradition of the dying god expressed in Pindar.

⁹ Cf. Ch.7, p.267.

¹⁰ Cf. Tzetzes Chil. 591. Both Tzetzes (582-86) and Eustathius (ad Hom. Il. 18.493) reject an etymology deriving from ‘hymen’, the virgin membrane.

Alternatively, Hymenaios is the son of Venus and Bacchus, because the desire for love is linked with drinking,¹¹ but, as will be discussed in Chapter 4,¹² the sources for this myth are Roman, and again, too late to explain the earliest association of Hymenaios with the hymenaios.

Epithalamios is a later term, which does not seem to come into use before the Alexandrian edition of Sappho, in which it is the title of a book of her poems composed for weddings. Its literal meaning, ‘at the thalamos’, does not seem to have defined a prescriptive usage, and the two words are used almost interchangeably from the Hellenistic period onwards, although hymenaios remains the more popular term. A hymenaios then – or epithalamium – is a song performed in the celebration of a wedding, or, as some of our literary examples will show, a song that refers to that celebration.

Genre

How can we identify a wedding song? In many examples, it is a straightforward process to attribute a song to a marriage. The public of Ithaca in the *Odyssey* are ironically half-correct in their assumption that there is music coming from the palace because someone has married Penelope. Similarly, on the *Shield of Achilles* in the *Iliad*, which depicts the bringing of brides to their bridegrooms, there are not only weddings represented (γάμοι, 18.491), but also wedding feasts (εἰλαπίναι), as well as the procession at which the hymenaios is raised (ἡγίνεον ἀνὰ ἄστῳ, πολὺς δ’ ὑμέναιος ὀρώρει, 493). On the Hesiodic *Shield*, the occasion can be inferred from the numphagôgia and its processional song: ἡγοντ’ ἀνδρὶ

¹¹ Myth. Vat. 3.11.2, cf. Sen. Med. 110 (Lyaei, no mother mentioned), Donat. ad Ter. Ad. 5.7.6.

¹² See p.152.

γυναιῖκα, πολὺς δ' ὑμέναιος ὀρώρει.¹³ Sappho narrates in fr. 44 V Hector's bringing home of his bride Andromache, before launching into an extended description of the celebration that follows, returning to the bride and groom at the end of the poem: Ἐκτορα κ' Ἀνδρομάχαν θεο<ε>ικέλοις (34).

As this song finds an increasingly literary use in other poetic genres – already foreshadowed in the irony of the *Odyssey* – the identification becomes more problematic. Aeschylus uses epithalamial imagery throughout *Suppliants*, yet the songs of the Danaids in this play are utilised in their avoidance of marriage. They are not *hymenaios* in the same way as those sung by the Oceanids for Prometheus and Hesione in *Prometheus Bound*, or even those sung by Helen's *gambroi* when she came to Troy, perverting all the norms of marriage, in *Agamemnon*.¹⁴ Yet the *hymenaios* seems to be an informative principle for the play, and perhaps the whole trilogy, as Chapter 2 will argue.¹⁵ The Hymn to Eros in the third stasimon of Sophocles' *Antigone* is another example of this kind of song: not communal celebration, but the disruption of the community through the power of Eros, is the subject of this ode, which leads into the lament for Antigone's departure to her *παγκοίταν θάλαμον*.¹⁶ Cassandra's monody in Euripides' *Troades* is an ironic celebration of her marriage to Agamemnon, which is at the same time a rape that will lead to his death.¹⁷ What about Plutarch's *Coniugalia Praecepta*, which takes epithalamial imagery, but mixes it with Platonic philosophy and presents itself as a letter to a newly-married couple?¹⁸

Even in the oldest extant examples, whether or not a song is a 'wedding song' is often unclear. Aside from the attribution of certain fragments of Sappho to the Book of Epithalamia, only the imagery of many of these gives clues as to the occasion of their

¹³ [Hes.] *Scut.* 273.

¹⁴ Aesch. *PV* 555-60, *Ag.* 699-703.

¹⁵ See pp.81-82.

¹⁶ Soph. *Ant.* 804; Ch.3, pp.112-14.

¹⁷ Ch.4, esp. p.161.

¹⁸ Ch.7, pp.263-64, 266.

performance. Lardinois has recently discussed fr. 16, 94 and 96 V as laments for friends departed to marriage, to be performed at wedding ceremonies.¹⁹ Wilamowitz argued that fr. 31 should be interpreted in the same context (though this suggestion is now largely discredited)²⁰ – yet none of these even allusively refers to a wedding. Finally, the lack of precise context for Alcman’s Partheneion has led to interpretations of this song as an epithalamium.²¹ I repeat my earlier question: what is a wedding song – and how can we tell?

Cairns argues that, rather than by form (epic, lyric, elegy, or epistle), poetic genres should be classified by content, in terms of primary and secondary elements:

For example, the primary elements of the propemptikon are in these terms someone departing, another person bidding him farewell, and a relationship of affection between the two, plus an appropriate setting. The primary elements of the komos are a lover, a beloved, and the lover’s attempts to come to the beloved, plus an appropriate setting. These primary elements will be present in every example of the genre, either implicitly or explicitly...this is because it is only by recognising these primary elements that an ancient audience could know to which genre a poem or speech belonged. As well as containing the primary elements of its genre every generic example contains some secondary elements (topoi).²²

This categorisation in terms of content does not appear to have made much of an impact among modern genre theorists, who more often see *genê* and *eidê* in terms of poetic form,

¹⁹ Lardinois (2001) 83-88.

²⁰ Wilamowitz (1913) 58, contra Page (1955) 30-33.

²¹ See e.g. Griffiths (1970) 10-11, in which he argues against Maas (1914) 130-4 and Gow-Page (1965) 366. Lardinois (1994) 74, (1996) 155-56, 170-72 suggests the choral group of the Partheneion is paralleled in Sappho’s circle, but does not explicitly connect this song with the epithalamium, and Calame (1997) 74, 88, dissociates the maiden song from ‘established’ lyric genres such as the nuptial song. See also Peponi (2007) 353-54.

²² Cairns (1972) 6.

and their manipulation, after Kroll, in terms of a *Kreuzung der Gattungen*, and who debate the imagery with which we should understand this ‘crossing’ or ‘fusion’.²³

These models of ‘content’ and form both seem somehow inadequate, for they assume poetic production to have been a definitive process with unchanging rules applicable across all periods and milieus.²⁴ Both are also somewhat anachronistic, for they assume distinctions for earlier poetry which are owed more to the categorisation of genres in Hellenistic Alexandria – or later. Yet archaic (and classical) poetic composition was inseparably bound up in its performative context, as recent scholarship has addressed.²⁵ A wedding song is a wedding song because it is performed at a wedding, or a dramatic/literary representation of one.

But because literature does evoke themes and images from the wedding song in an occasionally non-nuptial context, it is necessary to ask what the identifiable features of this genre are. And, used with caution, other models of genre may contribute to our understanding. For modern scholars, the moment of performance has passed and therefore the ‘contextual’ genre must be recovered from the text itself. Performative context is indicated by the presence of particular elements. These elements, when they intrude into a different context, may produce a *Kreuzung*. One may adopt some of Cairns’ terminology, without embracing uncritically his assumptions.²⁶ By this reasoning, the performance of a wedding song is indicated by terms associated with the ceremony of marriage. When wedding songs, or *topoi* associated with them, cross over into other generic ‘forms’ (particularly in the pre-Hellenistic period), it may be that a) the (internal) dramatic context is associated with a wedding, and a wedding song is a natural corollary – much like the tragic lament; b)

²³ E.g. Barchiesi (2001) 144.

²⁴ See especially Cairns (1972) 32.

²⁵ Depew & Obbink (2000) 1-2 argue that genre is mostly a modern construct – in an oral culture such as archaic or classical Greece, a poem only existed for or through its performance: ‘the literary genera in fact reflect different conditions of performance’ (p.3).

²⁶ As does Fowler (2000) 205-19.

performative context is inherently fluid and allows cross-fertilisation from other types of oral poetry (this might, for example, be seen in some of Sappho's lyric re-workings of 'epic' Homeric themes); or c) that archaic and classical poets deliberately mixed things up to create particular effects, acknowledging the specificity of performative context and the results of such mixis. Or indeed, all three.

By Cairns' model, elements which indicate a wedding song might be: a person who is marrying (who is usually the addressee of the song; this may either be the bride, the groom, or both); the role of singer or speaker (performed by (an)other participant(s) in the wedding ceremony, usually acquaintances of the couple or their families); the relationship between these (usually one of affection or companionship,²⁷ but it may be more formal, as in the case of the encomia of Phaethon, Birds, and Menander Rhetor's prescriptions);²⁸ and the appropriate setting speaks for itself – a wedding, at any stage in its celebration.

A poet may, however, choose to manipulate 'primary elements'. In two fragments of Sappho (fr. 107 and 114 V), the bride herself is the speaker and in one of these, the addressee is her lost virginity and speaks back to her. Cassandra in Troades is both singer and recipient of the wedding song, though she exhorts the Chorus to sing.²⁹ The Chorus of Sophocles' Trachiniae sing of a song raised by the δόμος μελλόνυμφος,³⁰ which overlaps with Heracles' bringing of a second 'bride' into his house. For whom, and at what wedding, is this to be performed? Similarly, in Euripides' Phaethon, a subsidiary chorus performs a wedding song for a wedding that will not happen – the bridegroom is dead and no bride is

²⁷ E.g. Sappho fr. 30.7 V: ὑμάλικας, perhaps also 103.8 V: ὑμάλικ[, Theoc. 18.22: συνομάλικες, cf. Calame (1997) 33-34, who adds the ἄλικες...ἐταῖραι of Coronis in Pind. Pyth. 3.17-19, the virgins who sang for the Nymph Aegina in Bacch. 13.88, and Cydippe's companions in the hymenaios of Call. fr. 75.42-43 Pf.

²⁸ Cf. Eur. Pha. 240, Ch.4, p.150; Ar. Av. 1711-18, 1726-30 (also ὦ δαιμόνων ὑπέρτατε, 1765), Ch.5, p.222-23; Men. Rhet. esp. 399.16-19, Ch.8, pp.303-4, 315.

²⁹ Eur. Tro. 335-37, Ch. 4, p.166.

³⁰ Soph. Trach. 205; Ch.3, p.129: LSJ suggests (s.v. μελλόνυμφος) that this refers to the maidens of the household. Seaford (1986) 56 argues that this refers instead to the delayed resumption of Heracles and Deianeira's marriage, a transition which, I will argue in Chapter 3, has never been completed by their cohabitation and reintegration into the community.

present.³¹ Such manipulations, I will argue, inform our knowledge of how the wedding song is being used in these texts, but they complicate its identification. I find the concept of primary terms useful in the broader discussion of the use and function of the epithalamium, but Cairns' strict model of genre as 'content' is inadequate for this project. I suggest a different but related set of elements, more closely related to 'context', by which to identify generic examples: a bride (most often called *numphê*), a bridegroom (*gambros* or cognate term), both of whom may be either speakers or addressees, and a wedding (*gamos*).

Wedding songs are songs containing these 'primary elements'. As the ancients referred to them interchangeably as *hymenaioi* or *epithalamia*, I shall do the same. Poetic representations of mythical or dramatic wedding songs will also be discussed under this heading. '**Epithalamial**' or '**hymeneal**' songs are songs which cannot be securely related to a wedding, but which are nonetheless enlightening for our discussion. They contain *topoi* belonging to the wedding song, or related language, even when uttered in another context.

As well as its literary significance, the performative context of the song (speaker, addressee, relationship, and occasion) is also important for its social significance. Who sings wedding songs, and why? This question involves issues not only of genre but also gender: Wilson calls Sappho's *epithalamia* 'a genre which is distinctively woman-oriented',³² and other scholars go even further, specifically identifying the wedding song as a female speech genre:

In addition to laments, ancient writers attributed other specific types of song or musical genre to women, such as the *katabaukalesis* (lullaby), the *ioulos* (spinning

³¹ Eur. *Pha.* 289ff (heavily lacunose); Ch.4, pp.147-48.

³² Wilson (1996) 142.

song), the Linus song associated with the harvest, and the hymenaios. These songs accompanied daily and seasonal domestic tasks as well as marked major life events.³³

Yet the Odyssean example above shows a communal celebration with dance and song, and participation by both sexes. Though a hymenaios is not mentioned, the picture of what a wedding song 'is' is nonetheless clear. Other early examples show a similar picture. On the shield of Achilles, the women do not actively participate in the procession, but watch the young men dance as the celebration passes by:

...ἐν τῇ ῥα γάμοι τ' ἔσαν εἰλαπίνας τε,
νύμφας δ' ἐκ θαλάμων δαΐδων ὑπο λαμπομενάων
ἠγίνεον ἀνὰ ἄστν, πολὺς δ' ὑμέναιος ὀρώρει·
κούροι δ' ὀρχηστήρες ἐδίνεον, ἐν δ' ἄρα τοῖσιν
αὐλοὶ φόρμιγγές τε βοὴν ἔχον· αἱ δὲ γυναῖκες
ἰστάμεναι θαύμαζον ἐπὶ προθύροισιν ἑκάστη.³⁴

The ritual is no less communal for its separation into gendered spheres. The married women witness the marriage from their doors (so Andromache is encouraged to remain at home earlier in the text)³⁵ while the men enact the public element of the ritual. In the context of the shield's peaceful city and wider context of the ordering of the universe, marriage and its ordering of gendered spheres are shown to be essential to the functioning of the polis and

³³ McClure (2001) 10, cf. Athen. 14.618-19: the katabaukalesis is a song of τῶν τιτθευουσῶν (14.618e7), the ioulos of τῶν ταλασιουργῶν (14.618d5). Linus is a song of τῶν ἰστουργῶν (14.618d3-4) who would normally be female, also sung ἐν πένθεσιν and ἐπ' εὐτυχεῖ μολπῆ (14.619c1-3). The hymenaios is sung ἐν δὲ γάμοις (14.619b12-c1), but the gender of its performers is not mentioned.

³⁴ Hom. II. 18.491-96.

³⁵ Hom. II. 6.490-93.

indeed the cosmos. The hymenaios, both as ‘wedding’ and ‘wedding song’, represents the establishment of the fundamental relationship of human society. Similar processions show gender divisions that nonetheless build a picture of participation by all elements of society alike: on the Shield, another group of men bring home a bride on a wagon by torchlight and the sound of the hymenaios, but these torches are held by slave-women (δμωῶν, 276) who precede the vehicle. Choruses follow them: men singing (τοὶ...ἴεσαν αὐδὴν, 278), and women or girls dancing (αἰ...ἄναγον χορὸν, 280). On the one side youths (νέοι) form a kōmos with flute-playing, dance, and song, and on the other they keep time with the flute-player and laugh.³⁶ The mixture of elements is different from the Iliad (as indeed, the wedding ceremony varied across the Greek world), but the atmosphere is still one of joyful celebration: πᾶσαν δὲ πόλιν θαλίαι τε χοροί τε / ἀγλαΐαι τ’ εἶχον.³⁷

Even in Sappho, where, following Wilson’s designation of a ‘woman-oriented’ genre, we might expect a more gynocentric representation, the same communality occurs. It is true that in fr. 44 V maidens sing a ‘holy’ song: μέλος ἄγν[ον] (26). Shortly afterwards, however, other sections of society join in with their own songs, as they had participated in the procession according to age, sex, and status:³⁸

γύναικες δ’ ἐλέλυσδον ὄσαι προγενέστερα[ι]

πάντες δ’ ἄνδρες ἐπήρατον ἵαχον ὄρθιον

παῶν’ ὄνοκαλέοντες Ἐκάβολον εὐλύραν

ὑμνην δ’ Ἐκτορα κ’ Ἀνδρομάχαν θεο<ε>ικέλο[ις].³⁹

³⁶ [Hes.] Scut. 281-84.

³⁷ [Hes.] Scut. 284-85.

³⁸ Sappho fr. 44.13-18 V: the sons of Ilus yoke mules to wagons, women and maidens ride on carts, the daughters of Priam are somehow χωρίς from the others, and bachelors (ἡίθεοι) yoke horses to chariots.

³⁹ Sappho fr. 44.31-34 V.

The ancient Greek wedding, then, involved not simply a couple, but the whole community, and the wedding song is the commemoration of the establishment of their place within that community. In other wedding songs, a similar pattern of speaking voices occurs. Many of Sappho's epithalamia do not identify the speaker, although fr. 107 and 114 V must refer to the bride, whose putative longing for her departed maidenhead is expressed in the first person, *παρθενίας ἐπιβάλλομαι* (107), and who is identified by the personal pronoun as the object of its departure: *ποῖ με λίποις' ἀ<π>οίχη;* (114.1). Interestingly, this last fragment is identified as a lament, expressing the bride's regret at her departure from childhood,⁴⁰ a point to which I will return below. In a happier scenario, a chorus of parthenoi urge the bridegroom to fetch his own age-mates so that they might sing all night long:

πάρθενοι δι
 παννυχισδοι[σ]αι[
 σὰν αἰδοῖσ[ι]ν φιλότατα καὶ νύμ-
 φας ἰοκόλπω.
 ἀλλ' ἐγέρθεις ἠῖθ[ε
 στείχε σοὶς ὑμάλικ[ας
 ἥπερ ὅσσον ἀ λιγύφω[νος

⁴⁰ Lardinois (2001) 81-82 on fr. 114 V. He compares this poem with laments for the dead, in which the speaker addresses directly the 'deceased' and accuses them of 'deserting' them (cf. Hom. Il. 24.725, Eur. Hipp. 848, Alexiou (1974) 121 on modern Greek bridal laments in which a mother addresses a daughter who is 'leaving' her). The structure of this fragment: (νύμφη). παρθενία, παρθενία, ποῖ με λίποις' ἀ<π>οίχη / (παρθενία). †οὐκέτι ἤξω πρὸς σε, οὐκέτι ἤξω† is also structurally parallel to an antiphonal lament for Adonis (fr. 140 V): Κατθνάσκει, Κυθήρη, ἄβροζ' Ἀδωνις· τί κε θεῖμεν; / κατύπτεσθε, κόραι, καὶ κατερέικεσθε χίτωνας.

ὑπνον [ἴ]δωμεν.⁴¹

The mixed-sex choral performance in this fragment is limited to the young, but still anticipates performance by both genders. The tragedians emulate this model. Aeschylus' Danaids are the primary singers of Supplices, but recent scholarship suggests that a mixed-sex choral exodos was employed specifically to evoke the wedding song and its social significance.⁴² Nymphs perform the hymenaioi in PV, but the bridegroom's kin in Agamemnon. Antigone performs an antiphonal lament with the male Chorus in Sophocles.⁴³ Euripides favours maiden song, but other elements of society are included in the celebrations: King Merops may join in the wedding song in Phaethon, Cassandra urges her mother and other captive Trojan women to participate in her celebration, and in the narrative of Peleus and Thetis' marriage in Iphigenia in Aulis, the Muses sing the hymenaios, but the Nereids γάμους ἐχόρευσαν, Cheiron offers a prophecy of the couple's future offspring, and the gods themselves pronounce the makarismos.⁴⁴ Attic comedy presents a different picture: in Aristophanes' Peace and Birds, the wedding song is sung by citizens of the relevant city,⁴⁵ with the bridegroom joining in – a far cry from the antiphonal laments of some women's songs. Theocritus returns to the image of the maiden chorus in his Hellenistic Epithalamium for Helen, but in the same era, Apollonius shows Orpheus and the Argonauts singing the wedding song for Jason and Medea, joined the following morning by the Nymphs of Phaeacia.⁴⁶ In my final examples, Plutarch and Menander Rhetor, an exclusively male voice is presupposed by the conventions of philosophical discourse and epideictic oratory – perhaps less a usurpation of a female speech genre by the male voice than a development dictated by

⁴¹ Sappho. fr. 30.2-9 V.

⁴² Swift (2006b) 205.

⁴³ Soph. Ant. 806-82.

⁴⁴ Eur. Pha. 217-18, Tro. 325, 332-40, IA 1040-45, 1057-57, 1062-75, 1076-79; Ch. 4, pp.144-45, 166, 189, 191.

⁴⁵ See Ch. 5, p. 221.

⁴⁶ Theoc. 18.2, Ap. Arg. 4.1159-60, 1193-99; Ch. 6, pp.240-41.

the genre's new form.⁴⁷ The wedding song, then, can be sung by and to either or both sexes. Moreover, other than Sappho, no matter what sex the internal speaker, the words of our extant songs are those of a male poet. Any focalisation on 'female speech' must take place through a male lens, and this must be borne in mind when submitting the wedding song to feminist critique. Can it be said to be 'gendered' in any other sense?

Gender

An examination of the *topoi* of this song shows that some gendered patterns do begin to emerge. Communal celebration, music, dance and song are common to both genders, as is ribaldry, sacral imagery, *erôs*, and the use of mythical narrative (and mythical foreshadowing, the ironic 'anti-epithalamium').⁴⁸ The most obvious difference is in the use of natural imagery. According to Menander Rhetor, narratives from nature formed a major part of one of the main *kephalai* of the epithalamial oration (the thesis on *Gamos*), and scenes from seasonal nature set the tone for love in his *Peri Kateunastikou*.⁴⁹ The *locus amoenus*, the seductive natural setting for love, is an integral image of erotic poetry, but Sappho uses two striking natural images, that of the fruit unplucked in the highest branches:

οἶον τὸ γλυκύμαλον ἐρεύθεται ἄκρωι ἐπ' ὕσδωι,

ἄκρον ἐπ' ἀκροτάτῳ, λελάθοντο δὲ μαλοδρόπῃες·

⁴⁷ See Ch.7, p.264; Ch.8 p.292.

⁴⁸ See Tufte (1970) 37-55: 'Instead of expressing joy over a proper union, the anti-epithalamium expresses lamentation or foreboding over a union which is for some reason improper or unsanctioned, and thus presages tragedy, death, dissention, revenge, murder, war, or other disruptions of order and nature. Sometimes, but not always, the misfortune is partially resolved on a note of hope or triumph. In general, the anti-epithalamium is a poem or excerpt using epithalamic devices in an expression of unhappiness, disorder, and evil omen associated with an improper union'. This motif will be discussed in greater detail in Chs. 2 and 4.

⁴⁹ Men. Rhet. 401.26-402.10, 408.8-26; Ch.8, p.314.

οὐ μὰν ἐκλελάθοντ', ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐδύναντ' ἐπίκεσθαι.⁵⁰

And of the flower trampled underfoot:

οἶαν τὰν ὑάκινθον ἐν ὄρεσι ποίμενες ἄνδρες,
πόσσι καταστείβοισι, χάμαι δέ τε πόρφυρον ἄνθος...⁵¹

The image of the plucked fruit or flower symbolises the loss of virginity on the wedding night, and is characteristic of epithalamial imagery spoken by the female voice. The exposure of the previously protected plant to rough handling is used in tragedy with the image of the sheltered garden from which a young woman is thrust by her marriage. Deianeira laments her loss of this state of innocence in Trachiniae:

τὸ γὰρ νεάζον ἐν τοιοῖσδε βόσκεται
χώροισιν αὐτοῦ, καὶ νιν οὐ θάλος θεοῦ.
οὐδ' ὄμβρος, οὐδε πνευμάτων οὐδὲν κλονεῖ,
ἀλλ' ἠδοναῖς ἄμοχθον ἐξαίρει βίον
ἐς τοῦθ', ἕως τις ἀντὶ παρθενοῦ γυνή
κληθῆ, λάβη τ' ἐν νυκτὶ φροντίδων μέρος,
ἦτοι πρὸς ἄνδρὸς ἢ τέκνων φοβουμένη.⁵²

⁵⁰ Sappho fr. 105 V.

⁵¹ Sappho fr. 105b V.

⁵² Soph. Trach. 144-50; Ch.3, p.128.

This state of being ἄπειρος (143), ‘without trial or experience’, is commonly used by maidens on the cusp of marriage. Aeschylus’ Danaids term themselves ἀπειρόδακρύν in contrast to the tears they shed at the prospect of forced marriage,⁵³ and the ideal of separation from the trials of adulthood and sexuality is expounded by Procne in another play by Sophocles:

αἱ νέαι μὲν ἐν πατρὸς
ἥδιστον, οἶμαι, ζῶμεν ἀνθρώπων βίον·
τερπνῶς γὰρ ἀεὶ παῖδας ἀνοία τρέφει.
ὅταν δ’ ἐς ἡβην ἐξικώμεθ’ ἔμφρονες,
ὠθούμεθ’ ἔξω καὶ διεμπολώμεθα
θεῶν πατρῶων τῶν τε φυσάντων ἄπο,
αἱ μὲν ξένους πρὸς ἄνδρας, αἱ δὲ βαρβάρους,
αἱ δ’ εἰς ἀγηθῆ δώμαθ’, αἱ δ’ ἐπίρροθα.⁵⁴

According to Seaford, this topos is an expression of bridal reluctance, a lament for the necessary departure of the bride to womanhood and an uncertain future.⁵⁵ From a female perspective, this transition can be seen as traumatic and violent, and the imagery of ‘reaping’ her virginity is prevalent. As the harvested fruit is cut off from the nourishment of its parent plant, and has no future but consumption, so this image can be associated with death (the culling of the flower of youth in war, analogous to the linking of bloodshed in consummation

⁵³ Aesch. Supp. 71; Ch.2, p.82.

⁵⁴ Soph. fr. 583.3-10 R.

⁵⁵ Seaford (1985) 51-52.

and death in Greek thought);⁵⁶ hence the lamentation for the loss of one's old life. The bride's separation from her mother, the nourishing parent, is also part of this nexus of images. It may be implied in an epithalamium of Sappho:

Ἦσπερε πάντα φέρηρις ὅσα φαίνολις ἐσκέδασ' Αὔως,
φέρηρις δὲν, φέρηρις αἴγα, φέρηρις ἄπυ μᾶτερι παῖδα.⁵⁷

It is employed again by Sophocles in his description of Deianeira as a calf that has wandered from her mother on the day Heracles fought with Achelous for her hand,⁵⁸ and it is used twice by the maidens of Theocritus 18: in the accusation that the drunk or sleepy Menelaus should have left Helen by her mother's side,⁵⁹ and again in the image used by the girls to express their longing for their absent friend:

πολλὰ τεοῦς, Ἐλένα, μεμναμένοι ὡς γαλαθηναί
ἄρνες γεινάμενας οἶος μαστὸν ποθέοισαι.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Cf. Aesch. Supp. 663-64: ἦβας δ' ἄνθος ἄδρεπτον / ἔστω. The first appearance of this motif is at Il. 8.302-8: μήκων δ' ὡς ἐτέρωσε κάρη βάλεν, ἦ τ' ἐνὶ κήπῳ / καρπῷ βριθομένη νοτίησί τε εἰαρινῆσιν, / ὡς ἐτέρωσ' ἤμυσε κάρη πῆληκι βαρυνθέν; also Stes. fr. S 15.ii.14-17 Davies: ἀπέκλινε δ' ἄρ' ἀνχένα Γαρ[υόνας / ἐπικάρσιον, ὡς ὅκα μ[ά]κω[ν / ἄτε καταισχύνοισ' ἀπαλόν [δέμας / αἴψ' ἀπὸ φύλλα βαλοῖσα γ]. A paper by Lynn Kozak (University of Nottingham, September 2005) argued for the fetishisation of the beautiful, dying male body in ancient epic based on Priam's words to Hector in Hom. Il. 22.71-76, and this sexualisation of death can be extended further and seen not only in the death of young male characters, but also of young, beautiful parthenoi (e.g. Iphigenia: Aesch. Ag. 227-43 or Polyxena: Eur. Hec. 544-65) whose deaths are often accompanied by violently, voyeuristically sexual descriptions. The Greek eroticisation of death is thus part of an interconnected web of imagery in which the consummation of erōs is likened to, or results in, death.

⁵⁷ Sappho fr. 104a V.

⁵⁸ Soph. Trach. 527-30, cf. Seaford (1985) 52-55.

⁵⁹ Theoc. 18. 12-15.

⁶⁰ Theoc. 18.41-42.

The language used by the maidens of Catullus 62 also makes clear the reactions of young women to this separation and sexual awakening:

Hesperē, quis caelo fertur crudelior ignis?
qui natam possis complexu auellere matris,
complexu matris retinentem auellere natam,
et iuueni ardenti castam donare puellam.
quid faciunt hostes capta crudelius urbe?⁶¹

In the case of a tragic bride such as Deianeira, the potential trauma of the transfer of the bride between oikoi and between modes of existence is made particularly explicit, for it is during this liminal period that she is assaulted by the centaur Nessus in a perversion of the normally contained and formalised violence of the wedding ceremony.⁶² Elements of lament and protest at this transition, however, are not unique to tragedy and persist in rural societies of today.⁶³ Separation and liminality are particular features of the modern Greek wedding song – as the bride steps over the threshold for the last time as a girl, her family take leave of her as of one dead in a manner strikingly similar to the Sapphic and Catullan odes:

⁶¹ Cat. 62.20-24.

⁶² Soph. Trach. 562-65; Ch.3, p.126.

⁶³ Alexiou (1974) likens the modern Greek wedding song to the funeral lament. She and others mention the *moirología* and its associated ethic of protest in this context: not a lament for oneself or a protest to fate ‘sung at any angry moment’, but a specific ritual lament, ‘sung usually at death and avoided on other occasions as ill-omened’ (p.116), including laments for the dead, those who have left their country, changed their religion, or have married. Caraveli (1986) 181 notes that the thematic conventions of lament may cause this protest to become generalised among the lamenters (hence potentially disruptive) as well as specifically directed towards the object of their song, for they ‘allow the focus of the song to shift from the plight of the deceased to the plight of the mourner (see Hom. Il. 19.301-2, in which Briseis and her women mourn for Patroclus and themselves). Since the performers of these ritual laments are women, the grievances thus voiced often relate to the social role of omen in the context of the androcentric village and to painful situations...peculiar to women’. At such intersections between the (largely private) world of ritual and the (largely public) world of village or political life, the boundaries of gender hierarchy may become blurred and allow what is unspoken in the social contract between men, but significant to the cycle of ritual observed by women, to be uttered. As Lardinois states (2001:88), in the wedding this is a ritualised, contained form of protest. Like funeral lamentation, it may to some degree be a necessary part of the ceremony, but is circumscribed (McClure (1999) 37). In the case of the wedding lamentation must give way to an essentially positive, if externally imposed, transition.

Today the sky is black, today the day is black,
today a mother takes leave of her daughter.
The seven skies have opened the twelve gospels
and have taken my child from out of my arms.
You are leaving, daughter, and I shall never laugh again,
Nor wash on Saturdays, nor change for a festival.⁶⁴

In India, Maithil women sing *samdaun* as the bride leaves her home to reside in her husband's village: 'the separation at which these songs are sung marks not only the beginning of her roles as daughter-in-law and wife, but the end of her role as a daughter, the end of her life in her natal village, and the beginning of the end of many relationships with village friends and relatives'.⁶⁵ Again, these songs remark on the sheltered innocence of childhood and the sorrow of separation, using the now-familiar imagery of the secluded garden:

In the sandalwood grove in my father's courtyard
There hangs a swing
In it the graceful *Sītā* is swinging
Ten friends are pushing
Oh that *Sītā* is being taken away by *Raghubar* as she weeps
Seeing the swing her mother cries

⁶⁴ Alexiou (1974) 120. Cf. the lament for the dead: 'Today the sky is black and the day is gloomy, / today the eagle and the dove take leave, / today children take leave of their father...'. Perhaps more striking is the use of the 'sheltered garden' motif typical of ancient Greek bridal laments: 'I had a pure white cotton plant growing in my courtyard; / I weeded it, I watered it, and it was all my own. / But a stranger, yes a stranger came and took it from me...' (p.121), which is also common to *moirólógia* for the dead: 'Here in this neighbourhood, here in this house, / there was a fountain with water and a shady tree, / where brothers and cousins would sit in its shade, / where her husband would sit and with him her children. / Now the fountain is dried up, and the tree is uprooted' (p.122).

⁶⁵ Henry (1998) 425.

The courtyard is not pleasing to her
Nowhere does she hear the sweet voice of Sītā
Without my daughter I will go crazy...⁶⁶

In addition, the Nanhui women China have transformed the wedding song into a complex system of bridal lamentation (*kujia*), still performed at various stages of the wedding ceremony, which ‘center around the bride’s grievance at being “sold” in marriage to a family that will probably mistreat her [here we recall Procne’s complaints], her sadness and anxiety at leaving her natal home, and her own lowly status and unfortunate destiny’.⁶⁷ Of these, the songs for the preparation of the trousseau bear the most resemblance to their Greek counterparts:

From birth I have borne my father’s name [family name].
As fixed and certain as the nail knocked into the weighing scales,
I am just poor merchandise like the shells purchased during the “moldy season”
Or like wet cigarette butts.⁶⁸

Chinese scholars, like those of the Greek lament, have seen an element of social protest in these songs: as resistance to arranged marriage, or containing a derivative of protest at earlier forms of marriage by abduction. The song may also be a socially acceptable, expressive female genre – acceptable because ritually performed in a period of liminality and constitutive only of individual, and hence non-threatening, grievances. As we will see in relation to the Greek epithalamium, these songs also represent the transformation of the girl into a wife and express some of the ambivalent cultural attitudes surrounding marriage. In

⁶⁶ Henry (1998) 426.

⁶⁷ McLaren & Chen (2000) 208.

⁶⁸ McLaren & Chen (2000) 220.

addition to these ritual and social functions, the Chinese songs signify a female-transmitted oral tradition replete with generic conventions, through which are ritually expressed quasi-narratives, invocations for good fortune, blessings and curses, and rhetorical persuasion,⁶⁹ in which the bride moves her audience to sympathy and consolation,⁷⁰ thus strengthening bonds with her kin and gaining status and protection for herself.

Similarly in Greece, or at least in classical Athens, the bride's natal family retained bonds with, and authority over, her even after she married. Aspects of Greek 'bridal reluctance' are paralleled in Chinese bridal lament. The bride feels spurned by her natal family, sold away from the familiar in a contract between men which anthropologists have termed 'the exchange of women' (we may note a fragment from a Sapphic epithalamium: δώσομεν, ἦσι πάτηρ),⁷¹ an exchange in which she has no say, for the production of legitimate children, undergoing 'death' for the sake of the continuance of male (homo)social relations. She becomes a metaphorical sacrifice performed for social continuation. This sacrifice is taken to its most extreme conclusion by mythology and tragedy, but may also be represented as something positive.

For example, when uttered in the male voice, the imagery of nature, associated above with the lament, is often presented in terms of productive agricultural and animal cultivation. The most obvious example of this imagery is in the Athenian formula of enguê: ἀλλ' ἐγγυῶ παίδων ἐπ' ἀρότῳ γνησίῳν / τὴν θυγατέρ'.⁷² The female body is a fertile field to be

⁶⁹ McLaren & Chen (2000) 209.

⁷⁰ McLaren & Chen (2000) 218.

⁷¹ Sappho fr. 109 V, although this may refer to the dowry, rather than the bride. Wohl (1998) xiii, following Lévi-Strauss; cf. also Rabinowitz (1993), Ormand (1999).

⁷² Men. Dysc. 842-43. In other contexts, the sexual female is an animal to be tamed, as is evident in the use of the verb δαμάζω to mean both 'tame' or 'break in' an animal and 'subject' a woman to a husband; and of δάμαρ for 'wife' (LSJ s.v. δαμάζω, δάμαρ. It can also mean 'subdue' or 'kill', adding further connotations of violence to the semantic field of marriage). The dual conceptualisation of the female as both 'field' and 'filly' reveals an interesting dichotomy. The horse is an animal representative of the aristocracy. It is a status-object which requires effort to tame – and even then, the most famous horses talk back (Hom. Il. 19.408-17). It is thus an image appropriate to the context of sexuality in heroic epic (Hom. Il. 18.432 δάμασσειν), Spartan

ploughed. Although this image is not used in early lyric or dramatic wedding songs, such sentiments are crudely voiced by men in other plays: Oedipus sowed his seed in the same field as his father; Haimon can plough ‘other fields’ than Antigone’s; and Deianeira sums up Heracles’ attitude to marriage and childrearing in these terms.⁷³ Only in Aristophanes’ *Peace* does the topos of agriculture enter the wedding song itself. The Chorus ‘gather’ or ‘reap’ the divine bride, *Opôra* (Harvest): *τρυγήσομεν αὐτήν* (1342-43). The benefits of the peace guaranteed by this marriage are presented in terms of cultivation, both of the land and of the female (1324-27).⁷⁴

In the Hellenistic epithalamium, the boundaries of gendered imagery become more blurred. Helen’s compatriots compare her beauty to that of various phenomena from domesticated nature: a cypress tree in a field or garden (*Theoc.* 18.29-30), a Thracian steed in its chariot (30).⁷⁵ Plutarch likens the initial disposition of new brides to the thorns in their crowns of asparagus or sharp grapes, both images of ‘plucking’, but later in his *Coniugalia Praecepta* speaks of the most sacred ‘ploughing’: that between man and wife for the production of children.⁷⁶ I will discuss his use of natural imagery at length in the penultimate chapter, because he develops this agricultural topos in a most startling way. The imagery of

partheneia (*Alc.* fr. 1.59 ἵππος), and early lyric (*Anacr.* fr. 72.1 πῶλε). This is in keeping with mythical and aristocratic representations of marriage as a contest in which the bride must be won: the race of Meleager and Atalanta, the chariot-race of Pelops for Hippodameia, the contests of Helen’s suitors (either in skill or in gifts). A description of a marriage ceremony presided over by Sappho speaks of ἀγῶνας (possibly of suitors, *Sappho* fr. 194 V = *Him. Or.* 9.4), and Herodotus (6.128) narrates the contests held by Cleisthenes for the hand of his daughter. As field or furrow, the female is the passive recipient of male sexual productivity, as Apollo infamously states in *Aesch. Eum.* 658-61. This image of the female is an appropriate foil to the classical Athenian politês: the citizen/farmer/soldier, although its locus classicus is in Hesiod (above). A diachronic development of topoi can thus be identified. One notable exception is the description of Phaethon as the νεόζυγι πῶλωι in *Eur. Pha.* 223-34, but this is also exceptional in that it refers to the bridegroom, not the bride. Interestingly, Helen’s compatriots identify her both as a cypress in a garden or fertile field and as a horse in *Theoc.* 18 (below), and Plutarch returns to the image of ‘woman as horse/status-object’ in his recommendations that a husband treat a rich wife with respect (*Mor.* 139B8-10), as well as referring to the ‘sacred ploughing’ (below).

⁷³ *Soph.* *OT* 1211-13, *Ant.* 569, (though interestingly, Creon also likens Antigone’s punishment to the disciplining of a horse: vv.477-78), *Trach.* 31-33; *Ch.*3, p.129.

⁷⁴ *Ch.*5, p.225; cf. also vv.708-9: κῆτ’ ἐν τοῖς ἀγροῖς / ταύτη ξυνοικῶν ἐκποιοῦ σαυτῶ βότρυς, 1356: συκολογοῦντες.

⁷⁵ *Ch.*6, p.243-44.

⁷⁶ *Plut. Mor.* 138D6-E5, 144A10-B9; *Ch.*7, p.264-66.

‘harvest’ is prevalent in both *Coniugalia Praecepta* and *Amatorius*, but as we will see, the ‘reaping’ of sexuality is only the most superficial part of this harvest. The real karpon is aretê, virtue, through which true communion may be achieved – not between bodies, but between souls, and between humanity and the truly divine. Menander Rhetor, by contrast, uses this imagery to create a more conventional *locus amoenus*, in which features of the landscape desire of their own accord to be joined in matrimony.⁷⁷

What is for women an image of death and loss is for men one of continued life and the bounty of harvest. This finds its clearest expression in Catullus 62, in which youths and girls compete in an amoebaeon song that makes use of the contrasting aspects of this image: to the maidens, the rising of Hesperus is a cruel sight that tears a bride from her mother’s embrace and is likened to the sack of a city, whereas to the young men, this star is not a breaker of bonds, but one who strengthens them – at least, the social bonds between men: *qui desponsa tua firmes conubia flamma, / quae pepigere uiri, pepigerunt ante parentes* (27-28). The bride is likened by the girls to a hidden flower in a garden which, once plucked will wither (*defloruit*, 43), but to the youths, the untouched virgin is like an unproductive vine, wasting away ‘uncultivated’ (*numquam...extolit, numquam...educat*, 62.50). Her marriage will make her not less, but more dear to both her natal and marital family:

at si forte eadem est ulmo coniuncta marito,
multi illam agricolae, multi coluere iuueni:
sic virgo dum intacta manet, dum inculta senescit;
cum par conubium maturo tempore adeptam est,
cara uiro magis et minus est inuisa parenti.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Men. Rhet. 401.29-402.2; Ch.8, p.314.

⁷⁸ Cat. 62.54-58.

Where the female focus is on the separation from one's youth and companions, the male concentrates on reintegration into productive adulthood. This can be explained in social terms: marriage is a *telos* for women, an initiation into adulthood and accomplishment of their socially determined role, in a way that it is not for men. As a *telos*, and a rite of passage, it is comparable to death, hence the emphasis on departure and lamentation in many wedding songs and other 'epithalamial' poetry in the female voice. Though these rites may be structurally similar, and in tragedy may often be conflated, their outcomes are fundamentally different, and Seaford is correct to state that in reality the 'negative tendency' inherent in this transition must be overcome.⁷⁹ In the central section of this thesis I will explore Seaford's dichotomy of reality: positive::tragedy:negative and examine the failed transitions of tragic brides in depth. Why do they fail, what consequences does this have for the community in which the marriage should be enacted, and how might this be resolved? In the next chapter, however, I will examine how the lyric epithalamiast attempts to negotiate in song the successful transition of the archaic Greek bride.

'Female' wedding songs, especially those directed towards other women, seem to focus primarily on the personal, individual aspects of this transition (the private sphere), but as we see from Catullus, the male voice often takes on the role of society and emphasises the communal benefits of marriage (the public sphere). Wilson notes the prevalence in an epithalamial simile by Pindar of such concerns:

As usual in Pindar's poetry, emotion takes second place to more serious male concerns: glorious objects, the expedient exchange of women in an aura of male solidarity, the envy of friends and a plenitude of good wine.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Seaford (1987) 106.

⁸⁰ Wilson (1996) 144, on Pind. Ol. 7.1-6: Φιάλαν ὡς εἶ τις ἀφ'νειᾶς ἀπὸ χειρὸς ἑλών / ἔνδον ἀμπέλου καχλάζοισαν δρόσω / δωρήσεται / νεανία γαμβρῶ προπίνων / οἴκοθεν οἴκαδε,

The inclusion of such a scene within an epinician poem is telling: what for women may be cast in terms of violence is for men a victory, as Sappho suggests when she addresses a bridegroom:

Ὶ Ολβιε γάμβρε, σοὶ μὲν δὴ γάμος ὡς ἄραο
ἐκτετέλεστ', ἔχης δὲ πάρθενον, ἄν ἄραο.⁸¹

The victorious tone of the exodoi of Peace and Birds is a development of this gendering, as is the presentation of marriage in terms of athletic victory in Menander Rhetor's *kateunastikos*.⁸² As we have already seen, strict gender divisions are not always observed – fr. 112 V above shows that a female poet may appropriate this imagery when addressing a male; Theocritus' maidens use the image of domestication; while Plutarch makes use of the 'plucking' motif – but the exact speaking voice of the former is not identified and the latter two are later developments. I will suggest in later chapters that as configurations of (elite) marriage and the family changed in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, and Greek ideologies interacted with Macedonian, Egyptian, and Roman society and literature, so also the configuration and function of the wedding song changed to adapt to new aspects of family and community life.

Ritual

πάγχρυσον, κορυφᾶν κτεάνων, / συμποσίου τε χάριν κᾶ-/ δός τε τιμάσαις <ν>έον, ἐν δὲ φίλων / παρεόντων θῆκε νιν ζαλωτὸν ὁμόφρονος εὐνάς.

⁸¹ Sappho fr. 112.1-2 V.

⁸² Men Rhet. 406.14-24; cf. Ch.5, p.222, Ch.8, pp.311, 13.

What is the function of the wedding song? What is its role in the Greek wedding, in Greek literature, and culture more generally? Several indications in lyric and drama suggest that it served a particular ritual function. The song of the maidens in Sappho fr. 44 V is described as ‘holy’ (ἄγνον, 26) and an ἄχω θεσπεσία (27). In addition, ritual cries such as the *olologê* and *paeon* feature in the final verses of this fragment.⁸³ Cassandra dedicates her wedding torches to Hymenaios and Hecate αἶ νόμος ἔχει, and refers to ὁ χορὸς ὄσιος and μακαρίαῖς ἀοιδαῖς.⁸⁴ Trygaeus opens his wedding song in the *Peace* with the injunction εὐφημεῖν χρῆ (1318), which echoes the command given at other major undertakings.⁸⁵ Antigone seems to regard this ritual as her right: ὑμενάϊων ἔγκληρον.⁸⁶ Yet it is difficult to determine what this function was: no fully extant descriptions of a Greek wedding ceremony of any age survive, and no extant source preserves evidence of exactly which processes determine *gamos*. When Cassandra speaks of *nomos*, what relation – if any – does this bear to marriage *kata nomon*, as expounded by the Athenian legal texts? What comprises a Greek wedding, and where does the wedding song fit in this schema?

Given the evidence, the best picture that we can compile is a composite one from a variety of textual and visual sources.⁸⁷ We should be wary of assuming a single pattern of marriage – this evidence is not applicable for the entire Greek world at all periods. Based mainly upon evidence from Classical Athens, elements of this picture could be included or omitted as befitted the occasion and the participants: the *kurios* of the bride would betroth her to the groom in the ceremony known as *enguê* or *enguêsis*, described above.⁸⁸ She was not

⁸³ Sappho fr. 44.31-33 V.

⁸⁴ Eur. *Tro.* 324, 328, 336; Ch.4, pp.166, 178.

⁸⁵ Ar. *Pax.* 96, 434.

⁸⁶ Soph. *Ant.* 813-14; Ch.3, p.118.

⁸⁷ The dangers of this type of reconstruction are mentioned by Oakley and Sinos (1994) 5. For this reason they, and Ormand (1999) 9-10, concentrate on the evidence from classical Athens in their descriptions of the wedding ceremony.

⁸⁸ E.g. Hdt. 6.130.10-12, Men. *Dysc.* (above). Oakley & Sinos (1994) 9 argue that the *loutrophoros*-amphora Boston 03.802 (fig. 1) depicts such a scene.

required to be present for this transaction, which could take place without her consent, or even knowledge – many girls, among them Demosthenes’ sister and Aristotle’s daughter, were betrothed at a very young age and would be given out (*ekdosis*) when they reached physical maturity.⁸⁹ The *enguê* could be used in court to testify to the legitimacy of the marriage and resulting children. A dowry was often given with the bride, and at least in classical Athens, it seems to have been considered rude not to provide one (it seems that this could be used to prove a marriage’s legitimacy).⁹⁰

Prior to the wedding itself, both families would make a sacrifice, the *proteleia*, and the bride-to-be would dedicate her childhood toys and cut her hair, marking the beginning of her official passage to adulthood.⁹¹ She and the groom would be bathed and adorned,⁹² and there might be a feast in the house of the father of the bride,⁹³ before the couple processed to their new *oikos* accompanied by friends and relatives, often with their mothers bearing torches.⁹⁴ The processional *hymenaios* for this stage of the ceremony comprise the greater

⁸⁹ Dem. 27.4.3, 29.43.2-4, Diog. Laert. 5.12.5.

⁹⁰ E.g. Is. 3.8.14. Vernant (1980) 47 notes that ‘marriage is first and foremost a statement of fact, the fact being *συνοικεῖν*, lasting cohabitation with the husband’, but states two essential preconditions: *enguê* (p.45), ‘a necessary element but not its sufficient condition’ and *proix* (p.46), which in the classical period ‘had the force of a legitimation, testifying that the daughter had been truly settled by her *oikos* in the family of her spouse’ (i.e., incorporation). Leduc (1992) 236 agrees that a bride must be given away with property. As we see from Isaeus, the defendant was content with ‘minimum legal requirements’ rather than specific dowry conditions for his sister’s betrothal: *μόνον τὸ κατὰ τοὺς νόμους ἐγγυῆσαι διεπράξατο* (3.39.8-9), indicating that the dowry was a social, rather than legal, requirement. In addition, the giving of dowry was not obligatory in earlier times: though *Andromache* in Sappho fr. 44.8-10 V brings great wealth to Troy, Homeric suitors gave *hedna* to the bride’s father (Il. 22.472, cf. 16.178, 190; *Andromache* is *πολύδωρος* 6.395, cf. 22.88). *Penelope’s hedna*, however, are to be prepared by those in her father’s house and are described as *ὄσσα ἔοικε φίλης ἐπὶ παιδὸς ἔπεσθαι* (Od. 1.277-78). It is conceivable that some of the wealth accumulated by the *kurios* through bride-gifts was then settled upon the daughter when she left the house.

⁹¹ E.g. Eur. IA 434 (*proteleia*, cf. Aesch Ag. 227; Ch.2. p.105, used subversively); AP 6.133, 6.280 (dedications); Hdt. 4.34.3-35.1, Eur. Hipp. 1423-27 (cutting hair, vv. 26-27, also associated with mourning); on this aition see Dunn (1996) 93-96; cf. Oakley & Sinos (1994) 14-15 on Oxford GR 1966.714 (figs. 3-5), Mainz 116 (figs. 6-8), and Syracuse 21186 (fig. 9).

⁹² Eur. IT 818-19 (bath), IA 1088 (*numphokomos*); Oakley & Sinos (1994) 15-21: for the groom’s bath, see Warsaw 142290 (figs. 10-13), for that of the bride, Athens 1453 (figs. 14-15), Karlsruhe 69/78 (figs. 16-19 – water-fetching processions), New York 1972.118.148 (figs. 20-21 – bath). Adornment scenes are shown on Athens 17790 (fig. 23), 1454 (figs. 28-29), Würzburg 541 (figs. 24-27), Boston 95.1402 (fig. 30), New York 19.192.86 (fig. 31), and London E 774 (figs. 32-35).

⁹³ Euangelos fr. 1, Plut. Mor. 666F3-67A7, Luc. Symp. 41.4-11: *Ἀρισταινέτου ἐν μεγάροισι*.

⁹⁴ This is ‘the most widely represented wedding scene on vases’ (Oakley & Sinos (1994) 28), and includes both mythical representations, e.g. Florence 3790 (figs 62-63 – *Peleus and Thetis*) and mortal wedding scenes, e.g. Berlin F 2372 (figs 72-73 – although *Eros* is present in this scene).

number of our extant wedding songs. The couple might share food, and be showered with fruits, nuts and coins, all actions symbolic of fertility.⁹⁵ They would then enter the thalamos to consummate the marriage, outside which the guests would sing epithalamia. Some, as in Sappho fr. 30 and possibly 23 V, would stay all night,⁹⁶ but the door would be guarded by the *thurôros*, the doorman branded a giant thug in fr. 110 V. The following day was called *epaulia*, or *anakalyptêria* after the symbolic unveiling of the bride, and the gifts given to the bride on this day shared the same name. Some scholars argue that this unveiling took place earlier in the proceedings, before the consummation or even before the procession, and indicated the bride's symbolic 'consent' to the union.⁹⁷ But although brides are almost always represented in vase-painting as being half-unveiled, either by their own hand or by that of a *numpheutria* or bridesmaid,⁹⁸ the bulk of the literary evidence suggests this took place later in the marriage, and would thus symbolise its successful completion.⁹⁹ The real *telos*, however,

⁹⁵ Theopompos fr. 15, cf. Boston 10.223 (Oakley & Sinos (1994) 34 & figs. 60-61, incorporating the *anakalyptêria*). Ormand (1999) 9 states that the shared food was a meal of sesame cakes, but cites no sources for this.

⁹⁶ Sappho fr. 30.3, 23.13 V (πᾶν]νυχίσι[δ]ην).

⁹⁷ E.g. Sourvinou-Inwood (1978) 106, Oakley & Sinos (1994) 25.

⁹⁸ The earliest examples show the bride holding her own veil, as in St. Petersburg Б 1403 (Oakley & Sinos fig. 99) and Florence 4209 (the Francois vase, Oakley & Sinos figs. 50-53). The figure of the *numpheutria* seems to have been introduced c.500 BC: on Warsaw 142319 (Oakley & Sinos figs. 100-4), Aphrodite adjusts Hebe's veil as Heracles leads his bride to bed. Both types of scene are used by red-figure painters, and later classical vases even show Eros flying in to adjust the bride's veil (Athens 19522 (Oakley & Sinos figs. 124-27)). Llewellyn-Jones (2003) 109-110 suggests the 'veil-gesture' performed by the bride does not indicate her unveiling, but rather her veiling of herself in a gesture of modesty, and provides many parallels from modern 'veil-cultures'. This idea has merit, particularly in representations of the public elements of the wedding such as the procession, in which it may be improper for a respectable woman to appear outside unveiled. Representations of the bride being unveiled by another (particularly in the presence of the groom, as Oakley (1982) 113-18 discusses with respect to Boston 10.223), and especially by Eros, seem at odds with this interpretation of modesty, but Llewellyn-Jones distinguishes the 'veil-gesture' from the ritual of *anakalyptêria*, in which the bride is passively unveiled. The gesture may, however, be analogous to those of the actors on the Pronomos Vase (Naples 3240), in which the figures' identity is indicated by their manipulation of their iconic attribute.

⁹⁹ The earliest use of the term, by Pherecydes of Syros, refers to the gift of a robe given by Zas to Chthonie on the third day of their marriage (fr. 2.13-19). Lysias calls these gifts τὰ δοθέντα ἀνακαλυπτήρια γυναικὶ γαμουμένη (fr. 14a Carey), but does not specify when in the *gamos* they were given. Photius and the Suda both associate it with the *epaulia* (Photius α 1502, Suda α 1888, ε 1990: καθόσον ἐν τῇ τοῦ νυμφίου οἰκίᾳ ἢ νύμφη τότε πρῶτον ἐπηύλισται, cf. Pausanias ε 49: ἡ δευτέρα τῶν γάμων ἡμέρα οὕτω καλεῖται, καθόσον κτλ.). Sicily was given to Persephone as an *anakalyptêria* gift κατὰ τὸν τοῦ Πλούτωνος καὶ Φερσεφόνης γάμον (fr. 164.14 FGH, also Diod. Sic. 5.3.2.6, cf. Plut. Tim. 8.8.2: ἐν τοῖς γάμοις), again, not specifying an exact moment unless to mean 'during the *gamos* (feast)'. Harpocration specifically associates the *anakalyptêria* with the *epaulia*, but states that this happened *δταν τὸ πρῶτον*

had yet to be completed. The couple must live together, sunoikein, for the purpose of producing legitimate children. A woman would be called gunê rather than parthenos after her marriage,¹⁰⁰ but childbirth might be said to signal ‘true’ integration into the marital oikos: Euphelitus, for example, states that he began to trust his wife after their son was born.¹⁰¹

This lengthy process from betrothal to motherhood is remarked upon by scholars. No one act was sufficient in itself, but marriage entailed a whole ritual and social process, with its intention the perpetuation of the oikos – a process which included songs, particularly processional hymenaioi. According to Oakley and Sinos:

There was no official legal document at Athens to establish official sanction for a marriage: the legitimacy of a gamos was determined by evidence of the intent of the bride’s father and the groom, as provided by the engyê...what was important was the performance of essential rituals – appeasing the gods, feasting, and the ceremonial transfer of the bride and her incorporation into her new home.¹⁰²

Of these, they hold the procession to be ‘the central act of the wedding’.¹⁰³ This would account for the high number of processional songs that are wholly or mostly extant (recall the Iliad and Shield, Sappho fr. 44, the exodos of Supplices; Troades as well as possibly Phaethon; and Peace and Birds) as well as such representations on vase-painting. The

ἀνακαλύπτονται ὥστε ὁραθῆναι τοῖς ἀνδράσι (A 115). When was the bride first seen by her husband? Pollux also states that this term refers both to the gifts and the **day on which ἐκκαλύπτει τὴν νύμφαν**. Hesychius calls the gifts optêria and the anakalyptêria ὅτε τὴν νύμφην ἐξάγουσιν <τοῦ θαλάμου> **τῆ τρίτη ἡμέρα** (α 4345 ο 1888). Only the Etymologicum Symeonis associates this event with an earlier stage: ὅταν πρῶτον ἀνακαλύπτονται **ἐν τῇ ἐστίασει** τῶν γάμων καὶ τοῖς ἀνδράσι καὶ τοῖς ἐστιωμένοις ὁρώμενοι (1.3.13, on Lysias).

¹⁰⁰ Hdt. 5.39.1, Lys. 1.6, cf. Rehm (1994) 17, Konstan (1995) 149, Ormand (1999) 19.

¹⁰¹ Lys. 1.6: the wife’s production of an heir means ἡγούμενος ταύτην οἰκειότητα μεγίστην εἶναι. Cf. Goldhill (1986) 121: ‘As the telos of a man’s life is found in the hoplite rank and war, so for a woman the aim and final point is marriage and the procreation of children’ (my emphasis); Patterson (1991) 59; Vernant (1991) 202-3, on Loraux (1981) 36-67.

¹⁰² Oakley & Sinos (1994) 10.

¹⁰³ Oakley & Sinos (1994) 26.

concept of behaviour endorsing the marriage also informs Patterson's opinion, that 'no specific legal ceremony was necessary – or sufficient' to denote legitimate marriage. She sees marriage as:

A composite process leading to or having its goal in the establishment of a new household or *oikos*, with the eventual production of children, introduction of children into appropriate civic and religious groups, marriage of children – and eventually the replacement of parents by children in new *oikoi* of their own which will continue or renew the life of the parents' *oikos*.¹⁰⁴

This composite process and renewal of parental *oikoi* also has as its result the continuation of the polis, situating marriage once more in the public sphere. Marriage is a matter of the propagation of society, of which *sunoikêsis* must be the central fact, with the intent to cultivate legitimate children denoted by the *enguê*. In the context of the community, as we see enacted in our earliest wedding songs, a wedding procession, accompanied by music and festivity, provides a public – and very loud – announcement of that intent. These songs involve the whole community, and often suggest, as I have mentioned above, that the marriage will benefit the community as a whole. This is particularly relevant in democratic Athens, where the body of citizens is reproduced by the marriage. There is little evidence for non-citizen marriage, but the problems of taking a bride of non-citizen stock are elucidated in Euripides' *Andromache*.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Patterson (1991) 60.

¹⁰⁵ Though *Andromache* describes herself as married (*νυμφεύομαι*, 403) to Hector's murderer, and knows that Neoptolemus would take the death of their son hard (*κᾶτα πῶς πατήρ / τέκνου θανόντος ῥαδίως ἀνέξεται*, 340-41), the idea that Molossus could rule over Phthia is rejected: *ἦ τοὺς ἐμούς τις παῖδας ἐξανέται / Φθίας τυράννους ὄντας*, (201-2).

The centrality of this ritual to oikos and community life provides fertile ground for its manipulation in literary epithalamia, particularly in tragedy. If it is omitted or improperly performed (which, I will argue, applies equally to hymenaios as ‘wedding’ and ‘wedding song’), the consequences are both disastrous and far-reaching:

When tragic weddings or funerals – rituals constitutive of the family – go awry or fail to effect their desired transitions, it is not simply the individual oikos that suffers. The ripples spread with increasing force to shake the polis as well, probing the nature of its social and political underpinnings and challenging those in the theatre audience to consider new and often radically different directions for the city.¹⁰⁶

The concept of marriage as transition is one which I would like to explore in greater detail. I have spoken of ‘departure’ and ‘separation’, topoi which most often find expression, associated with death, in bridal laments; and of ‘reintegration’, often connected with ‘cultivation’ and ‘victory’, particularly in epithalamia sung by or to men. The addition of a transitional stage accords with Van Gennep’s tripartite scheme of rites of passage, ‘ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined’.¹⁰⁷ He argues that ‘postliminal’ rites, those of incorporation, are the focus of the wedding in traditional societies,¹⁰⁸ and it cannot be denied that a large number of wedding rituals focus on the bride’s integration into her new oikos: the sharing of food and katachysmata, which is both a fertility rite and one performed

¹⁰⁶ Rehm (1994) 9.

¹⁰⁷ Van Gennep (1960) 3. He goes on to define this ceremonial schema (p.11) as including ‘preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition) and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation)’. Avagianou (1991), Rehm (1994) 5 and Clark (1998) also address the wedding in terms of this framework.

¹⁰⁸ Van Gennep (1960) 11.

in other contexts of incorporation, such as the entrance of a new slave into the household;¹⁰⁹ the epithalamia, with their focus on the marital love of bride and groom; the epaulia/anakalyptêria indicating the bride's establishment in the marital home; and the beginning of their life together, resulting in childbirth.

I have stated that marriage in ancient Greece was, in addition, the bride's initiation into adulthood: according to Van Gennep's schema, the rites of 'transition' or limen should therefore be emphasised.¹¹⁰ I will return to the wedding procession, arguably the central act of the ritual, and to its accompanying songs, in order to illustrate this. Although Van Gennep states that wedding processions should be seen as preliminal, as 'the change of residence is marked in the ceremonies by rites of separation, always primarily focused on the territorial passage',¹¹¹ I argue that this should be seen as a transitional rite. During this passage, the bride is literally between limina, as yet belonging neither to her father's house nor that of her husband. She is neither child nor adult, but suspended between two identities. This is often symbolised by her literal suspension above the ground in a cart or chariot.

This passage affects not only the identity of the bride (and, to a lesser extent, that of the bridegroom), but also of the community, and this phenomenon is also remarked upon by Van Gennep:

Every marriage is a social disturbance involving not just two individuals but several groups of varying sizes. A marriage modifies a number of elements in their

¹⁰⁹ Ptolemaeus s.v. καταχύσματα, Ammonius κ 256.3-4, Pollux 3.77.1-7, Syrianus 74.9-13, Hesychius κ 768c, Photius κ 145, Suda κ 877, 878, cf. Schol. Ar. Plut. 768.1-18.

¹¹⁰ Van Gennep (1960) 11. Calame (1997) 10-15, examines the choral activities of young men and women in the context of 'group initiation' into adulthood, a process during which the initiands exist in a liminal period and, especially at Sparta, 'enjoy an intermediary status between the conclusion of their initiation and enrolment in the army or their marriage' (pp. 14-15). This will be discussed at greater length in Ch. 1, however, we may view the wedding ceremony as a series of rituals within a larger rite of passage designed to effect the transition of the parthenos to womanhood and of the couple to the establishment of their oikos within the community.

¹¹¹ Van Gennep (1960) 116.

relationships to each other, and these changes, step by step, bring about a disturbance in the equilibrium.¹¹²

Marriage involves a whole community, and that community participates in the transitory journey between *oikoi* and between identities. The procession, and the movement of imagery from separation to reintegration, can thus be seen in terms of a communal ritual whose aim is to effect the transition of the bride from *parthenos* to *gunê*, thereby guaranteeing the fertility of the *oikos*, and, by extension, the continuity of the community – especially the classical polis. The *hymenaios* is part of this ritual, a ‘hymn for the wedding’, as it were.¹¹³ It must be borne in mind that not only the processional *hymenaios*, but other wedding songs also, make use of the imagery of progression (as well as other *topoi*), and only Catullus 62 among our extant songs represents anything like a complete and fully enacted transition, from separation/lament to reintegration/celebration. Caution must be exercised when utilising this interpretive framework, but it is probably safe to say that the epithalamium is a genre particular to various aspects of the marital transition.

Our literary examples emphasise a woman’s first transition – from *parthenos* to *gunê*, and this may underline the importance of such a transition in Greek thought. For this reason – and that space does not permit me to address the marriages which, given the average nuptial age in ancient Greece, would have frequently taken place later in a woman’s life – I have concentrated on first marriages. Where second marriages do appear in wedding songs, such as that of Helen in *Agamemnon*, they may be problematised – or this may be due to the fact that this song was sung for an adulterous union. Similarly, the importance of this transition to the community is most relevant in citizen or elite marriage rites: our extant *hymenaios* do not

¹¹² Van Gennep (1960) 139.

¹¹³ On the connection between ὑμῆν and ὕμνος, see Jolles (1916) 126, Muth (1954) 12-22.

provide us with songs for metic or non-citizen couples, thus, it is difficult to assess the role of marriage in strengthening bonds among these communities.

As part of a transitional rite of passage, the wedding song in literature draws attention to transitions and the problems inherent in them. They are not only fundamental to the relationships upon which the community is built, but often represent a crisis in these relationships, between identities, genders, and between oikos and polis. The final ‘gendering’ of the wedding song centres on the representation it gives of male/female relations in its performative and social context. Different authors manipulate the generic ‘elements’ of the wedding song in various ways to achieve various effects dependent upon their period of composition, their own gender and that of their speakers, their literary form and the social and political circumstances within which they composed. This thesis asks the question: how is the wedding song being used in these works, and with what picture of gender relations do our literary weddings present us?

Chapter 1 will distinguish Sappho’s epithalamia from ‘epithalamial’ songs (including Alcman’s partheneia) to establish an ideal model of transition and gender relations in the ‘real’ wedding. The central section of this thesis will then examine how those relations fail in tragedy: from the abuse of epithalamial ideals in Aeschylus’ *Supplikes*, *Agamemnon* and the disputed *Prometheus Bound* (Chapter 2), to Sophocles’ focus on the failure of transition in his use of the term *anumenaios* (‘without wedding songs’) and its implications in *Antigone*, *Electra* and *Trachiniae* (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 will examine the perverted hymenaioi which result from transgressive cycles of sexual relations in Euripides’ *Phaethon*, *Troades* and *IA*. These songs exist in dialogue with Aristophanes’ celebratory *exodoi* in *Peace*, *Birds* and *Lysistrata*, which will be analysed as developments of the Sacred Marriage motif in Chapter 5.

Chapter 6, on the Hellenistic epithalamium, shows both the genre and its social context to be in a state of transition, and so forms a crossroads at which the wedding song both looks back to previous literary models, and forward to a public idealisation of mutual, married *erôs*. The genre's transition to prose occupies Chapters 7 and 8, examining Plutarch's development of that *erôs* as part of an eschatological, as well as social, transition; and finally, the more secular presentation it receives in the prescriptions for epithalamial orations – which, like the Greek novel, present marriage as an initiatory *telos* for both partners. Further analysis of the novel, as well as New Comedy, is unfortunately absent from this thesis: constraints of time and space prevented chapters on these genres, but there is certainly scope for further research.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ARCHAIC WEDDING SONG

The scarcity of evidence for the archaic epithalamium poses interesting challenges for the critic of the Greek wedding song. We possess references to the hymenaios in epic, some fragments of Alcman that may or may not relate to a wedding, and a number of poems by Sappho, consisting mostly of a small number of heavily mutilated verses. Aside from commentaries, and analyses of their use as intertexts for later works,¹¹⁴ these epithalamia receive little scholarly attention. Modern Sapphic studies turn their backs, for the most part, on her heterosexual, formulaic, socially ‘mainstream’, and communal compositions in favour of articulating an understanding of her expressions of ‘lesbian’ desire. Female speech, female consciousness, and a rejection of patriarchal structures characterise this criticism, resulting in a range of images from ‘Sappho Schoolmistress’ to Sappho, female symposiast;¹¹⁵ thiasos-leader or chorêgos of Aphrodite;¹¹⁶ and sexual initiator of young girls whose homoerotic desire was so internalised she was herself incapable of ‘normal’ heterosexual relations.¹¹⁷ The passionate identification of feminist scholarship with a love-struck poetess burning her bra in the agora of Mytilene leaves little room for examination of the songs that commemorate the establishment of such ‘normal’ heterosexual relationships among her circle. Yet both she and Alcman were famed in antiquity for their composition of wedding songs, as well as other lyric poetry.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ E.g. Page (1955), Gow (1950) 348-61, Fordyce (1961) 245-55, Seaford (1986) 51-59.

¹¹⁵ Parker (1993) 304-51, contra esp. Wilamowitz (1913) 77.

¹¹⁶ E.g. Gentili (1988) 76-89, Lanata (1996) 11-18.

¹¹⁷ Calame (1997) 251.

¹¹⁸ Menander Rhetor 402.16-17 (Sappho), AP 7.19 (Alcman).

The criticism that does stray into epithalamial territory often encompasses songs with no obvious connection with a wedding as it strives to contextualise and interpret other ‘lesbian’ songs.¹¹⁹ This chapter aims to redress that balance. I will separate Sappho’s ‘epithalamia’ from the songs I categorised in the Introduction as ‘epithalamial’: songs which make use of the diction and images of the wedding song, but which may not relate directly to the occasion of marriage. I will also analyse the epithalamic fragments and attempt to construct some meanings for the archaic (predominantly Sapphic) wedding song: how should we understand this song? How is it being used? What, if anything, does it say about marriage in late seventh-/early sixth-century Lesbos, and what understanding do we gain of marriage and gender relations from this representation? I have spoken of marriage (and marriage songs) as a transition, a journey through initiation into adulthood and through literary history. This is our point of departure.

Songs of Separation

What is a wedding song? Aside from those songs assigned by the Alexandrian editor to Sappho’s Book of Epithalamia, I have designated the genre as being signified by the elements ‘bride’, ‘bridegroom’, ‘wedding’ and/or hymenaios.¹²⁰ Linguistically, this would seem to exclude those fragments most often discussed as epithalamia (fr. 16, 31, 94 and 96 V, as well as the Partheneion) without further consideration. The poems, however, are fragmentary, and the lack of generic signifiers may be due to this, or could represent a poetic innovation: the poet’s manipulation of ‘primary elements’, relying on the audience’s ability to identify

¹¹⁹ For which Parker (1993) 337-38 criticises Merkelbach on fr. 17, 94 & 96, and Wilamowitz on fr. 31. See also Hallett (1996) 140-41 on the Partheneion, fr. 82, 16 & 96 and Lardinois (1996) 197-69 on fr. 31 and (2001) 81-91 on fr. 16, 31, 94 & 96.

¹²⁰ Introduction, p.10.

the genre, in order to achieve particular poetic ends. By examining their use of epithalamial topoi, I aim to establish whether or these songs can be identified as wedding songs.

Fr. 16 V maintains that whatever one loves, κῆν' ὄττω τις ἔραται (3-4) is the fairest thing on the earth, and that the speaker would rather see the face and walk of absent Anactoria than the Lydian chariots and infantry.¹²¹ The poem is ordered in Sapphic strophes, as are the wedding songs fr. 27 and 30 V – likewise, the other fragments of the first book of Sappho, which are not epithalamia. Its speaking voice in the first person singular (ἔγω, 3, βολλοίμην, 17) is echoed in other wedding songs but is also a feature of choral lyric which supposes multiple singers.¹²² The types of wedding song to which it corresponds are telling. Fr. 115 V is an eikasmos and fr. 107 and 114 V are laments for virginity; fr. 16 V contains features of both of these – indeed, the two are connected. Helen of Troy, who left her home and family to follow Paris, reminds the speaker of Anactoria:

. .]μῆ νῦν Ἀνακτορί[ας ὀ]νέμναι-
σ' οὐ] παρεοίσαζ.¹²³

Lardinois notes that as well as being associated with marriage (another woman is compared to Helen in the possibly epithalamic fr. 23.5 V), Helen was also associated with death: her abduction by Paris can be construed as a descent into the Underworld, as in Euripides' Helen.¹²⁴ Here Helen appears as the agent of abandonment, καλλ[ίποισ]σ' ἔβα (9), not a passive abductee – although, as in the case of bridal lament, the happy life left behind is

¹²¹ Sappho fr. 16.17-20 V. The absence of the 'bride' might rule out a nuptial context, but cf. Ch. 4, p.147.

¹²² Sappho fr. 107 V ἐπιβάλλομαι, 114.1 με λίποισ', 2 ἤξω πρὸς σέ, 115.1, 2 εἰκόσδω, cf. Alc. fr. 1.77 Ἀγησιχόρα με τείρει.

¹²³ Sappho fr. 16.15-16 V.

¹²⁴ Lardinois (2001) 84.

stressed and the future remains uncertain: [τὸ]ν ἄνδρα τὸν> [αρ]ιστον (7-8), φίλων το[κ]ήων (10). Her agency is qualified by the fact that she was led astray: παράγαγ' αὔταν (11), and a verb stemming from agein could well recall the numphagôgia that brought a bride to her new home. That Anactoria seems not to be present, and that Helen's departure has reminded the speaker of this fact, suggests that like Helen, Anactoria too has left. She may have escaped Sappho's affections; 'fleeing' like the beloved of fr. 1.21 V. She may have died, and become aligned with the chthonic aspect of Helen. Or she may have left her circle of friends to marry: an action which, in the aristocratic poleis of the archaic period, is likely to have been exogamic and to have taken her away from her own philai in a manner similar to Helen's elopement. The language of departure (καλλ[ίποι]σ'), as Lardinois remarks, is similar to that of the departed virginity in fr. 114 V (λίποισ').¹²⁵

Helen is surpassingly beautiful: περσκέθοισα κάλλος [ἀνθ]ρώπων (6-7), a quality common to brides and bridal figures. If this song is an epithalamium, it is then an encomium for the beauty of the bride. Aligned with Helen, Anactoria is surpassing, but has left her old life behind. Perhaps Anactoria also follows ὅττω τις ἔραται (although she is unlikely to have known her bridegroom before the marriage). Perhaps, as we will see from other epithalamia, the song idealises the love between husband and wife in these terms, in order to encourage harmony to develop.¹²⁶ What is most obvious is that the subject of the song is ὅττω τις ἔραται to the speaker – she would rather see Anactoria's beauty than the Lydian military might. Whether or not this is deliberately presenting a positive image of the bride – she is valued by her old philai, so as to guarantee her value to her new family – is unclear.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ See pp.73-76.

Elsewhere Sappho also turns the epic into the erotic. In a nuptial context, this is most obvious in fr. 44 V, to which I shall turn later: the description of Hector and Andromache's wedding procession which, as Schrenk has argued, alludes to certain episodes in the Iliad.¹²⁷ Winkler also addresses this reconceptualisation of Homer in the context of frs. 1, 16 and 71. To him, this erotic, feminised reworking signifies Sappho's 'double-consciousness', the ability to understand both public, masculine culture and private, feminine subculture and to expose the limitations of the former by reading it through the latter. Her heroic poems 'are not just from another tradition, they embody the consciousness both of her 'private' woman-centred world and the other 'public' world'.¹²⁸ Is it appropriate, however, to compose a wedding song comparing the bride to the adulterous Helen – even in terms of this double-consciousness?

Helen is certainly attested in the epithalamium: Theocritus 18 is a wedding song for her and Menelaus, and the epithalamiast in Lucian also compares a bride to her.¹²⁹ She functions as a paradigm bride despite, or perhaps because of, her nuptial adventures.¹³⁰ Yet the idealised, legitimate union in Theocritus is a far cry from depictions of her illegitimate elopement with Paris. Or is it? Their relationship appears on a number of vases with nuptial associations, particularly lebetes gamikoi and loutrophoroi. Helen's compelling beauty and its consequences would have powerful associations in the context of the bridal bath that was part of the numphokomos. A number of aryballoi, ceramic containers for cosmetics, may also be associated with this kind of bridal adornment or with the phernê given by the bride's parents after the wedding.¹³¹ Helen is also depicted as a bride at the moment of her abduction: an Attic red-figure skyphos shows Paris taking Helen in the *cheir' epi karpôî* gesture during

¹²⁷ Schrenk (1994) 144-50.

¹²⁸ Winkler (1981) 66.

¹²⁹ Luc. Symp. 41.7, cf. also Sappho fr. 23 V.

¹³⁰ Lardinois (2001) 84.

¹³¹ LIMC s.v. 'Helene' on Ruvo 1619 (RF lebes gamikos), Berlin V.I.4906 & Athens 1162 (RF aryballoi), Naples 82265 (RF loutrophoros), Bâle HC 227 (RF lebes gamikos), Athens 1282, 17315 & Boston 95.1403 (RF aryballoi), and Leningrad 1929 (polychrome aryballos).

their wedding procession, attended by Aphrodite, Peitho, and Eros.¹³² An epithalamium containing a narrative of Paris and Helen's love might therefore be feasible, although the question remains: with which aspect of the myth could the audience be expected to identify?

If this is the case, fr. 16 V could, as Lardinois suggests, commemorate the departure of Anactoria to marriage – either anticipated,¹³³ or accomplished (hence the speaker's 'memory' of the departed). It deals with the separation between friends on this occasion and their relationships with one another. Paris, the new bridegroom, may be *τις ἔραται* to Helen, but to the speaker, it is the departing 'bride'. Most importantly, it addresses the power of love, specifically as a breaker of bonds between former *philai*, whether or not this love is idealised in the context of a wedding as that which leads a bride to her new life. The language is epithalamial, but the song itself cannot be securely identified as a wedding song.

Fr. 31 V is again in Sapphic strophes, and again in the first person singular – neither of which, we saw above, directly indicate a wedding song. Here, a verse akin to *makarismos* opens the song:

Φαίνεται μοι κῆνος ἴσος θεοῖσιν

ἔμμεν' ὄνηρ,¹³⁴

This, it has been argued, is equivalent to the blessings pronounced upon Hector and Andromache: *θεο<ε>ικέλοις*.¹³⁵ Page refuted this interpretation:

¹³² Oakley & Sinos (1994) 32-33 on Boston 13.186. The reverse of the vase shows Menelaus reclaiming Helen after the war.

¹³³ Lardinois (2001) 83: fr. 16, 94 and 96 'are in fact laments that Sappho herself or the young friends of the bride performed at weddings'.

¹³⁴ Sappho fr. 31.1-2 V. Winkler (1981) 73-77 suggests that this *makarismos* points to a re-creation of Odyssey 6, in which a blessing is followed by a statement of deep personal dread.

¹³⁵ Sappho fr. 44.34 V.

Since such terms are commonly used on occasions other than weddings, it should be obvious that their use in the present poem cannot be used as an argument that this occasion is a wedding.¹³⁶

Indeed, ‘equal to the gods’ is a common epithet of heroes, as is ‘like the gods’.¹³⁷ In fact, the use of *theoeikelos* in fr. 44 V is its only use in wedding poetry¹³⁸ – *olbios* or cognates of *makar-* are far more common for *makarismos*.¹³⁹ In a similar way to fr. 16, the poet is separated from a beloved girl in a context that may or may not indicate marriage: *ὄττις...ἰσδάνει* refers to an unspecific person, not an identifiable ‘groom’.

In fr. 31 V the separation is emotional, rather than spatial. Unlike Anactoria, the girl is envisioned as present and Sappho does not have to rely on memory in order to see her:

ὥς γὰρ <ἔς> σ’ ἴδω βρόχε’, ὥς με φώνη-
σ’ οὐδὲν ἔτ’ εἴκει,¹⁴⁰

The woman sits, however, next to the godlike man, who listens to her *ἄδου φωνείσας* and *γελαίσας ἡμεροεν*.¹⁴¹ This fires the sexual jealousy of the speaker, who describes herself as suffering the physical effects of love.¹⁴² How can this be construed as a wedding song?

The positioning of the man and woman would seem to be telling. In what contexts other than a wedding feast could a man respectably sit *ἐναντιός* (2) to a woman in ancient

¹³⁶ Page (1955) 31.

¹³⁷ *ἰσόθεος* is used regularly in Homer: Il. 2.565, 3.310, 4.212, Od. 1.324 inter al., and is used outside of heroic poetry for any ‘godlike’ individual. *Θεοεικέλος* is rarer: Il. 1.131, 19.155, Od. 4.216, 276, 8.256.

¹³⁸ Although cf. fr. 96.4 V.

¹³⁹ Sappho fr. 112.1, Eur. Pha. 240, Tro. 311-12, Ar Av. 1721-25, Theoc. 18.16.

¹⁴⁰ Sappho fr. 31.7-8 V.

¹⁴¹ Sappho fr. 31.3-4, 5 V.

¹⁴² Sappho fr. 31.5-6, 9-16 V.

