The Birth of the Mob: Representations of Crowds in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Classics

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Fall 2011
Abstract

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This dissertation surveys the representation of crowds and related phenomena in Homer, the Attic tragedians, and Aristophanes.

The first chapter begins by noting that while recent scholarship has explored the role of the crowd in ancient Roman history and literature, virtually no similar work has been done in archaic and classical Greek studies. Admittedly, Greek poleis were on a much smaller scale than was Rome, and it may be for this reason that classical scholars have assumed “the” crowd is not a feature of ancient Greek society. In order to explain why this absence of study is due to a limited understanding of what crowds are, I survey the development of crowd theory and mass psychology in the modern era. I adopt the model of Elias Canetti’s Crowds and Power, which studies crowds as part of a spectrum of group behavior, ranging from small “packs” to imagined crowds at the level of a nation. Under this expanded model, I argue that crowds are universal human phenomena whose representations in archaic and classical Greek literature are fruitful objects of study. The chapter ends with a brief survey of “crowd words” to be examined, including homilos, ochlos, homados and thorubos.

The second chapter studies crowds in Homer through a close reading of several words and passages. The two crucial words for this study are homilos and homados, which refer respectively to a crowd and the distinctive noise it makes. I survey the homilos in the Iliad as a background of anonymous figures against which elite figures display their excellence, before arguing that the suitors in the Odyssey are the closest Homer comes to representing a crowd. Individually elite, they nonetheless are reduced to the status of a mob by the fact of their aggregation.

The third chapter examines the crowd in tragedy. I argue that the crowd looms as an offstage threat to the elite characters depicted onstage, most obviously in such plays as Sophocles’s Ajax and Euripides’s Andromache and Orestes, but to some extent in almost every surviving tragedy. In this chapter, the word ochlos (not yet present in Homer) is the key crowd-term, although homilos and other words are also present. The works of
Euripides are particularly rife with descriptions of crowds, and my survey illuminates just how central the topic was to his work, in a reflection of the troubled politics of his era.

The fourth chapter examines the discourse on the crowd in Aristophanes. I demonstrate that the comedian’s work is highly concerned with crowds and other groupings of people. Athens during the Peloponnesian war was crowded, not only due to the siege but in mentality and dramatic representation. To many of Aristophanes’s characters, the improper aggregation of bodies is just one symptom of the general disintegration of society and decline of traditional morality. Where in tragedy the crowd must remain offstage, comedy can also bring crowds onto the stage, in such scenes as the opening of the *Acharnians*.

I close with a Postscript presenting two quotes of Plato, from the *Republic* and the *Laws*, whose descriptions of crowd behavior and its effect on individuals take on new significance in light of the deep history of the representation of crowds which this dissertation explores.
CHAPTER ONE
CROWD THEORY

This dissertation surveys the representation of crowds in the two great epics of Homer, the tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, and the comedian Aristophanes. It covers each of these authors in varying levels of detail, and has two major goals: to identify the vocabulary with which they describe crowds, and to infer from these descriptions certain underlying concepts of group behavior and collective psychology.

As a preliminary question, I must address whether such a thing as a crowd was available as an object of representation during the period surveyed. This will require establishing a distinction between two senses of the word “crowd.” According to the modern, sociologically technical sense of the word, archaic Greece and classical Athens clearly did not have crowds. According to a broader sense of crowd, however, as any aggregation of people exhibiting behavior interpreted by those who observe or represent it as threatening and/or volatile, they clearly did. Such aggregations are universal human phenomena – indeed, they are found in many other species of animal. If the goal is to determine, not to what extent the ancient sources conform to our modern categories, but rather how these ancient sources represent crowd-like formations and behavior on their own terms, this broader definition is more useful.

Once this distinction between the narrow and broad understanding of “crowd” has been established, we must consider two formulations of the problem of the crowd. According to one school of thought, which I call the “lowest common denominator” theory, crowds are dangerous because only a relatively few people are capable, or law-abiding, or restrained in their actions, or whatever the quality is that crowds are thought to lack. A large gathering of people, then, will tend to contain undesirable elements; as its size increases, these elements will come to dominate.

The other theory is that of the “Group Mind.” On this model, crowds exhibit problematic behavior not because of the prior character of their component members, but because the very fact of aggregation “dumbs down” the members of the group subordinates them to a collective entity that operates as its own organism, or some combination of these two mechanisms.

Both these theories of why crowds are dangerous things are present in the surveyed texts, implicitly and at times (especially in Euripides) explicitly. Especially in the fifth century texts, written and performed during a period of increased mass participation in politics and intermittent military mobilization, we find representations of groups and group behavior as crucial elements.1

After a history of the development of the modern theory of the crowd, with constant reference to its implications for the investigation of ancient texts, this introductory Chapter offers a list of Greek words that directly denote or are often found associated with descriptions of crowds. The stage will then be set for the examination of individual authors’ works in the subsequent Chapters.

