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CHINOISERIES: THE LIVES OF OTHERS IN AESCHYLUS

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RÉSUMÉ

CHINOISERIES : LA VIE DES AUTRES CHEZ ESCHYLE

Ma lecture met en lumière une dimension nouvelle et inexplorée de la figure de l'Autre, incarnée par Cassandre dans *L'Agamemnon* d'Eschyle et par le Chœur des Danaïdes dans *Les Suppliantes,* en lisant la pièce à travers le prisme de la philosophie politique de Frantz Fanon et d'Achille Mbembe. En appliquant la pensée moderne et contemporaine aux textes anciens, je présente Cassandre et le Chœur des Danaïdes comme des figures prototypiques de l'Autre vivant dans un contexte colonial, et leur situation tragique se manifeste à travers les difficultés qu'elles rencontrent pour s'intégrer au contexte dominant : la structure symbolique du monde grec. La position de ces femmes est en outre compliquée par leur entrée et leur inclusion dans la culture majoritaire, un monde narcissique qui les entoure. Ainsi, ces Autres féminins occupent un espace gris, à la fois à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur, et brouillent les frontières entre le soi et l'Autre.

Mots-clés

Eschyle, tragédie grecque antique, *Les Suppliantes, L'Agamemnon,* Danaïdes, Cassandre, Autre féminin, Fanon, Mbembe.

My reading brings out a new and unexplored dimension of the figure of the Other, embodied by Cassandra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and the Chorus of Danaids in the *Suppliants,* by reading the play through the lens of Frantz Fanon and Achille Mbembe's political philosophy.

Taking a theoretical approach to the ancient texts, I cast both Cassandra and the Chorus of Danaids as prototypical Others living in a colonial context, and their tragic situation manifests in the difficulties they face integrating with the dominant context: the symbolic structure of the Greek world. The position of these women, furthermore, is complicated by their entrance and inclusion into the majority culture, the narcissistic world around them. Thus, these female Others occupy a grey space, as both insiders and outsiders, and blur delineations between the self and Other.

Keywords

Aeschylus, ancient Greek tragedy, *Agamemnon, Suppliants,* Danaids, Cassandra, female Other, Fanon, Mbembe.

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UNIVERSAL CITIZENS

The opening stanza, "No such thing / as innocent / bystanding," of Seamus Heaney's poem "Cassandra," his deliberate move to bring to the centre a marginalized figure, inspires my own reading of Aeschylus, where I bring out a new and unexplored dimension of the figure of the Other, embodied by Cassandra and the Chorus of Danaids in the *Suppliants.* Using the political philosophy of Frantz Fanon and Achille Mbembe, I believe that these thinkers impart to readers a new level of awareness and consciousness, as Heaney does, by asking us to interrogate our world views and ethical codes, in what ways we participate in direct and indirect violence and perpetuate trauma. Taking a theoretical approach to the ancient texts, I cast both Cassandra and the Chorus of Danaids as prototypical Others living in a colonial context, and their tragic situation manifests in the problem of language and communication, in the difficulties that they face integrating with the dominant context: the symbolic structure of the Greek world.

In his thought, Fanon offers a provocative critique of the Western imperial machine and describes the psychological impact of racism and the destruction of colonialism. Speaking from his own experience and observations in French-ruled Algeria during the 1950s and personal commitment to the Algerian liberation movement (*Front de libération nationale*), Fanon calls attention to the disconnect between universal values – liberty, equality, and fraternity – and the reality of implementing these concepts in foreign territories, a practice which results in a severe power imbalance. [1] Trained as a psychoanalyst, Fanon focuses on the split of the colonized subject, who is turned Other and treated like an object, whose outer world of oppression reflects back and reinforces an inner sense of inferiority. Convinced of their objecthood, victims of colonialism are, in effect, treated like tools by the colonial regime, namely, the West, mediated by the European Spirit or thought, which Fanon believes is marked by a superiority complex because it is in "…[a] permanent dialogue with itself:" "…an increasingly obnoxious narcissism inevitably paved the way for a virtual delirium where intellectual thought turns into agony, since the reality of man as a living, working, self-made being is replaced by words, an assemblage of words and the tensions generated by their meanings" [2] In this description, Fanon alludes to the primary symptoms of the psychoanalytic term, "narcissism," which, in the Lacanian framework, refers to a moment in the developmental stages of the infant, its ego-formation during the mirror stage, when the child develops a sense of the self by identifying with an ideal image of itself, namely, with its own reflection in the mirror. [3]

For the purposes of my reading, I am interested in simplifying and understanding narcissism to be a type of delusional disorder – both Fanon and Jacques Lacan's treatment of the phenomenon suggest this, with the use of language such as "delirium" [4] and "phantoms," "in a fictional direction," and "his discordance with his own reality" [5]. The narcissist is driven by fantasy and experiences a reality that is only their own: this type of individual projects idealizations of the self onto those surrounding them, including love objects, and sustains their fundamental narcissistic illusion through the emotional and physical abuse of others. Their erotic self-love, in turn, generates a sense of grandiosity, entitlement, lack of empathy, and exploitative relationships. [6]

In the psychoanalytic framework, there is the implication that writing and language itself serve as the tools for narcissists when Fanon asserts that the being of man is replaced by words, their assemblages, and their meanings. [7] In essence, language, comprehended by writing, acts as a substitute for reality, or "a living, working, self-made being" [8] , and, in this way, expresses lack or desire in the succession of signifiers for the signified. Lacan, for example, claims that the

[1] Fanon 2004, p. 109.
[2] Fanon 2004, p. 237.
[3] In Jacques Lacan's mirror-stage, the subject, also object, encounters and imagines an ideal projection of the self (Lacan 2006, p. 76), and the same (mis) recognition occurs in the Narcissus episode of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Book 3.
[4] Fanon 2004, p. 237.
[5] Lacan 2006, p. 76.
[6] For a comprehensive portrait of the narcissist and description of the subject structure, see Durvasula 2015 and 2024.
[7] Fanon 2004, p. 237.
[8] *Ibid.*

phallus functions as a primordial or master signifier, the signifier of the Other's desire, "the lack of being [*manque à être*] that is wrought in the subject by his relation to the signifier…"[9]. This initial substitution, the phallus for the desire of the Other, prepares the infant for the realm of the symbolic and compels the movement of language as a chain of signifiers, the dialectic between absence and presence, self and Other. That is, symbols denote an absent presence, as signifiers for some kind of original, and, because they operate as substitutes, inherently metaphorical, these signs present the risk of miscommunication, misunderstanding, and misinterpretation. Both Lacan and Jacques Derrida bring this problem into relief, the inherent ambiguity of language.[10]

Meanwhile, in a narcissistic system such as the colonial one, its inhabitants develop psychological pathologies and live according to their predetermined, assigned subjectivity. Those in power revert to abuse, while the oppressed succumb to mental disorders and form a sense of self-hatred and inferiority complex. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon explores the psychology of both groups – the hunter and the hunted – and the trauma of racism, exclusion, and Othering. The "European" creates a mythology around the black man, particularly around his body and corporeality. "Whites," as Fanon calls them, project their unconscious erotic fantasies onto the body of the black man and fetishize and associate him with "…sexual licentiousness, orgies, unpunished rapes, and unrepressed incest," "fixated at the genital level".[11] From the Western perspective, Black men symbolize the biological[12] and represent the Dionysian element of nature, the untamed, unrepressed, and primal stage before civilization: "Black men are animals"[13]. The exoticization of the black man complements and underpins another narrative surrounding the North African Algerian population, that it is inherently violent, destined to resort to a life of criminality: "The Algerian, it was claimed, was a born criminal…born idlers, born liars, born thieves, and born criminals"[14].