Greece? We may be unable to say, lacking sufficient evidence for sexual segregation on archaic Lesbos. Our assumption that men and women did not interact is based on classical Athenian ideology, in which citizenship depended on the chastity of the women of the *oikos*, who were therefore encouraged to remain indoors. In this milieu, men and women did not sit together even at weddings: Euangelus' fragmentary comedy *Anakaluptomenê* shows slaves setting up separate tables for men and women for a *gamos*.¹⁴³ Our song does not have to relate to a wedding – indeed, if such segregation also operated on Lesbos, it could not. Other archaic texts, particularly Homer, present a different picture: Helen in the *Iliad* converses with the Trojan elders on the wall, and in her home with Hector.¹⁴⁴ In the *Odyssey*, she sits with her husband to receive his guests, as does Arete on Phaeacia.¹⁴⁵ Penelope also receives the disguised Odysseus in her hall, and sits and converses with him.¹⁴⁶ These, though, are married women – the latter two trusted queens, the former the daughter of Zeus whose sexual conduct might well be called into question. Different rules apply for Nausicaa, an unmarried maiden who would attract censure by being seen with Odysseus.¹⁴⁷ The subject of the song might well be a new wife, but could equally be a mature *gunê*, secure enough in her status to talk and laugh with a man even if he were not her husband. She may be neither – Sappho fr. 30 V suggests that girls and youths participated in mixed-sex activities, in that poem, the choral performance of *epithalamia*. A Lesbian girl or woman could therefore potentially come into more contact with males than her Athenian counterpart.

Rather than a wedding, the fragment could relate to a symposium, in which a woman – specifically a *hetaira* – could converse with men or speak on the subject of *erôs*. Sappho's

¹⁴³ Euangelus fr. 1.

¹⁴⁴ Hom. Il. 3.161-244, 6.342-68.

¹⁴⁵ Hom. Od. 4.120-295, 6.303-9, 1.139-66.

¹⁴⁶ Hom. Od. 19.53-360.

¹⁴⁷ Hom. Od. 6.273-89.

ancient biography preserves a tradition of her in this context,¹⁴⁸ but Lidov argues that this motif, arising from Attic comedy,¹⁴⁹ actually brought together ‘incidents based on a travesty of various types of wedding songs, such as are found in Sappho, with stories about Rhodopis [the hetaira reputedly responsible for the downfall of Charaxus, Sappho’s brother] and her fellow slave Aesop’.¹⁵⁰ It cannot be denied that Sappho’s love poetry is equally applicable to the emotions of the symposium,¹⁵¹ and this applicability may have accounted for the survival of her poems – transmission invariably takes place in the male voice, and so must be equally appropriate to masculine concerns. Fr. 31 V lends itself well to such generality: it shows no evidence of a banquet, nuptial, sympotic or otherwise. We cannot identify the subject as parthenos, hetaira or numphê, as no age is indicated. Her interlocutor is seemingly a mature man, ὄνηρ, rather than the gambros of the wedding songs. Even the identity of the speaker is ambiguous: we cannot assume that Sappho herself is driven mad by desire in this fragment.¹⁵² The suggestion that the poet was a hetaira poses problems for songs which are identifiably wedding songs: would the elite of Mytilene have commissioned a courtesan to compose poetry for their unions? Here, however, there is only a man, a woman, and a conversation – possibly a scene of courtship, in whatever context – and a suffering onlooker.

Questions must also be asked about this erotic suffering: is the narration of such internalised erôs on the part of the speaker appropriate to a wedding song? It is true that in fr. 112 V makarismos for the groom is immediately followed by effusive praise of the seductive beauty of the bride:

¹⁴⁸ Hdt. 2.134.4-35.29, Strabo 17.1.33.18-22, P. Oxy 1800 fr. 1, Ov. Her. 15.63-70, 117-20, Sen. Epist. 88.37, Ael. V.H. 12.19, Athen. 13.596c-d, Phot. s.v. ρ 490 (= Suda p 211), see Lidov (2002) esp. 222.

¹⁴⁹ Sappho is mentioned in an erotic context in Epicrates Ant. fr. 3.2, and was the eponymous heroine of plays by Amipsias, Amphis, Antiphanes, Ephippus, Timocles, and Diphilus; her love for Phaon was the subject of Menander’s *Leukadia*. Rhodopis was also a comic figure (*Comica Adespota* fr. 579).

¹⁵⁰ Lidov (2002) 234.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Parker (1993) 337, contra Lardinois (194) 78.

¹⁵² She is, however, female: *παῖσαν, χλωστέρα* (v.14). A possible quotation of this fragment in Plutarch’s *Amatorius* (763A1-6) presents the same sentiments in the mouth of a male speaker, indicating the universal power of such love; see also Plut. *Dem.* 38.4, Ch.7, p.287.

σοὶ χάριεν μὲν εἶδος, ὄππατα <δ' . . . >
μέλλιχ', ἔρος δ' ἐπ' ἡμέρτωι κέχυται προσώπωι
<.>τετίμακ' ἔξοχά σ' Ἀφροδίτα.¹⁵³

This praise, however, describes the bride's physical appearance. It is purely external beauty – although we may suppose that it might inspire *erôs* in those who view her. In fr. 31 V, no mention is made of the subject's physical appearance, only the speaker's reaction at her interaction with a man. The speaker's desire is internal – indeed, it is so acute that it is envisioned as preventing her from utterance, never mind encomium (v.9).

When love is the subject of a formal wedding song in Sappho, it is the love between the bride and groom, as in fr. 30.4 V, not between the bride and her companions. Homoerotic desire between females can be an appropriate subject of song in lyric poetry, as in *partheneia*,¹⁵⁴ but these reflect the bonds between girls in a ritual choir and may offer a comparison for the expressions of desire between women in Sappho, rather than suggesting that both are wedding songs. A socially-sanctioned eroticism could well be the subject of the song in this case. As in fr. 16 V, the poem does not necessarily need to praise the erotic capacity of a bride, but takes as its subject the power of the love between the speaker and a female addressee. Once again, the woman is ὄττω τις ἔραται to the speaker – who is not a bridegroom – which probably rules out the performance of this song at a marriage.

¹⁵³ Sappho fr. 112.3-5 V.

¹⁵⁴ The girls' beauty and its effect on chorus members is elaborated in Alcm. fr. 1.70-77, 3.61-64.

Fr. 94 V is another song discussed by Parker and Lardinois as a sympotic ode and bridal lament respectively.¹⁵⁵ Again, there is a first-person address to a departing female like Anactoria, and like virginity in fr. 141 V; and Voigt identifies a glyconic metre, elsewhere associated with wedding songs.¹⁵⁶ Here the focus is on the moment of separation between Sappho (identified in v.5) and the girl: *κατελίμπανεν* (2), *ἀπυλιμπάνω* (5). These verbs, with their connotations of ‘leaving behind’ and ‘abandonment’ suggest the emotional effect of the departure on both the departed and those who remain. The companion leaves Sappho against her will: *ἄέκοισ’* (5), a common term for bridal reluctance which is often used in contexts suggesting forcible abduction or rape.¹⁵⁷ The use of this term in connection with Thetis (whom Zeus *δαμάσσειν*, which, as we saw in the Introduction, also connotes violent death), and Persephone, goddess of the Underworld, may support a reading of the wish for death by a reluctant bride in the opening line, *τεθνάκην δ’ ἀδόλωσ θελω*.¹⁵⁸ Aeschylus’ Danaids also wish for death rather than forced matrimony with the Aegyptids.¹⁵⁹ Sommerstein is, however, quite right to point out that the suppliants would prefer neither option,¹⁶⁰ and if the departing girl in this fragment is in fact a bride, perhaps the same is true of her. The symbolic death involved in the transition to marriage is conflated by bridal lamentation with the ‘real thing’.

This statement needs qualification on two counts: firstly, we cannot be certain whether the wish for death is that of the companion, or of Sappho herself. The statement does

¹⁵⁵ Parker (1993) 346: ‘if we compare Xenophanes 1, his description of the perfect symposium, with Sappho 2, 94, and others, we find all the same elements: cups, wine, wreaths and perfume. Even the incense, altars, and hymns are as much a feature of the symposium as of the sacrifice’. Contra Lardinois (1994) 74 and (2001) 85.

¹⁵⁶ Voigt (1971) 102, cf. Eur. Tro. 314, 22-23, 31, 38-39.

¹⁵⁷ Also Hom. Il. 1.348 (Briseis); similarly, Zeus subdued Thetis to Peleus *οὐκ ἐθέλουσα* (18.434). Cf. H.H.Dem. 19, 72, 412, 432 (Persephone). King Pelasgus in Aesch. Supp. 940-41 tells the herald that he may only remove the Danaids to marriage with their cousins if they are *ἐκοῦσας* and *εὐσεβῆς πίθοι λόγος*.

¹⁵⁸ Sappho fr. 94.1 V; cf. p.22 n.72.

¹⁵⁹ Aesch. Supp. 787-91; Ch.2, pp.82-83. Deianeira makes the same wish when Achelous contends for her hand: Soph. Trach. 15-17; Ch.3, p.125.

¹⁶⁰ I am grateful for Prof. Sommerstein’s comments on the significance of bridal reluctance, particularly with reference to the Danaids, given during the annual review of this thesis in June 2007.

not contain any indication of speaker, and it is also common for the bereaved to wish for death in laments.¹⁶¹ Secondly, even if it is made by a bride, can we take the statement at face value? An expression of reluctance or unhappiness is a common topos for new brides, especially in connection with leaving their old homes and lives.¹⁶² It reflects the Greek polarisation of the female as the passive sexual partner – the expression of unwillingness demonstrates her valuation of virginity and suggests that she will possess similar *sophrosunê* once married. Persephone’s self-presentation is of rape, but she is taken from the meadow, a locus typical of burgeoning sexuality and resultant rape.¹⁶³ To display public eagerness for sexual contact, even in marriage, is not only immodest in a female, but can also suggest a perversion of the marriage rite, as in Cassandra’s enthusiastic *hymenaios* in Euripides.¹⁶⁴ The male is the active partner, the seducer, the persuader, the initiator (often expressed in poetic or iconographic terms as the abductor). The bride’s *kallos* may inspire the *erôs* that facilitates this process, but she is not expected to take the initiative.

Here it is not a bridegroom who strives to overcome this reluctance, but Sappho herself. She answers the girl:

χαίροισ', ἔρχεο κάμεθεν

μέμνιασ', οἶσθα γὰρ ὡς <σ>ε πεδήπομεν.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Alexiou (1974) 178. This wish conforms to strict conventions: either ‘that the mourner had died instead of the dead, or that they had died together, or that neither had ever been born’.

¹⁶² E.g. Sappho fr. 107, 114 V, Aesch. Supp., Soph Trach., fr. 583 R. Unusually, it is Phaethon the bridegroom who evidences this reluctance in Eur. Pha; Hippolytus exhibits a similar unwillingness to make the transition to adulthood. The bride is shown weeping in her modesty in Cat. 61.79-81, and encouraged not to struggle against her fate in Cat. 62.59.

¹⁶³ H.H.Dem. 5-6, cf. Eur. Hel. 180, Ion 888-90 (Creusa raped while picking flowers), Mosch. 2.62 (Europa); compare Eur. Hipp. 73-74.

¹⁶⁴ See Ch.4, p.170-71.

¹⁶⁵ Sappho fr. 96.7-8 V.

The injunction *chairein* can be used in any context of greeting or leave-taking, but is also specifically related to two epithalamia of Sappho: fr. 116 *χαῖρε, νύμφα, χαῖρε, τίμιε γάμβρε*, and 117 V *†χαίροις† ἄ νύμφα, χαίρετω δ' ὁ γάμβρος*. More literally, it means 'to rejoice', suggesting that the occasion is less unhappy than Sappho's interlocutor makes out. The exhortation to memory, however, is a feature of the *propemptikon* (leave-taking poem or speech) and does not appear in any other extant wedding song.¹⁶⁶ The epithalamium encourages and celebrates the transition to a new life; where it looks back on the old, this tends to be in the first person through the voice of the bride.¹⁶⁷

The intimate relationship of speaker and girl in the previous two fragments is expanded in this song. The interlocutor addresses her complaints directly to Sappho: *τόδ' ἔειπε μοι* (3), who replies in the first person singular: *τὰν δ' ἔγω τάδ' ἀμειβόμεν* (6). Immediately, however, the poet locates herself within a group of companions who shared the girl's life, and cared for her. Sappho is the prominent figure of this group. It is she who reminds the girl of their past activities, *ἔγω θέλω ὀμναισαι* (9-10), which the addressee undertook at her side: *πὰρ ἔμοι* (14). These activities seem both erotic and ritualised: the women garland themselves (12-14, 15-17); anoint themselves with perfume (18-20); seem to undertake an erotic activity in a bedroom (21-23); and are present at the *ἵρον* and *ἄλσος* (24-27).

This list of activities, particularly 'you put away desire/longing' has provoked extensive scholarly comment. Stigers focuses on the unity between the speaker and the addressee created by the narrative, in which 'Sappho dramatizes her absorption with the other

¹⁶⁶ E.g. Hom. Od. 8.461-62: "Χαῖρε, ξεῖν', ἵνα καί ποτ' ἐὼν ἐν πατρίδι γαίῃ / μνησῆι ἐμεῖ...", cf. Men. Rhet. 398.26-29: *εἶτα ἐπὶ τούτοις ἄπασιν ἀξιώσεις ἀντον μεμνήσθαι τῆς πάλαι συνηθείας...* An exhortation to memory is included in the *Peri Kateunastikou*, but this is an exhortation to intercourse based on the couple's courtship, 410.26-30.

¹⁶⁷ See examples of bridal reluctance: Introduction, pp.15-22; Theoc. 18.22-25 presents the only ancient example of recollection of the 'old life' by voices other than the bride's.

woman, the lapse of her separate self-consciousness as she is caught up in the other's sensuousness...the tension in Sappho's poem, then, is between the friends and the outside forces that are requiring them to separate. The aim of the dialogue is to obliterate the tension; it becomes a monologue in order to insist on the unity of the two participants'.¹⁶⁸ Whatever the circumstance of the separation, the poet directs attention away from these into a 'private world' of eroticised memory that excludes these external pressures – is this appropriate to a wedding song? Winkler goes even further and reads the stanza following the 'satisfaction' of desire as representing a somatic rather than geographical sacred landscape, taking οὐδ'...ἐπλετ' ὄππ[οθεν ἄμ]μεσ ἀπέσκομεν (25-26) to mean 'we explored every sacred place of the body'.¹⁶⁹

Again, this reading is inappropriate to a nuptial context: no participant in a marriage would be pleased to hear the epithalamiast drowning out the sorrow of separation in a homoerotic internal space with no place in it for the bridegroom, or that the women of Lesbos had had carnal knowledge of the virgin bride. Is the context at fault, or the reading? While there is no generic signifier of marriage, the initial language suggests bridal departure. Comparable expressions of homoerotic desire in partheneia suggest that such poetry was appropriate to a pre-marital state, within the ritual setting of choral activity (perhaps indicated here in v.27).¹⁷⁰ What is certain is that this period is now coming to an end, and the subject is leaving.

What is intriguing about the πόθος[ν] of this poem is that it demonstrates a desiring female subject. There is an acceptance of desire and the contexts of its expression (στρώμν[αν]) in these verses. This is unusual in nuptial poetry but recalls the locus amoenus

¹⁶⁸ Stigers (1981) 53.

¹⁶⁹ Winkler (1981) 82.

¹⁷⁰ Alcμ fr. 1.77, 3.61-63, 79-81 (see pp.53, 65), cf. Lardinois (1994) 70: 'the activities [of fr. 94] are compatible with those of a chorus and one can even read a linear progression into them, starting with the preparations and leading up to musical performances in temples and in other places'.

in which an idealised – particularly mythological – marriage takes place. Indeed, an almost nuptial progression seems to be enacted in this poem: from fatal protestation, through female beautification, to sexual acculturation and the fulfilment of desire. In this progression, the qualities of the bride praised in fr. 112 V attach themselves to the departing girl: *charis* (χαίροις'), gentleness (ἀπάλαι δέραι, 16), love and desire (πόθος, 23), and connection with the divine (ἦρον, ἄλσος). This fragment cannot be said to be an epithalamium, but it employs the language of this genre, perhaps to evoke the period of preparation for marriage, or even to suggest a homoerotic marriage-substitute.¹⁷¹

A final fragment dealing with relationships between women makes use of similar *topoi*. Fr. 96 V is in a slightly different metre,¹⁷² and slightly different structure: here the poet addresses Atthis, but the central relationship is between Atthis and a woman in Lydia, who is spoken of in the third person. Not just one, but both women receive the now-familiar comparison to the divine. The absent friend held Atthis to be †θεασικελαν ἀριγνώτα†,¹⁷³ and she herself is compared to a heavenly body:

νῦν δὲ Λύδαισιν ἐμπρέπεται γυναι-
 κεσσιν ὥς ποτ' ἀελίω
 δύντος ὃ βροδοδακτυλος <σελάνα>
 πάντα περ<ρ>έχουσ' ἄστρα.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ I am grateful to Professor Chris Pelling for this suggestion. This is paralleled in Gentili's interpretation of the Partheneion, but might suggest a more formal, institutional bond between women than is necessarily supported by the extant evidence.

¹⁷² Voigt (1971) 106: cr 3gl ba |||.

¹⁷³ Sappho fr. 96.4-5 V. Page (1955) 87 prints θέαι σ' ἰκέλαν ἀριγνώται, and is followed by Campbell (1982) 120.

¹⁷⁴ Sappho fr. 96.6-8 V.

This image of the ‘surpassing’ or ‘outstanding’ woman, often in comparison to a divine being, is used regularly in nuptial and quasi-nuptial contexts: Helen in fr. 16 V, the bride in fr. 112 V, Nausicaa in the *Odyssey*, Helen in Theocritus 18, and Europa in Moschus’ *Europa*.¹⁷⁵ It may also be used of a bridegroom in fr. 106 V when the poet addresses a man as *πέτροχος*. Moreover, the woman, like Anactoria, is now no longer present. She stands out among the Lydian *gunaikes* (mature women or wives). A departure to marriage is plausible.

The function of memory is again important in this song. The woman in Lydia retains her bond with Atthis by remembering her: *ἐπιμνάσθεις* Ἀτθίδος ἡμέρωι (15-16). The seductive setting for the memory of love is created not by the eroticism of shared ritual activity, but by the simile of the woman’s beauty (9-14). The gods of seduction, Aphrodite and Peitho, enter this nexus of images (possibly in comparison with the subjects of the song from v.21) in the highly fragmentary final section.¹⁷⁶ What is their function here? Aphrodite appears to pour nectar from a golden vessel, *νέκταρ ἔχευ’ ἀπὸ / χρυσίας* (27-28) in a manner reminiscent of her epiphany in fr. 2.13-16 V, a scene which owes more to the *theoxenia* of a religious festival than to a wedding. They might function to seduce a bride away from post-transitional lamentation, but the intertextuality here suggests otherwise. Parallels with the Louvre Partheneion have been noted: the plurality of the speaking voice: *].ώομεν* (3), *ἄμμ.[* (18), *α.μι* (ἄμμι? 21), *καμ* (κ’ ἄμ[μι? 27); the playful self-denigration, perhaps of a chorus, while comparing its leaders to goddesses (21-23); and an agonistic quality, between the chorus and Atthis and the Lydian Woman, and between the dances of ‘then’ (*μόλπαι*, 4) and ‘now’ (*ἐμπρέπεται* is thought to relate to dancing).¹⁷⁷ A

¹⁷⁵ Sappho fr. 16.6, 112.5 V, Hom. *Od.* 6.109, Theoc. 18.25, Mosch. 2.71.

¹⁷⁶ Sappho fr. 16.26, 29 V.

¹⁷⁷ Lardinois (1996) 162-63, cf. Burnett (1983) 312, Hallett (1996) 140, Calame (1977:1) 91, also (1997) 42-43.

pre-marital context might then be envisioned, from which one woman has departed to Lydia, although a chorus of mature Lesbian *gunaikes* is not out of the question.¹⁷⁸

This song again focuses on the relationship between women, kept alive by memory, and the fact of their separation. As the circumstances of this – indeed of all the separations examined thus far – are unknown, an interpretation of the fragment as a wedding, or even ‘epithalamial’ song, depends on the assumption that the Lydian woman’s departure is a departure to marriage. As in the other ‘epithalamial’ songs, this is suggested by the use of epithalamial language and *topoi*: the comparison to gods, the outstanding beauty of the *gunê*, the *locus amoenus*, the presence of Aphrodite and Peitho; but the fragment also contains features appropriate to other transitional genres such as the *partheneion*. The attention given to the relationship between women within the larger framework of a (possibly choral) group is akin to that in Theocritus 18 (the wedding chorus are *δώδεκα παρθενικαὶ* within a cohort of *τετράκις ἑξήκοντα κόραϊ*, who remember and long for their newly-married companion),¹⁷⁹ which is undoubtedly beholden to Sappho, but there are significant differences: Helen, though outstanding, was only one girl among the chorus – there is no particular or individual relationship in Theocritus’ poem. As a result, the *pothos* expressed by the maidens is less strongly homoerotic. It hints at close bonds within the group, but these are expressed in the image of the young animal – as we have seen, a common image of both lamentation and eventual domestication. Finally, the bridegroom Menelaus features significantly in the *Idyll*. In Sappho fr. 96 V, no men are mentioned at all.

This leads me to conclude that there are three possibilities: a) this is not a wedding song; b) Lesbian wedding songs might not feature a bridegroom;¹⁸⁰ or c) there existed songs

¹⁷⁸ Mature women are represented in fr. 44.31 (*γυναῖκες προγενέστερα[ι]*) and 58.13-27 V; if Cleis in fr. 132 V is Sappho’s daughter rather than the ‘love’ suggested by Bennett (1994) 346, the poet was herself a mature *gunê*.

¹⁷⁹ Theoc. 18.2-4, 24, 41-42; cf. Ch.6, pp.240-41.

¹⁸⁰ But contrast fr. 44, 106, 111, 112, 113, 115, 116, 117 & 141 V.

that concerned the transition to marriage and its effect on both the bride and her companions, but which were not directly related to a wedding.¹⁸¹ The use of epithalamial language in a poetic context where no marriage can be safely assumed leads me to suggest that fr. 16, 31, 94 and 96 V relate to (c), this ‘transitional’ period. Women’s separations and their strategies for dealing with these are probably the key to our interpretation of these songs, rather than epithalamia proper, for they deal wholly with the relationships between women and only fr. 31 V even suggests the presence of a putative bridegroom and thus a marital relationship.

Even the relationship in this poem leaves questions to be answered. In fragments of wedding songs in which Sappho includes a bride and a groom, both participants are addressed more or less equally – although the bride tends to receive the greater portion of ekphrasis. These fragments are one-sided: they focus on the departed girl or woman to the exclusion of the circumstances for that departure. They might pertain to some rite of separation prior to marriage or commemorate the departure afterwards, but without the generic signifiers of a marital relationship it is impossible to identify them securely as wedding songs through their use of *topoi*. They do, however, unquestionably use epithalamic devices and language and, by doing so, contribute to our understanding of marriage and marriage songs.

The notion that these songs deal with the departure of a girl to marriage shows that this departure had a significant effect on both the bride and her former *philai*. For the companions of the bride, poetic reactions could range from representations of sexual jealousy in fr. 31 V to fond memory in fr. 16 and 94 V. The bride’s own feelings might range from a wish for death, as in 94, to sorrow for the loss of companionship even while performing the activities of her new life, as in fr. 96 V. We must remember that the formal, occasional conventions of lyric poetry dictated that these expressions themselves be formalised, poetic

¹⁸¹ These might include songs which, as suggested by Prof. Pelling’s reading of fr. 94 V (cf. p.51 n.171), use epithalamial imagery to contrast the departure to marriage with a homoerotic separation – which may also be true of fr. 96 V.

utterances in accord with their performance context: lyric poetry performed in a public and socially regulated setting. They constitute a poetic representation of the emotions surrounding departure and thus should be seen as conventional rather than truly personal. They also suggest that the period before this separation was a happy and sheltered time, as our tragic and ethnographic bridal laments confirm. To her friends, the young woman is desirable and desires in return: ἔραται, ἔρατον, λάμπρον, ἄδω, ἰμέροεν, ἀπάλαι, πόθο[ν], ἔχαιρε, ἰμέρωι, ἐπή[ρατ]ον.¹⁸² Thus the maidens in Catullus can claim that a uirgo is cara as long as she remains intacta, but when ‘plucked’ will be dear to neither pueris nor puellis.¹⁸³

These songs also give the impression that a girl’s life during this period might not have been as secluded as is commonly assumed. The activities of the women in fr. 94 V are described as kala, in deliberate contrast to the deina which they are now forced to suffer (4, 11). Their public appearance in shrines, groves and dances is mentioned (25, 27, 96.5). Parthenoi performed songs at weddings, and stayed out all night doing it (30.2-3).¹⁸⁴ What is more, although their activities are likely to have been segregated according to gender, girls did address and interact with men who may not have been related to them.¹⁸⁵ Thus they seem to have participated in a range of enjoyable, ritually-oriented, and conceivably mixed-sex activities – although if the progression posited for fr. 94 V above is correct, these were enacted with a view towards the young woman’s eventual acculturation or integration into adult society through marriage. Calame posits for Sparta an intermediary period between the end of ‘tribal initiation’ (best described as a ‘season’ when girls are acknowledged as marriageable parthenoi) and marriage,¹⁸⁶ and it may be useful to apply the same theory to

¹⁸² Sappho fr. 16.4, 17, 18; 31.3-4, 5; 94.16, 23; 96.5, 16, 21-22 V.

¹⁸³ Cat. 62.45-47.

¹⁸⁴ Also at Athens: Men. Epit. 452.

¹⁸⁵ Sappho fr. 30.4-9 (address to a groom), 7 (assumed interaction with his age-mates), 31.1-6 (woman and man converse) V. It is possible that the badinage about a doorkeeper and bridegroom in fr. 110 & 111 V and the addresses to a groom in fr. 112, 113, 115, 116 & 117 V were sung by girls, but we cannot be certain.

¹⁸⁶ Calame (1997) 14-15.

Lesbos, and to suggest that these songs deal with the events of this intermediary period and its conclusion.

Frr. 94 and 96 V suggest that there was a ritual significance to this period. The garlands worn by the subject of 94 are suggestive of those worn in ritual contexts, as well as the picking of flowers that indicates ripeness for marriage. Moreover, Sappho gives the impression of their extensive participation in religious activities: κωῦτε...ἄμ]μες ἄπέσκομεν (94.24-26). The dances performed by Atthis in fr. 96 V may also indicate choral performance in a ritual context. A cultic aspect to the performance of Sappho's poetry has certainly been suggested, although the thiasos previously favoured by scholars is perhaps too institutionalised a framework within which to understand this.¹⁸⁷ It may be more useful to see the ritual activities of her circle in terms of those undertaken by marriageable parthenoi elsewhere: the kanephoroi at Athens,¹⁸⁸ partheneia at Sparta, the races at the Heraia in Elis,¹⁸⁹ or choroï performed for other religious festivals. The ancient Greek ritual calendar provided numerous opportunities for the ritual participation of young women in religious rites and for songs relating to these occasions.

The focus of such rituals seems to have been beauty and feminine grace, which Calame argues signified 'adult' or 'marriageable' status.¹⁹⁰ The semiotic nexus therefore created is one in which girls undertake a variety of rituals which acculturate them to the status of desirable brides. The beauty of girls leaving this context to be married is represented as superior, and warrants comparison with Helen, as in fr. 16 V, or other goddesses (as in 96).

¹⁸⁷ Parker (1993) 318 dismisses Gentili's (1988) 80 claim of a thiasos, rightly stating that fr. 1 provides us with insufficient evidence for such a group. See however Bennett (1994) 346 'goddess worship', Lanata (1996) 11-25 hetairai (companions, rather than courtesans) in the service of Aphrodite, Hallett (1996) 136-37.

¹⁸⁸ Ar. Lys. 646: κάκανηφόρουν ποτ' οὔσα παῖς καλή.

¹⁸⁹ Paus. 5.16.2.3-7: ὁ δὲ ἀγών ἐστὶν ἄμιλλα δρόμου παρθένους· οὔτι που πᾶσαι ἡλικίας τῆς αὐτῆς, ἀλλὰ πρῶται μὲν αἱ νεώταται, μετὰ ταύτας δὲ αἱ τῆ ἡλικία δεύτεραι, τελευταῖαι δὲ θεοῦσιν ὅσαι πρεσβύταται τῶν παρθένων εἰσι, cf. Calame (1997) 28, 115-16, 187 ('adolescent initiation into adult life and marriage'), 236.

¹⁹⁰ Calame (1997) 232.

This creates an image of powerful female *erôs* which must then undergo the next stage of female transition: subjection to the male and initiation to full adulthood in marriage and childbirth. The separation from this milieu at the height of its pleasures is traumatic for all participants, and leads to the lament for departure and recreation of this period in memory that we see in these poems. Fr. 94 V, however, suggests that an understanding of the inevitability – and desirability – of this transition was inherent to the poetry of this intermediate period. Despite her protests, the beloved girl is still leaving: she is commanded *chairein*, and told to go, taking pleasant memories with her. The participation in lamentation of both women allows them to articulate their reconciliation to the ‘bereavement’.¹⁹¹ Lamentation is turned, through the medium of song and the memory invoked of the activities of this period, into sexualised and ritualised acculturation and possibly acceptance, which might be realised in a more specifically epithalamic context by *topoi* of celebration. The narrative movement of this fragment suggests that songs connected with marriage, even if they are not epithalamia, might have had some role in this process of acculturation.

Acculturation: the Partheneion

The idea of ‘female acculturation’ also seems to be the key to understanding Alcman’s *partheneia*, albeit an earlier stage of acculturation. The Louvre Partheneion has, however, been previously interpreted as an epithalamium, and I agree with Contiades-Tsitsoni that it should not be seen as such¹⁹² – nor should fr. 3. Griffiths argued, on the basis of similarities with Theocritus 18, that fr. 1 is an epithalamium on which the Epithalamium for Helen was dependent. Arguing from the loss of one girl from their group (*ἀντ[ὶ] δ’ ἔνδεκα / παίδων δεκ, 98-99*), two possibly meta-epithalamic myths of marital malpractice (the Hippocoontids

¹⁹¹ Alexiou (1974) 125.

¹⁹² Contiades-Tsitsoni (1990) 59.

and the Giants), and the concern of the chorus immediately after this with Agido (ἀείδω / Ἀγιδῶς τὸ φῶς, 39-40; light being an all-pervading motif of epithalamia), he suggests that: ‘the Partheneion is actually a diegertikon sung by ten girls to the newly-wed Agido at the break of day’.¹⁹³ Gentili goes even further – he argued for a parallel to a Sapphic thiasos that could involve genuinely matrimonial homoerotic relationships (based on the use of σύνδυο(ς) in fr. 213.3 V), and that the Partheneion constituted a homoerotic epithalamium for Agido and Hagesichora:

It moves from agonistic language to reference to precious objects as a means of defeating a rival for the affection of a beloved, to resigned withdrawal from combat, and – finally – to the attainment of “peace” when one of their number accedes to the amorous desires of another at the moment of ritual marriage. First comes the amorous struggle, a part of the girls’ final attempt to separate Agido from Hagesichora, then the idea that they are now beyond being helped by any precious object, or even by their own beauty.¹⁹⁴

Since Calame, however, it has been generally agreed that partheneia are part of a pre-marital initiation rite signifying the end of childhood and the entrance to marriageable virginity.¹⁹⁵ Debates continue, though, as to exactly what rite is signified, and under the auspices of which goddess. As with our ‘epithalamial’ fragments of Sappho, there are no generic signifiers of

¹⁹³ Griffiths (1970) 29; see Ch.6, p.241-42.

¹⁹⁴ Gentili (1988) 76.

¹⁹⁵ I.e., being a young woman eligible for marriage. Calame (1997) 258-63; compare Bowra (1934) who argued that the occasion of the Partheneion was a pannuchis ritual for Helen and Dionysus; Hamilton (1989) who compared the activities represented in this fragment with those on Attic ‘Brauronian’ krateriskoi to conclude that both were female group rituals, although he does not specify an exact context apart from a private, female rite; Robbins (1991) who again does not specify an exact occasion, but reads the song as a competition between the chorus, and Agido and Hagesichora, to greet the Dawn-goddess; Hallett (1996), agreeing with Griffiths; and Cyrino (2004) who argues for a premarital initiation rite presided over by Aphrodite.

marriage: no numphê, no gambros, and no gamos/hymenaios. The focus is on the relationship between the girls and, in this case, we cannot even securely identify a departure. Alcman fr. 4A does, however, refer to a marriage and has been analysed by Contiades-Tsitsoni as an epithalamium.¹⁹⁶ This poem is similar in tone and in its concentration on female activity to fr. 1 and 3. In the following section, I aim to place the partheneion in relation to the epithalamium within a schema of female initiation.

Fr. 1 begins with a lacunose rendering of a myth relating a struggle between the sons of Tyndareus and their cousins, the sons of Hippocoön. Mythical narratives form part of a number of epithalamia, and these ‘meta-epithalamia’ often reflect or comment on the action of the wedding being performed.¹⁹⁷ A moralising gnomê suggests that the opening myth has erotic overtones, and therefore may be seen in a nuptial context: [μή . . . ἀνθ]ρώπων ἐς ὠρανὸν ποτήσθω / [μηδὲ πη]ρήτω γαμῆν τὰν Ἀφροδίταν...[]η παίδα Πόρκω (16-19). Page identified two possible erotic references: Clement of Alexandria’s reference to this poem is followed by the statement that Euphorion, in his Thrax, referred to the sons of Hippocoön as ἀντιμνηστῆρες of the sons of Tyndareus, and Plutarch preserves a version of the myth in which Enarsphorus (v.3) attempted to rape Helen in her youth.¹⁹⁸ No details of the exact nature of the offence are given in the extant poem, but it is possible that a sexual transgression against the divine was involved, and was punished by the Tyndarids (Polydeuces is mentioned in v.1). The rape of Helen would be an appropriate mythical subject given her divine aspect in Sparta, often related to marriage.¹⁹⁹ Finally, if Helen is identifiable with one of the goddesses mentioned in the song (or even with Hagesichora, as

¹⁹⁶ Contiades-Tsitsoni (1990) 50-54. I am not convinced by her analysis – the image of women praying to achieve marriage (τελέσαι γάμον, 15) suggests that a wedding may happen in the future, but is not necessarily the occasion of the present song.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. esp. Ar. Av. 1731-42 (ἐν τοιῷδ’ ὑμεναίῳ), Eur. IA 1036-98 (τίν’ ἄρ’ Ὑμέναιος ἔστασεν ἰαχάαν...;).

¹⁹⁸ Page (1951) 32, cf. Clem. Alex. Schol. Protr. 27.11, Plut. Thes. 31.

¹⁹⁹ Pausanias speaks of a sanctuary of Helen at the Plane-Trees in Sparta (3.15.3.1, cf. Theoc. 18.43-48), and she is said to be buried at a temple of Menelaus in Therapnae (3.19.9.2-4).

Griffiths suggests),²⁰⁰ then the Partheneion takes on the aspect of a cult hymn to her, in which a transgression, its punishment, and resolution are narrated, and the chorus state their intention to follow the pious course:

ἔστι τις θιῶν τίσις.

ὁ δ' ὄλβιος, ὅστις εὐφρων

ἀμέραν [δι]απλέκει

ἄκλαυτος.²⁰¹

Is such a myth appropriate to an epithalamium, however? In the preceding section, I discussed the problems of narrating one rape of Helen in the context of a wedding song. Here another rape may be represented, which, though not adulterous, seems nevertheless to be transgressive. If the contest between Tyndareus' sons and their rival suitors is the subject of the myth, its presentation is no less problematic – the death-count listed at the beginning of the fragment is hardly propitious for a wedding,²⁰² whose aim is the re-creation of life. The epithalamium does not shy away from problematic narratives: we have myths of Hector and Andromache, Zeus and Hera, Peleus and Thetis, Helen and Menelaus, and Menander Rhetor recommends more, especially unions of the hyper-sexual Heracles,²⁰³ but these are idealised, and represent the joyous celebration of the marriages themselves and the blessings conferred upon the couples as a result. The foreshadowing is a subtle undertone, contributing irony or uncomfortable discordance to the meaning of the wedding song. We do not have extant meta-

²⁰⁰ Griffiths (1970) 22-26.

²⁰¹ Alc. fr. 1.36-39. ὄλβιος here should not necessarily be taken as nuptial makarismos, as it is also appropriate to gnōmai in the context of hymns to the gods, cf. H.H.Dem. 486.

²⁰² Alc. fr. 1.1-12.

²⁰³ Sappho fr. 44 V, Ar. Av. 1730-40, possibly Sappho fr. 141 V, Eur. IA. 1036-79, Theoc. 18, Men. Rhet. 402.10-20, 406.24-28, 409.2-8; Ch.8, pp.309-10.

epithalamia depicting outright rape. Those that do survive present images of social cohesion, even if this means that they present versions of myths which contradict well-known traditions of force.²⁰⁴

As in our Sapphic songs and many extant epithalamia, praise is given to female figures. But the Partheneion is more akin to fr. 96 V, in which two women are singled out for encomia. Agido, as described above, is represented with ‘light’ imagery, and compared to the sun: $\text{F}' \ \acute{\omega}\tau' \ \acute{\alpha}\lambda\iota\omicron\nu$ (41), Immediately, however, the chorus notes that their leader Hagesichora forbids them either to praise or to blame Agido (43-45), and they proceed to describe her pre-eminence:

δοκεῖ γὰρ ἡμεν αὐτὰ
ἐκπρεπῆς τὼς ὥπερ αἴ τις
ἐν βοτοῖς στάσειεν ἵππον
παγὸν ἀεθλοφόρον καναχάποδα
τῶν ὑποπετριδίων ὀνείρων.²⁰⁵

Hagesichora is ἐκπρεπῆς. By the same logic that identifies Helen (in both fr. 16 V and Theocritus 18), the Lydian woman, Nausicaa, and Europa as bride-figures, this outstanding beauty should mean that if a wedding is intended, Hagesichora, not Agido, is its bride.²⁰⁶ Like a bride, she is compared to a horse: ὁ μὲν κέλῃς / Ἐνητικός (50-51). But so is Agido, who offers competition (perhaps literally racing her) for this pre-eminence:

²⁰⁴ See esp. Ch. 4, pp.192-93 on the third stasimon of IA.

²⁰⁵ Alc. fr. 1.43-49.

²⁰⁶ Cf. p.52; Ch.6, p.255-56.

ἀ δὲ δευτέρα πεδ' Ἀγιδῶ τὸ Φεῖδος

ἵππος Ἰβηνῶι Κολαξαῖος δραμήται.²⁰⁷

Neither girl, however, seems to be getting married. What the fragment does show them doing is performing a religious observance: Ἀγησιχ[ό]ρ[α]... Ἀγιδῶ . . . ἀρμένει / θωστήρ[ια τ'] ἄμ' ἐπαινεῖ (79-81). Hesychius' gloss of ἑορτή for θωστήρια suggests a religious, rather than marital, ritual.²⁰⁸ Prayers to the gods are mentioned in a nuptial context in Alcman fr. 4A,²⁰⁹ and could indicate a pre-nuptial sacrifice, the proteleia. But unless Agido and Hagesichora are undergoing a double (or homosexual, as Gentili suggests) marriage, this does not adequately explain the prominence of both in the 'festival', the role of the chorus as a whole in making a dedication,²¹⁰ or its desire, rather than the 'bride's', to please the goddess Aotis.²¹¹ Fr. 4A offers a scenario of multiple female participants performing prayers for the accomplishment of marriage, described as γυναιξὶ καὶ ἀνδρά[σι / φίλτ]ατα (16-17); perhaps a similar scenario, and similar telos, is envisioned for the maidens who, through the agency of Hagesichora, [ἰρ]ήνας ἔρατ[ᾶ]ς ἐπέβαν (1.91). Though not yet married, their participation in the rite looks forward to that occasion.

Griffiths' problem of ἀντ[ὶ] δ' ἑνδεκα / παίδων δεκ still remains, although I do not believe it can be answered as simply as he suggests: 'earlier in the season there had been eleven in the choir, now with the bride's departure there are only ten left'.²¹² Of those ten, he imagines Agido to be the bride and Hagesichora to be a benevolent daimon, which raises

²⁰⁷ Alcman fr. 1.58-59.

²⁰⁸ Hesych. s.v. θωστήρια.

²⁰⁹ Alcman fr. 4A.14-15: ταὶ δ' ὅτε δὴ ποταμῶι καλλιρρῶι / ἀράσαντ' ἔρατὸν τελέσαι γάμον, cf. Ar. Pax. 1328.

²¹⁰ Alcman fr. 1.61: ὀρθρία φάρος φεροίσαις.

²¹¹ Alcman fr. 1.88-89: ἐγῶ[ν] δὲ τᾶι μὲν Ἀώτι μάλιστα / Φανδάνην ἔρω.

²¹² Griffiths (1970) 12.

more problems. Eleven names appear in the fragment: Agido, Hagesichora, Nanno, Areta, Thalycis, Cleêsithêra, Aenesimbrotta, Astaphis, Philylla, Damareta and Vianthemis. If Aenesimbrotta is, as Page suggested, some kind of choral mistress and not to be included within this group,²¹³ that leaves the names of eight choreutai, a bride and a goddess. Why then leave two girls unnamed? Our Sapphic fragments refer to the bride only as numphê, and to the names of the epithalamial chorus not at all.

Two other interpretations are possible: that the eleven names refer to the ἔνδεκα, from which Aenesimbrotta is to be excluded. Perhaps she was once part of the chorus, or involved with its production, but no longer. The δεκ would then refer to the other girls, including Agido and Hagesichora, some of whose attention you would go to Aenesimbrotta's to attract.²¹⁴ Alternatively, Aenesimbrotta is herself a chorus member, and simply a friend of Astaphis, Philylla, Damareta and Vianthemis at whose house these girls could be found. She is part of the δεκ, and the eleventh girl is Hagesichora, the chorêgos, who is outstanding in every other way, is constantly singled out for attention, and cannot be included among the paides of the chorus. She may be a bride, but most likely her pre-eminence indicates her status as a marriageable parthenos, in the context of a ritual that prepares for marriage and childbirth but does not necessarily signify it.

Whether a girl has departed for marriage or is about to do so is impossible to tell from the contents which, like three of Sappho's 'epithalamial' songs, do not indicate the presence of a bridegroom that would make a wedding ceremony a more plausible interpretation. The girls speak of themselves as neanides, parthenoi and paides – the same designation is given to Astymeloisa, the subject of Alcman's third partheneion.²¹⁵ Both chorus and subject are unmarried maidens, yet are highly sexualised: the girls are represented as horses, given

²¹³ Page (1951) 65-66.

²¹⁴ Alcman fr. 1.73: οὐδ' ἔς Αἰνησιμβρο[ό]τας ἐνθοῖσα φασεῖς...

²¹⁵ Alcman fr. 1.68, 86, 90, 99, 3.72 (π[α]ρσενικῶς), 82 (παῖδα), 83 (παιδι.), 84 (παίς).

purple clothing and luxurious ornaments,²¹⁶ and are described in erotic terms like those of the young women in Sappho's 'epithalamial' songs: τὸ φῶς, ἐκπρεπῆς, χαίτα χρυσὸς, ἀργύριον πρόσωπον, τὸ Φεῖδος, θειδης, ἐρατά, ἐπιμέρωι.²¹⁷ If Sourvinou-Inwood was correct in stating that the 'bears' of the Athenian arkteia shed the krokotos, another luxurious garment denoting femininity, at the Brauronia on completion of their initiation,²¹⁸ then a parallel may be drawn between partheneia and the arkteia, whose climax she imagined as taking place at the five-yearly Brauronia.²¹⁹

In both rites, a religious festival provides the occasion for the reintegration ritual of a tribal initiation, during which a representative group of the cohort of about-to-be-marriageable-parthenoi (pre-pubescent to menarche) have taken part in a series of ritual activities aimed at their socialisation and acculturation to their adult roles. By demonstrating controlled sexualisation, if not sexuality, during their reintegration rites, they indicate that they have internalised sexual and gender norms and their mythological aitia, and thus are ready to assume those roles. In a ritual under the auspices of the civic religion which aims at male control of their sexuality, they are presented to society as parthenoi, desirable brides (in this respect the rite could be termed one of 'social puberty' along the lines defined by Van Gennep).²²⁰ There will then follow a period of maturation (menarche to marriage) during which the parthenos will take place in other 'civilising' rituals and activities, such as those described in the section on Sappho above, before she is fully initiated by marriage.

This period, and the ages at which it takes place, varies according to social context: Hesiod says ἡ δὲ γυνὴ τέτορ' ἡβῶοι, πέμπτω δὲ γαμοῖτο,²²¹ and a marital age of fifteen (supposing the completion of the arkteia at ten at the latest) is certainly usual for

²¹⁶ Alc. fr. 1.64-69.

²¹⁷ Alc. fr. 1.40, 46, 51-54, 55, 58, 71, 76, 101.

²¹⁸ Sourvinou-Inwood (1988) 127-34.

²¹⁹ Sourvinou-Inwood (1988) 21.

²²⁰ Sourvinou-Inwood (1988) 112, cf. Van Gennep (1960) 65-70.

²²¹ Hes. Op. 698.

Athens. In Sparta, Plutarch attests that girls married when they were ἀμαζούσας καὶ πεπείρους,²²² and therefore perhaps were initiated later – a greater seniority for the girls of the Partheneion might account for Griffiths’ interpretation of the poem as an epithalamium. We cannot be certain of the ‘initiatory’ and marital ages of the girls on Lesbos – Sappho’s ‘epithalamial’ songs display a similar degree of sexual self-awareness to the Partheneion, but we must remember that these were composed by Sappho and Alcman, who were probably not the same age as their choreutai, and thus might give a distorted poetic representation of this acculturation.

We may thus note a series of transformations undergone by Greek women in the passage to adulthood: from asexual childhood to marriageability, designated by the arkteia at Athens and partheneia at Sparta; an intermediate period between physical maturation and marriage in which other ritual activities (such as being a kanephoros, or a racing parthenos at Elis),²²³ including perhaps other maiden choruses, were performed and the female homoerotic sentiments expressed in the partheneion found expression; and the final transition to adulthood represented by heterosexual marriage and the wedding song. Just as marriage itself was a composite and often extended process, so too was the progression to womanhood culminating in marriage and childbirth. Taken together, they constitute the process of initiation for a Greek woman.

Maturation rites signify separation from childhood, intermediary rituals are part of the liminal period of partheneia (virginity), and marriage rites begin the process of reintegration into a fully adult role. Van Gennep first noted that transitions may be expanded into tripartite sub-structures,²²⁴ and this seems to be the case for female initiation. Sourvinou-Inwood saw

²²² Plut. Lyc. 15.3.2-3.

²²³ See p.56, n.189.

²²⁴ Van Gennep (1960) 11. He gives the example of betrothal, a liminal period between adolescence and marriage, but notes that ‘the passage from adolescence to betrothal itself involves a special series of rites of separation, a transition, and an incorporation into the betrothed condition; and the passage from the transitional

the rites at the beginning and end of this process (maturation and marriage) as enclosing and symbolically regulating the potentially dangerous female sexuality that developed in the intermediary period.²²⁵ As we have seen, participation in ritual during this period could also facilitate female acculturation, and offer a socially-sanctioned vehicle for the expression of sexuality in the poetry of this period. The partheneion and the epithalamium stand at opposite ends of this liminal period, and should not be conflated.²²⁶ Their shared language and topoi, however, suggest a shared ideology to these rites: both were part of an ongoing transition within which young girls were transformed into women, productive members of the adult community.²²⁷

From separation to incorporation: the epithalamium

The epithalamium is a separate category of song from both the partheneion, which deals with the entry into partheneia and looks forward to marriage, and from ‘epithalamial’ songs, which probably deal with this intermediary period and its termination upon marriage (Sappho fr. 16 etc). Here we come to deal with the epithalamia proper, of which only Sappho’s fragments survive. Leaving aside the songs rejected as epithalamia above, we are left with a number of fragments that fall under three broad categories – although they include other, secondary topoi. They are composed in a variety of metres, and it is almost impossible to determine the form of most of them: only a few lines – or even less – are extant. There are songs which indicate **lamentation**, which often include images of ‘plucking’ and departure: fr. 104a, 105a, 105b, 107, perhaps 109 (the father will ‘give’ something – the bride?), and

period, which is betrothal, to marriage itself, is made through a series of rites of separation from the former, followed by rites consisting of transition, and rites of incorporation into marriage’.

²²⁵ Sourvinou-Inwood (1988) 29.

²²⁶ Cf. Parker (1993) 332, on Calame (1997:1) 167.

²²⁷ Cf. Swift (2006b) 169.

114 V. These images, however, are polysemic: both Hague and Griffith saw the ‘plant’ *eikasmos*, particularly in 105a, as a positive encomium on the bride’s beauty.²²⁸ The question in fr. 107 V: ἦρ’ ἔτι παρθενίας ἐπιβάλλομαι; moreover, may be rhetorical²²⁹ – the answer may have been negative. There are more straightforward **encomia**, which also include *eikasmos* and *makarismos*: possibly fr. 23, and fr. 104b, 106, 108, 111, 112, 113, 115 and 194A V. The image of the larger-than-life bridegroom is developed to pronounce a reverse encomium on the outsized doorkeeper in fr. 110 V. **Celebration** is represented in fr. 27, 30, 44, elements of 103, and 141, including the celebratory farewell to the bride and groom in fr. 116 and 117 V. These celebrations can be human, heroic or divine, and often show mixed-sex dance and song that is nonetheless structured according to gender and age.

Under a simple tripartite ‘rite of passage’ scheme, we might expect a progression of these songs from lamentation to celebration, perhaps via *encomia*. A similar structure occurs in Theocritus 18: the maidens complain that Menelaus should have left the bride with her mother and friends, pronounce *encomia*, speak of their former lives, pronounce *eikasmos*, express their longing and intention to establish a cult for Helen (reconciliation through memory), bid them farewell and wish for marital blessings, and invoke *Hymenaios*.²³⁰ In Catullus 62, the protests of the girls against the cruelty of Hesperus and the loss of virginity are interspersed with the youths’ praise of that star and the necessity of the bride’s domestication, and invocations of *Hymenaios*.²³¹ In Catullus, the youths have the last word (59-62) – did celebration triumph? In Nanhui Chinese bridal song, the bride ceased her

²²⁸ Odysseus’ comparison of Nausicaa to a palm-tree (Hom. Od. 6.162-69) is one of our oldest extant examples of this type of praise; Hague (1983) 135, Griffiths (1989) 58-61 saw a positive point-by-point correspondence in this image, symbolising fertility, sweetness, passivity and modesty: the ‘delayed marriage’ behind the image of the near-forgotten or unreachable apple is held to be an index of the bride’s desirability. Cf. Theoc. 18.26-31; Ch.6, pp.243-44.

²²⁹ Cf. Johnson (2007) 118.

²³⁰ Theoc. 18.9-15, 16-24, 26-37, 38-48, 49-57, 58.

²³¹ Cat. 62.20-24, 25, 26-30, 31, 32, 33-37, 38, 39-47, 48, 49-58, 58b.

lament as the bridegroom's house came in sight.²³² Continued protest goes against the culturally positive objective of the transition (and is thus most often expressed in tragedy). From those poems that make use of epithalamial imagery, we might posit the following schema, although this is a cautious and speculative suggestion:

²³² McLaren & Chen (2000) 216; cf. Introduction, pp.21-22; Ch.4, p.175.

Fragment	Aspect	Stage	Intertext
109	Giving: of bride?	Enguê?	
27	Celebration: μέλπεσθ', χάρισσαι	Preparation? σ]τείχομεν γάρ ἐς γάμον.	
104a	Lament: Hesperus/young animal	Procession (separation)? Epithalamium?	Cat. 62 Theoc. 18
104b	Celebration: Hesperus	Procession (reintegration)	Cat. 62
105a	Lament: plucked fruit	Procession (separation)	Cat. 62
105b	Lament: trampled flower	Procession (separation)	Cat. 62
111	Badinage: groom	Procession (end): γάμβρος †(εἶσ)έρχεται... †	
108	Encomium: of bride	Epithalamium	Theoc. 18
[23]	Encomium of bride (eikasmos)	Epithalamium? παν]νυχίσι[δ]ην	
30	Celebration/love: ἀείδοις[ι]ν φιλότατα	Epithalamium: παννυχίσδοι[σ]αι	
110	Badinage: doorkeeper	Epithalamium	
112	Encomia (makarismos)	Epithalamium: ἐκτετέλεστ'	Theoc. 18
113	Encomium: of bride	Epithalamium	Theoc. 18
116	Celebration/rejoicing: χαῖρε	Epithalamium	Theoc. 18
117	Celebration/rejoicing: †χαίροις†, χαίρέτω	Epithalamium	Theoc. 18
107	Lament: long for virginity	Accomplishment: ἔτι ἐπιβάλλομαι	
114	Lament: long for virginity	Accomplishment: λίποισ' ἀ<π>οίχηι, †οὐκέτι ἤχω...†	
106	Encomium: of man	Unknown	
115	Encomium: of groom (eikasmos)	Unknown	

Figure 1: reconstruction of epithalamial process

Our fragments do not offer a simple structure – a warning of the dangers of using Hellenistic and Roman poetry to reconstruct their archaic models. Indeed, a number of fragments actually go against the schema defined above. Fr. 27 V shows a scene of celebration as the participants are going to a wedding: σ]τείχομεν γὰρ ἔς γάμον (8). It seems to be addressed to the bride: καὶ γὰρ δὴ σὺ πάις ποτ[(4), and shows a number of festive activities: μέλπεσθ',]ζάλεξαι, ἄ]δρα χάρισσαι (5-7). There is no bridal lamentation in this scene. The bride herself does not speak, and the maidens who might protest on her behalf are to be sent away.²³³ It ends with a moralising gnomê separating gods from mortals, like that in the Partheneion.²³⁴ As in Alcman, the transition to adulthood (πάις ποτ[) seems to a subject of celebration, and an essential part of mortal lot.

In fr. 44 V, rather than Andromache's departure to Troy, her arrival there is presented as a cause of celebration for its people. Music is again a feature of the procession to Ilion, with a heavy emphasis on sacral elements: αὐλος δ' ἄδυ[μ]έλης, ψ[ό]φο[ς κ]ροτάλ[ων, μέλος ἄγγνον, ἄχω θεσπεσία, κράτηρες] φίαλαί τ', μύρρα καὶ κασία λίβανός τ' ὄνεμείχνυτο, γυναῖκες δ' ἐλέλυσδον, πάον' ὄνκαλέοντες, ὕμνην (23-34). Here we see a later stage in the procession. The departure has been accomplished in Thebe, and the major part of the journey to the bride's new home has already been made by ship: ἐνὶ ναῦσιν ἐπ' ἄλμυρον / πόντον (7-8). The Trojan procession forms part of Andromache's reintegration into the house of Priam. As the groom's philoi (Ἰλῖαδαι, 13, Περάμοιο θυγ[α]τρεις, 16), who will benefit by this marriage (not least through the extensive dowry described in vv.8-10), they have cause for celebration – even the women.

²³³ Sappho fr. 27.9-10 V: ἀλλ' ὅττι τάχιστα[/ πα]ρθένοις ἀπ[π]εμπε.

²³⁴ Sappho fr. 27.12-13 V, cf. Alcman fr. 1.16-21, also noted by Campbell (1982) 77.

Even those fragments commonly associated with lamentation may have a double meaning, as previously mentioned.²³⁵ The image of a sheltered fruit or flower ripe for plucking (or of a protected space) in fr. 105a and b V, is used to lament the loss of the bride's virginity in Sophocles (post-transitional lamentation), Catullus, and modern Greek and Indian folk-song (anticipated loss).²³⁶ It cannot be definitively associated with the exact moment of separation – or, as in fr. 16 and 96 V, this separation may still be felt after the accomplishment of the transition. The bridegroom, however, is compared to a slender sapling (ὄρπακι βραδίνωι) in fr. 115 V, and 'garden' imagery is also used to praise Helen's beauty during the evening epithalamium (Theoc. 18.29-30).²³⁷ Neither context indicates lamentation. Hague associates such encomia with the wedding feast, although she admits that 'almost all the songs for every part of the ceremony compliment the couple by means of this technique'.²³⁸ Intriguingly, she associates naturalistic imagery with the *locus amoenus*:

The comparison of the bride or groom to a plant removes the couple from their village to the landscape of a garden or meadow, to a simple life, of the type men led before they developed such niceties as beds, the way of life of the city of hogs described by Plato (Republic 372 a-d) in which men recline on beds of leaves strewn with yew and myrtle. This was a time when a young girl alone might expect to be ravished by a god, for a meadow or garden is often the setting for such surprises, as well as for the love-making of the gods.²³⁹

Lamentation for the loss of virginity goes hand-in-hand with the representation of burgeoning sexuality implicated in the 'plucking' motif. On the one hand, the transition may be a cause

²³⁵ See p.67.

²³⁶ Cf. Introduction, pp.15-22.

²³⁷ Ch.6, pp.244.

²³⁸ Hague (1983) 132-33.

²³⁹ Hague (1983) 135.

of apprehension; on the other, it is a natural progression and may be eagerly anticipated, as it is for the women of Alcman fr. 4A and for Nausicaa in the *Odyssey*.²⁴⁰ The image contributes to the poetic representation of a seductive setting for love, facilitating the *erôs* between the bride and groom. It may even be used as an erotic pun, as in Aristophanes' *Peace*.²⁴¹ The meaning may vary depending on the gender, age, and marital status of the singer, and perhaps also the stage of the ceremony at which it is sung. Likewise, a lament for the loss of virginity may be articulated after marriage, as in fr. 107 and 114 V, suggesting that marriage produced mixed feelings often at odds with the tripartite progression imagined by Van Genep. The reintegration of Sappho's brides may not have been as traumatic as that of Deianeira and Procne, but it was nonetheless a potentially troubled period of acclimatisation to a new environment.

It is therefore worth considering a cautious construction of the sequence of wedding songs as defined above. It is for the most part consistent with the idea of transition, and the exceptions do not necessarily disprove this hypothesis. Attitudes to marriage are characterised by some degree of ambivalence in both ancient and modern Greek wedding song,²⁴² and the same *topoi* could be used to express a number of different perspectives. There is no single, holistic viewpoint (masculine or feminine) on marriage, and this schema is not absolute: what it shows is a general cultural ideal of a progression from modest protest to eventual acceptance and acculturation. It also indicates that just as the designation of song is not absolute, neither were the events of the wedding ritual. Separation might begin at *enguê*, but if the bride was betrothed as a child, marriage rites would properly begin with the preparations for marriage: the *proteleia* and *numphokomos*. Transition was physically

²⁴⁰ Hom. *Od.* 6.66 (θαλερὸν γάμον), also 163-69.

²⁴¹ Ar. *Pax.* 1340-43, cf. also Winkler (1981) 79-81, suggesting that the reddening *μᾶλον* is a clitoral image. Henderson (1975) 134-36 identifies several comparable terms in comedy for the female genital region, but none referring specifically to this organ. See Ch.5, esp. p.215.

²⁴² Alexiou (1974) 42 records a Pontic funeral custom of laughing and saying 'there's never a funeral without joy, nor a wedding without a tear'.

expressed by the wedding procession, but in reality a woman occupied a liminal space from maturation until first lochia, when she had fulfilled her ultimate function as ‘wife’ by bearing a child to her new oikos. Finally, reintegration, despite the symbology implied in the wedding, was not an immediate process, and acceptance of the new life in place of the old might take some time, as fr. 96 V and our Sophoclean laments demonstrate. This was recognised by the ancients, and Plutarch counsels the husband’s patience in a treatise that owes much to the epithalamium (Mor. 138D6-E5).²⁴³ The sequence of epithalamia could reflect the transition from separation to reintegration, in which the couple, especially the bride, are praised for their accomplishment of the marriage. Yet it is overly simplistic to think that this whole passage took place within the course either of one song, or a sequence of songs. How might it actually be achieved?

An examination of the other topoi used by Sappho in the epithalamia is useful at this point. The fragments discussed at the outset of this chapter are deeply erotic, and though they are not epithalamia per se, nonetheless depict a socially-sanctioned eroticism to which a young woman was acculturated in preparation for her marriage: this erotic imagery was shared with the epithalamium. The eroticism of the epithalamia was remarked upon in antiquity: Himerius speaks of the ‘rites of Aphrodite’ and Sappho’s creation of the atmosphere for the accomplishment – consummation – of marriage:

...τὰ δὲ Ἀφροδίτης ὄργια <μόνη> παρήκαν τῇ Λεσβίᾳ Σαπφοῖ {καὶ} ἄδειν πρὸς λύραν καὶ ποιεῖν <ᾠδὴν> τὸν θάλαμον· ἦ καὶ εἰσῆλθε μετὰ τοὺς ἀγῶνας εἰς θάλαμον, πλέκει παστάδα, τὸ λέχος {Ὀμήρου} στρώννυσι, ἱγράφει† παρθένους <εἷς> νυμφεῖον, ἄγει καὶ Ἀφροδίτην ἐφ’ ἄρμα<τι> Χαρίτων, καὶ χορὸν Ἐρώτων συμπαίστορα. καὶ τῆς μὲν

²⁴³ Ch.7, p.266.

ὑακίνθῳ τὰς κόμας σφίγξασα, πλὴν ὅσαι μετώπῳ μερίζονται, τὰς
λοιπὰς ταῖς αὖραις ἀφῆκεν ὑποκυμαίνειν, εἰ πλήττειεν. τῶν δὲ τὰ
πτερὰ καὶ τοὺς βοστρύχους χρυσῶ κομήσασα πρὸ τοῦ δίφρου σπεύδει
πομπεύοντασ καὶ δᾶδα κινουῦντασ μετάρσιον.²⁴⁴

Writers in antiquity (particularly those writing epithalamia, as Himerius here) perceived Sappho's poetry as creating an erotic space for the consummation of marriage. This marital *erôs* might seem to be a feminine construction but it, and manipulations of it, became integral to male hymeneal discourse, as later chapters will demonstrate. The fear of violence expressed in tragedy by the Danaids, Deianeira, and Procne is absent from Himerius' space.²⁴⁵ So are the anxieties of separation evident in other epithalamia and fr. 94 V. There is only the wedding song, contests, a garlanded room and a bed, a chorus of girls, and Aphrodite on the Graces' chariot, attended by the Erotes.

The setting for reintegration is thus one of seduction. It features the accoutrements of erotic acculturation familiar from fr. 94 V: music, garlands, bed, and female chorus, as well as the presence (real or imagined) of the gods of love. In such a way, the fulfilment of marriage is constructed as a divinely-sanctified occasion, for which the bride would have been prepared through the activities undertaken both during maturation/'tribal initiation' and during the intermediary period between maturation and marriage. These erotic aspects are present throughout Sappho's poetry, and her epithalamia and 'epithalamial' songs are no exception. Fr. 112 V best demonstrates the construction of an erotic space by the poet, within which the relationship between the bride and groom should develop. The bridegroom's marriage has been fulfilled as he prayed: σοὶ μὲν δὴ γάμος ὡς ἄραο / ἔκτετέλεστ' (1-

²⁴⁴ Sappho fr. 194 V (= Him. Or. 9.4 p.75s. Col), cf. Ar. Lys. 832, Ach. Tat. 4.1.2, Euseb. Laud. Const. 7.3.3, 7.4.7, Schol. Ap. Rhod. 3.1-5.

²⁴⁵ Cf. Introduction, pp.16-17.

2). We soon learn why the girl has been prayed for (πάρθενον, ἄν ἄραο, 2). She possesses charis (3), erôs and himeros (4). Aphrodite has honoured her – like our other brides and bride-figures, she stands out beyond others (ἔξοχά, 5).

Charis is repeated in fr. 108 V (ὦ κάλα, ὦ χαρίεσσα κόρα) and in the celebrations of fr. 27 V discussed above.²⁴⁶ The Graces themselves, along with the Muses, are summoned in fr. 103.8 V: ἄγνοι Χάριτες Πιέριδέ[ς τε] Μοῖ[σαι] (similar verses exist in fr. 53 and 128). Erôs appears again in fr. 23.1 V, as eraton to describe Anactoria's walk in fr. 16.17 V, and as philotês in fr. 30.4 V. Himeros is used to describe the girl's laughter in fr. 31.5 and Atthis in 96.16 V. Aphrodite appears again at fr. 96.26 V, and we should include pothos in fr. 94.23 and Peitho at 96.29 V.²⁴⁷ The intermediary period prior to marriage and the wedding itself both make use of the imagery of love: by the time a girl marries, this space is familiar to her, but its desire is now expressed in heteroerotic terms. It would not be unintuitive to suggest that the transition of marriage, particularly the reintegration whose climax is the consummation, is (at least rhetorically) accomplished through the agency of erôs. Later texts even show the deployment of such topoi in order to effect by logos the acceptance of the marital transition, if prior acculturation and preparation proves insufficient. In the exodos of Aeschylus' Supplikes, Aphrodite is honoured next to Hera, and given a retinue of Pothos, Peitho, Harmonia and the Erotes. These are used to emphasise the desirability of marriage to the unwilling Danaids (τίεται δ' αἰολόμητις / θεὸς ἔργοις ἐπὶ σεμνοῖς, 1036-37) and insist on its inevitability (1050-51).²⁴⁸ Menander Rhetor exhorts his bridegroom to acceptance with reference to the beauty of the bride, the seductive locus of consummation, and the attendant gods.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Sappho fr. 27.7 V.

²⁴⁷ Cf. Lanata (1996) 20.

²⁴⁸ Ch.2, pp.192-93.

²⁴⁹ Men. Rhet. 407.3-14; cf. Ch.2, pp.91-92; Ch.8, p. 314.

The desired effect on the addressees of such erotic exhortation must be the development of *erôs* and *charis* between the bride and bridegroom, including (but not limited to) the sexual relationship founded on the wedding night. The *encomia* for the physical beauty of both may also function not simply as public praise, but also as inspiration for such *erôs*. *Makarismos* lends additional weight to this positive valuation of marriage – intriguingly, in Sappho this focuses on the blessedness of the groom for his possession of the bride. He has prayed for her; there is no other like her.²⁵⁰ The *epithalamium* stresses the value of a wife to a husband as much as a husband to a wife. This implies a far more mutual (if still unequal) relationship than either male-oriented or female-oriented poetry supposes, as one might expect from a communal genre directed towards the continuation of the community. This illuminates the celebratory aspects of the genre: lamentation for a drastic change in circumstances might be expected, but on the whole, that change should be seen as positive. The *parthenos* has become a *gunê*, a productive member of society, *cara uiro magis et minus est inuisa parenti*.²⁵¹

The effect on the speakers of such discourse also bears investigation. We know from Sappho, and Himerius confirms, that maidens sang these songs, presumably at the weddings of friends and relations, and presumably in the intermediary period before they too were married. I suggest that just as girls participating in *partheneia* or the *arkteia* might be expected, as part of a maturation rite, to internalise the social and sexual norms embodied by their ritual activities; so too would performance of *epithalamia* for other people during an acculturation period cause them to internalise the ideologies behind these songs. Marriage songs were part of the process that, for their performers, might end in marriage. Participation in these songs demonstrates accord with the community's view of marital relationships, and an understanding of the part the performers will play – both in lamentation and celebration.

²⁵⁰ Sappho fr. 112.1-2, 113 V.

²⁵¹ Cat. 62.58; cf. Introduction, p.24.

These were not, however, exclusively female songs: men also participated. What could such sentiments signify when expressed through a male lens? Again, this could demonstrate the acceptance and internalisation of wider cultural values. If mixed-sex choral performance is assumed, we can allow no less a didactic function to the male chorus than to the female. Indeed, as Swift argues, the mixed-sex wedding chorus indicated the interdependence of gender roles in society at large²⁵² – a macrocosm of the mutual relationship privileged by the wedding song. Men might sing of the ‘taming’ and ‘cultivation’ of the female, but this is no more the whole story than the female bridal lament. Older women (and indeed men) whose own transitions had been accomplished may join in: the whole of society joins together to affirm and replicate its own values.

The wedding songs of Sappho (particularly those containing naturalistic imagery) and ‘epithalamial’ fragments might then be used differently by different gender, age and status groups, and for different rhetorical purposes. But they are not necessarily the product of a female ‘subculture’, ‘occupied with the vital activities customarily assigned to women by a cultural division of labour – the tasks of domesticity, including sexuality, reproduction, and nurturing, and the ceremonies surrounding the human life cycle’.²⁵³ They can be said to be ‘woman-oriented’ in that they focus on the central event of female life,²⁵⁴ marriage, but a qualification must be made. Marriage is part of a greater transition that spans a woman’s life from pre-menarche to childbirth, and must be seen as part of this transition rather than isolated from it. This transition took place within a communal and civic set of rituals, rather than a private, feminine space. Marriage does not only involve women. A wedding must have a bridegroom, which fr. 16. 94 and 96 V do not. The event affects him, and the community, as well as the bride, and it is regrettable that the parameters of this thesis do not allow for

²⁵² Swift (2006a) 133-35, (2006b) 173; see Introduction, p.14.

²⁵³ Skinner (1996) 179.

²⁵⁴ Wilson (1996) 142.

greater discussion of the male experience of marriage.²⁵⁵ Plato, in the fourth century BC, singles out song and dance as the ‘basic medium of transmitting an awareness of cultural values to the young’,²⁵⁶ and society’s valuation of a successfully accomplished transition, from separation/lamentation to reintegration/celebration through the internalisation of erotic and acculturating imagery, should be central to our understanding of the wedding song.

²⁵⁵ See, however, my discussions on Prometheus in Ch. 2, Phaethon in Ch. 4, the Aristophanic bridegrooms in Ch. 5, the parity of Hellenistic marital experience in Ch. 6, and the reluctant bridegroom of Menander Rhetor’s *Peri Kateunastikou* in Ch. 8.

²⁵⁶ Skinner (1996) 185 cf. Plat. Leg. 2.654a6-7.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TRAGIC HYMENAIOS: AESCHYLUS

The lyric wedding song articulates, through various combinations of imagery, the integration of the bride into her husband's home (and the couple into the community) and the subordination of her fertility to the *oikos*, on behalf of the social and cosmic order embodied by the *polis*. This ritual is a source of both trauma and celebration to the initiand bride and to the community.²⁵⁷ She is separated from her former life in a ritual akin to death. She and her *philoï* must adapt to this loss, and her new family must adapt to integrate the new *gunê*. At the same time, she is honoured as a blessing to the groom and a benefit to her new community, and the potential violence of the physical transition to adulthood may be elided, or that transition facilitated, by the seductive and erotic *topoi* of the *epithalamium*.²⁵⁸

In tragedy, this transition tends to fail spectacularly. Some transitions are abhorred and avoided, such as that of the Danaïds.²⁵⁹ Some are never accomplished or are disrupted, such as those of *Electra*, *Antigone*, *Deianeira* and *Phaethon*.²⁶⁰ At best, some are politicised to highlight other social transitions, as with the marriage of *Prometheus* and *Hesione*.²⁶¹ Many are perverted or improperly performed, like the rapes of *Helen* and *Cassandra* or the sacrifice of *Iphigenia*.²⁶² The consequence of this failure is a lack of reintegration. The dangerous sexual potentiality demarcated by maturation and marriage rites is not contained and causes increasing disruption of the *oikos*, *polis* and *cosmos*. The following chapters will examine how the tragedians deal with this crisis, and how the *epithalamium* is used by them.

²⁵⁷ For 'bridal initiation', see Introduction, p.25, 33- 35; Ch. 1, esp. pp.66-69.

²⁵⁸ Ch.1, pp.73-76.

²⁵⁹ See pp. 89-97.

²⁶⁰ Ch.3; Ch.4, pp.137-60.

²⁶¹ See pp.97-98.

²⁶² See pp.102-8; Ch.4, pp.161-208.

Tufte coins the term ‘anti-epithalamium’ to remark the tragic usage of this genre:

Instead of expressing joy over a proper union, the anti-epithalamium expresses lamentation or foreboding over a union which for some reason is improper or unsanctioned, and thus presages tragedy, death, dissension, revenge, murder, war, or other disruptions or order and nature...In general, the anti-epithalamium is a poem or excerpt using epithalamic devices in an expression of unhappiness, disorder, and evil associated with an improper union.²⁶³

I will argue that tragedy uses the wedding song not only to express dramatic irony, as above, but also deliberately to invoke the marital transition and its inherent connotations, in order to comment on significant issues within the text – and that it does so with an acute awareness of the way in which that crisis was enacted (or perceived to be enacted) within its own cultural milieu.

Whether by accident (i.e., due to the number of plays extant) or by design, the motif of the hymenaios becomes increasingly prevalent in later tragedy: most instances of the term occur in Euripides, who not only speaks of the occasion of the song’s performance but also uses whole wedding songs in his plays. Aeschylus and Sophocles linguistically evoke the hymenaios to articulate different issues surrounding the transition. This chapter will examine how Aeschylus develops the wedding song and what this may tell us about marriage and gender relations.

²⁶³ Tufte (1970) 38. She identifies four recurring and overlapping patterns in this usage: to remark on the absence of the ritual and order customarily associated with marriage; to remark on the presence of epithalamic trappings that function in reverse; instead of seeking to repel the elements and symbols of evil omen as is customary in the wedding ritual and epithalamium, it summons them or remarks on their presence; or to place a conventional epithalamium in a situation already tragic or horrible, or about to become so.

Suppliant Maidens: arrested transition

Three of Aeschylus' seven complete plays deal with, or use the motif of, songs of marriage. Of these, *Supplices* is the most problematic and at the same time the most fertile ground for inquiry. While the play does not overtly use the term *hymenaios*, the concept permeates the work. The tradition in Hyginus even suggests that the wedding song was founded in Greece as a result of the action of the plays: *...quinto loco Argis quos fecit Danaus Beli filius filiarum nuptiis cantu, unde hymenaeus dictus,*²⁶⁴ and moreover, one of the surviving fragments (43 R) seems to suggest that a *diegertikon* (awakening song) was included in the trilogy:

κάπειτα δ' εὔτε λαμπρὸν ἡλίου φάος

ἕως ἐγείρη πρηνεμενῆς τοὺς νυμφίους

νόμοισι θέντων σὺν κόροις τε καὶ κόραις.²⁶⁵

The daughters of Danaus flee to Argos to avoid enforced marriage with their cousins the Aigyptids (*Supp.* 8-10). If Seaford is correct and much of Hyginus derives from the tragedy,²⁶⁶ eventually they marry them but (all except Hypermetra) murder the bridegrooms on their wedding night, and then remarry in Greece. This story forms the tragic aition for the institution of the wedding song – which would then become a central theme of the trilogy. That many of the songs of the Danaids evoke or resemble *epithalamia* supports this hypothesis, as does the tragedian's use of similar *aitia* to form the conclusions of his

²⁶⁴ Hyg. Fab. 273.

²⁶⁵ Aesch. fr. 43 R.

²⁶⁶ Seaford (1987) 116. Garvie (1969) 167: Hermann and Croiset agree that Hyginus is probably closer to Aeschylus, though other scholars have favoured Ps.-Apollonius as more closely reproducing the plots of the trilogy. Neither of these are entirely unproblematic, however: while Hyginus appears to agree with Aeschylus in making the proposed marriage the motive, not the sequel, to the Danaids' flight, Ps.-Apollonius presupposes a version in which the marriage and murder had already taken place in Egypt. Garvie sees this account as contaminated and not entirely dependent upon Aeschylus – but states that the same is true of Hyginus.

Prometheia and Oresteia trilogies.²⁶⁷ Aeschylus uses imagery familiar from Sappho's wedding songs, and an analysis of this may yield clues as to the role of this genre in tragedy. What motifs are used in the drama, and how and when are they used? How far do the choral odes of Supplices formally resemble wedding songs, and what role do they play in Supplices and the trilogy as a whole?

One of the most recurrent epithalamial motifs in Supplices is that of bridal lamentation. While Tufte argues (above) that the lamenting anti-epithalamium is a tragic reversal of the norm, the Greek wedding song in its traditional lyric form contains elements of lamentation by the bride or her friends for the life left behind as in Sappho fr. 107 and 114 V, discussed in the previous chapter (the latter in particular bears structural similarities to the antiphonal lament for Adonis in fr. 140 V). Similarly, in their first choral ode, the Danaids lament the loss of carefree maidenhood:

δάπτω τὰν ἀπαλὰν Νειλοθερῆ παρειὰν
ἀπειρόδακρύν τε καρδίαν.²⁶⁸

More explicitly, maidens on the cusp of marriage turn what should be a wedding hymn into a funeral dirge, which they chant while still living: ζῶσα γόοις με τιμῶ (116). This association of marriage with death is repeated throughout the play (particularly in the parodos, first episode and second stasimon): they rend their own veils as would mourners (131-33) before threatening to hang themselves (154-61, 455-65, 787-90) if their supplication

²⁶⁷ In the Prometheia, it is likely that the Athenian festival of Promethea was established in commemoration of his binding and release, and subsequent voluntary binding by a ring of stone and iron (Athen. 15.674d8-11, cf. Griffith (1983) 303); the Oresteia explains the establishment of the Areopagus murder court. All three aitia are, speculatively, the result of the final victory of peithô over bia in the trilogies.

²⁶⁸ Aesch. Supp. 70-72; see Introduction, pp.15-22.

is not heeded, prefer Hades to the Aigyptids (791), and state that they would rather die than suffer this marriage:

ἐλθέτω μόρος, πρὸ κοί-
τας γαμηλίου τυχών.²⁶⁹

A girl who died before marriage was often imagined to have instead married death/Hades, as is demonstrated by a ‘Sapphic’ epigram:

Τιμάδος ἄδε κόνις, τὰν δὴ πρὸ γάμοιο θανοῦσαν
δέξατο Φερσεφόνας κυάνεος θάλαμος.²⁷⁰

Other Greek funerary epigrams use the same topos.²⁷¹ This image is connected with the perception of marriage as itself as a kind of ‘death’, in which the bride’s blood is shed in the consummation of the rite and she assumes a new identity as a *gunê*.²⁷² In tragedy, the two *telê* often become conflated and a marriage becomes a funeral – as a result, the ritualised lament for separation apparent in many epithalamia becomes an actual *thrênos*, and the protest against the fate of the bride turns into that for her death.²⁷³ From antiquity to the present day the wedding song has maintained this interchangeable character, and Greek

²⁶⁹ Aesch. Supp. 804-5.

²⁷⁰ AP 7.489.1-2.

²⁷¹ AP 7.182, 486, 487, 488, 490 & 491.

²⁷² Sissa (1990) esp. 106-123 discusses this ‘dramatised execution’, particularly in relation of the death of the wedding god Hymenaios (cf. Introduction, pp.2-5). Though the bride may ‘die’ socially as a *parthenos*, this does not seem to be related in Greek thought to the destruction of the hymen (cf. p.4 n.10), nuptial bloodshed being instead explained by the painful reaction of the vagina to first penetration. It is perhaps significant that Aphrodite in Aesch. fr. 44.1 R describes penetration as ‘wounding’ (τρῶσαι). Compare Deianeira’s death in Soph. Trach. 912-35; Ch. 3, p.132.

²⁷³ E.g. Eur. IA 1036-97.

moirólógia are sung for those who have married as well as those who have died, emigrated, or changed their religion.²⁷⁴ The role of blood in marital imagery pertains not just to the loss of virginity, but also the blood of childbirth and the continuance of the bloodline (an important feature in the citizen-marriages under discussion). As such, it features significantly in marital travesty, but here the Danaids go one step further, threatening to take the poetic topos into their own hands and pre-empt marriage by death: a bloodless death by hanging rather than by the sword with its connotations of sexual penetration and maternity.²⁷⁵ They seek to avoid what they view as personal pollution (γάμον...ἀσεβῆ, 9) by polluting the altars of the city with death in a sacred space, turning on its head the topos of hanging traditionally committed inside (especially inside the thalamos) by Greek women.²⁷⁶ Their sexuality, and rejection of sexuality, enters the public sphere.

Already the discourse of the wedding song appears to indicate a crisis between the feminine (personal) and masculine (civic) ideals, which, though it is momentarily averted by the Argives' decision to honour the maidens' supplication, is yet foreboded (προφοβοῦμαι, 1044) in the play's exodos. The strident lamentation for the perceived death in the marriage bed is muted to a sense of foreboding for death to follow by the end of the play, having reached its climax in the ode preceding the Herald's appearance. As the Chorus catch sight of their suitors putting in to land at Argos and the hated consummation seems inevitable, their fear is so great that they wish to disappear (779-83) or, failing that, to die.²⁷⁷ Significantly, the imagery of explicit violence and rape, absent from the lyric epithalamium,²⁷⁸ also reaches

²⁷⁴ Alexiou (1974) 116, 120; Introduction, pp.19-20; also Holst-Warhaft (1992) 40-43.

²⁷⁵ Cf. King (1983) 119, Loraux (1987) 15. Interestingly, Loraux argues that death by hanging is the result of the excessive valuation of the status of 'bride'/numphê: the very state abhorred by the Danaids. Though they reject sexuality, the poet, however, stresses their nubile status.

