

## WHAT MAKETH THE MESSENGER? REPORTAGE IN GREEK TRAGEDY

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At line 759 of Euripides' *Elektra*, our eponymous heroine despairs, 'It's impossible: we're done for. We must be, otherwise where are the messengers?'<sup>1</sup> Some scholars, myself among them, read here an overt reference to the messenger-speech convention.<sup>2</sup> Note the explanatory γάρ:<sup>3</sup> Elektra assumes that murder is always reported. The chorus-leader is equally confident: 'They will come: killing a king is no mean thing' (ἤξουσιν· οὔτοι βασιλέα φαῦλον κτανεῖν, 760). That is, regicide is serious enough to warrant a proper announcement, in life if not also tragedy.<sup>4</sup> Lo and behold! An anonymous, unannounced speaking character indeed enters,<sup>5</sup> who refers to himself as a πρόσπολος (766) but whom most editions denote as ἄγγελος, following the *dramatis personae*: 'I report (ἀγγέλλω) to all *philo*i: Orestes has won' (762). Metatheatrical or not, the passage is instructive: Elektra assumes the existence of *angeloi*; the chorus leader reassures her as to the imminent arrival of *angeloi*; the MS tradition indicates an *angelos*; and the text itself presents an anonymous character well aware of his duty to *angellein*.<sup>6</sup> To all intents and purposes, then, his speech (774-858) presents us with a *bravura* example of the so-called *angelia*.

The corpus, however, is not always so tractable. In Euripides' *Orestes* (1353-60) the chorus wish either to see 'for real' (ἐτύμως) Helen's body 'lying bloody in the house', or to hear a *logos* from some servant. That is, they (and by extension the audience) expect either to see a corpse on the *ekkyklêma*, as in, say, *Agamemnon* (*pace* Taplin [1977] 325-27), or to hear a report from an anonymous character entering the stage from the *skênê*—in other words, a so-called *exangelos*. Note the explanatory γάρ at 1360: because the chorus and spectators are ignorant of details, there *must* be an aftermath tableau or an announcement.<sup>7</sup> To the spectators' surprise perhaps, an anonymous Phrygian enters and narrates recent offstage events, in lyric monody, to the hitherto ignorant chorus. This character is sometimes considered a quasi-messenger and his aria (1369-1512) a quasi-

<sup>1</sup> οὐκ ἔστι· νικώμεσθα· ποῦ γὰρ ἄγγελοι; Cropp (1988) *ad loc.*: 'for if we had won we would have had news of it by now'.

<sup>2</sup> Winnington Ingram (1969) 131-2; Arnott (1973) 50-1; de Jong (1991) 119; *contra*, Taplin (1986) 169. Cropp (1988) *ad loc.* adopts a middle course: E. 'exploits our "generic expectation" . . . but for dramatic tension rather than self-referential amusement.'

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Denniston (1954) 62-63.

<sup>4</sup> *pace* Denniston (1939) *ad* 760. Note the force of οὔτοι here: 'Generally speaking, it is hard to do away with kings; be assured that Aigisthos is no exception.' Cf. Denniston (1954) 542-43.

<sup>5</sup> Taplin (1977) 138: the entry of a character whose arrival is explicitly expected, in Euripides at least (*El.* 758, *Bacch.* 1211, *IA* 1098), 'belongs more to the sphere of comedy, where wishes come true and where there is more room for deliberate play on the coincidences of fiction.'

<sup>6</sup> The anonymous reviewer rightly reminds me that the naming of a speaker as *angelos* in the MS is of no significance, especially to Euripides' audience. Indeed, my point is that such speaker designations (as printed in, say, an OCT) conceal certain assumptions about tragic reporting and tragic reporters.

<sup>7</sup> Willink (1986) *ad* 1366-1502; Burnett (1971) 191.

messenger-speech;<sup>8</sup> perhaps the main barrier to fully-fledged membership in the messengers' club is his rather *outré* decision to sing.