As one can imagine, the victims of these assumptions, which are normalized by societal institutions, experience an existentialist crisis or confusion of identity. The black man, according to Fanon, is defined by a split because his inner sense of self is constantly being shaped by outer aggressions, for he becomes a racialized subject/object in the European imperial system. Any sense of "Blackness" or "local cultural originality has been committed to the grave"[15] and replaced by a new orientation to the civilizing language or metropolitan culture. The black man fails to complete the process of integration, to ever fully assimilate into his metropolitan surroundings due to the way he speaks, an accent in the French language, and primarily due to the way he looks, the colour of his skin. Internalizing hostile interactions and racist perceptions, he develops an inferiority complex and has one primary aspiration: "As painful as it is for us to have to say this: there is but one destiny for the black man. And it is white"[16]. While white men can seek something beyond man, namely, spiritual transcendence, limitations are imposed upon their black counterparts, whose highest destiny is to be white in order to have any chance of breaking the glass ceiling. The black man, then, lives in a mode of impersonation and concedes to the power structure forced upon him; essentially, he tries to hide, even to erase, his black skin by wearing a white mask. In the case of the black woman,[17] she forms a

[9] Lacan 2006, p. 595.
[10] For Derrida, meanings are never fully present, for they are deferred, and, through detours and postponements, constitute spaces for interpretation and misinterpretation (Derrida 1972, p. 27-29).
[11] Fanon 2021, p. 142-143. - Critics have argued that the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe perpetuate this very stereotype; he has been accused of sexually objectifying the body of the black man and emphasizing his genitals and sexual potency. See Sigal, Stephens, and Lubow.
[12] Fanon 2021, p. 144.
[13] *Ibid*., p. 143.
[14] Fanon 2004, p. 221.
[15] Fanon 2021, p. 2.
[16] *Ibid.,* p. X.
[17] Feminist critiques have been made about Fanon's work by scholars, who claim that he writes from a misogynistic perspective and casts "woman" as a symbolic and epistemological ground or even as a fetishistic sign rather than as a historical subject of the Algerian nation (Dubey 1998, p. 1). See also Brownmiller 1975, Bergner 1995, Hooks 2015, and Kalisa 2002, who identifies "unabashed patriarchal and sexist attitudes" in his thought (Kalisa 2002, p. 3). Other feminist theorists, in contrast, have noticed allegiances in their own work to that of Fanon (see Bartky 1990, Butler 1999, 2004 and 2008, Ahmed 2015, and Oliver 2018) or have defended Fanon's feminist bent and potentialities: see Rabaka 2010 and Sharpley-Whiting 1998, who determines in his writings a "radically humanist profeminist consciousness" (1998, p. 24).

phobia towards her own body, known as affective erethism,[18] in one scenario, and lives with a sense of self-hatred, manifesting in the attempt to erase her blackness by marrying a white man and to lactify or "whiten the race" with future children[19].

Fanonian ideas, in turn, serve as a principal source of inspiration for the writings of Mbembe. In *Necropolitics,* Mbembe continues to probe the consequences of colonialism, the separation and violence it engenders, and establishes a phenomenon that he terms the "politics of enmity", which he believes characterizes contemporary liberal democracies. It is possible, Mbembe claims, that democracies, as communities of fellow beings, have also always been "societies of separation:" "They may well have always had slaves, a set of people who, in one way or another, are regarded as pertaining to the foreigner, members of a surplus population, undesirables of whom one hopes to be rid, and who, in this way, must be left 'completely or partially without rights'"[20]. Democracies today are defined by "[t]he desire for an enemy, the desire for apartheid (for separation and enclaving), the fantasy of extermination"[21], and have "two faces…even two bodies:" "…the solar body, on the one hand, and the *nocturnal body,* on the other. The major emblems of this nocturnal body are the colonial empire and the pro-slavery state – and more precisely the plantation and the penal colony"[22]. It is in the nocturnal body, this underbelly or political unconscious[23], where necropolitics resides: "…weapons are deployed in the interest of maximally destroying persons and creating *death-worlds,* that is, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the *living dead*"[24]. Necropolitics, then, consists in "…subjugating life to the power of death"[25] and the loss of sovereignty, "…a twofold process of self-institution and self-limitation (fixing one's own limits for oneself)"[26]. That is, the individual loses the ability to set limitations on one's own body, due to social and political interference, and is, therefore, not truly alive. This person, embodied by the slave, lives "… in a state of injury, in a phantomlike world of horrors and intense cruelty and profanity"[27], a "mere tool and instrument of production"[28].

This conceptual model illuminates the subjectivity of Cassandra and the Chorus of Danaids, both of whom experience powerlessness and incarnate the underbelly of democracy, the nocturnal body, as necropolitical figures. I believe that it is possible to use the terms, Otherness, blackness, and race, in a discussion of the ancient world and literature[29], for these concepts are already operative in tragedy, as I will demonstrate. The position of these women, furthermore, is complicated by their entrance and inclusion into the majority culture, the narcissistic world around them. Thus, these female Others occupy a grey space, as both insiders and outsiders, and blur delineations between the self and Other. My theoretical approach intervenes in scholarly discussions surrounding both tragedies, which focus on the male-female conflict and examine the ancient material from the perspective of gender[30].

This reading develops Victoria Wohl's observation made specifically about Cassandra, that she is "quintessentially other" and "doubly alien",[31] and extends the same identity to the Chorus of Danaids. I agree with Rebecca Kennedy's argument in her chapter "Fear of Foreign Women in Aeschylus's *Suppliants*," which "…offers a reading of the play not as a story promoting integration, as modern scholars, performers and audiences often see it, but as one cautioning against

[18] The term "affective erethism" refers to somatic disorders or hypersensitivity: "The white colonial gaze institutes in the black person a phobic relation to one's own body; a phobic auto-affection that manifests itself in affective symptoms: behaviors that are similar to neuroses. Fanon calls these 'affective erethism' (41, 130) and 'affective tetanization' (92)" (Whitney 2015, p. 51). In the debate surrounding Fanon and feminism, some scholars argue for a more complex and nuanced interpretation, such as Lindsey Moore, Nicole Yokum, and Clare Counihan who takes note of "Fanon's own mixed and contradictory impulses" (Counihan 2007, p. 167).
[19] Fanon 2021, p. 37.
[20] Mbembe 2019, p. 42. See Schmitt 2000, p. 10.
[21] Mbembe 2019, p. 43.
[22] *Ibid*., p. 22.
[23] In the use of the term "unconscious," I refer to a domain of repression and follow Lacan's description in his first seminar: "The unconscious is made up of what the subject essentially fails to recognise in his structuring image, in the image of his ego – namely those [traumatic] captivations by imaginary fixations which were unassimilable to the symbolic development of his history" (Lacan 1988, p. 283).
[24] Mbembe 2019, p. 92.
[25] *Ibid.,* p. 92.
[26] Mbembe 2003, p. 13.
[27] *Ibid*., p. 21.
[28] *Ibid*., p. 22.
[29] I make the same caveat as Sarah Derbew does in her study: "…the conception of race with which I work here is inevitably contingent on the view of the present and thus a work in progress" (Derbew 2022, p. 18). See also Snowden and Thompson, both of whom explore representations of blackness in antiquity.
[30] See e.g. Seaford 1987, Zeitlin 1992, and Foley 2003.
[31] Wohl 1998, p. 111.