²⁷⁶ Soph. OT 1263-64 (Jocasta), Ant. 1220-21 (Antigone), Eur. Hipp. 777-81 (Phaedra).

²⁷⁷ Cf. Sappho fr. 94.1 V, Soph. Trach. 15-17.

²⁷⁸ See Ch.1, p.60-61.

its crescendo in this scene, with the threats of the Herald (and the possible appearance, as has been suggested, of a subsidiary Chorus of Aigyptids):²⁷⁹

οὐκοῦν ἴοῦκοῦν

τιλμοὶ τιλμοὶ καὶ στιγμοί,

πολυαίμων φόνιος

ἀποκοπὰ κρατός.²⁸⁰

As the trilogy progresses, it is possible that lamentation was juxtaposed with the traditional wedding song, in the diegertikon fragment (43 R) that must precede the discovery of the murdered bridegrooms and subsequent mourning. Seaford notes that:

This is a fine example of an idea to which tragedy constantly returns: the often horrific contrast between songs opposed in mood.²⁸¹

I believe that this juxtaposition represents more than a dramatic trope of antithetical songs. It is part of a progression from lamentation, which reaches its peak in the mid-point of *Supplices* and fades to a sense of unease towards the end of that play; to lamentation amidst exultation as we discover the *telos* of death has been substituted for that of marriage; to the wedding song ‘proper’ of which the trilogy may form the tragic aition. Because of the events which make up this aition, the wedding song never quite loses its threnodic character, but the imagery would seem to move towards a resolution throughout the trilogy, and is

²⁷⁹ Garvie (1969) 193.

²⁸⁰ Aesch. *Supp.* 838-41. The simultaneous climax of fear and lamentation on one hand, and of violence and rape imagery on the other, may indeed lend weight to Macurdy’s (1944:96) conjecture that the hubris of the Aigyptids constitutes the reason for the Danaids’ flight.

²⁸¹ Seaford (1987) 115.

representative of the movement from rejection to acceptance of marriage and sexuality embodied in the speech of Aphrodite (fr. 44 R) discussed below.

The Danaids' asexual preferences are expressed further by the poet's use of another hymeneal motif, the mythical 'meta-epithalamium'. These wedding songs within wedding songs are used to elevate the participants in the ceremony to the divine or heroic level by comparison with the mythical protagonists, and are often used in drama to comment upon the action of the nuptials in which they are performed.²⁸² In the first two odes, the Chorus tell of the courtship of Zeus and their *ματρὸς ἀρχαίας* (51), Io. Both songs elide Zeus' usual sexual aggression towards mortal women (and indeed, his violent courtship of Io in another possibly Aeschylean play, *Prometheus Bound*) and narrate the conception of the offspring of this union, Epaphus, through the caress of Zeus' hand (*ἔφαψιν*, 47).

Though in their dialogue with the king the Danaids use the usual verb for sexual intercourse to describe the union (*μειχθῆναι*, 295), in their songs the affair is idealised, and far from causing the symbolic 'death' of a previously untroubled maiden, Zeus instead soothes (*θέλξας*, 471-72) the tormented Io. By using the traditional lyric function of the meta-epithalamium to assimilate themselves with their mythical ancestor, the Danaids use this topos in its tragic mode to pass comment on their own situation – to insist upon their own inviolability by intercourse:

σπέρμα σεμνάς μέγα ματρὸς εὔνας

ἀνδρῶν, ἔ ἔ,

ἄγαμον ἀδάματον ἐκφυγεῖν.²⁸³

²⁸² E.g. Sappho fr. 44, 103, 141 V; Ar. Av. 1719-65; Eur. Pha. 227-44, IA 1036-97; Theoc. 18; Cat. 61, 64.

²⁸³ Aesch. Supp. 141-43.

The meta-epithalamium has a very specific purpose in this context – it is used very narrowly at the outset to establish a parallel with Io and her conception without penetration. This insistence upon asexuality is reminiscent of the virgin goddess Athena, who remains an eternal parthenos at the side of her father Zeus – and certainly there are indications in Supplices that the maidens (like Sophocles’ Electra and Antigone) are excessively devoted, or in thrall, to their patriline.²⁸⁴ Their violent avoidance of marriage might be seen to align them with the equally un-Greek Amazons, yet their alignment with Danaus and emphasis on virginity suggests otherwise. Eternal virginity is not, however, an acceptable course for the mortal maiden, and I suggest that some external factor has disrupted the usual and anticipated transition from parthenos to *gunê* – suggestions range from the hubris of the Aigyptids,²⁸⁵ to Aeschylus’ expression of the anxiety of the position of the *epiklêros* in Athenian law,²⁸⁶ to Danaus’ almost overweening control over his daughters’ sexuality and fertility:

μόνον φύλαξαι τάσδ’ ἐπιστολὰς πατρός,
τὸ σωφρονεῖν τιμῶσα τοῦ βίου πλέον.²⁸⁷

This burgeoning reproductivity, untouchable by man, is more suggestive of the sexually-charged virginity of Artemis than the asexuality of Athena, and by situating the Danaids within the sphere of this goddess, the play insists upon their character as prospective brides at the same time as they themselves refuse that state. This tension is expressed by imagery

²⁸⁴ These maidens, however, regret that their alignment with their paternal family has caused them to remain unmarried (Soph. El. 958-66, Ant. 806-943), and Electra convinces Chrysothemis that an honourable marriage will be hers, having avenged Agamemnon: El. 967-71.

²⁸⁵ Macurdy (1944) 96.

²⁸⁶ Thompson (1973) 290-91 (1941:303-4), refuted in Macurdy (above); Seaford (1987) 117-19.

²⁸⁷ Aesch. Supp. 1012-13, Zeitlin (1996) 143, Sommerstein (1996) 147. An annotation on Supp. 37 suggests that this may be because of an oracle proclaiming the death of Danaus himself at the hands of his son-in-law (pp.144-5). Garvie (2006) xviii-xix. refutes this interpretation of the scholion, but as Sommerstein (2008) 284-85 notes, this does not mean Aeschylus did not use the oracle story in the trilogy – vv.1006-9 indicate that Danaus wished to preserve his daughters’ virginity not just from their cousins, but absolutely.

familiar from wedding songs throughout the Greek tradition – that of the young animal or sheltered plant.²⁸⁸ While they reject the outcome of their sexuality, the maidens describe themselves in terms that emphasise it: they are like prey in fear of predators, an image common in the modern Greek wedding song;²⁸⁹ in both this image and in their hoped-for assimilation with Io they compare themselves to the heifer (ὡς δάμαλιν, 351) an image which is thought to derive from Sappho: φέρηρις ὄιν, φέρηρις αἴγα, φέρηρις ἄπυ μᾶτερι παῖδα (fr. 104(a) V).²⁹⁰

Even Danaus acknowledges his daughters’ latent sexuality with a comparison to tender fruits:

τέρειν’ ὀπώρα δ’ εὐφύλακτος οὐδαμῶς·

θῆρες σφε κηραίνουσι καὶ βροτοί· τί μήν;²⁹¹

This is a traditional epithalamial image (οἶον τὸ γλυκύμαλον..., Sappho fr. 105(a) V).²⁹²

The positioning of this imagery within Supplices may be significant. Unlike outright lamentation, which recurs throughout (moderated towards the end), or the meta-epithalamium, which is placed at the beginning of the text, plant and animal imagery (used in lyric wedding songs to protest at the bride’s separation from the ‘sheltered garden’ of childhood, to represent the acculturation of the bride to her new social role, or to create a locus amoenus within which this acculturation will take place) occurs only in spoken

²⁸⁸ See Introduction, pp.15-22. This image of undomesticated nature again emphasises the bride’s Artemisian aspect: ‘It is possible to perceive that the core of her personality is a concern with transitions and transitional marginal places, such as marshes, junctions of land and water and so on, and marginal situations’ (OCD s.v. ‘Artemis’). The seeming emphasis of the trilogy on dramatic and ritual transition might place the action in the sphere of this goddess, although (as in ‘real-life’ marriage) it is Aphrodite who triumphs.

²⁸⁹ Aesch. Supp. 223-25, 351-52, 510-11; cf. Seaford (1987) 111.

²⁹⁰ Seaford (1986) 52, cf. later uses in Soph. Trach. 529-30 and Eur. IA 1082-89.

²⁹¹ Aesch. Supp. 998-99.

²⁹² See esp. Introduction, pp.15-16.

episodes – not choral songs. Given the popularity of this motif in nuptial poetry, why does it not occur in the Danaids’ songs, which so resemble traditional wedding songs?

I suggest that this is expressive of the emotional state of the Chorus expressed in the lyrics of the play. In reasoned dialogue with other characters, the maidens are willing to countenance their own sexual maturity, and both they and their father express this in terms of the imagery appropriate to the numphê (in the same way that they speak of the sexual union of Zeus and Io in their supplication to the king). When their heightened emotional state prompts them to lyrics, it is indeed as though their fear betrays a ‘pathological aversion’ to sexuality, and they deny this sexuality, even in its negative expression of ‘plucking’, both on their own behalf and that of Io. By doing so, it is possible that they also desexualise the image of the ‘young animal’ by insisting in song on the asexual reproduction of the heifer.

As they vacillate between acceptance and rejection of their own fertility, the Danaids praise the bounty of Argos. They wish for the city to be governed well, in awe of the gods (τῶς πόλις εὖ νέμοιτο / Ζῆνα μέγαν σεβόντων, 670-71) and to be reproduced by successful childbirth (Ἄρτεμιν δ’ ἐκάταν γυναικῶν λόχους ἐφορεύειν, 676-77). The works of Ares are rejected (678-83),²⁹³ and the earth encouraged to be bountiful:

καρποτελῆ δέ τοι Ζεὺς ἐπικραινέτω

φέρματι γὰν πανώρῳ,²⁹⁴

The wish for agricultural and civic fertility and stability resembles those of the comic exodoi, in which the processional hymenaios of which this motif is part signals the ‘happy ending’ for

²⁹³ Compare the exodos of Aristophanes’ Peace: 1319, 24, 27. This song is itself thought to replicate the traditional hymenaios (Maas 1914:131).

²⁹⁴ Aesch. Supp. 688-90, cf. Ar. Pax. 1321-23. Similar ‘civilising’ sentiments are expressed about Hymenaios in Cat. 61 and by the iuuenes of Cat. 62.34-37.

the protagonists and their communities.²⁹⁵ In Aeschylus' play it may serve a similar (though not identical), yet ironic function, as, in the second stasimon, the Chorus rejoice that their struggles seem to be at an end and that they have come to be part of a just society:

ἄγε δὴ λέξωμεν ἐπ' Ἀργείοις

εὐχὰς ἀγαθὰς ἀγαθῶν ποινάς.²⁹⁶

We have, however, already seen how the Danaids' songs rule out any possibility of their integration through marriage and childbirth into any society of which they are a part. As they wish for these blessings upon their new city and praise it for its *dikê*, at the same time their statement ἄζονται γὰρ ὁμαίμους (651) removes them from this equation, as if the Argives had after all vindicated the maidens' removal from the normative cycle of civic life.

Even their wish for blessings upon their new home is overshadowed by a negative perception of fertility, particularly within marriage. For if marriage is the initiation into adulthood for young women as war is for young men,²⁹⁷ the 'plucking' of a maiden's virginity is likened to death by association with the image of the culling of the flower of youth in battle:

ἦβας δ' ἄνθος ἀδρεπτον

ἔστω, μηδ' Ἀφροδίτας

εὐνάτωρ βροτολοιγὸς Ἀ-

²⁹⁵ See Ch.5, esp. p.225.

²⁹⁶ Aesch. Supp. 625-26.

²⁹⁷ Vernant (1999) 19-20 (= 1968: 15).

ρης κέρσειεν ἄωτον.²⁹⁸

That Ares is specifically named as the bed-mate of Aphrodite in this ode suggests the overwhelming power of the goddess as the Danaids perceive it. They fear subjection by her (μηδ' ὑπ' ἀνάγκας / γάμος ἔλθοι· Κυθερείαι / στυγερόν πέλοι τόδ' ἄθλον, 1031-33), yet this is a subjection which every living being must experience, and one in which she glories:

ἐρᾶ μὲν ἀγνὸς οὐρανὸς τρῶσαι χθόνα,
ἔρωσ δὲ γαῖαν λαμβάνει γάμου τυχεῖν·
ὄμβρος δ' ἀπ' εὐναέντος οὐρανοῦ πεσὼν
ἔκυσε γαῖαν· ἡ δὲ τίκτεται βροτοῖς
μήλων τε βοσκᾶς καὶ βίον Δημήτριον
δένδρων τ' ὀπώραν· ἐκ νοτίζοντος γάμου
τέλειθ' ὅσ' ἐστι· τῶν δ' ἐγὼ παραίτιος.²⁹⁹

It is in this subjection to Aphrodite that we are supposed to understand the dramatic intent expressed by the use of epithalamial imagery. Throughout the play, the violence of the *erga* Aphroditês is emphasised, as is her cosmic role as demiurge. To the Danaids, and perhaps also to the Athenian bride, marriage is a rape to which a woman must be subject in order for society to be reproduced. The *locus amoenus* of the wedding song offers one solution to this conceptualisation. In this ideal:

²⁹⁸ Aesch. Supp. 663-66; cf. p.17 n.56.

²⁹⁹ Aesch. fr. 44 R, generally believed to have come from the final play in the Danaids trilogy, although Garvie (1969) 205-6 notes that its context is highly ambiguous.

[the bride] tolerates the violence perpetuated by men in the grip of Eros, and allows herself to be seduced by the perfumes of the flowering meadows. She ends up by submitting to the yoke of marriage, to be united in love on a soft bed, in a relationship of reproductive reciprocity.³⁰⁰

In *Supplices*, the Danaids reject that subjection and reproduction for themselves – though not for the women of Argos. The flowering meadows and soft beds are absent, and *peithô* is merely hinted at to the uncomprehending Herald (εἵπερ εὐσεβῆς πίθοι λόγος, 941) and in the political persuasion that must be undertaken in order to advance the Danaids' cause.³⁰¹ The traditional *makarismos*, beauty and seduction of the wedding song, designed to honour the bride and facilitate her sexual transition, is instead expressed politically, in the persuasion of the assembly and in the blessings bestowed upon Argos. The seductive imagery of Sappho's wedding songs – the choruses of Graces and Muses, the beauty of the evening star and the bride (κάλα, χαρίεσσα, 108, cf. also 104(a) and (b), 112) and groom (ὄρπακι βραδίνωι, 115.2),³⁰² the *olbos* that befalls the man upon his marriage to such a woman (112.1, 113), and even the teasing banter towards the thuggish *θυρώρος*, a ritualised protest against the violence of the occasion (110),³⁰³ is rejected by the poetic strategy of the play in favour of negative images. We see the plucking of a young flower or breaking of an animal, the marriage to death or Hades on the nuptial couch. Only in the final insistence on marriage as woman's destiny and in Aphrodite's train of *Pothos*, *Peitho*, *Harmonia* and the *Erotes* does the tragic dialogue express anything approximating the idealised wedding chamber described

³⁰⁰ Calame (1999) 198.

³⁰¹ Aesch. *Supp.* 516-23, 605-24.

³⁰² Seaford (1987) 112 notes how the comparison of the bridegroom to a plant is used disapprovingly in *Supp.* 104-6 – burgeoning sexual maturity instead becomes the *δυσπαραβούλοισι φρεσίη* of the *Aigyptids* (108).

³⁰³ Cf. Ch.1, pp.46, 67.

in Sappho fr. 194 V.³⁰⁴ Both the erotic and the tragic are inherent in the lyric wedding song – it is probably the case that, because of the nature of the tragic text, in its exploration of the failure to effect the bride’s transition to a new life, ‘one of the negative elements in the wedding ceremony...has triumphed over the positive’.³⁰⁵

This ‘negative’ perception functions on a more complex level. For the images used by the play to express the negative aspect of marriage are precisely those used by political and philosophical discourse from the mid-fifth century to conceptualise marriage as a positive, civilising institution.³⁰⁶ The flower or fruit may be plucked, yet the plant (as an analogy for the female) is cultivated to both its own, and man’s, benefit. The animal may be broken and yoked, but it is tamed and domesticated.³⁰⁷ The parthenos may ‘die’ on the marriage bed, but she is ‘reborn’, like Persephone rising from the Underworld, a *gunê*, the wife and mother of citizens. This image finds its ultimate expression in the image of woman as a fertile field to be ploughed and cultivated.³⁰⁸ This discourse is problematised in *Supplices*, for the Danaids reject the violence inherent in domestication and determine to remain *ἄδάματον* (143), favouring instead an erotic alignment with the divine and the ideal of Io’s painless reproduction.³⁰⁹ The male political programme clashes (momentarily – but portentously) with the female voice, and moreover, the voice of erotic persuasion that would seduce the female to tolerate that violence becomes employed in the male, political sphere. Here the *charis* typical of the wedding song is instead realised by consensual reciprocity between men:

³⁰⁴ Cf. Ch.1, pp.73-74.

³⁰⁵ Seaford (1987) 106-7.

³⁰⁶ Note particularly the image of domestication used by Xenophon *Oec.* 7.10.2-3: ἐπεὶ ἤδη μοι χειροθήης ἦν καὶ ἐτετιθάσευτο ὥστε διαλέγεσθαι, and its use in this context to effect the integration of the bride into the household: ‘Ischomachus is concerned to transform the wife, who was an outsider to his *oikos*, into an insider by means of education’ (Pomeroy (1994) 272).

³⁰⁷ Seaford (1987) 106.

³⁰⁸ E.g. Soph. *OT* 1211-13, *Ant.* 569, *Men. Dysc.* 841-3; see Introduction, p.22. The prominence of agricultural images is discussed by duBois, (1988) 39-85 (woman as ‘field’ and ‘furrow’), and Ormand (1999) 20.

³⁰⁹ Zeitlin (1996) 152-53.

ἐγὼ δ' ἄν οὐ κρᾶίνοιμ' ὑπόσχεσιν πάρος,
ἀστοῖς δὲ πᾶσι τῶνδε κοινώσας πέρι.³¹⁰

The Danaids ignore this masculine discourse and insist that the issue of their consent enter the political arena, demanding that it become a subject for public debate.³¹¹ By doing so, they resist the traditional female passivity of the marital transition. Persuasion is taken out of the personal space of the thalamos and wedding song and into the civic space of the agora and male parrhesia – to refuse the very discourse which that order employs in favour of marriage. The tension between men's assumption of *peithô* and women's potential refusal of it is just one element that adds to the antithetical character of the songs in this play, a character which Seaford supposes may, 'in the context of the successful hymenaial transition at the end of the trilogy and the foundation of the formal-wedding song, have been adduced to explain the antithetical character of the formal wedding song'.³¹²

It would make sense for this transition if *Supplices* were the second play in the Danaid trilogy (though it is uncertain how much space would be left for the resolution of the action after this play).³¹³ The conclusion of the trilogy is ultimately life affirming, as demiurgic Aphrodite expresses marriage in terms of sacred reproduction, possibly in order to encourage the protagonists' acceptance of the institution. If *Aigyptids* was the first play, it might have represented an opposite polarity, which was bridged by the transitional lyrics of *Supplices*. As the motif of lamentation evolves (or resolves) into the wedding song as the trilogy progresses, so too the power of Aphrodite plays a greater role in the Chorus' songs in *Supplices* as the story progresses; affirmation of life begins to take the place of preference for death. The action moves from total denial of sexuality, to acceptance (cf. PV 865-66: *μίαν*

³¹⁰ Aesch. *Supp.* 368-69.

³¹¹ Aesch. *Supp.* 370-75.

³¹² Seaford (1987) 116.

³¹³ Sommerstein (1996) 143-46, contra Garvie (1969) 185-86, Friis Johansen & Whittle (1980) vol. I.24-25.

δὲ παίδων ἡμερος θέλξει τὸ μῆ / κτεῖναι σύνευνον), to its supremacy (fr. 44 R). The increasing prominence of this motif, as Hypermestra spares her husband out of love, suggests that the power of Aphrodite and marital erôs became less agonistic in the course of the drama and more integrated with the preservation and reproduction of the polis.³¹⁴ The drama thus suggests that a complex balance of persuasion – both personal and political – was essential to the continuance and functioning of the polis as a whole.

Tragedy can also juxtapose the joyful occasion of the epithalamium with a situation of lament to create tragic irony, as in the fragment quoted above – when the kouroi and korai arrive to perform the diegertikon, they will find the bridegrooms slaughtered, and so Danaus' wedding song presages a thrênos. Similarly, in another fragment (350 R) Thetis remembers the makarismos given by Apollo at her wedding to Peleus, a blessing which proves false when the god kills the son of that union, Achilles:

ὁ δ' αὐτὸς ἕμνων, αὐτὸς ἐν θοίνῃ παρών,
αὐτὸς τὰδ' εἰπών, αὐτὸς ἔστιν ὁ κτανών
τὸν παῖδα τὸν ἑμόν.³¹⁵

The poet specifically uses the motif (if not the actual term) of the hymenaios to depict the tragic result of that marriage. These are the aspects absent from Sapphic epithalamia, songs which seem to exist in a kind of sheltered, almost mythical, Hyperborean space.³¹⁶ In drama,

³¹⁴ One might, for example, contrast the destructive capacity that results from the attempt to effect marriage by force, ἀνδρας γυναικῶν οὐνεχ' ἀιμάξαι πέδον; (Aesch. Supp. 477) with the productive capacity of marriage accomplished by persuasion and love: αὐτῆ κατ' Ἄργος βασιλικὸν τέξει γένος (Aesch. PV 869).

³¹⁵ Aesch. fr. 350.7-9 R.

³¹⁶ As Redfield (2003) 113 notes: 'The Hyperboreans live at ease with nature and with each other, without age or sickness or struggle or conflict; their lives are given over to music, dance, feasting and ornament. Their life... is like that of the Golden Age and also like that of the gods, in that they wait for no special occasion, but sing and dance more or less continuously... This means that maidens are particularly at home in Hyperborea, in

particularly in comedy, wedding songs can express particular political concerns;³¹⁷ in Aeschylean tragedy, they bring the issue of the subordination through reciprocity assumed by Calame to the forefront of tragic, and therefore civic, discourse, and remark on its failure. As Sommerstein states, however, this fragment may not necessarily have pointed to a total failure of *makarismos* and reciprocity – for Apollo is the god of prophecy and thus speaks only the truth (cf. *Choe.* 559, *Eum.* 615).³¹⁸ Given that this play is probably based on the epic *Aethiopis*, it may be that in the dramatic future presaged by Apollo, Achilles would be restored to life and live forever on the ‘White Island’ in the Black Sea, or in the Elysian Fields.³¹⁹

In this case, the use of particular epithalamial *topoi* gives depth to this discourse and suggests that its failure is not total – for example, uncontained bridal lamentation becomes juxtaposed with, and is eventually superseded by, the formal wedding song and acknowledgement and acceptance of the power of Aphrodite and *erôs* (both social and sexual), suggesting a movement towards resolution of the crisis of male and female, political and personal, *peithô* and *bia* expressed in *Supplices*. The motif of the meta-epithalamium is given a special prominence and specific purpose at the beginning of the text to establish kinship with Io and a parallel with her asexual conception of Epaphus, and this is connected with the wish for civic and agricultural fertility – though fertility is used ironically to presage a ‘happy ending’ where there will be none; at the same time it is also used within the Danaids’ songs to contrast the social norm with their own ideals. In the final song, the possible addition of a male subsidiary chorus reinforces this norm, and insists (although more gently than the *Aigyptids*) that this wish for removal from the cycle of social and sexual life cannot be fulfilled:

the Golden Age world, since maidens are typically sheltered, know nothing of war, political conflict, or toil, and are (or always should be) young, beautiful, healthy, and adorned.’

³¹⁷ *Ar. Pax.* 1318.

³¹⁸ Sommerstein (1996) 375.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

μετὰ πολλᾶν δὲ γάμων ἄδε τελευτὰ
προτερᾶν πέλει γυναικῶν.³²⁰

This acknowledgement is expressed throughout the episodes of the play in the use of plant and animal imagery, which, while it contains traditional elements of bridal reluctance, also privileges a burgeoning sexuality which cannot be denied. The complex combinations of imagery expose a moment of crisis, but the development of these motifs throughout the play – and possibly the trilogy – does point towards an eventual resolution at the end of the Danaids.

Prometheus Bound: political transition

Prometheus Bound is another tragedy in which the hymenaios comments on the interrelation of *peithô* and *bia* in personal and social life. The effortless marital transition of Prometheus and Hesione is contrasted with the violent struggle between Prometheus and Zeus that accompanies the transition to Olympian ascendancy. As Prometheus is held prisoner by Kratos and Bia at the behest of Zeus, chained to a Scythian rock for having given fire to mankind, the Oceanid nymphs, eternal parthenoi, lament his fate. In an ode that structurally

³²⁰ Aesch. Supp. 1050-51; see Introduction, p.14. Taplin (1977) 230-37 sets out the case for a supplementary chorus of maids, based on the presence of *δμώιδες* in v.977, but concludes that it was probably composed of the Argive bodyguards introduced at 985; see also Friis Johansen & Whittle (1980) 306-9. Sommerstein (1996) 151 argues: ‘it would not be unfitting if at [the trilogy’s] end those same Argive spearmen became the Danaids’ new bridegrooms’.

resembles a lament for the dead,³²¹ they contrast his present misery with the joyous day on which they performed the hymenaios for his marriage to their sister:

τὸ διαμφίδιον δέ μοι μέλος προσέπτα
τόδ' ἐκεῖνό θ' ὅτ' ἀμφὶ λουτρὰ καὶ
λέχος σὸν ὑμεναίου
ἴοτατι γάμων, ὅτε τὰν ὁμοπάτριον ἔδνοις
ἄγαγες Ἡσιόναν πιθῶν δάμαρτα κοινόλεκτρον.³²²

The maidens raise the hymenaios around the nuptial bath and bed, a traditional epithalamial image.³²³

Unlike in *Supplices*, where the action of the play may function as an aition for the formal wedding song, here the song is deliberately juxtaposed in opposition to the main drama, making a more stark contrast. While many of the themes seem familiar from Aeschylus' treatment in *Supplices*, their dramatic application is slightly different – a possible case for this drama's inauthenticity.³²⁴ The motif of the hymenaios is used to lament Prometheus as though he were already dead. Though often interchangeable (and indeed, in this passage one is contained within the other), the two songs are at the same time separated

³²¹ Alexiou (1974) 165-184. This consists in the contrast between past and present (τόδ' ἐκεῖνό θ'...ἴοτατι γάμων, 556-60, cf. Hom. Il. 19.287-90); between the mourner and the dead in the first and second persons in the dialogue (φρίσσω δέ σε δερκομένα, 540); an unfulfilled wish (μηδ' ἄμ' ὅ πάντα νέμων / θεῖτ' ἐμῶι γνώμαι κράτος ἀντίπαλον Ζεῦς, 526-27: although this does not exactly meet Alexiou's criteria, it nonetheless expresses a wish that the situation were different), and provocation by reproach (Ζῆνα γὰρ οὐ τρομέων / ἱδίαι† γνώμαι σέβηθι θνατοῦς ἄγαν, Προμηθεῦ, 542-43, cf. Aesch. Choe. 491-96; Hom. Il. 24.725-26, 743-45).

³²² Aesch. PV 555-60.

³²³ Sappho fr. 30.2-5 V; Introduction, pp.13-14.

³²⁴ See Griffith (1977), (1983) 32; West (1990) 53, 67-72, who attributes the play to Aeschylus' son Euphorion; Podlecki (2005) 195-200, who discusses previous criticism before conceding the (albeit unrevised) drama to Aeschylus.

(τὸ διαμφίδιον) both to make the contrast more effective and to show how one can easily become the other in tragedy. On a superficial level, the wedding song functions as tragic irony: juxtaposed with the dramatic situation, it likens it to death – but the gods cannot die (933), which only emphasises the hopelessness of Prometheus’ existence.

There are other issues at work in this passage. Prometheus’ courtship of Hesione expresses his concern for *peithô*. She is δάμαρτα, the state abhorred by the Danaids, but she is also the wooed and wedded wife. Her sisters remember how Prometheus courted her with bride-gifts (ἔδνοις ἄγαγες), persuaded her to be his wife (πιθῶν) and how she holds his bed in common with him (κοινόλεκτρον). Their relationship is one of commonality and reciprocity, which contrasts sharply with the other relationships of the play’s protagonists: Prometheus and Zeus interact with mutual trickery and violence, as a result of which the hero withholds the secret that could prevent the overthrow of the current regime, and his relations with man are called χάρις ἅ χάρις (545) by the Chorus. Similarly, Zeus employs violent lust towards the female sex, threatening Io’s father with the thunderbolt (χαλινὸς πρὸς βίαν, 672) if he does not give up the girl ἄκουσαν ἄκων (671).³²⁵ A prospective marriage with Thetis adds further anti-epithalamial elements as the subdued Prometheus predicts that he will have the last laugh – not only will Zeus’ next conquest bear a son mightier than his father (ἦ πρὸς δάμαρτος ἐξανίσταται θρόνων; 767), but also Zeus will eventually sire a son who will release the bound Titan ἄκοντος Διός (771). The father of gods and men begets nothing but a continuing cycle of violence, which will prove his undoing, and that of all his plans. Such anti-epithalamia, if Prometheus does not reveal his secret, seem to function as justice for his mistreatment.

³²⁵ Cf. Aesch. Supp. 227-28.

The unbalancing of the cosmic or social order due to the mismarriages of the royal house is a theme that permeates the next play to be discussed, Agamemnon, as well as recurring throughout the works of Sophocles. That those who enact these destructive marriages do not recognise that ὁμαλὸς ὁ γάμος, / ἄφοβος (901-2), is the mark of a tyrant. As in the Danaid trilogy, Prometheus suggests that a degree of subjection is necessary, but that a balance must be maintained both publicly and privately in order for the oikos, and in a wider context the social order of which it is a part, to function. Prometheus employs peithô in the marital lektron, and refuses to submit to the political regime until he has been granted reciprocal charis by Zeus (although, admittedly, this could become the catalyst of cosmic upheaval):

οὐκ ἔστιν αἰκισμ' οὐδὲ μηχανήμ' ὅτῳ
προτρέψεταιί με Ζεὺς γεγωνῆσαι τάδε
πρὶν ἂν χαλασθῆι δεσμὰ λυμαντήρια.³²⁶

Zeus, meanwhile, employs bia politically and sexually and so is presented as a tyrant whose desire for dominance will prove his undoing. Prometheus, then, indicates a point of crisis much like that of Supplices, in which the protagonist (Prometheus/the Chorus), while recognising the value of persuasion, rejects the concept in their dealings with the antagonist (Zeus/the Aigyptids), a violent, hypersexual, off-stage presence.

Like the resolution posited for the Danaides, however, (and indeed, that which seems to accompany the Oresteia), there are indications in the fragments (and in PV) that the Prometheia also ended with the establishment of relations of persuasion and reciprocity

³²⁶ Aesch. PV 989-91.

between both divine and mortal figures. In terms of sexual relations, Sommerstein remarks: ‘The last speeches of Prometheus to Io indicate there may be (now or in the future) another side to Zeus’.³²⁷ This is the Zeus of the second oracle of Dodona, who will make Io ἡ Διὸς κλεινὴ δάμαρ (834, a term that recalls Hesione’s status as Prometheus’ wife), and τίθησ’ ἐγκύμονα / ἐπαφῶν ἀταρβεῖ χειρὶ καὶ θυγῶν μόνον (848-49, more akin to the descriptions of his courtship of Io in the *Supplices*). A further tragedy, *Prometheus Lyomenos*, tells us that the Titan was released from his bonds,³²⁸ perhaps as a result of his agreement to reveal the secret of Zeus’ potentially disastrous marriage, though Griffith remarks, ‘how the action was handled in *Lyomenos* we cannot tell’.³²⁹ The *Prometheus* plays, however, like the *Danaides* trilogy and the *Oresteia*, as mentioned above,³³⁰ would seem to give a tragic aetiology of some civilising institution, ritual or cult, in which proper relations – between male and female, god and man, persuasion and force – must be taken into account if the household, society and cosmos is to continue. The *hymenaios* plays an interesting role in this context. As both ‘wedding’ and ‘wedding song’, it is the cornerstone of human society, and its discourse is shown to be central to the proper functioning of all these spheres.

It is implied in *Supplices*, and made explicit in *Prometheus*, that *peithô* played a significant role in this discourse.³³¹ This seems out of place in Athens, where the emphasis on the subordination and seclusion of women might be thought to preclude an idealised discourse between husband and wife. This is not only not the case in Aeschylus, but it also seems that persuasion occupied a central role in Athenian ideology. The goddess *Peitho* was fundamental to the democracy defended so rigorously by the Athenians against the encroachment of Persian tyranny during Aeschylus’ lifetime. As one of the foundational

³²⁷ Sommerstein (1996) 307.

³²⁸ Cf. Schol. PV 511.

³²⁹ Griffith (1983) 303.

³³⁰ See pp.81-82.

³³¹ Buxton (1982) esp. 67-68, 90-91.

elements of the city – Pausanias states that when Theseus had brought the people of Athens together, he founded the cults of Aphrodite Pandemos and Persuasion³³² – she enjoyed cult as the goddess whose *timai* encouraged ‘political and domestic concord’,³³³ and scholars have often identified references to a contemporary (mis)persuasion of the Athenian Assembly in *Supplices*.³³⁴ Though it is possible to read topical allusions into these plays, however, what is significant here is the general importance of persuasion for an Athenian audience – and its use, for better or worse, underpins our final play for discussion.

Agamemnon: perverted transition

If, in *Supplices* and *Prometheus*, it is possible to insist that proper honours be given in marriage, that the correct forms be observed, and that *peithô* be employed in the *thalamos*, *Agamemnon* shows such *νυμφοτιμία* to be the very cause of a city’s downfall, and an inappropriate act which reaches beyond the occasion of its performance to blight the entire family of the men who go to war over it.

As the Herald announces *Agamemnon*’s victory and incipient return to Argos, the Chorus of Elders reflect on the wrath which repaid the Trojans for their wedding songs when Paris brought Helen to the city:

³³² Pausanias 1.22.3.1-4, Redfield (2003) 66.

³³³ Redfield (2003) 80.

³³⁴ Sommerstein (1997) 74-77: Cimon’s persuasion of the Athenians to support Pericleidias the Spartan in the Messenian revolt at Ithome in 462. The *Oresteia* is far more immediately ‘topical’ (Sommerstein (1996) 396). Herington (1967) 74-85, (1986) 28-31, however, argues for a West Greek bias: Aeschylus’ biography preserves a tradition of linguistic influence (Athen. 9.402b1-c2) and local knowledge (Schol. Ar. Pax. 73b.5-6, Macrobius Sat. 5.19.17.1-18.1) but Herington also observes a sharp break in the representation of the cosmos between, on the one hand, the *Persae* and *Theban* tetralogy, and the *Danaid* tetralogy, *Prometheia* and *Oresteia*, each of which he sees as betraying awareness of contemporary western Greek thinking. Pelling (1997) 217-18 and Macleod (1982) 144 both argue that these tragedies are more than political plays, and the text may have many meanings for each audience or reader – just as the audience of a wedding song may identify with the same image in a number of ways.

τραπέζας ἀτί-
μωσιν ὑστέρῳι χρόνῳι
καὶ ξυνεστίου Διὸς
πρασσομένα τὸ νυμφότι-
μον μέλος ἐκφάτως τίοντας,
ὑμέναιον ὅς τὸτ' ἐπέρ-
ρεπε γαμβροῖσιν ἀείδειν.
μεταμανθάνουσα δ' ὕμνον
Πριάμου πόλις γεραῖα
πολύθρηνον μέγα που στένει, κικλήσκου-
σα Πάριν τὸν ἀϊνολεκτρον.³³⁵

Seaford's observation that Hymenaios 'has a habit of turning wedding celebrations into funeral lamentations'³³⁶ is particularly borne out by this passage – nowhere else in Aeschylus is such tragic irony manifested by the interchangeable nature of the hymenaios and the thrênos (additional emphasis is given to these terms by their primary positions in vv.707 and 711) than in this κῆδος. It is an 'anti-epithalamium' par excellence, 'the reader or audience at times being aware of the impending tragedy or evil when the participants are not'.³³⁷ This hymenaios seems to be more integrated into the action of the play than that of Prometheus, for while it contrasts the joyous nuptial ode with the lament brought on as a result of Paris' marriage to Helen, it has immediate consequences for both this flashback scene and the wider

³³⁵ Aesch. Ag. 702-12.

³³⁶ Seaford (1987) 113.

³³⁷ Tufte (1970) 39.

dramatic context – for what is birthed from this marriage is not children, but a Fury³³⁸ who destroys those who perform the wedding song before turning her attention to the instruments of that destruction – the House of Atreus. Nor is this house free from sexual transgression: Agamemnon attempts to bring his concubine Cassandra into the house in a scene that resembles a wedding, contributing to his downfall at the hands of Clytemnestra.

Cassandra, having been forcibly removed from her natal home, enters the scene with Agamemnon on a carriage (ἀπήνης, 1039) like a bride. Clytemnestra describes her necessary submission to slavery in terms akin to those of marriage: χαλινὸν δ' οὐκ ἐπίσταται φέρειν / πρὶν αἵματηρὸν ἐξαφρίζεσθαι μένος (1066-67), as do the Chorus: εἴκουσ' ἀνάγκηι τῆιδε καίνισον ζυγόν (1071). Her own words, however, betray the marital relationship as that between Agamemnon and Clytemnestra (ὄμοδέμνιον πόσιν, 1108). Clytemnestra is herself an archetypal bride, the kalon kakon brought into the home – the dog that bites the hand that feeds it (1228-30), a lion cub as much as her sister Helen (1258-60).³³⁹ But for Cassandra, the 'death' she will undergo in the house is no mere metaphor for consummation: ποῖ δὴ με δεῦρο τὴν τάλαιναν ἤγαγες / οὐδέν ποτ' εἰ μὴ ξυνθανομένην (1138-39), and it is her prophecy, not she herself, who is veiled as a bride: καὶ μὴν ὁ χρησμὸς οὐκετ' ἐκ καλυμμάτων / ἔσται δεδορκῶς νεογάμου νύμφης δίκην (1178-79).

Like these anti-epithalamial elements, Helen's wedding song is a hymenaios that should never have taken place, a wedding song performed for another man's wife, and so the bridal timê which may be insisted upon in Aeschylus is out of place here – Helen is not numphê; she is already a gunê, a woman and mother married to Menelaus. The persuasion

³³⁸ Also identified with Helen (νυμφόκαλυτος Ἐρινύς) at Ag. 737-49.

³³⁹ cf. Knox (1979) 33-34.

and reciprocal honour that should guarantee the continuance of society is instead responsible for its destruction, as Helen repays her *νυμφοτιμία* with invasion, death, and destruction. In the context of the Athenian polis, a further aspect of courtship should be taken into account to explain this inappropriate exchange, for however persuasion may be employed in the thalamos, the legal relationship of reciprocity was that which existed between the bridegroom and the kurios of the bride. Marriage was first and foremost an exchange contracted by two men – the giving out of the bride from one household to provide children for another. I would argue that in Agamemnon, the balance of violence and persuasion is reversed both socially and sexually. What should be a rape is painted as a marriage for both Helen and Cassandra, with wedding songs and bridal honours – consequently, what should be the happy occasion of a girl's marriage becomes her death, in turn painted as a rape. As Iphigenia is led to the sacrificial altar, ἔβαλλ' ἕκαστον θυτήρων ἀπ' ὄμματος βέλει φιλοίκτωι (240-41); her beseeching glances painfully recall the smouldering looks of Helen as she is led to her new home on her 'wedding day': μαλθακὸν ὀμμάτων βέλος (742), and Cassandra's bloody prophecies.³⁴⁰

It is tempting to view the correspondences in the light of a perverted wedding ceremony, but what must be stressed here is the perversion inherent in these acts and in the House of Atreus, not the wedding ceremony. Though rape and marriage were related in Greek thought, and indeed, the Greek wedding ceremony contained elements of ritual violence, Aeschylus here demonstrates that excessive force (or excessive persuasion) results only in death and the destruction of society. Iphigenia becomes, rather than makes, the customary sacrifices for the setting out on a new venture (*προτέλεια*, 227);³⁴¹ she is not married (even to/in death), but her death becomes a violent, bestial parody of sexual assault

³⁴⁰ See p.101.

³⁴¹ Cf. Fraenkel (1950) 40-41: 'The word in itself...suggests cheerful images and ideas. For this very reason here [v.65] and in 227 Aeschylus inverts it and gives it a sinister meaning', 129, also Eur. IA 433, 718.

by her father and his ministers: she is seized (λαβεῖν, 234), forcibly gagged (βίαι χαλινῶν τ' ἀναύδωι μένει, 238), and finally submits to voyeuristic nudity (κρόκου βαφὰς δ' ἔς πέδον χέουσα, 239) before the Chorus can bear to recall no more. Finally, she receives no νυμφότιμον μέλος, no wedding songs, but the virginal songs she sung beside her father's table (243-47) are recalled with grief by the Chorus in contrast to her abrupt silencing.

This leads to a cycle of violence and sexual corruption, which reaches its point of crisis in the murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra. The result of these unions, moreover, is not the fertility and social cohesion we expect from marriage, but a Fury who devastates the families and societies of both of Helen's husbands.³⁴² The resolution of this crisis comes only when the Furies which arise from another murder, that by Orestes of Clytemnestra, are incorporated into the polis as goddesses of marriage and fertility at Athens.

The hymenaios of Agamemnon introduces the idea of recognition of woman's destructive potentiality – a potentiality that may be unleashed if the marriage is not performed properly. Menelaus, Paris and Agamemnon fail to conduct appropriately the exchange of women and so bring a 'beautiful evil' into their houses. This Hesiodic idea of woman, the gift ὅτε δὴ κακὸν εἶχ' ἐνόησεν,³⁴³ is also an Athenian concern, resulting from the tenuous situation of ekdosis which meant a bride still belonged to her natal kin even after marriage. A wife was thus a stranger in the house, of whose loyalties one could never be certain. In Sophocles' *Antigone*, Creon expresses men's anxieties about the potential character of the woman brought into the home,³⁴⁴ and this anxiety is also stated by the chorus' simile of Helen in *Agamemnon* as a lion cub reared in the house, which became:

³⁴² Aesch. *Ag.* 1186-93.

³⁴³ Hes. *Op.* 89.

³⁴⁴ Soph. *Ant.* 648-51.

ἐκ θεοῦ δ' ἱερεὺς τις Ἄ-
τας δόμοις προσεθρέφθη.³⁴⁵

The 'inherent conflict of interest'³⁴⁶ in the institution of exogamous marriage continually begs the question: if a woman does not truly belong to her husband's family, why should she not transfer her allegiance to the house of another man? Tragedy explores these crises of integration, both those that are completed, as in *Agamemnon*, and those that remain incomplete, as in *Suppliants* and many plays of Sophocles. Here the resolution of that crisis comes about in an unusual fashion. In highlighting the destructive potential of Helen, Aeschylus creates the female as the locus of violence and barrenness. As the trilogy progresses towards its conclusion, the male therefore becomes its polar opposite: the locus of persuasion (in the law courts) and reproduction (in Apollo's privileging of the father as genitor)³⁴⁷ – although Athena provides an element of ambiguity, as an exponent of 'good' female persuasion.³⁴⁸

When the Furies are persuaded, the transitions which have been problematised in their previous verses (the transition from old to new gods, *Eum.* 150; from maternal blood to the privileging of the marriage bond, 261-62; the Erinyes' vengeful telos at 393; their fear of transition to lawlessness, 490-98; and their anti-epithalamic threat of blight against the fertility of Athens, 775-92, 807-22) move more towards an epithalamial bias, a resolution of the theme of marriage. The Chorus are given reciprocal honours for their beneficence: τὰν ἐμῶν χάριν (939). Mortal girls are encouraged to find partners: νεανίδων δ' ἐπηράτων /

³⁴⁵ Aesch. *Ag.* 735-36; cf. p.101; Knox (1979) 27-29; Goldhill (1984) 61.

³⁴⁶ Griffith (2001) 131.

³⁴⁷ Aesch. *Eum.* 658-61.

³⁴⁸ Athena is 'entirely for the male' (737-38), and as such her persuasion is highly rhetorical: 'what she does goes beyond what we would call "persuading": she uses a veiled threat [esp. 826-30], promises, argument, and so forth. If we recognise that the main sense of πείθω is "I get (someone) to acquiesce", then the character of the scene is more adequately conveyed' (Buxton 1982:49).

ἀνδροτυχεῖς βίους δότε (959-60). Athena credits Peitho for such a result (970), and the Furies celebrate public concord: κοινοφιλεῖ διανοίαι (985). The verses which accompany their procession off-stage seem, in this context, to resemble nuptial makarismos as well as a religious hymn: <χαίρετε> χαίρετ' ἐν ἀισιμίαισι πλούτου (996), and they are escorted by women and Athena herself under torchlight to their new home (1021-27). The destructive female, whose 'rejection of marriage leads to the massacre of the male, the corollary of which is the threat of extinction to human society as a whole',³⁴⁹ is thus finally given back a productive role (though for the Eumenides, this is more kourotrophic than generative) in subordination to the masculine political order.³⁵⁰

Aeschylus implies that marital and social relations are always in delicate balance, ever evolving, and hinge on proper personal and political conduct of which the hymenaios is a part. In his tragedies, this concept is one of a range of functions of the wedding song: hymenaios are used to discuss the potential problems of marriage or the political order; to mourn or forebode mourning; or to create dramatic irony through the contrast between a joyful marriage and the tragic situation. None of these categories are exclusive of the others, and they create a loaded drama based on both the traditional antithetical character of the song and its interaction with contemporary discourse.

These songs are performed variously by maidens and mixed-sex groups (the composition of the chorus of gambroi in *Agamemnon* is unspecified, but the tone of the passage is one of communal celebration). Regardless of performer, the wedding songs give a powerful emphasis to the interdependence of gender roles in Aeschylus' societies. Hymenaios are used to evoke the gender crisis by commenting on and insisting upon reciprocity and the proper balance of relations between the sexes, reflected in the wider framework of the polis

³⁴⁹ Zeitlin (1996) 91.

³⁵⁰ Aesch. *Eum.* 938-948.

and the cosmos. As such, they are especially appropriate to tragedies in which marriage and its role in the integral fabric of the polis or cosmos is an especial concern – wherein its inherent crises must be resolved in order for life to continue.

On the shield of Achilles, we saw the marriages in the ‘city at peace’ forming an essential part of social life³⁵¹ – a microcosm for the cosmos. Aeschylus’ plays that use the wedding song develop this idea that the conduct appropriate to a marriage is also appropriate to the public sphere. This is our first real example of a civic hymeneal ideology: relationships within the oikos must function properly for those within the polis to work. In tragedy, however, the transition between oikoi and between regimes usually fails. Aeschylus offers a model in his trilogies of subordination through reciprocity – *charis* – with which to remedy these failures. Indeed, we may speculate that the ‘trilogy’ framework can be understood in dramatic terms as representing the separation, transition, and reintegration of the protagonists into normative social life. In these plays, the crises represented by the use of the *hymenaios* are resolved in the course of the overall performance. As we will shortly see, with Sophocles and Euripides, however, the rite of passage schema is rejected even on the meta-dramatic level. There is no option for reintegration, and so a dangerous potentiality is left uncomfortably unresolved.

³⁵¹ See Introduction, p.11.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TRAGIC HYMENAIOS: SOPHOCLES

This chapter examines how Sophocles uses the topos of the hymenaios, and how this contributes to our understanding of marriage in democratic Athens. A relatively straightforward use of the term in *Oedipus Tyrannus* would seem to suggest that perverted hymeneals and foreboding are the order of the day. Teiresias predicts disaster with the revelation of the truth behind Oedipus' marriage to Jocasta: ὅταν κατὰ ἴσθη τὸν ὑμέναιον, ὃν δόμοις / ἄνορμον εἰσέπλευσας, εὐπλοΐας τυχῶν;³⁵² This is an intriguing development of the imagery of departure and transition in the wedding song. The journey undertaken traditionally refers to the female, as it is the bride who is transferred between oikoi. Here, however, Jocasta is the 'harbour' into which Oedipus unknowingly 'sailed': the transition was improperly, if unwittingly, performed (indeed, Oedipus made the journey to Thebes and married Jocasta, 35), and the transgressive sexuality that results can only be resolved by the utter destruction of the house (425).

A greater complexity is, however, at work elsewhere in Sophocles' use of the term hymenaios. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, a variation of this word is used to describe death:

ὁ δ' ἐπίκουρος ἰσοτέλεστος,

ἦ Αἶδος ὅτε μοῖρ' ἀνυμέναιος

ἄλυρος ἄχορος ἀναπέφηνε,

³⁵² Soph. OT. 422-23. Here hymenaios is used as 'marriage', yet the song can also be inferred from the implication of lamentation in the passage, and the ironic use of *boa* in v.420, which can mean a cry or shout as well as a joyful exclamation made during a wedding song, as in Eur. Tro. 335-37.

θάνατος ἐς τελευτάν.³⁵³

Death holds no wedding hymns, no music, no dancing. Jebb suggests that this is because death is more properly owed the lament: ‘to death belongs the θρῆνος, not the joyous song of the marriage procession, or the music of the lyre, with dancing’,³⁵⁴ but a further analogy may be drawn. If death is anumenaios, then to be anumenaios is to exist in a state akin to death. This chapter will explore the meaning of that state for three ‘bride’ figures: Antigone and Electra, who are referred to by this term, and Deianeira, who is not, but whose transition seems somehow interrupted, leading to an ambiguous ‘epithalamial’ song. As we shall see, this term does not merely imply death, but effectively deprives these women of either telos: they exist in permanent liminality, expressed by erêmia.

Antigone: Procession to Death

Scholars have seen the excessive mourning of Antigone and Electra, as a result of which they are condemned to death and unmarried ‘living death’, in the context of concerns of female speech and action in the mid-fifth century: women’s voices are associated with their subjectivity and sexuality;³⁵⁵ and at the same time, many traditionally female symbolic roles (for example public mourning) became increasingly allocated to the polis while excluding women as active participants.³⁵⁶ The struggle of these heroines to act in the face of the regime can be seen as a reaction to the policies of democratic Athens, either the Periclean citizenship law of 451/50BC which foregrounded women’s positions as wives and transmitters of

³⁵³ Soph. OC. 1220-23.

³⁵⁴ Jebb (1900) 193.

³⁵⁵ McClure (1999) 19-20.

³⁵⁶ Pelling (2000) 190-91, contra Blok (2001) 106, also Tyrrell (1999) 148-55, esp. on the relation of Polyneices’ burial to the Samian episode (Thuc. 1.115.2-117).

citizenship, or bound up in the ideology of funerary legislation.³⁵⁷ A clash of public and private may be understood, and these women's lack of marriage rites as one consequence of their rejection of Athenian female norms. Some see them as heroic, others as deeply transgressive, but all acknowledge deep ambiguity.³⁵⁸ The Sophoclean use of the *hymenaios*, while connected with the ambiguous position of the Athenian wife and with tragic lamentation, is not confined to this issue. It articulates concern for the necessity of this transition and the roles that must be played if it is to be successfully enacted. It also betrays the inadequacy of this ritual – or indeed, any other form of containment – for control of female sexuality, and a deep-seated anxiety regarding Eros, the god through whose agency the marital transition, and hence reproduction of society, was supposed to be achieved.³⁵⁹

The heroine of *Antigone* defies Creon's ruling in order to bury and mourn her brother Polynices, a traitor to the state, and is subsequently sentenced to death.³⁶⁰ Her sentence ruptures the filial bond between her fiancé Haimon and his father Creon, the author of the edict. As such, her laments for her unmarried death follow on from a choral ode which both praises and blames the power of Eros, as an irresistible and cosmic force equal in might to the laws of the city (*τῶν μεγάλων πάρεδρος ἐν ἀρχαῖς / θεσμῶν*, 797-98) – though one not necessarily conducive to their actuation (*νῦν δ' ἤδη ἴγὼ καύτος θεσμῶν / ἔξω φέρομαι τάδ' ὄρων*, 801-2). Seaford suggests that this hymn 'is appropriate to a *hymenaios* context',³⁶¹ and its use of epithalamial imagery and a wedding-like procession suggests a *hymenaios*, but this is perverted. Eros is militarised, an image unparalleled in the

³⁵⁷ Cf. Alexiou (1974) 22, Holst-Warhaft (1992) 3-6, McClure (1999) 45-47.

³⁵⁸ Jebb (1900) xx. on *Antigone*; Segal (1981) 168, 177, 192, 200 on *Antigone*; Sorum (1982) 205 on *Antigone*, 208-9 on *Electra*; Seaford (1985) 317 on *Electra*'s justified but 'excessive' mourning; Murnaghan (1986) 193 on *Antigone*, (subverted by vv.904-20); Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 139-40 on *Antigone*; Kitzinger (1991) 308; Griffith (1999) esp. 29 on *Antigone*; Foley (2001) 150-51, 61 on *Electra*, 197, 180, 182 on *Antigone*.

³⁵⁹ Ch.1, pp.73-76.

³⁶⁰ *Soph. Ant.* 26-30.

³⁶¹ Seaford (1987) 108.

epithalamium.³⁶² He spends the night upon the cheeks of a girl (ἐν μαλακαῖς παρειαῖς / νεάνιδος ἐννουχεύεις, 783-84) and gives victory to the bride:

νικᾶ δ' ἐναργῆς βλεφάρων
ἥμερος εὐλέκτρου
νύμφας, τῶν μεγάλων πάρεδρος ἐν ἀρχαῖς
θεσμῶν· ἄμαχος γὰρ ἐμ-
παίζει θεὸς Ἀφροδίτα.³⁶³

This image recalls the *erôs* and *himeros* characteristic of the face of a bride in Sappho fr. 112 V.3-4 V).³⁶⁴ While the wedding song stresses the mutuality between bride and groom, however (he is ὄλβιε to possess her, 112.1; she is blessed with grace by Aphrodite, 112.5), the hymn to Eros is more agonistic – the bride is the victor in a contest which destroys, rather than reproduces, families. Gods and men alike are subject to this *erôs*, suggesting a cosmic and social order held to ransom by the capricious daimon:

καί σ' οὐτ' ἀθανάτων φύξιμος οὐδεις
οὐθ' ἀμερίων σέ γ' ἄν-
θρώπων, ὃ δ' ἔχων μέμνηεν.³⁶⁵

³⁶² Although cf. Aphrodite σύμμαχος in Sappho fr. 1.28 V.

³⁶³ Soph. Ant. 795-800. Contrast the serious ἄμαχος with Aphrodite's sportive activity: ἐμπαίζει. This juxtaposition highlights the gulf between mortal and immortal activity.

³⁶⁴ See Ch. 1, p.46.

³⁶⁵ Soph. Ant. 788-90.

With the laws of the city set as game-pieces in the sport of Aphrodite and held as nothing beside divine law by Antigone, social norms and *telê* become inverted and the anticipated nuptial chamber instead becomes the *παγκοίταν θάλαμον* (804).

This raw, cosmic power of Eros is very rarely stressed in wedding songs. Its closest parallel is in the *hieros gamos* of Aeschylus fr. 44 R – but in this fragment, the universality of love and marriage is represented positively.³⁶⁶ It is a productive and beneficial *erôs*, inverted in the Sophoclean ode. The Sapphic language is here used antithetically. This is neither a communal celebration nor a song by maidens, but performed by a chorus of old men, to stress the negative power of love over Haimon. As such, the Chorus emphasise the destructive rather than the creative aspects of love. The ode betrays an unease regarding one of the principal *topoi* of the epithalamium, an unease directly connected with the erotic power of the bride. The language may be epithalamial, but the purpose of this song is the opposite.

Antigone seems to have turned her back on marriage:³⁶⁷ while Haimon coaxes and threatens Creon for her life, and commits suicide in her tomb in a perverse *mimêsis* of marriage,³⁶⁸ she never once mentions her fiancé,³⁶⁹ and opts for the noose and a ‘virginal’ suicide.³⁷⁰ To the social order of Thebes, she represents a dangerous potentiality, aligned both sexually and politically with the previous regime.³⁷¹ Physical containment seems the only

³⁶⁶ Ch.2, p.91.

³⁶⁷ Yet it is she who laments that she must die unmarried: 813-16, 867, 876-77, 917. This tragic paradox is discussed further on pp.114-15.

³⁶⁸ Soph. Ant. 635-765, 1238-41: *καὶ φυσίων ὀξεῖαν ἐκβάλλει ῥοήν / λευκῆ παρειᾶ φοινίου σταλάγματος. / κείται δὲ νεκρὸς περὶ νεκρῶ, τὰ νυμφικὰ / τέλη λαχῶν δειλαιοῦ ἔν γ' Αἰδοῦ δόμοις.*

³⁶⁹ Jebb (repr. 2004) 110 thought that v.572, *ὦ φίλταθ' Αἴμον, ὥς σ' ἀτιμάζει πατήρ*, must be spoken by Antigone: ‘This solitary reference to her love heightens in a wonderful degree our sense of her unselfish devotion to a sacred duty’. The problem is that it is a solitary reference: nowhere else in the play are Antigone’s feelings for Haimon discussed. Most editors now assign this line to Ismene: Brown (1987) 68-69, Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990) 206 with app. crit., Griffith (1999) 92, 217: ‘a third person’s interruption of a two-person *stichomythia* would be highly unusual (unparalleled in S.); and in any case much more characteristic of the warm-hearted Ismene to express such concern, than of Ant., who is already devoted to death and never utters a word about Haimon or her feelings for him’.

³⁷⁰ Soph. Ant. 1221-22, Loraux (1987) 15; cf. Ch. 2, p.84.

³⁷¹ Cf. 73-74: *φίλη μετ' αὐτοῦ κείσομαι, φίλου μέτα, / ὅσια πανουργήσασ', 524-25: κάτω νυν ἐλθοῦσ', εἰ φιλητέον, φίλει / κείνους.*

way to enclose the danger she embodies. Dramatically, her protests at this containment are also enclosed, between a condemnation of the bride's erotic potentiality in the third stasimon and myths of imprisonment in the fourth.

This ode draws a parallel between Antigone and other mythical figures imprisoned in an attempt to enclose their potentiality. Danae's is also both sexual and political: she is held ἐν τυμβήρει θαλάμῳ (945-46) in an attempt to prevent her bearing a son. Lycurgus is imprisoned by Dionysus πετρώδει ἐν δεσμῶ (957-58) for his own attempt to check (παύεσκε, 963) the Maenads and the εὖιον πῦρ (964). Cleopatra's sons are trapped in blindness by their stepmother Eidothea while Cleopatra is called ἀνυμφεύτου (980), an expression which denies her fulfilment even though she had married and borne children. Their imprisonment is not made explicit, but is implied or foreshadowed in the description of Cleopatra's upbringing τηλεπόροις δ' ἐν ἄντροις (983). The reference to two illicit or unhappy unions in this song and their correspondences to Antigone's situation in the context of the preceding action might recall the narrative 'meta-epithalamium'. But this, like other epithalamial topoi in this sequence, is inverted. The closing verses pronounce that harsh fate afflicts even those of royal birth, such as the princess now imprisoned: κάπ' ἐκείνῃ / Μοῖραι μακράωνες ἔσχον, ὦ παῖ (986-87).

It is implicit in all these stories, however, that such potentiality cannot be artificially contained: Danae bears the Ζηνὸς γονὰς χρυσορύτους (950); Lycurgus is in turn afflicted with madness (μανίας, 959). The Cleopatra story has no clear result, but an alternative tradition asserts that Phineus, the children's father, blinded them, and was punished for this by the Argonauts.³⁷² Fate is inescapable (οὐτ'...ἐκφύγοιεν, 952-54). The

³⁷² Apollod. 3.15.3, cf. Griffith (1999) 291. Diodorus Siculus (4.43.3.3-44.3.8): imprisonment, not blinding; Schol. Hom. Od. 12.69.14-21: Phineus punished by Zeus; Serv. ad Aen. 3.209, Myth. Vat. 1.27, 2.142: Phineus

fact that many of these suppressions end in violent release may highlight the nature of marriage as being externally imposed and, to an extent, an artificial, ritual containment of a masculine construct of ‘wild’ sexuality that is itself somewhat artificial. Murnaghan comments on this artificiality and its tension with natal kinship bonds in the *Antigone*:

As she articulates a rationale for preferring the tie of kinship she has honoured over the marriage she has necessarily renounced, *Antigone* draws an important distinction between ties of marriage and tie of blood: ties of marriage are seen as artificial human constructs that can be made and unmade while ties of blood are seen as natural, unalterable, and incapable of being manufactured through human conventions.³⁷³

That marriage ties can be ‘made and unmade’ suggests insecurity in the institution; a fallacy in the model of sexual ‘containment’ it offers. The lyric epithalamium implied the inevitability and desirability of such containment;³⁷⁴ Sophocles’ use of epithalamial topoi exposes its inadequacy. The position of the Athenian bride as movable goods, ‘lent out’ by her natal oikos to produce children for another, yet still subject to her original kurios,³⁷⁵ may contribute to such a feeling of inadequacy and insecurity. If the separation of a woman from her birth family is never completed, neither is her reintegration into a new home. *Antigone* represents a dramatic extreme of Greek marriage, in which female sexuality might always be regarded as being in transition. Rejecting marriage, only physical confinement may contain

punished by gods, Argonauts run off Harpies; Schol. Ap. Rhod. Argon. 2.178 (141.1-6): blinding, no retribution; Hyg. Fab. 19.1-2 (similar); Phylarchus FGH fr. 18: Aesclepius restored the sight of the boys for Cleopatra’s sake, but was killed by Zeus’ thunderbolt for this, s.v. Sextus Empiricus Adv. Math. 1.262.1-2 (cf. 260.8), Schol. Pind. P. 3.96.9-10, Schol. Eur. Alc. 1.20-21 (see Introduction, p.4).

³⁷³ Murnaghan (1986) 198.

³⁷⁴ Ch.1, pp.68, 76.

³⁷⁵ LSJ s.v. ἐκδίδωμι shows the connection of the term ‘to give in marriage’ with ‘letting for hire’, especially of slaves for work.

her, yet even this cannot prevent damage to both natal and marital families – which for her, are the same thing.

The epithalamium does not wholly explain the dramatic sequence articulated above, but its resonances expose certain perceptions about women’s valuation of the hymenaios. The two choral odes enclose an antiphonal lament between Antigone and the Chorus. Amoeban song is a feature of epithalamia; the most obvious examples pitting female resistance to marriage against male insistence on its necessity.³⁷⁶ Here again the motif is inverted: Antigone sorrows for the married life she will not have, while the Chorus counsel her to tlamosunê and remind her that this is her own will (αὐτόνομος, 821). Bridal reluctance is taken to its most reductive conclusion: the valuation of her natal family to the point of denial of marriage.³⁷⁷ Her lament, however, undermines such ‘reluctance’: she protests that her previous mourning was in accordance with her rights as daughter and sister of the dead, identifying herself as belonging to the paternal oikos:

ἐλθοῦσα μέντοι κάρτ’ ἐν ἐλπίσιν τρέφω
φίλη μὲν ἤξειν πατρί, προσφιλῆς δὲ σοί,
μῆτερ, φίλη δὲ σοί, κασίγνητον κάρα.³⁷⁸

When she is punished by death for her performance of this duty (εὐσεβοῦς’, 924), in death she laments that she will have no share in marriage, thus identifying herself as ‘bride’:

³⁷⁶ E.g. Aesch. Supp. 1018-73 (cf. Swift 2006a:132, 2006b:205), Cat. 62; see Introduction, pp.24-25; Ch.2, pp.96-97.

³⁷⁷ Foley (2001) 175, esp. n.11 on the name Antigone as meaning ‘instead of or opposed to generation’. A similar etymology can be observed for Electra as deriving from an alpha-privative meaning ‘without lektron’, hence ‘unmarried’.

³⁷⁸ Soph. Ant. 897-99.

οὐθ' ὑμεναίων

ἔγκληρον, οὐτ' ἐπὶ νυμ-

φείοις πῶ μέ τις ὕμνος ὕ-

μνησεν, ἀλλ' Ἀχέροντι νυμφεύσω.³⁷⁹

Previous chapters have shown that bridal lament in the first person is usually a protest against the transition, or more specifically, against the separation from the 'sheltered garden' of parthenia.³⁸⁰ Here Antigone laments that this will not happen to her. She undergoes a departure (τὰν νεάταν ὁδὸν / στείχουσας, 807-8), but there will be no makarismos to accompany it, no erôs to facilitate the transition, and no reintegration at the end of it. As the bride of death, she is ἀραῖος ἄγαμος (867), and as ἀνυμέναιος (876-77) is also ἄκλαντος and ἄφιλος (876). She will have a place neither among the living nor the dead, but will be perpetually liminal (μέτοικος, 852).³⁸¹ This liminality emphasises her fundamental paradox: her simultaneous privileging of the natal over the marital, and lamentation for the loss of that marriage.

The notion that women are owed a share in hymenaios is echoed in Sophocles' Electra as an aspect of adulthood of which Electra and Chrysothemis are cheated along with their father's inheritance (ἔστερημένη) and is repeated of Polyxena in Euripides' Hecuba: ἀνυμφος ἀνυμέναιος ὦν μ' ἐχρήν τυχεῖν (416). The women themselves lament their lack of wedding songs, suggesting that in spite of their protests, this ritual was regarded by

³⁷⁹ Soph. Ant. 813-16.

³⁸⁰ See Introduction, pp.15-22.

³⁸¹ See also Sorum (1982) 207 for the inversion of the marital telos in this episode: 'on the verge of marriage and womanhood she returns to her parents'.

women as their right or ‘due’.³⁸² Contemporary medical discourse, with which Sophocles was probably familiar,³⁸³ regarded marriage not merely as a woman’s lot or share, but as essential to her health.³⁸⁴ She must reproduce for her own benefit as well as that of society. Antigone’s erotic fascination with death could be a manifestation of the symptoms of delayed maturation mentioned in the Hippocratic texts – an ailment which could be cured through marriage and intercourse, woman’s ‘natural’ transition.³⁸⁵ The deprivation of this telos leaves only one option open: marriage to death. Yet as we see, this is no marriage, and no telos, at all:

καὶ νῦν ἄγει με διὰ χερῶν οὔτω λαβῶν
ἄλεκτρον, ἀνυμέναιον, οὔτε του γάμου
μέρος λαχοῦσαν οὔτε παιδείου τροφῆς
ἀλλ’ ὦδ’ ἐρήμος πρὸς φίλων ἢ δύσμορος
ζῶσ’ ἐς θανόντων ἔρχομαι κατασκαφάς.³⁸⁶

Death may be *anumenaios* for the Chorus of OC, but for Antigone, to be *anumenaios* is a living death: ζῶσ’ ἐς θανόντων. By insisting on her performance of funeral rites, she denies herself the wedding song, aligning herself with the dead while still alive. As a result, she goes alive to her tomb without rites of her own.³⁸⁷

³⁸² Soph. Ant. 814, Lloyd-Jones (1994) 79.

³⁸³ Kosak (2004) 8, 11-13, cf. Collinge (1962) 47; Simpson (1969) and Ryzman (1992) on disease themes; Wilson (1941), Biggs (1966) and Worman (2000) on engagement with contemporary medical issues; Knox (1957) on OT.

³⁸⁴ Hipp. De Virg. Morb. 1.10-12: αἱ δὲ παρθέναι, ὀκόσησιν ὥρη γάμου, παρανδρούμεναι, τοῦτο μᾶλλον πάσχουσιν ἅμα τῇ καθόδῳ τῶν ἐπιμηνίων, πρότερον οὐ μάλα ταῦτα κακοπαθεύουσαι.

³⁸⁵ Hipp. De Virg. Morb. 36-43, cf. King (1983) 113-115, Foley (2001) 199.

³⁸⁶ Soph. Ant. 916-20. Note the perversion of the *cheir’ epi karpōi* gesture with which a bridegroom would usually lead a bride to her new home; and that while Antigone has previously stated that she will ‘marry Acheron’ (816) she in fact envisages her entombment as a denial of her marital *meros*.

³⁸⁷ Soph. Ant. 811: Αἰδᾶς ζῶσαν ἄγει, 920, cf. above.

Like Electra, and like Cassandra in the following chapter, this perversion forces Antigone to perform her own lament.³⁸⁸ The kommos between her and the Chorus formally resembles a thrênos with an antiphonal structure in which, from the end of the third stasimon, they respond to her laments: ‘Behold me...the bride of Acheron’, ‘With glory and praise...you descend alive to Hades’; ‘I am like Niobe...’, ‘But she was a goddess...such fate is a credit to you’; ‘You mock me...’, ‘It is your own fault, and your ancestral curse’; ‘My family have destroyed me’, ‘You have destroyed yourself’; and she follows with an epode. According to Alexiou, such an ending is ‘a formal refrain, metrically different from the rest of the ode...they occur most frequently in odes which are laments or invocations, at the moment when the dramatic tension within the ode has reached its highest pitch’.³⁸⁹ As Creon comes to take Antigone away, she incorporates dactylic and trochaic metres into her verse for the first time, combining formal alliteration with an emotional register in a series of alpha-privatives: ἄκλαυτος, ἄφιλος, ἀνυμέναιος...ἄδάκρυτον (876-81). She laments that she will no longer look upon the sun (a common threnodic motif, also at 808-10), and complains of her lack of friends. Most perversely, the antiphony recalls the dialogue between the living and the dead that is a common feature of Greek funerary lament.³⁹⁰ Antigone goes alive to her grave, and is lamented as if dead while still alive. Not only is her ‘marriage’ perverted by its conversion to her ‘funeral’, but even this is conducted improperly. She is taken (ἄγει, 811, ἄγομαι, 876, 939; recall the numphagôgia), not to the telos of marriage or that of death, but to perpetual liminality, erêmia, and invisibility.³⁹¹ What should have been her bridal (or at least funeral) procession is instead a road to nowhere, at the end of which the unfulfilled sexual potentiality of the parthenos is turned back upon the house which rejected her in a devastating psychological explosion which, as Griffith notes, ‘results in the obliteration of the

³⁸⁸ Cf. p. 122; Ch.4, pp.168-69.

³⁸⁹ Alexiou (1974) 134.

³⁹⁰ Alexiou (1974) 139.

³⁹¹ Soph. Ant. 887, 919.

whole extended family'.³⁹² Such a subversive transition means that she vacillates between defiance in her act and lament over its consequences, life and death, virginal hanging and 'marriage in death'. Nor is such vacillation unique to this play.

Electra laments the unmarried fate of herself and her sister Chrysothemis in similar terms to Antigone:

ἦ πάρεστι μὲν στένειν
πλούτου πατρῶου κτήσιν ἔστερημένη,
πάρεστι δ' ἀλγείν ἐς τοσόνδε τοῦ χρόνου
ἄλεκτρα γηράσκουσιν ἀνυμέναιά τε.³⁹³

This play on the heroine's name suggests Electra and her sister wasting into old age and childlessness in their devotion to their paternal family, denied the telos of womanhood by Aegisthus.³⁹⁴ Their alignment to their patriline threatens the new regime (like Danae, they might bear sons to overthrow the king), and so a lack of transition is imposed upon them. Like Antigone, being *anumenaios* is a living death for Electra, in which she is erotically aligned with the dead: *οἰκονομῶ θαλάμους πατρὸς*.³⁹⁵

Similarly, she regrets her lack of feminine telos. To a Greek woman, marriage may be a cause of lament, but to live an old maid (*γηράσκουσιν*) in the house of one's dead father was far worse:

³⁹² Griffith (1999) 50.

³⁹³ Soph. El. 959-62, cf. 164-65, Ant. 876-77, Eur. Hec. 416, Or. 206; Finglass (2007) 401-2.

³⁹⁴ Soph. El. 964-66. This is made more explicit in Eur. El. 22-24, but cf. Seaford (1985) 318: 'it may indeed be supposed that Elektra's enemies fear the threat that might be posed by her offspring, as in Euripides' version. This is, however, never indicated in the play. And it is anyway unthinkable that Elektra should want to be married while absorbed in mourning'. Cf. Hdt. 1.107-8 as well as Ant. 944-50.

³⁹⁵ Soph. El. 190. Here the term has connotations of both 'marriage chamber' and 'tomb', as in Ant. 804, 947. See Seaford (1985) 318-19, but contra Finglass (2007) 158.

ὄν γ' ἐγὼ ἀκάματα προσμένουσ' ἄτεκνος,
τάλαιν' ἀνύμφευτος αἰὲν οἰχνῶ,
δάκρυσι μυδαλέα, τὸν ἀνήνυτον
οἶτον ἔχουσα κακῶν.³⁹⁶

Electra's wasting away into anumenaios old age makes plain the pathos implied by Antigone's living entombment. Indeed, the same fate is threatened if she will not stop her excessive lamentation for Agamemnon.³⁹⁷

Despite her sorrow at her lack of feminine fulfilment, she will not cease to mourn for her murdered father: οὐ μὲν δὴ / λήξω θρήνων στυγερῶν τε γόων,³⁹⁸ and so, like Antigone, vacillates between defiant mourning and sorrow over its cost to her. Electra, however, goes further and mourns to cause deliberate pain to Clytemnestra and Aegisthus (λυπῶ δὲ τούτους, 355). Her assumption of lamentation as vendetta takes this revenge to its ultimate conclusion when she thinks that Orestes will no longer return to champion her.³⁹⁹ Moreover, to her mind, the act of murder will free her and Chrysothemis to marry (ὥσπερ ἐξέφυς, ἐλευθέρα / καλῆ τὸ λοιπὸν καὶ γάμων ἐπαξίων / τεύξῃ)⁴⁰⁰ – and this is where her living death contrasts sharply with Antigone's.

³⁹⁶ Soph. El. 164-67, also 188: ἄς φίλος οὐτις ἀνὴρ ὑπερίσταιται.

³⁹⁷ Soph. El. 379-82, cf. Ant. 774, 887-88, Finglass (2007) 207.

³⁹⁸ Soph. El. 103-4, cf. 132-33, 223-25, 231-32, 239-44, cf. Kitzinger (1991) 307: 'it is not that she doesn't want to stop mourning Agamemnon; it is that she cannot'.

³⁹⁹ Soph. El. 954-57: νῦν δ' ἠνίκ' οὐκέτ' ἔστιν, ἐς σὲ δὴ βλέπω / ὅπως τὸν αὐτόχειρα πατρώου φόνου / ξὺν τῆδ' ἀδελφῆ μὴ κατοκνήσεις κτανεῖν / Αἰγισθον, cf. Alexiou (1974) 22 (especially on Electra), Holst-Warhaft (1992) 5-6, 33, 118 (on the general connection between women's laments and incitement to revenge), Foley (2001) 145-71.

⁴⁰⁰ Soph. El. 967-72, Foley (2001) 163.

Antigone's insistence on burial and lament of Polynices in defiance of the polis leads her to rebellion inappropriate for a woman and denial of female transition. In *Electra*, the heroine, paradoxically, thinks that transition to marriage will result from her adoption of an even more masculine position: that of tyrannicide. What would an Athenian audience have made of these paradoxes? Sourvinou-Inwood suggested that far from arousing sympathy, Antigone's actions would have alienated her from her viewers:

Antigone privileged her own interests over those of the polis and subverted the very articulation of the polis. For the fifth century Athenians her actions were not a response (let alone a correct and acceptable one) to 'legitimately' conflicting duties, towards the oikos and the polis...her oikos duty was to obey Kreon.⁴⁰¹

As with most epithalamia, the key to understanding Antigone's song and *Electra*'s use of anumenaios seems to be in the enactment of correct modes of behaviour for, and between, men and women. Both dramas are overshadowed by the performance of incorrect sexuality in the past: Oedipus and Jocasta's union and Polynices' use of a marriage alliance to make war on his own city;⁴⁰² and the rape of Helen, leading to Iphigenia's sacrifice, Clytemnestra's adultery, and Agamemnon's murder.⁴⁰³ These transgressive actions lead to death, and to transgressive acts by the daughters of the houses in response to those deaths. They attempt to act correctly by the dead as befits their role of female mourners and by their patriline as befits virgin daughters,⁴⁰⁴ but the political situation that results from previous transgressions means

⁴⁰¹ Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 139. In this duty both women also fail in their role as epiklêroi (or perceived epiklêros, in *Electra*'s case) to produce children for their father's oikoi.

⁴⁰² Soph. Ant. 863-65: ἰὼ ματρῶναι λέκτρων ἄται κοιμήματά τ' αὐτογέννητ' ἐμῶ πατρὶ δυσμόρου ματρὸς; 869-70: δυσπότημων γάμων.

⁴⁰³ Soph. El. 516-609 (Clytemnestra and *Electra*'s contrasting viewpoints on the sacrifice of Iphigenia and murder of Agamemnon).

⁴⁰⁴ Soph. Ant. 924: εὐσεβοῦσ'; El. 968: εὐσέβειαν, but compare Sorum (1982) 206: Antigone's independent action leads her to assume a role that is socially defined as masculine. Further, though lamentation is an

that they themselves are in violation of normative (female) behaviour.⁴⁰⁵ Balance and reciprocity – between speech and silence, male and female, private grief and political regime – are lost in these plays. This ruptures the possibility of transition. Unlike in Aeschylus, only further death may resolve these crises.

The transgression of female norms means that the normative progression of female life – daughter, wife, mother – is also disrupted. The maidens seem caught in the midst of transition: desirous of marriage, yet unable to forsake paternal devotion. But with their fathers and brothers dead (though in *Electra*, Orestes' death is only feigned)⁴⁰⁶ they seem neither to belong wholly to their patriline nor to a husband. They are *anumenaioi*, perpetually liminal – the living dead. Sophocles seems less interested in the wedding song per se than in inversions of *hymenaioi*: thus entombment is presented as marriage in a corruption of both marriage and funeral rites. Aeschylus remarked on the necessity of correct behaviour in marriage;⁴⁰⁷ Sophocles goes further and specifies the nature of that conduct. Women must obey feminine norms in order to attain the *telos* that is their destiny and their right – but the need for adherence to social norms is not limited to women. Creon and Aegisthus attempt to impose a perverted transition, or the lack of one, and are punished. Haimon, having defied his father, can only achieve his in death. Men must also enact the *telos* correctly, else the containment it represents will be exposed as inadequate. Transitions, both to marriage and to death, must be performed *eusebeôs* if society is to continue.

Deianeira: Girl, Interrupted

essentially feminine duty, burial would have been performed by male relatives – or not at all, in the case of traitors to the state.

⁴⁰⁵ Soph. *Ant.* 61-68, 484-85, 578-79, 677-80; Chrysothemis presents similar sentiments of yielding to those in power as Ismene at *El.* 333-40, 396, and Clytemnestra criticises her appearance outside the house at 516-18. *Electra* herself states: *μανθάνω δ' ὀθούνεκα / ἔξωρα πράσσω κόρυκ' ἐμοὶ προσεικότα* (618-19). See also 997-98.

⁴⁰⁶ Soph. *El.* 673, see Sorum (1982) 207, Foley (2001) 153 'her [*Electra*'s] status too, depends on a dead father and brother'.

⁴⁰⁷ Ch.1, esp. pp.108-9.

Trachiniae includes not one, but two improperly performed marriages. The first is Heracles' with Deianeira: though she is not explicitly *anumenaios*, she exists in a state of liminality that recalls the use of the term in *Antigone* and *Electra*. The second is Heracles' with Iole, which ensures that Deianeira will never be 'fulfilled'. On the surface, Deianeira's union with Heracles is the archetypal 'hero rescues maiden from monster' story. Her prologue describes her fear of marriage with Achelous, beyond that of the average Geek bride:

ἦτις πατρός μὲν ἐν δόμοισιν Οἰνέως
ναίουσ' ἔτ' ἐν Πλευρώνι νυμφείων ὄτλον
ἄλγιστον ἔσχον, εἴ τις Αἰτωλὶς γυνή.⁴⁰⁸

She is a passive object in this transaction, with the river as *μνηστήρ* (9), and can merely hope for death before consummation:

τοιόνδ' ἐγὼ μνηστήρα προσδεδεγμένη
δύστηνος ἀεὶ καθανεῖν ἐπηυχόμην,
πρὶν τῆσδε κόιτης ἐμπελασθῆναι ποτε.⁴⁰⁹

This wish for death, we have seen, is common to 'epithalamial' songs, if not to epithalamia themselves.⁴¹⁰ It betrays bridal reluctance that must be overcome by the encouragement to

⁴⁰⁸ Soph. Trach. 6-8.