Where Euripidean tragedy embeds its messengers as metatheatrically aware self-parodies, Sophoklean tragedy muddies the waters of definition, especially with respect to veracity and speaker identity. In Sophokles' *Elektra* (680-763), for example, the *paidagōgos* delivers a fictional account of Orestes' death, in advance of Orestes' own arrival with the putative ashes of 'Orestes'. In *Trakhiniai* (749-812), Hyllos, a named high-status character, recounts first-hand events leading to Herakles' imminent arrival and certain death. Aiskhylean tragedy, on the other hand, simply refuses to play along. The *angelos* in Aiskhylos' *Persai*, for example, narrates the true story of Persian defeat, in spoken trimeters (249-514). His splintered narrative, however, comprises fifteen separate passages, only four of which comprise twenty-five verses or more; the whole is divided into five *rhêseis*; he recounts events from neither the immediate past nor the immediate vicinity. We might ask of extant tragedy the same question Elektra asks of the chorus. *Where are the messengers?*

In response, Barrett (2002) 96-99 posits a conventional, idealised type, which our surviving examples 'illuminate, interrogate, and mock' (98); the closest extant tragedy comes to this lost archetype is Aiskhylos' *Persai*.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Barrett refuses the sort of definition essayed here: 'It is not hard to see that any system of classification that could comprehend all of these figures in a single category would tell us little. Such a project, I submit, would amount to a matter of definition' (97). This is precisely the point. Despite the unruly corpus, despite Barrett's nuanced treatment thereof, despite various efforts to problematise the concept, messengers and messenger-speeches live on, in tragedy as in scholarship on tragedy. What is more, fuzzy terminology supports fuzzy analysis, and scholarship on 'messengers' is certainly prone to this failing. One ought to establish clearly the axioms or terms from which one intends to proceed—especially with respect to ubiquitous terms such as 'messenger-speech'. On the other hand, I do not endorse unwavering insistence on a given definition: a formal, descriptive (rather than pre- or proscriptive) model should also encourage, rather than close down, further interpretation. We do in fact need (*pace* Barrett) a definition that 'tells us much', or at the very least tells us *something*. I shall thus offer my own definition in due course.

First, however, I shall survey a selection of previous attempts. Bremer (1976) 33 offers this definition of 'messenger-speeches in the formal sense': 'speeches delivered by a person whose sole function in the play is to appear as the bringer of news, and then to disappear; he is not a *dramatis persona* in the full sense, i.e. not otherwise involved in the action.' I submit that this definition of messenger-speeches, *viz.*, speeches delivered by messengers, is circular and thus redundant.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Biehl (1965) *ad* 1369-1502: the Phrygian gives a lyric messenger-speech ('lyrischer Botenbericht') in the role of the *exangelos*. Taplin (1977) 82 includes the Phrygian's monody in a group of 'scenes which, although they have an ἀγγελία function, are cast in some form other than the long speech.' *Orestes* 1359 proleptically marks the Phrygian as an anonymous reporter.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Rosenmeyer (1982) 198, quoted approvingly by Barrett: 'a messenger-speech in its purest and at the same time most ambitious form.'

<sup>10</sup> de Jong (1991) 1-2 defines the *Euripidean* messenger-speech as 'a long, continuous speech in which a messenger reports events that have taken place off-stage.'

Taplin (1977) 81-82 posits three elements of an ‘unmistakeable ἀγγελία’: ‘anonymous eye-witness, set-piece narrative speech, and over-all dramatic function’. I take issue with the third element: a character’s ‘overall dramatic function’ is contestable, and consideration of function risks circularity in this context. (If the function of messengers is to deliver messenger-speeches, then messengers always deliver messenger-speeches because that is their function.) I suggest that we are best to restrict ourselves, for the time being, to *form*. de Jong (1991) 179-80 likewise asserts three criteria, which at least have the virtue of being strictly formal: anonymous speaker (excepting Talthybios in *Trojan Women*), narrative (‘verbs in the past’), and introductory dialogue. Of these criteria, however, the first and third represent recurring, rather than *essential*, elements, and I am unpersuaded that they represent *sine quibus non*. Most recently, Dickin (2009) 7 offers a definition worth quoting at length:

[T]he general term ‘reporting figure’ will be used to include any individual character whose function in the drama is to bring news or an announcement to the other characters on stage. ...

Another type of ‘reporting figure’ to be appended to this group consists of aristocratic characters who are involved in the action of the drama, but who also deliver a speech, as a part of their overall role, which specifically involves the bringing of news.

Aside from the problem of *function*, I would also contend that any speaking character, anonymous or named, is ‘involved in the action of the drama’. Moreover, if narrative is somehow essential to Greek tragedy, then surely those who narrate are even more involved—whether or not this is their ‘function in the drama’.