it"[32]. Cassandra and the Chorus of Danaids are situated outside of the symbolic order in a position of "ek-stasis," and the rapprochement with Fanon will elucidate their fragility, yet I will also illustrate how they form a communion with the Greek point of view.

ORIGIN

Aeschylus' *Suppliants* and *Agamemnon* of the trilogy *Oresteia* portray the experience of the Other, foreign and gendered feminine. Previous scholarship has examined the significance of gender in the tragic works: Richard Seaford, for example, focuses on the wedding ritual as a fundamental rite of passage for women, who undergo a metaphorical death in marriage, and writes regarding the Danaids' aversion to marriage in the *Suppliants*: "The attitude of the Danaids resembles in several respects the attitude associated with the Greek bride or her female companions, but taken to an exotic extreme"[33]. This notion of the "exotic" is further explored by scholars, who view the play through the lens of immigration and migration.[34] Kennedy, correcting her earlier view that the tragedy exhibits a trajectory of peaceful integration– "…we should imagine that whereas the Danaids enter the city as metics, they end the trilogy as integrated with the citizens"[35] – in her more recent analysis, detects a xenophobic undercurrent in the play: "My reading does not aim to replace other interpretations but to offer a different perspective that illuminates one perspective from the surely multivalent audience, the point of view of Athenian xenophobes with anti-immigration views…"[36]. This position pushes back against the interpretation that the play harbours pro-refugee, pro-immigrant sympathies in Argos, which simultaneously "…stands as a metonymy for contemporary Athens"[37] and is represented as a "benevolent *hegemon*"[38].

The Fanonian apparatus brings clarity to the status of the Danaids and the question of whether the play promotes anti-immigrant, xenophobic attitudes. First performed around 463 BCE, the *Suppliants* portrays the plight of the Danaids (daughters of Danaus), who, in their rejection of marriage to their Egyptian cousins, escape to Argos and seek asylum from the king there, Pelasgus. Descendants of an Argive woman, Io, they appeal to this ancestry and come to the city as suppliants of the Greek gods. Having Egypt as their origin, the Danaids possess a mixed identity, Greek and non-Greek, and are perceived as foreigners by their Argive host. Pelasgus, upon encountering the chorus of maidens, wonders at their unusual appearance[39]. He begins by asking these women where they are from, "from what country?" (ποδαπὸν), a question that implies their otherness. From an Argive point of view, the Danaids appear out of place, for they seem to "luxuriate in barbarian robes" (πέπλοισι βαρβάροισι… χλίοντα).

The presence of the Danaids provokes confusion in Argive territory, as Pelasgus continues to stress their difference. He compares them to various foreign peoples, Libyans, Cypriot wives, Indian women, and "the man-hating carnivorous Amazons" (τὰς ἀνάνδρους κρεοβότους τ' Ἀμαζόνας)[40], and insists that these women justify their background: "But, once instructed, I would more fully know/ how your birth and ancestry is Argive" (διδαχθεὶς <δ'> ἂν τόδ' εἰδείην πλέον, / ὅπως γένεθλον σπέρμα τ' Ἀργεῖον τὸ σόν)[41]. Pelasgus explicitly asks the Danaids to demystify their heritage, to explain how their "race" (γένεθλον) and "lineage" (σπέρμα) are Argive when they appear otherwise. The request is fundamentally offensive, and these women continue to be othered by their interlocutors. The King, for instance, addresses them as "strangers" (ξέναι)[42] and later draws attention to their status as "immigrants" (ἐπήλυδας)[43], when he expresses a fear of admitting outsiders to his native city: "So never may people say, if evil comes,/'By honoring immigrants you destroyed the city'" (εἴπηι λεώς, εἴ πού τι μὴ τοῖον τύχοι, / "ἐπήλυδας τιμῶν ἀπώλεσας πόλιν")[44]. Pelasgus distinguishes original inhabitants of Argos from these foreign newcomers, whose resident status will be determined by a democratic voting procedure. The moment of hesitation betrays a xenophobic sentiment, for he espouses a classi-

[32] Kennedy 2023, p. 100.
[33] Seaford 1987, p. 110. On women and gender in the *Suppliants*, see also Zeitlin 1992, Foley 2003, and Murnaghan 2005.
[34] See e.g. Vasunia 2001, Tzanetou 2012, and Bakewell 2013.
[35] Kennedy 2014, p. 38.
[36] Kennedy 2023, p. 100.
[37] Tzanetou 2012, p. 16.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[39] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 234-245. I follow Seth Benardete's translation, with occasional adaptions.
[40] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 279-287.
[41] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 289-290.
[42] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 277.
[43] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 401.
[44] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 400-401.

fication system based on sameness and difference, of citizenship conferred to individuals who are more original and truer than others.

Additional dichotomies come into play: oppositions between order and disorder, culture and nature, civilization and wildness, and these categories, in turn, get confused. Danaus, their father, at one point, warns his daughters not to make an overt display of their sexuality: ὑμᾶς δ' ἐπαινῶ μὴ καταισχύνειν ἐμέ, / ὥραν ἐχούσας τήνδ' ἐπίστρεπτον βροτοῖς·. ("I beg you not to bring me shame, you who have/that bloom which draws men's eyes.")[45]. The Danaids represent an unruly feminine force, and, in this way, illustrate the universal experience of women in the prime of life, having reached sexual "maturity;" Danaus once again draws attention to their appearance as he predicts: "…every man, at the sleek allure of maidens,/ as he walks by, overcome by desire,/ will shoot enchanting arrows from his eyes" (παρθένων χλιδαῖσιν εὐμόρφοις ἔπι / πᾶς τις παρελθὼν ὄμματος θελκτήριον / τόξευμ' ἔπεμψεν, ἱμέρο νικώμενος)[46]. Dangerous sexual allure is attributed to maidens specifically and to the race of women, where the metaphor of bestiality applies in this particular case; the Danaids, in tracing their genealogy, describe the hybrid identity of their ancestor Io: βοτὸν… δυσχερὲς μειξόμβροτον, / τὰν μὲν βοός, / τὰ δ' αὖ γυναικός, τέρας δ' ἐθάμβουν. ("…a creature vexed, half-human:/ in part a cow/and a woman in turn, a monster marveled at.")[47] . The mixed race of the Danaids, as a combination of being Argive and Egyptian, maps onto the opposition between human and animal, yet it is interesting that the category of bestiality pertains to a Greek woman. What we would expect to be projected onto the Other, the foreign female, namely, barbarity, is, in fact, associated with the Greek or the self. In this instance, the demarcation between self and other is made obscure, and the hybrid nature of both Io (half-woman/half-heifer) and the Danaids (Greek/Egyptian) amplifies the combination between two opposing poles.