⁴⁰⁹ Soph. Trach. 15-17.

⁴¹⁰ E.g. Sappho fr. 94.1 V (if this is in the voice of the departing girl), Aesch. Supp. 779-91; see Ch.1, p.47.

transition to a new life. In Deianeira's case, she is saved from both virgin death and hated marriage by the arrival of Heracles (18-21).

Unusually among tragic brides, Deianeira leaves her father's house under her own preferred circumstances (ἀσμένῃ δέ μοι, 18). Once the transfer to Heracles' oikos gets underway, however, things start to go wrong. Ormand notes how, following a 'courtship' that is in reality little more than an agôn between two hypermasculine figures with herself as the prize, Deianeira complains about the perversion of the traditional send off from her father's house and subsequent attempted rape by the centaur Nessus:⁴¹¹

ὄς τὸν βαθύρρουν ποταμὸν Εὐήνον βροτοὺς
μισθοῦ ἴπορευε χερσίν, οὔτε πομπίμοις
κάπαις ἐρέσσω οὔτε λαίφεσιν νεώς.
ὄς κάμῃ, τὸν πατρῶον ἡνίκα στόλον
ξυν Ἡρακλεῖ τὸ πρῶτον εὐνις ἐσπόμην...⁴¹²

He states that:

Deianeira's choice of words, particularly the adjective "processional" (pompimos) is significant. She uses the word because she is complaining about the lack of traditional *pompē* (procession) after her wedding.⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ Ormand (1999) 41, cf. Armstrong (1986) 101-2. Armstrong further links this passage with Deianeira's erēmia by noting that eunis can mean both 'bride' and 'deserted' ('lacking' her patros, understood with eunis from patrōion).

⁴¹² Soph. Trach. 559-63.

⁴¹³ Ormand (1999) 41.

We have seen how marriage is a process of transition for the bride, from *enguê* to childbirth, which is part of a wider initiation into adulthood. The wedding procession functions as a ritual compression of this process, inscribed in its songs which may represent a transition from wildness and reluctance to domestication and acceptance.⁴¹⁴ Electra and Antigone demonstrated the consequences if that process was withheld or perverted; Trachiniae presents a different consequence of its being improperly performed. Instead of processional oars or a ship with sails and a hymeneal stolon to effect her transition into the civilised and civilising institution of marriage,⁴¹⁵ Deianeira is carried over the river, a symbol of her liminal state, by a centaur, a hypersexual beast representative of the very margins of civilisation – who then attempts, in a perversion of the *cheir' epi karpô*i gesture with which a bridegroom would lead a bride to her new home, to appropriate her sexuality for himself, outside the context of the *oikos*.

That *oikos* is unstable – Heracles' actions mean that the family are forced into continual transition and separation from each other. He and Deianeira never complete the marriage process through *sunoikêsis*, living together as man and wife (though by the time of the dramatic action, their son, Hyllus, is himself old enough to marry – an extraordinary deferral of reintegration):

ἐξ οὗ γὰρ ἔκτα κείνος Ἰφίτου βίαν,
 ἡμεῖς μὲν ἐν Τραχίῃνι τῆδ' ἀνάστατοι
 ξένω παρ' ἀνδρὶ ναίομεν, κείνος δ' ὄπου
 βέβηκεν οὐδεὶς οἶδε.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁴ Cf. Ch.1, pp.72-73.

⁴¹⁵ Compare Sappho fr. 44.5-8 V: Ἐκτωρ καὶ συνέταιρ[ο]ι ἄγοισ' ἐλικώπιδα / Θήβας ἐξ ἱέρας Πλακίας τ' ἀπ[ὸ] [ἀί]ν<ν>άω / ἄβραν Ἀνδρομάχαν ἐνὶ ναῦσιν ἐπ' ἄλμυρον / πόντον.

⁴¹⁶ Soph. Trach. 38-41.

On Van Gennep's model of rites of passage, here the rites of limen, the dangerous transitional phase between separation and reintegration, are corrupted and the transition permanently arrested. The essential fact of reintegration – cohabitation – is missing from their relationship.⁴¹⁷ Deianeira's visualisation of her wedding procession as unsanctioned abduction and rape (and one that consequently overshadows the whole of her married life), followed by abandonment, suggests that its proper performance was regarded as essential for the successful transition and transfer of the woman between oikoi. To effect its telos ensures a kind of successful fulfilment in marriage, a reintegration which Deianeira never experiences. She is described during her wedding contest as a calf wandered from its mother, an image which may derive from the wedding song:

κάπο ματρὸς ἄφαρ βέβαχ',

ὥστε πόρτις ἐρήμα.⁴¹⁸

Both Deianeira and the Chorus look back to the images of partheneia even after Deianeira is married. This imagery can be used to indicate bridal anxiety or reluctance, which in the course of the Greek wedding would ideally be overcome, 'perhaps by persuasion or perhaps by rites of incorporation'.⁴¹⁹ Deianeira's marriage, however, was characterised by violence and due to her arrested transition it is unlikely that her reintegration could ever have been accomplished. She expresses post-transitional lamentation, identifying with the 'sheltered garden' image (τὸ γὰρ νεάζον ἐν τοιοῖσδε βόσκεται / χώροισιν αὐτοῦ, 144-45) at the same time as the 'fertile field':

⁴¹⁷ Cf. Wohl (1998) 33, also on Iole's failure to make the transition from parthenos to gunê.

⁴¹⁸ Soph. Trach. 529-30; cf. Sappho fr. 104(a) V, Seaford (1986) 52.

⁴¹⁹ Seaford (1986) 52-54.

κάφύσαμεν δὴ παῖδας, οὓς κείνός ποτε,
γῆτης ὅπως ἄρουραν ἔκτοπον λαβών,
σπείρων μόνον προσεῖδε κάξιαμῶν ἄπαξ.⁴²⁰

As a result, she remains liminal. Unlike the Greek bride, this calf is never truly domesticated, always *erêma*, and never truly a part of a new household. Despite her status as *μητέρα* (64) and *δάμαρτά...Ηρακλέους* (406), Deianeira has never undergone the process of acculturation expressed in the wedding songs that would make her *teleia*: she, like her house, is eternally *μελλόνυμφος*.

The news of Heracles' return leads to a choral ode anticipating a marriage, prompted by Deianeira herself:⁴²¹

ἀνολολυξάτω δόμος
ἔφεστίοις ἀλαλαγαῖς
ὁ μέλλόνυμφος.⁴²²

Her joy seems to suggest that the wedding to be celebrated is the long-awaited reunion of herself and Heracles. His labours are complete; now they may both be reintegrated. This song follows many epithalamial patterns: as in Sappho fr. 44.33-34 V, the chorus of women call upon the men to raise a song to Apollo (*ἀρσένων / ἴτω κλαγγὰ τὸν εὐφάρετραν /*

⁴²⁰ Soph. Trach. 31-33; see Introduction, pp.15-22.

⁴²¹ Soph. Trach. 202-4.

⁴²² Soph. Trach. 205-7.

Ἐπόλλω προστάταν, 207-9). Here maidens also join in: παιᾶνα παιᾶν' ἀνάγετ', ὦ παρθένοι (210-11). The overall image is one of communal celebration – until Artemis is invoked, both in her 'wild' aspect (ἐλαφαβόλον, 214) and as torch-bearer (ἀμφίπυρον). The virginal is again juxtaposed with the nuptial. This could refer to the anticipated transition of marriage, but is slightly jarring in view of Deianeira's earlier vacillation.

Marriage is an institution which reproduces and strengthens social relations and reaffirms gender roles. The introduction of Dionysiac imagery to this song suggests the rupture or dissolution of those boundaries. The aulos (217) is appropriate to the wedding song,⁴²³ but not the function of the god as τύραννε τᾶς ἐμᾶς φρενός (218), suggesting madness and frenzy which have no place in the epithalamium. It is the result of madness – that of uncontrolled passion – which Deianeira is called to look upon when the Chorus say: τὰδ' ἀντίπρωρα δὴ σοι / βλέπειν πάρεστ' ἐναργῆ (223-24).⁴²⁴ The next thing Deianeira sees will be the στόλον (227, cf. 562) by which Iole, Heracles' captive-bride, is brought into the house.

Μελλόνυμφος could therefore also refer to the second improperly performed marriage. Indeed, the Messenger's words cast this union in the context of transgressive marriage from the beginning. Heracles destroyed a city to obtain Iole (ἔλοι / τήν ὑψίπυρον Οἰχαλίαν, 353-54); as in *Antigone*, the destructive power of love is blamed for this rupture:

Ἔρως δέ νιν

⁴²³ Hom. Il. 18.495, [Hes.] Scut. 281, Sappho fr. 44.24 V.

⁴²⁴ Cf. 368: ἐντεθέρμανται πόθῳ, 445: νόσῳ, 476: δεινὸς ἡμερός.

μόνος θεῶν θέλξειεν ἀιχμάσαι τάδε.⁴²⁵

The hero wished to have Iole as his κρύφιον λέχος (360), creating ambiguity as to her role in the house. Lechos can be used of a wife or a concubine, and Deianeira refers to herself with the same term at v.27. The captive is not to be a sex-slave: οὐκ ἀφροντίστως...οὐδ' ὥστε δούλην (366-67). Lichas swore that he was bringing her (ἄγειν) as the δάμαρτ'... Ἡρακλεῖ (428), the very term by which he addresses Deianeira in v.406. Deianeira draws the obvious conclusion that the two of them are to occupy the same position:

ἐγὼ δὲ θυμοῦσθαι μὲν οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι
νοσοῦντι κείνω πολλὰ τῆδε τῆ νόσω,
τὸ δ' αὖ ξυνοικεῖν τῆδ' ὁμοῦ τίς ἂν γυνή
δύναιτο, κοινωνοῦσα τῶν αὐτῶν γάμων;
ὁρῶ γὰρ ἤβην τὴν μὲν ἔρπουσαν πρόσω,
τὴν δὲ φθίνουσαν· ὦν <δ'> ἀφαρπάζειν φιλεῖ
ὀφθαλμὸς ἄνθος, τῶνδ' ὑπεκτρέπει πόδα.
ταῦτ' οὖν φοβοῦμαι μὴ πόσις μὲν Ἡρακλῆς
ἐμὸς καλῆται, τῆς νεωτέρας δ' ἀνὴρ.⁴²⁶

Though both are presented as wives, it is desire for Iole that rules the husband. He will be Deianeira's posis in name only. Though she is to all intents and purposes married, to her

⁴²⁵ Soph. Trach. 354-55.

⁴²⁶ Soph. Trach. 543-51.

mind, she will never have completed the transition of *gunê* to an *anêr*. This takes further the theme of ‘artificial containment’ in the previous two plays. Here the ritual and *telos* of marriage is insufficient to enclose Deianeira’s sexuality – though married and a mother, she remains, in a sense, *anumenaios*, and therefore threatening. When she attempts to reclaim her marital relationship, she inadvertently kills her husband. In the end, it is only her robe which will *sunoikein* with Heracles.⁴²⁷

Again we are given a sense of the perceived importance of the marriage relationship to women: not only the social construction of *posis/damar*, but also the personal relationship of *anêr/gunê*. Deianeira is married and has borne children but is separated from Heracles and privileges the marital relationship in her suicide. Perhaps post-transitional bridal lamentation should be seen in this context: the socio-ritual transition has been accomplished, but the bride has yet to establish a relationship with her husband and stresses her ongoing separation. Rituals may be inadequate to overcome this: the bride still feels herself to be liminal. In Deianeira we see an extreme example of this phenomenon. Her pre-marital anxiety and liminality becomes the central fact of the text, and this unfulfilled potentiality eventually proves the death of her husband – and herself.

I agree with Ormand’s hypothesis: arguing for the lack of fulfilment of tragic women in marriage and tragedy’s inability to express this comprehensibly, he notes that Trachiniae presents Deianeira’s transformation from *parthenos* (the wandering calf) to *gunê* as incomplete, and as such, her integration into her new *oikos* is interrupted.⁴²⁸ She is suspended in a liminal phase and arrested in her bridal identity until the moment of her death – a death figured as a sexual penetration in which she makes up the bed (920), bares her breasts (925-

⁴²⁷ Soph. Trach. 1055, see Ormand (1993) 224-26.

⁴²⁸ Ormand (1999) 42.

26), and stabs herself with a sword in the liver (930-31).⁴²⁹ Only through one telos can she express her achievement of another.

An inappropriately performed procession, as in *Trachiniaiæ*, or *anumenaios* wedding, as in *Antigone*, disrupts the telos of the ritual – or is used to indicate its disruption and the consequences to follow. The Sophoclean plays give the impression that women are owed these rituals – not merely because they are integral to the survival of the household and the community of which it is a part, but also on a personal level. *Epithalamia*, with their progression towards civilising imagery and their encouragement of acceptance, are part of a wider, communal ritual whose aim is to effect the transition of the bride from *parthenos* to *gunê*, thereby guaranteeing the fertility of the *oikos* and by extension, the continuity of the polis.⁴³⁰ By implication, their improper performance will result in a corruption of interpersonal relations within the household, sterility, and social stasis. At the same time, the rituals of marriage by themselves are not sufficient to effect this telos. Correct behaviour between husband and wife contributes to the establishment of a relationship that extends beyond the *epithalamium* and which is presented as the cornerstone of feminine ‘fulfilment’.

Sophocles seems at first glance to use the *hymenaios* in a similar way to Aeschylus’ manipulation of the genre in *PV* or in *Agamemnon*, in which the term contrasts the expectations of joy which would accompany marriage in reality with the tragic situation, and thus emphasises the current misery of the protagonists (such as *Antigone*, *Electra*, and to an extent *Oedipus*);⁴³¹ or, more ironically, looks forward to it. There are further similarities with the Aeschylean *hymenaios*: namely, that the motif can be used to underscore a recognition (or lack of recognition) of illicit or cursed sexuality, and that those who fail to recognise it as such are often classed as tyrants⁴³² – whose downfall is thus imminent. In a similar way to

⁴²⁹ Cf. Foley (2001) 97.

⁴³⁰ See Introduction, pp.34-35.

⁴³¹ Cf. Ch.2, pp.97-99, 103.

⁴³² *Soph. El.* 661, 64, also *Ant.* 506.

Supplices, the Choruses of *Antigone* and *Trachiniae* use songs that are like (and yet unlike) wedding songs in order to foreshadow or comment upon the corruption of the hymeneal telos.⁴³³

In the suggestion of arrested transition, however, Sophocles differs from Aeschylus. While the Danaids resist marriage and attempt to avoid their own transitions by flight to Argos and obedience to their father, *Antigone's* and *Electra's* devotion to their patrilineal causes them to remark on the meaning of their loss of marriage. They are at once defiant over these actions, and at the same time pitiful and 'lost', denied a 'share' in marriage and children. *Deianeira*, while she attains this lot on a social level, fails to make the transition to *gunê* in her own self-identity, and can only assert her status as wife/mother in death. The association of the term *anumenaios* with death, moreover, suggests both a pitiable sterility and the potential destructiveness of such a state. Its implications of silence, liminality and unfulfilled *erêmia* intersect with the political sphere in which it can be applied – forcibly – to the female in order to reflect on the Athenian ideals of women's silence, obedience, and invisibility – ideals more prevalent under the Periclean regime, but not necessarily the result of it.

When applied to a maiden, *anumenaios* can suggest the unleashing of a destructive potentiality as a result of her denial of traditional fulfilment in the role of wife, a denial often resulting from her fulfilment of her role as daughter. This denial is due both to her tragic excess and the fear of her reproductive capacity by the authorities, and is bound up in Athenian anxieties about women's role in society. The lack of fulfilment in marriage can also be applied to the tragic wife, who occasionally experiences a lack of integration into the marital household as a result of the lack of appropriate ritual behaviour (as in *Trachiniae*). The tragic *hymenaios* emphasises the dangers of the liminal position of the *parthenos*, and to

⁴³³ Cf. Ch.2, p.81.

an extent of women as a whole in Athenian society,⁴³⁴ and of the period of transition between oikoi. It emphasises the importance for personal fulfilment of female rites of passage – and the importance of their correct performance if society is to continue.

The hymenaios in Sophocles is therefore a more complex topos than in Aeschylus. Sophocles uses ‘epithalamial’ odes, but these suggest a lack of appropriate ritual and an inversion of the anticipated telos. He also highlights women’s valuation of marriage through their status as anumenaios. This is a positive valuation of marriage, implying a social and personal fulfilment lacked by Antigone, Electra and Deianeira. Positive representations of marriage in the female voice do exist, but it is rare to find them expressed by the bride in the first person in the wedding song.⁴³⁵ As mentioned in Chapter 1, it is inappropriate for a woman to display eagerness for sexual contact – Sophocles’ plays suggest, however, that lamentation for the missed opportunity of marriage was acceptable. Similar sentiments are displayed by Greek funerary epigrams on the death of parthenoi:⁴³⁶ to wish for death is an acceptable, ritualised expression of pre-marital anxiety, to achieve death was an occasion for real grief.

⁴³⁴ Anxiety over the transferable position of women and their potential for ill is apparent in the simile of Helen as a lion cub brought into the house in Aesch. Ag, and is expressed by Creon in Soph. Ant. 647-51: μή νύ ποτ', ὦ παῖ, τὰς φρένας γ' ὑφ' ἡδονῆς / γυναικὸς οὐνεκ' ἐκβάλλης, εἰδὼς ὅτι / ψυχρὸν παραγκάλισμα τοῦτο γίνεται, / γυνὴ κακῆ ξύνευος ἐν δόμοις.

⁴³⁵ Compare Sappho fr. 30, 44.25-27, 31 V and Theoc. 18 with Eur. Tro 308-41; see Introduction, pp.15-22; Ch.1, pp.47-48.

⁴³⁶ AP 7.182, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491; see p.83, n.271. These, however, are not in the bride’s own voice, which further highlights the abnormality of Antigone, Electra and Deianeira’s self-laments. A similar situation occurs in Cassandra’s performance of her own wedding song (see Ch. 4, pp.168-69).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TRAGIC HYMENAIOS: EURIPIDES

The tragedians studied thus far have been shown to use the motif of the wedding song in very different ways; Euripides adds a further difference. He uses whole epithalamia in his plays – in *Phaethon* and *Troades*, these are complete lyric hymenaioi. In *IA*, the third stasimon is devoted to a choral reminiscence of the wedding song performed at the marriage of Peleus and Thetis. I will examine these songs, as hymenaioi in themselves and as part of a wider dramatic structure, to discover how the youngest and arguably most sophisticated playwright uses the wedding song. Can a coherent overview of its Euripidean development be identified? Is this development consistent with the analyses of Euripides’ pushing the boundaries of tragic convention generally posited for his drama?

It can be established at the outset that these songs are performed for perverted or transgressive unions. *Phaethon*’s mortal stepfather, Merops, arranges his son’s marriage to a goddess, not knowing that the boy is the product of the extramarital liaison of Merops’ wife, Clymene, with Helios (*Pha. Hypothesis* 6-9). Agamemnon takes Cassandra, virgin priestess of Apollo, as his spear-bride ‘by force’, ‘abandoning piety to the god’ (*Tro.* 43-44). Iphigenia is summoned to Aulis on the pretext of marriage to Achilles – but actually to be sacrificed for a fair wind to Troy in an ironic inversion of the marriage ceremony (*IA* 89-105). The perversion takes place on a generic as well as dramatic level. The elements discussed in the Introduction of ‘bride’, ‘bridegroom’ and ‘wedding’ are all present in some form,⁴³⁷ but there is a disjunction, or confusion, of these elements, which throws the song into question. The question asked of Iphigenia’s arrival in *IA*: Ὑμέναιός τις ἢ τί πράσσεται; (is this a

⁴³⁷ See p.10.

wedding (song) or what is happening?, 430), is appropriate to all Euripides' hymenaioi. We must draw our conclusions about the tragedian's depiction of marriage against this confusion.

Phaethon: flights of fancy?

The wedding song of Phaethon is unique among our dramatic examples – as a fragment of a mostly lost play, it is the only tragic epithalamium to receive much scholarly attention. Due to the fragmentary nature of the tragedy and its obscure mythology, commentators have never satisfactorily answered the key interpretive issues: who is the bridegroom Phaethon, and who is his unnamed bride? These questions have a fundamental impact upon how we read the wedding song at 227-44, yet it is nearly impossible to answer them from the text itself. A wider dramatic manipulation of the 'primary elements' 'bride' and 'groom', casting the song's recipients into doubt, renders the song even more problematic than usual. I argue that this crisis of identity is an essential framework within which to understand this song, and the tragedy in general.

Euripides' manipulation of the genre takes place simultaneously with another: Aristophanes' use of the wedding song at the end of *Peace* and *Birds* to signify happy endings for the protagonists and their communities, which I shall discuss in the next chapter. Euripides does the opposite. His hymenaioi take place in the midst of the dramatic action, and are surrounded by crushing revelations of death and the destruction of family. What is the connection between the two, and could Phaethon (if the date of c.420BC is correct)⁴³⁸ exist in

⁴³⁸ Diggle (1970) 49: 'metrical evidence, such as it is, favours the attribution of Phaethon to the later part of Euripides' career, to within a few years of 420'. However, Webster (1972) 628, following Zeliński, argues for a later date of 415-409. cf. Cropp & Fick (1985) 69: 427-14BC. The progressive development of the hymeneal motif in Euripides seems to support an earlier date for Phaethon, but this is still too uncertain for confidence.

dialogue with Peace of 421BC? Aristophanes is always thought to react against Euripidean tragedy, but the reverse may be true here.⁴³⁹

If we date the play at c.420, Phaethon is the first of Euripides' plays known to contain a full hymenaios, a trend continued in Troades (415) and IA (405). Does he, in Phaethon, create a point of departure for his later plays? If so, in what way? This brings us back to one of the central questions of this thesis: how is the wedding song being used in this play? Contiades-Tsitsoni argues for an interpretation of tragic irony in all three plays, consonant with the 'marriage to death' motif common in tragedy:

Der Thematik dieser Partien liegen die traditionellen Motive der "tragischen Hochzeit" zugrunde, der Hochzeit, die durch den Tod verhindert wird, und des "frühzeitigen Todes", des Todes *πρὸ γάμοιο*. Beide Motive haben ihren "Sitz im Leben".⁴⁴⁰

This is an interpretation shared with Tufte, who applies the designation 'anti-epithalamium' to this ode:

As used in the Troades, the anti-epithalamium consists of a conventional epithalamium interrupted and followed by the "anti" devices. In another play of Euripides, the fragmentary Phaethon, a somewhat similar technique seems to have been employed.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁹ Such comic reactions exist: Ar. Av. 213-14 may be based on a similar passage (1107-12) in Euripides' Helen, produced two years earlier. See Dunbar (1995) 205, 'though alternatively both may be imitating a common model unknown to us'; Burian (2007) 258; Allan (2008) 272. The dating of Phaethon, however, is too insecure to be certain of such an allusion to Peace.

⁴⁴⁰ Contiades-Tsitsoni (1994) 52.

⁴⁴¹ Tufte (1970) 42.

By this logic, Phaethon seems to set the tone for the further two tragedies: a nubile young woman or a youth on the cusp of marriage goes instead to their death, and the rejoicing surrounding the proposed union turns out to be bitterly inappropriate to the situation. Yet I believe that an examination of the song in its wider textual and dramatic context might raise specific problems that are also addressed in these later plays. As mentioned above, the first of these problems concerns the ‘primary elements’ which identify the ode as a wedding song.

Crisis of identity

Our first problem lies in the identification of the bride and bridegroom of this play – in the case of the former, the extant fragments do not preserve her name, only the fact that she is a goddess (Θεὸν, 241). This has not prevented extended debate over her identity. As for the bridegroom, recent scholarship has problematised (perhaps excessively) the parentage, and thus ‘identity’, of Phaethon. Two semi-divine Phaethons exist in the mythical tradition prior to Euripides – a beautiful boy, son of Eos and Cephalus, carried off by Aphrodite in Hesiod,⁴⁴² and a son of Helios (and possibly the nymph Rhode) in Aeschylus’ *Heliades*, a youth whose sisters were transformed into poplars and weep tears of amber for him beside the Eridanus.⁴⁴³ Schol. Hom. Od. 17.208, which may reflect this version, tells how he drove the chariot of Helios and was killed by the thunderbolt of Zeus. In neither version is Phaethon presented as a bridegroom, but the son of Helios, who crashes the chariot of the Sun, is a far closer match.

Wilamowitz argued the opposite: ‘Euripides nicht sowohl eine neue Sage erfunden, als Phaethon den Sohne der Eos mit Phaethon dem Sohne des Helios kontaminiert hat’.⁴⁴⁴ In

⁴⁴² Hes. Th. 984-991.

⁴⁴³ Cf. Eur. Hipp. 735-41.

⁴⁴⁴ Wilamowitz (1883) 130.

addition, Euripides was thought to have combined Hesiodic material with other myths, namely the catasterism of Phaethon as the evening star in Eratosthenes (194-97), and the myth of the fatal ride of Phaethon, ‘eigentlich die Sonne’, supposedly originating in Corinth.⁴⁴⁵

In the light of this interpretation, the bride becomes Aphrodite, and Phaethon, called the νεόζυγι...πώλωι (233-34) of that goddess in the wedding song, is her husband. Wilamowitz’s theory was an interpretive spectre that Diggle hoped to lay to rest by distinguishing between the Hesiodic son of Eos and Cephalus and the Euripidean son of Merops/Helios and Clymene:

The legends which he [Wilamowitz] sought to impose upon Euripides were legends of his own invention, justified by neither the text of Hesiod nor the text of Euripides nor the text of any other author.⁴⁴⁶

Diggle sees the Euripidean Phaethon as being totally separate from the Hesiodic character,⁴⁴⁷ and in answer to Wilamowitz’s speculation of a fusion of legends surrounding the youth’s transformation into a star, maintains that the catasterism of Phosphorus-Hesperus was not attested before the Hellenistic period – any attempt to bring the legends into line, and into line with Euripides, must therefore stem from this period.⁴⁴⁸

If more than one youth went by the name of Phaethon, an Athenian audience could well be expected (particularly after Aeschylus’ tragedy) to know the difference between them and dissociate the tragic and Hesiodic characters. The prologue suggests that the boy’s descent has already been elucidated: μνησθεῖς ὁ μοί ποτ’ εἶφ’ ὅτ’ ἠὺνᾶσθη θεὸς /

⁴⁴⁵ Wilamowitz (1883) 134, 141-42.

⁴⁴⁶ Diggle (1970) 12.

⁴⁴⁷ Diggle (1970) 13.

⁴⁴⁸ Diggle (1970) 14.

αἰτοῦ τί χρήζεις ἔν (45-46). Underlying similarities, however, remain – these would have been recognisable to an audience versed in epic poetry.

Though the parentage of the two youths differs, legend situates them both in Ethiopia as denizens of the solar family. Phaethon's Hesiodic half-brother, Memnon, is Αἰθιοπῶν βασιλῆα (Th. 985), while Euripides has his Phaethon praised as βασιλῆ (Pha. 237) and βασιλεύς (240) of that people. Hesiod's Phaethon is 'a man like the gods' (common praise in the epithalamium and 'epithalamial' songs);⁴⁴⁹ whereas Euripides' will become 'dear to the starry palace of gold' through his marriage to a goddess. The youth of both figures is emphasised: τόν ῥα νέον τέρεν ἄνθος ἔχοντ' ἔρικυδέος ἥβης (Th. 988); νέος δ.[/ ἥβης (Pha. 132-33), παῖς (104), παῖδ' (107).⁴⁵⁰ This youthful aspect has a fundamental bearing on our identification of the boy. For it is at the height of this period, when Phaethon is occupied by 'childish thoughts', παῖδ' ἄταλὰ φρονέοντα (Th. 989) that he is snatched by Aphrodite. Similarly, Euripides' protagonist seems to have entered the fullness of his youth, the age at which his marriage can be arranged.⁴⁵¹ He, like many Greek brides, seems resistant to the idea of leaving childhood behind, and perhaps, like Hippolytus, prefers such 'youthful pursuits' as athletics – or chariot racing – to the responsibilities of adulthood, marriage and sexuality: ...ὥσπερ ἡ Κλυμένη λέγουσα "μισῶ δ' εὐάγκαλον τόξον κρυνείας γυμνάσια δ' οἶχοιτο".⁴⁵² Finally, Aphrodite places Hesiod's Phaethon in her temple, ζαθέοις ἐνὶ νηοῖς (Th. 990) and makes him its keeper: νηοπόλον μύχιον (991).

Euripides' Phaethon is also placed within, in the treasury where the house's precious

⁴⁴⁹ See esp. Ch.1, pp.42-43.

⁴⁵⁰ See also Eur. Pha. 103, 117, 135, 161, 172, 176, 276, 312, 322.

⁴⁵¹ The association between the 'flower of youth' and the 'season of marriage' is made elsewhere in Euripides, e.g. Hel. 12-13.

⁴⁵² Plut. Mor. 698E, repr. as fr. inc. sed. 4 in Diggle (1970) 70. Two fragments, δεδοικ[(147), and Phaethon's remark on the enslavement to dowry at 158-59, have been used alongside this to suggest that he was temperamentally hostile to the idea of marriage and feared the departure from youth, cf. Collard (1995) 199, Reckford (1972a) 410 and (1972b) 338-39.

possessions would be kept: κρύψω δέ νιν / ζεστοῖσι θαλάμοις (Pha. 221-22).

Aphrodite in the Phaethontic wedding song also hides her πῶλος: ἐν αἰθέρι κρύπτεις (234).

Other factors identify Phaethon with the ‘newly-yoked colt’. Besides the fact that he yokes the horses of Helios (Nagy points out the closeness of the stables of Helios and Eos, one of whose horses was called Φαέθων),⁴⁵³ he is also represented as being ‘yoked’ in marriage: ζεῦξαι νύμφης τε λεπάδνοις (109). This is a common metaphor for the female experience of marriage, often seen in terms of the domestication of a formerly unbroken animal.⁴⁵⁴ Newly-yoked here must mean ‘newly-married’. The identification of the ‘colt’ with the offspring of Aphrodite’s marriage, however, cannot support his identification with her Hesiodic beloved: the πῶλωι is also σῶν γάμων γένναν and thus must refer to a son, not a husband (regardless of Nagy’s supposition that Clymene should be seen as a chthonic Aphrodite, and can therefore be, along Near Eastern lines, a ‘Great Mother’ figure mourning her son/consort).⁴⁵⁵ If there is a connection or conflation between these two myths, it must be sought at a less literal level.

Reckford proposes that the relationship of Aphrodite and Phaethon may operate on only a symbolic level – in much the same way as in Hippolytus.⁴⁵⁶ Yet it is difficult to see how this may have been achieved or why it would have warranted the performance of a wedding song. Others reject Aphrodite as the bride, often in favour of the identification of her (after Diggle)⁴⁵⁷ as a daughter of Helios:

⁴⁵³ Nagy (1973) 164, on Hom. Od. 23.246.

⁴⁵⁴ See p.23, n.72.

⁴⁵⁵ Nagy (1973) 171.

⁴⁵⁶ Reckford (1972a) 406. By associating both Phaethon and Hippolytus with the experience of the bride (departure, yoking and ‘death’) Euripides represents the loss of innocence that accompanies marriage and the human condition in general. There are dangers to this interpretation; chiefly, the representation in two plays of a youth hostile to marriage in a symbolically erotic relationship with Aphrodite.

⁴⁵⁷ Diggle (1970) 159-60.

No later poet could add another marriage to [Aphrodite's] famously cuckolded one with Hephaestus in Homer, Od. 8.266ff., even in the play's near-fairy setting...Mortal Merops could not 'arrange' either an actual or even a token marriage of a youth to her...As a husband himself of a god's daughter, however, Merops might reasonably claim marriage for his son to a daughter of his divine neighbour, Helios.⁴⁵⁸

This is likely to be the case (and as paternal half-siblings, who were not raised in the same household, such a marriage would have been acceptable to an Athenian audience), so any use of the Hesiodic Phaethon myth must therefore function in a different context. It could, however, be an informative principle for the text, an 'older myth' which illuminates our understanding of the story of Phaethon the charioteer used here.⁴⁵⁹

Euripides used contradictory versions of well-known myths, but often, particularly in later tragedies, these were deliberately juxtaposed with other versions, either epic or tragic (from an already complex and contradictory tradition), to create a distinctive jarring effect.⁴⁶⁰ The contrast between *logos*, 'what people say', and *ergon*, 'what is reality', especially in the tragedies of 412BC has been explored by Wright, and I believe is also a useful interpretive tool for Euripides' hymeneal plays. In Phaethon, as well as Troades and IA, words are undermined by hidden realities – not least the truth of the hero's parentage: Clymene's assurance that her children are also Merops',⁴⁶¹ versus the extra-marital fathering of her son. The acts surrounding the wedding also fit this pattern: the joy of Merops and the girl chorus, versus the audience's knowledge of Phaethon's death. In the midst of such a clash of word and deed, true and false identity, the insertion of an older Phaethon-myth adds to the confusion and provokes a crisis of understanding among the audience that parallels that

⁴⁵⁸ Collard (1995) 198.

⁴⁵⁹ Reckford (1972a) 406, 425.

⁴⁶⁰ Wright (2005) 82: 'the plays' meaning results from the odd manner in which these elements are combined, as well as the choice of mythical subjects itself'.

⁴⁶¹ Hypothesis 3-4: πάντων δὲ [π]α[τ]έρα ἔφ[η] τὸν / κατὰ νόμους συ[μβι]οῦντα εἶναι[·]

she grieves over Phaethon's body, but it is uncertain whether the king himself is participating in the ode. He is leading (ἡγούμενος, 218) the girls in their γαμηλίους / μολπὰς (217-18), perhaps functioning as a chorêgos or master of ceremonies, as Sappho is said to have done.⁴⁶⁵ The use of a mixed-sex subsidiary chorus to indicate epithalamial activity is not new in tragedy, and has roots in the traditional wedding song:

...the focus is on the combining of both sexes, while each group nevertheless remains aligned to its own gender rôle...the mixed chorus itself would have triggered assumptions of marriage in the minds of an ancient audience. And such a connection is appropriate, since we know that both the bride's and the groom's friends had a rôle to play in the wedding festivities, that men and women both attended the wedding feast, and that marriage ritual itself symbolizes the combination of male and female.⁴⁶⁶

This is perhaps the first time it is used in tragedy with an actual wedding song and may, like other tragic references to hymenaios, point to a disruption of gender or social roles. At first glance, though, the song appears to be a traditional processional hymenaios, with little beyond its juxtaposition with the tragic death of the bridegroom (and prevailing problem of identifying the bride) to cause any interpretive problems.

Its form has caused some confusion among critics. Diggle comments:

This hymenaeus does not correspond to anything in Greek practice, neither with the hymenaeus sung during the procession which accompanied the bride to her husband's

⁴⁶⁵ Sappho fr. 194.1-2 V = Himer. Or. 9.4; Ch.1, p.76. Also AP. 9.189, and Sappho test. 217 V = Philostr. Imag. 2.1.

⁴⁶⁶ Swift (2006a) 134-35; see Introduction, p.14.

home, nor with the epithalamion which was sung later outside the marriage-chamber. Rather it borrows features from both types of hymn. Like the processional hymenaeus it takes place out of doors; and like the evening epithalamion it is sung by a choir of girls.⁴⁶⁷

Collard, too, sees an abnormality in its performance:

This rite belongs properly to the house of the bride...This irregularity is dictated by dramatic need and effect: Merops' happiness is at once overtaken by discovery of the groom's death.⁴⁶⁸

Does the song itself suffer from a crisis of identity? This seems an overly simplistic and extreme statement. Epithalamia, as we have seen, were a flexible genre, performed at all stages of the Greek wedding ceremony, by a variety of participants. Until the Hellenistic period, all merely went by the title of hymenaioi.⁴⁶⁹ Our literary record does not allow us to draw a firm distinction between hymenaios and epithalamion, so a *Kreuzung* of forms should not necessarily be assumed here. The designations of Diggle and Collard are then somewhat artificial: it is the context of this song which renders its performance perverse; a blessing pronounced upon the man whose corpse lays smouldering within the house; an epithalamium whose thalamos refers to the royal treasury which has become Phaethon's tomb (221-23).

Moreover, it is a wedding song without a wedding. Neither partner is imagined as being present (the maidens do not know, when they address Phaethon, that his body is nearby). This does seem unusual. We know from ancient evidence that the bridegroom did not have to be present during the processional transfer of the bride to her new home – his

⁴⁶⁷ Diggle (1970) 149.

⁴⁶⁸ Collard (1995) 201-2.

⁴⁶⁹ Introduction, p.1.

place might be taken by a *parochos* or *nymphagôgos*, who would bring the bride from her natal home to the marital *oikos*.⁴⁷⁰ Can one, however, have a wedding procession without a bride? Surely this is another example of premature rejoicing so apparent in this scene. Euripides not only manipulates the identities of the couple, a ‘primary element’ in the song, he seems to erase them altogether, in a dramatic foreboding of the revelation to come.

But even a ‘lack of element’ is not entirely unknown. The wedding song can express anticipation for the appearance of one of the bridal couple. Sappho remarks on the arrival of the bridegroom and his entry into the *thalamos*: γάμβρος †εἰσέρχεται ἴσος† ἸΑρενι, (fr. 111.5 V). Menelaus is enjoined to begin the wedding rites (ὑμέναιον εὐτρέπιζε, IA 437) although Iphigenia has not yet reached Aulis. Later, Catullus has the bride arriving, like an epiphany, partway through the wedding song:

Prodeas noua nupta, si

Iam uidetur, et audias

Nostra uerba.⁴⁷¹

Like the bells rung in church before the Christian wedding or the chords of ‘Here Comes the Bride’,⁴⁷² this sort of hymn heralds or anticipates the arrival of the bridal pair and the completion of marriage. It builds a sense of joyful expectation, which in Phaethon is frustrated – the bride will not arrive, and the marriage will not be consummated. The putative blessings of the *makarismos* will never be fulfilled. The song’s apparently traditional structure is given a darker meaning by its situation in the play. It is, as the ‘anti-

⁴⁷⁰ Pollux 3.40.4-41.4: ...ὁ δ’ ἄγων τὴν νύμφην ἐκ τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς οἰκίας νυμφαγωγός, ὅποτε μὴ ὁ νυμφίος μετίσῃ...; compare Hesychius ν 712, where he distinguishes the *numphagôgos*, who fetched the bride, from the *parochos*, who rode on the carriage with the bridal pair. Cf. Ar Av. 1737-41 (Ἐρωσ...Ζηνὸς πάροχος), also Oakley & Sinos (1994) 28.

⁴⁷¹ Cat. 61.92-94, cf. also 62.4: **iam ueniet** uirgo, iam dicetur hymenaeus.

⁴⁷² R. Wagner (1841) ‘Bridal Chorus’ from Lohengrin.

epithalamium' prescribes, an apparently normal hymenaios sung in a situation of (unrecognised by the singers, at least) abnormality.⁴⁷³ These contextual abnormalities are developed further in Troades and IA: Cassandra sings her wedding song amidst destruction and slaughter, her joy at her union jarring with the grief that surrounds her: ἔσφέρετε πεύκας δάκρυά τ' ἀνταλλάσσετε / τοῖς τῆσδε μέλεσι, Τρωιάδες, γαμηλίοις (Tro. 351-52); while Peleus and Thetis' divinely sanctioned match is contrasted with the proposed union of their son with Iphigenia, an impious deception which defies *nomos* and does violence against the gods.⁴⁷⁴

Traditional topoi?

The context of the song is problematised, but its language seems traditional. Aphrodite is represented in her heavenly aspect, Διὸς οὐρανόϊαν (228), and as the purveyor of marriage: τὰν παρθένους / γαμήλιον (229-30), βασιλῆ νυμφεύεαι (237). She is a universal force of life and love, a figure familiar from other 'hymeneal' contexts.⁴⁷⁵ Her principal *timai* of *erôs* and beauty are honoured: ἐρώτων πότνια (229), θεῶν καλλίστα (232), as they are when she bestows them upon the bride in Sappho fr. 112 V. In keeping with this central role, Aphrodite is hymned (ἀεΐδομεν, 228) in the first position as the goddess of marriage. This place of honour is later dedicated to the god by the rhetoricians, whose epithalamia set out to hymn the chambers and alcoves and couples and families, and πρό γε πάντων

⁴⁷³ Tufte (1970) 39, also Contiades-Tsitsoni (1994) 55.

⁴⁷⁴ See p.197.

⁴⁷⁵ E.g. Aesch. Supp. 1035-35, fr. 44 R, Eur. Hipp. 447-50. This is especially pertinent if Reckford's assumption of a connection between the role of the goddess in the Phaethon and the Hippolytus is correct.

αὐτὸν τὸν θεὸν τῶν γάμων.⁴⁷⁶ Her role in the marriage will bring great benefit to the city:

ἅ τὸν μέγαν
τᾶσδε πόλεως βασιλῆ̃ νυμφεύει
ἄστερωποῖσιν δόμοισι χρυσεῖς
ἀρχὸν φίλον Ἄφροδίτα.⁴⁷⁷

This positive, political view of marriage is unusual – it is far more common for archaic and classical authors to speak of the detriments of bringing a new bride into the house.⁴⁷⁸ Marriage, though necessary for the normative functioning and continuance of society, nevertheless possessed the potential to undermine and destabilise it, a fact exploited by many tragedies. Exceptions are most often found in wedding poetry, which represents the act not simply as a painful and traumatic transition for the bride, but also as a longed-for and joyful occasion, in which the groom is considered blessed for his possession of the girl; Οὐ γὰρ ἴετέρα νῦν ἢ πάις ὧ γάμβρε τεαύτα.⁴⁷⁹ This positive attitude towards marriage is given a public bent in the wedding song of Phaethon: βασιλεὺς μείζων ἔτ' ὄλβον (240), and in the play at large:

ναῦν τοι μὶ ἄγκυρ' οὐχ ὁμῶς σώζειν φιλεῖ
τῶι τρεῖς ἀφέντι. προστάτης θ' ἀπλοῦς πόλει

⁴⁷⁶ Men. Rhet. 399.13-15. The rhetorical gods Gamos and Eros take the place of Aphrodite and Hymen in these later orations; however, like them, the earlier poetic gods are both demiurges and political benefactors; see Ch.8, pp.300-1.

⁴⁷⁷ Eur. Pha. 236-39.

⁴⁷⁸ E.g. Hes. Op. 695-705, Soph. Ant. 648-52.

⁴⁷⁹ Sappho fr. 113 V; see Introduction, esp. p.17; Ch.1, p.76.

σφαλερός, ὑπὸν δὲ κάλλος οὐ κακὸν πέλει.⁴⁸⁰

Not only is Phaethon praised for his possession of a goddess as his bride, but the marriage will result in increased stability for his country and increased status within that country for himself. The civic-spiritedness of this perception of marriage should not entirely surprise us. In classical Athens, the purpose of marriage was to reproduce the *oikos*, providing citizens for the polis. Certainly, girls expected to get married,⁴⁸¹ and marriage could be a companionable, productive, relationship.⁴⁸² Merops' attitude, and that of the epithalamium, reflects the fact of marriage as a societal necessity. Arranged marriage was a cultural expectation – for both sexes. Tragedy, it has often been said, uses women as the 'other' through which to examine the Athenian male 'self'.⁴⁸³ marriage is a prime locus in which to do this; any representation of the institution will consequently be distorted by generic gendering. A more positive picture is presented by comedy and oratory, genres arguably closer to everyday 'reality'.⁴⁸⁴ Married life is the adult citizen norm.⁴⁸⁵ It is unusual in Phaethon that girls take this attitude. Maiden choruses can express joy at a marriage,⁴⁸⁶ but their mode of expression focuses on the private: the relationship between the couple (φιλότατα, Sappho fr. 30.4 V; ἔδνοις / ἄγαγες Ἡσιόναν πιθὼν δάμαρτα κοινόλεκτρον, Aesch. PV 559-60),⁴⁸⁷ or praise and good wishes (Theoc. 18).

⁴⁸⁰ Eur. Pha. 124-26, cf. Diggle (1970) 38: 'Merops...is either urging Phaethon to join him in the responsibilities of government or is preparing to abdicate in Phaethon's favour'.

⁴⁸¹ See e.g. Aesch. Supp. 1050-51, Soph. Ant. 813-14, El. 918, Eur. Hec. 416 (see Ch. 3, pp.123-24), Men. Dysc. esp. 38-39 (Pan arranges a girl's marriage in recompense for worship), Just (1989) 40.

⁴⁸² Xen. Oec. 7.11 (*koinônon*).

⁴⁸³ Zeitlin (1990) 68.

⁴⁸⁴ Pelling (2000) 211.

⁴⁸⁵ Garland (1990) 199 argues that Sparta was the only polis known to have imposed severe penalties upon bachelors: 'no other state is known to have been so authoritarian, and perhaps none needed to be'. He further suggests that the term *heitheos* 'bachelor' indicated a young man (p.200) – the mature Athenian citizen male was therefore perceived as the head of an *oikos*.

⁴⁸⁶ In Eur. Hipp. 1140-41, they even strive for it.

⁴⁸⁷ See Introduction, p.25.

A parallel does exist for the expression of civic benefits in the wedding song: in the exodos of Aristophanes' *Peace*. There Trygaeus (a vintner, not a prince) also marries a goddess, Opôra. This union will ensure the repatriation of Peace in Athens (ἐπὶ τούτοις...λάμβανε / γυναιῖκα, 706-7), hence stability for the community. Farmers will be able to produce crops and children (κριθάς τε ποεῖν...γυναιῖκας τίκτειν ἡμῖν, 1324-27). Political stability will be ensured by the return of Peace's other handmaiden, Theôria, to the Boulê (βουλή, πρυτάνεις...σκέψασθ' ὅσ' ὑμῖν ἀγαθὰ παραδώσω φέρων, 887-88). The benefits of this union to Athens are explicitly proclaimed.⁴⁸⁸ Like Phaethon, Trygaeus is praised and promised lasting fame for his actions (καὶ πλήν γε τῶν θεῶν ἀεὶ σ' ἠγησόμεθα πρῶτον, 917). *Peace's* wedding song, however, is performed by an all-male chorus – unattested in the extant epithalamium before *Peace* in 421BC.⁴⁸⁹ Euripides seems to have exposed a convention of gendered speech in the epithalamium.

Aristophanes' hymenaios will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter, but if a date of c.420 is to be assumed for Phaethon, it is likely that a dialogue with *Peace* exists. If the comedy is later, its hymenaios is paratragic. If not, Euripides takes similar concerns and topoi and locates them in the discourse of the more traditional maiden chorus. As in Aristophanes, we may assume a pattern of the Sacred Marriage of hero and goddess – but this is rendered perverse by the deception surrounding Phaethon's conception and upbringing, which leads to the events surrounding this song.⁴⁹⁰ Such a distortion of mythical patterns is typically Euripidean, and may argue in favour of a later date for Phaethon than *Peace*. The expression of masculine Realpolitik by young women, more often the voices of protest or

⁴⁸⁸ The prayer to the gods in the hymenaios (1322-30; Ch.5, p.225) includes a wish for wealth, barley, wine, figs, offspring and the 'good things we have lost', as well as an end to war.

⁴⁸⁹ Ch.5, p.221.

⁴⁹⁰ Ch.5, p.223. An Athenian audience may well have associated this model with the Sacred Marriage of the Basilinna and Dionysus. Demosthenes sees the correct performance of this ritual as integral to social stability – the deception surrounding the identity of Phano, who performs this duty in *Against Neaira* 59.72-78, betrays a contemporary concern for the consequences arising from such deception, similar to that portrayed in Phaethon.

romanticisation in the epithalamium, adds further dissonance. Euripides calls attention to his use of the wedding song. Its discourse is traditional (positive) yet not (political). We will see further examples of such dissonance in Troades and IA.

Thus far, the *topoi* of the song have been shown to be manipulations of traditional themes. Aphrodite, goddess of *erôs* and beauty, is the purveyor of marriage who effects this *hieros gamos*. The bridegroom will become a ruler dear to her, who will reap the benefits of marriage. Aphrodite's son (*σῶν γάμων γένναν*, 235) poses more problems. The offspring most commonly associated with Aphrodite (particularly in a nuptial context) is Eros, but nowhere in this god's mythology is he referred to as:

τῶι τε νεόζυγι σῶι

πῶλωι τὸν ἐν αἰθερι κρύπτεις.⁴⁹¹

Diggle, following Weil, sees this figure as Hymen(aios), 'whose name was invoked at the beginning of the hymn', a view widely accepted by critics.⁴⁹² This young man, commonly the son of Apollo and a Muse, but later the child of Venus and Bacchus, vanished – perhaps due to untimely death – on his wedding night.⁴⁹³ In the context of Phaethon's death and concealment, 'the significance of the myth of Hymen's death or disappearance is transparent'.⁴⁹⁴ The association of the two youths is an ironic development of the epithalamic *eikasmos*, in which the bridal couple, as well as being called 'godlike', are often conflated

⁴⁹¹ Eur. Pha. 233-34.

⁴⁹² Diggle (1970) 151, cf. Nagy (1973) 165, Contiades-Tsitsoni (1994) 52, Collard (1995) 235, contra Webster (1972) 629: 'there appears to be no Greek evidence for Hymen being the child of Aphrodite and no evidence at all for his being hidden in heaven by Aphrodite'.

⁴⁹³ See Introduction, pp.2-5.

⁴⁹⁴ Diggle (1970) 151.

with, or compared to, gods and heroes as part of the traditional nuptial encomia: γάμβρος
†εἰσέρχεται ἴσος† Ἀρευι.⁴⁹⁵

This kind of comparison was made programmatic by Sappho;⁴⁹⁶ as well as offering a divine sanction through the presence of the gods,⁴⁹⁷ it elevates the participants in the wedding beyond their mortal circumstances. Such encomia were a prominent feature of the wedding song. In the context of marital reintegration, relationships within the community must be rearranged to incorporate the new adult (even more so if, like Phaethon, the marriage is arranged with a gain in status in mind).⁴⁹⁸ As such, a unique opportunity for more than merely metaphorical elevation is offered,⁴⁹⁹ which such encomia promote. Phaethon may not be the son or lover of Aphrodite, but by identifying him with such a figure, the song suggests that he is worthy of such a position, and therefore a man to be reckoned with.

The comparison of Phaethon to a son of Aphrodite, the νεόζυξ πῶλος, is intriguing in connecting Phaethon not only with Hymen, but also with the bride. It is usually the female who is yoked, in order to ‘tame’ her dangerous sexuality to a domestic purpose. Aphrodite is, after all, τὰν παρθένους γαμήλιον, associated with the accomplishment of marriage for young women. The yoking need not imply ‘either compulsion on the part of Merops or subservience to his divine bride on the part of Phaethon’,⁵⁰⁰ but it nonetheless puts Phaethon in an odd position. Like a bride, he is ‘given in marriage’, νυμφεύει (237) by

⁴⁹⁵ Sappho fr. 111.5 V, cf. also fr. 23.3, 4 V, Luc. Symp. 41.4-11.

⁴⁹⁶ Sappho fr. 44.34 V: Ἐκτορα κ’Ανδρομάχαν θεοεικέλο[ις, also perhaps fr. 31.1-2 V: ἴσος θεοῖσιν, Himer. Or. 9.186: Σαπφούς ἦν ἄρα μήλω μὲν εἰκάσαι τὴν κόρην...τὸν νυμφίον τε Ἀχιλλεῖ παρομοιωῶσαι καὶ εἰς ταύτον ἀγαγεῖν τῷ ἥρωι τὸν νεανίσκον ταῖς πράξεσι; cf. Ch.1, pp.42-43; this Chapter, p.141.

⁴⁹⁷ This is made apparent in the parodos of Phaethon: θεὸς ἔδωκε, χρόνος ἔκρανε / λέχος ἐμοῖσιν ἀρχέταις, and a divine sanction is also given to the marriage of Peleus and Thetis in IA (703): Ζεὺς ἡγγύησε καὶ δίδως ὁ κύριος. Compare, however, the union of Agamemnon and Cassandra (Tro. 43): τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ τε παραλιπῶν τό τ’ εὖσεβες.

⁴⁹⁸ Introduction, p.34.

⁴⁹⁹ Cooper (1996) 34.

⁵⁰⁰ Diggle (1970) 117. He compares other instances of the ‘yoking’ of the husband, in which no reversal of the usual roles is assumed: Soph. OT 825-26, Eur. Pho. 337-38, IA 907. See also Eur. Tro. 670.

Aphrodite.⁵⁰¹ This is a strangely passive role for the male, the active partner in marriage. The language of Phaethon's marriage, his 'yoking', the 'colt', and Aphrodite's 'marrying him off', feminises him, and hints at the subversion of normative relationships.

Such language has earlier parallels in Euripides, where it is used in choral odes to comment upon the transgression of relations in the dramatic action. In *Hippolytus*, the same verb is used of Semele's marriage to Zeus, again under the auspices of Aphrodite: [Κύπρις] νυμφευσάμενα (Kirchhoff: -μέναν codd., 61). The goddess also acts as *kurios* in Iole's union with Heracles: ἐξέδωκεν (Hipp. 553). These acts are 'extraordinary',⁵⁰² and somehow dangerous. Aphrodite is the guarantor of marriage for young virgins – the patroness of the event, not an active participant. Her 'giving in marriage' of these brides ends in destruction, as does Phaethon's marriage. In this drama, as in *Hippolytus*, mortals cross the line that divides them from gods through transgressive behaviour that results in divine punishment. Similarly, gods cross that boundary to interfere directly in mortal rituals – a fine balance is disrupted, which results in death. This reciprocal transgression inverts the reciprocal *charis* which should exist between man and god, and this inversion of norms contributes to the more general failure of social relations in the play. Moreover, it makes a man like a woman – a further disruption of these relations.⁵⁰³

Phaethon's experience is uncannily similar to that of the Greek bride (again, leading to comparisons with *Hippolytus*).⁵⁰⁴ He departs from his natal *oikos* on his wedding day, never to return.⁵⁰⁵ Like a bride, he may be subject to competing claims upon his loyalty from

⁵⁰¹ This reading is dependent on Aphrodite's remaining the subject of vv.236-39: Diggle (1970) 152.

⁵⁰² Halleran (1991) 114.

⁵⁰³ Cf. Eur. Med. 262: Jason ἐγγήματο Medea.

⁵⁰⁴ Reckford (1972a) 415.

⁵⁰⁵ This is a departure from the masculine norm – Swift (2006a) 129: 'though men also undergo a transition, there is nothing to parallel the sharp cut-off between *parthenos* and *gunê*, and the ideas associated with male transition are more to do with assuming citizen responsibilities than a total change of status. After all, the *ephebeia* took place well after puberty'. Somehow, both these aspects – the cut-off between childhood and adulthood in marriage, and the assumption of civic responsibility, are combined in the Phaethon. This

two families – those of Merops, who raised him, and if his bride is a Heliad, those of his marital oikos, which is also that of his natural birth. In addition, he is extremely young, an unusual state of affairs in a culture where women were generally married early to men far beyond them in age.⁵⁰⁶ Though Phaethon’s bride may not be older than he, she is far beyond him in (at least perceived) social status, a fact at which he balks:

ἐλεύθερος δ’ ὦν δοῦλος ἐστι τοῦ λέχους,
πεπραγμένον τὸ σῶμα τῆς φερνῆς ἔχων.⁵⁰⁷

His father arranges the marriage (and may only inform him of the bride’s identity on the day of the wedding), in what is a long-awaited telos, a transition to adulthood:

ὀρίζεται δὲ τόδε φάος γάμων τέλει...
θεοσ ἔδωκε, χρόνος ἔκρανε
λέχος ἐμοῖσιν ἀρχέταις.
ἴτω τελεία γάμων ἀοιδά.⁵⁰⁸

Like many brides, when faced with the departure from the safety of childhood and the assumption of maturity, he expresses reluctance – and is probably persuaded to acquiesce during the agôn.⁵⁰⁹ A variety of reasons have been suggested for his resistance to marriage, chiefly that he refuses either a specific bride or marriage in general, due to a predisposition

conceptualisation of marriage underpins Menander Rhetor’s later *Peri Kateunastikou*, as I argue in the final chapter of this thesis.

⁵⁰⁶ Hes. Op. 695-98.

⁵⁰⁷ Eur. Pha. 158-59.

⁵⁰⁸ Eur. Pha. 95-101.

⁵⁰⁹ Diggle (1970) 39, ‘even if that acquiescence may have been feigned’, Collard (1995) 230; see Introduction, pp.15-22.

against sexuality.⁵¹⁰ The latter interpretation, however, risks too close an assimilation with Hippolytus. Though both (at least initially, in Phaethon's case) reject marriage and are punished for transgression against the divine, causing their transition to adulthood to fail, the transgressions are different even if the transition is the same. Hippolytus' is his refusal to honour Aphrodite; Phaethon's is his attempt to act like a god by taking on the attribute of his solar father. There is no evidence in the extant text that he refused to marry – his protests betray more of a sense of unease over the forthcoming nuptials, one that concerns his standing relative to his bride.

Here the experience of Phaethon differs from that of a parthenos: the bride had no say in her union, and must submit to it regardless of her feelings. Besides the positive, 'civilising' aspects of marriage, the wedding song often reflects this truth in a ritualised protest at the bride's fate, and an erotic, persuasive discourse aimed at overcoming this reluctance and facilitating the transition.⁵¹¹ This was not physically necessary for its completion, but is an idealised representation of a continuing reciprocity and persuasive dialogue between husband and wife. In the case of Phaethon, it is necessary, for although he may be bride-like in his passivity to greater powers, he is still the active partner in marriage, and the act could not be accomplished without his assent. *Merops* seems to recognise the need for careful persuasion during their agôn, εἰ γὰρ εὖ λέγω (120),⁵¹² but somewhere in this scene the relationship between father and son breaks down and descends into sententious accusations. Persuasion fails, and with it, familial relations – foreshadowing the failure of social relations in the arrested marriage.

The manipulation of persuasive and reciprocal discourse in both sexual and social relations is a theme explored by the later hymeneal tragedies. In *Troades*, Cassandra's failure

⁵¹⁰ Reckford (1972a) 409-10.

⁵¹¹ Ch.1, pp.73-76.

⁵¹² Collard (1995) 231.

to persuade her audience of the truth of her marriage to Agamemnon is symptomatic of a wider failure of *peithô* brought about by excessive *bia*. All *charis* – between men and women, between cities, and between men and gods – has been stripped away in the corruption of social relationships brought about by Helen’s adultery and the protracted war. In IA, *peithô* experiences a staccato series of failures and successes in which persuasion to assent to sacrifice is mixed in with, and concealed beneath, the more usual persuasive and idealised discourse of marriage – and since no-one really knows what they are being persuaded to do, they fail to recognise the relationships in which they stand to one another and the appropriate behaviour between them.⁵¹³

Somewhere in the lost fragments of this scene appears to be the persuasive breakthrough – at least, to the extent that Merops feels able to sing a wedding song, anticipating Phaethon’s arrival with the bride. This in itself may be seen as persuasive rhetoric: the blessings that will befall Phaethon will come as a result of his acceptance and the establishment of a relationship between him and his wife. The audience, however, knows that Phaethon has gone to seek his natural father and discover the truth of his birth: ‘Ἡλίου μολῶν δόμους / τοὺς σοὺς ἐλέγξω, μῆτηρ, εἰ σαφεῖς λόγοι (61-62).⁵¹⁴ These blessings will therefore prove false, like the *makarismois* of Troades and IA. Ergon contradicts *logos*. Instead of the renewal of life – the ultimate aim of marriage and the marriage hymn – we are faced with death. Merops’ rhetoric comes too late.

The context of crisis

⁵¹³ E.g. IA 819-54: Clytemnestra treats Achilles as her *philos*, but he responds to her as the wife of his superior.

⁵¹⁴ Compare Eur. Ion. esp. 69-73.

As often in the tragic hymenaios, a widespread disruption of relationships leads to the misperformance of the wedding rite and the corruption of its songs. This is evident not only in the performance of the hymenaios, but in the structure of the play as a whole. In our fragments, the wedding song stands between a celebratory choral ode and a lament for Phaethon's death. This reversal of the ideal progress from lamentation to celebration expressed through the wedding song mirrors the inversion of expected relationships present in, and exposed throughout, the play. It does not seem to be accidental.⁵¹⁵ The parodos anticipates the successful telos of marriage, presenting itself almost as a dawn diegertikon⁵¹⁶ – the attitude of premature rejoicing for ὑμεναίων δεσποσύνων (88) is thus established long before the epithalamium itself and is unravelled in the course of the action.

The fulfilment of marriage is presupposed: τέλει (95), τελεία (101). The aorists ἔδωκε and ἔκρανε (99) further suggest a completed action. God has ordained; it must be so. At last (ποτ', 96) the Chorus come forward to sing the wedding song – but their masters' appearance prompts them instead to silence (96-98, 102-5). It will not be they, but a subsidiary chorus of parthenoi who perform the hymenaios – which will in turn give way to the Chorus' lament. Already, their long prayed-for plans begin to go awry. Rather than the dusk-till-dawn progression from separation to reintegration, lament to celebration, the celebrations begin at dawn and as the day progresses, move towards lamentation. The

⁵¹⁵ The linking of choral odes, together with a thematic unity in the episodes of the text, will be further elaborated in the discussions of Troades and IA.

⁵¹⁶ The imagery is certainly hymeneal: Ἄως (64), cf. Sappho fr. 103.10 V, Theoc. 18.26, 56-57, Aesch. fr. 43 R; ἀηδῶν (68), cf. Sappho fr. 30.8 V: λιγύφω[νος]. The nightingale, a 'clear-voiced' night-singing bird, should probably be assumed, as at Theoc. 12.6-7: ἀηδῶν...λιγύφωπος. The 'bridal' Cassandra in Agamemnon (1145-46) is also compared (and compares herself) to the nightingale bewailing her own fate. The nightingale's characteristic role is as lamenter – Procne mourning for her murdered son – which is made clear in this passage (Ἴτυν Ἴτυν πολύθρηνον, 70), cf. Chandler (1934) 78-80, though he admits that the nightingale's song itself is 'neutral' and lends itself to various interpretations: lament, symbolising the poet or his poems, proclaiming springtime and love, praise of God, and virtuosity; Young (1951) 181, Forbes Irving (1990) 99-107. I suggest that anti-epithalamic foreboding is at work here: amid the celebrations, the song looks forward to Clymene's laments for Phaethon. The image of the country's dawn activities is one of peaceful productivity, similar to that in the hymenaios of Peace. It expounds the benefits of marriage as a civilising institution. Not only the marriage, but also the expression of it in song, is right (δίκαιον, 89) and desirable (ἔρωσ).

anticipated transition fails, and the imagery of civilisation is replaced by negative elements of foreboding.

Because the wedding is fundamental to society, society itself is destabilised by this failure – what Merops feared in his ‘ship of state’ metaphor comes to pass. Phaethon becomes overshadowed by his mother’s transgression: Clymene has had an unsanctioned relationship, one that, when the truth is revealed, may threaten her life:

Ὠκεανου̅ κόρα,
†πατρὸς ἴθι πρόσπεσε γόνυ λιταῖς σφαγᾶς
σφαγᾶς οἰκτρὰς ἀρκέσαι σᾶς δειρᾶς†.⁵¹⁷

The joyous wedding song is replaced by this choral lament, linking the two unions thematically through their shared result:

...the anti-epithalamium is associated with an illicit union which appear to accompany and presage disastrous consequences.⁵¹⁸

Furthermore, Clymene has borne the child of that union and raised him as the son and heir of her husband. Such ‘cross purposes’⁵¹⁹ within the marriage are precisely what the hymenaios seeks to avoid – Clymene’s corrupted hymenaios, like that of Helen in the later tragedies which make use of epithalamia, have disrupted the functioning of her oikos and laid an all-too-unstable foundation for the marriage of her son.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁷ Eur. Pha. 281-83. Diggle (1970) 170 admits uncertainty as to whether the corruption in these lines is confined to πατρὸς ἴθι πρόσπειπε or whether it is more extensive: ‘there is no alternative but to obelise’.

⁵¹⁸ Tuft (1970) 43.

⁵¹⁹ Reckford (1972b) 339, Collard (1995) 199.

⁵²⁰ Cf. pp.182, 205-7.

Phaethon now doubts himself as Merops' son and heir, and the responsibility of a marriage of state and governance of Ethiopia becomes an inappropriate destiny for him. He also doubts his true parentage.⁵²¹ Clymene, seemingly, has persuaded him (πέποιθα, 53), but the question persists: having lied to Merops for so long, is she telling the truth now? His actions may be caused by self-doubt; he cannot escape this fundamental conflict of identities, and his attempts to do so cause his downfall. Whereas the rites and songs of marriage were aimed at mediating the transition between identities of the participants, this marriage exacerbates that difference, to fatal effect. Anxiety such as Phaethon's must be overcome in reality, and illicit sexuality such as Clymene's destroys the household.

One thing is certain: this epithalamium stands in stark contrast to the 'happy ever after' wedding song of Peace. Why? Euripides is not averse to ending a tragedy happily with the (re)marriage of its protagonists, as in *Helen* and *Alcestis*, but here, as so often in Euripides, the tragic wedding turns to tears. Phaethon's attempt at 'flight' avails him nothing.⁵²² We cannot fully explain what is happening, other than that a traditional wedding song is performed in a tragic context; that the play highlights the problems of *peithô*; and that family history overshadows the current *hymenaios*. Yet these factors contain hints of what is to come in more 'familiar' contexts.

Troades: What's Love Got to Do with It?

Amidst the destruction of Troy, Hecuba learns the fate of her daughter Cassandra from the Greek herald Talthybius: the virgin priestess of Apollo will become the *λέκτρων σκότια νυμφευτήρια* of Agamemnon (252). As the Chorus are instructed to bring her out, torch-

⁵²¹ Eur. *Pha.* 51, 62.

⁵²² Cf. Padel (1974) esp. 234-35 on 'escapism' in Euripidean lyric.

fire interrupts the herald, and Cassandra rushes from the tents of her own accord, brandishing torches and singing a hymenaios for her marriage to the general. The monody that follows is difficult to interpret, both for its air of celebration in a situation of disaster, and because of the difficulties involved in this union.

As in *Phaethon*, we see a manipulation both of the ‘primary elements’ and the *topoi* of the song. Whereas in the previous play, the generic elements of ‘bride’, ‘bridegroom’ and ‘wedding’ were cast into doubt by the nature of the fragments and the possibility of conflicting or conflated *Phaethon*-myths, in *Troades* there is a blatant perversion of these elements. The ‘bride’ is the prophetess of Apollo, to whom that god promised eternal virginity (41-42). The spear-bride who warrants a hymenaios recalls Sophocles’ *Iole*, who also straddles the boundary between concubine and wife. Like *Iole*, her ‘groom’ is her captor, who is already married (250).⁵²³ The ‘wedding’ is a consummation of enforced concubinage, a glorified sexual slavery or rape.⁵²⁴ As in *Phaethon*, Euripides’ manipulation of the fundamentals of the genre cast it and its performative context into confusion. Ὑμέναιος τις ἢ τί πρόσσεται; This is a question we may also ask of Cassandra’s union with Agamemnon: is a marriage-hymn appropriate to the situation?

Here comes the bride?

⁵²³ See p.168. Cf. Soph. *Trach.* 360. *Iole* is imagined as the wife of *Heracles*, a great insult to his existing wife *Deianeira*: Ch.3, p.131.

⁵²⁴ Compare Ch.2, p.104 on the presentation of this union in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*. On the parity of experience between rape and marriage, see Ch.2, pp.91-92; Ch.3, pp.126-27; but cf. Ch.1, pp.60-61; and Ch.2, p.92 for the inappropriateness of the language of rape to the epithalamium. See Dué (2006) 143-46 on the conflation of imagery in Cassandra’s hymenaios.

Cassandra uses the vocabulary of marriage to describe her union: she is *γαμουμένα* (313), and nuptials are *γάμοις ἐμοῖς* (319) and *ἐμῶν γάμων* (339).⁵²⁵ She calls Agamemnon ‘husband’, *γαμέτας* (311), and herself ‘bride’, *νύμφαν* (337). In her subsequent speech, she also calls him *posis* (340), a term repeated of other marriages – Hecuba and Priam (107), Andromache and Hector (587, 654, 655, 730), Helen and Menelaus (1023), the gods (854, 978), and generically (1014, 1032, 1081), as well as for less regular marriages – Andromache and Neoptolemus (662), and Helen and Deiphobus (959, 961).

No-one else, however, refers to her union in those terms. Indeed, the transgressive, abnormal character of Cassandra’s marriage informs our understanding of the whole dramatic situation in the Troades. Hecuba’s encounters with Cassandra, Helen, and Andromache are linked by their conceptualisation as extreme examples of the prevailing breakdown in sociosexual relations, and all three women undergo marriages whose validity is questioned by the situation in which they are enacted – marriages which undermine both their old and new homes. Helen is married by both Paris and Deiphobus, but still called the *damar* of Menelaus, as he is called her *posis* (above). For the sake of her marriage, the Greeks destroy Troy, and though they do not realise, destroy themselves in the process (365-69). Andromache’s famous wifely virtues win her the attention of Neoptolemus, but her status is equally doubtful. She states that the son of Achilles wishes to take her as his wife, and calls him her husband, yet she is called the wife of Hector, and calls upon his shade in these terms (above). Is she a bride to be married, a widow, wife, or slave?⁵²⁶

⁵²⁵ Cf. vv.44, 347: others use the same language of the union.

⁵²⁶ The ambiguity of Andromache’s status will cause problems in her mythological afterlife, as Euripides explores in *Andromache*: the heroine presents herself as a slave concubine, in contrast to Neoptolemus’ wedded wife, Hermione, but still a perceived threat to that status of wedded wife (29-35). Hermione, on the other hand, seems to see Neoptolemus as husband to them both (78): *δυσὸν γυναῖκῶν*. The use of the dual here suggests equivalence between the two women, akin to that perceived by Deianeira between herself and Iole, but also a similar dichotomy of *posis/anêr*. Since Andromache has borne a son to the house (24), and Hermione has not, the status of the latter is further undermined. See also Allan (2000) 269-70, Torrance (2005) 39-66. The conflation of wife and concubine, bride and slave, is another example of the way in which perverted marital relations inform the action of Troades – action drawn together by the same experience among the Chorus, who

As a result of this ambiguity, modern commentators dispute how literally we are to view Cassandra's monody: Lee states that although the wedding song seems a mere parody to the women of Troy, her lyric 'is an expression of the emotions of a woman who sees her fate as it truly is...through the eyes of the god whose servant she has become'.⁵²⁷ Barlow disagrees, arguing that this very divine possession allows her the refuge of deluded madness – that Euripides separates the episode into the 'unhinged frenzy' of the *hymenaios* and the 'clear prophetic perception' of the subsequent iambics, and that, in contrast to Lee's analysis, 'her madness protects her from seeing her fate as it truly is'.⁵²⁸

The opinions of others within the play are more ambiguous. Croally suggests that Hecuba does acknowledge the legitimacy of the marriage: 'we can only note that acceptance in the use of the phrase *γάμους γαμείσθαι τουσδ'* (347: 'this marriage would be contracted')'.⁵²⁹ Hecuba, however, deems the wedding song inappropriate (351-52) – is this due to its juxtaposition of joy with horror, or because it contradicts what she views as the 'reality' of the situation (*logos* vs. *ergon*)?

Certainly, the language of Cassandra's union is used in the context of other, less regular relationships. The gods describe Agamemnon's action as *γαμεί βιαίως* (44), as does Hermes when narrating Apollo's rape of Creusa: *ἔξευξεν γάμοις / βίαι*,⁵³⁰ though no marital relationship should be supposed in *Ion*. Whereas Cassandra adopts this vocabulary in her own self-presentation, Creusa does not use the language of *gamos*: she refers to her union as *μιγῆναί* (*Ion* 338), to Apollo as *ὄμευνέτας* (894), and to her own *hymenaios* as *οὐχ ὑπὸ λαμπάδων οὐδὲ χορευμάτων / ὑμέναιος ἔμός* (1474-75) – a far cry from

lament their lawful husbands even as they tell of their own marriages-by-force and are led away to bear children for Greece (562-67).

⁵²⁷ Lee (1976) 125.

⁵²⁸ Barlow (1986) 170, 173.

⁵²⁹ Croally (1994) 88.

⁵³⁰ Eur. *Ion* 10-11.

Cassandra's torch-lit dancing. Does Cassandra's role as prophetess give her access to the divine opinion expressed in the prologue, and enable her to see her marriage through the eyes of the gods? Or is Creusa right, and does her example expose Cassandra's perception as delusional? I will treat the question of her madness below, but I think we must cautiously accept Cassandra's version of events, for she is cursed to prophesy truly even as she is cursed not to be believed.⁵³¹ When she says:

εἰ γὰρ ἔστι Λοξίας,

Ἐλένης γαμῆ με δυσχερέστερον γάμον

ὁ τῶν Ἀχαιῶν κλεινὸς Ἀγαμέμνων ἄναξ,⁵³²

we must believe not only that Agamemnon will have a gamos more hateful than Helen, but also that he will have a gamos.

Such confusion produces a layered set of ironies both within and without the drama itself. Tufte calls this ode an 'anti-epithalamium', of the type which 'places a conventional epithalamium in a situation already tragic or horrible, or about to become so. In drama especially, a conventional epithalamium is used in this way for dramatic irony, the reader or audience at times being aware of the impending tragedy or evil when the participants are not'.⁵³³ The irony goes deeper – though the Greeks are initially unaware of their impending ruin, they are warned, and the warning is ignored. Talthybius states that Cassandra's words are as wind, she is not in her right mind, her speech on the folly of the Greek victory and Troy's triumph in death are worthless,⁵³⁴ and whatever she thinks of her marriage to

⁵³¹ Aesch. Ag. 1203-13, Eur. Alex. fr. 62g = 42b N.².

⁵³² Eur. Tro. 354-56.

⁵³³ Tufte (1970) 39.

⁵³⁴ Eur. Tro. 417-19, also 406-7.

Agamemnon, his description of her as *καλὸν νύμφευμα* (420) is rendered ironic by his disbelief in her outburst. Euripides manipulates the mythological tradition of Cassandra as well as the hymeneal tradition, so as to force the audience to question the veracity of her vision.⁵³⁵ Do we believe her? Do the characters? Our only benchmark is that the mythological tradition confirms the results of her prophecies – yet this tradition is itself questioned. If we accept her statements about the future, we must also accept her statements about the present. If she will bring down the House of Atreus through her marriage, she will marry to do it. Euripides, however, makes that belief challenging.

Nothing is as it seems; to the characters of the plays, to their Athenian audience, to the modern reader. Least of all is Cassandra's wedding song as it appears to be on the surface – it contains a paradox of joy and misery, victory and defeat, marriage and death. It is bitterly inappropriate to its internal audience, but the divinely-inspired Cassandra sees the presence of all of these elements in her situation through the eyes of her god.

(In)appropriate expression?

A genre which contains the antitheses above, and aims at the facilitation of the acceptance of, and transition to, their positive aspects and a new sphere of existence,⁵³⁶ is therefore the perfect vehicle of expression. At first glance, the form of the ode appears in keeping with the extant epithalamia. The processional hymenaios, for the bringing of the bride to the groom or departure to the wedding chamber, appears in Sappho's narrative epithalamium of Hector and

⁵³⁵ Croally (1994) 126: 'Everyone knew – the whole mythical tradition authoritatively asserts it – that the Greeks won the Trojan War, yet Cassandra, speaking the truth, denies this fact. Gilbert Murray [1946:142] thought that we must believe Cassandra but, if we do, we deny another part of the mythical tradition. We seem to have reached an impasse: how can we believe Cassandra? But how can we not, when disbelieving her, as the Trojans have discovered, normally leads to disaster? Euripides confronts a mythical *donnée* (Greek victory in the Trojan War) with a mythical figure who speaks the incredible truth. Whose truth is being questioned? That of Cassandra? Of myth? Of Euripides? We cannot finally be sure'.

⁵³⁶ Ch.1, pp.66-76.

Andromache as well as fr. 111 V; Euripides' Phaethon contains a similar example, as do Aristophanes' Peace and Birds, and the tradition is continued in Latin by Catullus (Carm. 61 and 62). Departure, as we have seen, is an important motif in the wedding song. It corresponds to the 'separational' phase of marriage as a rite of passage, and is often expressed in the female voice as a lament for the loss of one's old life – though this convention is dependent upon the identity of the singer and addressee.⁵³⁷

Cassandra's monody resembles the processional songs above in a number of ways: the bride goes by torchlight to her bridegroom: φῶς φέρει (308), λαμπάσι (310), ἀναφλέγω πυρὸς φῶς / ἐς αὐγάν, ἐς αἴγλαν (320-21); and the hymeneal refrain is sung: ὦ 'Υμέναι' ἄναξ.⁵³⁸ Makarismos for the good fortune of the participants is pronounced upon the bridal couple:

μακάριος ὁ γαμέτας,
μακαρία δ' ἐγὼ βασιλικοῖς λέκτροις
κατ' Ἰργος ἅ γαμουμένα.⁵³⁹

Cassandra makes reference to music and dancing, such as might accompany a wedding procession or be performed for an epithalamium: πάλλε πόδ' αἰθέριον, <ἀναγ'> ἀναγε χορόν (326), ὁ χορὸς ὄσιος (328), χόρευε, μάτερ, χόρευμ' ἀναγε (332), μακαρίαῖς ἀοιδαῖς (336), μέλπεται ἑμῶν γάμων (339). The preceding dialogue, moreover, contains allusions to certain acts which accompanied the wedding ceremony: Talthybius' duty to στρατηλάτῃ / ἐς χεῖρα δούς νιν (295-96) parallels, though not

⁵³⁷ See Introduction, pp.15-26; Ch.1, esp. pp.38-57.

⁵³⁸ Eur. Tro. 310, 314: ὦ Ὑμέναι' ἄναξ, 331: Ὑμῆν ὦ Ὑμέναι' Ὑμῆν.

⁵³⁹ Eur. Tro. 311-13.

exactly, the *enguê*, in which the bride was given ‘into the hand’ of her husband by her *kurios*; and his instruction to the captives to *ekkomizein* Cassandra recalls the opening of the *hymenaios* in Aristophanes’ *Peace*: *νύμφην ἔξω τινὰ δεῦρο κομιζεῖν* (*Peace* 1316).

Yet this term may also be used of a corpse,⁵⁴⁰ and it is possible that the threnody as well as the *hymenaios* underpins this song. While in Aristophanes the bride is escorted out and torches brought as a celebration of peace and renewal of human and agricultural bounty,⁵⁴¹ Euripides reminds us that these are structural elements of both the wedding and the funeral, part of yet another ghastly crime of war, and the total cessation of Trojan productivity – indeed, the torches are feared to be a sign of the captive women’s self-immolation (301-2), and presage the fires which extend this barren destruction to the whole city of Troy at the end of the play. Aristophanes’ wedding songs signal a happy ending for the protagonists and their fellow-citizens, the renewal (if fantastic) of hope and prosperity for the communities involved. In contrast, we know that Agamemnon’s union with Cassandra ends in their deaths, and prompts Orestes’ matricide of Clytemnestra and subsequent haunting by the Furies. Could a further irony be at work here? In the latter two episodes, Hecuba’s encounters with her kinswomen are characterised by hope sprung from disaster, to be taken away and leave despair in its wake – that Helen might be justly executed, only for Menelaus to be beguiled (if not explicitly) by her beauty and take her back to Greece,⁵⁴² and that Andromache might blandish Neoptolemus and raise Hector’s son Astyanax to be an avenger for Troy, only to be told he must be killed to prevent just this.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ekkomidê* may also be performed for a corpse: LSJ s.v. *ἐκκομιδή*, *ἐκκομίζω*.

⁵⁴¹ Ch.5, p.217.

⁵⁴² Like many aspects of the play, the reunion of Helen and Menelaus is inferred from the mythical tradition in Homer and directly contradicts the statement made by Menelaus (*Tro.* 1055-57): *ἔλθοῦσα δ’ Ἄργος ὥσπερ ἄξια κακῶς / κακῆ θανεῖται καὶ γυναῖξι σωφρονεῖν / πάσαισι θήσει*, cf. Lloyd (1992) 99-112, (1984) 303-304: he argues that ‘we are not entitled to make use of our knowledge of the story if nothing is made of it in the play’; contra Gregory (1991) 174, Meridor (1984) 211-213: Euripides ‘seems to hint at this well-known fact’ in vv.1107-9, when ‘the chorus envisage “the daughter of Zeus” crossing the sea as she “takes up in her hands her golden mirror”...the incongruity of such a description with her status of condemned captive, as well as her presentation as Zeus’ daughter, may point to the chorus’ assumption that Helen is not subject to human justice and will be reinstated in her husband’s favour’.