A synthesis of the foregoing definitions might thus run as follows: a messenger is a speaker whose function is to deliver a messenger-speech. Needless to say, this is a circular definition, and one which *tells us little*. Moreover, our terminology is also misleading, specifically the vulgate gloss ‘messenger’ for ἄγγελος. Consider Jakobson’s model of verbal communication, particularly the tripartite constellation of Sender-Message-Receiver. A *messenger* implies a ‘sender’, a third party from whom the message originates, thereby marking the speaker as a mere conduit for the message. Plenty of effort has already gone into proving, successfully I might add, that tragic narrators are not mere conduits, but individualised speakers, focalisers, people, even. *If we prick them, do they not bleed?* Generally speaking, moreover, ἀγγέλλειν is to *report*, not merely (although sometimes) to *bring a message from someone*. I am not the first to make this observation. Halleran (2005) 173-74 notes, ‘the character relays not a message but information’, which nevertheless obfuscates the issue by ignoring those reporters (so-called heralds) who do relay a message. The corpus as a whole illustrates my point: some characters bring a specific message from a named sender; others report off-stage action on their own account; each pursues a rhetorical agenda. Taplin (1977) 82-83 distinguishes ‘advance messengers’ from ‘aftermath messengers’, but I would suggest that this pertains more to interpretation than definition: whether ‘advance’ or ‘aftermath’, these reporting characters could—and perhaps should—sensibly be included under the same rubric. Others have suggested ‘news-bringer’, which is effective if somewhat unwieldy.<sup>11</sup> Even ‘news-bringer’, moreover, tends to imply a news-sender, so to speak. I propose that ἄγγελος makes at least as much—if not more—sense, in this context, as ‘reporter’, and that we would do well to describe as a *reporter* any character who reports.

<sup>11</sup> West (1987) *ad Eur. Or.* 1369-1502; Fotheringham (2000); Dickin (2009) 6-8.

All of this still invites a very important question: What form does such a report take? Goward (1999) 26-32 rightly concentrates on speech acts rather than speakers, suggesting that we ‘[widen] the definition away from “messenger speech”, perhaps towards the less loaded phrase “message narrative” ’ (27). With this in mind, I shall define a ‘report-narrative’ in tragedy as follows: *a narrative of events in the past, providing new information about changed offstage affairs, delivered to onstage addressees by someone with a superior claim to genuine knowledge of this information*. As indicated earlier, I intentionally set aside considerations of introductory dialogue, character identity, or overall dramatic function; this proposed definition encapsulates the defining formal characteristics of the convention as I see it: narrative, ‘news’, offstage affairs, speaker-addressee constellation, and eyewitness status. Accordingly, I shall now discuss each of these characteristics in turn.

Tragic reporters frequently reflect on their eyewitness status,<sup>12</sup> especially with respect to sight, sound, spectacle, or strangeness/terribleness, that is, τὸ δεινόν.<sup>13</sup> At line 1167 of *Medeia*, for example, the anonymous reporter introduces Kreousa’s death as an ‘awful sight to see’, later using the same phrase to round off the description in a neat ring composition at line 1202. On the one hand, such emphasis reflects an epistemological preoccupation with sight and knowledge in tragedy.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, the perceived veracity of a report-narrative depends on the perceived authority of the reporter. Indications of eyewitness status thus negotiate a relationship between reporter and audience, an ‘external communication’ to match the ‘internal communication’ (de Jong [1991] 119) of narrator and addressee. Sociolinguistics, particularly conversation analysis, has a part to play here: what gives the reporter the right to interrupt? As Lewis (1996) 84-85 has shown, tragic reporters came into being against the background of real-life attitudes to oral reportage, principally the equation between identity and credibility. A known reporter is a trusted reporter.

Regarding the structure of this internal communication, there is indeed a conventional format for introducing a report-narrative:<sup>15</sup> the reporter announces his arrival, sometimes asking the whereabouts of his intended addressee; the reporter makes a general statement of affairs; the addressee asks what has happened; the speaker sums up the specific event, often in a stichomythic exchange; and the addressee requests a detailed description, often with a πῶς-question.<sup>16</sup> For example, the anonymous reporter of Euripides’ *Suppliant Women* draws attention to one recurring element of the convention when he preemptively saves his addressees a ‘long explanation’ of his rank and serial number, as it were.<sup>17</sup> ‘I’ll save you a long explanation: I was a servant of Kapaneus, whom Zeus destroyed with a fiery thunderbolt’ (Eur. *Suppl.* 638-40). The schema allows for multifarious permutations; narrator-addressee interactions manifest dialogic relationships which ought not be dismissed as merely formulaic.

<sup>12</sup> Barrett (2002) 23-55 treats *Persai* 249-531 as an echo of the ‘literary messenger’, a figure from epic who tells a story in full, accurately, first-hand; the passage is a ‘laboratory’ for the study of tragic reporting, one which displays a marked interest in the ontological and epistemological status of the *angelos* (27).