Events in the tragedy, moreover, take place on the border between the city and riverbank, as Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet observe, and the play is interested in the idea of liminality by exploring the tension between culture and nature: "Wild nature serves as a constant reference point, as does the bestiary connected with it…"[48]. Savage nature, in this case, is, in one sense, othered, as Vernant and Vidal-Naquet suggest: "The wild world and the barbarian world may overlap to some degree, as in the case of Egypt referred to in *The Suppliants*…"[49]. At the same time, we should not neglect that Egypt is also very much valued in the play, and that associations with the luxuriance of nature are not uniquely markers of inferiority. Egypt, for example, is described as "the sacred land of Zeus that nourishes all the world" (Διὸς πάμβοτον ἄλσος)[50], a land where "the life-giving blood of mortals flourishes and grows"[51]. This description does not reinforce the colonialist stereotype, which associates Africa with wildness and the unbridled, unsophisticated "organic." Instead, Egypt is represented as a land of fertility and abundance because it is placed under the beneficial influence of Zeus, and these are qualities which are undoubtedly positive in Greek culture during the Archaic and Classical periods. The universal presence of a divine force thus makes the border between the Greek and non-Greek world more porous. In contrast to the notion of the "othered", several elements of the piece, the attention to hydrography (rivers, "nourishing" waters) and the motif of rooting in the land, also establish close correspondences between Argos and Egypt and present them as two quasi-twin lands[52].

Another essential polarity is that between black and

[45] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 996-997.
[46] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 1003-1005.
[47] Aeschylus, *Suppliants*, 568-570. - I follow Sommerstein's suggestion to take τὰν μὲν βοός, τὰ δ' αὖ γυναικός in apposition to βοτὸν… δυσχερὲς μειξόμβροτον, for the construction "…[specifies] a little more precisely the amazing sight the Egyptians beheld." He also rejects having τάν twice: "…this reading is unacceptable because it would mean that the Egyptians saw two separate 'sights', a cow and a woman" (Sommerstein 2019, p. 249).
[48] Vernant & Vidal-Naquet 1990, p. 265.
[49] *Ibid.,* p. 265.
[50] Aescyhlus, *Suppliants,* 558.
[51] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 856-858.
[52] I am very grateful to the anonymous reader, who made this suggestion and pointed out such nuances for sharing their knowledge. It is true that the Chorus of Danaids praises both Argos and Egypt for their bodies of water: "the ancient stream of Erasinus" (Aeschylus, *Suppliants*, 1019), the rivers that quietly/ through this land pour fullness/ and gladden this earth with waters/ brilliant and rich, nurturing children" in Argos (Aeschylus, *Suppliants*, 1027-1030) and "that river's [the Nile] fruitful water" (Aeschylus, *Suppliants*, 855) or "the water that produces cattle" (Miralles, Citti & Lomiento 2019, p. 404). The maidens also invoke the Apian land (Aeschylus, *Suppliants*, 117 and 129) and, in the beginning, explain that they have fled Zeus' land (Aeschylus, *Suppliants*, 4-5 Δίαν δὲ λιποῦσαι/χθόνα…φεύγομεν), referring to the land of Egypt. Garvie, furthermore, notices that sound or form suggests recurring motifs of the play: "At *Supplices* 117, βοῦνιν means 'hilly land', but suggests land of the cow', while Ἀπίαν recalls Apis, the Egyptian equivalent of Epaphus (cf. 262)" (Garvie 1969, p. 71). βοῦνιν is re-echoed in πάμβοτον, "a land of rich pasture" (558) describing Egypt, while Ἀπίαν also has Egyptian resonances phonetically.

white, which, once again, mix in the presence of the Danaids, and their alterity is exhibited by dark skin colour. In the opening choral ode[53], they refer to themselves as "black, a sunburnt race" (μελανθὲς… ἡλιόκτυπον γένος)[54], and they remark that their tender cheek is "burnt by the Nile" (τὰν ἁπαλὰν Νειλοθερῆ παρειὰν)[55]. While, in the ancient context, actors would have worn dark masks to display this difference[56], in a recent production of the play at Sorbonne University in March of 2019, performers covered their bodies with black paint and incurred charges of condoning "blackface," "…a practice with a long racist history in the United States and a colonialist one in France and other parts of Europe"[57]. Visualizations of the performances help us better understand King Pelasgus' reaction to the Danaids, his perplexity, and bring to the fore questions of belonging, blackness, and race, which the French staging emphasizes with the implementation of black paint. Despite their physical appearance, black skin and "barbarian robes", these women must prove that they are Argive and "Greek enough" to gain acceptance into the city: "The Danaids' survival hinges on their ability to erase any distinction between their assigned identity (i.e. their race) and their asserted identity"[58].

On one level, the Danaids enact the phenomenon that Fanon describes in *Black Skin, White Masks* of having to reorient themselves to the civilizing culture in the process of assimilation: in their efforts to integrate, they must efface traces of blackness and live in a mode of impersonation. In their first encounter with Pelasgus, he remarks that they speak "incredible things" (ἄπιστα)[59], when they claim to belong to the Argive race (Ἀργεῖον γένος)[60]. In other words, he experiences a dissonance between their appearance and their words, "beyond belief," because the Danaids do not adhere to a model that he has seen before and constitute an anomaly. Even if these foreign women exhibit fluency in the language, "…which helps them gain access into his [Greek] world"[61], language, at this moment, fails to be comprehended, and remains "unreliable" (ἄπιστα). The Danaids and Pelasgus face a linguistic impasse, even when they are speaking the same language. This is another difficulty that the foreigner confronts: the threat of miscommunication and misapprehension in their encounters with the autochthonous population. The Danaids straddle the border between two different worlds, each with their own respective signs, and feel more intensely the ambiguity of language by having to adapt to the dominant structure and to learn the subtleties of the majority discourse.

Yet when the Danaids are not speaking to a Greek character, particularly in the choral sections, they are clearly depicted as speaking a non-Greek language (even if, following tragic conventions, they obviously continue to express themselves in Greek). The expression καρβᾶνα αὐδάν[62], for example, is inserted in a context where the Danaids also express their confidence that the Argives will understand them: "You know my foreign speech"[63]. On another level, then, they preserve their native tongue in this new context and communicate in a language, even if non-Greek, that is understood by their Argive audience. This is another way in which the Danaids experience and embody ambivalence: they negotiate two symbolic structures and, in so doing, fuse two languages, identities, and cultures to present a third type of category, the mixed or hybrid.