Other funereal elements pervade the ode. Cassandra's mention of her mother's weeping for the dead Priam, ἐπὶ δάκρυσι καὶ γόοισι (315-16), may recall the goos of the Trojan women in the Iliad – an antiphonal lament with the professional mourners who sing the thrênos for Hector.⁵⁴³ Under these circumstances, Cassandra's reiterated cry to Hymenaios (which increases in frequency towards the end of the ode), might be seen as a refrain of lamentation.⁵⁴⁴ Yet her joy in her circumstances resists – or complicates – such a reading, as I will go on to discuss. Rather, the combination of the joyful and the ghastly, hope and despair, suggests with Cassandra as with her sisters-in-law something of what is to come.

If this is not the marriage Hecuba hoped for (345-7), at least her daughter will go to a kingly bed (312). But Hecuba knows her hope is in vain, that Clytemnestra is the true bride of Agamemnon (Λακεδαιμονίαι νύμφαι, 250), that her daughter is mad and delusional to think that she will be Troy's avenger (οὐδὲ...σεσωφρόνηκας, 349-50), and that there is no hope for them (ἐλπίδων ποίωv ὕπο; 505). Cassandra's appearance thus establishes a thematic unity for the episodes of the drama, and her wedding song informs her internal audience not of a happy ending, but that their troubles have only just begun. The manipulation of certain formulaic aspects reflects this inversion of purpose.

Though Cassandra sings a joyful wedding hymn, which may, as Barlow suggests, reflect 'some of the natural exuberance a girl may feel at her wedding',⁵⁴⁵ there is something inherently wrong in this. Not simply because 'the elements of normality [which are especially ironic]...are totally inappropriate to this one person for whom the married state was never contemplated',⁵⁴⁶ but because these elements are in themselves abnormal. While it is not

⁵⁴³ Hom. Il. 24.720-23, Alexiou (1974) 12.

⁵⁴⁴ Cf. Alexiou (1974) 135-36.

⁵⁴⁵ Barlow (1986) 173. The transition may be traumatic, but as the feminine telos may also be eagerly anticipated. Contra Croally (1994) 229-30, who sees her joy as pertaining not to the marriage itself, but to the destruction it will bring Agamemnon: 'she does so [i.e., looks forward] with some glee and admiration for her own responsibility in the matter'. Compare Aesch. Ag. 1071-1330.

⁵⁴⁶ Barlow (1986) 173.

unknown for the bride to sing a wedding song (or the song to be cast in the voice of the bride), our surviving examples of this depict a lament, as in Sappho fr. 107 and 114 V, the sentiments of which are echoed in tragedy and in the songs of modern ethnological studies.⁵⁴⁷ The transition, though necessary and generally positive, is a fearful one, a rite of passage envisioned as death and rebirth, and so a maiden may be perceived as marrying Hades. Antigone presents an extreme example of this tendency in her lament as she leaves the stage in Sophocles' play,⁵⁴⁸ but even this image is warped in the Cassandra episode – she does not imagine marrying Hades himself, but marrying Agamemnon in Hades: ἐν ᾧ Αἰδου νυμφίωι γημώμεθα (445).⁵⁴⁹

The element of lament in a wedding song, and the ethic of protest inherent to that genre,⁵⁵⁰ may lend the epithalamium the force of social comment – but this protest is ideally overcome in the course of the transition. Lament as social comment, however, is how Suter perceives this ode: ‘this speech is an example of an astrophic solo, elsewhere (and I believe here also) used for self-lament in a situation of extreme alienation’.⁵⁵¹ According to her, the whole play is a lament,⁵⁵² and Euripides' use of the genre as a vehicle for social comment offers ‘a proleptic lament for Athens...a warning and a plea to the public in the theatre’.⁵⁵³ Though she believes that Cassandra's madness and her death far from home are responsible for this emotion, alienation is also a characteristic of bridal lamentation, the *erêmia* of separation from the familiar, preceding reintegration into her new home.⁵⁵⁴

The ethic of the epithalamium is mapped onto the wider dramatic and cultural contexts of the play. However, this explanation may not be all it seems. Though the ode

⁵⁴⁷ See Introduction, pp.15-22; Ch.1, pp.71-72; Ch.2, pp.82-86; Ch.3, pp.117-20, 125.

⁵⁴⁸ Soph. Ant. 806-928.

⁵⁴⁹ But see Soph. Ant. 1240-41 for a marriage completed in Hades.

⁵⁵⁰ Cf. Alexiou (1974) esp. 116: protest in the *moirólógia*; Holst-Warhaft (1992) 41: protest at departure; McClure (1999) 37; Lardinois (2001) 88, on Caraveli (1986); cf. p.19, n.63.

⁵⁵¹ Suter (2003) 9.

⁵⁵² Suter (2003) 1.

⁵⁵³ Suter (2003) 21-22.

⁵⁵⁴ E.g. Soph. Trach. 530; see Ch.3, p.128.

contains some technical features of lament, it cannot be said to be a *moirólógia* for the fate of the bride, since these lamentations are typically expressions of reluctance on her part: of anxiety about, and protest against, the transition she must undergo (an experience over which she has little or no control), acceptance of which the positive, civilising imagery of the traditional wedding song aims to effect.⁵⁵⁵ This is not truly the case in Cassandra's song, which is wildly joyous and expresses eagerness for the coming union. Indeed, her enthusiasm is unparalleled in other wedding songs Cassandra hastens of her own accord to the nuptial bed, as her iambic speech also makes clear: *πέμπε, κἄν μὴ τὰμά σοι πρόθυμα γ' ἦι / ὄθει βιάως* (355-56). Such eagerness is improper for a maiden about to embark on marriage – though the transition may be secretly longed for at the same time as dreaded,⁵⁵⁶ and many texts show anxiety about the sexually incontinent female,⁵⁵⁷ a well-bred Greek woman did not publicly admit desire for sexual intercourse.

Nor, it seems, should a Trojan princess. Though Hecuba, Cassandra and Andromache are geographically barbarians, they operate within the same moral standards as Greek women. Andromache is silent, secluded, and submissive – the Greek ideal, except that this continent behaviour has won her destructive reputation (643-60). Hecuba imposes exacting standards upon her view of the world, and demands that Helen die to provide an object lesson for would-be adulteresses in the future (1029-32). Ironically, it is Helen, the Greek princess, who plays the barbarian (991-97, 1021-22). Another boundary is destabilised,⁵⁵⁸ and Cassandra's inappropriate eagerness throws the un-barbarian behaviour of her kinswomen into sharper relief. The immodesty inherent in her actions also underscores the perversions

⁵⁵⁵ Cf. Seaford (1985) 50-59; Introduction, pp.17-18; Ch.2, p.88.

⁵⁵⁶ Hom. Od. 6.66: *θαλερὸν γάμον*, Alc. fr. 4A.15: *ἔρατὸν τελέσαι γάμον*, Cat. 62.37: *quid tum, si carpunt, tacita quem mente requirunt?*

⁵⁵⁷ This is evident in tragedy (Clytemnestra, Phaedra, Helen), comedy (the loose wives of *Thesmophoriazusa*), and oratory (Euphiletus' wife in *Lysias* 1).

⁵⁵⁸ In making the 'identification of Greek against barbarian' (Croally 1994:115) more problematic, Euripides also makes the examination of the Greek/male/free self against the barbarian/female/slave more difficult.

upon which this marriage is founded. But she is not as eager for the union itself as for its result: not the birth of children and her new status as ‘wife’ (indeed, though Agamemnon is called her husband and she his bride, she is never referred to as his *gunê* or *damar*, as Andromache is to both her husbands), but the violence that will result from his taking of her, which will avenge his destruction of Troy:

κτενω̄ γὰρ αὐτὸν **κάντιπορθήσω** δόμους
ποινάς ἀδελφῶν καὶ πατρὸς λαβοῦσ’ ἐμοῦ.⁵⁵⁹

The use of her *hymenaios* (in the sense of wedding, as well as wedding song) as a vehicle for vendetta justice takes the interchangeability between this genre and lament to its most extreme conclusion,⁵⁶⁰ and one wholly in keeping with the character of Troades – it is difficult to tell whether the ode is one or the other, as neither the joy nor the sorrow inherent to the nuptial transition is as it seems. Only Apollo’s priestess can see the truth and accept the paradoxes of her situation, and this identity as priestess and prophet is central to our understanding of it.

In keeping with this identity, the language of the song is almost hyper-sacral. According to Barlow, her repetitive vocabulary ‘underlines Cassandra’s obsessive fervour and single-minded delusion of a sacral occasion misconceived and wrongly applied, but expressed in terms consistent with her function as priestess’.⁵⁶¹ Though held in a prisoner-of-war camp, Cassandra seems to imagine that the action is taking place in the temple of Apollo:

σέβω φλέγω -

⁵⁵⁹ Eur. Tro. 359-60.

⁵⁶⁰ Cf. Alexiou (1974) 22.

⁵⁶¹ Barlow (1986) 174.

ἰδοὺ ἰδου -

λαμπάσι τόδ' ἱερόν.⁵⁶²

And though the gods have left Troy in its desolation, she incorporates a cletic address to Apollo into her hymenaios: ἄγε σὺ Φοῖβε (308). Identifying her current activity as doing the god's work (θυηπολῶ, 310) further underscores the perversion inherent in the marriage of a virgin priestess of Apollo. She abandons her sacred insignia (a kind of perverted anakalyptêria) before Agamemnon takes her, so that they cannot be defiled⁵⁶³ – a sharp contrast to the behaviour of her conquerors, men willing to drag a priestess from supplication at Athena's statue (and, in the later tradition at least, rape her there and then).⁵⁶⁴ Appropriately, the virgin takes refuge in the shrine of the virgin goddess. Cassandra's use of θυηπολῶ sets up a deliberate and ironic contradiction between logos (divine service) and ergon (sacrilege).⁵⁶⁵ Or does she genuinely believe she is serving the god – is she delusional?

Her divine ecstasy has in addition a darker, more manic element, for it contains elements of Bacchic, as well as Apolline, worship. Her pine torches can equally be used in the cult of Dionysus as the wedding procession, and she is called μαινώξ (306) and described as βακχεύουσαν (342). She uses the ritual Dionysiac cry, εὐὸν εὐοῖ (326) as well as the more traditional refrain to Hymenaios. This 'seems to have been a unique Euripidean creation', in which 'Cassandra is characterised by special language' throughout

⁵⁶² Eur. Tro. 308-10.

⁵⁶³ Eur. Tro. 451-52, cf. Aesch. Ag. 1039-1272: p.108, n.327. Whereas such bridal imagery functioned metaphorically in Agamemnon, here Cassandra imagines it literally – another sign of madness, or Euripides' manipulation of a mythical 'truth' that only she can understand (cf. Mossman 2005:359-60).

⁵⁶⁴ This is generally thought to be a Hellenistic addition to the tradition, although Archaic vase-paintings of the scene often show Cassandra naked (OCD s.v. 'Cassandra'). In Euripides, Mason (1959) 89 argues that the words ὡς ἔτ' οὐδ' ἀγνή χροῶ (453) suggest that she escaped physical rape by Ajax, and Poseidon's words Αἴας εἶλκε Κασσάνδραν βίαι (70) refer to her removal from the temple, not a sexual attack.

⁵⁶⁵ Apollo's own rapacious nature, however, complicates this dichotomy, as the myths of Daphne (cf. δάφναις, 308), Creusa, Cyrene and Cassandra all suggest.

the trilogy.⁵⁶⁶ But does the conflation of the two ritual aspects have a greater significance? The madness of Dionysus is of a different character to possession by Apollo: it implies violent Maenadism.⁵⁶⁷ The identification of Apollo's cult with Bacchism in Cassandra's language further increases our difficulty in identifying her prophecy as Apolline truth,⁵⁶⁸ but though Mason finds 'nothing incongruous' in this representation,⁵⁶⁹ the conflation of ritual indicates a dissolution of boundaries (as often with wedding and funerary ritual in tragedy) – here attributable to the collapse of civilisation, and civilised norms, resulting from protracted war.⁵⁷⁰ This theme may operate both within and without the dramatic frame: while Cassandra displays characteristics of possession by both gods and treats her marriage in these terms, it is the victorious Greeks who have abandoned piety, boundaries and *nomoi* altogether, and the 'marriage' is treated as such: τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ τε παραλιπὼν τό τ' εὐσεβες, / γαμειβιαίως σκότιον Ἀγαμέμνων λέχος (43-44). Is the union a warning for the audience of the transgression and social dissolution which accompanies gratuitous warfare?

If so, it is strained and undermined by its expression in Cassandra's speech – both by her madness, and by her questioning of mythical 'truth'. We know she speaks truthfully, and most of what she says is straightforwardly factual in the light of inherited tradition: that she will be the catalyst for the death of Agamemnon (356-60) and the matricide of Clytemnestra (363-64). The Greeks destroyed thousands for the sake of one woman (368-69), including, in the case of Agamemnon, his beloved daughter (τὰ φίλτατ', 371). In doing so, they inflicted damage upon their own *oikoi* (374-85), while the Trojans fought for and in the presence of

⁵⁶⁶ Scodel (1980) 70.

⁵⁶⁷ In contrast to Mason's (1959:92) assertion, Dionysus also functions as a god of prophecy, as at Eur. *Hec.* 1267, and is worshipped at Delphi: Aesch. *Eum.* 24-26, Eur. *Ion* 550-53, with Zeitlin (1993) 167-71, Orph. fr. 35 Kern, Call. fr. 643 Pf.

⁵⁶⁸ Croally (1994) 134: 'The framing of Cassandra's arguments also raises questions about the truth value of the representation performed under the aegis of Dionysus'. Cassandra herself draws an important distinction between divine possession and raving (366-67): ἐνθεος μὲν, ἀλλ' ὅμως / τοσσόνδε γ' ἔξω στήσομαι βακχευμάτων.

⁵⁶⁹ Mason (1959) 92.

⁵⁷⁰ Cf. Ch.3, p.130 for the use of such imagery in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*.

their families (386-94). She foretells that Hecuba will not be taken back to Greece (428-31), and describes the trials of Odysseus before shying away from the future and returning to the task at hand (432-44). The only part of her speech without mythological provenance is her statement that she will be thrown out unburied,⁵⁷¹ an uncharacteristically gloomy and morbid image amid her exultation.

What strains belief, however, is her value-judgement of the fate of the Trojans. To Cassandra, Τρώες δὲ πρῶτον μὲν, τὸ κάλλιστον κλέος, / ὑπὲρ πάτρας ἔθνησκον (386-87). Such a judgement would be comprehensible to an Athenian audience. Kleos is the fame that lives on after death, such as that of Achilles (Il. 9.412-13), and is guaranteed by re-performance after the event. Her association of κλέος with πάτρας is, however, part of the same set of warrior values that she has criticised the Greeks for adhering to.⁵⁷² Hector and Paris are singled out for praise among the Trojan dead – indeed, she considers them to be the most fortunate. Because of the war, Hector is δόξας...ἄριστος (395). Had the Greeks remained at home, he would not have been famous (397). Paris is similarly blessed – if it were not for his marriage, σιγώμενον τὸ κῆδος εἶχ' ἄν ἐν δόμοις (399). The consolation of fame is Homeric, even if Cassandra's mode of expression is incongruous. With it, she realigns her position with that of tradition. Logos and ergon fuse, but with some dissonance. We accept Cassandra's factual truth, but may question her presentation of it.

⁵⁷¹ Eur. Tro. 448-50. This seems to be a Euripidean invention, as Schol. Eur. Tro. 448.4-7 asserts: ὑπ' οὐδενὸς δὲ παραδίδοται ἡ Κασσάνδρα ἀταφος ἐκβεβλημένη - ἄλλως ὅτι ἰδικῶς ἱστορεῖ ἀταφον τὴν Κασσάνδραν ἐκβεβλήσθαι εἰς ὄρος. Pausanias states that she was buried: that ὅσους σὺν Ἀγαμέμνονι ἐπανήκοντας ἐξ Ἰλίου were buried at Mycenae, but that the Amycleans also claim her tomb (2.16.6). In Aeschylus, she does not speak of her fate after death, saying only: ἀλλ' ὡς θανούση μαρτυρῆτέ μοι τότε, / ὅταν γυνὴ γυναικὸς ἀντ' ἐμοῦ θάνηι / ἀνὴρ τε δυσδάμαρτος ἀντ' ἀνδρὸς πέσηι (Aesch. Ag. 1317-19). There is something akin to this evasion in Euripides (Tro. 361): πέλεκυν οὐχ ὑμνήσομεν... Such hesitancy, like that surrounding Hecuba's fate, is intriguing. It cannot be that Cassandra simply wishes to concentrate on her revenge – she refuses to cause pain to her mother (παθεῖν, 431). Perhaps her own future causes her similar pain: the shift from calm iambs to trochaics in v.444, just prior to her mention of her corpse, suggests a more agitated emotional state, and potentially undermines her triumphant attitude.

⁵⁷² Croally (1994) 126-27.

Similarly, we must accept her marriage with Agamemnon, but its nature as γαμει̂ βιάίως makes it a similarly uncomfortable truth.

The adverb βιάίως and its associations with rape colour our perception of the marriage no matter how joyously Cassandra presents it. Indeed, the hymenaios is as remarkable for what it lacks as for what it contains, namely, the lack of any legal or religious sanction. Talthybius' enguê, on closer analysis, seems a mere parody of the act which strips the marriage contract back to its most basic part, the giving of a woman into the hand of a man in a sexual transaction in which she has no say. The experience of the Greek bride is an uncomfortable informative principle for this perversion of marriage imagery. If the girl is Agamemnon's geras, his war-prize, she is a slave and chattel to dispose of at will, including her sexual favours. If she is his bride, then we expect her to be given to him by her guardian in a legally binding betrothal from which a new family and household will spring – but there is none.⁵⁷³ Cassandra's father and brothers are dead; she has no male relative to act as her kurios in the matter of her marriage. One may argue that the rules of Athenian marriage are not applicable in the context of the Trojan War, or that, as part of the booty, Agamemnon becomes her kurios and may marry her as he wishes, but this seems facile and contradicts both the function of tragic Troy as a recognisable 'other' space,⁵⁷⁴ and other mythical exempla – as Achilles' geras, Briseis looks to Patroclus as her guardian who will give her to Achilles in marriage when they return to Phthia.⁵⁷⁵ Does any such kurios exist for Cassandra, or is this another corruption of sociosexual relations, hubris and bia dressed up as gamos?⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷³ Compare Men. Dysc. 842-43.

⁵⁷⁴ Zeitlin (1986) 117, Croally (1994) 38-41, 188.

⁵⁷⁵ Hom. Il. 18.297-99: ἀλλά μ' ἔφασκες Ἀχιλλῆος θείοιο / κουριδίην ἄλοχον θήσειν, ἄξειν δ' ἐνὶ νηυσὶν / ἐκ Φθίην, δάσειν δὲ γάμον μετὰ Μυρμιδόνεσσι.

⁵⁷⁶ A similar situation seems to exist in the case of Andromache, who unlike Cassandra is referred to as the wife of Neoptolemus, but like her was chosen from among the captives by the hero rather than given away in marriage by her kurios.

If violence is the chief characteristic of this wedding, it follows that the erotic topoi traditional to the epithalamium, designed to mitigate the violence inherent in the transition,⁵⁷⁷ are also missing from Cassandra's wedding song. Though Hymenaios is imagined as present, Cassandra calls on Hecate rather than Artemis, the usual recipient of virgin dedications. Aphrodite, Eros, Peitho and the Graces, the expected nuptial deities, are entirely absent.⁵⁷⁸ In their absence, the love extolled by the poets (σὸν ἀείδοις[ι]ν φιλότατα καὶ νύμφας ἰοκόλπω, Sappho fr. 30.4-5 V, c.f. also fr. 112.4 V) has vanished, to be replaced by the hatred of the bride for her husband: τοὺς γὰρ ἐχθίστους ἔμοι / καὶ σοὶ γάμοισι τοῖς ἔμοις διαφθερῶ (404-5). Peithô, the gentle persuasion of the bride to overcome her reluctance and accept the transition to womanhood effected by marriage, not only goes totally unmentioned in Cassandra's hymenaios, but is also rejected in the play at large: the Chorus urge Hecuba to destroy Helen's persuasive speech (967) which will persuade no wise man (982). Instead, marriages are contracted by its opposite, bia (although how far we are to believe Helen that both Paris and Deiphobus took her by force is debatable), and, as mentioned, Cassandra needs no urging, so eager is she to complete the union and get on with her revenge. Moreover, there is a failure of charis that is 'universal in the world of the play', not only in erotic relations, but also in a wider social framework.⁵⁷⁹ The gods of the epithalamium have departed, like the gods of the prologue, withdrawing from a world where their timai are scorned and their sphere of influence transgressed by violence and hatred.⁵⁸⁰

A similar case can be made for other traditional epithalamic topoi, many of which are perverted rather than missing. Alongside praise for the couple, Cassandra seemingly praises

⁵⁷⁷ See Ch.1, pp.73-76.

⁵⁷⁸ Cf. e.g. Sappho fr. 197 V = Himerius Or. 9.4; see esp. Ch.1, pp.73-74.

⁵⁷⁹ Scodel (1980) 133-34. She sees this failure in the abandonment of Troy by the gods, who owe the Trojans erotic charis, and in human relationships with the gods. This can be extended further, to a failure of charis in everyday life, manifested primarily in the failure of normative relations between men and women.

⁵⁸⁰ Cf. Hes. Op. 197-201; a similar situation is represented in Eur. IA 1090-97.

her father (ὡς ἐπὶ πατρὸς ἐμοῦ μακαριωτάταις / τύχαις 327-28),⁵⁸¹ but censures her mother, who is too engrossed in weeping for Priam to perform her appropriate offices:

ἐπεὶ συ μάτερ, †ἐπὶ δάκρυσι καὶ †
γόοισι τὸν θανόντα πατέρα πατρίδα τε
φίλαν καταστένουσ' ἔχεις,
ἀναφλέγω πυρὸς φῶς.⁵⁸²

There are no prayers and good wishes for the future, no naturalistic imagery – either as lament for ‘plucking’ or celebration of the bride’s ‘harvest’ or ‘cultivation’. The seductive locus amoenus for the consummation of marriage instead becomes its opposite, the porch of Hades and the tomb of Agamemnon with its wintry streams (ὕδατι χειμάρρῳι, 449), beside which Cassandra will be thrown to the beasts. Hatred and death lend themselves only to sterility, the antithesis of the hymeneal objective. The imagery of cultivation, agriculture, and ‘plucking’ of fruit that may symbolise the bride’s loss of virginity in the epithalamium is rightly transformed into this barren image.

The perversion of ‘primary elements’ discussed above may give us some clue as to how we are to understand the manipulation of topoi in this ode. Cassandra, far from being lost within her delusions, recognises the absence of those positive, civilising aspects of the wedding song which would acculturate the bride to her new way of life – she knows exactly what is missing, and how abnormal this is:

...φάος

⁵⁸¹ Perhaps here she simply praises his fate, as she does for Hector and Paris.

⁵⁸² Eur. Tro. 315-20.

παρθένων ἐπὶ λέκτροις

αἶ νόμος ἔχει.⁵⁸³

It is uncertain what *nomos* Cassandra refers to here, but given the parallels elsewhere in Euripides, it must refer to Hecuba's bearing the marriage-torch in the wedding procession, an image frequently depicted on Athenian vases.⁵⁸⁴ Hecuba cannot bear the torch as is customary; Cassandra must do it herself. And call the dance. And sing the wedding song. Her *hymenaios* is one long list of elements which violate *nomos*, and cast a shadow of doubt over Tufte's definition of this song as a 'conventional epithalamium' used for dramatic irony. Unlike the *hymenaios* in *Phaethon*, there is little conventional about this song, and its transgression of *nomos* is symptomatic of the marriage itself. Further, because marriage is the cornerstone of the community, the *oikos* the foundation upon which other relationships in the polis are built, this transgression reflects the state of society at large.

The Bride's Departure

Far from being removed by the action by her ecstasy, Cassandra's monody is deeply embedded in the play's overall unity, not simply in its accumulation of lamentation, as Suter suggests, but on an ethical level: 'the anti-epithalamium thus dramatizes not only Cassandra's forced union with Agamemnon, her plans for his destruction, and her prospective union in death with her father, but symbolizes also the theme of the entire play – the miseries for all mankind brought on by the illicit and unsanctioned union of Paris and Helen'.⁵⁸⁵ The

⁵⁸³ Eur. *Tro.* 323-25.

⁵⁸⁴ Eur. *Med.* 1026-27, *Phoen.* 344-45 (νόμιμον [ἐς γάμοις]), *IA* 733-34 (οὐχ ὁ νόμος). Or does Hecuba actively refuse to lift the torches, seeing such celebratory action as inappropriate? She certainly insists that they be taken away at the end of the ode (351).

⁵⁸⁵ Tufte (1970) 42.

centrality of the hymenaios to our understanding of Troades suggests that, just like the lament, the wedding song constitutes an informative principle for the drama. The experience of the bride is evident in the play's emphasis on transition – for both the conquered and the conquerors.⁵⁸⁶ All the women face separation from the familiar, sheltered life they have previously known (even if this was a husband's home rather than a father's) and express anxiety about the future: ἡ λέκτροις πλαθεῖς Ἑλλάνων / ἔρροι νύξ αὐτα καὶ δαίμων (203-4). The natural erēmia of the bride at this separation is expressed in the loss and desolation faced by all the captives (ἐρημόπολις μάτηρ ἀπολείσθαι ὑμῶν, 603), their wedding beds (καρατόμος ἐρημία, 565), and by the city at large (ἐρημία γὰρ πόλιν, 26).

Furthermore, the notion of the marital transition as a journey, often nautical, expressed in some wedding songs,⁵⁸⁷ is brought to mind by the repeated vocabulary of sailing,⁵⁸⁸ the notion of the voyage of Helen and Menelaus as a journey towards remarriage, and the bitter words of Andromache:

κρύπτει ἄθλιον δέμας
καὶ ῥίπτει ἐς ναῦς ἐπὶ καλὸν ἔρχομαι
ὑμέναιον, ἀπολέσασα τοῦμαυτῆς τέκνον.⁵⁸⁹

As in the modern Greek wedding song, which likens the bride to the girl taken in Charon's boat in the funeral lament (and indeed, the ancient tradition which casts the maiden as the

⁵⁸⁶ Gregory (1991) 156.

⁵⁸⁷ Particularly evident in the arrival of Andromache at Troy for her wedding in Sappho fr. 44 V, inverted by Sophocles (OT 420-23); see Ch.3, p.110.

⁵⁸⁸ Craik (1990) 1, 3-4, 9-11. This is not necessarily, as she argues, entirely sexual, as e.g. 686-95.

⁵⁸⁹ Eur. Tro. 777-79.

bride of Hades),⁵⁹⁰ to the captives, this journey is a voyage towards death: at first they are merely afraid that the Greeks will kill them outright (179-80), confusing the movement of the ships, a metaphor for transition and toil,⁵⁹¹ with the decision to end their lives; but, realising they will be taken to Greece, Hecuba likens her life as a slave to death and laments her fate: νεκροῦ μορφά...αἰαῖ αἰαῖ. (192-93). Finally, their transition turns out to be not to a new state of life, but actually a passage to death – most of them will be destroyed by shipwreck en route to Greece; the experience of the Greek bride taken to a tragic extreme. Hecuba will die before departure, transformed into a dog.⁵⁹²

In the absence of so many positive elements of the wedding song, it is unsurprising that acceptance of this transition – externally imposed, feared, and a parody of the eagerly-anticipated one which accompanied ‘real-life’ marriages – should be difficult to come by. But, as we saw in Chapter 1, the wedding song (as well as the lament) aimed at the eventual acceptance and reintegration of the bride (or mourner) into the community after the period of separation and change.⁵⁹³ Scodel interprets Hecuba’s opening anapaests as ‘essentially an exhortation to *τλαμοσύνη* which is a central part of the traditional consolatio...her very laments constitute acceptance of what has taken place’,⁵⁹⁴ and Mead sees a gradual progression towards the positive: ‘her many references to the former glory and present desolation of Troy are not so much laments as attempts to accustom herself to the situation and the beginning of questioning as to why such things should be, speculation taking the

⁵⁹⁰ The ‘voyage to death’ motif recurs in the modern Greek wedding song – the bride may beg her mother to hide her as she crosses her natal threshold for the last time, as in the funeral lament for a girl who asks the same as Charon comes for her. Alexiou (1974) 121 identifies this tendency towards lament as the bride’s resistance, albeit conventionally expressed, to leaving behind girlhood, a tendency that was expressed literally by the Nanhui Chinese, among whom the bride would ritually lament, among other stages, as she was taken in an actual boat to her new husband’s home (McLaren & Chen 2000: 216); see Introduction, pp.21-22.

⁵⁹¹ Cf. Eur. Tro. 686-95.

⁵⁹² This is not mentioned in Troades, but is prophesied by Cassandra in Alexandros (fr. 62h = 968 N.²), and also mentioned in Hecuba: 1265-73; Mossman (1995) 194-200.

⁵⁹³ See esp. pp.72-73.

⁵⁹⁴ Scodel (1980) 68. For the expression of this in a bridal context, we may compare the consolatio of Hades in H.H.Dem. 360-69.

place of action for an able and active woman for whom independent action is no longer possible'.⁵⁹⁵

Cassandra has already gleefully accepted her fate and needs no consolation; we assume that Helen is in perfect control of hers; to the other women who surround her, Hecuba is practical even in her devastation, counselling submission and *philia* to Andromache even as a mother might on the eve of her daughter's wedding: **τίμα δὲ τὸν παρόντα δεσπότην σέθεν, / φίλον διδοῦσα δέλεαρ ἀνδρὶ σῶν τρόπων** (699-700).⁵⁹⁶ The experience of the bride – taken from her home, given to a stranger, and eventually acculturated to a new life at the end of a transition cast as a voyage towards death – is thus central to our understanding of Troades, and presents us with a startling picture of its dramatic world. Such figures as Astyanax, relics of the old life, must be left behind.

That the experience of the bride may be used at all as an analogy for the taking of a slave woman amidst the destruction of a city presents a bleak image of marriage – to the parthenos, how different was it to be given out in marriage or be apportioned in sexual slavery, either way a transaction between men in which she had little or no control, upon which she may lament but ultimately must accept her change in circumstances?⁵⁹⁷ This is not the whole story, however: Cassandra's *hymenaios*, and the 'marriages' of the captive women, illustrate a perversion of normative sociosexual relations. That women expected to be married is a given – but not like this:

ἄς δ' ἔθρεψα παρθένους

ἐς ἀξίωμα νυμφίων ἐξάιρετον,

⁵⁹⁵ Mead (1939) 104.

⁵⁹⁶ Eur. Tro. 697-700. In Nanhui bridal lament, the mother counsels the Chinese bride to submit in similar terms: 'once you change your household, you must learn how to follow their ways; you must not compare your new home with living here...' (McLaren & Chen (2000) 219); see Introduction, pp.20-21; p.175, n.590.

⁵⁹⁷ See Introduction, p.21 on the 'exchange of women'; also Ch.2, p.102.

ἄλλοισι θρέψασ' ἐκ χερῶν ἀφηιρέθην.⁵⁹⁸

We have previously seen that marriage, as well as being traumatic and potentially violent, could also be eagerly anticipated and a beneficial institution. The model of marriage presented in Troades inverts the positive expectations of Phaethon, but similar conclusions may be drawn: correct relations must be performed in order for society to function properly. Perverted hymenaios are symptomatic of a failure of these relations, and contribute to further failures.

In addition, the model presented here is not all it seems on the surface. The women, like brides, are totally subject to the authority of their captors. But the captors are subject to a higher authority: while the mortal characters believe that men are the agents of the transition being enacted, in reality, the gods control the action. It is they who will oversee the journey to Greece and effect its telos. Furthermore, they do this in punishment at the Greeks' violation of sociosexual relations – both those between the sexes (the rape of Cassandra) and those between mortals and immortals (the rape of Cassandra in the temple).⁵⁹⁹ Eventually, the men will undertake a marriage to death. As with all tragic hymenaios, this song presents us with a picture of a world in crisis, of a total breakdown in social and sexual relations. One failure of *philia* and *nomos* – that of Helen and Paris – begets another, until all *philia* and *nomos* fails. What might, in a normal marriage, be gained by persuasion is in war taken by force, and so the wedding song, which aims at persuasion, fails, like all of Cassandra's utterances, to persuade – at least its internal audience.⁶⁰⁰

If the capture and rape of a city's female population is symptomatic of a world gone wrong and the corrupt relations characteristic of war, what does this say for the play's

⁵⁹⁸ Eur. Tro. 484-86.

⁵⁹⁹ Eur. Tro. 65-70.

⁶⁰⁰ Mason (1959) 88: this failure to persuade makes Cassandra dramatically effective.

cultural context, in which the women and children of Melos had recently been led back to Athens following the sack of their island? Thucydides portrays another failure of persuasion in the Melian dialogue, with the threat of force if the island's submission is not gained peacefully, and scholars tend to see Troades in terms of a criticism of events on Melos and a warning against the further hubris of a campaign on Sicily.⁶⁰¹ For an Athenian audience in 415BC, however, the situation may have been different: the play is unlikely to have been written before the capture (though topical allusions may have been added before the performance); the Melian campaign was a success, and imperialist sentiment most likely cast the voyage to Sicily in a positive light.⁶⁰² War was part of civic ideology, and the enslavement of the defeated a fact of life. Melos was not the only city sacked during the War. The disruption of the oikos through extended warfare, represented through the experience of the young bride, is also an Aristophanic topos,⁶⁰³ and may associate Euripides' mythical representation with a more general Peloponnesian War context.

The hubris committed by the Greeks was not the sacking and rape of Troy, but outrage against the gods. The nemesis that befalls the Achaeans cannot have been expected to find a parallel in Athens.⁶⁰⁴ Herodotus' report of the reaction to Phrynichus' *The Capture of Miletus* demonstrates that the Athenians did not like tragedy to correspond too closely to

⁶⁰¹ See esp. Mead (1939) 102, Murray (1946a) 82-83, (1946b) 127-28, Luschnig (1971) 8; Lee (1976) xiv maintains that the anti-war message, 'is not the whole play, and we are too easily satisfied if we regard the Melos incident as the play's central theme'; Barlow (1986) 34-35: it is more than merely a political play; see also Pelling (2000) 204.

⁶⁰² Bosworth (1993) sees the resistance of the Melians, not the force of the Athenians, as the more destructive activity, and suggests that the arguments made by the Melians against the invasion were inappropriate to the context: 'the achievable is what is exacted by the superior and conceded by the weak. That excludes questions of justice as inappropriate in a debate between participants who are not subject to the same constraints' (35). The sack of Troy is not comparable. Macleod (1983) admitted deeper ambiguities in the Athenians' discourse: 'with artful rhetoric, they disguise their defence, which has to admit that they have in some sense done wrong, as a defiant warning' (61). The possibility thus exists for varied levels of approval of the Melian action – and varied levels of association with Troades.

⁶⁰³ Peace guarantees childbirth (hence marital relations, Pax. 1327), Dicaeopolis will give a draught of peace to the bride and not the bridegroom, because 'she is a woman and not responsible for the war' (Ach. 1062), Lysistrata also speaks of the damage done to the oikos by war – a woman gives her sons to be soldiers, then wastes into old age while her husband fights (Lys. 588-97).

⁶⁰⁴ The Athenian envoys to Melos thought a reversal of fortune highly unlikely: Thuc. 5.91.1-2.

reality:⁶⁰⁵ self-examination was desirable, but this should take place through the focalisation of the ‘other’. Euripides, it is true, complicates this other, but in doing so questions the categories by which the audience constructed its idea of ‘self’. Even so, *Troades* focuses more on the general effects of war, particularly on male/female relations, than on the cultural context of any particular war.

Within that perversion of relations, only Cassandra the prophet can see that her marriage will be beneficial, and only she can identify the appropriate mode of speech with which to express this. As with all prophecies, hers is no less true for others’ inability to understand it, and it is by such ambiguous, oblique means that Euripides lays the foundations for the transition of Cassandra and her fellow captives. At the same time, he dramatises the inversion of *nomoi*, noting the damage to even the victorious society of prolonged warfare:

τὰ δ' οἴκοι τοῖσδ' ὅμοι' ἐγίγνετο.

ξῆραί γ' ἔθνησκον, οἱ δ' ἀπαιδες ἐν δόμοις

ἔσθ' ὅστις αὐτῶν αἷμα γῆι δωρήσεται.⁶⁰⁶

War perverts social institutions, leading to the dissolution and weakening of both victorious and defeated societies. The centrality of the *hymenaios* to these institutions allows the ripples of its subversion to spread out from the song, to the drama as a whole and its cultural context. Euripides plays with our expectations of the ritual to present a vision of the chaos that results when *philia* and *nomoi* go awry. Cassandra and Agamemnon’s union may show the pattern of sexual violence taken to tragic extremes, but it remains debatable whether those extremes offer a lesson to be learned outside the tragedy.

⁶⁰⁵ Hdt. 6.21.

⁶⁰⁶ Eur. *Tro.* 380-82.

Iphigenia in Aulis: the cost of transition

In Troades, both Greeks and Trojans were in a state of transition as they awaited a fair wind to Greece at the end of the Trojan War. The voyage was cast as a ‘marriage to death’ for the captives, but with the gods as authors of their transition, it also became such a voyage for the Greeks. Agamemnon would marry his captive bride, Cassandra, in Hades. This transition forms a doublet with that at the beginning of the War, represented by Euripides nine years later in IA. Again, the Greeks await a fair wind and a voyage – this transit will cost the sacrifice of Agamemnon’s daughter, Iphigenia. Playing on the structural and linguistic similarities between sacrifice, death and marriage,⁶⁰⁷ Agamemnon summons her to Aulis on the pretext of marriage to Achilles. Achilles, when he learns of this abuse of his name, promises to defend Iphigenia’s life and marry her; throwing the mythic tradition into doubt.

Between Achilles’ acceptance of Iphigenia and Agamemnon’s insistence that her sacrifice take place is a choral ode detailing the wedding song of Peleus and Thetis, parents of the prospective groom. The song bears strong resemblances to Sapphic epithalamia: naturalistic imagery, music, community feasting and celebration, dancing and singing maidens, makarismos and good wishes for the future. Coupled with its jarring comparison of Iphigenia, not to the mythical bride but to a sacrificial animal, it provides an ironic contrast to the action of the play and a lyric interlude preceding the maiden’s crushing discovery of her fate. Though not a wedding song per se, this ode should be examined alongside other Euripidean epithalamia, as it exposes similar problems, which find their most developed exposition in this play.

⁶⁰⁷ Cf. Foley (1985) 85, cf. Vernant (180) 138 = (1974) 149, also Michelakis (2006) 71.

In a play in which sacrifice disguised as marriage is the dominant motif,⁶⁰⁸ a hymenaios, with its tacit acknowledgement of the necessity of symbolic sacrifice, is entirely appropriate to direct the action (compromised by Achilles' acceptance of the marriage, rather than sacrifice) back to its traditional course. In IA, like Troades, the world is turned upside down. The kourotrophic goddess Artemis demands a girl's life (89-91). A chaste parthenos must pay for the transgression of an unchaste gunê: τὰμὰ δ' οὐκ ἀποκτενῶ ἴγῳ τέκνα· κοῦ τὸ σὸν μὲν εὔ / παρὰ δίκην ἔσται κακίστης εὐνιδος τιμωρία (396-97, 881, 1236-37). The anax andrôn is a slave to his army (450). The father will take the mother's place, against nomos, in a 'wedding' that is really a sacrifice (727-50), and the mother plots revenge on the father (1455). Achilles threatens to disinherit his own heroic tradition; consent is given, withheld, given, withheld, given...lies are truth and truth is lies (1115-16) and a girl who wished she could sail with her father to Troy leads the Greeks to victory and liberation from the barbarian (1472-3). A final piece of extra-dramatic irony caps this list of inversions: the text of IA is so corrupt that we do not know if Iphigenia really was sacrificed at the end of the play. The finale is a later interpolation.⁶⁰⁹

As in Phaethon and Troades, there is a deep and fundamental anxiety in IA about 'appearance' and 'reality': nothing is as it seems. The deception arising from the rhetoric of acceptance, of which the wedding song is part, appears to offer a solution to this social disruption, but may actually undermine it. Wright suggests a philosophical idea of the theme of deceptive appearances and the confusing nature of reality at the heart of some of Euripides' other late tragedies;⁶¹⁰ if we read IA as an expression of Euripidean anxiety arising

⁶⁰⁸ Foley (1985) 67-68.

⁶⁰⁹ Diggle (1994) 414-19; Kovacs (2003) 98 argues that 1531, the departure of Iphigenia, is the end of the play. Regarding the third stasimon itself, Kovacs merely states (p.94) that it was part of the first production, while Diggle suspects the strophe and antistrophe of being developed by Euripides original, and the epode as less confidently proven (399-401).

⁶¹⁰ Wright (2005) 50; cf. p.150.

from rhetorical deception, our belief in outward appearances is shattered and the play's rhetoric is rendered dubious, especially that contained within the marriage song.

How is the song being used? It is seemingly at odds with the action of the play, and debate rages as to the function of these lyrics. Most critics note the idealisation of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, so different from its Iliadic paradigm, and the (ironic) contrast of this to the dramatic situation:

The third stasimon of the *Iphigenia in Aulis* stands out in contrast to the dramatic situation and serves to define it by showing us what it is not.⁶¹¹

Michelakis agrees,⁶¹² and Foley also comments on the Sapphic idealism against the background of late-fifth century anxiety:

The descriptions of both the marriage and the shield [of Achilles, implied by *δωρήματα*, 1074] have a pictorial, distant quality that contrasts with the troubled marriages and the mob violence of the action. The tone is more reminiscent of lyrics such as Sappho's fragment on the arrival of the bride Andromache at Troy...The epithalamic themes and the hint at Achilles' future role in epic again augment and pressure for a return to an ideal and ordered social life and a Panhellenic poetic perspective on events.⁶¹³

The *hymenaios* is thus cast as a Golden Age in contrast to the social meltdown within and outside of the text. Does this ode really refer to the 'good old days' of Panhellenism and

⁶¹¹ Walsh (1974) 241.

⁶¹² Michelakis (2006) 17.

⁶¹³ Foley (1985) 82.

direct the action (and the audience) from fractured disorder towards mythic idealisation? Foley identifies Sappho fr. 44 V, the wedding of Hector and Andromache, as the primary intertext here,⁶¹⁴ but is the romance of that fragment simply juxtaposed with the tragedy, or does the hymenaios have a more significant function in the text?

Euripides' Sappho?

To see the third stasimon merely as ironically juxtaposed to the action is to undermine its true significance. There is a manipulation of generic elements in this ode. The action of IA thus far points to a marriage of Achilles and Iphigenia; we would expect them comprise the 'primary elements' 'bride' and 'groom'. Instead, the wedding of Peleus and Thetis takes centre stage. This is ironic, as it is the arrival of Iphigenia like a bride in the first episode which recalls Andromache in Sappho fr. 44 V.⁶¹⁵ Instead, the Sapphic wedding narrative forms the model for that of an appropriate, but unexpected, couple – as in so many instances in IA, the expectations of the audience are frustrated. The mythical narrative is not entirely unusual: as well as fr. 44 V, we possess mythical epithalamia in fr. 103 and 141 V and Aristophanes had, seven years earlier, included a mythical meta-epithalamium in the exodos of *Birds*.⁶¹⁶ Our expectations are further frustrated, however, by Euripides' manipulation of another element, that of 'wedding'. This element is clear in Sappho, and is also emphasised in the third stasimon: Ὑμέναιος (1096), γάμον (1044, 1077), γάμους (1057), ὑμεναίους

⁶¹⁴ Perhaps Hinds' (1998: 22-23) definition of 'allusion' is more suited to this context: Euripides' dialogue with Sappho fr. 44 V is, as Hinds describes, a 'covert', 'implied' or 'indirect' reference, as opposed to an explicit reworking of that text. In a play which deals so specifically with the interrelation of illusion and reality, Euripidean allusion can be seen as 'precisely the teasing play which it defines between revelation and concealment'.

⁶¹⁵ Eur. IA 435-38: ἀλλ' εἶα τὰπὶ τοισίδ' ἐξάρχου κανῶ, / στεφανοῦσθε κρᾶτα, καὶ σύ, Μενέλεως ἀνάξ, / ὑμέναιον εὐτρέπιζε, καὶ κατὰ στέγας / λωτὸς βοάσθω καὶ ποδῶν ἔστω κτύπος, cf. also 1036-45 (a similar scenario at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis), and Sappho fr. 44.24-30 V: αὐλος...κ]ροτάλων...μέλος ἄγγ[ον...πάνται δ' ἦς κατ' ὄδο[ις / κράτηρες φῖαλαι...μύρρα καὶ κασία λίβανός τε.

⁶¹⁶ See Ch.5, p.224.

(1079). This will not be the case with Iphigenia. Neither the wedding of Hector and Andromache nor of Peleus and Thetis will form a paradigm for her experience – she will not be a bride, but a sacrificial victim (1080-84).

Unlike in Phaethon and Troades, the epithalamial topoi almost beguile us in this ode, and their ‘pictorial, distant quality’ suggests that this effect is probably intentional. The narrative in Sappho fr. 44 V focuses heavily on the sensory, particularly auditory, aspects of the procession, and the description in IA does the same. The audience is drawn in through this appeal to sensory perception. The hymenaios itself is sung by the Muses: ἔστασεν ἰαχάν...αἱ καλλιπλόκαμοι / Πιερίδες...μελωιδοῖς...ἀχήμασι (1039-45).⁶¹⁷ The êchêma recalls the ‘holy song’ of the maidens in Sappho: πάρ[θENOI...ἄχW θεσπεσία (fr. 44.25-27 V). The Euripidean song is similarly accompanied by music: λωτοῦ Λίβους (1036), φιλοχόρου κιθάρας (1037), συρίγγων καλαμοεσσᾶν (1038-39).⁶¹⁸ As in Sappho, where songs of young and old women are set against the paeon of men,⁶¹⁹ the song sung by the Muses competes with the noise made by the Centaurs, μέγα δ’ ἀνέκλαγον (1062) and Chiron’s prophecy: ἐξονόμαζεν (1066). In Sappho’s narrative, sounds, sights and smells combine to increase the festival atmosphere:

πάνται δ’ ἦς κατ’ ὄδο[ις

κράτηρες| φιάλαί τ’ ὀ[. . .]. .εακ[.].[

μύρρα καὶ κασία λίβανός τ’ ὄνεμείχυντο.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁷ Cf. Introduction, p.12; Ch.1, p.70.

⁶¹⁸ Cf. Sappho fr. 44.24-25 V: αὖλος δ’ ἄδυ[μ]έλης...ψ[ό]φο[ς κ]ροτάλων.

⁶¹⁹ Sappho fr. 44.31-33 V: ἐλέλυσδο]ν...ὄνκαλέοντες.

⁶²⁰ Sappho fr. 44.28-30 V.

This is echoed in Euripides by Ganymede's mixing of the wine bowl:

ὁ δὲ Δαρδανίδα, Διὸς
λέκτρων τρύφημα φίλον
χρυσέοισιν ἄφυσσε λοι-
βὰν ἐκ κρατήρων γυάλους.⁶²¹

Rather than the *pais amphithales* symbolic of good fortune and fertility, this wedding is attended by a boy who represents the cessation of transition, and sterility. As Zeus' bed-partner, Ganymede is fortunate in his immortality and eternal youth. Like a bride, he has been separated from his family, never to return. He will, however, never achieve adulthood and family, but will remain forever under the homosexual dominance of Zeus, forever liminal between gods and humans. In this, he symbolises the inversion of both gender relations and of mortal-divine *charis* – a failure present in the wider context of the drama.⁶²²

The tragedian recalls epic and lyric wedding celebrations most when narrating the activities performed by various gender and social groups. This is a particular feature of the wedding song as a communal celebration, emphasising the separate but interdependent spheres of the genders.⁶²³ In the *Iliad*, youths dance while women watch from their doors as the bride is taken through the city.⁶²⁴ In Hesiod's *Shield*, slave-women bear torches ahead of the nuptial car, while male participants sing and females dance.⁶²⁵ In Sappho, the sons of Ilus yoke mules, and women and girls ride on carriages. The daughters of Priam ride apart and

⁶²¹ Eur. IA. 1049-52; Hermes does this in Sappho fr. 141.1-3 V.

⁶²² Cf. also Eur. Tro. 821-58.

⁶²³ See Introduction, pp.11-14.

⁶²⁴ Hom. Il. 18.491-96.

⁶²⁵ [Hes]. Scut. 272-85.

bachelors yoke horses to chariots (fr. 44.13-18 V).⁶²⁶ In Euripides, the guests are again represented as performing different activities in cohorts: Πιερίδες (1041), ὁ δὲ Δαρδανίδα...Γανυμήδης (1049-53), πενήκοντα κόραι Νηρέως / γάμους ἐχόρευσαν (1056-57), θίασος ἔμολεν ἵπποβάτας / Κενταύρων ἐπὶ δαῖτα τῶν / θεῶν κρατῆρά τε Βάκχου (1059-61), εἰδῶς γεννάσειν / Χείρων ἐξονόμαζεν (1065-66), μακάριον τότε δαίμονες...ἔθεσαν (1076-78).

The scene is thus characterised by a dreamlike, idealistic quality, much like those other narratives. It seems, like them, to represent an ideal of social cohesion in stark contrast to the dissolution of the play that surrounds it. But all is not as it seems. The opening verse of the ode, τίν' ἄρ' Ὑμέναιος (1036) recalls not only the wedding song for Peleus and Thetis, but also the question asked by the army of Iphigenia's arrival: 'Ὑμέναιός τις ἢ τί πράσσεται; (430). We are invited to ask the question, 'is this a wedding (song), or what is happening?' In repeating the question, Euripides invites his audience to connect the two unions and to draw parallels – and also to question its assumptions surrounding the marriage of Peleus and Thetis. At first it seems as though Euripides does for this couple what Sappho did for Hector and Andromache. There is evidence in Lesbian poetry of the joyful wedding of Peleus and Thetis,⁶²⁷ providing multiple reconfigurations of epic for Euripides to use. A closer examination, however, causes us to question not only the romantic rewriting of the Peleus and Thetis story against its Homeric model, but also the earlier example in Sappho.

If we argue for an idealised picture of social cohesion, it is notable that this song does not present any picture of society. Andromache arrives at Troy in Sappho's song, and the activities greeting her are indicative of civilisation and civilised behaviour. Likewise on the

⁶²⁶ See Introduction, p.12.

⁶²⁷ See Sappho fr. 141 and Alc. fr. 42 V.

shields of Achilles and Heracles, the brides are escorted ἀνὰ ἄστυ.⁶²⁸ Marriage is shown in the context of community, as a ritual that strengthens and reproduces communities. This is particularly significant in the Iliad, in which marriage and law-courts are represented on Achilles' shield as fundamental to the peaceful city. The marriage in IA, however, takes place in the wild, on Mount Pelion. The Muses travel ἀνὰ Πήλιον (1040), and the Centaurs καθ' ὕλαν (1048). The image is one of untamed nature – the opposite of the 'taming' effect that marriage was hoped to produce. How can domestication take place without a domus?

This is an inversion not only of civilised patterns of marriage, but also of one tradition of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. Visual representations most commonly depict either the rape of Thetis or the gods arriving at the house of Peleus for the ceremony;⁶²⁹ no house is shown in Euripides. In Alcaeus, Peleus ἄγεται' ἐκ Νή[ρ]ηος ἔλων [μελάθρων / πάρθενον ἄβραν / ἐς δόμον Χέρρωνος (fr. 42.7-9 V). With no oikos and no polis, the contrast to the social upheaval surrounding Iphigenia's marriage/sacrifice becomes less defined. We might see the potential for rape in the marginal, wild setting which forms the locus for other abductions.⁶³⁰

The breakdown of idealisation becomes more pronounced when we consider the participants in this marriage. The attendance of the gods at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis is a long-standing part of the mythical tradition, indicated here by δαίμονες. In Sappho fr. 141 V, the actions of the gods are similar to those in Euripides: Ἑρμῆς εἰνοχόησε (3), πάντες κάλειβον (4-6), ἀράσαντο δὲ πάμπαν ἔσλα γάμβρωι (6). Alcaeus also indicates the presence of the gods at the wedding: πάντας ἐς γάμον μάκ[α]ρας

⁶²⁸ Hom. Il. 18.493, cf. [Hes.] Scut. 284: πᾶσαν δὲ πόλιν.

⁶²⁹ LIMC (s.v. 'Peleus') lists 139 depictions in which a context of rape is likely, and 16 (4 of which are Roman) of their wedding ceremony.

⁶³⁰ E.g. H.H.Dem. 4-10, H.H.Aphr. 121-24, Eur. Hel. 179-90, Ion. 886-92.

καλέσσαις (fr. 42.6 V). Indeed, the marriage of Thetis to Peleus guarantees divine stability, for Zeus arranged the marriage lest she bear him or Poseidon a son mightier than his father.⁶³¹ The cycle of cosmogonic succession was thus arrested. The transition made by the bride guaranteed the community on a cosmic scale. There are divine representatives in the third stasimon of IA, the Muses, and the Nereids. None of the Olympians, however, are mentioned by name. Though Zeus acts as Thetis' kurios in the marriage,⁶³² his only mention in this passage is in connection with Ganymede.⁶³³

Perhaps the most notable guests are the Centaurs. Again, the civilising aspects of the wedding song are abandoned in favour of wildness – these creatures blur the boundary between human and beast. Their garlands give them a sympotic appearance (ἐλάταισι στεφανώδει τε χλόαι, 1058), as does their destination, the mixing-bowl of Bacchus. This description is coloured negatively by tradition: it was at the wedding of Peirithoos and Hippodamia that the Centaurs got drunk and attempted to rape the female guests, resulting in the Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs.⁶³⁴ Their presence at a wedding connotes sexual violence and warfare – elements prominent in the wider text.

The gods remain largely unmentioned – effacing the divine sanction given to this marriage by the rhetoric of the text. It is presented as marginal, with undertones of rape, sterility, and death. Other nuptial motifs serve to dissociate the occasion from the ideal of Andromache's wedding. She brings with her a golden catalogue of gifts:

πόλλα δ' [ελί]γματα χρύσια κάμματα

⁶³¹ Pind. Isth. 8.26-45.

⁶³² Eur. IA 703.

⁶³³ See p.190.

⁶³⁴ Hom. Od. 21.295-304, Pind. fr. 166 S-M. While Chiron is often represented at this wedding (as in Alc. fr. 42 above, and many wedding scenes in vase-painting), the presence Centaurs themselves appears to be a Euripidean invention.

προφύρ[α] καταὔτ[με]να, ποίκιλ' ἀθύρματα,
ἀργύρα τ' ἀνάριθμα ποτήρια κάλέφαις.⁶³⁵

The only gift mentioned in connection with Thetis is the armour she will give her son: χρυσέων ὄπλων ἑφαιστοπόνων...θεᾶς ματρὸς δωρήματ' (1072-74). In this armour, he will assault Troy, kill Hector, and die.⁶³⁶ A discordant note is struck, and the fantasy begins to crumble. The pronouncement by Chiron is part of the traditional bridal makarismos. Like Andromache, or indeed any bride, Thetis is complimented by the assembled throng (τᾶς εὐπάτριδος, 1077; cf. Sappho fr. 44.5-7 V) and her marriage praised (1045, cf. 44.34), but the makarismos pronounced by the gods and by Chiron only points to grief:

ὃς ἤξει χθόνα λογχήρεσι σὺν Μυρμιδόνων
ἀσπισταῖς Πριάμοιο κλεινὰν
γαῖαν ἐκπυρώσων.⁶³⁷

The blessing shatters the illusion of happiness – this heroic future dooms Iphigenia, and Achilles himself, to death.⁶³⁸ In representing Chiron's prophecy of the sack of Troy, the song

⁶³⁵ Sappho fr. 44.8-10 V; cf. p.28, n.90.

⁶³⁶ Eur. IA. 1071-75. It is likely that this prophecy is meant to direct us to Iliad 18 on two levels: firstly, Thetis' gifts include the shield on which a similar wedding is described, and secondly, to her own first-person narrative of her marriage (Hom. Il. 18.429-41), in which she is married by violence and doomed to lose the son praised in the choral ode above. A similar allusory play exists even in the idealised narrative of Sappho fr. 44 V: Schrenk (1994) 144-45 suggests that 'both the use of epic vocabulary and the narrative structure of the poem direct the reader to particular episodes in the Iliad, namely, Andromache's discovery of the death of her husband in Book X and the return of Hector's corpse in Book Ω'. See also Griffin (1980) 2-8: Andromache's reaction to Hector's death also recalls the day of her marriage in her casting away of her bridal headdress. As with the prospective marriage of Achilles and Iphigenia, the agamos gamos of Helen and Paris also condemns the socially-sanctioned, productive marriage of Hector and Andromache.

⁶³⁷ Eur. IA 1066-70.

has redirected the dramatic action to the story known from Homer and Aeschylus. Achilles will go to Troy – a journey requiring Iphigenia’s sacrifice. If we must accept this epic/tragic version of events, we must also view the marriage of Peleus and Thetis in the light of her portrayal as the *mater dolorosa* of the *Iliad*, and victim of false *makarismos* in Aeschylus.⁶³⁹

Understanding a second set of allusions, in addition to those to lyric poetry, may reveal how we are supposed to understand this ode. It does not stand in contrast to the dramatic action. Rather, it is not merely a foil for that action. The song is not a separate lyrical interlude, a reference to an epic golden age, or an ironic juxtaposition, but itself an intrinsic and pathos-laden part of the drama whose unfolding demands Iphigenia’s sacrifice. In this, it is deeply embedded in the action of the play.⁶⁴⁰

The metaphor of sacrifice

Euripides, then, suggests that the action of the play may deviate from its traditional course, from sacrifice into marriage. He employs a mythical ‘meta-epithalamium’ to recall the idea of a wedding song for Iphigenia and Achilles, expressed in v.430, and to comment on the action. Like Iphigenia, Thetis’ fate might deviate from that expressed in prior traditions. The absence of traditional elements of her marriage, however (the Olympians, the palace), and the presence of non-traditional figures who represent a negative and violent sexuality (Ganymede, the Centaurs), suggest that the wedding may not be as ‘ideal’ as at first assumed. The meta-epithalamium, moreover, suggests a correspondence between the current action and that represented in the song.⁶⁴¹ If the ode recalls a Homeric/Aeschylean Thetis, it also

⁶³⁸ Walsh (1974) 245: ‘It [this portion of the song] glorifies Achilles without qualification, but at the same time precludes the possibility that he will keep his promise to Clytemnestra, who had put so much trust in his heroic abilities’.

⁶³⁹ Cf. Aesch. fr. 350 R; Ch. 2, pp.95-96.

⁶⁴⁰ See p.186 on its authenticity.

⁶⁴¹ Cf. esp. Ch.2, pp.86-87.

functions in the same way for Iphigenia. The plot ceases to move towards what the audience know to be an impossible conclusion, and the Chorus return to the expectation of sacrifice in the epode.

Here meta-epithalamium becomes anti-epithalamium: the traditional language of the wedding song is used in a subversive way. Iphigenia will be wreathed like a bride – and like a sacrificial victim (κάραι στέψουσι καλλικόμαν / πλόκαμον Ἄργεῖοι 1080-81). In this, she is like a young animal separated from its mother (μόσχον ἀκήρατον...παρὰ δὲ μητέρι, 1085-89), a traditional image of the wedding song. This image corresponds to the ‘separational’ stage of marriage, generally used by women as a lament for the loss of the bride’s formerly sheltered life.⁶⁴² In this passage, the lament has become a protest for Iphigenia’s literal loss of life (αἰμάσσοντες, 1086). Marriage is again an anticipated transition, for which Iphigenia has been reared: Ἴναχίδαίς γάμον (1089). The blood she sheds, however, will not be that in the marriage bed, but of her λαίμον (1086).⁶⁴³

This rite, moreover, is not perceived in terms of conventional animal sacrifice, an act which reaffirms the community. Rather, it is seen in terms of the breakdown of societal norms – perpetrated by the very figures that should promote and safeguard cultural cohesion:

ποῦ τὸ τὰς αἰδοῦς ἢ τὸ τὰς Ἀρετᾶς

σθένει τι πρόσωπον,

ὅποτε τὸ μὲν ἄσπετον ἔχει

δύνασιν, ἀ δ’ Ἀρετὰ κατόπι-

σθεν θνατοῖς ἀμελεῖται,

⁶⁴² See Introduction, p.18; Ch.2, p.88; Ch.3, p.128.

⁶⁴³ Cf. Eur. Hec. 565; p.17 n.53; see Fowler (1987) esp. 191-92 on the comparison of virgin sacrifice to defloration.

Ἄνομία δὲ νόμων κρατεῖ,
καὶ <μῆ> κοινὸς ἄγων βροτοῖς
μῆ τις θεῶν φθόνος ἔλθῃ;⁶⁴⁴

As in *Troades*, a relationship presented as marriage transgresses the boundaries of *nomos*. This forces us to question the legitimacy of the ‘sacrifice’ of her double in this ode, Thetis. The divine sanction assumed for the marriage of Achilles’ mother may not be all it seems.

Indeed, the experiences of the two women are presented in remarkably similar terms in *IA*. The play as whole diverges from the Homeric paradigm, which saw Thetis subjected to Peleus by force (ἐκ μὲν μ’ ἀλλάων ἀλιάων ἀνδρὶ δάμασσαν, *Il.* 18.432), and presents the union as an idealised wedding.⁶⁴⁵ The action of the drama diverges similarly from the tradition of the sacrifice, although notably this tradition is not present in Homer. Iphigenia may be one of Agamemnon’s daughters, Chrysothemis, Laodice, and Iphianassa, offered as bride to Achilles to persuade him to rejoin the battle in the *Iliad*.⁶⁴⁶ It is uncertain whether Homer was unaware of the myth of sacrifice, or whether he knew it but chose not to allude to it. Aeschylus was aware, and his *Iphigenia* is an unwilling victim, her death cast in the imagery of rape.⁶⁴⁷ In Euripides, it is presented in terms of legitimate marriage, and an act to which Iphigenia – finally – acquiesces: ταῦτα γὰρ μνημεῖά μου / διὰ μακροῦ καὶ παῖδες οὗτοι καὶ γάμοι καὶ δοξ’ ἐμή (1398-99). Moreover, as Thetis was ‘sacrificed’

⁶⁴⁴ Eur. *IA* 1090-97. The introduction of female abstracts in this passage heightens further the distance of the ode from the Olympian gods, but is not unknown in situations of mortal transgression, e.g. Hes. *Op.* 197-201.

⁶⁴⁵ See also 701-3; Foley (1985) 72-73. The words Ζεὺς ἠγγύησε καὶ δίδως ὁ κύριος, are, however, expressed by Agamemnon, whose *logos* is not to be trusted and conflicts with reality (1115-16).

⁶⁴⁶ Hom. *Il.* 9.144-48, 286-90. In Sophocles (*El.* 157) Iphigenia was sacrificed, but Chrysothemis and Iphianassa remain alive in the house.

⁶⁴⁷ Aesch. *Ag.* 227-38; see Ch.2, p.105 on the sacrifice as *proteleia*.

to Peleus to preserve Zeus' sovereignty, so Iphigenia must be sacrificed to maintain Agamemnon's (ὥστε μὴ στερέντα σ' ἀρχῆς ἀπολέσαι καλὸν κλέος, 357).

The sacrifice implied metaphorically by the meta-epithalamium is made literal in the play upon which that topos comments. A fundamental difference is notable. Despite the necessity of her marriage for cosmic stability, Thetis remains unwilling, lamenting its outcome: ἔτλην ἀνέρος εὐνήν / πολλὰ μάλ' οὐκ ἐθέλουσα (Il. 18.433-34). Any protests Aeschylus' Iphigenia might make are stopped by force (βίαι ἀναύδωι). Euripides' Iphigenia laments initially (1211-52, 1279-1335), even after Agamemnon has offered his weak rhetoric of necessity: ἀλλ' Ἐλλάς, ἦι δεῖ, κἂν θέλω κἂν μὴ θέλω, / θῦσαί σε (1271-72). The appearance of Achilles, bent on defending her, seems to prompt a change of heart.⁶⁴⁸ She is no longer unwilling, but states βούλομαι / εὐκλεῶς πράξαι (1375-76). She repeats her father's spurious patriotism almost verbatim:

εἰς ἔμ' Ἐλλάς ἡ μεγίστη πᾶσα νῦν ἀποβλέπει,
κἂν ἔμοι πορθμός τε ναῶν καὶ Φρυγῶν κατασκαφαῖ
τάς τε μελλούσας γυναῖκας, ἦν τι δρῶσι βάρβαροι,
μηκέθ' ἀρπάζειν ἔαν †τάς† ὀλβίας ἐς Ἑλλάδος,
τὸν Ἐλένης τείσαντας ὄλεθρον, ἦν ἀνήρπασεν Πάρις.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁸ Whether or not Iphigenia's acquiescence is convincing is itself a problematic issue: Griffin (1990) 148, Foley (1985) 66, Luschig (1985) 3, Michelakis (2006) 39.

⁶⁴⁹ Eur. IA 1378-82, cf. 1270-75. Wilkins (199) 179 sees the self-sacrifice of virgins in Euripides as analogous to the 'non-literal self-sacrifice' of the hoplite soldier in battle. The rhetoric of Agamemnon and Iphigenia is thus deeply embedded in Athenian civic ideology, and should not be spurned as merely facile. Furthermore, if marriage is to women what war is to men, then the representation of self-sacrifice as the telos of marriage is integral to fifth-century social structures. The literal sacrifice, as with the metaphorical one of marriage, is performed on behalf of the community to ensure its integrity and continuance.

Our perceived ‘knowledge’ of the tradition had previously been transgressed by Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Achilles. It is Iphigenia, however – a maiden who, as either bride or sacrifice, would have had no agency in her transition – who performs the final divergence.⁶⁵⁰ In asserting her consent she allows the story as we know it to progress, but divorces herself from her presentation in that tradition. In her willingness, she also dissociates herself from allusions to a Homeric/Aeschylean Thetis, and presents herself as an acquiescent bride. It is as though, in accepting the superficial justification offered by Agamemnon, she becomes one with the superficial narrative of the choral ode. Deeper allusions and anxieties are dismissed, and she goes willingly under the knife⁶⁵¹ – though recent scholarship on the fallacy of the ‘willing victim’ in Greek animal sacrifice may cause us to question such a dismissal.⁶⁵² What is certain is that the story we know is ‘back on track’, but details have fundamentally changed.

The wedding song in IA and the action surrounding it thus raises more questions about our understanding of the mythical tradition in which Euripides composed his play than it answers. This is consistent with the rest of the play:

IA plays with the spectators’ familiarity with earlier versions of the story to challenge their assumptions but also to provide them with an intricate and suspenseful narrative.⁶⁵³

⁶⁵⁰ The passivity of Iphigenia in either of those roles would seem to negate Foley’s (1985:62) statement: ‘Here the ritual experience of women and children, excluded from political participation, offers an apparent cure for the political crises produced by men and forges unexpected links between the public and private worlds’. Her sacrifice may drive a deep wedge between public and private. Though she counsels Clytemnestra to acceptance (1454), tradition still maintains that her death would be the catalyst for her mother’s future crimes.

⁶⁵¹ Wilkins (1990) 183: ‘the principal rhetorical force of the scene is the great desire of the victim to die against the wishes of φίλοι, relatives and friends’.

⁶⁵² Naiden (2007) esp. 61-2 argues against the popular viewpoint (esp. Burkert (1983) Ch.1) that the sacrificial victim ‘nodded’ its assent, and that tragic sacrifice was often perverted because of a lack of this consent, especially in human victims. Yet such ‘assent’ is exposed in Naiden’s article as fallacy, so we may question the efficacy of a comparison to between Iphigenia and animal sacrifice. In addition, as I have shown, perversions exist despite her willingness, not because of its lack.

⁶⁵³ Michelakis (2006) 21.

First Agamemnon attempts to avert the sacrifice (107-9, 115-23), then Menelaus (473-503), then Achilles (932-39, 1361, 65). Other contradictions intrude upon our understanding, and are in turn overshadowed by our knowledge of the tradition: Odysseus, the traditional hero of the oikos, is a key figure in the sacrifice (424-27, 1362), and presented variously as the son of Laertes (203-4) and of Sisyphus (424, 1362). Orestes, the soon-to-be-matricide, is presented as a helpless baby.⁶⁵⁴ Agamemnon's own marriage began in violence against the oikos:

ἔγημας ἄκουσάν με κάλαβες βίαι,
τὸν πρόσθεν ἄνδρα Τάνταλον κατακτανών·
βρέφος τε τοῦμόν ἴσωι προσούρισας πάλωι†
μαστῶν βιάίως τῶν ἐμῶν ἀποσπάσας.⁶⁵⁵

The language recalls his marriage βιάίως to Cassandra in Troades. It is little wonder that such a man perpetrates violence against his own house. Clytemnestra still claims to have been ἄμεμπτος γυνή (1157) to him; ἐς τ' Ἀφροδίτην σωφρονοῦσα (1159) and μέλαθρον αὔξουσ' (1160). These verses cause us to recall that Clytemnestra becomes the opposite of the 'blameless wife' in response to the murder of another child, that she goes on to become 'unchaste' in matters of Aphrodite and that she too does violence against her house. A familiar pattern emerges, in which one act of sexual transgression begets another, until all is consumed by violence. Iphigenia's self-sacrifice aims to stop this cycle (μηκέθ' ἄρπάξειν), but simply allows it to continue. The rhetoric that surrounds her act is thus undermined.

⁶⁵⁴ E.g. Eur. IA 465-66, cf. Michelakis (2006) 100.

⁶⁵⁵ Eur. IA 1149-52.

Idealised visions?

Euripides, then, deliberately plays on variant mythical traditions – including his own⁶⁵⁶ – to cause the audience to question their knowledge of mythical ‘truth’. Epic violence is disguised as political expediency and sexual violence as political alliance-making. From the third stasimon onwards, the traditional picture begins to converge with the Euripidean one, causing us to question closely the ‘idealised’ vision presented in this ode as well as the surrounding action. Ironically, it is Iphigenia’s own deviation from tradition, in her voluntary self-sacrifice, which allows that tradition to continue. We are left with an uncomfortable paradox, one made even more uncertain by the state of the play’s final episode.⁶⁵⁷ Such allusory play demands closer examination of critics’ supposition of idealisation underlying all the play’s choral odes:

The odes, like Iphigenia’s lyrics, do not deny the brutality of the events about to ensue, but their form and beauty translate it to another level...the further the action in the corrupt political world of the play veers from the predicted sequence of the myth, the less relevant the ideals of the odes seem to become.⁶⁵⁸

This ‘beauty’ is questionable. The *parodos*, perhaps the most ‘epic’ of these odes, by situating itself within that epic tradition, points to a focus on war. It thus makes clear the

⁶⁵⁶ In *IT* (356-76), Iphigenia entertains vengeful feelings towards the family who sacrificed her, rather than her forgiving portrayal in *IA*. In the sacrifice described in the earlier play, Clytemnestra and Orestes do not travel with Iphigenia to Aulis, and she regrets her lack of farewells.

⁶⁵⁷ Though both the extant (spurious) ending and Eur. fr. 857 (a possible fragment of the original) preserve the substitution of a deer – rendering Iphigenia’s voluntary self-sacrifice pointless.

⁶⁵⁸ Foley (1985) 84, see also Michelakis (2006) 28.

increasingly prevalent association between heroism and violence.⁶⁵⁹ As Iphigenia arrives, the choral language becomes less epic and more epithalamic. Those to whom Aphrodite comes in moderation are μάκαρες (543). Marriage is described as the λέκτρων Ἐφροδίτας (544), and the goddess called Κύπρι καλλίστα (553).⁶⁶⁰ Eros appears as the kindler of love, but, as in anti-epithalamic passages such as the Ode to Eros in Sophocles' *Antigone*,⁶⁶¹ his disruptive capacity is also described: τὸ μὲν ἐπ' εὐαίῳνι πότμῳι, / τὸ δ' ἐπὶ συγχύσει βιοτᾶς 550-51).

The ambiguous representation of love in this ode reflects once again its conceptualisation in Greek thought as both desirable and dangerous. For the young bride, destructive love is rejected (554-57), and moderate desire held to be part of feminine virtue (568-70). This is presented in contrast to Helen's love, as Iphigenia is contrasted with Helen throughout IA:

ἐλεφαντοδέτων πάροι-
 θεν θρόνων ὃς σταῖς Ἐλένας
 ἐν ἀντωποῖς βλεφάροις
 ἔρωτά τ' ἔδωκας ἔρωτί τ'
 αὐτὸς ἐπτοήθης·
 Ἐλλάδα σὺν δορὶ ναυσὶ τ' ἄγεις

⁶⁵⁹ This association seems to be undermined by the action of the play. Achilles, the 'ideal' hero, is presented as a man of piety and moderation rather than his traditional hot-headed action (824), and a defender of maidens rather than killer of men (935). His complaint against Agamemnon's dishonour of him (961-67) and the prophecy of his actions at Troy, however, recall his portrayal in the *Iliad* and the Homeric ideal of the warrior-hero.

⁶⁶⁰ Cf. *Pha.* 232: Κύπρι θεῶν καλλίστα.

⁶⁶¹ See Ch.3, pp.112-14.

ἴες Τροίας πέργαμαῖ.⁶⁶²

We know from Aeschylus, however, that the two women were more closely associated: in Agamemnon, the looks cast by Iphigenia towards her father upon her sacrifice are described in similar terms to the smouldering gaze of Helen upon her elopement.⁶⁶³ Any contrast is ironic and premature, for Euripides' Iphigenia is herself capable of arousing *erôs*.⁶⁶⁴ If love for Achilles prompts her self-sacrifice,⁶⁶⁵ and leads to the War, she is no less capable of destructive love than the wanton Helen.

The reference to Cassandra's prophecies in the next ode (757-61) recalls her portrayal in Euripides' Trojan trilogy. The parity of experience between Helen and the Trojan women also points back to the motif of violent (re)marriage as a structural unifier in Troades, as well as forward to the violence which seems inevitable at this point in IA (when Agamemnon has, for now, successfully deceived Clytemnestra about the nature of Iphigenia's marriage/sacrifice): κόρας πολυκλαύτους δάμαρτά τε Πριάμου... Ἑλένα πολύκλαυτος (779-81).⁶⁶⁶ Helen's marriage ruins the successful unions of the Trojan women, as well as Iphigenia's own chance at marriage. Again, however, the role of the drama in the mythical tradition is highlighted and the tradition itself questioned:

εἰ δὴ φάτις ἔτυμος ὤς

ἴετυχε Λήδαῖ ὄρνιθι παμένωι,

Διὸς ὅτ' ἀλλάχθη δέμας, εἴτ'

⁶⁶² Eur. IA. 582-89; for the contrast/association between Iphigenia and Helen, see 396-97, 881, 1236-37.

⁶⁶³ Aesch. Ag. 240-41 (Iphigenia), 742 (Helen).

⁶⁶⁴ Eur. IA 1410-15.

⁶⁶⁵ Smith (1979) 174, 180.

⁶⁶⁶ Cf. Troy πολύθρηνον in Aesch. Ag. 711.

ἐν δέλτοις Πιερίσιν

μῦθοι τάδ' ἐς ἀνθρώπους

ἤνεγκαν παρὰ καιρὸν ἄλλως.⁶⁶⁷

By the time we reach the third stasimon, we have been exposed to a layered set of allusions to epic, tragedy, and epithalamium – it is unsurprising that the ode in question poses problems as to its dominant paradigm. IA continually questions its own mythology, and its place within that mythology. The contrast between ‘spoken’ tradition and the ‘tablets’ of the Muses in the above song draws attention to the distinction between *logos* and *ergon*, present in all three ‘hymeneal’ plays of Euripides, but most pronounced in IA. As in the myth of Peleus and Thetis, the audience (internal and external) must form their own opinions as to the ‘authoritative’ tradition.

That tradition is far from idealised. The final ode reconfigures motifs from the meta/anti-epithalamium of the third stasimon,⁶⁶⁸ to present Iphigenia not as the victim, but the instigator of violence:

ἴδεσθε τὰν Ἴλιου

καὶ Φρυγῶν ἐλέπτολιν

στείχουσαν.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁷ Eur. IA 795-800.

⁶⁶⁸ Eur. IA 1513-14: ἐπὶ κάραι στέφη / βαλουμέναν = 1080: ἐπὶ κάραι στέψουσι, 1515: ῥανίσιν αίματατορρύτοις = 1084: αίμάσσοντες, 1516-17: †θανούσαν εὐφυῆ τε σώματος δέρην / σφαγεῖσαν... † = 1083-84: βρότειον...λαμόν.

⁶⁶⁹ Eur. IA 1511-13. Fraenkel prints ἐλέναυς, cf. (1950: vol. 2) 331.

Again, she is aligned with Helen: ἑλένας ἔλανδρος ἐλέπτολις,⁶⁷⁰ but also with the chaste, bloody Artemis of the hymn: πότνια...θύμασιν βροτησίοις / χαρεῖσα (1524-24). In exchange for this charis will come the journey to Troy (1525-26) and fame for Agamemnon and the Greeks: κλεινότατον στέφανον...κλέος ἀείμνηστον (1529-31). The cost of the journey, of the immortal kleos bestowed by epic, is enumerated: not simply the security of tradition, but of other nomoi: normative relations among and between families and cities, and between men and the gods. Charis, that essential characteristic of the wedding song, is inverted in this world which demands the inversion of the metaphors of marriage: actual, rather than symbolic death.

The text, in addition, has undergone its own transition: in coming full-circle, it has taken the audience through an epic ideal to the violence underlying it.⁶⁷¹ The action of IA should make us mistrustful of ‘idealising’ rhetoric in the play at large: all too often, it questions the models underlying those ideals, without providing a secure answer. If ideals are questioned, so might ideology be: Iphigenia’s sacrifice is presented in terms of fifth-century polis ideology.⁶⁷² In problematising the ideals upon which such structures rest, the play exposes their inadequacy to cope with the situation of crisis depicted. Iphigenia dies to preserve social cohesion, but her death will only contribute to social dissolution. As with Troades, the question may be asked: can social structures outside the dramatic frame withstand the pressure of violence? As with Troades, the answer may be found in the experience of the bride.

As a bridal sacrifice, Iphigenia represents the separational stage of marriage as a rite of passage. She will not only lose her old life, she will lose her life. The loss of the sheltered

⁶⁷⁰ Aesch. Ag. 689-90, also Eur. Tro. 358 of Cassandra: κἀντιπορθήσω.

⁶⁷¹ Thus we must question Foley (1985) 102: ‘when politics are irredeemable, ritual and poetry offers a timeless scenario for a positive and necessary deception and for a politics of love that dissolves even while it consents to a politics of revenge’.

⁶⁷² Eur. IA 1376, 1394, 1400-1.

innocence of childhood is made more profound. An Athenian audience at the end of the fifth century might relate to this sense of loss. The impact of war on society and the family, part of the discourse of Troades as well as in a number of Aristophanic plays,⁶⁷³ is present in IA. The play presents a world turned upside down in which there is no escape from war's effects – either in idealised yet violent epic visions, or on the tragic stage. At the same time, this message is polysemic: Iphigenia's act allows Greek victory against the barbarian, and is to her an affirmation of Greek identity and social structures.⁶⁷⁴ An audience may make the connection between IA and Troades, seeing the two plays as a doublet framing the action of the War, or they may see Iphigenia's sacrifice as a literal expression in dramatic terms of the metaphorical marriage/war analogy: a rite of passage in which the young woman or man subsumes themselves as an individual to the needs of the community; its defence both within (in the case of marriage) and without (in the case of war).⁶⁷⁵ Hope and death, salvation and condemnation, are both present. The polysemic language of the wedding song expresses these paradoxes throughout.

The hymenaios is, however, questioned in this play. From Iphigenia's arrival, there is confusion over whether the wedding song is an appropriate genre with which to articulate the action. The wedding song of Peleus and Thetis is cast into doubt by the audience's knowledge of the past and future of that marriage. The use of epithalamic themes and images in the choral odes draw attention to the contradictions underlying the rhetoric of the songs. Yet IA questions the value of its own peithô and rhetoric themselves, not simply their expression in any one genre. We are constantly forced to question truth and falsehood, logos and ergon.