<sup>13</sup> de Jong (1991) 183-84.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Gregory (1985).

<sup>15</sup> Strohm (1959) 266; Mills (1989) 132; Halleran (2005) 174.

<sup>16</sup> de Jong (1991) 34; Perris (2011) 45-46.

<sup>17</sup> Strohm (1959) 267 n.1.

Yet for Bremer (1976), the formal make-up of Greek tragedy substantively determines the report-narrative phenomenon: the almost-ever-present chorus, the irregularity of scene-changes, the inability to stage crowd scenes and miracles, and an aversion—religious taboo?—to onstage death.<sup>18</sup> Keeping certain events offstage necessitates onstage reporting; reporting such events also introduces imaginary offstage space to the theatrical universe. This, too, relates to tragedy’s formal make-up. Joerden (1971) 370 argues that the placement of the *skênê*-building (originally a changing-room-cum-props-shed) behind the *orkhêstra* establishes three distinct regions of offstage space, at least from the *Oresteia* on: left, right, and indoors. Moreover, these regions correspond to the three entrances or exits which a character might use. Offstage space is thus vital to the rhythm of Greek tragedy, punctuated as it is by entrances and exits via the *eisodoi* and the *skênê*-door.<sup>19</sup> Given that they both instantiate offstage space and are also themselves usually preceded and followed by entrances and exits, report-narratives are fundamental to the rhythm of Greek tragedy.

Although everything in the drama is in one sense experienced by an audience as *new*, this is not always the case for characters and chorus. Choral odes, for example, are more often than not exercises in collective memory. Tragic reporters, however, impart new information to someone. As the anonymous reporter at line 1513 of Euripides’ *Helen* says, ‘What new (καινά) troubles you will soon hear from me!’ This is especially significant when one considers the importance of mythological innovation to tragedy: on one level, tragedy presents τὰ ἀρχαῖα as καινά.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, it is of course crucial to most definitions of so-called messenger-speeches that these are *narratives*. Thus de Jong (1991) 180 discounts Talthybios’ speech at *Trojan Women* 1123-55, because there is no introductory dialogue and no narrative content. Disregarding the criterion of introductory dialogue, I would quibble on even the second point: Talthybios uses secondary tenses, and his vivid, extended account of Andromakhe’s plea (in indirect speech, introduced by the aorist ἠτήσατο, ‘she begged’) is very much situated within a sequence of past events.<sup>21</sup> Even if we deny Talthybios narratorial status here, he is still reporting offstage affairs to an onstage addressee based on eyewitness knowledge; as a reporter, he is thus still intimately involved in the structural rhythm of the play. This is a key point: sharing information does not always necessitate narration, but the report-narrative is still a natural extension of a prosaic statement of facts. We see this in the schema discussed above, for report-narratives in fact tend to follow a general statement of affairs and a summary of offstage events. We see this in the *Trojan Women* passage also, where Talthybios’ account of Andromakhe’s plea follows a general statement and summary (‘You are about to sail’, ‘Neoptolemos has gone with Andromakhe’). As Dickin (2009) argues, the role of the anonymous reporter, especially in Euripides, may have developed into a star part, a carefully crafted vehicle

<sup>18</sup> Tragedy’s origins may well lie in violence, specifically blood-sacrifice: Burkert (1966). Cf. also Goldhill (2006); Perris (2011).

<sup>19</sup> Joerden (1971) 369; cf. Taplin (1977) 49-60.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Arnott (1990).

<sup>21</sup> ἡνίκ’ ἐξώρμα (1131) is analogous to the ἐπεὶ-clause with which 60% of report-narratives begin (Rijksbaron 1976). δακρύων ἀγωγός sc. ἦν (1131) is analogous to the sequence of imperfects with which report-narratives set the scene (Allan 2009: 187, 190). Finally, the aorist ἠτήσατο (1133) constitutes the main action, culminating in the present state of affairs described at 1145-55. The aorist indicative ἀφείλετ’ (1146) elaborates on the *present* state of affairs indicated by βέβηκε (1145).

for virtuoso histrionic display. This hypothesis at least fits well with my approach: in many instances, basic reportage is fleshed out as elaborate narrative rather than unadorned summary—*following* unadorned summary, in fact.

I readily allow that one might wish to distinguish non-narrative reports, but I nevertheless assert that this is not so fundamental a distinction as it may seem. Consider the frequency with which report-narratives are immediately preceded by a *How?*-question from an internal addressee. Such questions mark the report-narrative as a direct elaboration of the announcement.<sup>22</sup> So it is that reportage and narration are closely related in tragedy. In sum, the very form of tragedy was such that some form of reportage was often necessary; poets at times made a virtue of this necessity, developing the simple announcement into a set-piece of the tragic performer's art, namely the report-narrative.