The *Suppliants* sheds light on the process of immigration, the way in which a *polis* navigates the presence of foreigners and the determination of their status. King Pelasgus puts the fate of the Danaids up to democratic vote, which rules in favour of their Argive heritage. The final decision is described by the daughters' father, Danaus[64]. Even though the Danaids claim to be Argive, the laws of the *polis* will never see them as one of their own. The determination is made by democratic procedure, "by the whole people" (πανδημίαι), and ratifies the resolution or "law" (τόνδε κραινόντων λόγον): the Danaids are to be metics, resident aliens or non-citizens, "that we are settlers in this land, and are free" (ἡμᾶ μετοικεῖν τῆσδε γῆς ἐλευθέρους). They gain certain protections, "subject to no seizure" (κἀρρυσιάστους) and "with safety to the person" (ξύν τ' ἀσυλίαι βροτῶν), and no one,

[53] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 1-175.
[54] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 154-155.
[55] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 69-70. - Edith Hall notices parallels with the Herodotean environmental explanation of ethnic differences: "…perhaps in describing themselves as a 'black race, struck by the sun' (154-5) the Danaids reflect the theory that dark-skinned peoples are more heavily suntanned than others (see Hdt. 2.22)" (Hall 1989, p. 173-174).
[56] Derbew 2022, p. 69.
[57] Kennedy 2023, p. 99.
[58] Derbew 2022, p. 72.
[59] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 277.
[60] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 278.
[61] Derbew 2022, p. 70.
[62] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 118-130.
[63] Again, I am very grateful to the same anonymous reader who noticed such subtleties and made this suggestion.
[64] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 605-624.

native or alien, can lead them away captive (καὶ μήτ' ἐνοίκων μήτ' ἐπηλύδων τινὰ / ἄγειν). Their safety is enforced, for any landholder who refuses to rescue them (τὸν μὴ βοηθήσαντα τῶνδε γαμόρων), should be deprived of citizen rights (ἄτιμον εἶναι) and suffer public banishment (φυγῆι δημηλάτωι). The language is legal, and, at the same time, the moment provides a mythological *aition* to explain metoikia, "…an extremely recent legal development at Athens"[65].

The in-between status of metics, neither citizens nor foreigners, mirrors the mixed lineage of the Danaids: Greek Argive, Egyptian, and black. It is true that they gain recognition under the law and differ from "complete foreigners", such as the Egyptians, who will later try to reclaim the Danaids. Upon the arrival of Egyptian sailors and their spokesperson, the Herald, Pelasgus declares these newcomers "barbarians" and differentiates them from Greeks: "You are barbarians, and you trifle insolently with Greeks" (κάρβανος ὢν Ἕλλησιν ἐγχλίεις ἄγαν)[66]. Although the reaction is similar to his previous encounter with the Danaids[67], at this moment, the King comes to a different conclusion about the Egyptians: they are unfamiliar with Greek customs – "Well, first, you don't know how a visitor should behave" (ξένος μὲν εἶναι πρῶτον οὐκ ἐπίστασαι)[68] and religion– "You speak of gods but have no reverence" (θεοῖσιν εἰπὼν τοὺς θεοὺς οὐδὲν σέβηι)[69], unlike the Danaids who speak the language and know how to deploy the Argive code. The Egyptians, consequently, are treated as total foreigners, unwelcome in the land of Argos, and their request is refused, whereas Pelasgus grants shelter to the Danaids: "…you may live in a house separate from the rest. Of these, please choose the best and most agreeable. / I am myself your sponsor, with all the citizens/whose voted will is now being fulfilled" (πάρεστιν οἰκεῖν καὶ μονορρύθμους δόμους. / τούτων τὰ λῶιστα καὶ τὰ θυμηδέστατα / πάρεστι· λωτίσασθε. Προστάτης δ' ἐγὼ / ἀστοί τε πάντες, ὧνπερ ἥδε κραίνεται / ψῆφος)[70].

The gesture is paternalistic, in its attempt to provide humanitarian aid to individuals who are displaced and seeking refuge. Pelasgus sets himself up as the "guardian" (προστάτης) of the Danaids, and his will coincides with the collective will or "vote" (ψῆφος). References to democratic procedures reverberate with the system of fifth-century BCE Athens and reinforce the notion that the theatrical performance serves as a projection of Athenian cultural norms and values and as a reflection of the political structure itself[71]. In Danaus' description of the Argives' decision to incorporate the Danaids into their *polis*, the process is quintessentially democratic, in the sense that the political leader, King Pelasgus, in this case, uses persuasion– "he persuaded" (ἔπειθε) – to effect a specific outcome: "the Argive people" vote with their hands that this should be so (χερσὶν Ἀργεῖος λεὼς/ ἔκραν' ἄνευ κλητῆρος ὡς εἶναι τάδε·) "the subtle windings of the orator" (δημηγόρους… στροφὰς) are then approved by both the Pelgasian *dêmos* (δῆμος Πελασγῶν) and divine law, Zeus (Ζεὺς). Again, in Pelasgus' confrontation with the Egyptians[72], he explains that the Argives have collectively decided to keep the Danaids under their protection– "a decree has been passed by the unanimous resolve of the people of the state" (τοιάδε δημόπρακτος ἐκ πόλεως μία / ψῆφος κέκρανται) – and "the truth," he proceeds, "you hear from free-spoken lips" (σαφῆ δ' ἀκούεις ἐξ ἐλευθεροστόμου / γλώσσης). On this occasion, echoing the words of Danaus, Pelasgus reiterates the importance of persuasion and speech or *logos:* "These women, if they were willing, you'd be welcome/ to take them with you, provided that pious speech persuaded them" (ταύτας δ' ἑκούσας μὲν κατ' εὔνοιαν φρενῶν / ἅγοις ἄν, εἴπερ εὐσεβὴς πίθοι λόγος).

The portrayal of these democratic features on stage offers a validation of the Athenian experience. Aeschylus, as the playwright, has made it possible for Athenians, as they are watching these episodes in the theatre, to look at their own reflection in the mirror,

[65] Bakewell 2013, p. 31.
[66] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 914. - Miralles, Citti and Lomiento notice that there is an antithesis κάρβανος vs. Ἕλλησιν, which echoes that between men and women ἀνδρῶν vs. γυναικῶν in the preceding line 912 (Miralles, Citti & Lomiento 2019, p. 418).
[67] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 234-245.
[68] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 917.
[69] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 921.
[70] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 961-965.
[71] Peter Euben observes that Aeschylus in the *Oresteia* illuminates tragedy's potential to facilitate a primary identification between the audience and what is being presented on stage: "…by putting contemporary political debate into the costume of a legendary but living past, Aeschylus provides the audience with a magnified reflection of their own lives" (Euben 1982, p. 24). I also draw on the scholarship of Froma Zeitlin, who has shown how the mythical setting of Thebes speaks to and reveals Athenian concerns by providing the negative model to Athens' manifest image of itself with regard to its notions of the proper management of city, society, and self: "Thebes, we might say, is the quintessential 'other scene...' There Athens acts out questions crucial to the *polis*, to the self, the family, and society, but these are displaced upon a city that is imagined as the mirror opposite of Athens" (Zeitlin 1990, p. 144)
[72] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 938-949.