The play highlights the dangers of transgression against the oikos by a sexually incontinent female (Helen), but also those that exist within it when transgression is

⁶⁷³ Ar. Pax 1327, Ach. 1062, Lys. 588-97; see p.193.

⁶⁷⁴ Compare e.g. Lysistrata's brand of feminine Panhellenism: Ar. Lys. 41, etc.

⁶⁷⁵ Cf. Wilkins (1990) 189-90.

perpetrated by the male (Agamemnon). Marital love can itself be a cause of social disruption, as is Achilles' pothos for Iphigenia. IA demonstrates how even actions in defence of the oikos can harm it. The gaps in both civil and domestic rhetoric are exposed. The interdependence of the civil and domestic spheres is also made apparent. In using the analogy of Thetis' 'marriage-as-sacrifice' on Pelion for Iphigenia's 'sacrifice-as-marriage' in Aulis, Euripides stresses the importance of social context for both marriage and sacrifice – and the importance of these rituals to society – at the same time as underlining the potential subversion of both ritual and society.

IA presents a transition perverted by wider failures of social relations. A failure to recognise and enact correct behaviour between men and women, between father and children, between the needs of the oikos and the desires of the army, between states and their allies (and enemies), and between gods and men, results in a profoundly dark vision of a society in crisis. The human sacrifice demanded by Artemis represents not merely a ritual perversion, but is symptomatic of a social failure on a wider scale. 'Greece is sick' (411), and those who have no part in that sickness (recall the bride in Ar. Ach. 1062, ὅτι ἡ γυνὴ ἴστυ τοῦ πολέμου τ' οὐκ αἰτίαι) attempt to offer a path to salvation. But nothing is as it seems – in the end, Iphigenia's acceptance of her fate may simply represent her succumbing to that sickness, or to its inevitability. Like Polyxena, she opts to die with dignity not as an alternative to life, but because the alternative is death without it.⁶⁷⁶ Tu ne pugna, Catullus will remind his bride,⁶⁷⁷ and, like a bride, the sacrificial virgin must realise the futility of struggle. Her only option is to accept the role offered post-transition – a blessed lot, but a costly one.

⁶⁷⁶ Eur. Hec. 74: θανεῖν πρὶν ἀίσχρῶν μὴ κατ' ἀξίαν τυχεῖν. Notably, both sacrifices are cast as 'marriage' to Achilles. Cf. Luschnig (1985) 92.

⁶⁷⁷ Cat. 62.59.

Euripides presents us with the most fully developed expression of all the tragedians of the 'marriage to death' topos. There is a coherent development in his use of the epithalamium in his plays. In *Phaethon*, *Troades*, and *IA*, a wedding ceremony literally ends in the death (or, in the case of *Iphigenia*, ambiguous fate) of one or both of its protagonists. The metaphorical sacrifice of bloodshed in the bridal bed becomes increasingly literal across these plays. In all three, moreover, the failure of transition is caused by a previously perverted hymenaios (either in the sense of 'wedding', or as 'wedding song'), and continues to cause failures of both gender and political relations. The tragic hymenaios in these plays, which in reality demonstrates how the transition should be performed, highlights and comments upon the ways in which it is not. Euripides pushes the boundaries of its dramatic development, using it as an informative principle for the action and odes of these dramas. Within this structure, the contrast between illusion and reality becomes more pronounced towards 405BC, when, in *IA*, both the mythical tradition and the current action are questioned, with no secure conclusion offered. The audience is left doubting the wedding song, its relationship to the tragedy, and the tragedy itself. In doing so, the use of a hymenaios to effect a happy ending in Aristophanes' plays is questioned, an issue which will be addressed in the next chapter. The failure of ritual and abuse of the oikos by war and politics is potentially reversed in *Peace*, *Birds*, and *Lysistrata* – a reversal which may function in the service of the bellicose polis.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE COMIC HYMENAIOS

With the tragedians we witnessed the hymenaios used to illustrate a marital transition that had in some way failed, or was incomplete or perverted. This chapter examines how the epithalamium was adapted for comic usage, and what picture of marriage and gender emerges on the comic stage. Three Aristophanic comedies use plot devices akin to that of Euripides' Phaethon: unite with a goddess and secure both personal benefits and the future of the community.⁶⁷⁸ In *Peace* (421 BC), Trygaeus the vinedresser takes the personified *Opôra* (Harvest) as his wife as part of the bounty of *Peace*'s return to Athens. In *Birds* (414), a year after Euripides staged *Cassandra*'s wedding song, absconded-debtor-turned-king-of-the-birds Peisetaerus marries *Basileia* (Princess) in order to guarantee his new-found sovereignty. This goddess is the custodian (ταμιεύει, 1538) of the thunderbolt of Zeus and all else – receive her, promises Prometheus, and Peisetaerus will have everything: ἦν γ' ἦν σὺ παρ' ἐκεῖνου παραλάβῃς, πάντ' ἔχεις (1542). The plays close with weddings; the wedding songs also constitute the *exodoi* of the cast and chorus.

These finales, according to Sommerstein, had, by the 420s, become part of the elaborate and formalised structural scheme of Aristophanic comedy, in which the *exodos* typically included sexual union (with a young bride or courtesan) and feasting.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁸ See Ch.4, p.151.

⁶⁷⁹ Sommerstein (1980) 9-11.

Both these are likely to go back to a very early stage in the history of comedy, and both survived in a refined form in the betrothal (naturally to be followed by a feast) with which the plays of the New Comedy period so often ended.⁶⁸⁰

Lysistrata, performed in 411, is different. Epithalamial resonances begin early in the play, in the choral competition between the old men and women.⁶⁸¹ This performance may be intended to evoke the epithalamium, especially in the resultant reunion at the end of the song: the men and women sing an amoebaeon song, each stressing their role in the community (614-705). They threaten one another sexually (671-76, 694-95), including the women dousing the men with a λούτρον νυμφίικον (377-78), before reconciling.⁶⁸² The exodos proper is a Spartan hymn,⁶⁸³ but it is preceded by praise of Athens and peaceful reaffirmation of mortal marriage after the women's sex-strike.⁶⁸⁴ The personified 'bride' in this play, is *Diallagê* (Reconciliation), given not to the comic hero, but to the men of Greece to divide between them.⁶⁸⁵ Embodying the land as well as the new regime, she is the object upon which both Athenians and Spartans vent their urge for sexual and martial conquest. She becomes a fetish for their violence, which is displaced onto her person rather than onto Greece itself. But as a symbol for Greece, she calls into question the efficacy of such displacement, and read retrospectively against *Opôra* and *Basileia*, may also call into question their function as 'beneficial' symbols. The transition made in Aristophanes' marriages may thus function as subversively as those in the tragic hymenaioi.

⁶⁸⁰ Sommerstein (1980) 11.

⁶⁸¹ *Ar. Lys.* 254-1042.

⁶⁸² Swift (2006a) 136: 'The choruses unite when the women become reconciled to the men, and make overtures of friendship towards them...The language the chorus uses after they unite also contains sexual overtones, playing on double-entendres between the language of feasting and the language of sex', cf. (2006b) 177; Introduction, esp. p.14; Sommerstein (1990) 209 on 1061-64.

⁶⁸³ Henderson (1987) 218.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ar. Lys.* 1273-90.

⁶⁸⁵ *Ar. Lys.* 1159-80.

The generic elements of these songs also make for an intriguing representation of (particularly female) sexuality. Apart from *Lysistrata*, where the Athenian and Spartan peacemakers both serve as ‘bridegrooms’ for *Diallagê*, this element is represented by the comic hero: an aging Athenian farmer magically rejuvenated by the promise of sexuality embodied by his goddess. These figures are in stark contrast to the mythical heroes and aristocratic bridegrooms of our previous wedding songs, and their like is not seen again in the period under study. The brides present us with a greater problem. *Opôra* and *Basileia* are goddesses, but neither exists in the usual pantheon. As one interpretation for *Phaethon*’s bride suggested, they are created by the playwright for his dramatic program,⁶⁸⁶ in this case, to personify the benefits of the new regime. *Diallagê* does the same: she is ‘a physical embodiment of the pleasures and benefits of peace’.⁶⁸⁷ Though not overtly divine in *Lysistrata*, she is described in such terms in *Acharnians*.⁶⁸⁸ All three females are mute personifications, and this presents a problem.

Opôra and *Diallagê* are nude characters, like many others of Aristophanes’ mute females, and by so appearing in public are cast in the mould of hetairai. *Opôra* at least receives a bridal bath (λέλουται, 868) but bridal attire is never mentioned.⁶⁸⁹ *Basileia* probably does not appear undressed, but certain aspects of her presentation, I will argue, associate her with these other females. Debate rages as to whether these characters were played by real hetairai or male actors in ‘nude’ costume;⁶⁹⁰ in either case, the evocation of a

⁶⁸⁶ Diggle (1970) 160, with reference to *Peace* and *Birds*; see p.142.

⁶⁸⁷ Taaffe (1993) 69.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ar. Ach.* 976: the Chorus address her as ξύντροφε of *Aphrodite* and the *Graces*.

⁶⁸⁹ Oakley & Sinos (1994) 16-19 (figs. 20-35) collect evidence for the adornment of the bride: perfume, an extravagant gown, *stephanê*, special shoes called *nymphides*, and the bridal veil.

⁶⁹⁰ Stone (1981) 145-54 with discussion of the evidence for both nudity *per se* and the debate on male vs. female actors. She states that ‘these scenes almost always occur right before or during the celebratory *exodos* scene...the closing scenes are also the most robust in their humour; it is in this spirit that I find the concept of a man padded with false breasts and wearing a leotard painted with nipples, navel and pubic hair most appealing as a solution. Moreover, this assumption prevents an unnecessary rupture of the men-only rule on the Athenian stage’, but admits that ‘the issue is problematic and the evidence scant, so that a firm conclusion cannot really be reached’ (p.150). Sommerstein’s discussions on the ‘sexy mute’ type (1983:239 on *Vesp.* 1373-75, 1985:175-76 on *Pax* 886-904, 1990:215-26 on *Lys.* 1162-72) suggests that to allow the characters’ comments and stage

scantly-clad prostitute was probably intentional (in *Birds*, this is displaced onto – or suggested by – the appearance of the flute-girl/wife, Procne).⁶⁹¹ More to the point, to cast such a figure in the role of ‘bride’ raises serious questions about the nature of the exchange of women in classical Athens. The ambiguity inherent in such a presentation is exacerbated further by the participation of the hetaira-type in another primary element, that of ‘wedding’ to a citizen. Not only could such an act be construed as illegal in Athens,⁶⁹² but when the ‘wedding’ is in each case presented as a variation of the hieros gamos model, the subversive nature of the comic wedding song is made apparent.

How to sing a comic wedding song

In *Peace*, the song is sung by a chorus of all-male characters and a male protagonist – the bride is the unspeaking recipient of verses, but no women participate, and this is striking. The epithalamium is not an exclusively female genre, yet the wedding is a ritual instance (one of few) in which the public appearance and utterance of women was acceptable, positive, even essential. As such, the epithalamium is often associated with women.⁶⁹³ Compared especially with the hymenaios of Euripides, in which women are the main or sole voices,⁶⁹⁴ this lack of female participation seems significant. It has been noted, however, that women play a very minor role in Aristophanes’ plays before 411BC,⁶⁹⁵ and the lack of female participation may stem from this absence. Aristophanes’ presentation is almost Homeric, in which war and

business implied by them, at least a representation of female anatomy must have been visible. See also Zweig (1992) 73-89, Finnegan (1995) 12, 17, Foley (2000) 282.

⁶⁹¹ See Barker (2004) 195-99 on Procne.

⁶⁹² Ap. [Dem.] 59.16. A hetaira was often a non-citizen, so marriage to such a woman might contravene Athenian marriage legislation: ἔστω δὲ καὶ ἐὰν ἡ ξένη τῶι ἀστῶι συνοικῆι κατὰ ταῦτά, καὶ ὁ συνοικῶν τῆι ξένηι τῆι ἀλούσῃ ὀφειλέτω χιλίας δραχμάς (see Carey (1992) 92 on the authenticity of this document).

⁶⁹³ McClure (2001) 10; see Introduction, pp.10-11.

⁶⁹⁴ Eur. Pha. 218: παρθένους, 217-28: πόσις...ἡγούμενος, Tro. 307: δεῦρο Κασσάνδρα, 332: χόρευε, μᾶτερ, 338-39: καλλίπεπλοι Φρυγῶν / κόραι, IA 1041-45: Πιερίδες.

⁶⁹⁵ Finnegan (1995) 3.

speech are the prerogatives of men.⁶⁹⁶ In *Birds*, a number of the avians who make up the Chorus are linguistically gendered as female, but as Dunbar remarks, there is a complete lack of reference in the play to the male-female division of the Chorus.⁶⁹⁷ It is thus likely that this aspect of gendered speech and gendered activity is not given particular emphasis.

In *Lysistrata*, women play a much greater role in the action. The antiphonal, ‘epithalamial’ chorus takes place between the old men and old women – a comic parody of the *πάρθενοι* and *ὑμάλικ[ας]* imagined by Sappho.⁶⁹⁸ Like the old men who respond to Antigone’s lament in Sophocles, both parties are closer to death than to new life. Once *Diallagê* has been presented and the spouses reunited, it is the Athenian and Spartan delegates who respond to each other’s songs,⁶⁹⁹ with the now-united Chorus and possibly *Lysistrata* interjecting⁷⁰⁰ – in this way, the mixed-sex amoebaeon associated with the epithalamium comes to represent not only the whole of society, but also the whole of Greece.

Unlike the often ambiguous performative contexts of Euripides’ wedding songs, the processional *exodoi* are easily attributable to a stage of the wedding ceremony. The mixed chorus in *Lysistrata* is less readily assigned. The *agôn* between male and female perspectives would seem to associate it with the ‘separational’ stage, often characterised by lament and protest. This is in keeping with the dramatic action, in which the young wives are separated from their husbands by the sex-strike.⁷⁰¹ The united chorus corresponds to ‘reintegration’, when husbands and wives are reconciled: ἀνὴρ δὲ παρὰ γυναῖκα καὶ γυνὴ στήτω

⁶⁹⁶ Hom. *Il.* 6.492-93, *Od.* 1.358-59. Note that in the *hymenaios* in *Il.* 18.491-96, it is *κοῦροι* who perform, while the *γυναῖκες* remain in their doorways (Introduction, p.11). Cf. however *Od.* 23.142-49 (p.1), in which both men and women participate in the song and dance to mask Odysseus’ slaughter of the suitors.

⁶⁹⁷ Dunbar (1995) 242-43.

⁶⁹⁸ Sappho fr. 30.2, 7 V, cf. however the *γύναικες προγενέστεραι* and *πάντες δ’ ἄνδρες* of fr. 44.31-32 V.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ar. Lys.* 1247-1320/21.

⁷⁰⁰ Henderson (1987 & 2000) attributes her verses 1273-90 to the Athenian envoy in contravention of the MSS; Sommerstein (1990) keeps *Lysistrata* as the speaker.

⁷⁰¹ *Ar. Lys.* 194-236.

παρ' ἄνδρα (1275-76).⁷⁰² This song is 'epithalamial' rather than an epithalamium: it evokes the wedding song for dramatic purposes.⁷⁰³ As in many Euripidean hymenaios, normative marital relations have been corrupted by war,⁷⁰⁴ and this song, like the tragic hymenaios, may indicate this fact. The women are already married, so the reconciliation of the two choruses prefigures remarriage – it is thus a more ambiguous song than the earlier exodoi.⁷⁰⁵ These are processional hymenaios, songs which accompanied the transfer of the bride from her natal to her marital home.

There are interesting variations on the traditional format. While Basileia is indeed being transferred from the house of her kurios (via Clouduckootown) to her new home and the consummation of her marriage ἐπὶ δάπεδον Διὸς καὶ λέχος γαμήλιον (1757), Opōra has already arrived at the house of her bridegroom, been molested verbally by his slave, and now progresses away from this house to the telos of marriage in the countryside during the song:

δεῦρ' ἃ γυναῖ εἰς ἀγρόν,
 χῶπως μετ' ἐμοῦ καλῆ
 καλῶς κατακείσει.⁷⁰⁶

Olson notes the unusual sequence of action here:

⁷⁰² Cf. Introduction, pp.15-25.

⁷⁰³ See Introduction, p.10.

⁷⁰⁴ See Ch.4, pp.184, 206.

⁷⁰⁵ There may be a relationship here with the hymenaios in Eur. Hel. 1435 (staged the previous year in 412BC), which Theoclymenus orders for himself and Helen, but which prefigure Helen's reunion with Menelaus. Another parallel occurs in Alcestis (produced in 438BC) in which Admetus' antiphonal lament with the Chorus (esp. vv.903-1005, contrasting the hero's marriage and marriage-songs to his current grief), prefigures Heracles' ekdosis of the 'bride', the resurrected Alcestis, at 1024.

⁷⁰⁶ Ar. Pax 1331-33. Trygaeus' house in the country, however, is evidently envisioned as 'home': οἶκαδ' εἰς τὰ χωρία (562), as well as being the abode prescribed by Peace (707-8).

The bride was properly introduced to the bridegroom's house only via an elaborate ceremony...at the end of the procession that followed the feast...but Harvest has nowhere else to go.⁷⁰⁷

While the displacement of this introduction from the end to the beginning of the wedding may be due to the necessities of staging, it nonetheless seems significant. Structurally, the wedding procession is a rite of limen, bridging the gap between the bride's separation from her old life and rebirth into her new, as symbolised by her acceptance into her husband's home and the consummation therein.⁷⁰⁸ To hold this procession after the *eisagôgia* seems somehow to subvert a fundamental rite of passage. It also removes the sexual aspect of the wedding from the domestic context of the house and resituates it in the fields, and while the 'cultivation' of both *Opôra*'s sexuality and the countryside are constantly emphasised in the song (τί δράσομεν αὐτήν...τρυγήσομεν αὐτήν, 1340-43), there is nonetheless an undertone of removal from civilisation into the wilderness.⁷⁰⁹ *Opôra*'s entry into the house lacks the dignity of a wedding: she and *Theôria* are presumably still nude,⁷¹⁰ and their appearance is marked by the slave's banter: he accuses the gods of pimping their own, suggests that the bride may find fellatio more to her taste than mortal food, and fondles her companion.⁷¹¹ Considering the feasting and revelling yet to come, the goddesses appear more like prostitutes arriving early for a symposium or *komos*.

⁷⁰⁷ Olson (1998) 233-34 (my italics), cf. also Oakley and Sinos (1994) 34-37 for depictions of these rituals on Attic vases.

⁷⁰⁸ See Introduction, p.33-35.

⁷⁰⁹ Cf. Ch.4, p.192.

⁷¹⁰ See Stone (1991) 148 on vv.887-92: the language in *Theôria*'s introduction to the *Boule* suggests, like *Diallagê*, that her pubic area was visible.

⁷¹¹ Ar. Pax 849, 855, 879-80. Ribald jocularly and euphemism were an established *topos* of the *epithalamium* and may have been used for the bride (γλυκύμαλον ἐρεύθεται, Sappho fr. 105a.1 V; see p.74, n.234), members of the bridal party (such as the *thurôros* of fr. 110 V) and bridegroom (μεγάλω, fr. 111.7 V). This becomes more pronounced in the Latin *fescennina iocatio* (Cat. 61.119-23), but the use of obscenity in this

Nevertheless, the processions are both conducted with due ceremony. The bride is brought from the house (or, in the case of Basileia, from Heaven),⁷¹² and torches are raised.⁷¹³ Though not carried by the couple's mothers, as in other representations,⁷¹⁴ they nonetheless seem to sanctify the action, which is surrounded by communal rejoicing (συγχαίρειν, Pax 1319). A possible parody of a Euripidean wedding song exists here, in the opening of the hymenaios of Birds: ἄναγε δῖεχε πάραγε πάρεχε (1720). This is remarkably similar to the opening of Cassandra's monody from Troades, and may be a deliberate allusion:

ἀνεχε, πάρεχε, φῶς φέρε· σέβω φλέγω –
 ἰδοὺ ἰδοὺ –⁷¹⁵

Whether an Aristophanic spoof of the tragedian, a deliberate appropriation of the line for a different purpose, or a coincidental allusion through the use of an actual ritual call,⁷¹⁶ the effect on an experienced Athenian ear, which might recently have sampled Troades, must have been jarring. It momentarily brings the aftermath of war into the picture of nuptial rejoicing, and in that moment we may question the nature of that joy as we questioned Cassandra's. How appropriate is the happiness portrayed on stage, and how blessed is the king to have taken his bride from the losing side in war? Peisetaerus' behaviour has become

passage is more explicit than is extant in the Greek epithalamic tradition. Henderson (1975) 183 notes the prevalence of fellatio as a motif as 'an erotic and a scurrilous topos throughout classical literature, particularly in epigram and in iambic poetry' but not epithalamium. Since some of this obscenity is directed towards Opôra, Taaffe (1993) 39 is wrong to state that 'Eirene and Opora provide happy procreation; while sex does return, neither of them receives sexual abuse'.

⁷¹² Ar. Pax 1318, Av. 1685-87, 1706-14.

⁷¹³ Ar. Pax 1319, Av. 1720.

⁷¹⁴ Eur. Med. 1024-27, Tro. 316-24, Phoen. 344-46. This is possibly another elision of traditionally female roles in the wedding ceremony, particularly if a general lack of female presence in these plays cannot be supported in the light of the bird-chorus. Yet even considering this Chorus, the plays are undeniably male-dominated.

⁷¹⁵ Eur. Tro. 308-9, cf. Robert (1921) 306-8, Dunbar (1995) 754: Schol. Ar. Av. 1720.9-10 cites the Euripidean line as being ridiculed here; cf. Ch.4, p.172. Rau (1967) 12 defines such quotation as being a particular paratragic device: 'Eine konkreten Tragikerstelle, trimetrisch oder lyrisch, wird zitiert oder variiert, um einem komischen Sachverhalt punktuell Prägnanz, Pathos oder Feierlichkeit zu verleihen'.

⁷¹⁶ Robert (1921) 308, Rau (1967) 13, Dunbar (1995) 753.

increasingly hubristic since the founding of Cloudcuckooland. Does he risk becoming another Agamemnon, one endowed with divine powers and Zeus' thunderbolt rather than a king's sceptre? Does he risk a similar downfall?

Like *Peace*, the play gives no hint of such apprehension; indeed, the celebratory and optimistic tone of both has been commented on by critics.⁷¹⁷ Unlike Euripides, whose hymenaios raise our expectations only to thwart them with death, the exodic nature of Aristophanes' wedding songs gives a note of the finality to the proceedings, a stamp of 'happy ever after' (in the same way that many fairytales and modern comedies end with the marriage of the hero and heroine). The last thing we see is rejoicing, and this rejoicing, not its intertextual shadows, will most likely shape our overall impression of the drama. Moreover, these songs effect a complete reversal from the situations at the beginning of the plays: whereas Trygaeus suffered the effects of war and fed a beetle dung-cakes, he now enjoys the benefits of peace and shares wedding-cakes with his friends: *πλακοῦντας ἔδεσθε* (1367). Peisetaerus began as a fairly low-life character – fleeing Athens to escape jury service and debts, he and his companion Euelpides long for a place free from cares and the social obligations of city life.⁷¹⁸ He ends the play as king of the birds, a god, and the master (through *Basileia*) of all the *pragmata* he sought to avoid at home:

...τὴν εὐβουλίαν,

τὴν εὐνομίαν, τὴν σωφροσύνην, τὰ νεώρια,

τὴν λοιδορίαν, τὸν κωλακρέτην, τὰ τριώβολα.⁷¹⁹

⁷¹⁷ Sommerstein (1985) xvi. on *Peace*, (1987) 5 on *Birds*, also Dunbar (1995) 5 and Olson (1998) xlii.

⁷¹⁸ *Ar. Av.* 109-42.

⁷¹⁹ *Ar. Pax* 1539-41, cf. Sommerstein (1987) 311.

This irony cannot dampen the representation of triumph in the exodos, and this sense of triumph gives the epithalamium somewhat of the character of a victory-ode.⁷²⁰ This may seem odd, as this is not a genre generally associated with the wedding song (more often compared to the funeral lament), yet it is not incongruous. Both forms are essentially encomial and their function is to commemorate the event and praise the participants.⁷²¹ In Aristophanes, the triumph is that of a victorious general, but offers a similar elucidation of marriage as an episode in the ongoing battle of the sexes, in which the man must come out, as it were, on top. The female ‘opponent’ is subdued,⁷²² and what power she has (i.e., that of fertility) is assumed by her victor/husband for himself, his oikos, and his community.

Lysistrata’s gift of *Diallagê* is presented in similar terms. Lacking definitive victory over each other, the Athenians and Spartans instead plan to divide and conquer the symbolic female.⁷²³ *Diallagê* is cast as the bountiful earth whose agricultural subdual offers a substitute for victory – the sexuality of peace, presented as the spoils of war.⁷²⁴ The reversal of fortune allowed by this gesture is pronounced: from the sexual withdrawal and *gunaikokratia* of the beginning of the play comes reunion and male control over sexuality and political institutions. More subtly, the empty beds lamented by the women of Greece at the outset of their venture are now filled, and normal marital life can resume. In these plays, the benefits of female sexuality are portrayed as that which the abstractions represent: peace and plenty, and sovereignty, but the principle of domination is the same.

As discussed in the Introduction, this ‘victorious’ point of view generally appears in texts featuring a male speaker: Peace, the *iuvenes* of Catullus 62, and Menander Rhetor. The lament, by contrast, is only expressed by the female speaking voice, of Sappho’s bride,

⁷²⁰ Dunbar (1995) 769, Calame (2004) 176-81. The victory thus referred to can be either that of Peisetaerus, or the anticipated victory of the poet in the Dionysiac contest.

⁷²¹ For the bridegroom praised in similar terms in later literature, see Men. Rhet. 406.14-20; Ch.8, p.311.

⁷²² Cf. p.22 n.72.

⁷²³ Ar. Lys. 1162-72.

⁷²⁴ Note the victorious interjection at 1291-94.

especially fr. 107 and 114 V, the Danaids, the Spartan maidens of Theocritus, and the virgines of Catullus 62, regardless of the gender of the text's author.⁷²⁵ We have seen that the epithalamium contains some gendered conventions of speech, representing, at least for rhetorical purposes, conceptions of the institution vastly differing between the sexes.⁷²⁶

Such difference of opinion is readily apparent in the mixed chorus of *Lysistrata*. In its parody of epithalamial agônes, the traditional ethos of the song is reversed. Rather than juxtaposing women's complaints with men's praise of the current event (i.e., marriage), here the men protest against the situation – not marriage, but a suspension of it and the political reversal that ensues – while the women extol its benefits:

X.γε. ...δεινὰ γάρ τοι τάσδε γ' ἦδε τοὺς πολίτας νουθετεῖν,
καὶ λαλεῖν γυναῖκας οὔσας ἀσπίδος χαλκῆς πέρι,
καὶ διαλλάττειν πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀνδράσιν Λακωνικοῖς,
οἷσι πιστὸν οὐδὲν εἰ μὴ περ λύκῳ κεχηνότι...

X.γυ. ...ἄρα προὔφείλω τι χρηστὸν τῇ πόλει παραινεῖσαι;
Εἰ δ' ἐγὼ γυνὴ πέφυκα, τοῦτο μὴ φθονεῖτε μοι,
ἦν ἀμείνω γ' εἰσενέγκω τῶν παρόντων πραγμάτων...⁷²⁷

The situation threatens the former way of life of the men as marriage may do to young girls:
καὶ μάλιστα' ὀσφραίνομαι τῆς Ἰππίου τυραννίδος (619);⁷²⁸ but, like Catullus' chorus

⁷²⁵ There are isolated variations, as for example the wedding song sung by the Trojans for Helen, which became a lament (Aesch Ag. 699-715). This, however, is an unusual example: the bridegroom's kin (gambroisi, 708) sang the song at her marriage, but it is Troy herself who learns to lament this hymenaios (709-11).

⁷²⁶ See Introduction, pp.15-25.

⁷²⁷ Ar. Lys. 626-50.

of iuvenes, the women argue that it will be better for the community in the long term: *κατάρχομεν τῇ πόλει χρησίμων* (639). Finally, the contest in which each attempts to outdo, and threatens, the other, is concluded with the men admitting the women's victory and the two sides becoming reconciled. Positive and negative elements find a middle ground, establish a discourse, and go forward into the future with a mutual affection (*καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν οὐκέτι / οὔτε δράσω φλαῦρον οὐδὲν οὔθ' ὑφ' ὑμῶν πείσομαι*, 1040-41).

In *Peace*, a male chorus and male speaker respond to each other's songs; and in *Birds*, a mixed chorus and male protagonist. The male-dominated voice of these plays presents a unilaterally positive view of marriage, with none of the hesitation that may mark female speech on the subject. For the bridegroom and his male citizen comrades, the transition to marriage is far less abrupt than that of the bride,⁷²⁹ and is taken in their stride by the participants of the wedding song. Even so, the dialogues are vastly different in tone and content. The text of *Peace* is problematic between vv. 1331-67, and it is impossible to reconstruct the exact form of the song.⁷³⁰ Nonetheless, the interaction between the vinedresser and a now-farmer Chorus surrounding the goddess of harvest gives the song an agrarian quality,⁷³¹ made more apparent by the association of human sexuality and fertility with crop cultivation: *κριθὰς τε ποεῖν ἡμᾶς πολλὰς...τάς τε γυναῖκας τίκτειν ἡμῖν* (1324-27), *τρυγήσομεν αὐτήν* (1342, 43), *συγκολογοῦντες* (1356), *τοῦ μὲν*

⁷²⁸ See also *Ar. Lys.* 672-81, where the women's incursion is presented in terms of (female) barbarian incursion.

⁷²⁹ Cf. however *Eur. Pha.* 158-59; Ch.4, pp.154-56.

⁷³⁰ Olson (1998) 315.

⁷³¹ The identity of the Chorus is, to quote Sommerstein (1985) xviii, 'oddly fluid'. They begin as Panhellenes but speak as if Athenian (349-57). During the 'hauling scene' they are divided into political units (Boeotians, Argives, Laconians, Megarians, Athenians), yet by 508 only the peasants remain and it is these who reap the benefits of peace and give the *hymenaios* the character of rural folksong. This casts a new light on the Panhellenic nature of the peace to be established: Treu (2007) 259 states that the function of the *parodos* of *Peace* is to 'deliver a single message: that the help of every single citizen (all of Greece) is required if the war is to end'. The participation of the whole community in this venture is akin to the participation of all in the wedding procession, symbolising the couple's integration into that community. Yet, if all citizens do not participate, either in the retrieval of *Peace* (*γεωργοὶ τοῦργον ἐξέλκουσι κάλλος οὐδεὶς*, 511) or in the wedding song which arises as a result, what does it say about that community?

μέγα καὶ παχύ, / τῆς δ' ἠδὲ τὸ σῦκον (1359-60).⁷³² It would seem that despite the extra-domestic context of the marriage, the wedding song still expresses its 'positive' elements in terms of the civilisation of the wild female/cultivation of the land.⁷³³ The tone is folksy, 'volkstümlich',⁷³⁴ and made more so by ribald joking familiar from traditional epithalamia (Sappho fr. 110, 111 V).

The song concluding *Birds*, by contrast, is conducted in a much higher register, 'as befits the marriage of the new Zeus and the new Hera'.⁷³⁵ It is presented not only in terms of victory, but also as a cultic hymn, with praise of the new god (e.g. *παμφαῆς ἄστηρ*, 1709-10), the blessings he confers (*μακαριστὸν σὺ γάμον τῆδε πόλει*, 1725), and his attributes (*ἔχων γυναικὸς κάλλος*, 1713, *πάλλων κεραυνόν*, 1716), and containing a narrative (*ποτ'*, 1731): a 'meta-epithalamium' that both parallels and comments on the wedding currently being performed.⁷³⁶ It is 'hieratisch',⁷³⁷ and its description of the hieros gamos of Zeus and Hera suggests that this too is a sacred marriage of god-king and goddess to secure Peisetaerus' divine sovereignty. These more elevated epithalamia are also traditional.⁷³⁸ Comparisons to gods or heroes have an encomial function, similar to representations of gods at otherwise mortal marriages on Athenian vases – the marriage is identified as extraordinary and the participants elevated through their connection with the

⁷³² Cf. p.22 n.72.

⁷³³ Henderson (1975) 8 sees this language as distinct from the obscenity that characterises the 'cultivation' of *Diallagê* (p.166): such metaphors as are used in the *hymenaios* of Peace have a long and 'grand' literary pedigree.

⁷³⁴ Maas (1914) 6.

⁷³⁵ Sommerstein (1987) 309, cf. Dunbar (1995) 750.

⁷³⁶ The narrative wedding songs of Sappho may function in this way; cf. also the songs of the Danaids about Io's union with Zeus in Aesch Supp. (Ch.2, pp.89-91), and Eur. IA 1036-97 (Ch.4, p.206).

⁷³⁷ Maas (1914) 6.

⁷³⁸ Cf. Sappho fr. 44 V, Eur. IA 1036-79, Dunbar (1995) 757 on Telesilla's lost epithalamium for Zeus and Hera.

divine.⁷³⁹ When a hero marries a goddess, the ‘sacred’ aspect of the marriage is even more pronounced.

A Sacred Marriage?

All three plays contain elements of the *hieros gamos* motif: the marriage of the highest gods, or of the hero and the goddess, in order to guarantee sovereignty or the fertility of the land. Avagianou identifies such a marriage as dependent upon a wedding ceremony, the immortal nature of both partners, and a permanent marital union.⁷⁴⁰ If these categories are not artificially imposed, the marriage of Peisetaerus and Basileia, modelled on the union of Zeus and Hera, falls within this model and the other two operate on its margins. The Sacred Marriage is, strictly speaking, an Athenian festival of Zeus and Hera,⁷⁴¹ and Avagianou is less convinced by unions of gods and heroes, and vegetation, agricultural, and seasonal interpretations.⁷⁴² To her, the *hieros gamos* represents a rite of passage, based on the ritual patterns of human marriage, and through which Zeus and Hera receive their titles of *Teleios* and *Teleia*.⁷⁴³ She finds no evidence that the Attic Sacred Marriage was a rite of agricultural fertility,⁷⁴⁴ but consideration of such models yields some interesting results. The marriage of goddess and hero looks back to an earlier age, when gods and mortals mixed freely – does Aristophanes use this motif in his *epithalamia* to blur the boundary between past and present, mortal and immortal; and if so, why?

⁷³⁹ Oakley & Sinos (1994) 29, on London B 174 (Attic black-figure amphora) and Oxford 1965.119 (Attic black-figure hydria in the style of the Lysippides Painter); Ch.2, p.86; Ch.4, p.153.

⁷⁴⁰ Avagianou (1991) 201.

⁷⁴¹ Hesych. *ι* 322, Photius *ι* 103, Etym. Mag. 468.56, cf. Alc. (Com.) *Hieros Gamos*, Men. Meth. fr. 2.2, cf. Theoc. 17.131.

⁷⁴² Avagianou (1991) 201.

⁷⁴³ Avagianou (1991) 32.

⁷⁴⁴ Avagianou (1991) 33.

The motif is most obvious in *Birds*. The marriage of Peisetaerus and Basileia is explicitly modelled on that of Zeus and Hera. This is in keeping with the cosmogonic themes that run throughout the play,⁷⁴⁵ and the presentation of Peisetaerus as the new King of the Gods once he has overcome the Olympians. The parallels are noted in the exodos:

Ἦρα ποτ' Ὀλυμπία
τὸν ἡλιβάτων θρόνων
ἄρχοντα θεοῖς μέγαν
Μοῖραι συνεκοίμισαν
ἐν τοιῶδε ὑμεναίῳ.⁷⁴⁶

Indeed, the probability that Basileia functions as a substitute for Hera, making her a fitting bride for the new Zeus, has been explored by Holzhausen.⁷⁴⁷ Marriage to her, as in Zeus' marriage to 'Olympian' Hera, guarantees Peisetaerus' sovereignty and universal power, as Prometheus makes clear:

Πε. τίς ἐστιν ἡ Βασίλεια;
Πρ. καλλίστη κόρη,
ἥπερ ταμιεύει τὸν κεραυνὸν τοῦ Διὸς
καὶ **τάλλα ἀπαξάπαντα...**
Πε. ἅπαντα γ' ἄρ' αὐτῷ ταμιεύει;

⁷⁴⁵ Dunbar (1995) 7-8.

⁷⁴⁶ Ar. Av. 1731-35.

⁷⁴⁷ Holzhausen (2002) 42, who notes that the name Basileia is used as an epithet for other goddesses, notably Hera: Phoronis fr. 4.1, H.H.Hera 1-2, Pind. N. 1.39.

Πρ. φήμ' ἐγώ.

ἦν γ' ἦν σὺ παρ' ἐκείνου παραλάβης, **πάντ' ἔχεις**.⁷⁴⁸

The birds appear to view this marriage as instituting a kind of Golden or Blessed Age,⁷⁴⁹ in which the pre-Olympian rule of the Bird Gods, expounded earlier in the play (1322-27), is re-established. As we will see, the Golden Age becomes a notable motif in the Aristophanic Sacred Marriage.

The model of Zeus and Hera is also apparent in the wedding song of Peace. The return of Peace to earth, guaranteed by Opôra's marriage to Trygaeus the vinedresser, will bring about an abundance of agricultural and human fertility:

κάπευξάμενους τοῖσι θεοῖσιν
διδόναι πλοῦτον τοῖς Ἑλλησιν
κριθάς τε ποεῖν ἡμᾶς πολλὰς
πάντας ὁμοίως **οἶνον** τε πολὺν
σῦκά τε τρώγειν,
τάς τε **γυναῖκας** **τίκτειν** ἡμῖν.⁷⁵⁰

This fertility recalls the result of the gods' mating on Mount Ida in the Iliad.⁷⁵¹ Other parallels, rejected by Avagianou's classification of 'Sacred Marriage' but equally applicable to this union, have been noted. Bowie explored the marriage of the god Dionysus and the

⁷⁴⁸ Ar. Av. 1536-43.

⁷⁴⁹ Ar. Av. 1725-28: ὦ μακαριστὸν σὺ γάμον τῆδε πόλει γήμας. / μεγάλοι μεγάλοι κατέχουσι τύχαι / γένος ὀρνίθων / διὰ τόνδε τὸν ἄνδρ'.

⁷⁵⁰ Ar. Pax 1322-27.

⁷⁵¹ Hom. Il. 346-49.

Basilinna at the Athenian Anthesteria as a possible ritual meaning behind the marriage of Trygaeus and Opôra,⁷⁵² although here the human and divine roles are reversed. The Basilinna may also provide a parallel for Basileia, further linking the two plays.⁷⁵³ The agrarian marriage of Demeter and the hero Iasion provides a more striking model. They unite in a ‘thrice-furrowed field’ to produce the god Ploutos (Wealth).⁷⁵⁴ This deity makes those to whom he comes rich, and bestows great *olbos* upon them.⁷⁵⁵ *Olbos*, ‘wealth’ or ‘blessing’, is part of the traditional language of *makarismos* and so appropriate to any wedding-hymn (e.g. Sappho fr. 112.1 V). The marriage in *Peace* is also predicted to bring *ploutos* and other *agatha* to the Greeks, so Aristophanes may also have had this Hesiodic parallel in mind. Moreover, *Peace* provides us with the most striking example of a Golden Age ideology: the determination τὰγαθὰ πάνθ’ ὅσ’ ἀπωλέσαμεν / συλλέξασθαι πάλιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς and λῆξαι τ’ αἰθωνα σίδηρον may well reflect the desire of the protagonist to turn his back on Hesiod’s *genos sidêreon*,⁷⁵⁶ and achieve a more peaceful and blessed – perhaps more primitive – state in the country, far away from the sins that render this race damned from birth.⁷⁵⁷

The model becomes more problematic in *Lysistrata*, for there is no wedding. Instead, *Diallagê*’s body, representing the Greek landscape, is divided up by the Athenians and Spartans, and the peace this prompts allows the mortal women to end their sex-strike and return to their husbands. There exist mythical parallels for the ‘marriage’ to the land or earth,

⁷⁵² Bowie (1993) 147, on Apollodorus *Against Neaira* 75.

⁷⁵³ Anderson & Dix (2007) 323-24: ‘from the same stem come *Basile* and *Basilinna*, both of which have religious and cultic associations...with *Basile*, we have a goddess venerated together with ancestral heroes; with the *Basilinna*, we have a mortal woman “married” to a god. These instances provide a point of reference for the spectators as they contemplate the fictive marriage of the mortal *Peisetairos* with the goddess *Basileia*’.

⁷⁵⁴ Hes. Th. 969-71.

⁷⁵⁵ Hes. Th. 971.

⁷⁵⁶ Ar. Pax 1328-30, cf. Hes. Op. 176. Sommerstein (1985) 195 notes that the phrase is Homeric (e.g. 485) – it may thus refer to the Heroic Age which precedes the Iron Age. Even so, the decision to abandon αἰθωνα σίδηρον signifies rejection of ‘Homeric’ martial values in favour of simpler, more peaceable pastimes.

⁷⁵⁷ Hes. Op. 175-186.

the most notable being that of Earth and Heaven in Aeschylus fr. 44 R.⁷⁵⁸ The resultant fertility of this marriage is parallel to that of Zeus and Hera, or Demeter and Iasion. Diallagê's mate, however, is neither god nor hero, but everyday Greek males in all their lustful glory. Rather than marriage, the assignment of her bodily parts is presented in baldly sexual (and occasionally violent) language: τῆς σάθης ἄγε (1119), δηρῶτε (1146), πρωκτὸς (1148), κύσθον (1158), κινήσομεν (1166), βινεῖν (1180). This kind of violence can form part of a Sacred Marriage, as in the wedding song for Opôra and Trygaeus (1340-43), but that takes place within the context and socially sanctioned tradition of ribald joking in the epithalamium, and omits the primary obscenities used here.⁷⁵⁹

In *Lysistrata*, the context is the reaffirmation of human marriage. Diallagê, being in this play to all intents and purposes human, takes on the publicly sexual role common to the hetaira, allowing it to be displaced from the wives so that they can become respectable brides again. The epithalamial elements in the mixed choral ode do not prefigure her union, but that of the Athenian wives, who are retaken in marriage during this scene: κᾶπειτα τὴν αὐτοῦ γυναιχ' ὑμῶν λαβὼν ἄπεισ' ἕκαστος (1186-87). She does not merely reconcile individual wife and husband – she is Reconciliation personified, so all must have a share in her bounty. Though a return to pre-war peace and prosperity is envisioned (εὐπορος, 1262), it does not seem to be quite a Golden Age. Human endeavour is stressed, for in the future the Greeks must 'take care never to make the same mistake again', implying that the transgressive nature of the *genos sidêreon* is ever-present, and must be kept at bay (τὸ λοιπὸν αὖθις μὴ ἕξαμαρτάνειν ἔτι, 1278).

How are we to read this, particularly against the marriages of the former two personifications? Does Diallagê provide a stark contrast against which the previous marriages

⁷⁵⁸ See Ch.2, p.91.

⁷⁵⁹ See Introduction, p.23; p.216.

appear even more sacred? Or is it part of a progressive degradation that causes us to question Aristophanes' 'sacred' epithalamia? I suggest that a clue to understanding Diallagê's role lies in her ultimate function in the text. She is given by Lysistrata to establish peace, but ultimately to (re)establish mortal marriage in its normative form. In this she is like Pandora, to whom Opôra and Basileia also bear marked similarities. This association bears further investigation, for union with a Pandora-figure suggests not a blessed Sacred Marriage, but man's degeneration from a former state of blessedness: a false makarismos.

If Diallagê is the personified land, then Pandora is a most appropriate model to apply to her, for Pandora is also a chthonic goddess often associated with Gaia.⁷⁶⁰ Indeed, one interpretation of the name Pandora, the 'giver of all', is an epithet of Earth used in Aristophanes.⁷⁶¹ This causes us to question seriously the applicability of a Golden Age ideal in this case, because Pandora in Hesiod's Works and Days provides an alternative ending to this age of bliss and ease.⁷⁶² The invention of woman means that man must work in order to support a wife and to ward off the evils of Pandora's jar. Toil and labour are the characteristics of a post-Golden Age universe, in which men must actively reap the benefits of natural and human fertility. The union with Diallagê symbolises the subordination of the land, as she also stands in for the subordination and re-domestication of the Greek wives. Agricultural husbandry, the work of peace-time, is sexualised with respect to Diallagê:

Πρ.α. ἤδη γεωργεῖν γυμνὸς ἀποδὺς βούλομαι.

Πρ.λ. ἐγὼν δὲ κοπραγωγῆν γὰρ ἴπρωταί, ναὶ τὸ σιώ.⁷⁶³

⁷⁶⁰ West (1978) 164, on Hippon. 104.48, Ar. Av. 971 (with sch.) Philoch. F 10, Diod. 3.57.2, Philo de opif. mundi 133, de aetern. mundi 63, Philostr. VA 6.39, Orph. Arg. 974-75; cf. Hom. epigr. 7.1. She may also be the same figure as Anêsidora, another title of Ge or Demeter.

⁷⁶¹ LSJ s.v. Πανδώρα, cf. Ar. Av. 971.

⁷⁶² Hes. Op. 90-92.

⁷⁶³ Ar. Lys. 1173-74.

The sexualisation of agriculture is also apparent in the presentation of Opôra. In the betrothal scene in *Peace*, Trygaeus is ξυνοικῶν with Opôra and must make βότρυς with her (708). The wedding chorus enact ‘gathering the vintage’ of the bride (1342-43), and make jokes on the size and sweetness of the couple’s ‘figs’ (1359-60). In addition, Olson noted the prevalence in *Peace* of the motif of the anodos of the earth-goddess,⁷⁶⁴ a story-pattern associated with Pandora. In Hesiod she is sent from the gods, but in fifth-century vase painting she arises from the earth, as does *Peace* with her attendants Opôra and Theôria here. Olson speculates that some of these pots may relate to a lost satyr-play by Sophocles, *Pandora* or *The Hammerers*, which may well have influenced *Peace*, and argues that:

It thus seems a reasonable conclusion that a story-pattern in which a god or goddess emerged from the earth or underworld (sometimes represented specifically by a cave) under the escort of Hermes in order to restore fertility to the world was relatively widespread in Greece in the classical period and would have been recognised by Aristophanes’ audience when he put it to use in *Peace*.⁷⁶⁵

As in the case of *Diallagê*, the fertility resulting from Opôra’s marriage is the result of labour rather than spontaneous bounty. The ζείδωρος ἄρουρα αὐτομάτη will not καρπὸν [φέρειν] πολλόν τε καὶ ἀφθονον,⁷⁶⁶ as in Hesiod’s Age of Gold, but will be fruitful as a result of the Greeks’ abandonment of war in favour of agriculture. Yet agriculture is glorified throughout the play and in no wise seen as a bad thing: farming is positive, and farmers represented as saviours of Hellenic civilisation (508). This positive valuation is something to which I will return in the conclusion to this chapter. Taaffe also notes a parallel between

⁷⁶⁴ Olson (1998) xxxii. In the H.H.Dem. 443-46 Persephone’s anodos prompts a return of natural fertility, but even these verses presuppose the existence of crop cultivation rather than spontaneous bounty.

⁷⁶⁵ Olson (1998) xxxvii-xxxviii.

⁷⁶⁶ Hes Op. 117-18.

Peace and Pandora in their connection with Hermes, and Trygaeus' invocation in v.456: 'Ερμῆ Χάρισιν' Ωραισιν 'Αφροδίτην Πόθῳ, recalls the divinities associated with the first woman: 'Αφροδίτην...Ερμείην...Χαρίτεζ...Ωραι (Hes. Op. 65-75). Given Hermes' role in the marriage of Trygaeus and Opôra, this association should be extended to include Peace's attendant goddess.

The association between Basileia and Pandora has been most noted by critics.⁷⁶⁷ Like Pandora, she is associated with Prometheus, and is given to the protagonist as a result of his intervention (1534-36).⁷⁶⁸ Like Pandora in Hesiod, Basileia is represented as a beautiful bride: καλλίστη κόρη, (1722).⁷⁶⁹ If Pandora's bridal kosmos receives more attention in both Theogony and Works and Days, then Basileia gets instead an extended celebration of her wedding.⁷⁷⁰ Pandora's name, the 'giver of all' or 'all endowed', is an accurate description of Basileia's function as the ward of both Zeus and Peisetaerus. Previously, Prometheus had listed the things of which Basileia was the custodian; the gifts (dôra) that she would bring to her marriage. This goddess is endowed with everything, and may bestow everything.⁷⁷¹ However, this may not necessarily be a good thing: for along with good counsel, good laws, and prudence, she also brings the dockyards, abuse, financial officials, and the three-obol juryman's pay – all the evils, in short, of a supposedly 'civilised', post-Golden Age society. Her dowry is a Pandora's Box that condemns those who receive it to the very life they fled Athens to escape.⁷⁷² Whatever makarismos the birds may imagine for themselves and their city, one must ask how good things really will be under the new regime? Even if the birds will live a νυμφίων βίον (161) in Cloudcuckooland, life will not change considerably for

⁷⁶⁷ Taaffe (1993) 44-45.

⁷⁶⁸ Cf. Hes. Op. 85-89, Holzhausen (2002) 36.

⁷⁶⁹ Cf. Hes. Th. 572, Op. 71: παρθένῳ αἰδοιῆ ἵκελον.

⁷⁷⁰ The mute nudes Opôra and Diallagê are stripped of the bridal kosmos which in Hesiod, makes Pandora such a seductive lure – perhaps the lack of description of Basileia's numphokomos functions in the same way.

⁷⁷¹ Cf. Holzhausen (2002) 38.

⁷⁷² Pandora's box also contains both good and bad: μέγα πῶμ' (94) as well as Ἐλπὶς (96).

ordinary men. Agriculture is still the basic fact of mortal man's existence, and mankind will undertake economic ventures and trade at sea (590-97) – things lamented by Hesiod as unfortunate and dangerous necessities of the human condition (Op. 618-34).

The 'human condition' is precisely the result of these marriages. These unions celebrate a change of regime, and it is a regime in which men, and not the gods, figure prominently. Even in *Birds*, Peisetaerus becomes a bird and a god, but his behaviour shows him to be still the same unwholesome Athenian peasant underneath his feathers and thunderbolt. Returning briefly to Pandora, she is the barbed gift of the gods to man, the first bride and aition of human marriage. She shares this aspect of 'gift' with her personified compatriots Opôra and Basileia, although this is more problematic in the case of Diallagê, who is bestowed by Lysistrata (the human, rather than divine, director of the action). Moreover, the gift of woman is a punishment for the hubris of men (in which category I include Hesiod's Prometheus, who was acting on behalf of men by stealing fire from Zeus). Punishment is necessitated in *Peace* by mankind's violence against the goddess Peace (659) and in *Birds* by the birds' violence against the Olympians (e.g. 1189-90). In *Lysistrata*, the violence consists of a prolonged internecine war which does further violence against traditional bonds of marital philia (507-8). Rather than a manifestation of an earlier age of divine-human interaction, these Pandora-figures represent the separation of man from the truly divine, especially in *Peace* and *Birds*, in which the gods are even more physically distanced from the earth.⁷⁷³ Are these personifications then a dolun aipun,⁷⁷⁴ a 'sheer trick' held out to men who think they are getting a good deal but actually τέρπωνται κατὰ θυμόν, ἐδὸν κακὸν ἀμπαγαπῶντες?⁷⁷⁵ Rather than the bestowers of all agatha, does the

⁷⁷³ Ar. Pax 199: ὑπ' αὐτὸν ἀτεχνῶς τοῦρανῶ τὸν κύτταρον (there is no suggestion that the gods will return even when Peace is established), Av. 1515-17: ἐξ οὐπερ ὑμεῖς ὠκίσσατε τὸν ἄερα. / θύει γὰρ οὐδεὶς οὐδὲν ἀνθρώπων ἔτι / θεοῖσιν.

⁷⁷⁴ Hes. Th. 589.

⁷⁷⁵ Hes. Op. 57-58.

wedding song betray these females as a καλὸν κακὸν ἀντ' ἀγαθοῖο,⁷⁷⁶ overshadowing the happiness of the marriages with anticipation of toils yet to come? The representation of marriage and gender seems to be one of bountiful, male-dominated sexuality for which woman, represented by the mute personifications, is a passive and positive cipher. This representation, however, may be underscored by a Hesiodic misogyny, in which woman is a destructive punishment.⁷⁷⁷

The Triumph of Iron-Age Man

Thus far our 'Hesiodic' hieros gamos has yielded polyvalent meanings. The hymenaioi for Opôra and Basileia and the 'epithalamial' songs surrounding Diallagê promise great benefits to come of the union, as is usual not only for the Sacred Marriage motif but for epithalamia more generally (especially those in the male voice). Yet, by using Pandora as a model for these personifications, Aristophanes forces us to question the nature of the gifts bestowed, and thus the future promised in these songs. We are given a Golden Age vision populated by Iron-Age figures, which may just be comic farce, but may also recall contemporary, negative, Euripidean hymenaioi, from Phaethon and Troades.⁷⁷⁸ The intrusion of negative meanings is not unusual in the wedding song, which might contain both positive and negative elements, or an utterance of lamentation or protest alongside expressions of joy.⁷⁷⁹ In the 'real' world, these extremes would have to be reconciled in the marriage itself, and the song may provide the beginning of such mediation.⁷⁸⁰ The comic fantasy is closer to this median than the tragic wedding song, as is appropriate to its more 'realistic' setting and triumphal ending.

⁷⁷⁶ Hes. Th. 585.

⁷⁷⁷ Hes. Th. 590-93.

⁷⁷⁸ See Ch.4, pp.137-38; p.217.

⁷⁷⁹ E.g. Cat. 62, Theoc. 18.

⁷⁸⁰ See esp. Ch.1, p.72.

And the endings are triumphal. No apprehension about the meaning of these female gifts is expressed – unless their positive representation is itself a parody.⁷⁸¹ I suggest that, in this case, we are meant to read the joyous epithalamium at face value. The Pandora-paradigm is ever-present, and Aristophanes' detailed use of Hesiodic themes and language cannot have failed to resonate with an audience. His development of this model, however, has fundamental implications for our understanding of his triumphal exodoi. Pandora comes with certain attributes: beauty like the goddesses, handicrafts, *charis* and *pothos* and cares, a shameless mind and deceitful nature, and rich adornment – most of which are attached in some way to our personifications. What is missing in Aristophanes is the final gift given to her by the gods:

ψεύδεά θ' αἰμυλίου τε λόγους καὶ ἐπικλοπον ἦθος
τεῦξε Διὸς βουλῆσι βαρυκτύπου.⁷⁸²

Aristophanes' personifications are mutes. They possess Pandora's external gifts, but none of the 'lies' and 'whispering words' which deceive men as to the nature of these gifts. They are as they appear: symbols of female bounty without the dangers women represent. Woman's most dangerous attribute, her voice, is removed, preventing the expression of her potentially deviant nature and thus ensuring a more passive and benevolent sexuality, and the easy access of comic man to her 'gifts'.

Hesiod's *kalon kakon* has been rehabilitated, and her symbolism envisioned as more positive. If these personifications then come to represent the perspective of the female presented by these plays, it is no wonder that the female voice is elided in the comic wedding

⁷⁸¹ As e.g. Taaffe (1993) 44 suggests in the case of Birds.

⁷⁸² Hes. Op. 78-79.

song. This in turn seems to remove an element of (admittedly romanticised) male-female reciprocity from the wedding song, stripping the marital transaction down to its most basic elements. Woman is purely a field to be cultivated, sovereignty to gain and exercise. Elements of lament and protest contained in the ‘plucking’ motif may arise despite the poet’s best attempts at joyful triumph,⁷⁸³ but such an interpretation relies on an audience’s ability to read automatically particular motifs in a particular way.

Feminist scholars suggest that the ‘stripping’ of the bridal voice and ‘stripping back’ of hymeneal imagery (also the physical ‘stripping’ of Opôra and Diallagê), casts a shadow over the respect these figures can command as wives. As mentioned above, both goddesses are subjected to denigration and Opôra at least is treated almost as a prostitute.⁷⁸⁴ Sommerstein, however, explains this as another aspect of the comic fantasy:

Trygaeus is doing what no one could do in real life: he is taking a wife who also has (and being immortal, will always retain) the qualities one could wish for in a mistress.⁷⁸⁵

This hazy definition between wife and lover was often drawn by the Greeks, who frequently blurred the boundaries between wife and mistress/concubine for rhetorical purposes, and we saw in Troades that the experience of these sexual transactions may be startlingly similar from a female perspective.⁷⁸⁶ The modestly mute but (in two cases) immodestly nude

⁷⁸³ See Introduction, pp.15-17.

⁷⁸⁴ See p.216.

⁷⁸⁵ Sommerstein (1985) 174, although she is implicitly presented in the Olympus scene as an Athenian citizen-daughter to be betrothed with due ceremony, cf. Olson (1998) 212-13.

⁷⁸⁶ See Ch.4, p.175. Neaira easily crosses between the categories of wife, mistress, and concubine as outlined by her prosecutor (Apollodorus Against Neaira 122): τὰς μὲν γὰρ ἑταίρας ἡδονῆς ἕνεκ’ ἔχομεν, τὰς δὲ παλλακὰς τῆς καθ’ ἡμέραν θεραπείας τοῦ σώματος, τὰς δὲ γυναικας τοῦ παιδοποιεῖσθαι γνησίως καὶ τῶν ἔνδον φύλακα πιστὴν ἔχειν, and Euphiletus quotes the law that a man may punish with equal severity a moichos caught with his wife or pallakê (Lys. 1.31). Pelling (2000) 191 comments on the problems inherent in accepting such distinctions at face value: ‘for most Athenian males a wife rather than a

presentation of these brides blurs that boundary even further and almost makes mockery of the 'sacred' aspect of the marriages. Basileia is more idealised, but is nonetheless a speechless, passive object of spectacle, and may be categorised as the same visually-exploited, objectified 'type' as Opôra and others. The resulting representation seems negative:

Pax and Aves ambiguously portray mute, abstract characters both as hetairai (available objects for men's lust) and brides (symbols of legitimate marriage)...the conflation in imagery and verbal abuse betrays the fundamental notion that women, despite legal and social distinctions between wives and hetairai, share the basic capacity qua women to be controlled, used sexually, and possibly be abused by men at will.⁷⁸⁷

Aristophanes' Golden Age marital fantasy proves therefore to be a highly contemporary, Athenian, rhetorical/political sexuality. His presentation of Diallagê may debase the hieros gamos model even further.

The reconciliation effected between Athens and Sparta in *Lysistrata*, symbolised by Diallagê, is analogous to, and indeed allows, the reconciliation between men and women after their conflict. (Re)Marriage, then, becomes symbolic of the re-establishment of correct social relations in a peaceful world. So far, so good. Yet this reconciliation – specifically the figure of Reconciliation, or Diallagê – has occasioned criticism which again undermines the utopian

hetaira would have been the main source of sexual pleasure, despite Apollodorus' categorisation...So perhaps we should take Apollodorus' listing as cumulative rather than exclusive: hetairai give only pleasure, concubines give everyday care too, but only wives add the possibility of legitimate children. That is better, but it still suggests firmer distinctions than can have operated in practice; the roles of a live-in hetaira and of a concubine must have been particularly similar (as with Pericles' renowned hetaira Aspasia, for instance); childbirth as well as 'daily care' could be envisaged as the role of concubines, not merely wives, and it may be (though it is hotly disputed) that a concubine's children could even be citizens provided that she was of citizen birth herself. So even the cumulative approach does not quite work, as it imposes a more rigid scale of divisions than can have operated in reality'.

⁷⁸⁷ Zweig (1992) 77.

vision of the exodos. The mute nude abstraction is given to mankind with oaths and pledges that may recall an *enguê*, but a highly sexualised and bawdy one. *Diallagê* is encouraged to grope the men towards the treaty-table (τῆς σάθης ἄγε, 1119). They, in return, are presented with a vision of her as the body female/body politic ripe for the taking. As in *Peace* and *Birds*, male community relations are guaranteed by the symbolic ‘rape’ of the female personification. What is more, even the symbolic ‘marriage’ between man and his country posited by the former two plays is degraded here as the public licentiousness between *Diallagê* and the men firmly places her in the category of prostitute.

Lysistrata’s injunction for her to do this ὡς γυναικῶν εἶκος, ‘like a woman/wife’ (1118; recall the lascivious *Procne*, ὡσπερ παρθένος, *Av.* 670) again blurs the distinction between categories of women and suggests that the ‘gifts’ of all females may be so obtained.⁷⁸⁸ Stroup offers a positive reading (for the male citizen body, at least) of this association within the play’s strategy of composition:

No mere bawdy abstraction of a favourable democratic outcome, then, the figure of *Diallagê* is rather a politically compelling means of transforming the earlier hetairizations of citizen wives into an undiluted embodiment of an eroticized, and newly attainable, democratic impulse...It both reinstates male occupation of Greek topography and, no less importantly, resolves the gender balance in terms of the vocal, discriminating, and active male and the silent accessible, and nearly passive female.⁷⁸⁹

⁷⁸⁸ Stroup (2004) 41-42 argues that the public trading of wives in their sexuality comically ‘hetairizes’ them (creates them as pseudo-hetairai): it ‘underlines in its bawdy innocence the shaky discursive antithesis of wife vs. hetaira...by extension, the representation of Athenian wives as Athenian hetairai morphs the comedy as a whole into a fantastic, political Hetären-symposion. It is a topsy-turvy world in which sympotic activity not only mimes, but in a sense, actually becomes the civic, and a world in which a democratic peace can mean only the return of the wife to the confines of the private home’.

⁷⁸⁹ Stroup (2004) 66.

Diallagê, in her association with the land and the politics of reconciliation, is a final manifestation of the Pandora-figure who ‘rehabilitates’ woman’s potentially subversive sexuality for male purposes and civic relations. Female sexuality had erupted into the public sphere as a result of the overturning of society symptomatic of protracted war. Here both woman and the polity she represents are re-established under male control. What is more, they go willingly, in *Lysistrata*’s donation of the body female to this cause, and Diallagê’s complicity. It may seem pornographic from a feminist perspective,⁷⁹⁰ but Aristophanes has in fact represented the ultimate Athenian fantasy: the wife with all the charms of a mistress, a mistress who is in turn like a submissive wife. And this wife/hetaira is the symbol of a new Age of Man – peaceful yet bellicose, political but carefree, a world separate from the gods but one which receives their gifts and ensures that Pandora’s whispering mouth is well-stopped. For all its potentially subversive mythical paradigms, it is a world which would appeal to the collective ego of an Athenian audience, which demands the resolution of paradoxes and uses the polysemic wedding song as its vehicle for doing so.

In each of these plays, the union and wedding song symbolises the establishment of a new social order. We have previously observed the foundational role of the *hymenaios* (as both wedding and wedding song) in the *oikos/polis* structure,⁷⁹¹ and this precedent makes its function in the *exodoi* of Aristophanes both logical and meaningful. A largely positive representation of marriage is given, in which the institution guarantees the appropriate conditions for the future conduct of social relations. These relations are conducted among men, for men, and woman’s complicity in *Lysistrata* may be the final closing of the dangerous Pandora’s Box opened by the motif in *Peace*. Neither a utopia nor a tragic dystopia results, but an Iron Age world of men who toil in the landscape (rural or urban)

⁷⁹⁰ E.g. Zweig (1992) 73.

⁷⁹¹ Esp. Ch.2, pp.108-9.

represented by the female, which, though idealised, is startlingly similar to the Athens outside of the play. As in marriage in the extra-dramatic world, a balance of positive and negative elements must be achieved if the transition to a new state is to be effected.

CHAPTER SIX

THE HELLENISTIC EPITHALAMIUM

We have seen that the Sapphic epithalamium may function as a lyric expression of the transition made by a young woman from *parthenos* to *gunê*.⁷⁹² Tragic wedding songs highlighted the problems inherent in this transition,⁷⁹³ and in comedy, fantasy weddings expressed valorisation of the Iron Age and the ideal role of woman within that Age.⁷⁹⁴ The Hellenistic epithalamium constitutes a unique phase in the development of the wedding song: it looks both back, to earlier poetic models, and forward, to new constructs of marriage, arising in the Hellenistic period, which will be prominent in later chapters. Due to the constraints of this project, it is not possible to examine the entire Hellenistic corpus of wedding poetry, much of which is fragmentary or contained within larger texts.⁷⁹⁵ I will restrict my analysis to Theocritus' Epithalamium for Helen (Idyll 18), the most coherent epithalamial text. This poem has already received detailed treatment by Hunter, who discusses it as a Spartan poem, a Ptolemaic poem, and an ironic reading of the Helen myth aimed at an audience skilled in 'selective' cultural memory.⁷⁹⁶ I aim to examine the Idyll qua epithalamium, and discuss its role in the development of this genre.

Little is known about the song's context. The idea that Theocritus, like Callimachus and Posidippus, may have composed a wedding song for his patrons Ptolemy II and Arsinoe

⁷⁹² Ch.1, p.73.

⁷⁹³ Esp. Ch.2, pp.79-80.

⁷⁹⁴ Ch.5, pp.232-37.

⁷⁹⁵ Erinna fr. 1 (Distaff), fr. 4 (= AP 7.712), Theoc. 15.100-43 (hymeneal themes in the Hymn to Adonis), Call. In Del. 296-99, fr. 392 Pf. (epithalamium for Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II), epig. 54 (= AP 7.89), Posid. fr. 114 (epithalamium of Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II), Ap. Arg. 4.1159-60, 1193-99 (hymenaioi for Jason and Medea), Bion Epitaph. Adon., [Bion] 2 (Epithalamium of Achilles and Deidameia), Moschus 2 (Europa).

⁷⁹⁶ Hunter (1996) 152-66. It is usually Theocritus' bucolic poems which receive scholarly attention, as in Hunter (1999), cf. Dover (1971) liv.

II (the latter was associated with Helen/Aphrodite in cult),⁷⁹⁷ of which this narrative formed a part, is an attractive but unprovable hypothesis.⁷⁹⁸ Yet it is possible to read Ptolemaic associations into this poem, so the possibility that it may have been part of an epithalamium for the royal couple will be discussed where relevant. Like Sappho fr. 44 V, which cannot be securely associated with a ‘real’ wedding, and IA 1036-97,⁷⁹⁹ this song tells of the epithalamium for a mythical couple, Helen and Menelaus. Like those songs, this marriage also resulted in tragedy which, more than anything else, should render the subject matter inappropriate for a ‘real’ wedding song, especially for a monarch.

The meta-epithalamic song itself is performed by a chorus of twelve Spartan maidens upon the closing of the thalamos door (κατεκλάξατο, 5) on the bridal couple – the epithalamium ‘proper’. This seems to recall the scene set by Sappho fr. 30.1-3 V, especially in its allusion to a subsequent ‘awakening song’:

ἐγρέσθαι δὲ πρὸς ἄω̄ μὴ ’πιλάθησθε.

νεύμεθα κάμμες ἐς ὄρθρον, ἔπει κα πρᾶτος ἀοιδός

ἐξ εὐνάς κελαδήση ἀνασχῶν εὐτριχα δειράν.⁸⁰⁰

Sappho’s parthenoi command the bridegroom to awaken and fetch his humalikas to join the night-long song. Theocritus’ parthenikai envision themselves as the only chorus, who will

⁷⁹⁷ Theoc. 15.110-11: Ἐλένω̄ ἐϊκυῖα / Ἄρσινῶα, cf. Basta Donzelli (1984) 306-16. Gow (1950 vol. I) xvii, (1950 vol. II) 348 suggests that this poem may be related to Theocritus’ period of patronage under the Ptolemies.

⁷⁹⁸ See Kuiper (1921) 223-42. Gow (1940) 116 called this theory ‘a mere guess’.

⁷⁹⁹ Cf. esp. Ch.4, pp.188-95.

⁸⁰⁰ Theoc. 18.55-57, cf. Sappho. fr. 30.6: ἄλλ’ ἐγέρθεις...The awakening song or diegertikon appears at Aesch fr. 43 R, with ominous connotations (Ch.2, p.81).

return at dawn to wake the couple.⁸⁰¹ Other maiden choruses in the literary epithalamium (the Oceanids in PV, the maidens in Phaethon, the women Cassandra exhorts to join her song in Troades, and the Muses in IA) contrast a situation of ‘happy past’ or ‘ideal present’ with an (unhappy) ‘actual present’.⁸⁰² For the Alexandrian reader, sensitive to the canon of both lyric and tragedy formulated in the Hellenistic period, the form of the song is thereby loaded. When we look at the community-wide celebration of the marriage of Hector and Andromache in Sappho fr. 44 V, however, we can see that mixed choruses do not portend so well either.⁸⁰³ The epithalamium, however ironic, can be sung by either or both genders.⁸⁰⁴

The epithalamium appears to be ‘gendered’ not so much in its voice, but in its focus on feminine social and sexual experience. The specific focus of Idyll 18 has, however, led to comparisons with another (female) genre, the partheneion. Though few of Alcman’s maiden songs, and none of his epithalamia, survive, Hunter argues for a considerable *Nachleben* for this poet and his interest to the Alexandrians. He notes parallels between Theocritus’ Helen and Alcman’s Hagesichora who, as Aôtis, may have been associated with Helen in her manifestation as a Spartan goddess: their radiance, their shared function as leader of the chorus, the comparison of both to horses, and their beauty.⁸⁰⁵ Griffiths proposes, on the basis of similarities between the two poems, that Partheneion 1 is itself an epithalamium and that Theocritus was dependant upon Alcman.⁸⁰⁶ As I argued in Chapter 1, it is more likely that the

⁸⁰¹ Sappho fr. 30.6-9, contra Theoc. 18. Dover (1971) 231: ‘Theocritus does not indicate whether he envisages other choruses as filling in the gap between the departure and return of the girls’.

⁸⁰² See Ch.2, pp.97-98; Ch. 4, pp.144-45, 166, 189.

⁸⁰³ See also Swift (2006) 131-33 on Eur. Hipp. 1102-50.

⁸⁰⁴ Cf. Erinna fr. 1, 4 (female voice, though West (1977) 118-19 claims, on the basis of the erudition of the Distaff, that ‘Erinna’ is merely a ‘pretty creation’ of an early Hellenistic male poet. This is refuted by Pomeroy (1984) 67, Snyder (1989) 96; discussion by Neri (2003) 31-32, Loman (2004) 110), Theoc. 15.97 (‘Αργείας Θυγάτηρ), also Bion Epitaph. Adon. (female voice, see Reed 1997:24, but Hymen also sings, vv.87-90), Ap. Arg. 4.1159-60 (Argonauts), 1193-99 (Orpheus and Nymphs), Mosch. 2.122-24 (Tritons), [Bion] 2 (Lycidas).

⁸⁰⁵ Hunter (1996) 152-53, on Alcman fr. 1.44, 45-49, 51-55; comp. Theoc. 18.22-25, 30, 26-28.

⁸⁰⁶ Griffiths (1972) 11.

transition represented by Alcman is one to a state of marriageability: the celebration of partheneia.⁸⁰⁷

As in all the Idylls – and indeed most Hellenistic poetry – these maidens sing their song in dactylic hexameter. This is both a development of the period and appropriate to the epic subject matter. The poem quotes directly and indirectly from non-dactylic Sapphic epithalamia: ὄλβιε γάμβρ’;⁸⁰⁸ οἶα Ἀχαιιάδων γαῖαν πατεῖ οὐδεμί’ ἄλλα;⁸⁰⁹ χαίροις, ὦ νύμφα· χαίροις, εὐπένθερε γαμβρέ,⁸¹⁰ as well as dactylic: ὦ καλα, ὦ χαρίεσσα κόρα.⁸¹¹ The hexameter verse and situation in the Trojan cycle of myth locate the song firmly in the heroic past. Yet this poetic form is also a symptom of the literary present. The emergence of a written ‘book culture’ and the loss of many forms of choral lyric connected with elite polis life led to a ‘separation between metrical and musical rhythm’ from the end of the fifth century BC.⁸¹² Many old forms of choral lyric ceased to be relevant, as the performance context for ‘high’ poetry focussed increasingly on recitation. The ‘sung’ hymenaios, however, continues to be mentioned as late as the third century AD,⁸¹³ so it is possible that they continued to be performed, if not composed. At a literary level, this separation increasingly led to composition in hexameter and elegiac couplets, metres which lend themselves to recitative performance.

The Doric Greek of the poem has already been much analysed, and befits both its status as an Idyll and its subject of ‘Spartan’ Helen.⁸¹⁴ The diction is that of encomium,

⁸⁰⁷ See pp.57-66.

⁸⁰⁸ Theoc. 18.16, cf. Sappho. fr. 112 V, Voigt (1971) 123: cho ba (|) cho ba ||.

⁸⁰⁹ Theoc. 18.20, cf. Sappho fr. 113 V: οὐ γὰρ / ἀτέρα νῦν πάις, ὦ γάμβρε, τεαύτα, Voigt (1971) 123: 3 io?.

⁸¹⁰ Theoc. 18.49, cf. Sappho fr. 117 V †χαίροις ἅ νύμφα†, χαίρέτω δ’ ὁ γάμβρος, Voigt (1971) 125: 3 ia^?.

⁸¹¹ Theoc. 18.38, cf. Sappho fr. 108 V.

⁸¹² Hunter (1996) 3.

⁸¹³ Men. Rhet. 409.8-13.

⁸¹⁴ Gow (1950 vol. I) lxxii. identifies the dialect as belonging to Theocritus’ ‘genuine’ poems in Doric (along with Idd. 1-7, 10, 11, 14, 15 & 26). The concern of the poem for ‘Dorian’ verse is apparent in v.48, and Hunter (1996) 155 suggests that this may draw attention to itself as being mimetically analogous to Alcman.

despite Helen's problematic mythology. Praise may additionally connect the two parts of the Idyll – the wedding song for human Helen, and the plane-tree cult of divine Helen – whose relationship has plagued critics:⁸¹⁵ the encomium is a central feature of both hymn and hymenaios, and may act as a bridge in a deliberate Hellenistic Kreuzung der Gattungen. As is appropriate for both goddess and bride, Helen is praised in superlative language, above and beyond Menelaus: οἷα Ἄχαιιάδων γαῖαν πατεῖ οὐδεμί' ἄλλα,⁸¹⁶ and the standard against which her peers compare themselves:

τετράκις ἐξήκοντα κόραι, θῆλυς νεολαία,
τᾶν οὐδ' ἄτις ἄμωμος ἐπεὶ χ' Ἑλένα παρισωθῆ.⁸¹⁷

As well as in beauty, Helen is peerless in feminine accomplishments:

οὐδέ τις ἐκ ταλάρῳ πανίσδεταί ἔργα τοιαῦτα,
οὐδ' ἐνὶ δαιδαλέῳ πυκινώτερον ἄτριον ἴστω
κερκίδι συμπλέξασα μακρῶν ἔταμ' ἐκ κελεόντων.
οὐ μὰν οὐδὲ λύραν τις ἐπίσταται ὧδε κροτῆσαι
Ἄρτεμιν ἀείδοισα καὶ εὐρύστερνον Ἄθάναν.⁸¹⁸

In keeping with its continued allusion to Sapphic epithalamia, the song employs extravagant eikasmos, praising Helen in similes that compare her to various phenomena of the natural

⁸¹⁵ Stern (1978) 34-37, Pantelia (1995) 76.

⁸¹⁶ Theoc. 18.20.

⁸¹⁷ Theoc 18.24-25.

⁸¹⁸ Theoc. 18.32-36; cf. Ch.1, pp.51-52, 61.

world: dawn (Ἄως, 26) springtime (λευκὸν ἔαρ, 27), a cultivated cypress (κυπάρισσος), and a steed in its chariot (ἧ ἄρματι Θεσσαλὸς ἵππος, 30).⁸¹⁹ According to Konstan, these encomia introduce:

a subtle vein of humour or irony in the contrast between the divine stature of Helen, whose praises occupy the middle thirty lines of the chorus (19-48) and the rather hapless figure which Menelaus cuts as the butt of several sallies.⁸²⁰

The badinage familiar from Sappho fr. 110 (where a chorus uses superlative language in order to hurl abuse at the oversized door-keeper)⁸²¹ thus takes on a more ironic function: Menelaus' makarismos (ὄλβιε γάμβρ', 16) depends on his (almost accidental) possession of such a bride (ἀγαθός τις ἐπέπταρεν...τοι).

The 'blessing' of marriage to Helen has further literary significance: because he is the husband of the daughter of Zeus, Menelaus is destined not to die, but to enjoy eternal blessings in the Elysian Fields (to which this passage may allude).⁸²² Here, though, he comes off considerably worse than his wife. Where superlative language is used of him, it is in the same context of Sappho fr. 110 V: to characterise him as a figure of fun. He is heavy-limbed (λίαν βαρυγούναστος, 10), has drunk too much (11), and, rather than being eager to consummate his marriage, is accused of being εὔδειν μὲν σπεύδοντα (12). This disparity between the couple is perhaps unsurprising: it exists already in the depiction of their 'married bliss' in Sparta after the Trojan War (Odyssey 4), is 'in keeping with Theocritus' treatment of

⁸¹⁹ Theoc. 18.26-31; see Ch.1, p.67, Dover (1971) 234.

⁸²⁰ Konstan (1979) 233.

⁸²¹ Sapph. fr. 110 V.

⁸²² Hom. Od. 4.561-69.

love in several other idylls',⁸²³ and also reflects a typically epithalamic focus on the bride – she is an object of beauty in her own right, whose transfer between oikoi acts to strengthen social relations, and moreover, one whose loss is a cause of regret for the performers of this song. The loss of Helen, however, and the pain it causes, points forward to her elopement. Can we reconcile the Trojan War with the makarismos of this Idyll?

Helen at Court?

Such praise, regardless of its recipients or the outcome of the marriage (compare Agamemnon and Cassandra, Sappho's comparisons of the bridegroom to Achilles, or the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, one of the most represented wedding scenes in the Greek tradition), is typical of the epithalamium.⁸²⁴ It is also typical of Helen, who, even in Homer, is consistently presented as 'better' than her husbands. In the Iliad, she receives no censure for her actions, only sympathy in contrast to widespread contempt for Paris.⁸²⁵ Stesichorus, Gorgias, and Euripides' Helen vindicate her of any wrongdoing, and the Homeric Helen expresses remorse on a number of occasions.⁸²⁶

It has been argued that such sympathy strips Helen of any agency and lays the blame for the War squarely on the shoulders of Paris, the active male seducer,⁸²⁷ yet in Homer, she maintains a narrative agency of her own that often contradicts the versions of events given by

⁸²³ Konstan (1979) 234, esp. Id. 3, and those on Polyphemus and Galatea. Menelaus' comic inferiority hints at Helen's reasons for elopement with Paris: she herself criticises his haplessness in Eur. Tro. 943-94: ὄν, ὦ κάκιστε, σοῖσιν ἐν δόμοις λιπῶν / Σπάρτης ἀπῆρας νηὶ Κρησίαν χθόνα. The imbalance of an unprepossessing man and superlative woman later becomes popular in the Greek novel, particularly Chariton.

⁸²⁴ See Ch.1, p.67.

⁸²⁵ Hom. Il. 3.156-60.

⁸²⁶ E.g. Hom. Il. 3.172-75.

⁸²⁷ Fulkerson (2008) conference paper.

her menfolk.⁸²⁸ She is more intelligent than Menelaus in a number of representations (even when presenting herself as a victim of force, circumstance, or the gods, as in Troades), able to manipulate emotions and interpret oracles.⁸²⁹ As the daughter of Zeus, she not only seems possessed of some measure of divine omnipotence, but also some measure of divine licence. She is a law unto herself, and far superior both to her companions and her spouse. Her divine aspect is constantly emphasised, and even when she is called Τυνδαρίδα (5), Zeus soon appears as πενθερόν of Menelaus (18).

While referring to the history of Helen, the praise of the female and divine characterisation is also appropriate to the poet's own time. The much-married and later divinised Arsinoe II was a powerful patron at the Ptolemaic court and the prime example for scholars of an increased political prominence for women in this period.⁸³⁰ Queens, as well as kings, became the subject of extensive encomia, in spite of the 'retrogressive social notions' of Demetrius of Phalerum, the Peripatetic employed by Ptolemy I Soter to establish a new administrative apparatus for the Egyptian kingdom – one that looked to classical Athens, infamous for its 'repression' of women, for its model.⁸³¹ This classical self-fashioning also fused with Egyptian Pharaonic and Macedonian customs.⁸³² Female prominence does not seem to be confined to the court, as Burton argues:

⁸²⁸ In the Iliad, she tells her own story, like Philomela, through her weaving (3.125-28), and in the Odyssey, presents a version of herself as helper to the besieging army (4.235-64), rather than the harmful temptress of Menelaus' narrative (265-89).