I shall now offer some tentative conclusions, and suggest what I hope may be fruitful avenues of further research.

1. A definition of tragic report-narratives such as I have offered here allows for nuanced appreciation of variations on the theme. The Phrygian in *Orestes* is not a pseudo- or quasi-messenger, but an anonymous reporter *who sings*.<sup>23</sup> The fact that he is *sui generis* in this respect does not undermine his status as reporter,<sup>24</sup> for he is a formalised, stylised, typical, anonymous late-Euripidean reporter—with a twist.<sup>25</sup> The *paidagōgos* in Sophokles' *Elektra* delivers a *false* report-narrative.<sup>26</sup> In *Trakhiniai*, Hyllos delivers a report-narrative as a *named* reporter. In *Persai*, we find a *discontinuous* report-narrative.<sup>27</sup> And so on, and so forth.
2. A formal definition of the report-narrative as a discrete element of a transmitted text might help us to identify linguistic nuances in the narrator-addressee relationship. Compare the 'standard' report-narrative context to that in Sophokles' *Elektra*, for example. The *paidagōgos* explicitly marks his summary: 'I tell it in a word.'<sup>28</sup> The two women parcel out the duties of a typical addressee: Klytaimestra eagerly asks the

<sup>22</sup> Finglass (2009) *ad* 679 notes that report-narratives are typically concerned with *how* events have taken place, given the usual announcement of *what* has happened.

<sup>23</sup> Willink (1986) *ad* 1366-1502: 'the only anonymous singing slave in extant tragedy . . . also the only singing ἐξάγγελος.' West (1987) *ad* 1369-1502: 'Our astonishment at the manner of his arrival is compounded when he bursts into song instead of following the conventional procedures of a tragic newsbringer'.

<sup>24</sup> Maas (1962) 53-54: with the exception of the Phrygian, low-status characters in tragedy do not sing; the nurse in *Hippolytos* has recitative anapaests (176-97) and the old man in *Trakhiniai* has both anapaests (974-81, 988-91) and dactylic hexameters (1017-1022).

<sup>25</sup> Biehl (1965) *ad* 1369-1502: the Phrygian's monody takes the place of a stasimon, but as an intermezzo rather than the usual *kommos*. The other twist is that he does not offer a preceding summary, which would ruin the surprise of Helen's disappearance. West (1987) *ad* 1369-1502: the Phrygian's abject fear renders him an unwilling narrator; thus, he does not begin with an outright announcement.

<sup>26</sup> Kells (1973) *ad* 680-763: 'The Messenger's speech is one of the most splendid and effective in Sophocles.'

<sup>27</sup> Garvie (2009) *ad* 249-531: although by Aristotle's or Taplin's model there is not a structural break at 249, there are still grounds 'to describe the whole of 249-531 as the Messenger-scene, the longest in surviving Greek tragedy.'

<sup>28</sup> Some read a double meaning in ξυυθείς (673), 'composed a false story'; cf. Ar. *Ran.* 1052. Jebb (1894) rejects this as 'unfitting'; Kamerbeek (1974) cites ἐν βραχεῖ in support of Jebb. Cf. Finglass (2009) *ad loc.* on the reporter's initial announcement.

questions,<sup>29</sup> while expressions of grief are restricted to Elektra.<sup>30</sup> Finally, Klytaimestra's repeated injunctions against Elektra's involvement in the narrative (675, 678), using the 'impatient' present imperative underscore this unequal division of labour.<sup>31</sup> Klytaimestra's rewriting of the script (for report-narrative addressees) thus casts the narrative itself in a different light: an addressee's stance influences the shape of narrative.<sup>32</sup> Note the present verb διόλλυται in the 'How?' question at line 679, a verb which I term an 'interrogative present'.<sup>33</sup> It has been suggested that the deictic force of the quasi-historic present διόλλυται emphasises Klytaimestra's keenness to confirm Orestes' death and her lack of concern for Elektra's grief.<sup>34</sup> I would add that the falsity of the following report-narrative emphasises the folly of Klytaimestra's misplaced confidence.<sup>35</sup>

3. Reporters are people too. Whether named or anonymous, they interact with other characters, and they are ultimately individuated not by what they do but by how they do it. In *Trakhiniai*, then, the report-narrative at lines 749-812 illuminates the narrator-addressee relationship, in this case the strained relationship between Hyllos and his mother.<sup>36</sup> Hyllos' focalisation emphasises Deianeira as the agent of a crime,<sup>37</sup> Herakles (and Likhas!) as innocent victim,<sup>38</sup> and himself as loving son.<sup>39</sup> His is an angry,<sup>40</sup> unwilling narrative (749),<sup>41</sup> directed at one whom he considers an enemy