1 The ultimate expression of this is in Euripides’s Iphigenia at Aulis, for which see Chapter Three.
The major work to date in the field of classical studies on the subject of the crowd is Fergus Millar’s *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic*. This dissertation positions itself, as it were, at the other end of the field: its subject Greece rather than Rome, its sources read as literature rather than history. Millar’s own description of his project will serve to highlight these contrasts.

At the beginning of his first chapter, Millar announces:

The first purpose of this book is to present a series of images of the Roman people: assembling in the Forum, listening to orations there, and responding to them; sometimes engaging in violence aimed at physical control of their traditional public space; and dividing into their thirty-five voting groups to vote on laws.²

A few pages earlier, in the preface, he defines his intent as “merely to try to feed into our attempts to understand Republican Rome a sense of the possible significance of a series of images of political meetings that are to be found in our literary sources.”³

Millar restricts his inquiry to images of the political crowd, and indeed his work makes a political argument: that the Roman Republic was more democratic a system of government than is usually appreciated.⁴ The role of mass assemblies in this system, he maintains, has been neglected; the work (originally a series of lectures) redresses this neglect. Arranged chronologically, it studies the political crowd from the post-Sullan restoration of popular elections in the 70s B.C. to the decline of popular politics in the 50s and beyond.

Millar’s project is made possible by the (relatively) thorough documentation of the late Republican period: “[T]he political life of these three decades,” he notes, “is more fully recorded than that of any other period of the ancient world.”⁵ This dissertation takes as its subject one of those “other” periods. It must be stressed at the beginning that this is not an attempt, parallel to his, to assess the (actual, historical) role of the crowd in, e.g., classical Athens. Rather, the focus is on the representation of crowds in canonical archaic and classical Greek texts: specifically, Homer, the three tragedians, and Aristophanes. A trade-off is made: we lose the specificity and thoroughness of Millar’s study, but we access a broader range of sources, dig further into the roots of representation, and engage larger questions in political and social theory.⁶

Where Millar’s study is a “deep” plumbing of a more narrowly defined historical phenomenon, this dissertation is more in the way of a “broad” survey of a theme over

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³ Id. ix.
⁴ “[I]t is difficult to see why the Roman Republic should not deserve serious consideration … as one of a relatively small group of historical examples of political systems that might deserve the label “democracy,”” p. 11. Millar 2002 expands this claim; Morstein-Marx’s Introduction provides full bibliography for the debate over the degree of popular democracy in the Republic.
⁵ 1998:1
⁶ None of this is meant to indict Millar for his focus. Indeed, he acknowledges that his sources are “indirect literary reflection[s]” (9) of historical reality. But since that reality is what interests him, he takes the indirect reflection largely as read, leading to the major methodological difference between his work and this dissertation: his inquiry attempts to see through the reflection to relate and assess socio-political reality; ours, to examine the evolution and variety of the reflection itself.
centuries and across genres. A necessary first step, one that Millar, his concerns being different, does not take, is to define the term “crowd.” Again, my methods will employ a trade-off in comparison to Millar’s. The phenomena he studies are more obviously “crowd-like,” allowing him to avoid any theoretical discussion of “crowd-ness,” and to make specific claims about their social role and historical development. Rome at its height was far larger and denser than any center of population in the early Greek world; its urban “mob” is therefore more directly analogous to that which concerns modern theorists.

For my part, I must engage the theoretical issue of what we mean by “crowd”; I will be forced to defend the “crowd-ishness” of some seemingly dubious textual moments, and I cannot presume to pronounce judgment on the role of “the” crowd at a particular historical juncture. Yet it is to be hoped that the theoretical discussion will not be without its own interest and benefit. Adopting the insight of Elias Canetti (discussed in detail below), who models “crowd” not as a mass modern urban phenomenon but as a universal characteristic of human and other animal societies, I will in subsequent Chapters examine the full range of human groupings represented in the texts I survey.

A more recent publication also stands in great contrast to Millar’s, but in a very different way than does this dissertation. Millar’s is the work of one scholar, written from a highly traditional, nontheoretical perspective, and investigating a clearly delineated field of study. Crowds, edited by two scholars at the Stanford Humanities Laboratory, presents the work of more than a score of writers. Its format and methodology are both far from traditional. The book was accompanied by an art exhibit, and has its own website. The anthology conveys a sense of why crowds are seen by many modern scholars as “good to think with.”

The main body of the book’s text is devoted to the scholars’ essays, but the margins are host to personal reminiscences of participation in crowd events (mostly political protests of 60s/70s vintage), as well as brief lexical glosses on crowd terminology in various languages. In the starkest contrast to Millar’s study, the essays in Crowds are intensely “theoretical,” with constant reference to the modern theory of the crowd, as well as robustly multidisciplinary in their use of art history, sociology, etc. The material covers a wide range of topics and time periods, from crowd photography in fascist Italy, to the French concept of “the masses” during and after the Revolution, to the crowds of shoppers at a high-end fashion store.