⁸²⁹ Hom. Od. 4.220-26, 15.169-78.

⁸³⁰ E.g. Pomeroy (1984) 40, Burton (1995) 124.

⁸³¹ Pomeroy (1984) 46, (1997) 64.

⁸³² In the one, sibling marriage granted prominence to the queen as well as the king as transmitter of royal status, in the other, polygamous monarchy forced a wife to establish a power base in order to ensure the safety and succession of her own children, Ogden (1999) ix-x.

Although Hellenistic Greece was still basically a patriarchy, and women's lives remained more circumscribed than men's, normative boundaries between public and private, male and female, domestic and political were becoming more fluid.⁸³³

Pomeroy offers some explanations for this:

In the new territories acquired by Alexander's conquests, neither polis nor monarch exerted pressure on individuals to perpetuate their families. No longer was there a need to produce sons who as citizens would defend their homeland, for soldiers could be recruited from foreign territories with the promise of land and cash. No longer did ethnocentrism, as reflected at its most restrictive in Pericles' citizenship law, prevail in the determination of social and civic status...Rather, intermarriage, at least among Greeks and Macedonians, of different ethnicities began to occur in the new cities. In the Hellenistic world the exclusively male 'public' family begins to suffer a demise.⁸³⁴

The generation of Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II presents for these critics a crisis of transition from the 'old world' to the new, so it is no wonder that the epithalamium, the genre of transition, is utilised to explore the limits and possibilities of this change. What results is an explicitly archaising song celebrating the good fortune of a king for his possession of a divine royal female. In spite of Menelaus' portrayal as somewhat foolish, a topos with demonstrated epithalamial provenance, we might reassess our notion of its inappropriateness for the *Theoi Adelphoi*.

⁸³³ Burton (1995) 41.

⁸³⁴ Pomeroy (1997) 192, contra Loman (2004) 165-215.

In certain respects, an epithalamium for Helen can be seen as relevant to the royal house: the ambivalence of Helen's portrayal (mortal/goddess, bride/adulteress, Helen of Sparta/Troy) is analogous to Arsinoe's ambiguous position: associated with Helen during her life and assimilated to Aphrodite after her death, a Greco-Macedonian queen in Egypt, and the sister and wife of Ptolemy Philadelphus for whom he had already dismissed one bride, Arsinoe I. In this she followed in the footsteps of her mother Berenice, who was apotheosised by Aphrodite after death,⁸³⁵ and was the cause of Ptolemy I's divorce from his first wife Eurydice.

A queen, especially in the marriage pattern of the Macedonian royal house,⁸³⁶ acts as a physical manifestation of sovereignty (compare *Basileia* in *Birds*).⁸³⁷ Her body and sexuality function symbolically for the country itself. As such, she may be a positive force in society, as is *Arete* in the *Odyssey*⁸³⁸ – in the case of Arsinoe, it seems that her final marriage functioned as an idealised model for the institution, as in *Theocritus 17* – or a negative one. *Penelope's* suitors consume the house of *Odysseus* as they vie for his wife and kingship, while she wavers indecisively.⁸³⁹ *Candaules' wife* is responsible for the overthrow of a dynasty, allowing *Gyges* to claim leadership through marriage to her.⁸⁴⁰

⁸³⁵ *Theoc.* 15.106-8.

⁸³⁶ *Ogden* (1999) xix refers to this pattern as 'levirate', although this term, strictly speaking, would refer to the marriage of the king's brother to his queen. In this model, the successor to the throne married the widow of his predecessor in order to assimilate the symbolic sovereignty of the king's wife and legitimise his claim to the throne, e.g. *Archelaus* to *Cleopatra*, widow of *Perdiccas II*, and *Ptolemy Alorus* to *Eurydice*, widow of *Amyntas III*. *Finkelberg* (1991) esp. 306 suggests that such kingship by marriage may have been the norm in Bronze Age Greece: see especially the example of *Penelope* here, but also *Clytemnestra* and *Aegisthus* (n.839 below), and *Jocasta* and *Oedipus* (although she suggests that marriage to the king's daughter and being chosen as successor by the princess' male relatives was more usual, p.315).

⁸³⁷ See Ch.5, pp.224-25.

⁸³⁸ *Alcinous* married his niece *Arete*, thus merging the two royal lines (*Hom. Od.* 7.67-68). She is represented as using her influence for good, such as aiding *Odysseus' homecoming*.

⁸³⁹ *Hom. Od.* 1.245-51. By rights *Telemachus* should inherit the household (1.387) and the suitors should court *Penelope* at her father's house (1.275-78), but since she refuses to quit the palace of *Odysseus*, each aims to install himself in the place of the absent king. *Penelope*, like *Arete*, was seen in antiquity as the 'good queen' whose actions preserved her husband's house, but the ill effects of her vacillation upon the *oikos* cast doubt over that portrayal. A similar situation befalls the *oikos* of *Agamemnon*, in which *Aegisthus* weds *Clytemnestra* and rules *Argos* (with agency varying between texts from his wife).

⁸⁴⁰ *Hdt* 1.11.1-12.7: ἡ γὰρ Κανδαύλην ἀποκτείνας ἐμέ τε καὶ τὴν βασιλῆην ἔχε τὴν Λυδῶν...

This is a literary characteristic of barbarian women and is part of the construction of the barbarian ‘other’ in Greek thought. The strong personality of Queens and Queen Mothers (such as Olympias) is also a feature of Macedonian royalty. For Arsinoe to follow this tradition would be problematic for the Hellenising Ptolemies, for it directly contradicts Hellenic values. Even in Greece, though, the problem of male subordination to a rich wife is a common topos, revealing widespread insecurity about the position of the wife within the oikos.⁸⁴¹ The domineering royal females who symbolise the ‘other’ might already have been latent in the ‘self’,⁸⁴² but the advent of monarchy allowed strong personality traits public expression.

A queen might bestow or withhold patronage of court poetry, or persuade her husband to do so. In politics, the fear exists that the king may be ruled from the thalamos (another particular characteristic of ‘barbarian’ queens).⁸⁴³ With the apotheosis of Egyptian monarchs, the picture becomes doubly complicated, for the Greek gods are by nature capricious, and Aphrodite, the double of the Ptolemaic queens, even more so. A deified female monarch may be a benevolent or malevolent daimon, taking gender insecurity to a divine extreme.⁸⁴⁴ The tensions that emerge from such a reading strengthen the case against an interpretation of Idyll 18 as an epithalamium or encomium for Arsinoe per se, but it nevertheless creates a sphere for the negotiation of this problematic construction of gender relations.

⁸⁴¹ See Diggle (1970) 126 on Eur. Pha. 158-59; cf. Ch. 4, p.155.

⁸⁴² Though strong personalities and temporal power are characteristic of barbarian queens, similar traits existed among the Spartan queens for whom Helen may have been a paradigm: e.g. Gorgo (Hdt. 5.48-51, 7.239; Plut. Lyc. 14) and Chilonis (Plut. Ag. 17-18). Finkelberg (1991) 305 further suggests that royal succession in heroic Sparta may have run from mother to daughter.

⁸⁴³ It is particularly noted among the Persians, for whom ‘the king’s wife...as well as the king’s mother, held very privileged positions at court. They enjoyed immediate access to the king, were able to join the king at public appearances, such as audiences, and were permitted to dine with the king, an extremely private occasion which few were allowed to witness’ (Brosius 2006:41). Atossa, wife of Darius I (Aesch. Pers.), and Amestris, wife of Xerxes (Hdt. 9.109-13) were represented as particularly domineering. The biblical Queen Esther, despite acting piously to save the Jews from genocide (Esther 8.3-5), nonetheless exacts excessive revenge (9.12-13, Dalley 2007:196-97). The conflict between Queen and Queen Mother, and its impact on the state, underpins Plutarch’s Artaxerxes (cf. Ctes. F16-29), in which he criticises the ‘harem politics’ of the succession (1025e5-8): ...<ει> τοῦ μὲν ἀδελφοῦ διὰ τῆς γυναικωντίδος ἐνδυομένου τοῖς πράγμασι, τοῦ δὲ πατρὸς οὕτως ἐμπληκτον ἦθος καὶ ἀβέβαιον ἔχοντος, οἷεται βέβαιον αὐτῷ τὴν διαδοχὴν ὑπάρχειν.

⁸⁴⁴ Although it seems that Aphrodite-Arsinoe, as patroness of conjugal love and protectress of sailors, occupied the former position.

Scholars have had difficulty reconciling the figure of Helen to the wedding song at all. Lane favours an ironic reading of the Epithalamium, on the basis of a number of linguistic puns and allusions he claims to be inscribed in the text.⁸⁴⁵ Stern also asks:

Can anyone be expected to read an epithalamium for Helen and Menelaus, no matter how charming and happy its tone, without remembering what the future of that marriage will be?

He situates the poem in the context of the ‘ironic epithalamium’ first apparent in Sappho fr. 44 V and expounded at length by Euripides.⁸⁴⁶ The hymenaios that turns to tears remains a popular topos in the Hellenistic period.⁸⁴⁷ Pantelia, noting that ‘Helen and Menelaus hardly qualify as the happy couple of a joyful wedding song’,⁸⁴⁸ attempts to rehabilitate their marriage by stressing the epic resonances with *Odyssey* 4, Homer’s more domesticated picture of the aftermath of the Trojan War.⁸⁴⁹ As I argue above, even this scene is not totally unproblematic, and may heap further ironies upon an ‘anti-epithalamium’. If the *Idyll* is, as Burton argues, part of a ‘hegemonic myth which the poets could explore, reinforce and test’,⁸⁵⁰ I would stress the ‘testing’ aspect: lyric *makarismos* is juxtaposed with epic or tragic allusions which serve to undermine it. Some have previously been noted, especially the irony of good wishes for the couple’s future which conclude the song.⁸⁵¹ Others – particularly in view of their relationship to lyric – also prove illuminating.

The maidens’ first address to Menelaus, ὦ φίλε γαμβρέ (9) recalls Sappho’s *eikasmos* in fr. 115 V, but the portrayal here is far less flattering. The νεώτερος Ἄτρεος

⁸⁴⁵ Lane (2006) 23-26.

⁸⁴⁶ Stern (1978) 29, 31.

⁸⁴⁷ Cf. Erinna fr. 4.7-8, Theoc. 15.132-35, Bion Epitaph. Adon. 87-90.

⁸⁴⁸ Pantelia (1995) 76.

⁸⁴⁹ Pantelia (1995) 76-81.

⁸⁵⁰ Burton (1995) 4.

⁸⁵¹ Theoc. 18.29-53, cf. Stern (1978) 37.

υἱῶν is lazy – and drunk. This might recall an accusation levelled against the elder son of Atreus in the Iliad: ‘you wine sack’ (1.225). Praise of family is one of the key components of formal encomia,⁸⁵² yet here neither bride (daughter of Leda’s adulterous liaison with Zeus) nor groom (scion of the transgressive House of Atreus) can be said to possess particularly complimentary hereditary traits. Furthermore, the characterisation of Menelaus as besotted, boorish, and undeservedly lucky may recall his unpleasant and bumbling persona in Euripides’ Troades, Andromache, and Helen. He is hardly a flattering paradigm for the prodigious lover Ptolemy II.

They will pass on these characteristics to their daughter – Helen’s friends wish ἡ μέγα κά τι τέκοιτ’, εἰ ματέρι τίκτοι ὁμοῖον (21), but Euripides’ Andromache shows Hermione in the worst light of this: vain, adorned, rich; a spiteful wife who elopes with her husband’s killer.⁸⁵³ The lovely and accomplished Helen, τῶς πάντες ἐπ’ ὀμμασιν ἕμεροι ἐντί (36), is a bride in the Sapphic mode, ἕρος δ’ ἐπ’ ἡμέρῳ κέχυται προσώπῳ (fr. 112.4 V), but this bride’s eyes already carry dangerous connotations, as in Aeschylus,⁸⁵⁴ and her effect on the eyes of men, already noted in Agamemnon, is also developed by Euripides.⁸⁵⁵ The reference to her destiny as a housewife also quotes from a Sapphic epithalamium: ὦ καλά, ὦ χαρίεσσα κόρα, τὸ μὲν οἰκέτις ἤδη (38, cf. fr. 108 V). She is well-prepared for this duty – no-one spins, weaves or plays music like Helen (32-37). Helen the housewife is an ambiguous figure: as a weaver, she creates a picture of sufferings

⁸⁵² Men. Rhet. 402.21-403.25 (Ch.8, pp.303-4); on this topos in Theoc. 18, see Russell & Wilson (1981) xxxiii-xxxiv.

⁸⁵³ No evidence exists for this in the fragments of Sophocles’ Hermione, and Sommerstein (2006) 5 posits that she remains in Neoptolemus’ house until after his death (though she may plot this death in her desperation at being married against her will, p.18 n.67). In Euripides’ Orestes, Hermione is the unfortunate (τάλαιν’, 1490) victim of the machinations of her parents and traditional fiancé.

⁸⁵⁴ Aesch. Ag. 742-43; see Ch.2, p.105.

⁸⁵⁵ Aesch. Ag. 416-19, Eur. Tro. 892-93: αἰρεῖ γὰρ ἀνδρῶν ὄμματ’...

undergone for her sake.⁸⁵⁶ As a spinner, she uses a *talaron* (32) given to her by an Egyptian queen – another of whom gave numerous drugs, both good and ill.⁸⁵⁷ Her Homeric lyre is rather the voice of epic narrative,⁸⁵⁸ and her own voice has the power to deceive and enthrall.⁸⁵⁹ In addition, female musicians, though this one sings hymns to goddesses, tend to be characterised as *hetairai* (although Loman argues for a move away from such representation in the Hellenistic period, as performers of both genders became increasingly professionalised).⁸⁶⁰

Finally, the farewell to the couple (49) echoes other Sapphic farewells.⁸⁶¹ Menelaus is called *εὐπένθερε γαμβρέ*, an address similar to the *τίμιε γάμβρε* of Sappho fr. 116 V, yet the good wishes that follow on from this are deeply ironic. Leto is invoked for *euteknia* (50-51) – but Hermione will prove somewhat of a let-down. That good fortune will pass along the generations of *eupatridai* (52-53) is a misplaced wish in the light of the literary tradition: Menelaus may have a good father-in-law, but his own lineage is shadowed and his only son is the bastard of a slave concubine in the *Odyssey* (4.10-14). And for *θεῶν Κύπρις* to grant *ἴσον ἔρασθαι ἀλλάλων* (51-52) is a typically epithalamial idealisation, but one that will not be fulfilled. Aphrodite will become involved with this couple – but it will be to instil *erôs* for another bridegroom in Helen. Each optimistic epithalamial echo seems to carry a specific linguistic or thematic foreshadowing of the Trojan cycle. Which (if any) are the dominant allusions? Should we read this song in the light of lyric or epic/tragedy?

Both strands affect our reading. The *Idyll* spans notions of genre as well as those of gender interaction, exploring ideas of transition and poetic as well as personal identity. This

⁸⁵⁶ Hom. Il. 3.125-29.

⁸⁵⁷ Hom. Od. 4.125, cf. 226-32.

⁸⁵⁸ Hom. Od. 4.235-64.

⁸⁵⁹ Hom. Od. 4.279.

⁸⁶⁰ Ar. Vesp. 1345-46, Plut. Mor. 664C, Athen. 13.607e, contra Xen. Symp. 2.1-2; see Loman (2004) 111-18 (esp. 112 on the slave status of many such women).

⁸⁶¹ Sappho. fr. 116, 177 V.

may seem to create a literary paradox, but as we have seen in previous wedding songs, marriage is a fundamentally ambiguous and paradoxical institution, and the poetry of marriage attempts to articulate and make sense of that ambiguity. It can be both a celebration and a lament, as is demonstrated in this poem. It can present marriage as a romantic seduction and ongoing discourse, or, in tragedy, as violent rape and domination of the female. Hymen/Hymenaios, and the hymenaios, oversees the transition of the bride from parthenos to gunê, mediating between ‘death’ to the previous life and ‘rebirth’ into a new identity, and similarly the procession from old home to new – from natal to marital family, a fundamentally problematic departure in Greek (especially Athenian) marriage. A wedding song thus often problematises, or signals a problem concerning, philia relations – between genders, families, or cities.⁸⁶²

In this case, we must ask again whether this song can be connected appropriately to the royal couple, and perhaps answer in the negative. The Ptolemaic/Egyptian/Macedonian royal family saw numerous crises of philia in the lifetime of Theocritus and later: Arsinoe II married Lysimachus, king of Samothrace, whose daughter Arsinoe I married Ptolemy (II). On Lysimachus’ death, Ptolemy Ceraunus, the son of Ptolemy I by his first wife Eurydice, attempted to seize the throne of Samothrace by marrying the widowed queen and murdering two of her sons by Lysimachus. Arsinoe fled, and after many trials returned to Egypt where her brother put aside Arsinoe I and married her – while Ceraunus still lived.⁸⁶³ If Theocritus’ view of Helen’s marriage seems overly complicated and confused, marital politics during his period at court hardly provided a stable model. While Helen may seem a likely paradigm, the literary texture discussed above overlays any connection to the Ptolemies with problematic negative connotations.

⁸⁶² See Introduction, p.35.

⁸⁶³ Ogden (1999) 62-79.

It may be safer to say that *philia* relationships are more generally problematic in the Hellenistic period. Migration to the new monarchic centres meant that many families no longer lived in close proximity (making burial rites and tomb-cult more difficult to maintain).⁸⁶⁴ Marriage, childbirth and death were no longer state-regulated activities, and scholars have argued that this occurred as the need to maintain an ethnically homogenous citizen body and an army of citizen soldiers disappeared – Greeks mixed with non-Greeks and in some cases married native partners.⁸⁶⁵ Women, such as Theocritus' Simaetha, could be left without a *kurios*, to fend for themselves and manage (or not) their own sexuality. Male homosocial relationships retreated from the political sphere as absolute power became concentrated in one man, perhaps leading to the greater prominence of domestic relationships. The contents of marriage contracts imply women's increased mobility and perhaps also freedom,⁸⁶⁶ but this mobility in turn must have contributed to already existing anxieties about the position of women in the home and society. Traditional *philia* roles and relationships changed, and new paths were forged. Helen, one of the most problematic figures of *philia* in ancient myth, provides a suitable medium through which to make sense of this. Thrice-married (possibly four times, if we count Theseus); variously courted, bestowed, raped, and seduced; victim and willing adulteress; whore yet prime example of mythical depictions of marriage; praised, slandered, celebrated, and lamented; located in Greece, Troy, and Egypt, she represents the ambiguous nature of Greek marriage and *philia*.

There appears to be no such thing as a wholly positive hymeneal mythology – stemming from the very beginning in the various myths of Hymenaios discussed in the

⁸⁶⁴ Cf. e.g. Pomeroy (1997) 112.

⁸⁶⁵ Pomeroy (1997) 229, but see Loman (2004) 165-215, who maintains the thesis that Greeks preferred to marry Greeks, and thus that Greco-Macedonian women must have formed a part of the original colonisation of the East.

⁸⁶⁶ Pomeroy (1984) 83-98, on esp. P. Elephantine I, P. Tebtunis I 104, P. Geneva I 21; Foucault (1986) 76. Burton (1995) 41. Restrictive citizenship laws in Alexandria, however, still favoured brides who were *astai* (Pomeroy *op. cit.* 45-47).

Introduction.⁸⁶⁷ Audiences are invited to identify with the aspect of the myth most appropriate for the occasion: at a ‘real’ wedding, the joyful celebration of a marriage, in tragedy, its disastrous aftermath. In the Hellenistic epithalamium, it is perhaps most difficult to tell which is the dominant aspect. Dover suggests that a Hellenistic poet could ‘challenge readers intellectually by *recherché* allusions’, but at the same time assume the ‘right of creative variation of the inherited myth’.⁸⁶⁸ Hunter argues that the Epithalamium ‘dramatises the process of “selective memory”’,⁸⁶⁹ a process which contemporary Greeks in Egypt would be forced to undergo in order to accept the mythologies promulgated by their rulers as a means of understanding their world. At the same time, he claims, it ‘challenges us to read “in Dorian fashion”’: to set aside the stories of Helen’s wantonness and celebrate the glorious goddess’.⁸⁷⁰ If this is so, the poem’s mythology, operates squarely within the tradition of the wedding song, engaging, whether on an active or subconscious level, with all aspects of the story, and allowing the reader to choose to ‘read’ those most applicable to their own circumstances.

Hellenistic Erôs

In the final section of this chapter, I will return to a particularly epithalamial aspect of Theocritus’ ode: its presentation of love. Although the epithalamium is by nature an erotic genre, and as such the emphasis on the love of the newlyweds stands within a long-established tradition, in the Hellenistic period a particular representation of married love gains prominence, which becomes programmatic for later epithalamial writings. This mutual love (and the difficulties thereof) are emphasised throughout the Theocritean corpus.

⁸⁶⁷ See pp.2-5.

⁸⁶⁸ Dover (1971) lii.

⁸⁶⁹ Hunter (1996) 166.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid.

Yet such love has always played a role in the epithalamium. Sappho's maidens sang σὰν...φιλότατα καὶ νύμφας ἰοκόλπω (fr. 30.4-5 V), and other wedding songs, such as fr. 112 V, stress the longed-for nature of the marriage, the groom's prayers for his bride, and her erotic, desirable beauty. The Danaid trilogy, whose choral odes bear such resemblance to wedding songs, presents 'the ideal sexual union [as] one between two persons both of whom are not merely consenting but eagerly desirous parties',⁸⁷¹ and other Aeschylean hymenaioi, particularly in Agamemnon, examine the problems that arise from such equal desire, particularly where Helen is concerned.⁸⁷² Equality of desire appears in Theocritus: Helen is ἀγαπατάν / μναστεύσας (4-5), a wooed and wedded wife,⁸⁷³ and though she is τεῶν νῦν (15) of Menelaus, the mutuality of their relationship is the image with which the Epithalamium leaves us:

εὔδειτ' ἔξ ἀλλάλων στέρνον φιλότατα πνέοντες
καὶ πόθον.⁸⁷⁴

Theocritus' innovation stems from his focus on love in general throughout the Idylls. Like the wedding song, they represent often mutual love between unequal individuals, and very few depict the male homosocial erôs of the classical polis, or even the aristocratic love and hetaireia of the archaic/classical symposium. The locus amoenus, a 'setting of stylised natural beauty' away from the city,⁸⁷⁵ is the setting for this love and had also long characterised the wedding song with its focus on unspoilt nature and beauty. This

⁸⁷¹ Sommerstein (2006) 244.

⁸⁷² See Ch.1, pp.39-42; Ch.2, p.103.

⁸⁷³ Cf. Aesch. PV 559-60.

⁸⁷⁴ Theoc. 18.54-55, cf. Sappho fr. 126 V: δαύοισ(ὶ) ἀπάλας ἔτα<ί>ρας ἐν στήθεσιν.

⁸⁷⁵ Hunter (1993) 13.

romanticised setting forms the crucible of married erôs in the Epithalamium (νεογράφτω θαλάμω, 3).

It is only through the *Idyll's* representation of this kind of love that any appropriate Ptolemaic connection may be sought. As mentioned above, the marriage of Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II, modelled on that of Zeus and Hera was represented as an ideal (or idealised) union.⁸⁷⁶ Arsinoe's love of her husband forms part of the Ptolemies' poetic self-projection: ἐκ θυμοῦ **στέργουσα** κασίγνητον τε πόσιν τε (17.130). Such love was also projected back onto their parents and seems to legitimise the marriage of Ptolemy I and Berenice:

τῶ οὔπω τινὰ φαντὶ ἀδεῖν τόσον ἀνδρὶ γυναικῶν

ὅσον περ Πτολεμαῖος ἔην ἐφίλησεν ἄκοιτιν.

ἦ μὰν ἀντεφιλεῖτο πολὺ πλέον· ὦδε κε παισὶ

θαρσήσας σφετέροισιν ἐπιτρέποι οἶκον ἅπαντα,

ἀστόργου δὲ γυναικὸς ἐπ' ἄλλοτρίῳ νόος αἰεὶ,

ῥήιδιοι δὲ γοναί, τέκνα δ' οὐ ποτεικότα πατρί.⁸⁷⁷

The storgê of spouses and lovers is a concern in the corpus,⁸⁷⁸ but what is interesting here is the presentation of the ideal marriage as a husband who ἐφίλησεν ἄκοιτιν and wife who ἀντεφιλεῖτο πολὺ πλέον. This focus on the emotional subjectivity of both husband and wife is symptomatic of a reciprocal relationship expressed by most Hellenistic wedding

⁸⁷⁶ Theoc. 17.31-34, Posid. fr. 114. (esp. 7-8), cf. Ar. Av. 1720-65; on the hieros gamos of Zeus and Hera, Ch.5, esp. pp.223-35. Hom. Il. 14.153-353, however, demonstrates how tensions may exist even within this model.

⁸⁷⁷ Theoc. 17.38-66.

⁸⁷⁸ Theoc. 17.23.63; 23.63, death is astorgos in Epig. 16.4.

songs, though not by Erinna, who follows the model of Sappho's 'epithalamial' songs in focusing on the relationship between two girls, and their separation by marriage and death.⁸⁷⁹

These poems show a concern for the private relationship between husband and wife, the day-to-day erotic and discursive negotiation of marriage as well as the extreme emotions of the wedding ceremony.⁸⁸⁰ The increasing importance of the private sphere in Hellenistic life is almost too clichéd an explanation of focus on private relationships, yet it is appropriate to the wedding song and for articulation through the wedding song, which marks the establishment of so fundamental a relationship. One thing that should be emphasised is the privileging of the relationship between husband and wife. Apollonius' Alcinous decides: 'if [Medea was] sharing a husband's bed he would no longer seek to cut her off from a **love sanctioned in marriage** (κουριδίης φιλότητος)'.⁸⁸¹

If Medea is still a maiden, she must go home. If not, she must stay with Jason, though it may mean war. Her natal family retains no control over her reproductive capacity. She cannot return home to produce children for her father's oikos now that she is an epiklêros, even if indeed her part in the murder of the previous heir did not preclude this possibility. She belongs to her husband, as Helen now belongs to Menelaus ἔνας καὶ ἐς ἁῶ / κῆς ἔτος ἐξ ἔτεος (18.14-15).⁸⁸² In this age where women as well as men were part of the Greek diaspora, marriage implies finality, a departure from friends and kin which may only be

⁸⁷⁹ See Ch.1, pp.38-57; compare Theoc. 15.131: τὸν μὲν Κύπρις ἔχει, τὰν δ' ὁ ῥοδόπαχυς Ἀδωνις. Bion (Epitaph. Adon. 16-17, 64-66, 71-73) portrays Aphrodite and Adonis' experience of pain as mutual and interdependent, and likens this passion to their coitus; Apollonius focuses on the κουριδίης φιλότητος (Arg. 4.1120) and γλυκερῆ φιλότητι (1155-69) of Jason and Medea; Zeus the bull must seduce Europa (κατέθελεγε, Mosch. 2.94) into loving him (κύσει, 96); and Achilles must use λόγον to win over Deidameia in [Bion] 2.26.

⁸⁸⁰ See Ch7, p.263-64 for this discursive ethic.

⁸⁸¹ Ap. Arg. 4.1118-20, trans. Hunter.

⁸⁸² Medea's dependence on Jason was also emphasised in Eur. Med. e.g. 255-56: ἐγὼ δ' ἔρημος ἄπολις οὖσ' ὑβρίζομαι / πρὸς ἄνδρος. Pomeroy (1984) 73 notes the possibility of isolation for a Greek woman in Egypt.

figurative or symbolic in depictions of Athenian citizen-marriage.⁸⁸³ As such, the marital relationship might carry increased emotional significance for women as well as men, as they became mutually dependent for *philia* in a manner previously unrepresented. But the majority of women would not have been as mobile as the early colonists; thus, the emphasis on mutual conjugal love should not be taken as merely symptomatic of a widespread social phenomenon.

It is the poetic emphasis on marital love and its use in Ptolemaic self-fashioning which marks a significant development in the poetry of this period, into which the representation of mutual love in the wedding song may be drawn. The discourse of the *hymenaios* expounded in previous chapters becomes public discourse, advocating a reciprocal love between husband and wife as the divine and political ideal and thus establishing it as a model for private emulation. There is a positive valuation of the heterosexual courtship and seduction of a 'good' wife such as Berenice or Arsinoe, which uses Hera and Aphrodite as its mythical paradigms. Where the wife will prove not to be 'good', however, poetic ironies are created, aimed at a knowledgeable, elite reader (i.e., Helen's separation from – and then reconciliation with – Menelaus, and the tensions involved in this series of events). Problematically or not, this poetry represents marriage as an exchange between men and women, rather than simply the 'exchange of women' common in structuralist analyses of archaic and classical Greek marriage and notable in the formula of *enguê*.⁸⁸⁴

The epithalamium in this period appears to stand at a crossroads. It is a dense intertextual fabric, woven of lyric optimism and eroticism, tragic irony combined with epic resonances, and even a few comic aspects of characterisation (positive valuation of marriage

⁸⁸³ Cf. Mosch. 2.111-17. Such finality and the implication of movement might not, however, necessarily have meant freedom for women. Though some Hellenistic women are shown from inscriptional evidence to have moved through their own agency, most would still have been tied to their male relatives: 'women habitually followed their husbands and/or male relatives abroad, and a few individual women migrated alone or at least without a formal guardian' (Loman (2004) 201).

⁸⁸⁴ E.g. Men. *Dysc.* 842-44; see Introduction, p.22.

for the community, *hieros gamos*, and the benefits of marriage to a goddess). The following chapters will see it diverge along two separate paths: the formalistic, encomial elements will be developed by the prose orators, as we will see in Chapter 8, using the past to construct a vision of the epideictic present at the weddings of society's great and good. Another more philosophical branch focuses on the personal aspects of marital discourse and the private significance of the relationship – not an entirely new phenomenon, but one which is innovative in its context and articulation – as will be discussed with regard to Plutarch in the next chapter. It becomes the basis of a philosophical construction of marriage in which *logos* is the key component of *erôs*. Especially in the philosophical branch, the mutuality (especially of desire) between husband and wife remains an emphatic feature, as does the exchange and reciprocity of the sexual relationship. Moreover, the inclusion of this ideal in philosophy and epideictic keeps married *erôs* in the public sphere in the Imperial period.

The use of the epithalamial ideals in court poetry also means that the female experience gained in political prominence. The emphasis on, or valorisation of, the bride, must not be read exclusively in terms of Arsinoe's role in this court, since it already has long hymeneal provenance.⁸⁸⁵ But gender relationships feature prominently in the exploration and negotiation of the role of women in public and private life, representing an attempt to articulate the meaning of the marriage relationship in a time when *philia* itself was undergoing a fundamental transition. In addition, developments of a literary nature may have contributed to this picture. As the corpus of Greek literature began to be canonised and codified at the Library of Alexandria, scholar-poets must have studied the key features of various literary genres, and it is these key features which emerge in their reworking and composition of poetry. In the case of the epithalamium (this period sees the first assignment of Sappho's wedding songs to a book of their own as well as the cataloguing of Alcman's)

⁸⁸⁵ E.g. Ch.1, pp.45-46.

the central features are a focus on the beautiful bride, the setting of natural beauty for her courtship and consummation, the establishment of marital erôs, and the tension between positive and negative aspects of marriage, which are also apparent in the mythology used for it. It is these topoi that the Hellenistic epithalamiasts recreate for their own age, and re-imbue with meaning (literary and perhaps political), in an attempt to make sense of that age.

Is the portrayal of ‘empowered’ Hellenistic women and idealised marital love more striking because it contrasts so strongly with the agendas exposed by the poetry of previous chapters? The transition would have been more gradual, and less startling to a 3rd century BC audience than to us – less of a ‘gap’ that we see in the survival of our sources, and more of a ‘development, a transition in truth.’⁸⁸⁶ Perhaps the change is generic: in Bucolic poetry, which is less connected with polis ideology than drama is, such representations can exist without posing a threat or even an antithesis to the polis. There is certainly a danger in identifying this form of representation as a specifically Ptolemaic development.

The poem itself looks back to a mythical past, a self-fashioning tool in any period, but in the Hellenistic, with its court-sponsored poets, most of all. It does so to create, negotiate, and legitimate the identity and discourse of its poetic patrons and subjects. It is not a straightforward borrowing of mythical exempla, but an intellectually-engaged creative process, in which ‘meaning is created by the dismantling and reconstruction of great texts of the past’.⁸⁸⁷ Theocritus, and his contemporaries and successors, were using specific models in specific ways. The Hellenistic epithalamium does not align itself with the classical Athenian ideal of ‘repressed’ womanhood. Tragic and comic resonances exist and provide an ironic foil for more traditionally ‘epithalamial’ elements, but they do not provide the whole meaning for these poems. The nuptial literature also looks back to the world of the partheneion and the Sapphic epithalamium, to the maiden chorus and a positively valued (especially in ritual) role

⁸⁸⁶ Cf. Dover (1971) lxx.

⁸⁸⁷ Hunter (1993) xiii.

for aristocratic women. Tensions typical of Attic drama exist in this model, as tension existed during this time over the queen's role in politics and cult, but on the whole they represent a predominantly positive scenario. No longer is the highest praise for a woman 'to be least spoken of',⁸⁸⁸ but to elicit praise in her own right, regardless of whether or not, like Helen, she deserved it – an unavoidable side-effect of the epithalamium's inclusion in court-poetry.

⁸⁸⁸ See however Pelling (2000) 190.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PLUTARCH'S CONIUGALIA PRAECEPTA: THE PHILOSOPHICAL EPITHALAMIUM?

While the Hellenistic wedding song alluded to earlier models of poetry in its articulation of marriage, it nonetheless presented a view of marriage based on the mutual *erôs* of husband and wife.⁸⁸⁹ Such mutuality is not new to the epithalamium;⁸⁹⁰ the innovation lies in its adoption by the public self-representation of the Ptolemies. It becomes part of the promulgation of civic discourse, and possibly the functioning of private life – very different from the model of marriage in Classical Athens as a transaction between members of a homosocial male group. In the late first/early second century AD, Plutarch of Chaeronea develops this discourse further: mutuality between husband and wife is again emphasised, but the Athenian ideals of silence and submission for women are also valorised. A peculiar model of marriage relations emerges, in keeping with both old values and the emergence of new institutional structures and philosophies under the early Roman Empire.⁸⁹¹ The rites of transition inherent in the epithalamium are imagined by Plutarch as an ongoing process, whose *telos* is spiritual, as well as social, initiation.

Οἶμαι καὶ τὸν λόγον ὁμοῦ συνεφαπτόμενον ὑμῶν καὶ συνυμεναιοῦντα (138B2-3), Plutarch muses in the opening chapter of his letter to Pollianus and Eurydice, *Coniugalia Praecepta*. For the scholar of the Greek wedding song, the syntactical combination of *λόγον* and *συνυμεναιοῦντα* is intriguing, for it implies an epithalamial quality to the discourse: this philosophical treatise contains features of the *hymenaios*. And no

⁸⁸⁹ Ch.6, pp.255-58.

⁸⁹⁰ See Ch.1, pp.73-76.

⁸⁹¹ See pp. 272-74.

ordinary hymenaios, for this wedding song is performed not by choruses of maidens and youths, but by logos – ‘reason’, or ‘discourse’ itself. Moreover, this discourse joins in the bridal hymn at the end of the first century AD, when the lyric wedding song made paradigmatic by Sappho had ceased to be composed.⁸⁹² Does Plutarch offer his treatise as a replacement? What does it mean for a Greek philosopher in the Roman Empire to claim this genre as a model for his work?

Critics have previously aligned this work with other contemporary (particularly Stoic) discourses on duty, or those addressing the question *ei gamêteon*, ‘should one marry?’⁸⁹³ Others have looked to classical philosophy, particularly the education of the wife in Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*, for influences.⁸⁹⁴ There is no question that, like Musonius,⁸⁹⁵ Plutarch implies that marriage is the right course for the philosophical man, or that, as in Xenophon, he envisions such a man as the moral and intellectual teacher of his wife. In both form and content, however, Plutarch goes beyond all these examples to create a highly unusual text. The insertion of an authorial persona and details of his own life blurs the boundaries between epistolary, Platonist discourse and epithalamial lyric; and Ischomachus’ instruction in household management in the *Oeconomicus* is ignored in favour of exhortation to Pollianus to teach, and to Eurydice to learn, philosophy – a philosophy of *erôs* with eschatological implications.

The existence of hymeneal motifs in *Coniugalia Praecepta* leads me to examine Plutarch’s use and philosophical development of these *topoi*. Should the treatise be seen as a

⁸⁹² Philodemus (*Mus.* 4.119.28-31) writes in the first century BC: τὰ ποιήματα ἔστιν, οὐχ ἡ μουσική, τὰ τὴν εἰρημένην ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ παρεχόμενα χρεῖαν ἐν τοῖς ὑμεναί[οι]ς. However, Plutarch suggests the possibility of a sung hymenaios in *Quaestiones Convivales*: 654F6, 666A1; suggesting that it was not totally extinct.

⁸⁹³ E.g. *Ps.-Dion.* 2.2.3, *Arius Didymus* 55.2.20, *Plut. Mor.* 408C4, *Epictetus ab Arr. dig.* 3.7.19.2, *Dio Or.* 22.3.4, *Ael. Theon. Prog.* 120.15, 121.9, 15, 128.4-5, 12, *Clement Protr.* 11.113.1.2, *Paed.* 2.10.94.1.1-3, *Hermog. Prog.* 11.7, 33, *Alex. in Ar. topic.* 52.1, *Lib. Prog.* 13.1, *Apth. Prog.* 10.41.17, 42.11, *Stob. Anth. esp.* 67-68, *Nic. Prog.* 71.20, 72.20, 74.15. The subject was a common topic for progymnasmata. Foucault (1986) 154, Goessler (1999) 109-10.

⁸⁹⁴ Pomeroy (1999) 33-34, *Xen. Oec.* 7.11.4, *Plut. Mor.* 138C7 etc.

⁸⁹⁵ Musonius 14.

philosophical epithalamium, and if so, is it a forerunner of the philosophising, rhetorical epithalamios logos of the later Second Sophistic, as taught by Menander Rhetor and pseudo-Dionysius?

A philosophical hymenaios?

The introduction of Coniugalia Praecepta resembles traditional epithalamial imagery. The couple are shut up together in the wedding chamber with the blessing of the priestess of Demeter (**συνειργνυμένοις**, 138B2),⁸⁹⁶ a blessing reminiscent of traditional makarismos. Plutarch's mention of music, particularly the hippothoron song, inducing the stallion to cover the mare (138B5), evokes the music of the hymenaios and similar exhortations to the bridegroom in the wedding song: ἀείδοις[ι]ν φιλότατα καὶ νύμφας ἰοκόλπω; γάμβρος †(εἰς)έρχεται ἴσος Ἄρευι†...ἄνδρος μεγάλω πόλυ μέσδων; οὕτω δὴ πρῶιζα κατέδραθες ὦ φίλε γαμβρέ; ludete ut lubet, et brevi liberos date.⁸⁹⁷

The first precepts, referring to the first sexual encounters between the bride and groom, are based on images of fruit and flowers. Solon ordered that the bride eat a quince (μήλου κυδωνίου, 138D3) in order to be sweet of lip and tongue, and Boeotian brides are crowned with asparagus (ἀσπαραγωνιᾶ, D6), a reminder that the ἥδιστον καρπὸν comes ἐκ τραχυτάτης ἀκάνθης (138D7-8). Such metaphors are attested for the loss of virginity in our earliest extant epithalamia, which may, as in Plutarch, also imply the

⁸⁹⁶ Cf. Theoc. 15.77: ὁ τὰν νυδὸν...ἀποκλάξας, 18.5-6: κατεκλάξατο τὰν...Ἐλέναν ὁ νεώτερος Ἄτρεος υἱῶν.

⁸⁹⁷ Sappho fr. 30.4-5, 111.5-6 V, Theoc. 18.8; cf. also the kateunastikos speech of Menander Rhetor (405.15-412.2) dedicated to the same function, Cat. 61. 204-5; cf. Ch.1, p.73-76.

reluctance of the bride to make this transition.⁸⁹⁸ A deviation from the tone of the wedding song is noticeable, however, in the development by Plutarch of the motif of the untouchable fruit into a philosophical truism, οἱ δὲ τὰς πρώτας τῶν παρθένων διαφορὰς μὴ ὑπομείναντες οὐδὲν ἀπολείπουσι τῶν διὰ τὸν ὄμφακα τὴν σταφυλὴν ἑτέροις προϊεμένων (138D10-E2), counselling patience in the face of this resistance.⁸⁹⁹ A comparison with the Amatorius, moreover, reveals that the idea of ‘plucking’ or ‘cultivation’ of the fertile female implicit in these agricultural images refers to the fruit of the union not as children, as supposed by the formula of enguê, but as virtue (the karpoi of the Muses that are to be Eurydice’s reward for her education and philosophy, 146A23-5): while Protogenes, a pederast, argues that desire for women is not Love, because Love οὐκ ἐθέλει παραμένειν οὐδὲ θεραπεύειν ἐφ’ ὧρα τὸ † λυποῦν καὶ ἀκμάζον, εἰ καρπὸν ἦθους οἰκείου εἰς φιλίαν καὶ ἀρετὴν οὐκ ἀποδίδωσιν (750E4-6), Daphnaeus, in his vindication of love for women as the only true form of Love, insists that it is pederasty which is, in fact, akarpon (752B5)⁹⁰⁰ and which is an impediment to virtue.

A further philosophical development may be seen in the use of divine figures. The traditional gods of the wedding night are present in the introduction of Coniugalia Praecepta: Aphrodite and the Muses, Hermes, Peitho, and the Graces,⁹⁰¹ but their function has also been adapted to the discursive epithalamium. Rather than ‘acting most likely to win the bride over to willing compliance and...to escort her to her new life’,⁹⁰² these figures are employed τὴν περὶ γάμον καὶ οἶκον ἐμμέλειαν ἡρμοσμένην παρέχειν διὰ λόγου καὶ

⁸⁹⁸ Sappho fr. 105a, b V, Ar. Pax 1337-40; also Seaford (1986) 50-59 on the use of this motif in Soph. Trach. 141-49 et al; see Introduction, pp.15-22; Ch.2, pp.88-89; Ch.3, pp.128-29; contra Ch.4, p.169.

⁸⁹⁹ Compare e.g. Men Rhet 407.9-11; Ch.8, pp.299-300.

⁹⁰⁰ The comparison of human with plant is developed later in the Amat.: βλαστήσεως ὀρμὴν ἔχοντα διαφαίνουσιν ὥραν καὶ κάλλος ἅμα σώματος καὶ ψυχῆς (757E7-9).

⁹⁰¹ See Ch.1, pp.53, 73-74, 75; Ch.2, pp.92-93; contra Ch.4, pp.144, 176.

⁹⁰² Patterson (1999) 131.

ἀρμονίας καὶ φιλοσοφίας προσῆκον (138C6-7). The importance of logos and philosophy to a harmonious marriage, and the role of the gods in facilitating these aims, appears to supersede their prior erotic function in the wedding song, or to contribute (*sunumenaionta*) to it: ἵνα πείθοντες διαπράττωνται παρ' ἀλλήλων ἅ βούλονται, μὴ μαχόμενοι μῆδε φιλονεικοῦντες (138C10-D1).

Even the erotic language of the song has been employed in the philosophical cause. The ribaldry and *fescennina iocatio* which, as we have seen, is characteristic of the wedding song,⁹⁰³ gives way to exhortations to perseverance in the sexual aspect of marriage, leading to the Plutarchian ideal of marital symbiosis:

ἢ τε νύμφη τῷ μὴ φυγόντι μῆδὲ δυσχεράναντι τὴν πρώτην χαλεπότητα
καὶ ἀηδῖαν αὐτῆς ἡμερον καὶ γλυκεῖαν παρέξει συμβίωσιν.⁹⁰⁴

The (occasionally *ithyphallic*) sexuality of the *epithalamium* is replaced by an emphasis on *aidôs*, which a woman should wear in place of her clothes,⁹⁰⁵ but more importantly, which a couple should show to one another as a sign of their love: τοῦναντίον γὰρ ἢ σώφρων ἀντενδύεται τὴν αἰδῶ, καὶ τοῦ μάλιστα φιλεῖν τῷ μάλιστα αἰδεῖσθαι συμβόλω χρῶνται πρὸς ἀλλήλους (139C7-9). The conception of *aidôs* as 'shame' has

⁹⁰³ Sappho fr. 110, 111.5-7 V, Ar. Pax 1340-43, Cat. 61.120; see Ch.5, esp. p.216.

⁹⁰⁴ Plut. Mor. 138D8-10.

⁹⁰⁵ Prof. Pelling pointed out in his comments on this thesis that Plutarch does not really do justice to the suggestions of the Herodotean statement that 'a woman takes off her modesty when she takes off her clothes' (Hdt. 1.8). The implications of *aidôs* in the story of Candaules wife, from which this quotation comes, are discussed by Cairns (1996) esp. 82: 'Gyges' remark both draws attention to the objective fact that an undressed woman has cast off the signs of her conformity to society's standards of honour and shame, and implies that, having done so, she no longer observes those standards. But his observation also constitutes a reason for his horrified rejection of the breach of decorum which he is being asked to commit. Thus he is not concerned only with the situation, attitude, or behaviour of the woman; on the contrary, the function of his utterance is to communicate his own respect for standards of honour and shame'.

led some commentators to suggest that Plutarch's attitude to sex was dominated by 'Victorian' prudery:

'Prudery, a repugnance for sexual contact, the denial of female sexual pleasure, cold functional sexual relations inside the bourgeois marriage, complemented for men by necessary liaisons with mistresses or prostitutes, comical efforts to mask public sexuality or nudity' have been claimed to form part of a perception of Victorian life, and it is clearly a perception with which one finds abundant echoes in the *Moralia* and the *Lives*.⁹⁰⁶

This cannot be said to be the case in *Coniugalia Praecepta* and *Amatorius*. *Aidôs* must be understood as 'modesty', and occupies the same semantic field as *sôphrosunê*, the self-restraint that is the basis of the philosophical marriage. Indeed, the *sôphrôn* wife is encouraged μήτε φεύγειν μήτε δυσχεραίνειν τὰ τοιαῦτα τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἀρχομένου μήτ' αὐτήν κατάρεσθαι (140C7-8). Mutual love, as we have seen, was part of the public discourse of the Ptolemies in Hellenistic Egypt.⁹⁰⁷ In Plutarch, far from being 'cold' and 'functional', conjugal relations are thought to form the locus of the highest form of friendship,⁹⁰⁸ and extra-marital relations are a source of pain (λυπεῖν καὶ συνταράττειν, 144D2) which a husband is wrong (ἄδικον, 144D1) to cause his wife. Most significantly, the sexual love of the married couple, and the pleasure they take in each other's bodies, are revealed in *Amatorius* as reflections of a truer, intelligible beauty and love with roots in Platonic philosophy:

⁹⁰⁶ Walcot (1998) 177, citing Walvin (1988) 120.

⁹⁰⁷ Ch.6, p.257.

⁹⁰⁸ Plut. Mor. 751C11-D3: ...πολὺ μᾶλλον εἰκός ἐστι τὸν γυναικῶν καὶ ἀνδρῶν ἔρωτα τῆ φύσει χρώμενον εἰς φιλίαν διὰ χάριτος ἐξικεῖσθαι.

πάντα ἐνταῦθα πειθομένη τὸ καλὸν εἶναι καὶ τίμιον, ἂν μὴ τύχη θείου καὶ σώφρονος Ἔρωτος ἱατροῦ καὶ σωτήρος, <ὃς ἐνταῦθα μὲν> διὰ σωμάτων ἀφικόμενος ἀγωγὸς ἐπὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ἐξ Ἄιδου δ' εἰς "τὸ ἀληθείας πεδῖον", οὐ τὸ πολὺ καὶ καθαρὸν καὶ ἀψευδὲς ἴδρυται κάλλος, ἀσπᾶσασθαι καὶ συγγενέσθαι διὰ χρόνου ποθοῦντας ἐξαναφέρων καὶ ἀναπέμπων εὐμενῆς οἷον ἐν τελετῇ παρέστη μυσταγωγός. Ἐνταῦθα <δὲ> πάλιν πεμπομένων αὐτῇ μὲν οὐ πλησιάζει ψυχῇ καθ' ἑαυτήν, ἀλλὰ διὰ σώματος.⁹⁰⁹

The 'primary elements' of *Coniugalia Praecepta* – the marriage of a bride and groom who are also students of philosophy – allow Plutarch to negotiate the boundaries of genre and explore the intersections of Plato's discourse on love with the ideology of the epithalamium, extending the applications of philosophy in his creation of a treatise relevant to that marriage.

This Platonic discourse is a composite one, as I and others argue elsewhere,⁹¹⁰ and its intersections with the epithalamium are intriguing. Plutarch takes particular aspects of Plato's theories on love – in particular the didactic role of Eros from the *Symposium*;⁹¹¹ and the function of the beloved as 'mirror' and eschatological implications of the erotic mysteries from the *Phaedrus*; and the philosophical search for 'true' Beauty, adapted from the *Republic* – and applies them not only to a heterosexual, but also to a marital context. That the lovers, or

⁹⁰⁹ Plut. *Mor.* 764F7-765A6, cf. Plat. *Symp.* 209A1-212A7, *Phdr.* 248B, 254B.

⁹¹⁰ Badnall ([forthcoming] 2009), Rist (2001) 558, Martin Jr. (1984) 85 (both on *Amatorius* rather than *Coniugalia Praecepta*. I believe the full implication of Plutarch's epithalamial philosophy may be gained by reading the two texts together).

⁹¹¹ This motif is present not only in Diotima's speech (both in Socrates' 'instruction' by Diotima and in the education of the beloved by the lover, 209a1-c2), but also in those of *Phaedrus* (love teaches those who wish to *καλῶς βιώσεσθαι*, 178c4-7), and Pausanias (pederasty teaches excellence and wisdom, 184c2-e7).

rather the bridal couple, are philosophers is understood, and this philosophic tone colours the epithalamial elements of Plutarch's discourse. As discussed above, the image of fruit and flowers is transmuted from its traditional dichotomy of death/fertility to the image of metaphorical progeny in virtue. The same is true of the other epithalamial *topoi* used in *Coniugalia Praecepta*. Beauty, grace, and the physical act of love all become part of a programme for living designed to educate and elevate the soul. The traditional *kallos* of the couple, particularly the bride, exemplified by Sappho (e.g. fr. 112.3-5 V),⁹¹² is thus rejected by Plutarch in favour of a model of inner beauty advocated by Socrates:

καλὸν οὖν καὶ τὴν οἰκοδέσποιναν, ὅταν ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν ἔχη τὸ ἔσοπτρον, αὐτὴν ἐν ἑαυτῇ τὴν μὲν αἰσχράν "τί οὖν, ἂν μὴ σώφρων γένωμαι;" τὴν δὲ καλὴν "τί οὖν, ἂν καὶ σώφρων γένωμαι;" τῇ γὰρ αἰσχρᾷ σεμνὸν εἰ φιλεῖται διὰ τὸ ἦθος <μᾶλλον> ἢ τὸ κάλλος.⁹¹³

Yet his use of 'Socrates' advice' is itself a rejection of Platonic thought. Where Diotima argued that the philosopher desires to give birth in the beautiful and that ἀνάρμοστον δ' ἐστὶ τὸ αἰσχρὸν παντὶ τῷ θείῳ (Symp. 206d1), for Plutarch, he *aischra* may possess a truer beauty in her character. He does not simply amalgamate Platonic discourse, but develops and 'corrects' it for his own heterosexual, philosophical project.

⁹¹² See Ch. 1, pp.45-46.

⁹¹³ Plut. Mor. 141D2-7. The elder philosopher applied this model to young men and virtue, rather than women and *sôphrosunê* (141C10-D2), cf. Diog. Laert. 2.33.

Similarly, *charis*, used in hymeneal contexts to denote physical beauty and imply physical gratification,⁹¹⁴ becomes another weapon in the wife's arsenal of inner virtues, and is also given a paradigm from philosophy:

‘ Ο Πλάτων τῷ Ξενοκράτει βαρυτέρω τὸ ἦθος ὄντι τὰλλα δὲ καλῶ κάγαθω παρεκελεύετο θύειν ταῖς Χάρισιν. οἶμαι δὴ καὶ τῇ σώφρονι μάλιστα δεῖν πρὸς τὸν ἄνδρα χαρίτων, ἔν’ ὡς ἔλεγε Μητρόδωρος, ἡδέως συνοικῆ καὶ "μὴ ὀργιζομένη ὅτι σωφρονεῖ".⁹¹⁵

The mutual *charis* in the relationship between the spouses is prominent in *Coniugalia Praecepta*, and is associated with the idea of *homonoia*.

Again Plutarch applies a philosophical reading to a traditional concept. *Homonoia* was considered in Greek thought to be the chief blessing of a household: οὐ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ γε κρεῖσσον καὶ ἄρειον, / ἢ ὅθ’ ὁμοφρονέοντε νοήμασιν οἶκον ἔχητον / ἀνὴρ ἡδὲ γυνή.⁹¹⁶ It implies consensus between husband and wife: like Odysseus and Penelope, a meeting of like minds. The harmonious functioning of such relationships provides a model for wider social relationships outside the *oikos*, a model which we have seen reversed in the use of the tragic *hymenaios*. In *Coniugalia Praecepta*, the requirements of genre – this is a treatise for a real marriage, not a dramatic subversion – dictate that the tragic breakdown of sexual and social relations cannot occur. *Homonoia* must be established if the transition is to be completed successfully. Nevertheless, Plutarch notes the interrelation of personal and political *homonoia*, and the consequences of their failure:

⁹¹⁴ LSJ s.v. *χαρίζομαι*, esp. ‘to grant favours’ erotically; see Ch.1, p.75.

⁹¹⁵ Plut. Mor. 141F2-142.2, cf. 142B1-5: a wife should cultivate her relationship with her husband through inner *charis*.

⁹¹⁶ Hom. Od. 6.182-4.

"συμβουλεύει περὶ ὁμονοίας, ὅς αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ τὴν
θεράπαιναν ἴδια τρεῖς ὄντας ὁμονοεῖν οὐ πέπεικεν;" ἦν γὰρ ἔοικέ τις
ἔρωσ τοῦ Γοργίου καὶ ζηλοτυπία τῆς γυναικὸς πρὸς τὸ θεραπευιδίον.
εἶ τοίνυν ἡρμοσμένον τὸν οἶκον εἶναι δεῖ τῷ μέλλοντι ἀρμοζεσθαι
πόλιν καὶ ἀγορὰν καὶ φίλους.⁹¹⁷

The result is an idealised 'rule by consensus', an (unequal) partnership which, as we will see, is expressed in both public and private spheres. For Plutarch, to establish homonoia is to accept one's place in a hierarchical relationship, whether within or outside of the oikos. Swain suggests a parallel in first century writings between the method of achieving social harmony and harmonious relations within the home in this vertical field,⁹¹⁸ but this parallel does not take into account homonoia with a hierarchical master which we see articulated in *Coniugalia Praecepta* in another musical simile:

Ὡσπερ, ἂν φθόγγοι δύο σύμφωνοι ληφθῶσι, τοῦ βαρυτέρου γίνεται τὸ μέλος, οὕτω πᾶσα πράξις ἐν οἰκίᾳ σωφρονούσῃ πράττεται μὲν ὑπ' ἀμφοτέρων ὁμονοούντων, ἐπιφαίνει δὲ τὴν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἡγεμονίαν καὶ προαίρεσιν.⁹¹⁹

⁹¹⁷ Plut. Mor. 144B12-C5, cf. Lyc. 19.3.5-6.

⁹¹⁸ Swain (1999) 88.

⁹¹⁹ Plut. Mor. 139C10-D2.

Russell's remarks on Plutarch's advice in *Praecepta Gerendae Reipublicae* are more telling: his aim 'could only be concord',⁹²⁰ which both bride and groom, but specifically Eurydice, are encouraged to develop (more than half the precepts are addressed to her alone). 'Peace is assured by the ruling power, freedom is conceded up to a point, prosperity and population are gifts of heaven...He counsels against resistance'.⁹²¹ So too in *Coniugalia Praecepta* does Plutarch address the delicate balance of power and freedom between ruler (husband) and ruled (wife), and counsel the female to accept her subordinate position:

ὑποτάττουσαι μὲν γὰρ ἑαυτὰς τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐπαινοῦνται, κρατεῖν δὲ
βουλόμεναι μᾶλλον τῶν κρατουμένων ἀσχημονοῦσι.⁹²²

The positions of Eurydice and the would-be Greek statesman are thus not exactly comparable – he operates in a context of *homonoia* between peers – though some elements, such as acceptance of the status quo, are mutually applicable. Moreover, in *Praecepta Gerendae Reipublicae*, the uncomfortable reality of Roman domination is ever-present in the Greek political sphere, but no mention is made in *Coniugalia Praecepta* of Roman influence on the position of the wife.⁹²³ Under Roman law, all parties must consent to a marriage – a bride's resistance might therefore be more problematic than a mere literary trope.⁹²⁴ Marriage

⁹²⁰ Russell (1973) 8.

⁹²¹ *Ibid*, my emphasis.

⁹²² Plut. *Mor.* 142D10-E1. Yet Pollianus is advised to treat the subject in his care gently, οὐχ ὡς δεσπότην κτήματος ἀλλ' ὡς ψυχὴν σώματος (142E2-3), much in the same way as in the political advice: Plutarch 'is here preaching modesty to the Greek partners of empire, as he preaches humility to the Roman' (Russell 1973:9).

⁹²³ Foxhall (1999) 144 suggests that those elites who acquired Roman citizenship were more likely to make use of Roman family law in order to exploit this status and transmit it to their descendants; Native Greeks, while generally following Greek laws and polis customs, would nonetheless have been 'aware of Roman fashion, custom, and to some extent, law'.

⁹²⁴ Digest 23.2.2: *Nuptiae consistere non possunt nisi consentiant omnes, id est qui coeunt quorumque in potestate sunt*, Saller (1993) 83; though this statement is problematic (87): 'even though in law a daughter's consent to a marriage may have been required, her father could in practice be assumed to take the initiative and bestow her (*collocare*) on a husband'. Paoli (1990) 108 adds: 'Digest 23.1.11-12 says a daughter's consent is

contracts, prominent since the Hellenistic period, specified the duties and obligations of husbands as well as wives, and their mutual agreement to enter into marriage.⁹²⁵ Women could own property and initiate divorce.⁹²⁶ In addition, Roman elite matronae might wield high levels of influence in both the domestic and political spheres.⁹²⁷

In a milieu which had existed as the Roman province of Achaia since 27 BC, Plutarch's encouragement of Eurydice to adopt the Classical ideal of wifely submission might seem anachronistic. Adherence to such Classical models is often construed as a reaction of the subordinate Greeks to that domination.⁹²⁸ Plutarch looks back to an age when Greece was at its most glorious and culturally affluent,⁹²⁹ but may also reflect a reality in which provincial Greek elites operated outside of Roman cultural norms. Cultural continuity, not reaction, may therefore explain aspects of Plutarch's hymeneal discourse. *Homonoia in Coniugalia Praecepta* is also, like *charis*, inward-looking: a like-mindedness which both lays the foundation for, and acts as a guarantee of, the marital *philotês* expounded by the lyric wedding song (e.g. Sappho fr. 30.3-5 V). Plutarch's 'concord', however, extends beyond the wedding night represented in the verse examples and is conceptualised, as are all the precepts, as a philosophical way of life for both partners in the marital relationship.⁹³⁰ We may also conclude that the other epithalamial motifs discussed above also refer more to the state of being married than the wedding itself, the traditional occasion and 'primary element'

necessary for marriage [*Sponsalia sicut nuptiae consensu contrahentium fiunt: et ideo sicut nuptiis, ita sponsalibus filiam familias consentire oportet*], but adds that anything short of positive resistance is taken for consent, and consent can only be refused if the proposed bridegroom is morally unfit [*pr. Sed quae patris voluntati non repugnat, consentire intellegitur. 1. Tunc autem solum dissentiendi a patre licentia filiae conceditur, si indignum moribus vel turpem sponsum ei pater eligat*]. Little girls of twelve [the minimum age for marriage at Rome] can have had small practical chance to refuse; but it must be remembered that your children in potestate might not be little boys or girls'. In the case of second marriages, particularly of mature women, a different balance of consent between *paterfamilias* and prospective bride may have to be taken into account.

⁹²⁵ See Ch.6, p.254.

⁹²⁶ Plut. Mor. 140F4-5: *κἂν ἡ γύνη πλείονα συμβάλληται*, 144A6: *ἀπόλειψιν γράφουσα*.

⁹²⁷ Prominent examples include Octavia (Plut. Pub. 17.8, Marc. 30.10-11, Cic. 44.1, Ant. 31.1-87.6) and Fulvia (Ant. 10.3-30.3, Dio Cass. 47.8.4-48.28-3), wives of Antony; and Livia, wife of Augustus (Dio Cass. 48.15.4-58.2.7). Blomqvist (1997) 88-89 argues that Pompeia Plotina, wife of Trajan and adoptive mother of Hadrian, overshadows much of Plutarch's representation of women.

⁹²⁸ Alcock (1993) 28.

⁹²⁹ See also Alcock (1993) 195-96.

⁹³⁰ *Homonoia* is also mentioned as a long-term goal in later prose epithalamia; see Ch.8, p.317.

for lyric epithalamia. That the advice given to a newly-married couple should continue beyond the wedding night is a relatively limited motif in traditional epithalamia, though it is contained in some Latin examples (*usque dum tremulum mouens / cana tempus anilitas / omnia omnibus annuit*, Cat. 61.154-56). Those that do look to the future speak of blessings for the community or wish for fine children.⁹³¹ The theme of advice, though, can be explored in a treatise advocating marriage as a philosophical way of life. As Menander Rhetor later states, the appropriate themes for epithalamia are bridal chambers and alcoves,⁹³² not the correct ratio of male/female domination in a relationship, the potential licentiousness of one's groom, or how to befriend one's mother-in-law (precepts 6, 35-36, 44). While *Coniugalia Praecepta* uses images and ideas taken from the hymeneal tradition, its philosophical texturing as *πῶς δεῖ ζῆν* excludes it from this category; also from the lines of development that led from the *hymenaios* to the prose wedding speech:

The first leads from actual wedding songs and rituals to poetical versions of these, like those in Sappho or in Euripides' *Phaethon*. The second begins with the traditional custom of praising the returned victor or warrior, and leads through Pindaric epinicia to the rhetorical formulation of rules and methods of praise which was due to the fifth-century sophists or their fourth-century successors. These two lines first coalesce in what we may call rhetoricized wedding-poems: Theocritus 18 is a good example. Rhetorical prescriptions, like those of Menander, depend on both these lines of development: they draw both on the poems, 'rhetoricized' and not, and on the sophistic encomium tradition.⁹³³

⁹³¹ See Ch.4, pp.149-52, 194-95; Ch.5, pp.221-22; Ch.6, pp.251-52; Ch.8, pp.306-7.

⁹³² Men. Rhet. 399.12-15, 405.16-19; see Ch.8, p.309.

⁹³³ Russell & Wilson (1981) xxxiv.

Coniugalia Praecepta seems quite to belong to neither of these lines of development, though it contains some features of each. Moreover, though the text claims to be *sunumenaionta*, can such an epistle, given *μετὰ* (after) *τὸν πάτριον θεσμόν* (138B1) truly lay claim to a tradition that was part of the process of this rite, performed *ἐπὶ* (at) *τῷ θάλαμῳ*? It is not an *epithalamios*; it appears to be created after the event, and refers to the future life of the couple. Like Sappho's 'epithalamial' poems, it is an 'epithalamial' text, one which uses *topoi* and language from the wedding song in order to evoke it.⁹³⁴ It stresses a different aspect of the transition, though: not the separation of girls leading to marriage, but the long-term integration of man and wife following that ritual. As we saw in Sophocles, this reintegration is an ongoing process, dependent on the actions of both partners to establish an *oikos* and to *sunoikein*. Plutarch's text sets out a method for that *sunoikêsis*.⁹³⁵ As such, the post-transitional lament which sometimes characterises female conceptions of marriage is absent, and the institution presented in positive terms.⁹³⁶

In both form and content, *Coniugalia Praecepta* pushes the boundaries of the *epithalamium*, and constitutes a philosophical discourse in which the wedding song is adapted to promote a philosophy based on *erôs*. Like the *erotikoi logoi* discussed by Goldhill, it functions as a stimulant for *erôs*,⁹³⁷ while reflecting on and developing the tradition of *erotikoi logoi*. Like the playful, sophisticated, erotic discourses of Leucippe and Cleitophon, the reactions of the protagonists to the text are placed under the aegis of their schooling in *sôphrosunê*.⁹³⁸ But unlike the protagonists of the novel, the *sôphrosunê* of Pollianus and Eurydice is not compromised by this text – rather, *Coniugalia Praecepta* is expected to develop and strengthen that *sôphrosunê*. It takes ideas from the wedding which will be

⁹³⁴ See Introduction, p.10.

⁹³⁵ See Introduction, p.30; Ch.3, p.127.

⁹³⁶ See Ch.1, pp.52, 72; Ch.3, p.128-29.

⁹³⁷ Goldhill (1995) 68.

⁹³⁸ Goldhill (1995) 73.

relevant to the marriage as a whole – reciprocal *charis*, the nature of beauty, the appropriate conduct of sexual and community relations – and applies them to an art of leading married life for the *sophos* (wise) man and his *sôphrôn* (self-controlled) wife. It becomes a kind of epithalamium for those to whom marriage, rather than being a single act, is a continuing part of the process by which one examines and educates one's own soul,⁹³⁹ reflects upon and constructs one's own identity; particularly Greek identity in the Roman Empire, a construction of *paideia* and *philosophia*. Because of the importance of the marriage bond for the construction of this identity,⁹⁴⁰ we find in later Second Sophistic literature a valorisation of this bond above all others – it is no surprise then, that Plutarch, in a treatise emphasising the interconnectivity between marriage, education, and philosophy, should turn to the imagery and philosophy of the poetic genre that celebrates *gamos* above all else.

In praise of married erôs

The philosophical valorisation of marriage in the first century, then, owes much to the ideology of the epithalamium. The conjugal love expounded in *Coniugalia Praecepta*, further defined and praised in *Amatorius*, draws particularly heavily on the structure and content of the encomiastic tradition which constitutes Russell and Wilson's second 'line of development'. Here *Eros* (interchangeable with *Gamos* in the later orations) is personified, is praised for his birth or generation, beauty and accomplishments/virtues in a similar way to the encomium of Helen in *Theocritus* 18 (which in turn is indebted to the philosophical praise

⁹³⁹ Foucault (1986) 50-53.

⁹⁴⁰ See esp. Swain (1999) 89-90: 'Investment in the past had become a very personal matter and individual descent from named figures from the glorious past functioned as an important part of a general civic classicism. The perpetuation of this identity depended on reproduction, and it is not unreasonable to suggest that greater attention to the marriage relation and the marriage's role as a site for self-reflection should be connected with the preservation of the male elite at a time when self-consciousness of their own worth had reached new heights'.

of Eros given by Agathon in Plato's Symposium).⁹⁴¹ A comparison of these treatises may help us understand the relationship between *Coniugalia Praecepta*, *Amatorius*, the Platonic dialogue, and the wedding song.

The debt to Agathon's encomium is significant. While Plutarch utilises many of the discourses on love from the Symposium,⁹⁴² his own encomium of love is indebted not to Socrates' repetition of Diotima, but to the speech of Agathon which that repetition corrects. Plutarch does make use of the ascent of the soul from Diotima's teachings (*Symp.* 211b6-8), but his praise of love in *Amatorius* seems as though it returns to the *καλὸν καὶ παντοδαπὸν λόγον* (198b3) rejected by Socrates. Like Agathon (198e1-2), Plutarch appears to attribute the greatest and most beautiful characteristics to his subject.

When the subject of the encomium has been defined, it is first praised for its noble birth: Helen is called *Ζανός θυγάτηρ*,⁹⁴³ but Plutarch, alluding to Agathon's encomium, praises the marriage god rather than the married couple. The divine origins of the god and his connection with nature are stressed in both Plato and Plutarch: Eros *θεὸς...ἔφυ*, and his divinity is insisted upon.⁹⁴⁴ This divine love is the foundation for the most 'natural' kind of marriage in *Coniugalia Praecepta*:

σχεδὸν οὖν καὶ γάμος ὁ μὲν τῶν ἐρώντων ἠνωμένος καὶ συμφυῆς
ἐστίν...οὓς συνοικεῖν ἂν τις ἀλλήλοις οὐ συμβιοῦν νομίσειε.⁹⁴⁵

⁹⁴¹ Russell & Wilson (1981) xiv.

⁹⁴² See p.273.

⁹⁴³ *Theoc.* 18.19, cf. also *Men. Rhet.* 402.21-403.25.

⁹⁴⁴ *Plut. Mor.* 756-763, cf. *Plat. Symp.* 197B7, *Men. Rhet.* 401.2-4, also *Ps.-Dion.* 2.2.8-15.

⁹⁴⁵ *Plut. Mor.* 142E10-14.

In addition to birth, the subject's physical appearance receives encomium. Such praise is traditional of the epithalamium (e.g. Sappho fr. 112.3-5 V), and is also given to Eros in Plato. His youth and beauty are emphasised: Agathon argues against Hesiod's assertion of Love's primordially and calls him κάλλιστον ὄντα καὶ ἄριστον...πρῶτον μὲν νεώτατος θεῶν.⁹⁴⁶ The god is described in a manner appropriate to the epithalamial couple: delicate, slender, and blushing or soft-skinned.⁹⁴⁷ The systematic encomium of beauty is repeated by Theocritus: his maidens describe their friend as incomparable (18.20), wonder at the children of such a mother (21), and praise her with comparisons (26-31).⁹⁴⁸ Interestingly, Plutarch deviates from this system: neither the bride, nor Love, receive any physical ekphrasis. Instead, much like the ideal beauty of the young wife, the beauty sought by Plutarch's Eros is inward-looking:

ἐκεῖ γὰρ ἀνακλᾶται πρὸς τὸ θεῖον καὶ νοητὸν κάλον· ὄρατοῦ δὲ σώματος ἐντυχῶν κάλλει καὶ χρώμενος οἷον ὄργάνῳ τινὶ τῆς μνήμης ἀσπάζεται καὶ ἀγαπᾷ, καὶ συνῶν καὶ γεγηθῶς ἔτι μᾶλλον ἐκφλέγεται τὴν διάνοιαν.⁹⁴⁹

Love is the mirror held by the housewife in *Coniugalia Praecepta*, whose reflection directs contemplation to higher realities than physical form (ἐν κατόπτροις εἰδῶλον αὐτοῦ, *Amat.* 765F10): to the true form of Beauty itself, that of the soul, the *êthos* for which the wife should wish to be loved, which is reflected here in the philosophical contemplation of the

⁹⁴⁶ Plat. *Symp.* 195A7-B1, contra Hes. *Th.* 116-22; cf. *Men. Rhet.* 401.1-3 (Gamos and Eros as primordial gods); 404.31-405.2 (Gamos as ever-youthful, νέος ἐστὶν ἀειθαλής).

⁹⁴⁷ Plat. *Symp.* 195D1, 196A2, 5 (also *Men. Rhet.* 404.32), cf. Sappho fr. 115 V; *Symp.* 196A7 (also *Men. Rhet.* 404.32-405.1), cf. Sappho fr. 105a.1 V.

⁹⁴⁸ See Ch.6, pp.244-45.

⁹⁴⁹ Plut. *Mor.* 766A7-11.

husband. This concept of ‘lover-as-mirror’ is a Platonic construction, which, as in Plutarch, arises from the continued society and intercourse of lover and beloved (ὥσπερ δὲ ἐν κατόπτρῳ ἐν τῷ ἐρώντι ἑαυτὸν ὀρώων λέληθεν, Phdr. 255D6-7).

Though the analogies with Agathon’s speech need not necessarily imply either marital or pederastic love, the ‘mirror’ image and references to the Phaedrus should warn of a possible homoerotic bias. In Plutarch’s Alcibiades Socrates becomes a kind of reverse-mirror for Alcibiades: an εἰδῶλον ἔρωτος (4.4) of whom the protagonist’s love is matched only by his despite of himself. This in turn calls to mind Alcibiades’ erotic antagonism towards his mentor at the end of the Symposium, and his frustration at Socrates’ lack of reciprocation of his physical advances (215-22). Indeed, though in Amatorius Plutarch advocates married love, the beginning of the soul’s ascent is still presented in terms of pederasty: ἐν τε σχήμασι καὶ χρώμασι καὶ εἶδεσι νέων ὥρα στίλβοντα δείκνυσι καὶ κινεῖ τὴν μνήμην ἀτρέμα διὰ τούτων ἀναφλεγόμενην τὸ πρῶτον (765B3-5). Even so, it is this love, which looks inward to a true reflection of the marital partner in one’s own soul, that Pollianus and Eurydice are encouraged to develop:

οὕτω τὸν ἀπὸ σώματος καὶ ὥρας ὄξυν ἔρωτα τῶν νεογάμων ἀναφλεγόμενον δεῖ μὴ διαρκῆ μηδὲ βέβαιον νομιζεῖν, ἂν μὴ περὶ τὸ ἦθος ἰδρυθεῖς καὶ τοῦ φρονούντος ἀψάμενος ἔμψυχον λάβῃ διάθεσιν.⁹⁵⁰

Those who love in this way, and live a life of philosophy, find that their soul grows wings and can progress upwards towards the divine.⁹⁵¹ This contemplation of true or divine Beauty,

⁹⁵⁰ Plut. Mor. 138F3-7.

aided by Eros, seems to align the couple more with the philosopher seeking the Form of Good in Plato's Republic than with the bride and groom of the marriage hymn,⁹⁵² yet the virtues of this god are more in keeping with both the encomiastic and epithalamial traditions. While the mortal partners (even Helen) may be praised for mundane accomplishments – crafts, music, and education⁹⁵³ – the gods of love and marriage are given a universal sphere of influence, which directly benefits these mortals. Like Plato's philosopher-kings (Rep. 6.504A5-6), they are just and courageous, moderate and wise, and bestow the blessings of these virtues upon mankind. Plato and Plutarch acknowledge the inspiration of the god in similar ways:

ποιητῆς ὁ θεὸς σοφὸς οὕτως ὥστε καὶ ἄλλον ποιῆσαι· πᾶς γοῦν
ποιητῆς γίγνεται, "κἂν ἄμουσος ἦ τὸ πρῖν", οὐ ἂν Ἐρωσ ἀψηται.⁹⁵⁴

The god's primary sphere of erotic love, however, while acknowledged, and indeed highly praised, in the philosophical texts, is given the more elevated function of leading men to the good and bringing harmony.⁹⁵⁵

⁹⁵¹ Plat. Phdr. 256B4-7. Here Plutarch again combines a hymeneal motif with Platonism in search of a philosophy of marriage, for the mirror is a traditional part of the bride's numphokomos. Like the hymenaios, the image is often used in tragedy to signify transgression, particularly of gender roles or the marriage bond, or to presage disaster: Aesch. Ag. 839; Eur. Hipp. 429, Med. 1161, El. 1071. This mirror, however, is employed positively, and its association with female kosmos is explicitly rejected in Con. Praec. in favour of an insistence that the wife provide a true reflection of her husband: 139E8-F1. This exhortation to Eurydice to subsume her own feelings in order to accurately mirror the moods of her groom has led some scholars to identify an anxiety in this motif – there is always the danger that the wife may not prove an accurate mirror, thus undermining his prohairesis and hêgemonia (Wohl 1997:177). Even the Platonic mirror, by implication, contains the potential for the distortion or subversion of accuracy, for its concave surface makes images appear as their opposites: Plat. Tim. 46A4-C7, cf. Cole (2000) 121-22. However, if we read Con. Praec. in conjunction with the Amatorius, which develops the philosophy of Eros contained in the wedding precepts, it appears that both partners may mirror one another, not reflecting to the outside world an image of personal askêsis and philosophical teaching, but refracting (anaklatai, Amat. 766A8) each other's gaze towards divine and intelligible Beauty itself.

⁹⁵² Like the Beauty sought by Plutarch's lover, the Good is the reality underlying mundane objects and concepts, cf. Plat. Rep. 6.508E.

⁹⁵³ Cf. Ch.6, p.243; Ch.8, p.304.

⁹⁵⁴ Plat. Symp. 196E1-3, cf. Plut. Mor. 762B7-10.

⁹⁵⁵ Plat. Symp. 197D5-E3.

Plutarch also acknowledges the elevated character of this Eros, which once again brings the lover to the contemplation of true Beauty.⁹⁵⁶ This is achieved by fusing a number of Platonic intertexts with epithalamial tradition in a variety of ways, to create a different and innovative text. In both *Coniugalia Praecepta* and *Amatorius*, Eros is the instrument of the elevation of one's being to a higher level of existence – a motif taken from the *Phaedrus* and developed for a new, epithalamial context. The ascent of the philosophical soul through the contemplation and pursuit of true (inner) beauty and enlightenment, in addition, draws in ideas from the *Republic*,⁹⁵⁷ though again, their application to a context of marital love gives new depth to the newlyweds' relationship.

The transition effected by marriage here is presented as a spiritual as well as social initiation – indeed, an eschatological one, for it encompasses the afterlife. Plutarch is often thought to have 'regarded marriage as a sacred institution',⁹⁵⁸ but this perception of Eros goes further, to create a 'spiritualisation of marriage that can be seen throughout the *Advice to the Bride and Groom*...something new...not found in this form in any author before Plutarch'.⁹⁵⁹ If, therefore, the marital bond is to be the locus of spirituality and philosophy, the source of the love which initiates one into τὸ ἀληθείας πεδῖον, it is imperative that one who would pursue philosophy should marry in order to undergo this initiation.⁹⁶⁰ As such, it cannot truly be argued, as does Walcot, that Plutarch's attitude to sex is:

Something essentially 'dirty', forced upon man by a combination of biological necessity and an inability to resist feminine wiles, and something, therefore, to be

⁹⁵⁶ See pp.268-69.

⁹⁵⁷ Cf. pp. 261, 272, 277.

⁹⁵⁸ Blomqvist (1997) 87.

⁹⁵⁹ Goessler (1999) 110.

⁹⁶⁰ In this Plutarch again seems to contest Plato, who never married (*Ademantus* τοῦ παιδίου is mentioned in *Diog. Laert.* 3.41, but this may be a nephew rather than Plato's son).

experienced rather than enjoyed, not spontaneously but at a set and regular time, in total privacy and without excessive passion.⁹⁶¹

While Eros is indeed presented as an undeniable force of nature as well as a god (757C10-14), ‘feminine wiles’ in *Coniugalia Praecepta* are directed towards the internal *charis* which facilitates the marriage relationship (141B11-C3), making sex an act of mutual and philosophical pleasure as well as the renewal of that relationship (ἀνανεοῦσθαι τὸν γάμον, 769B1-2). Time, place, and attitude all contribute, not to a polarisation of ‘clean’ or ‘unclean’ relations, but of ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’, of which the conjugal relation is held to be the most sacred, therefore to be approached with the utmost reverence (144B1-9). No longer are ‘platonic’ homoerotic relations perceived as the holiest bond – Plutarch maintains a dialogue with Plato in *Coniugalia Praecepta* and *Amatorius* which argues that marriage is ἱερωτέρα (750C2), and indeed, that this sacred bond is achieved through physical consummation between husband and wife (144B1, 769A1-2).

The motif of sexual teaching in the *Symposium* has also been reconfigured for a nuptial usage:⁹⁶² The *thamos* is envisioned as a *didaskaleion*; a classroom, not simply of *eutaxia* or *akolasia* (145A1-2), but of philosophy, the teaching which will allow the wife, as well as the husband, to apprehend the intelligible Forms. Russell remarks on the high moral value attached to sex in marriage and its relation to ‘the common sentiments that we find in the unphilosophical morality of Greece from the time of Menander onwards’,⁹⁶³ and Swain offers a more civic explanation, that the moralisation of sexual conduct was related to the

⁹⁶¹ Walcot (1998) 166.

⁹⁶² See p.261.