<sup>29</sup> Jebb (1894) *ad* 666: ὦ + χαῖρε indicates joyous excitement; cf. Kamerbeek (1974); Fraenkel *ad* Aesch. Ag. 22. Jebb (1894) *ad* 675: τί φής, τί φής, ὦ ξεῖνε; 'serves to show that her excitement is of a joyful kind'; also Kells (1973). Kamerbeek (1974): repeated expressions in questions express a range of emotions, here indicating Klytaimestra's eagerness.

<sup>30</sup> Kells (1973) *ad* 674 considers the initial announcement 'utterly shattering to Elektra'. Cf. Bakker (1966) 31-66 on the 'impatient' present imperative.

<sup>31</sup> Kamerbeek (1974) *ad* 678: 'the most derisive scorn, as if Orestes' death did not concern *her*.' Cf. Finglass (2009) *ad* 660, 674-79 on linguistic and spatial representations of Elektra's pathos.

<sup>32</sup> Sicking and Stork (1997); Allan (2009); Perris (2011) 41-49.

<sup>33</sup> Kells (1973) *ad* 675: Klytaimestra uses the 'vivid historic present' because 'she wants to see the event as it occurred'.

<sup>34</sup> Sicking and Stork (1997) 139. Jebb (1894) *ad* 675: ταύτης is 'scornful'. Kamerbeek (1974): 'She brushes aside, as it were, Elektra and her distress.' Cf. Finglass (2009) *ad loc.* on *polypragmosynē* here.

<sup>35</sup> Kamerbeek (1974) *ad* 679 reads τάληθές εἶπέ α as a (metatheatrical) hint of the false narrative to follow. Kells (1973) *ad* 680-763: Klytaimestra is initially pleased, but at 770-1 and 775-78 she suffers, finally, a mother's pain.

<sup>36</sup> Easterling (1982) *ad loc.*: 'This has the formal features of a Messenger's speech: expansive treatment of the details of the story and a rather ornate style . . . But there are effective reminders that the narrator is a son denouncing his mother'. Davies (1991) *ad* 749 cites A. A. Long, *Language and Thought in Sophocles: A Study of Abstract Nouns and Poetic Technique* (London: Athlone Press, 1968) 97, describing Hyllos' *rhēsis* as 'essentially a messenger-speech' with 'a high style of description.' Jebb (1892) *ad* 748 rightly observes that Deianeira's use of narrative present verbs 'suits the tension of mind with which the question is asked'; these are her final words onstage.

<sup>37</sup> ὡς σὺ προὔξεφίεσο, 759; τὸ σὸν φέρων δῶρημα, θανάσιμον πέπλον, 760; τοῦ σοῦ κακοῦ, 773; τὸ σὸν μόνης, 775; τὸ δυσπάρεινον λέκτρον ἐνδατούμενος | σοῦ τῆς ταλαίνης, 791-92; τοιαῦτα, μήτερ, πατρί βουλεύσασ' ἐμῶι | καὶ δρῶσ' ἐλήφθης, 807-8; κτεῖνας', 812.

<sup>38</sup> δεῖλαιος, 763; τὸν δυσδαίμονα | Λίχαν, τὸν οὐδὲν αἴτιον, 772-73, ὁ δ' οὐδὲν εἶδες δύσμορος, 775; πάντων ἄριστον ἄνδρα τῶν ἐπὶ χθονί | κτεῖνας', ὅποιον ἄλλον οὐκ ὄψηι ποτέ, 811-12.

<sup>39</sup> ἄσμενος πόθωι, 755; δακρυρροῦντα, 796; ἐν μέσωι σκάφει | θέντες σφε πρὸς γῆν τήνδ' ἐκέλσαμεν μόλις, 803-4.

<sup>40</sup> Easterling (1982): Hyllos begins 'abruptly'. Jebb (1892) *ad* 750: the absence of preparatory γάρ is a kind of asyndeton admitted elsewhere in *Trakh.* (555, 900).

(739-40) and a criminal (807-9). It is in this context that his final curse comes, the curse which is for Deianeira the final straw: without a word, she leaves the stage to commit suicide, not unlike Eurydike in *Antigone*. Hyllos' narrative, and the attack on Deianeira which it represents, is very much grounded in the emotional topography of *Trakhiniai*.