that is, to see themselves in the mythological Argive setting. The posture is fundamentally narcissistic, for the audience is looking at a representation of itself and admiring its own image in the praise that the play gives of democratic values, freedom, collective decision-making, and fairness. Such a posture endorsed by this tragedy would suggest that the democratic structure is founded on narcissistic, patriarchal, and paternalistic tendencies in its promotion of self-validating institutions and cultural productions, such as the theatre, which props up social stratification, the social hierarchy found in Athens at the time. The case of the Danaids bears witness to this conclusion: as a manifestation of the Athenian imaginary, they embody the foreigner and symbolize the immigrant and metic, who must be repressed in order to achieve successful integration. The work expresses an underlying anxiety about the figure of the Other, who must be evaluated, judged, and, in the end, accepted by the autochthonous population of a territory. After the departure of the Egyptians and their victory, Danaus warns his daughters, "…an unknown company is proved by time./ For in an alien's case, all the world bears an evil tongue in readiness,/ and it is easy to utter defiling slander" (ἀγνῶθ' ὅμιλόν πως ἐλέγχεσθαι χρόνωι· / πᾶς δ' ἐν μετοίκωι γλῶσσαν εὔτυκον φέρει / κακήν, τό τ' εἰπεῖν εὐπετὲς μύσαγμά πως) [73]. For this reason, among others, I cannot believe that the *Suppliants* offers a story that promotes integration, due to xenophobia that the play exhibits and the precarious position and subjugation of the Other.

POSSESSION

In this section, I focus on the figure Cassandra in Aeschylus' play *Agamemnon* of the trilogy *Oresteia,* which, I realize, has generated a wealth of scholarly discussion. In the past, scholars have been interested in the male/female conflict of the *Oresteia,* which runs across the trilogy as a thread, beginning with the opposition between Agamemnon and Clytemnestra and culminating with the dialectic between Apollo and the Furies. [74] The figure of Clytemnestra has also generated much interest amongst scholars, who have interpreted her in a multiplicity of ways: a mother whose relationship to her own maternity is ambivalent [75], perhaps even a false mother in relation to her son Orestes (Whallon), a powerful character [76], and, most of all, a complex figure, "…with positive heroic qualities, as well as negative, monstrous ones" [77]. The complexity of Clytemnestra, furthermore, is matched by that of Cassandra. It would seem that Cassandra presents us with another genre of woman, a prophetess and foreign slave, rather than a mother or masculine queen. Victoria Wohl aligns Cassandra with other female characters of Greek tragedy, the virgin maiden Iole in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and another silent virgin, Iphigenia: "Cassandra, like Iphigenia, is both a bride (1178- 1179) and a sacrificial victim (1277-1288)" [78]. Yet, she breaks her silence, only to speak an obscure language, "taken for lunacy," "[i]n her prophetic madness, "ecstatic," "possessed by the god who gives her her visions" [79], and Wohl raises the question, "Given her otherness within the world of Argos, will her prophetic ecstasy also be an 'ek-sta-

[73] Aeschylus, *Suppliants,* 993-995.
[74] Simon Goldhill, for example, has noticed, "…gender and politics (inevitably) interpenetrate" (Goldhill 2004, p. 41) and "Aeschylus' stark structural composition" (Goldhill 2004, p. 36), in other words, the Aeschylean emphasis on gender in his treatment of the mythological material: "At each point of the narrative where tragic conflict takes place, this conflict is depicted as a conflict between the genders" (Goldhill 2004, p. 38). Zeitlin also observes the centrality of the male-female conflict and suggests viewing the trilogy as a "gynecocentric document" (1978, p. 150). Zeitlin argues that, while the female serves as a catalyst for events that ensue, the feminine principle must subsequently be suppressed and reinserted into the social order as a subdued force. Such a trajectory fulfils the conditions of Bamberger's theory of the myth of matriarchy, of which the *Oresteia* is an "intricate and fascinating variant" (Zeitlin 1978, p. 151), where the so-called Rule of Women eventually surrenders to masculine triumph and the installation of patriarchy (Zeitlin 1978, p. 151).
[75] Goheen 1955, p. 133-135.
[76] Vickers 1973, p. 358, 394, 424.
[77] Betensky 1978, p. 13. See also Foley, who views Clytemnestra through a gendered lens and suggests that the moral dilemma posed by the queen, after committing adultery and murder, is different precisely because she is a woman (Foley 2001, p. 203); McClure (1997a, 1997b, 1999) and Rabinowitz (2004), both of whom explore gender issues in the *Agamemnon*.
[78] Wohl 1998, p. 211. Seth Schein makes the sensible connection between Cassandra and Iphigenia and also with Clytemnestra: "She herself is a victim – like Iphigeneia, like the young birds of the robbed nest (49-54), and like the unborn young in the mother hare's womb, who are ripped by the eagles (119-22). She is also a Fury, like Helen and Clytemnestra" (Schein 1982, p. 15).
[79] The Chorus says that Cassandra is φρενομανής ("maddened") and θεοφόρητος ("possessed by a god") (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon,* 1140), but the concept of Greek μανία does not necessarily coincide with modern "madness" or "psychosis."

sis,' a standing outside and speaking from beyond the symbolic order?"[80].

My response to this question is yes and no: Cassandra is both implicated in the symbolic order and thrust outside of it, an ambivalent figure infused with an in-betweenness, like the Chorus of Suppliant Maidens. These two parties, Cassandra and the virginal daughters of Danaus, portray an ek-stasis because they are female foreigners, yet, at the same time, they are folded into the fabric of their surroundings. The situation of the Danaids, the many, comes to a head in the situation of the one, Cassandra, who, in my view, epitomizes the post-structural problem of (mis)communication and language. In the case of Cassandra, she represents the Other, who offers a reflection of the self, and, eventually, the Greek/foreigner dichotomy is overcome.

Cassandra maintains a unique position in the tragedy and manifests a duality between being inside/outside. At first blush, Cassandra, an Asiatic princess, war prize, recently captured after the fall of Troy, is depicted as a foreign element in her immediate context and treated as such. The Chorus, for example, compares Cassandra to a captive animal, "I think this stranger girl needs some interpreter/who understands. She is like some captive animal" (ἑρμηνέως ἔοικεν ἡ ξένη τοροῦ / δεῖσθαι· τρόπος δὲ θηρὸς ὡς νεαιρέτου)[81]. In the same scene, Clytemnestra also makes the assumption that her orders are incomprehensible to Cassandra: "But if, failing to understand, you do not catch my meaning, then, instead of speech, make a sign with your barbarian hand" (εἰ δ' ἀξυνήμων οὖσα μὴ δέχηι λόγον, / σὺ δ' ἀντὶ φωνῆς φράζε καρβάνωι χερί)[82]. The trauma of othering and being made Other is made clear in this instance, for her audience emphasizes Cassandra's foreign origins, her barbarian and bestial nature, "in the passion of her own wild thoughts" (ἦ μαίνεταί γε καὶ κακῶν κλύει φρενῶν)[83]. She presents a hole in the Argive/Greek symbolic structure, and her exotic identity maps onto an anomaly that reveals itself in the linguistic sphere.