⁹⁶³ Russell (1973) 91

investment in civic life made by contemporary elites,⁹⁶⁴ but it must also be noted in this text that one's relations with the lover – the mirror – are the locus of philosophy itself.

If the other is to be the mirror of the self, which directs the gaze towards the contemplation of truth, it is imperative that this other (in *Coniugalia Praecepta*, the wife) be able to act as such a mirror: that she provides an accurate reflection of one's self-definition, identity, and education. Thus Eurydice is encouraged to mirror her husband – in her thoughts and feelings, tastes and friends – to identify and meld with him as far as possible, creating an inner *koinônia* that goes far beyond the common management of household and children. While she is encouraged to have no feelings of her own, but to mirror his, Plutarch does acknowledge the need for mutual *eunoia*, and Pollianus, for his part, is advised to respect his wife's feelings and share his education with her (140A3-5, E1-2): the mutual and reciprocal creation of *sympatheia* by which they may both practise a philosophical marriage and thus win for themselves a kind of immortality.

Hymeneal philosophy?

The epithalamic themes and the emphasis on married Eros, developed in the encomium of the god in *Amatorius*, are both traditional and continue to be used in the rhetorical wedding speech. But Plutarch's vision of the philosophical marriage leading to contemplation of the divine, the purpose to which he puts these traditions, is unique. Purpose, content, and form all lift *Coniugalia Praecepta* from the hymeneal continuum.

⁹⁶⁴ Swain (1999) 89-90, on Galen *De praen. ad. Post.* 14.624.8-10: ἐν ἧ πάντες ἴσμεν ἀλλήλους ἐκ τίνων τε γεγόναμεν ὅπως τε παιδείας ἔχομεν καὶ κτήσεως καὶ τρόπου καὶ βίου: 'The perpetuation of identity depended on reproduction, and it is not unreasonable to suggest that greater attention to the marriage relation and the marriage's role as a site of self-reflection should be connected with the preservation of the male elite at a time when self-consciousness of their own worth had reached new heights'.

The lyric wedding song is part of the rites that are both instrument and guarantor of the transition of the parthenos to womanhood, to an adult role as a productive member of the household and of society. Plutarch, in applying his ‘hymeneal philosophy’ outside a specifically ‘epithalamial’ context, goes beyond the form and function of this tradition. He uses the epithalamium to create a philosophy with relevance beyond its immediate context which forms a lesson for life. Coniugalia Praecepta interacts with the hymenaios only to transcend the genre. The Sapphic motif of the ‘roses of Pieria’ in the epilogue provides the key to understanding this. For the epithalamium is made paradigmatic by Sappho and indeed forms a crucial part of her corpus of ‘immortal daughters’.⁹⁶⁵ Plutarch, however, holds up the example of Sappho – though not an epithalamium – to Eurydice only to offer her a different (and to his mind at least, even better) form of immortality:

εἰ γὰρ ἡ Σαπφῶ διὰ τὴν ἐν τοῖς μέλεσι καλλιγραφίαν ἐφρόνει
 τηλικούτον ὥστε γράψαι πρὸς τινα πλουσίαν

"καθάνοισα δὲ κείσεαι, οὐδέ τις μναμοσύνα σέθεν

ἔσεται· οὐ γὰρ πεδέχεις ῥόδων

τῶν ἐκ Πιερίας",

πῶς οὐχί σοι μᾶλλον ἐξέσται μέγα φρονεῖν ἐφ’ ἑαυτῇ καὶ λαμπρόν, ἂν
 μὴ τῶν ῥόδων ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν καρπῶν μετέχῃς, ὧν αἱ Μοῦσαι φέρουσι
 καὶ χαρίζονται τοῖς παιδείαν καὶ φιλοσοφίαν θαυμάζουσιν;⁹⁶⁶

⁹⁶⁵ AP 7.407, cf. Williamson (1995) 13.

⁹⁶⁶ Plut. Mor. 145F3-146A9. This is a different usage of the ‘fruit’ and ‘flower’ topos than the loss of virginity (Introduction, pp.15-22).

The ‘flowers of the Muses’ are the immortal fame of poetry, but their ‘fruits’ which, as argued above, are constituted by aretê (cf. *Amat.* 750E4-6, 752B5) and cultivated by Eros, offer a superior form of immortality to those who admire education and philosophy: the immortality of the soul.⁹⁶⁷ Plutarch’s Muse is not merely a Muse of song but one of paideia and philosophia, and, as such, may join with a philosophical Aphrodite to ‘ensure the tunefulness of marriage and home through discourse (logos), harmony and philosophy’ (138C6-8).⁹⁶⁸ Melos (song) is superseded by logos; Sappho’s Lesbian Kreis gives way to Plutarch’s household at Chaeronea as a locus for the education and socialisation of those for whom the text is intended.

It is tempting to read the elevation of the fruits of the Muses over the roses of Pieria as a Platonic assertion of the higher truth of philosophy over poetry, in keeping with the emphasis on education and the search for true Forms which relates to the *Republic*.⁹⁶⁹ If Plutarch were advocating Plato’s utopian rejection of poetry as a mimetic and dangerous art form, we would expect this attitude to be apparent throughout his work, and indeed, there is an anxiety as to the value of ‘truth’ in poetry contained in his references to lyric.⁹⁷⁰ There is, however, self-consciousness in this positioning, as there is in Plato’s simultaneous rejection and utilisation of poetic and rhetorical techniques.⁹⁷¹ Perhaps because of his self-fashioning as an educator of Greeks, Plutarch appears more reconciled to the use of poetry as an educative and cultural tool. Other references to poetry in the corpus hold the lyric poets in high esteem – particularly Sappho, as the prime exponent of all things related to erôs: in

⁹⁶⁷ The traditional ‘fruit’ of marriage is, as pointed out to me recently by Prof. Pelling, children, and a similar transposition to ‘spiritual’ offspring takes place in Diotima’s speech in *Plat. Symp.* 212a. Plutarch uses a traditional agricultural image for procreation (143B1-3) but develops this motif further in the concept of ‘fruit of virtue’, particularly in *Amatorius*.

⁹⁶⁸ Transl. Pomeroy (1999).

⁹⁶⁹ *Plat. Rep.* 603A7-B2. The study of mathematics is praised for the opposite effect (525D4-8). Mathematics directs the philosopher towards the study of dialectic, by which he may apprehend the intelligible Forms. Similarly, Plutarch suggests that educating Eurydice in this manner will direct her away from typically (potentially subversive) female concerns, such as witchcraft and dancing (*Plut. Mor.* 145C3-5).

⁹⁷⁰ E.g. *Plut. Mor.* esp. 16A7-B1 (*Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat*).

⁹⁷¹ Murray (1996) 12-14: ‘But although the dialogues are poetic they are not poetry, and it is poetry which is [Plato’s] real target’.

Amatorius, Daphnaeus is encouraged to recite fr. 31, which is itself an ‘epithalamial’ song (763A1-6).⁹⁷²

Clues to his use of love poetry, particularly the epithalamium, are given in the opening lines (λόγον...συννυμεναιούντα) the answer lies in the conclusion: παιδείαν καὶ φιλοσοφίαν (146A8-9). This is not a discourse about the hymenaios, but a discourse about discourse (logos), education, and philosophy, and their importance within marriage. And here the idea of a ‘locus of socialisation’ becomes important, because wedding songs, with their ideals of beauty, charis, persuasion, and love, possessed a similar socialising function for young women as paideia, with its aim of justice, courage, temperance, and wisdom, did for young men: both referred to and anticipated the adult roles of each gender. A bride’s education and socialisation, as we saw in Chapter 1, would normally take place under the direction of other women and was completed by her initiation by her husband into marriage and adulthood,⁹⁷³ and music – the hymenaios in particular – would form a crucial part of this process.

In the first century AD, the idealised period of transition represented by Sappho might no longer have been the current model: ‘the practicalities of Roman government entailed significant adjustments to the ways in which marriage and the family had traditionally been formulated as political entities’.⁹⁷⁴ At the same time, the preservation of Greek identity and heritage took on even greater importance for the Greeks living under Rome, for which preservation of paideia became an essential aspect, even an ideal. And in Plutarch, whose

⁹⁷² See Ch.1, pp.42-46.

⁹⁷³ See Ch.1, esp. pp.67-68. Stafford (1999) 167 interprets a scene from an Eretria Painter epinetron as a ‘traditional premarriage instruction session’, wherein the bride-to-be is Harmony, attended by Aphrodite and Peitho, Kore and Hebe: ‘...the bride being decked out with sexual knowledge as well as with such trappings as jewelry and perfume’. The bride of Xenophon’s Oeconomicus is presented as knowing as little as possible before her marriage, but the essential skills of textile production, literacy and sôphrosunê are present nonetheless (7.6, 14).

⁹⁷⁴ Foxhall (1999) 139.

‘aim was to convey the essence of Hellenic paideia to his pupils, to his powerful contemporaries, and to posterity’,⁹⁷⁵ these two variables meet and must be resolved.

Eurydice has been Plutarch’s pupil as much as Pollianus: διὰ στόματος ἀεὶ τὰς φωνὰς ἔχειν ἐκείνας ὧν καὶ παρθένος οὔσα παρ’ ἡμῖν ἀνελάμβανες (145E3-4), and Plutarch enjoyed an intellectual friendship with Clea, her mother (or perhaps daughter),⁹⁷⁶ indicating that the women of this circle had a freedom of movement and access to education far beyond that of their archaic and classical Greek contemporaries. With the increasing public role of women in this period, their education comes out of the *gunaikōnitis* and into the public eye, and thus forms a suitable topic for a publishable treatise. Plutarch, if he is to provide a locus of socialisation for both sexes, must attempt to provide an education relevant to both. This explains the use of *συνυμεναιοῦντα* in the introduction: for while this is a text replete in traditional paideia, it also adopts the socialising and educative functions of the *hymenaios* to induct Eurydice into her adult role.

Recent scholarship has commented upon the difficulty in reconciling the two different models of gender relations apparently present in Plutarch:⁹⁷⁷ on the one hand, he speaks happily of women’s education, and recommends his wife’s treatise *On Adornment* for Eurydice’s reading (145A6-8), but on the other, he advocates a classicising ideal of female submission, silence, and seclusion.⁹⁷⁸ The jocular approval of Ismenodora in *Amatorius* thus seems almost counter-intuitive,⁹⁷⁹ and we wonder what to make of the presence of Eurydice in Plutarch’s schoolroom. And yet, in this social context, the classicising ideal can hardly be said to correspond to the reality. Respectable women were seen in appropriate public situations. Timoxena acts as hostess in Plutarch’s absence, and attends temples, sacrifices,

⁹⁷⁵ Russell (1973) 17.

⁹⁷⁶ See Pomeroy (1999) 34 & 42.

⁹⁷⁷ Foxhall (ed. Pomeroy 1999) 150.

⁹⁷⁸ Cf. also Blomquist (1997) 87.

⁹⁷⁹ Walcot (1998) 184. On randy widows and older women, see Hom. Od. 15.20-23, Ar. Eccl. 877-1079, Pelling (2000) 244.

and the theatre, where her manners are the wonder of all who behold her, a source of great pride to the philosopher (690C8-D7). It is assumed that Eurydice will accompany her new husband outside the house, though remain at home when he is away (139C3-5). Wives and daughters are also found in contexts traditionally pertaining to aristocratic education, such as in *Septem Sapientium Convivium*, in which the focus on wisdom and love serves to justify the presence of Cleobulina and Melissa.⁹⁸⁰

All of these women, however, conform (or are expected to conform) to norms of female behaviour, suggesting that their public visibility may be less untraditional than many critics think. All are *sôphrôn* women, and if they are highly educated, that education is not in itself untraditional: that a husband should instruct his wife is a principle at least as old as Hesiod.⁹⁸¹ Women, too, had been trained in philosophy since the schools of the Pythagoreans, but Plutarch's resolution of these variables seems somehow different. I suggest that the cultivation of philosophy within the affective relation of husband and wife, evident in the insertion of his persona at the end of *Coniugalia Praecepta*, is the cause of this difference. As he teaches Timoxena in *Consolatio ad Uxorem*, the soul is immortal, and the love shared between philosophers gives it wings with which to ascend towards immortality (611D11-E1). By teaching philosophy to his wife, the husband can provide her with this immortality. Thus, Pollianus is encouraged to continue his wife's development within the context of their home and marriage:

τῆ γυναικὶ πανταχόθεν τὸ χρήσιμον συνάγων ὥσπερ αἱ μέλιτται καὶ
φέρων αὐτὸς ἐν σεαυτῷ μεταδίδου καὶ προσδιαλέγου, φίλους αὐτῆ
ποιῶν καὶ συνήθεις τῶν λόγων τοὺς ἀρίστους. πατὴρ μὲν γάρ "ἔσσι"

⁹⁸⁰ Mossman (1997) 125-26.

⁹⁸¹ Hes. Op. 699. Lysistrata (Ar. Lys. 1124-27) claims to have learnt wisdom from her father and his friends. Cf. Pomeroy (1994) 268 on Xen. Oec.

αὐτῇ "καὶ πότνια μήτηρ ἠδὲ κασίγνητος". οὐχ ἦττον δὲ σεμνὸν ἀκούσαι γαμετῆς λεγούσης "ἄνερ, ἄτὰρ σύ μοι ἔσσι' καθηγητῆς καὶ φιλόσοφος καὶ διδάσκαλος τῶν καλλίστων καὶ θειοτάτων".⁹⁸²

This expression of the wife's dependence on the husband is modelled on Andromache's dialogue with Hector at Iliad 6.429, a scene that has been associated with a Sapphic wedding song.⁹⁸³ If the bedroom is to be a classroom for these lessons for life, then *Coniugalia Praecepta*, with its didactic function, is more epithalamial than it first appears.

Genre-bending

Plutarch's rhetorical and grammatical training became 'a powerful instrument of social and moral education',⁹⁸⁴ and this education explains Plutarch's use of the epithalamium in *Coniugalia Praecepta*. His own *paideia*, the core of his Greek identity, is put to use establishing the identity of the married couple; presiding, like Eros, over their initiation into adult life and life together, and their pursuit of philosophy leading to immortality. The text adopts features of the wedding hymn to make it relevant to the occasion of the marriage of two friends, a bride and groom only recently shut up in their wedding chamber (regardless of who might have read the text after its publication), and to a wider audience.

Coniugalia Praecepta also adopts the socialising function of the *hymenaios*. For Plutarch to claim this genre as a model for philosophy enables a meaningful transition to be

⁹⁸² Plut. Mor. 145B5-C2. The bee is a traditional image for female industry: Xen Oec. 7.32, Semonides fr. 7.83-9 West – the queen bee remains in the hive and oversees the labour of the worker bees. Here Pollianus is represented as a bee, suggesting that the seclusion associated with the image is developed in a different direction by Plutarch.

⁹⁸³ Pomeroy (1999) 5, cf. Schrenk (1994) 145.

⁹⁸⁴ Russell (1973) 43.

made by both partners to an adult relationship predicated on philosophical inquiry. While hierarchical, it posits a parity of experience between male and female erôs – an aspect of the epithalamium which first became part of public discourse in the Hellenistic period, and continues under the Roman Empire. The insertion of an authorial persona is self-reflexive, directing the viewer’s gaze from the text to Plutarch’s philosophy of erôs, exemplified by his own life and the lifestyle he recommends for his friends and readers. It is thus a statement of his ability to educate both sexes in a social, personal, and sexual bond which will both create and perpetuate a Greek identity through the ‘fruits that the Muses bring’: the virtue and divine truth attained by the philosophical marriage.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HOW TO COMPOSE AN EPITHALAMIUM: MENANDER RHETOR

‘The third general topic is that of the bridal pair (τῶν νυμφίων). This is most elegantly (χαριέστατος) handled if it proceeds by complex counter-examination (συμπλοκὴν ἀντεξεταστικῶς)...’

(Menander Rhetor 403.26-28)

‘It was love at first sight, nice and simple. She was nice, and he...’

(Best Man speech, 2005)

Menander Rhetor’s *Peri Epithalamiou* and *Peri Kateunastikou* make an appropriate finale for this thesis. No Second Sophistic epithalamia survive, but in these prescriptions we see a reconfiguration of the tradition: looking back to the past to prescribe a method for the future. Menander’s project is, as the quotations above demonstrate, highly successful: the speeches made by the Best Man and father of the bride at weddings today hark back (with a few adjustments to accommodate modern humour) to his programme of structured encomia.

The choruses of youths and maidens who performed our lyric wedding songs have vanished;⁹⁸⁵ commemoration and celebration of this rite of passage falls instead to the male sophist or rhetor. Communality of performance is no longer a feature, but the speaker still must convey the desirability of reproducing the community through marriage. And while the rhetor draws upon elements of the lyric wedding song in order to situate his work firmly

⁹⁸⁵ See Introduction, pp.11-14.

within the Greek literary tradition, the everyday philosophy and Platonic *erôs* of Plutarch is influential. As in Plutarch, marriage is presented as an initiation for both partners, which has fundamental implications for the representation of the transition in these sophistic texts.⁹⁸⁶

Heath has recently demonstrated that Menander wrote within a continuous, if not thriving, tradition of rhetorical handbooks,⁹⁸⁷ and that, far from being fanciful schoolbook exercises with little or no relevance to life, these treatises, like the poetic genres from which they were crystallised, arose from a real-life need.⁹⁸⁸ The primary element ‘wedding’ is distanced from the prescriptive text, but provides important occasions for the application of those prescriptions. Rhetoric became a vehicle for preserving Greek cultural heritage and the transmission of values shared by the audience (as did the *hymenaios*), at a time when that culture, already balanced between Greek identity and Roman domination, came increasingly under threat from social instability,⁹⁸⁹ and its values were perceived as questioned and challenged by Christianity.⁹⁹⁰ Not only does the epithalamial genre adapt and survive to the end of the Second Sophistic and into the Byzantine, Renaissance, and Modern eras,⁹⁹¹ but the very concept of genre also becomes integral to the preservation of the values it transmits. The strict definition of the occasions for public speech can be seen as a reflection of Greek identity, of man’s place in the social structures of which he is a part. It is a formulation of practice,⁹⁹² for life as well as the art that imitates it.

⁹⁸⁶ See Ch.7, esp. p.282.

⁹⁸⁷ Heath (2004) 52-53.

⁹⁸⁸ Also Whitmarsh (2005) 56.

⁹⁸⁹ The ‘third century crisis’ of 235 to 285 AD, in which ‘a new problem arose [the combination of Persian pressure to the east and Germanic invasion to the north] which exacerbated old weaknesses in the imperial system’ (that the empire was militarily unready to face powerful adversaries, faced ongoing fiscal difficulties, and was governed by an unstable succession of emperors until Diocletian), Drinkwater (2005) esp. 58-59.

⁹⁹⁰ It is uncertain as to how far Christianity actually threatened traditional Greco-Roman values; cf. Clarke (2005) 589-671. It appears that the challenge Christianity was perceived to pose to traditional structures and institutions was manifested mainly in their refusal to sacrifice, thus undermining public religion and divine favour.

⁹⁹¹ Wilson (1948) 37, Cameron (1965) 479-80, Viljamaa (1968) 125-31, with review by Musurillo (1969) 326-27, Tufte (1970), D’Elia (2002).

⁹⁹² Russell & Wilson (1981) xi.

The treatises on wedding speeches are such a departure from our poetic examples that the best way to make sense of them is to return to the most basic questions of this dissertation:⁹⁹³ how is the epithalamium being developed by Menander (and Pseudo-Dionysius) in these prescriptions, and why? With what sort of model for gender relations does this text provide us? And how does this inform our knowledge of the cultural context of this work?

The Sophist's Seduction

The most striking and obvious development in the Second Sophistic epithalamium is its generic form. A rhetorical element had been present in elite nuptial literature at least since the Hellenistic period (the encomia of the Epithalamium for Helen),⁹⁹⁴ but Menander Rhetor and Pseudo-Dionysius suppose a prose, rather than verse, form, extant in the later works of Himerius (fourth century) and Choricus (late fifth/early sixth century). This adaptation to prose, specifically to oratory, is not unique to the epithalamial genre, but rather part of a more general trend which sees many of the functions of poetry being taken over by prose from the fourth century BC;⁹⁹⁵ the spread of literacy (at least among upper-class Greeks) perhaps contributing to the composition and dissemination of many great rhetorical works of this period. Alongside the judicial and deliberative works of the Classical period, epideictic flourished as a means of display and commemoration of power and culture by and for those with access to the education that gave rise to these orations – the epitaphios in Thucydides can be seen as one example of the triumph of logos over melos: καὶ οὐδὲν προσδεόμενοι οὔτε Ὀμήρου ἐπαινέτου οὔτε ὅστις ἔπεσι μὲν τὸ αὐτίκα τέρπει, τῶν δ' ἔργων

⁹⁹³ See Introduction, p.35.

⁹⁹⁴ Russell & Wilson (1981) xxxiii; see Ch.6, p251; Ch.7, pp.277-78.

⁹⁹⁵ Russell (1979) 111, Russell & Wilson (1981) xiii, Kennedy (1994) 225: 'by the first century poetry was in decline and its social functions were being taken over by epideictic prose'.

τὴν ὑπόνοιαν ἢ ἀλήθεια βλάψει.⁹⁹⁶ This oration is a political prose speech expounding the values of the Athens for which the war-heroes perished, and as part of those values, encouraging the imitation of men, and the silence and restraint of women, towards the dead; replacing the almost ecstatic laments familiar from Homer. In its masculine sobriety and replacement of communal song by the voice of a single speaker, its exhortation to men and ideals of female behaviour, this literary oration may be seen as programmatic for the much later epithalamios logos.

The distinction between prose and verse is less polemical than may be assumed: the sophists and rhetors saw both as logos.⁹⁹⁷ Logos covers many different meanings, not simply ‘word’, and its cognates, but also ‘reason’ and its associated ideas; effective forms of communication.⁹⁹⁸ Thus could rhetoric assume the traditional role of poetry, for both possessed a similar *dunamis* and similar function:

The essence of the rhetorical attitude to literature is that every form of λόγος, verse or prose, is a form of persuasion, and is to be judged by its effectiveness for this purpose.⁹⁹⁹

The persuasiveness with which students of rhetoric in later antiquity were taught to apply their arguments is,¹⁰⁰⁰ I will argue, just as applicable to epideictic as to more ‘civic’ oratory. Peithô had always been inherent to the wedding song;¹⁰⁰¹ now, it becomes its explicit and stated purpose, and those who would make these speeches received formal training in the art

⁹⁹⁶ Thuc. 2.41.4, see Loraux (1986) for the rejection of the thrênos by the epitaphios, also 53 for discussion of this quote.

⁹⁹⁷ Russell (1967) 131, on Gorgias Enc. Hel. 9.3-4.

⁹⁹⁸ LSJ s.v. λόγος.

⁹⁹⁹ Russell (1967) 132.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Heath (2004) xiii.

¹⁰⁰¹ See Ch.1, p.75; Ch.2, pp.92, 99; Ch.4, p.176; Ch.7, pp.266-67.

of persuasion. If public speech had previously been seen as seductive,¹⁰⁰² how much more so when applied to that most seductive of contexts, the union of man and wife on their wedding night? This persuasion is unlike the *peithô* of the traditional epithalamium, for the speech addresses the wider audience, not the bride or groom, the ‘primary elements’ of the marriage hymn.¹⁰⁰³ If the audience, who share in the cultural and educational system of the rhetor, have employed him to commemorate the occasion, they show themselves willing to be persuaded – or, as I will discuss, already so.

Kennedy describes epideictic rhetoric as ‘any discourse that does not aim at specific action but is intended to influence the values and the beliefs of its audience’.¹⁰⁰⁴ Yet this ‘influence’ and ‘persuasion’ perhaps better describes deliberative and/or forensic oratory than epideictic. A ‘display’ speech performed by an elite Greek male for an audience of elite Greek males assumes a shared set of values and assumptions – *peithô* should perhaps also already be assumed; the epideictic orator is preaching to the choir. His persuasion may function more in the context of reaffirmation of those values, at which point it becomes ritualistic and symbolic rather than strictly functional – in much the same way that the language of *peithô* and *erôs* functioned within the ritualised, idealised space of the lyric epithalamium.¹⁰⁰⁵ In examining the rhetor’s exhortations, it is therefore possible to understand some of the expectations and values of his audience.

In the context of the traditional epithalamium, this rhetorical persuasion would function to seduce the bride and groom into sexual union, thereby to effect the passage to adulthood of the girl and continue the household, and hence the society of which it was a

¹⁰⁰² Buxton (1982) 31.

¹⁰⁰³ Contrast the *kateunastikos* (addressed to the bridegroom), Ps.-Dion. *Ars Rhet.* 4.3.17-17 (to the couple).

¹⁰⁰⁴ Kennedy (1994) 4.

¹⁰⁰⁵ The epitaphios is again illuminating for such reaffirmation: *οἱ μὲν πολλοὶ τῶν ἐνθάδε ἤδη εἰρηκότων ἐπαινοῦσι τὸν προσθέντα τῷ νόμῳ τὸν λόγον τόνδε...ἐπειδὴ δὲ τοῖς πάλαι οὕτως ἐδοκιμάσθη ταῦτα καλῶς ἔχειν* (Thuc. 2.35.1-3).

part, through the production of legitimate children.¹⁰⁰⁶ In a prescriptive treatise, this function is more problematic. The speech assumes an elite audience, and if not all-male, at least (in the Greek east) likely to be sexually segregated.¹⁰⁰⁷ The audience are presented with encomia for all of the participants in the marriage, as well as some of its accoutrements:

λόγος δ' ἔστιν ὑμνῶν θαλάμους τε καὶ παστάδας καὶ νυμφίους καὶ γένος, καὶ πρό γε πάντων αὐτὸν τὸν θεὸν τῶν γάμων.¹⁰⁰⁸

While the prescribed *topoi* would seem to be merely a collection of commonplaces or thematic encomia,¹⁰⁰⁹ the material on the bridal chambers and alcoves, the couple and their families, and the god of marriage, convey ideals or norms of behaviour. In common with their later Renaissance manifestations, the public and performative nature of these wedding orations demonstrates the popularity and acceptance among their elite audiences, not only of the values espoused by the epithalamium, but also the portrayal of marriage and gender therein.¹⁰¹⁰ The sophist enacts the seduction of the audience, both through the persuasiveness of his speech and the sanctioned eroticism of the genre, into acceptance of and complicity with his values; in the same way that *peithô* functioned in the poetic wedding song to win over the bride to acceptance and complicity with the union, but the participation of the audience in the occasions already indicates such complicity.¹⁰¹¹

The address of the author to the putative sophist envisages a male speaker, a man with access to a formal, rhetorical system of education, and thus one able to appreciate the divisions of epideictic apparent from the very openings of the texts: εἶδος οἱ μὲν

¹⁰⁰⁶ Cf. Ch.1, pp.73-76.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Russell (1979) 109.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Men. Rhet. 399.12-15.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Russell & Wilson (1981) xii; cf. also Kennedy (1994) 226 on such commonplaces in Ps.-Dionysius.

¹⁰¹⁰ D'Elia (2002) 381.

¹⁰¹¹ See Patterson (1999) 131; Ch.7, p.266-67.

συντόνως, οἱ δὲ συγγραφικώτερον...συνέστραπται λόγος...προοίμιά τε ἐγκατεσκευασμένα (399.16-12). Ps.-Dionysius imagines a similar scenario: ὀπηνίκα κομιδῇ νέος ὦν παρ' ἔμοι τὴν πρώτην ὁδὸν τῶν ῥητορικῶν μετήεις...καὶ τούτων τὰ εἰς τὸν περὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ γάμου λόγον συντείνοντα καὶ τὴν προτροπὴν τὴν εἰς αὐτόν (Ars Rhet. 2.1.16-2.2.1). The language and educational scenario envisaged presuppose training beyond the means, not only of the masses, but also of women. The presence of sophists at elite wedding feasts is attested both in Menander (400.25) and by Lucian (Symp. 21.7), 'a display of culture, as well as wealth'.¹⁰¹² The male voice is probably our greatest indicator of an androcentric audience, for, as with the war-widow of the Thucydidean epitaphios, the bride (traditionally the central figure of the epithalamium) is little spoken of by or among men:

τῆς παρθένου δὲ φυλάξῃ διὰ τὰς ἀντιπιπτούσας διαβολὰς κάλλος
ἐκφράζειν,¹⁰¹³

Himerius is shown to not take this injunction too seriously,¹⁰¹⁴ thus Menander seems to portray a deliberate anachronism; an 'oriental seclusion' or classical Athenian ideal of respectable invisibility for women.

As in the Hellenistic epithalamium, which uses lyric models of female ritual expression and praise of female beauty as its model,¹⁰¹⁵ the sophistic wedding oration identifies with a particular cultural paradigm: in this case, the perceived acme of Hellenic

¹⁰¹² Russell (1979) 104.

¹⁰¹³ Men. Rhet. 404.11-12, cf. Thuc. 2.45.2.3-5; Russell (1979) 109: 'this is presumably a realistic touch, a concession to actual need'.

¹⁰¹⁴ Cf. Russell (1979) 109.

¹⁰¹⁵ See Ch.6, pp.261-62.

civilisation.¹⁰¹⁶ In the assumption of poetry's hymeneal function by rhetoric, it is implied that the epithalamium as a vehicle for public female speech has disappeared. The gender-specific communality of the ritual is no longer present – at least, not in a form which supposes ritual interaction and interdependence. In the absence of these voices, the mixed emotions characteristic of women's wedding songs are no longer a feature. Not only does this genre now seem to espouse female silence and seclusion, but the negative aspects of the marriage rite which liken the nuptial transition to death are elided. The male-articulated wedding speech, like the masculine hymenaios of Aristophanes' *Peace*, values marriage as a purely positive and beneficial institution.¹⁰¹⁷

Gone is the suggestion that the new *gunê* may view the loss of virginity, and with it the loss of her old life, with regret, ἦρ' ἔτι παρθενίας ἐπιβάλλομαι;¹⁰¹⁸ Instead, the address to the elite male audience takes its cue from a standard thesis of the rhetorical progymnasmata, 'should one marry?':

τὰ δὲ μετὰ τὰ προοίμια ἔστω περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ γάμου λόγος ὡσπερ
θετικὸς καθόλου τὴν ἐξέτασιν περιέχων ὅτι καλὸν ὁ γάμος,¹⁰¹⁹

Any potential protestations are dismissed as coy foreplay later in the *kateunastikos*:

¹⁰¹⁶ Whitmarsh (2005) 5: Philostratus (VS 1.481.22-26) roots the Second Sophistic in the 'prestigious tradition' of Classical Athens – although Aeschines is said to have founded the movement after his exile from that city; see Ch.7, p.274.

¹⁰¹⁷ For marriage to death, see esp. Ch.2, pp.82-83; Ch.3, pp.117-18; Ch.4, pp.146-47, 169, 185; contra esp. Ch.5, p.212 (rejuvenation).

¹⁰¹⁸ Sappho fr. 107 V; see esp. Introduction, pp.15-22.

¹⁰¹⁹ Men. Rhet. 400.31-401.2, cf. Ps.-Dion. Ars Rhet. 2.1; see Ch.7, p.264.

ἔαν δέ σε καὶ ἀπατᾶν ἐπιχειρήσῃ αἰμύλα κωτίλλουσα, φύλαξαι τὴν ἀπάτην· περικείται γὰρ καὶ Ἀφροδίτης κεστόν, ἐν ᾧ διὰ λόγων ἐστὶν ἀπάτη.¹⁰²⁰

Russell sees the positivity of marriage as ‘conventional’ and notes ‘how much it depended on popular philosophical preaching’,¹⁰²¹ and nowhere is this popular philosophy more apparent than in Menander’s description of the god of marriage. As discussed in Chapter 7, the Menandrian Gamos owes much to the Platonic Eros, a theme which is expounded in Plutarch with a new emphasis on married love and its function as a path to virtue within the philosophical marriage.¹⁰²² One may praise either Gamos or Eros, depending on which god the rhetor has chosen for personification at the outset.¹⁰²³ The god is praised according to the same structure recommended for other orations in the treatise (including praise of the bridal couple): for his origins, nature, accomplishments, and actions, a combination of structure and subject which is clearly owed to both Plato and Plutarch. Marriage is divine:

ἄρξῃ δὲ ἄνωθεν, ὅτι μετὰ τὴν λύσιν τοῦ χάους εὐθὺς ὑπὸ τῆς φύσεως ἐδημιουργήθη ὁ γάμος, εἰ δὲ βούλει, ὡς Ἐμπεδοκλῆς φησι, καὶ <ὁ> ἔρωσ.¹⁰²⁴

He is both a demiurge and civilizing force:

¹⁰²⁰ Men. Rhet. 407.9-12.

¹⁰²¹ Russell (1979) 106.

¹⁰²² See Ch.7, pp.277-78.

¹⁰²³ Men. Rhet. 405.4-6.

¹⁰²⁴ Men. Rhet. 401.2-4, cf. Plat. Symp. 197b7, Plut. Mor. 756A2-3; Ch.7, p.278. In Ps.-Dion, marriage comes from the gods (Ars Rhet.): 2.2.6-16.

γενόμενος δὲ ὁ θεὸς οὗτος συνάπτει μὲν οὐρανὸν τῇ γῆ, συνάπτει δὲ Κρόνον τῇ Ῥέᾳ, συνεργούντος αὐτῷ πρὸς ταῦτα τοῦ ἔρωτος· εἶτα ἐφεξῆς ἐρεῖς ὅτι ἡ τῶν ὄλων διακόσμησις διὰ τὸν γάμον γέγονεν, ἀέρος, ἀστέρων, θαλάσσης· τοῦ γὰρ θεοῦ τούτου τὴν στάσιν παύσαντος καὶ συνάψαντος ὁμοιοῖα καὶ τελετῇ γαμηλίῳ τὸν οὐρανὸν πρὸς τὴν γῆν, ἅπαντα διεκρίθη καὶ στάσιν οἰκείαν ἔλαβεν.¹⁰²⁵

Gamos (or Eros) also owes his physical form to Agathon's encomium of Love:

ὅτι νέος ἐστὶν ἀειθαλῆς ὁ Γάμος, λαμπάδα φέρων ἐν ταῖν χερσίν, ῥαδινός, ἐρυθθήματι τὸ πρόσωπον καταλαμπόμενος, ἕμερον ἀποστάζων ἐκ τῶν ὀμμάτων καὶ τῶν ὀφρύων.¹⁰²⁶

In addition, the accomplishments of the marriage god form the very basis of civilised society: through him exists sailing, farming, philosophy, astrology, laws and politics (401.22-26). This philosophical representation seems to suppose an audience of *pepaideumenoi*, and thus provide further evidence for a male audience, yet, as Plutarch's *Coniugalia Praecepta* and *Amatorius* show, it was equally possible for Greco-Roman women to appreciate the nuances of this portrayal. Though the primary element 'bride' does not feature as significantly in the rhetorical prescriptions as in previous epithalamia, it is possible to understand her as an indirect recipient of the oration. Plutarch's ideal wife talks only to or through her husband

¹⁰²⁵ Men. Rhet. 401.4-12, cf. Plat. Symp. 197a2-4. The function of the god as the origin of all civilised accomplishments is echoed in Diotima's speech: Eros is an intermediary between men and gods, the origin of *manteia* and magic (202e3-203a7); the demiurge of *sôphrosunê* and *dikaiousunê* (209a3-8); and the cause of elevation to science – particularly the science of beauty (211c5-8).

¹⁰²⁶ Men. Rhet. 404.31-405.2, cf. Plat. Symp. 195c1-196b2, contr. Plut. Mor. 766A6-11; Ch.7, pp.279-80.

(142D3-4); perhaps Menander's bride is addressed in the same way. Women are not so much effaced, as they are treated according to the mores of classicising 'respectability'.

Many traditional marriage hymns contain mythical or divine paradigms, and Menander's speeches recommend them as germane to the wedding oration.¹⁰²⁷ These narratives are often used as comparison with the bride or groom, elevating the mortal participants to a higher sphere.¹⁰²⁸ Here, Gamos provides an oblique exhortation to practice that which is praiseworthy. The attribution of these values to the god, and the benefits that arise from his influence, suggests that married life offers its own, secular, virtue. This is a sophistic adaptation of a Plutarchian marital aretê,¹⁰²⁹ and directly contradicts ascetic Christian values. The early Church Fathers 'generally followed Paul in holding that marriage was necessary but that celibacy was by far the better state',¹⁰³⁰ an ideal that existed in tension with the nature of marriage as a largely civic institution directed towards the ordered continuation of society.¹⁰³¹

The rhetors, as part of the elite class on which that social system relied for its survival, promoted traditional values and institutions,¹⁰³² and the assertion that virtue may be gained through marriage instead of its denial offers something to both pagan and Christian audiences. Menander's prescriptions are relevant to either religion (the Latin epithalamia demonstrate that mythological figures can also be used in Christian marriage poetry as personifications of their appropriate aspects, and have been shown to offer a sophisticated

¹⁰²⁷ Sappho fr. 23.3-4, 111.5-6 V, cf. Himer. Or. 9.16; Ar. Av. 1730-41, Luc. Symp. 41.4-11; Men. Rhet. 400.11-22, 401.28-402.20; the gods are imagined as being present at 404.20-29; comparisons are also used in the kateunastikos: 405.24-28, 408.33-409.8, with the gods again personified at 406.18-407.9, 411.9-13.

¹⁰²⁸ See Ch.2, p.86; Ch.4; p.153; Ch.5, p.224.

¹⁰²⁹ See Ch.7, esp. p.286.

¹⁰³⁰ D'Elia (2002) 390.

¹⁰³¹ Cameron (1994) 154, Cooper (1996) 45-46: 'the narrative strategy of the Acts of Andrew and the other Apocryphal Acts borrows from and inverts the ideology of *erōs* and the city's regeneration...in the ancient novel'.

¹⁰³² Whitmarsh (2005) 15: the sophists strove for a particular form of identity; a fusion of manliness, elitism, and Greekness.

development of the ‘gods are present’ theme),¹⁰³³ and so creates a text that is widely applicable during a period of potential instability in the valuation of marriage itself. Clark notes the tension between the attraction to and support of the Church for the ‘lofty virtue’ of celibacy and proper deference to the wishes of one’s family.¹⁰³⁴ Menander holds out marriage as an alternative route to the virtuous life, an institution already regarded as positive by the Platonic and Stoic traditions (popular with pagans and Christians alike),¹⁰³⁵ and one which, as the erotic works of Plutarch suggest, can itself lead to contemplation of and communion with the divine.¹⁰³⁶

If the rhetor values marriage positively as a path to virtue, one would expect his encomia of the families to reflect this, but it is Ps.-Dionysius, not Menander, who speaks of the positive reflection on one’s family of marriage. Marriage is a social transition not just for the couple, but for their community:

Καὶ ὅτι ἐκ τούτου πρῶτον μὲν συνοικίαι ἐγένοντο, εἶτα καὶ κῶμαι,
εἶτα καὶ πόλεις. ἐκ δὲ τῶν ἐπιγαμῶν καὶ ἡ γνῶσις πλείων καὶ ἡ
συγγένεια ὑπερορίοις.¹⁰³⁷

Menander, by contrast, speaks of their existing achievements. His injunction is telling: *θηρευέτω γὰρ ὁ λόγος τὰ ἐνδοξότερα* (403.17-18). If neither family has any distinction, the speaker is to pass quickly over this part of the speech onto praise of the bride

¹⁰³³ Roberts (1989) 333.

¹⁰³⁴ Clark (1993) 52.

¹⁰³⁵ See Ch.7, p.264.

¹⁰³⁶ See Ch.7, p.269.

¹⁰³⁷ Ps.-Dion. *Ars Rhet.* 2.5.11-14; see Introduction, pp.33-34. The idea of cross-border networks of marriage-alliance goes against the classical Athenian ideal, but was a feature of the provincial elite under the Empire (as well as those of Archaic and early classical Greece): Alcock (1993) 155. One corollary of this, however, could be ‘a diminishing sense of local identity by indigenous ruling classes and their concomitant alienation from the rest of the subject population’. Menander Rhetor’s prescriptions praise those who do not succumb to this alienation and remain involved in the civic life of their poleis.

and groom. The value-system of this section is apparent in its treatment rather than explicit content: if ideals are expressed through panegyric, then the encomium of those contracting the marriage is an exhortation to *lamprotês*, the acts of outstanding euergetism perceived to be the civic duty of the upper classes.¹⁰³⁸

Indeed, in the same way that their parents are encouraged to perform the traditional achievements of the notable citizen, the young couple is envisaged to have mastered the achievements traditionally appropriate to their own roles: he in *παιδεία, λύρα, μούσαις* or *λόγοις*, she in *σεμνότητι* or *ἱστουργίαις καὶ Ἀθηνᾶς καὶ Χαρίτων ἔργοις*, and both possess *ἀρετᾶς, σωφροσύνην, and ἐπιείκειαν* (403.29-404.4). Virtue is treated equally as regards both sexes, a Platonic idea, but the division of qualities presents a very traditional model of gender: he is outstanding in education, music, letters; she in dignity and traditional female tasks. Is this another deliberate classicism? Or does it reflect a particular reality, in which the everyday roles of the married couple were not much changed in their basic structure since classical times? Though some women, particularly Roman aristocrats, are notorious for their assumption of public roles,¹⁰³⁹ for the great majority, the household and family would still have formed the basic fact of their existence.¹⁰⁴⁰ Epideictic in praise of traditional gender roles promotes a positive valuation of these, or of the household as the central unit of community and society, as something desirable and praiseworthy.

Also desirable and praiseworthy is the beauty of the bridal couple, which should be treated as regards them both: *παρ' ἀμφόλιν* (404.5). This is hardly surprising in an

¹⁰³⁸ Plutarch (Dem. 2.2.1-3) states: *ἡμεῖς δὲ μικρὰν μὲν οἰκοῦντες πόλιν, καὶ ἵνα μὴ μικρότερα γένηται φιλοχωροῦντες*. Alcock (1993) 102, 114, 154, 210, Whitmarsh (2005) 12: 'the dominant ideal of *philotimia* or *ambitio* provided a vertical framework within which the ambitious elite competed for the rewards of Roman recognition'.

¹⁰³⁹ See Ch.7, p.274.

¹⁰⁴⁰ This in itself was seen as a hindrance to virtue, male and female, by many Christian writers, whose treatises in praise of virginity 'either aim to persuade women that domestic life is drudgery or men that they do not need women to look after the house': Clark (1993) 98.

epithalamium,¹⁰⁴¹ but it is subtly adapted to rhetoric articulated by the male voice. We have previously seen how Plutarch, in his marital philosophy, encourages the bride to cultivate an inner, rather than outer, beauty (141D4-5),¹⁰⁴² and beauty, particularly seductive female beauty, is represented as dangerous and potentially disruptive to society (καλὸν κακὸν) in the earliest Greek texts.¹⁰⁴³

Menander Rhetor not only envisages female beauty positively, but in his equal treatment of the topos as regards both ‘bride’ and ‘groom’ (the ‘primary elements’) he creates parity between the two. The equal treatment of the participants is a traditionally epithalamic feature (Sappho fr. 112, 116, 117 V), suggesting the distinct but interdependent nature of male and female.¹⁰⁴⁴ In Imperial literature, this parity is explored more fully in the Greek novel: the central couple are equally young and equally beautiful. This allows for mutual desire which culminates in legitimate marriage. This beauty, then, is conducive to the continuance of society (it is an integral part of his exhortation to intercourse in the *kateunastikos*, 407.4-7).

This is a far cry from patristic assertions that physical attractiveness functioned as a foil, or even an indicator, of immorality.¹⁰⁴⁵ The virtues of femininity, which include chaste beauty, are represented in a positive, though conservative, light. In an Empire experiencing social instability, and in the face of the exempla offered by publicly powerful Imperial women and outspoken Christian martyrs, the rhetor holds out a *dolon aipun* of his own as a lure to sanctioned eroticism and the future stability of cities through legitimate reproduction – the *κάλα χαρίεσσα* of the epithalamium,¹⁰⁴⁶ a blushing bride endowed no longer with a

¹⁰⁴¹ E.g. Sappho fr. 23, 106, 108, 112, 113, 115 V, Theoc. 18.20-38; Ch1, pp.73-76 (mutuality).

¹⁰⁴² Ch.7, p.270.

¹⁰⁴³ E.g. Hes. Th. 585-89; see Ch.5, pp.231-32.

¹⁰⁴⁴ See Ch.1, p.76.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Paul, Tertullian, John Chrysostom, Philo, and Jerome write on this subject: Bloch (1987) 11-15, Cameron (1994) 153.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Sappho fr. 108 V.

‘doglike mind’ and ‘deceitful nature’,¹⁰⁴⁷ but with philosophic virtue as well as modest dignity and good looks, a benefit rather than a bane: μεταδιδόντων ἡμῶν ταῖς ἑαυτῶν γυναίξιν τῶν δυσχερῶν καὶ τῇ κοινωσίᾳ παρηγουρομένων (Ps.-Dion Ars Rhet. 2.5.3-4).

The gods of love and reproduction, imagined as present in the bridal chamber, are a further rhetorical strategy in this implementation of an idealisation of marriage, lending an almost sacred aspect to the consummation (further enhanced by the use of telos, implying ‘initiation’, throughout the kateunastikos). This erotic-sacerdotal element was, as we have seen, present in the hieros gamos motif of the Aristophanic hymenaioi, and to a lesser extent in Euripides’ Phaethon.¹⁰⁴⁸ In Menander Rhetor, as well as in Plutarch, it elevates marriage to the level of mystic initiation,¹⁰⁴⁹ whose resultant *olbos* is a form of immortality: Plutarch’s of the soul, Menander’s of the human race. In addition, the presence of gods creates a charming and attractive setting for this initiation:

συνελήλυθε μὲν οὖν ἡ πόλις, συνεορτάζει δὲ ἅπασα, πεπήγασι δὲ παστάδες οἷαι οὐχ ἑτέρῳ ποτέ, θάλαμος δὲ πεποίκιλται ἄνθεσι καὶ γραφαῖς παντοίαις, πολλὴν δὲ τὴν Ἀφροδίτην ἔχει.¹⁰⁵⁰

Concluding the speech with a prayer (404.28-29, cf. Theoc. 18.50-53) adds to this sacral atmosphere. Here the prescription turns again to the couple: τέξετε παῖδας ὑμῖν τε ὁμοίους καὶ ἐν ἀρετῇ λαμπρούς (404.27-28). The ‘primary elements’ are again the subjects of the rhetor’s persuasion. His encomia may be directed at the bridal chambers and

¹⁰⁴⁷ Hes. Op. 67.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Cf. Ch.4, p.151; Ch.5, esp. p.223.

¹⁰⁴⁹ See Ch.7, p.282.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Men. Rhet. 404.17-20.

alcoves, the couple, their families, and the god, but his moral thrust is telling: ‘bear children’. The rhetor holds the audience in his power through the force of his logos, speaking to them not only with the voice of their own class but also as the voice of their own self-interest.

With this kind of social cohesion in mind, marriage (as in Plutarch) is the seat of *homonoia*, the concord by which the universe is ordered (401.9-12).¹⁰⁵¹ Russell argues for the obvious promotion of virtue in Ps.-Dionysius’ treatise, but says that the moral emphasis is ‘much less conspicuous’ in Menander;¹⁰⁵² I would argue that the morality of the text is contained within its very epideictic structure, in the exhortation to virtue through panegyric thereof, to the civic duty and civic piety appropriate to an educated, distinguished Greek, evident in the reference to the imagery of civilisation on the shield of Achilles (405.8). Menander offers a powerful argument for marriage, based on a convincing (if artistic) treatment of traditional morals and models:

In the ideological contest between Christianity and paganism for the hearts and minds of the Greeks, the sophists as a group were influential teachers of the old religion and values.¹⁰⁵³

Marriage was not merely necessary, but beneficial, a worthy subject for epideictic and therefore indicative of moral and social status. Classical models provide not simply attractive examples for the present oration, but a value system prescribed for the future.

‘Fight in a Manner Worthy of Your Fathers’

¹⁰⁵¹ See Ch.7, p.271.

¹⁰⁵² Russell (1970) 106, 108.

¹⁰⁵³ Kennedy (1994) 230.

Ancient literary models also provide the paradigm for the *kateunastikos* speech, the ‘exhortation to intercourse’.¹⁰⁵⁴ This oration is roughly concordant with Ps.-Dionysius’ *Epithalamios*, but differs in tone and content (the latter contains much the same material as his *Methodos gamêliôn*, but with an exhortation to concord) and indeed is envisaged to function for the song at the chamber door. The rhetor is imagined as deploying his persuasive force towards an individual (albeit with an audience present), to ‘rise to the task’ once the moment is upon him. The exhortation to intercourse is implicitly an exhortation to continue the household and community, and so, like the *epithalamios logos*, the *kateunastikos* has an inherent social function, speaking to the young man not only as a bashful bridegroom, but as an *anêr* (man/husband) among *andres* of his class. The genre is traditional,¹⁰⁵⁵ thus, the imagery and morality of this oration are largely conservative. Yet they provide clues to the interpretation of gender relations in the cultural context of this treatise.

The form of the text has changed from the familiar poetic *epithalamium*. The bridegroom is addressed directly in a number of wedding songs, either in praise (Sappho fr. 112.1, 115 V, Eur. *Pha.* 240-44, Ar. *Pax* 1332-33, Av. 1725) or in jest (Theoc. 18.9-11). He may be addressed either by women/girls (Sappho fr. 30.2-5 V, Eur. *Pha.* 218, Theoc. 18) or by men (Ar. *Pax* 1332-59). In Menander, the groom is addressed en route to the *thalamos* by the rhetor, and the variety in modes of address – as a brother or relation, as a fellow married man, or even a stranger (younger or older) – strongly resembles the divisions of the *propemptic* (departure) speech expounded by Menander, lending the oration a *symbolaestic* air.¹⁰⁵⁶ As such, the *ithyphallic* joking and *fescennina iocatio*, already absent from the philosophical treatise of Plutarch, disappears even from the bedroom speech:

¹⁰⁵⁴ Men. *Rhet.* 405.19-23, cf. Sappho fr. 110, 111 V; Theoc. 18.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Men. *Rhet.* 405.19-21.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Cairns (1972) 236.

φυλακτέον δ' ἐν τούτῳ, μή τι τῶν αἰσχροῶν μηδὲ τῶν εὐτελῶν ἢ φαύλων
λέγειν δόξωμεν, καθιέντες εἰς τὰ αἰσχροῶ καὶ μικρά, λέγειν γὰρ δεῖ
ὅσα ἐνδοξά ἐστι καὶ ὅσα σεμνότητα φέρει καὶ ἐστὶν εὐχαρῆ.¹⁰⁵⁷

Perhaps, however, ithyphallism is expressed in the suggestion of Heracles as a mythological model. The use of this hero signals at once a completely androcentric value system. The erotic exploits of Heracles are supposed to give the appearance of 'charm' to the logos (405.28), but this charm is distinctly masculine, even macho: if Deianeira could not bear to watch when he fought for her hand,¹⁰⁵⁸ what hope had the parthenos when confronted with such a paradigm? Moreover, the use of Heracles' love-affairs (τοῖς περὶ γαμῶν αὐτῶ καὶ γυναικῶν καὶ νυμφῶν πεπραγμένοις, 405.27-28) also appears to be problematic, for they introduce the motif of violence and disruption into a genre aimed at concord and cohesion, as well as the representation of hypersexuality on a truly 'epic' scale.¹⁰⁵⁹ The hero's exploits founded any number of dynasties in the ancient world, but his most famous unions formed the subject of tragedy: the murder of his wife and children in Euripides' *Hercules Furens*, and his *erôs* for Iole which results in the death of himself and Deianeira in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*. The literary Heracles could well be used as a model for 'how not to conduct a marriage'. He is an indifferent husband and father,¹⁰⁶⁰ prepared to destroy societies in pursuance of his lust.¹⁰⁶¹ Finally, he is destroyed by *erôs*, as Deianeira, desperate to keep him, inadvertently poisons him.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Men. Rhet. 406.4-7; see Ch.7, p.267.

¹⁰⁵⁸ See Ch.3, p.125.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Soph. Trach. 459-60, Paus. 9.27.6-7, Herodorus fr. 20 Fowler.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Soph. Trach. 31-33; Ch.3, p.129.

¹⁰⁶¹ Soph Trach. 359-365; Ch.3, p.130. The idea that Heracles may be an 'anti-epithalamial' figure is apparent in other tragedies, which refer to his failed or destructive hymenaioi with Iole (Eur. Hipp. 554): τλάμων ὕμεναιών.

Nor is Heracles the only problematic parallel recommended to the rhetor: he may also speak of the marriages of Dionysus, of Aeacus and Aegina, Peleus and Thetis, Zeus and Leda, Telemachus and Polycaste, or Anchises and Aphrodite.¹⁰⁶² They are all divine or divinely-sanctioned marriages, but they are not without their difficult mythologies: Dionysus rescued Ariadne on Naxos, but in some traditions she was ‘already married to Dionysus when she followed Theseus and was killed by Artemis’.¹⁰⁶³ Thetis was subdued to Peleus at the behest of Zeus and their son, Achilles, died in the sack of Troy.¹⁰⁶⁴ The result of Zeus and Leda’s coupling was Helen and the Trojan War, and though Aeneas and the foundation of Rome resulted from that of Anchises and Aphrodite, he boasted of their liaison and was punished by the gods.¹⁰⁶⁵ Menander makes no distinction between happy marriages (Polycaste at least *μιχθεῖσα διὰ χρυσῆν Ἀφροδίτην* with Telemachus, Hes. fr. 221.3 M-W) and those which are more ambivalent, nor does he include more ‘idealised’ unions in the *kateunastikos*: Zeus and Hera (for all its tensions, still the Sacred Marriage par excellence) or Hector and Andromache.¹⁰⁶⁶

Viewed within the androcentric value system of the *kateunastikos*, these mythologies appear to complement, not detract from, the programme of the speech, which presents the exhortation in agonistic terms, and the imagery is defined by the model of ‘courage in marriage’ expressed in the opening of the treatise. On this competitive model, the female is presented as an adversary to be overcome, and marriage the prize:

¹⁰⁶² Men. Rhet. 408.31-409.8.

¹⁰⁶³ OCD s.v. ‘Ariadne’: Hom. Od. 11.321-25; contra Hes. Th. 947-49, Cat. 64.50, Ov. Her. 10.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Hom. Il. 18.432-44, Pind. Isth. 8.26-45; contra Alc. fr. 42 V, Eur. IA 703, 1036-79 (Ch.4, pp.194-95), Cat. 64.19-21, 303-81.

¹⁰⁶⁵ OCD s.v. ‘Anchises’: H.H.Aphr. 286, Soph fr. 373 N, cf. Virg. Aen. 2.648-49, Servius on Aen. 2.35.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Cf. esp. Ch.4, p.188-95; Ch.5, p.224-25. Problematic marriages continue to characterise the Late Antique epithalamic corpus: Him. Or. 9.5.10-11 (Achilles and Hippodamia/Deidameia), 9.5.12-6.1, Chor. Or. 6.12.2-3 (Dionysus and Ariadne), Him. 9.6.4-6 (Pelops and Hippodamia), 12.10-13.1 (Olympias and Philip!), 14.14-15, Chor. 6.42 (Peleus and Thetis), Him. 9.17.1-2 (Heracles and Deianeira), 18.9-12 (Boreas and Oreithyia), 19.23-20.1 (Polyphemus and Galatea), Chor. 6.12.1-2 (Apollo and Daphne). Even Himerius’ narratives of primordial, cosmogonic marriages are ambiguous: 9.8.1-2 (Oceanus and Tethys). Choricus uses more variety: Theseus’ *erôs* for an Attic girl is mentioned but not elaborated (5.13.2-3), he draws positive exempla from history: Cyrus and Aspasia (14.1-2); the marriage of Demophon (17.1-10), and mentions Nausicaa’s prospective marriage (6.41). The union of Zeus and Hera is mentioned – in the context of the Dios *Apatê* (6.17.1-3).

ἐπεὶ δὲ τελετὴ γάμου τὰ δρώμενα, βραβευτῆς δὲ Ἔρωσ, κῆρυξ δὲ Ὑμέναιος, καὶ στάδιον ὑμῖν ὁ θάλαμος, φέρε μὴ τὰ τῶν φευγόντων ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις πάθης δεδοικῶς καὶ πρὸ τῆς συμβολῆς τὴν τροπὴν, ἀλλὰ νόμισον ἔνθεν μὲν παρεστάναι σοι Πόθον, ἔνθεν δὲ Γάμον, Ἔρωτα δὲ συμβραβεύειν, Ὑμέναιον δ' ἐπιφωνεῖν, Ἴθι, τῶν πατέρων ἀξίως ἀγωνιούμενος.¹⁰⁶⁷

Like the athletic victor or the triumphant warrior, additional timai are bestowed as a result of his victory, not simply the immortality of commemoration, but the immortality conveyed by marriage itself, for which the mythical bridegrooms provide examples in Ps.-Dionysius:

οἷον ὅτι Μενέλεως ἀθάνατος ἐγένετο διὰ τὸν γάμον τῆς Ἐλένης καὶ ὁ Πηλεὺς διὰ τὸν Θέτιδος, καὶ ὁ Ἄδμητος διὰ τὴν Ἄλκηστιν τὸν ἐκ τῆς εἰμαρμένης θάνατον διέφυγεν.¹⁰⁶⁸

Can an argument be made for a genuine eschatological implication here? Plutarch had already developed a theory for the progression of the soul through marital erôs.¹⁰⁶⁹ Ps.-Dionysius uses paradigms of heroes made immortal by the agency of their wives, and Menander Rhetor argues in *Peri Epithalamiou* that marriage, through reproduction, makes man σχεδὸν ἀθάνατον (402.18) and gives us ἀθανασία (21), and in *Peri*

¹⁰⁶⁷ Men. Rhet. 406.18-24; cf. Ch.5, pp.217-18.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Ps.-Dion. Ars Rhet. 2.5.17-20.

¹⁰⁶⁹ See Ch.7, p.269.

Kateunastikou that the couple achieves a telos.¹⁰⁷⁰ It must be said, however, that the ‘immortality’ envisioned by the rhetors is highly secular. Neither speaks of an afterlife – as one might expect in the context of a secular wedding oration. In Menander, immortality is achieved through procreation.¹⁰⁷¹ An eschatology might be implied by these particular mythical examples (Menelaus would not die, but would go to the Elysian Fields, Peleus was immortalised by Thetis, Alcestis went to Hades and returned, Heracles was divinised after his death),¹⁰⁷² but even in Ps.-Dionysius, who uses the greatest number of them, they are far removed from the marriage immortalised by the logos, and function not as models for that marriage, but as examples of ὄση ἀποτροπή τῶν δυσχερῶν διὰ γάμου (2.5.16-17). The initiate of the Mysteries receives olbos: in the blessings bestowed by marriage, these mythical unions parallel the makarismos bestowed upon the mortal bride and groom.

These narratives thus allow ambiguous mythologies to be incorporated into the genre. Even the tragic Heracles, who proved so problematic a model in an erotic context, receives these benefits in his apotheosis and marriage to Hebe, re-habilitating him to a hymeneal context:

Ἦβας τ' ἔρατὸν χροῖ-
 ζει λέχος χρυσέαν κατ' αὐλάν.
 ὦ Ὑμέναιε, δισ-
 σοὺς παῖδας Διὸς ἠξίωσας.¹⁰⁷³

¹⁰⁷⁰ Men. Rhet. e.g. 406.4, 408. 16 (τελετή καὶ γάμος), 409.9 (τελοῦσι τὰ ὄργια τοῦ γάμου καὶ τελοῦνται), 410.8 (τελετῆς ἐρωτικῆς).

¹⁰⁷¹ Again, we perceive an echo of Diotima’s speech, in which immortality by procreation (here of spiritual children) precludes immortality of the soul, Plat. Symp. 208e2-209a3.

¹⁰⁷² Hom. Od. 4.561-69, Eur. Andr. 1254-58 (though Russell & Wilson (1981) 367 state that Peleus’ immortalisation is ‘a variant on the normal legend...his ‘immortality’ does not seem to be mentioned elsewhere’), Alc. 12-18 etc., cf. also Plat. Symp. 179c3-7, Eur. Heracl. 910-18 (below), Theoc. 17.20-33.

¹⁰⁷³ Eur. Heracl. 915-18.

To the audience at large, marriage is presented as a beneficial and pleasant duty; to the young groom, an exhilarating contest with fantastic rewards that assimilates him to gods and heroes. This is not so innovative: Sappho compares the bridegroom to Ares, the war god (fr. 111.5 V), suggesting that the masculine ideology of ‘marriage as struggle’ has always been present in the genre alongside the feminine conception of ‘struggle against marriage’. The performer of the epithalamium must mediate between these two extremes, soliciting *charis* from both parties and the wider community, but the male voice naturally privileges the former perspective.

As such, the young man is praised for his prowess (406.11), with the implication in this persuasive encomium that he may fail to live up to expectations. This militarisation of the wedding night, the injunction of Hymen to fight, is a variation of a traditional motif, the ‘wounding’ or ‘death’ of the maiden on the marriage bed, and a concomitant of the sexualised imagery of battle and the coming of age of a youth in that battle.¹⁰⁷⁴ Here it is presented in a positive light, an act worthy of the man’s forefathers, situating him within a genealogical sequence which he will, by implication, continue by the act which he is about to perform. This reminds us that in the mortal marriage, the ‘death’ of the maiden must necessarily be followed by her ‘rebirth’ as a *gunê*, allowing the transition to culminate in reproduction.

The sexualisation of the *agôn* is made even more explicit by the subsequent imagery – the encomium of the girl’s beauty is clearly an incitement to arousal. Not for the *kateunastikos* the exposition of philosophic virtue. Menander deems this extraneous to the argument:

¹⁰⁷⁴ Vernant (1999) 19-20 (= 1968:15); see p.17, n.56; Ch.2, p.90-1.

οὐ τὸ [ἐγκώμιον] ἀπὸ τῆς σωφροσύνης οὐδὲ τὸ ἀπὸ τῆς φρονήσεως
οὐδὲ τῶν λοιπῶν ἀρετῶν τῆς ψυχῆς, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀπὸ τῆς ὥρας καὶ τοῦ
κάλλου – τοῦτο γὰρ οἰκεῖον καὶ πρόσφορον μόνον.¹⁰⁷⁵

Rather, the erotic purpose of the genre is expounded by every topos, and traditional motifs are reclaimed for their original purpose: the sexual seduction of a young couple. The scene is set at the most appropriate moment for love, under the evening star familiar from Sappho and Catullus: ἔσπερος μὲν γὰρ ἔστιν ὑπαιθρος καὶ λαμπρός (406.25).¹⁰⁷⁶

The chamber is a beautiful setting for erôs and the deities of love are on hand to offer assistance.¹⁰⁷⁷ The event is pictured with a dreamlike quality, in which the traditional wish for children is expressed as an epiphany of future good fortune (407.14-17). No matter what the season of the marriage, its imagery can be employed erotically to tempt the groom into bed: if it is spring, birdsong and the bloom of plants and mingling of trees are an appropriate counterpart to the mingling of the blooming couple; if autumn, they are to take their cue from the marriage of earth and heaven; winter makes the marriage-bed a cosy refuge from the cold; and summer's burgeoning is analogous to human fertility (408.9-26).

What is most interesting about this imagery is the vocabulary it employs to describe the bridegroom's experience: the consummation of marriage is presented throughout the *kateunastikos* as a *telos*, and the youth imagined rising from the marriage bed 'initiated'. This is a striking development in the epithalamium, for while marriage had always been envisioned as a woman's initiation into adulthood, a man was presumed to enter majority at *ephebeia* (eighteen years old), after which training he was admitted to the adult male citizen

¹⁰⁷⁵ Men. Rhet. 405.29-406.1, cf. 407.6-7, 411.5-6.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Men. Rhet. 406.25-29, cf. Sappho fr. 104(a) V, Cat. 62.1-2; see Introduction, p.24.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Men. Rhet. 407.4-9, 17-20, cf. Sappho fr. 194 V = Himer. Or. 9.4.

body.¹⁰⁷⁸ The ancient bridegroom is generally thought to be already an adult upon marriage, and to take a bride much younger than he, as counselled by Hesiod.¹⁰⁷⁹ In the literature of the Imperial period, however, there is a greater symmetry between the couple, which, as we saw in the discussion of epithalamioi logoi, is reflected in their ages. The groom of the kateunastikos is addressed as neaniskos or neania,¹⁰⁸⁰ and his bride's youth is referred to throughout, as in the novel.¹⁰⁸¹ The reciprocity idealised by the ancient wedding song has found a new expression in the bedroom oration,¹⁰⁸² presenting the idea of mutual initiation or fulfillment as an incentive to marriage. Both partners make the transition to adulthood, presented in the novel as a physical journey. With power now held centrally by the Emperor and enforced by a standing army, the young elite male no longer found his entry into adulthood in deliberating policy for, and fighting on behalf of, his fatherland, but could best serve his community by ensuring its propagation – initiation is therefore presented in these terms. The anêr is one who has done his civic duty by marriage (in the event that the bridegroom is an older man, civic duty forms part of his encomium: προσθήσεις δ' ὡς ἵνα καὶ παῖδας φυτεύσητε τῇ πατρίδι λόγοις ἐνακμάσοντας, φιλοτιμίαις, ἐπιδόσεσι 408.6-8).

The religious implications of such erotic initiation continue in the fourth century to be explored in detail in the works of the early Church Fathers: in Jerome, Christ is the bridegroom, approaching the young Christian virgin (Ep. 22.19).¹⁰⁸³ The mystic telos is erotically charged, and seems to owe much to the language of the epithalamium and from the

¹⁰⁷⁸ Arist. Ath. Pol. 41.1.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Hes. Op. 695-98.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Men. Rhet. 406.1, 10; cf. νεανιεύματα (407.3).

¹⁰⁸¹ The reciprocal erôs thought to result has a social dimension: 'the author could rely on readers to see in the tale of young lovers an allegory of the condition of the social order and be influenced by his views of how that order should be perpetuated', Cooper (1996) 31.

¹⁰⁸² See Ch.1, p.73-76.

¹⁰⁸³ Cameron (1994) 157-58.

Old Testament Song of Songs,¹⁰⁸⁴ demonstrating that, though an ideological contest may indeed take place during this period between pagans and Christians, in which rhetors were at the forefront, nonetheless a dialogue of mutually applicable concepts and philosophies existed between the two,¹⁰⁸⁵ enabling Christian writers to adapt traditional images to their own uses, and lay Christians to live in relative harmony with existing social structures and ideologies. The idea of *telos* is therefore a persuasive strategy, in social, religious, and personal terms, towards marriage and its consummation for members of either faith:

The concern to preserve a religiously positive role for married couples, and a socially positive role for married women, would have been shared by Christians and pagans alike.¹⁰⁸⁶

The *kateunastikos* situates the use of pleasure firmly within marriage, acknowledging adult sexuality to be both a duty and a pleasure, and a contributing factor to both personal and social status.

This public aspect is concordant with the idea of a ‘shame culture’ expressed in the oration: the bridegroom’s reputation depends on his performance. He is encouraged not to disgrace his prowess and strength, because *τοσοῦτων μαρτύρων γενησομένων τῆ ὑστεραία τῆς τελετῆς* (406.3-4). The crowd is constantly present, as in the stadium; watching his performance, deliberating, and placing bets (406.30-407.1). In the division of the speech expounded towards the end of the treatise, Menander notes that the rhetor may call upon the audience to join the exhortation and bring the groom to the chamber (410.16-18), and once there, the occasion is envisaged to turn into a loud celebration of his victory: *ἡμεῖς*

¹⁰⁸⁴ Cameron (1994) 157.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Cf. Heath (2004) 87.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Cooper (1996) 82.

ῥόδοις καὶ ἴοις στεφανωσάμενοι καὶ λαμπάδας ἀνάψαντες περὶ τὸν θάλαμον
παίξωμεν καὶ χορείαν στησώμεθα, καὶ τὸν ὑμέναιον ἐπιβοώμεθα (409.9-12).

The epithalamial oration addressed generally a crowd of listeners, seducing them through reiteration of their shared values and aims; the bedroom oration does the same on an individual level. The two can stand for the polis/oikos dichotomy, with the latter a microcosm of the former, but no more ‘private’ than the ‘visible invisibility’ of the oikos in ancient thought.¹⁰⁸⁷ What goes on behind closed doors is an object for public speculation and public comment, as fitness for public life in the ancient world often depended on perception of private conduct. The concern of the epithalamios with homonoia is thus expanded in this oration: homonoia is a divine blessing, and part of the couple’s public profile (along with children, the increase of property, and oikonomia), and part of the kerdos of marriage.¹⁰⁸⁸ The young bridegroom of the kateunastikos is being judged by his audience as anêr (adult male citizen) on the basis of his performance as anêr (husband). The direct address means that the speaker can offer more personalised incentives and disincentives: a moment of singular eroticism should he succeed versus one of singular terror – public shame – should he fail. In presenting his speech in terms of the panegyric of the agôn, he creates the image of the bridegroom as the classical Greek athlete/citizen-soldier, at a time when the only role open for him may indeed be ‘husband’. Like the hero of the Greek novel, the youth is imagined as embodying both these identities, as the logos embodies the values of both the old and the new world.

Marriage and Identity

¹⁰⁸⁷ Cf. Cooper (1996) 14.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Men. Rhet. 407.16, 22, 411.15.

The use of a discourse of marriage and sexual relations as a tool for rhetorical self-fashioning seems to take a new direction in the Roman Empire. Cooper discusses Veyne's theory that the Roman aristocrat invented a rhetoric of conjugal love to compensate for his emasculation in the public realm, a sociosexual structure that seems also to be pertinent in the literature of the eastern (Greek) Empire. In keeping with the implications of the *oikos:domus/polis:civitas* microcosm/macrocosm, this is explained as an attempt to elicit affection from one's wife as from one's social inferiors, where before the elite male had exacted fearful subservience. This model must be adapted from the context of its dichotomy between Republic and Empire, since the idea of 'fearful subservience' may be inappropriate in a Greek political context.¹⁰⁸⁹

In a wedding oration performed before an (entirely?) elite male audience, the injunction of man and wife to *homonoia* must surely, as in other literature of the period, fashion an identity of suitability for public concord. We have already seen in Plutarch how both the wife and the statesman must cultivate this virtue (824D4-7);¹⁰⁹⁰ it appears as an ideal not only in the rhetorical handbooks but also in the speeches which make use of the strategies of those handbooks, an 'extension of *philia* between individuals to the city'.¹⁰⁹¹

Moreover, the representation of traditional Greek values in these orations – in the *epithalamios*, Platonic virtues, public liturgies, and on the part of the couple, music, education, housekeeping, *aretê*, and beauty; in the *kateunastikos*, the military and athletic vigour of the young man – may well reflect the promotion of Greek identity associated with the Second Sophistic, an attempt to recreate the splendour of the past in the somewhat uncomfortable political reality of the present, which can also be seen in the sophists' use and definition of the poetic genres of past literary glories as the basis of their speeches.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Cooper (1996) 1-2.

¹⁰⁹⁰ See Ch.7, pp.271-75.

¹⁰⁹¹ Salmeri (2000) 81: this is an Aristotelian definition by which Dio Or. 38.11, 40.26, 41, 41.13 may be compared with Arist. EN 1155a24-25, 1167a22-b24. In advising the Emperor, Dio takes a similar line on marriage to Plutarch (Or. 3.122, cf. Plut. Mor. 142E7-143A5): *γυναῖκα δὲ οὐ κοίτης μόνον ἢ ἀφροδίσιων κοινωνὸν νενομίκεν, βουλῆς δὲ καὶ ἔργων καὶ τοῦ ξύμπαντος βίου συνεργόν*. Whitmarsh (2005) 63, however, notes the ambiguous relationship of Dio's orations with Menander's precepts.

The social reality had changed, however, and this is evident both in the changed form of the epithalamium (a male prose oration for an androcentric audience), as well as in its content. The genres cannot be, as Cairns argues, timeless and unchanging,¹⁰⁹² but are bound up in their cultural contexts and, as we have seen throughout this thesis, put to work for a variety of purposes, by many different kinds of literature, within those contexts. Yet the retention of basic elements – the beautiful young bride and groom, the romantic setting, the love between the two and their place within the community – enables its basic function both to be performed and manipulated across contexts.

With what picture of gender and society do the prescriptions present us? If we consider the didactic function of panegyric, in its praise of particular values as models for imitation, we are offered an ‘ideal public image of women’¹⁰⁹³ as a model to her kind. She is beautiful, dignified, domesticated, and virtuous. She is also totally silent, for the epithalamium has moved from communal articulation, through male representation, and into an oration by and for men. The speech tells us much about perceptions of sexuality, but it is entirely male sexuality, and no attempt is made, as it is by the tragedians and in Hellenistic poetry, to address its implications for women. For men, marriage and sexual relations are promoted as positive, a benefit to civilization and to one’s person, a route to virtue, a passage into adulthood and an indicator of suitability for the responsibilities thereof. Marriage is the basic fact of society and its continuation.

How does this image relate to reality? I would not go as far to say that ‘in a society premised on honour and shame, rhetoric was reality’,¹⁰⁹⁴ but it was certainly used to influence it, if only in the perceptions of its audience. Heath describes the third century AD as ‘a period of crisis and recovery’ in terms of culture,¹⁰⁹⁵ and I would argue that this also took place in

¹⁰⁹² Cairns (1972) 32; see Introduction, pp.7-10.

¹⁰⁹³ D’Elia (2002) 421.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Cooper (1996) 4.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Heath (2004) 84.

terms of its value-system, whose 'recovery' is presented by the rhetoricians. The theory of rhetoric expounded by Menander Rhetor and Ps.-Dionysius had a real-life application in this context, with epideictic eloquence not only a reflection of the honour and identity of the speaker,¹⁰⁹⁶ but a persuasive tool in the dissemination of a culture and its values in crisis. If, in this recovery, they hearken back to a classicising past, they look to the most powerful expression of what it meant to be Greek, allowing the 'expression of traditional values of Hellenic culture in an age dominated by the realities of Roman rule and later by the threat of Christianity'.¹⁰⁹⁷

¹⁰⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Kennedy (1994) 232; see Ch.7, p.274; this chapter; p.298-99.

CONCLUSION

Marriage is a point of crisis in social relations: between individuals, between families, and between communities. The songs of marriage provide valuable information as to how that crisis was negotiated, particularly with respect to the husband/wife relationship. The epithalamium thus becomes an invaluable tool for the examination of gender relations in the ancient world, their articulation through wedding ritual, and the representation of this articulation in literature. Though the majority of our information is focalised through male-authored material, we can nonetheless draw certain conclusions about the public perception of marriage through these texts. I have discussed what each text or author tells us about the Greek wedding song in the conclusion to each chapter; here I will elucidate some general points about how the epithalamium informs our understanding of the ancient world. I opened this thesis with the sub-headings genre, gender, and ritual, and it is to those categories that I will return in this section.

Firstly, ritual. In Chapter 1 we saw how the imagery of the wedding song might form a progression from separation (lamentation) to reintegration (celebration), consonant with Van Gennep's tripartite scheme of rites of passage. The wedding was a communal ritual in which both genders participated according to their traditional spheres of activity, aimed at establishing the couple within the community. The 'initiation' of the bride into adulthood in marriage was seen as part of a wider structure of female initiation, enclosed by rites of maturation and marriage, and containing a liminal period between menarche and marriage during which the parthenos might undertake ritual activities which would prepare her for her role as a *gunê*.

Because wedding songs could be performed at all stages of this process, they can be used in literature to remark on various aspects of the marital transition. The ‘epithalamial’ songs of the Danaids and Antigone correspond to the separational stage and the dangers of incomplete transition (Ch. 2.1, 3.1). Deianeira experiences a failure of reintegration (Ch. 3.2). Helen attempts to go through the process a second time, and offers a salutary lesson on the tensions inherent in the exchange of women between oikoi – tensions which overshadow her representation even in Theocritus (Ch. 2.3, 4.3, 6). Though Sappho composed epithalamia which relate to a number of stages, in literary depictions, we see a diachronic movement towards focus on reintegration in the period under study: the Aristophanic plays end with ‘happy ever after’ exodoi (Ch. 5); the Hellenistic epithalamium focuses on the affective relationship between husband and wife which becomes part of civic discourse in the Imperial period (Ch. 6); Plutarch and Menander Rhetor draw together the strands of ‘transition’ and ‘mutuality’ to present marriage as a dual initiation – the former into the Mysteries of philosophical Eros, the latter into adulthood for both bride and groom (Ch. 7, 8).

It cannot be said that the epithalamium is a specifically ‘female’ genre. Some aspects of gendering, however, can be noted. The first is in perspective: the female voice tends (though this is not true in Phaethon, Ch. 4.1) to focus on the personal aspects of marriage, particularly the separation of the parthenos from her friends and family. The male voice expresses the concerns of the community or polis: that though marriage may be an ambivalent and potentially threatening institution, it is also a positive and civilising force, which reproduces the community and contributes to human civilisation. Indeed, only when a female is married is she considered ‘tamed’ or ‘civilised’. This gendering is most often expressed through the ‘reaping’/‘cultivation’ dichotomy.

Marriage is the feminine telos, and in its focus on the defining moment of feminine existence, the wedding song might be said to be gendered in a further sense. Though the topoi

of ‘separation’ and ‘departure’ are often stressed, the songs examined here also point towards a high valuation of marriage by women. Antigone, Electra and Polyxena feel cheated of their ‘due’ of marriage (Ch. 3.1). Deianeira exists in perpetual *erêmia* because she has never experienced *sunoikêsis* with Heracles (Ch. 3.2). Hecuba cannot believe Cassandra’s joy in her union with Agamemnon – she raised her daughters for worthy husbands, as Iphigenia was raised (Ch. 4.2, 4.3). In their contrasting of that valuation with the male-directed action around it, these texts also betray an anxiety about the tenuous position of the (particularly Athenian) woman in the house (the ‘other within’), and the problems of woman as an object of exchange, whether in the context of aristocratic gift exchange (cf. Ch.1), contractual *ekdosis* (Ch. 2-5), or under the liberating but still subordinating marriage contract of the later periods (Ch. 6-8). Those texts which relate to ‘real’ weddings, particularly those of Plutarch and Menander Rhetor, aim to mitigate that tension by setting out a programme for incorporation, either directly (as in the precepts of the *Con. Praec.*, Ch. 7) or indirectly (though panegyric of correct adult roles, as in Menander, Ch. 8).

Finally, genre. It has been useful to adapt Cairns’ theory of genre as ‘content’ rather than examine the epithalamium in terms of genre as ‘form’ in this project, because the wedding song cannot be said to exist as a ‘genre’ in the same way as epic, tragedy, comedy, and bucolic are. This adaptation consists in utilising some of his terminology, without embracing anachronistic notions of universal and unchanging generic rules – if poetry is bound up in its performance context, certain elements contained in the text will indicate that context. The ‘primary elements’ and *topoi* of the wedding song occur in a variety of ‘forms’: sometimes with the insertion of entire lyric odes into one of these forms, at others simply as a reference which draws our attention to the issues raised by the *hymenaios* in a particular text. The lyric genre of epithalamium makes a transition of its own in the course of this project: through a variety of forms, from communal verse to male-authored prose. The epithalamial

text itself can even serve as a metaphor for transition, as in the Hellenistic epithalamium, which forms a literary crossroads between the archaic and classical past and the (perhaps more formalised) literary future – in addition, it looks back to the marital transitions of the past to articulate problems of *philia* in the present day, which will remain influential on the composition of later epithalamia (Ch. 6).

Indeed, the *hymenaios* can be called a discourse of *philia*. In all our texts, it highlights this relationship – either encouraging its formation, or remarking on its problems. It explores not only the marital relationship, but also those in the wider community and, in some texts, the cosmos. The cultivation of *philia* might be said to be the objective of the *hymenaios* – as such, it is the aim of the marital transition. It has at its root the bond of family,¹⁰⁹⁸ thus we must question the position of the wife as an outsider in the house. She is the other who must become part of the self: her reintegration must be accomplished for marriage to strengthen and perpetuate the household. Tragic failures of incorporation draw attention through a negative paradigm to an ever-present fear and possibility, but are not a ‘realistic’ option in ancient Greek marriage. The crisis of social relations in marriage discussed at the beginning of this conclusion in fact results from the blurring of the most fundamental boundary in our understanding of Greek thought. In this crisis, we learn how truly delicate was the balance between male and female, self and other, in the ancient world.

¹⁰⁹⁸ LSJ s.v. φίλος, ‘beloved’, ‘dear’, also ‘friend’, ‘kith and kin’.

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