4. Report-narratives represent a work-in-progress, with its parameters constantly pushed and redefined, rather than an idealised, original, impossible Platonic form. Not, however, that I wish to treat report-narratives as evidence for tragedy's origins. Our earliest extant tragedian goes to great lengths to avoid spoken narrative.<sup>42</sup> The report-narrative in *Persai* may thus represent a nascent convention, or perhaps a development of pre-Aiskhylean norms.<sup>43</sup> Regardless, it is still some way from the ubiquitous 'typical' report-narrative of Euripidean tragedy, itself constituent in a radical formalism that combines both Aiskhylean and earlier elements.<sup>44</sup> The different species of report-narrative presumably developed over time in response to specific dramaturgical or narratological concerns.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, apparently 'transgressive' messengers may merely indicate that one's definition is insufficiently fluid to account for the varying manifestations of a formal element only fully stereotyped in Euripidean tragedy.<sup>46</sup> Rather than indicating formal ossification, tragic report-narratives illustrate tragedy's synchronic and diachronic flexibility.

Aiskhylos is clearly an important point of comparison here, given that the report-narrative is more a Euripidean-Sophoklean phenomenon. One might also make a comparison with choral narrative in tragedy, Euripides' account of Herakles' labours (Eur. *HF* 359-429) being but one example which comes to mind. Tragedy's instantiation of other choral genres suggests an important contrast with solo report-narratives.<sup>47</sup> Taking another tack, I remind the reader that tragic report-narratives have long been considered an 'epic' feature, principally due to the supposedly languid narrative style, the apparently objective stance,<sup>48</sup> the frequency of direct speech, and the occurrence of 'Homeric' linguistic features (epithets and unaugmented historic verbs) in some speeches. I, for one, am loathe to universalise the epic quality of certain report-narratives, at least with respect to omitted augments: the small sample size may well indicate a *metri gratia* phenomenon.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, unaugmented

<sup>41</sup> Easterling (1982) and Davies (1991) *ad* 749 merely note Hyllos' brief introduction motivating the *rhêsis*. Jebb (1892) *ad* 750 is instructive: it is not *hosion* for the relatives of a murdered person to speak with the murderer if this is avoidable; cf. Lys. 12.24, Isae. 9.20, Aesch. *Eum.* 448, Eur. *Or.* 75.

<sup>42</sup> Taplin (1971), (1977) 80-85.

<sup>43</sup> Garvie (2009) 142; *contra*, Taplin (1977) 85.

<sup>44</sup> Michelini (1987) 95-116; Dunn (1996).

<sup>45</sup> Taplin (1977) 82-3; de Jong (1991) 121-30.

<sup>46</sup> Fotheringham (2000).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Swift (2010).

<sup>48</sup> *pace* de Jong (1991).

<sup>49</sup> Bergson (1953); *contra*, Page (1938) *ad* Eur. *Med.* 1141; Fotheringham (2000). Bergson (1953) records the following undisputed (!) cases: Aesch. *Pers.* 313, 376, 416, 458, 506 (*angelos*); *Cho.* 738 (nurse), 930 (Orestes); Soph. *Trach.* 904, 915 (nurse); *El.* 715, 716 (*paidagôgos*); *OT* 1249 (*exangelos*); *OC* 1606, 1607, 1224 (*angelos*); Eur. *Bacch.* 1066, 1084, 1134 (*angelos*); *IA* 404 (Menelaos).

historic tenses in tragedy are (probably) restricted to reporters,<sup>50</sup> and a descriptive model should perhaps thus include a sub-set of ‘epicising’ report-narratives distinguished by a concentration of epic features.<sup>51</sup>

Before concluding my remarks, it is incumbent on me to devote some speculative attention to that most troublesome of tragic reporters, namely Cassandra in *Agamemnon*. Strictly speaking, Cassandra does not deliver a report-narrative; she is an important counterpart to the *über*-reporter of *Orestes*. She takes the stage *in loco nuntii*, and the many points of divergence serve to underline the importance of her character and the scene in which she features (*Ag.* 1035-1330).