Over the course of the exchange, however, we notice the evolution of the reactions of the Chorus, which shares from v. 1119 the lyricism of the prophetess. From disbelieving–"No, I am lost. After the darkness of her speech/I go bewildered in a mist of prophecies" (οὔπω ξυνῆκα· νῦν γὰρ ἐξ αἰνιγμάτων/ἐπαργέμοισι θεσφάτοις ἀμηχανῶ)[84]–the Chorus moves to conceding, "All your speech makes dark my hope" (οὔ με φαιδρύνει λόγος)[85], and agrees, "Ruin is near, and swift" (ταχεῖα δ' ἄτα πέλει)[86]. At this juncture, the Chorus not only understands the words of Cassandra, but there is also an affinity between them in the complaint. Moreover, a rupture occurs from v. 1178, with the metaphor of the "unveiled" oracle, "No longer shall my prophecies like some young girl/ new-married glance from under veils, but bright and strong/ as winds blow into morning and the sun's uprise" (αἰ μὴν ὁ χρησμὸς οὐκέτ' ἐκ καλυμμάτων / ἔσται δεδορκὼς νεογάμου νύμφης δίκην, / λαμπρὸς δ' ἔοικεν ἡλίου πρὸς ἀντολὰς)[87], and Cassandra's shift to the more rational language of iambic trimeter. She becomes comprehensible to her interlocutors and asserts at this time, "No I will tell you plainly and from no cryptic speech" (φρενώσω δ' οὐκέτ' ἐξ αἰνιγμάτων)[88]. The text presents her as a clairvoyant and lucid interpreter, who gives a coherent meaning to the history of the palace of the Atreides (from the murder of the children of Thyestes to the matricide of Orestes), to that of her people and to her own, by revealing a divine plan that until then had remained opaque.[89]

As the dialogue unfolds, the subjectivity of the Chorus mirrors that of Cassandra: just as the self/Other divide is eclipsed in the figure of Cassandra, the Chorus also displays a capacity to imagine itself in the position of the alien outsider. After the prophetess switches to a more accessible language, the Chorus wonders at the prophet: "And still we stand amazed at you,/ reared in an alien city far beyond the sea;/how can you strike, as if you had been there, the truth? " (θαυμάζω δέ σου,/ πόντου πέραν τραφεῖσαν ἀλλόθρουν πόλιν/ κυρεῖν λέγουσαν ὥσπερ εἰ παρεστάτεις)[90]. In its interaction with Cassandra, the Chorus considers the guest "strange" or "alien," "speaking a strange tongue" (ἀλλόθρουν), but another understanding of ἀλλόθρουν πόλιν is possible and even more satisfactory from

[80] Wohl 1998, p. 111
[81] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon,* 1062-1063. I follow Richmond Lattimore's translations, with occasional adaptions.
[82] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon,* 1060-1061.
[83] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon,* 1064.
[84] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1112-1113.
[85] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1120.
[86] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1124.
[87] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1178-1180.
[88] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1183.
[89] Judet de La Combe 2001, p. 395-407. I am very grateful to the anonymous reader for raising this important point and pointing me in the direction of Judet de La Combe's commentary.
[90] Aeschlyus, *Agamemnon,* 1199-1201.

a grammatical point of view [91]: ἀλλόθρουν πόλιν would, in fact, depend on λέγουσαν = "I am surprised that you know how to speak of a city [= Argos] which expresses itself in another language." In this case, instead of "making other" Cassandra, the Chorus decentres itself: to speak of its own city, it adopts the point of view of the foreigner. [92] Again, as the Chorus misunderstands and hesitates to believe the prophecies– "But as for the rest I heard I am thrown off the track" (τὰ δ' ἄλλ' ἀκούσας ἐκ δρόμου πεσὼν τρέχω) [93]– the two parties, in the end, come to an agreement: ΚΑ. καὶ μὴν ἄγαν γ' Ἕλλην' ἐπίσταμαι φάτιν | ΧΟ. καὶ γὰρ τὰ πυθόκραντα, δυσμαθῆ δ' ὅμως. (Cassandra: 'Yet I know Greek; I think I know it far too well.' Chorus: 'And Pythian oracles are Greek, yet hard to read.') [94]. The Chorus tells Cassandra that she speaks Greek – this is the meaning of the γὰρ – but adds that her Greek, like that of the Delphic oracles, is difficult to understand. While Cassandra is inside, integrated into the symbolic structure that is Delphi, the old Argives claim not to understand the Greek of the oracles [95].

The reversal of roles illustrates the difficulty of communication and interpretation, language as an unstable medium, and Cassandra's situation puts this dimension of life into relief. Among her own people, the prophetess is cursed, for no one believes her interpretations, as she explains: "For this my trespass, none believed me ever again" (ἔπειθον οὐδέν' οὐδέν, ὡς τάδ' ἥμπλακον) [96]. She exhibits precarity at the time that she is introduced to her audience, for she is defined by literal silence in the beginning: "…she is on stage but utterly ignored for *c.* 170 lines, then neglected for *c.* 80 more, and then silent for about another 40 in the face of Clytemnestra's invitation and command to enter the palace" [97]. The position that one has to language, whether one is situated outside or inside it, has the potential to determine status and to serve as a marker of Otherness [98]. Cassandra embodies what Fanon describes as "[t]he power of language" [99], namely, its ability to provoke affective responses from listeners – fear, anger, surprise, sadness, in her case – and draws attention to the social, public, and political function of language, how it acts as a mutual support between language and the community [100]; language has the capacity to create ties among individuals or, inversely, to demarcate divisions. Representing a lacuna in her own civilization, and carrying this quality into the Argive setting, Cassandra achieves both these effects and may stand as a universal symbol for people in general when they communicate, encounter misunderstandings, and interpret meaning from ambiguity. The paradox of her situation, that she becomes more intelligible in a foreign new environment, and the reversal that ensues between Cassandra and the Chorus of Argive Elders, who move into the position of the outsider in their interaction, reinforce the dialectic between the self and Other, whereby the (Greek) self sees itself in the difference of the (foreign) Other, in an interplay inherent to the dynamics of the theatre.

In her clairvoyance, using perception beyond ordinary sight, Cassandra illuminates both the solar and nocturnal body of democracy and brings us into the realm of the necropolitical. What the tragedy illustrates is Mbembe's claim, "…the Other is no longer external to us. It is within us, in the double figure of the alter ego and the altered ego (*l'autre Moi et du Moi autre*),

[91] Medda 2017, p. 218-219 and Judet de La Combe 2001, p. 508-510.
[92] I am very grateful to the anonymous reader for noticing this subtlety and sharing their knowledge, which helped me reformulate my reading of the text.
[93] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon,* 1245.
[94] Aeschlyus, *Agamemnon,* 1254-1255.
[95] Again, I am very grateful to the same anonymous reader for suggesting this idea, which is central to my argument.
[96] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon,* 1213. - Cassandra explains to the Chorus how she gained her powers from her previous encounter with the god Apollo (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon,* 1198-1213). The idea that Cassandra had sexual relations with Apollo is supported by David Kovacs, "The Way of a God with a Maid in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*," p. 326-34. The way in which Cassandra describes the encounter with Apollo is clearly erotic, for Cassandra describes Apollo as a "wrestler" (παλαιστὴς) and alludes to the moment of climax when the god "breathes delight" (πνέων χάριν), but vv. 1207-08 also explicitly deny that there was a sexual act: "You two together, have you also arrived at the act that involves the procreation of children?" (ἦ καὶ τέκνων εἰς ἔργον ἠλθέτην ὁμοῦ;). Cassandra responds that by giving her consent she deceived Apollo: that is, she subsequently refused the sexual union that she had promised. Kovacs' hypothesis, therefore, is not sufficiently supported by the text, and it must be abandoned, as Paula Debnar maintains, Cassandra "…never had sex with Apollo, at least in any usual, human sense of the act" (Debnar 2010, p. 132-133) and "…enters the palace a virgin" (Debnar 2010, p. 138).
[97] Schein 1982, p. 13.
[98] As Fanon describes the experience of a racialized individual in *Black Skin, White Masks*, the person of colour presents an anomaly to the standard French context precisely due to his use of the language and internalizes his difference. The black man, upon entering the *métropole,* attempts to master French and to perfect his diction in order to place himself on an equal footing with his European peers (Fanon 2021, p. 5).
[99] Fanon 2021, p. 22.
[100] Fanon 2021, p. 21.

each mortally exposed to the other and to itself"[101]. Familiar and unfamiliar, she forms a part of the Greek psyche as the Other, the alter ego and, in this way, modifies the original self, the "altered ego". The Other is differentiated but always exists in relation to the self, "within us," as the Chorus incorporates her presence and assumes the subjectivity of the foreigner to understand the meaning of Cassandra's destiny. In the final section devoted to the fate of the prophetess, moreover, the Chorus expresses its admiration for her courage, "Woman, be sure your heart is brave; you can endure much" (ἀλλ' ἴσθι τλήμων οὖσ' ἀπ' εὐτόλμου φρενός)[102], and mourns her announced death, "Poor wretch, I pity you the fate you see so clear" (ὦ τλῆμον, οἰκτίρω σε θεσφάτου μόρου)[103]. Thus, the Chorus shows empathy for her situation and reveals how it is bound together by a common feeling or sensibility.

As we said, episodes taking place on stage set up a mirror to an Athenian audience and portray democratic practices in the image of the Other, in the mythological past. A democratic moment, for instance, is seen when the collective force, the Chorus of Argive elders, expresses compassion for Cassandra's suffering, and, in this way, their shared experience exposes the solar body of democracy. That is, their empathy constitutes a positive aspect of democracy, a political form that extends equality to the people (*dêmos*) and gives consideration to members of the community. At the same time, their benevolence, such cultural exceptionalism is intertwined with the erasure of Cassandra from the Argive context altogether. This event makes present and reinforces a nocturnal force, for the female foreigner, slave, and Other to the Athenian imaginary, whose alterity sustains the solar face and body, is violently suppressed and sacrificed.

The twinship of lightness and obscurity, the solar and the nocturnal is emphasized by Cassandra in her last words[104]. Cassandra beseeches the latest light of the sun (ἡλίου…πρὸς ὕστατον φῶς) to shine on her plight as "a slave who died, a conquest easy to effect" (δούλης θανούσης, εὐμαροῦς χειρώματος)[105]. The play of oppositions between contrasting gradations carries over into her final words: the shadow (σκιᾶι) that overcomes prosperity (εὐτυχοῦντα), and the stroke of a wet sponge that wipes all the picture out (βολαῖς ὑγρώσσων σπόγγος ὤλεσεν γραφήν). Whereas Fraenkel interprets the sponge as a continuation of the shadow, "…the whole, light and shade together, has vanished forever"[106], Judet de la Combe prefers to see two different scenarios in the imagery, happiness and unhappiness, in which the former is subject to the alternation of fortune: its brilliance can at any moment darken, and "we are in a perpetual struggle between light and shadow" (*on est dans une lutte perpétuelle entre la lumière et l'ombre*). The condition of unhappiness is different: it can be destroyed and doomed to annihilation, that is to say, to oblivion; it is no longer in memories, "having become nothing" (*devenu rien*)[107]. While images change from σκιᾶι to σπόγγος and scenarios, from fortune (εὐτυχοῦντα) to misfortune (δυστυχῆι), I do still see the presence (or absence) of light in Cassandra's final words, for another translation of βολαῖς is possible, "bolt" as in thunder-bolts or "ray" of the sun: "it suggests the notion of a movement swift as lightning"[108]. Obscurity that overshadows radiance turns into a lightning bolt that erases and annihilates the representation or picture (γραφήν). A contrast is drawn, in any case, between the visible and invisible, the seen and unseen, and Cassandra moves between both worlds, the solar and nocturnal, as a liminal figure and opens up the possibility for necropolitics. A slave, deprived of the ability to set limitations on her own body, occupying a space of horrors, she experiences the loss of sovereignty and ultimately subjugates life to the power of death; even in her final threnody, a conflation is made between her own extinction and stranger or foreigner status: "Here in my death I claim this stranger's grace of you" (ἐπιξενοῦμαι ταῦτα δ' ὡς θανουμένη)[109].

[101] Mbembe 2019, p. 46-47.
[102] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon,* 1302.
[103] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon,* 1321.
[104] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon,* 1322-1330.
[105] I follow Fraenkel's suggestion to take εὐμαροῦς χειρώματος "…in apposition to the phrase δούλης θανούσης" (Fraenkel 1950, p. 620).
[106] Fraenkel 1950, p. 621.
[107] Judet de la Combe 2001, p. 573-574.
[108] Fraenkel 1950, p. 621.
[109] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon,* 1320. - With respect to the sense of ἐπιξενοῦμαι, Fraenkel concludes, "…while a general connexion with ξένος may be recognized, the details are not sufficiently clear" (Fraenkel 1950, p. 616).

CONCLUSION

I put Cassandra in juxtaposition with the Danaids because they reveal the experience and destiny of the foreigner, who faces barriers to integration and the risk of forced assimilation. In tragedy's fascination with the female Other and all the other realms with which it is associated – the biological, the unconscious, the erotic – the theoretical apparatus exposes the inextricable link between culture and nature, self and other, the solar and the nocturnal: the creation of an Other sustains the identity of the self. The application of the postcolonial philosophy of Fanon and Mbembe to Aeschylus' tragedies enhances the complexity of the situations of the Danaids and Cassandra, as racialized individuals, and illuminates power structures, the construction of a social hierarchy, based on the relationship that one has to language and culture. At the same time, close readings of the plays make manifest the interchangeability of antithetical positions, for boundaries between Greek and barbarian, inside and outside get obfuscated, and categories reverse. The Danaids and Cassandra combine these opposing poles and open up anomalous spaces for a third category, the hybrid or the mixed. This is to say that there is a fusion of identities, expressed by the metic status of the Danaids and elusiveness of Cassandra, a barbarian prophetess, who paradoxically gains fluency in a Greek context. Onto these female Others is projected specular images of the self, and thus I have pursued the inherent identification that takes place between the audience and text/performance in the theatre, the overlap between binary opposites, and the way in which identities are constructed. ■

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