Firstly, Cassandra does not report recent past events as such. Indeed, although her predictions do turn out to be an accurate account of offstage events, and although what she has to say/sing about the future is ‘news’ to the chorus, such predictions do not constitute new *information* as such for the internal addressees at the time of utterance; line 1249 emphasises this distinction as it pertains to the addressee. In a sense, Cassandra’s potent admixture of past, present, and future takes us beyond even the realm of mere fact, as she supersedes the information-sharing duties of a reporter. In that respect, line 1246 is telling: it is here that she first names Agamemnon and declares an explicit prediction: Ἀγαμέμνωνός σέ φημ’ ἐπόψεσθαι μόρον. Second, Cassandra does not unambiguously address the chorus, *qua* addressee, before the iambics beginning at 1178.<sup>52</sup> Her visions are addressed to no-one in particular, but her prophecy is addressed to the chorus. Third, Cassandra has a superior claim to mantic knowledge but is doomed never to be believed—until now. Her control of prophetic language does not, ironically, lead to ‘narrative control’ over her addressees—at least not at first.<sup>53</sup> Cassandra’s prophecies are marked by the language of ‘witnessing’ at 1184, 1196, 1317;<sup>54</sup> contrast the tragic reporter who is (eye)witness to his own truth-telling. Fourth, Cassandra does not narrate. She outlines no sequence of anterior events described with historic verbs. Cassandra’s tendency to favour the present tense (e.g. 1110-11) marks this as a running commentary rather than a report.<sup>55</sup>

Unlike the entrance of a lone reporter from the *eisodos* or the *skênê* (as so often in Sophokles and Euripides), Cassandra arrives as an accessory to Agamemnon’s grand entrance; she does not enter the stage, as it were, until she disembarks at 1072 and reveals that she is not a mute extra—by singing. Her long, stationary silence, following the ‘entrance’ at 783, is highly significant. We are to notice her but not focus our attention on her; our curiosity is piqued but not satisfied until she sings; her silence, remarked on but

<sup>50</sup> Bergson (1953) includes two instances where the speaker is not a reporter, but this is a matter of selective textual criticism: Page (OCT) prints ἔκανεσ for κάνεσ γ’ at Aesch. *Cho.* 930; Diggle (OCT) prints οὐκ ἐκεκτῆμην for οὐχὶ κεκτῆμην at Eur. *IA* 404.

<sup>51</sup> As Page (1938) *ad* Eur. *Med.* 1141 notes, it is ‘very remarkable’ that unaugmented historic tenses are limited to so few texts: Aesch. *Pers.*; Eur., *Bacch.*; and Soph. *El.*, *Trach.*, *OT*, and *OC*.

<sup>52</sup> Cassandra addresses Apollo (*passim*), Klytimestra (1107), and Skamandros (1158). At 1125, Cassandra utters the imperative ἰδοῦ within the context of her vision. Denniston and Page (1957) 165 take σοι (1129), μὲν οὖν (1090), and μαρτυροῖσι γάρ (1095) as indications that Cassandra directly responds to the chorus; I remain unpersuaded.

<sup>53</sup> Goldhill (1984) 87.

<sup>54</sup> Goldhill (1984) 85.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Conacher (1987) 42-43.

not explained, emphasises an air of mystery.<sup>56</sup> What is more, Cassandra does not communicate clearly. There is at first some doubt over whether she speaks Greek; when she does, it is far from pellucid, though she herself claims to know Greek all too well (καὶ μὴν ἄγαν γ' Ἑλλην' ἐπίσταμαι φάτιν, 1254). She both participates in an epirrhematic *amoibaion* (with the chorus) and also mixes song and speech in her own utterances. An increasing proportion of spoken (?) iambics suggests a gradual calming-down, while the chorus, by contrast, moves into agitated dochmiacs.<sup>57</sup> She prefaces her prophecy with an assertion of clarity (1178-83), yet opens with three similes.<sup>58</sup> Finally, Cassandra exits the stage to her death, more a tragic protagonist than a reporter at this point. This leaves Klytaimestra the task of reporting the murder, which she duly does, immediately following the chorus's expression of curiosity at 1370-1.

Whatever form it may take in a given drama, reportage is woven into the fabric of Greek tragedy, and analysing tragic report-narratives is thus part and parcel of analysing form and meaning in tragedy. Given the ubiquity of the so-called 'messenger' in our scholarly literature, it is imperative that we establish a useable, robust, formal working definition. We might then identify similarities, differences, and norms. We might also investigate the relationship between form and language by examining the (socio-) linguistic context of report-narratives. In so doing, we might reconsider once more the status of reporters as *dramatis personae*. Finally, we might investigate the development (or otherwise) of report-narratives within the overall trajectory of Athenian *tragôidia* in the fifth century B.C. Euripides' *Elektra* is right to be concerned about tragic reportage, and we, too, should follow suit.

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<sup>56</sup> Taplin (1972) 77-78.

<sup>57</sup> Denniston and Page (1957) 165; Conacher (1987) 41.

<sup>58</sup> Goldhill (1984) 85.

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