Classical material is included, with one essay discussing at length Roman representations of the populus assembled. Yet, in keeping with the overall trend of the collection, the main concern of even this essay is the modern socio-political valence of

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7 Schnapp and Tiews
8 http://crowds.stanford.edu/; Schnapp and Tiews, xi
9 E.g. White.
10 E.g. Sofroniew; Samuels.
11 Schnapp, “Mob Porn.”
12 Jonsson
13 Burstein
14 Connolly. Symptomatic of the divergence between Millar’s project and Crowds’ is the fact that the former is not cited in the latter; although the material under scrutiny – Roman representations of political crowds – is similar, the purposes to which it is put are very different.
the crowd: the Roman crowd as represented in American film. Most frustratingly for our purposes, almost all the antiquarian references are to Roman material. The significant exceptions are three: a brief discussion of the word ὀξχλος; references to Homeric and Olympic sports audiences; and an observation that “[n]ot a single purely Greek institution was incorporated into the American or French constitutions of the late 1700s.” The point is to contrast the modern systems’ avoidance of Greek “direct democracy” in favor of Roman “checks and balances;” the argument is prefaced by the aphorism “Rome is not Greece; and here has lain its virtue.”

Rome is, indeed, not Greece. The study of the Roman crowd has, as we have seen, produced some significant works. The study of the Greek crowd, however, can truly be said to be in its infancy, and has already faced the danger of being strangled in its crib. Sergei Karpyuk, using a (for our purposes) overly restrictive definition, has concluded that there were no “crowds” in pre-Hellenistic Greece. Karpyuk’s article is the only work of scholarship treating the specific issue of the crowd in ancient Greece, and its negative conclusion threatens the viability of my project.

Were I to accept Karpyuk’s conclusion, this dissertation would come to an abrupt halt. To explain why I do not, it will be necessary, after engaging his argument, to provide a broader survey of the history of crowd theory over the last century and more. Thus will I attempt to combine the approaches of Millar and the contributors to Crowds: limiting my inquiry to source material within the bounds of traditional “classics,” but

15 De Vivo, echoing Karpyuk and identifying the two key words surveyed in this dissertation:

The standard definition of the Greek term ochlos … is “a crowd, throng.” In this it closely parallels the term homilos, “assembled crowd, throng of people” … In its standard sense, ochlos is often used in relation to armies and soldiers and their camp followers. …

The term ochlos also carries a political connotation, as “populace, mob.” For Plato [and, as I hope to show, for the dramatists], ochlos can refer to a popular assembly …

The term appears 641 times in the Greek main corpus, from the tragic and comic poets, through the great philosophers Plato and Aristotle, on to the New Testament. The term survived into the Middle French ochlocratie, “a government by the populace,” and modern Italian oclocrazia, “mob rule, rule of the plebs,” from the Hellenistic coinage ochlokratia, “mob rule.” It was soon to enter the English language as ochlocracy, “rule of the populace, mob,” a term used in 1991 by the Observer, in quoting the Russian newspaper Pravda as claiming that Boris Yeltsin’s run for the presidency was backed by an ochlocracy.

16 Guttmann
17 Connolly 81
18 Ibid.
19 Morstein-Marx studies the contio (Roman political assembly) as “center stage for the performance and observation of public, political acts in the Roman Republic” (9), but his study is primarily focused on public discourse: “I seek in this book to examine how mass communication shaped the distribution of power between the Roman People and their political elite in the late Republic … to provide a richer picture of the relationship between public speech and political power” (31-2). The representation of the crowd per se is tangential to such a project.
20 Karpyuk remains the only attempt directly to address the question: “Was there a crowd in ancient Greece?” His adoption of the modern sociological definition of “crowd” dictates that his answer will be negative.

More attention has been paid to the representation of crowds in classical Greek historiography and philosophy. E.g. Hunter 1986, 1988; Segal 1962, esp. at 108 ff. No such similar body of scholarship has yet investigated crowds in earlier and more “literary” texts.
incorporating a discussion of the theoretical issues involved (and, not incidentally, drawing on a broader range of source material).

In his article “Crowd in Archaic and Classical Greece,” Karpyuk states his conclusion starkly: “May we suppose a crowd as a social phenomenon, and crowd activities to have any importance in Greek political life in pre-Hellenistic period [sic]?

The answer is clear: no.” He attributes this alleged lack of crowds to two causes: the small size of ancient Greek poleis, and the nature of Greek city institutions as “a slightly organized civil crowd.”

The first posited cause – insufficient size – implies that crowds, properly so-called, occur only in social settings larger than even such a large polis as Athens. Issues of scale will be addressed later, and are at any rate of little importance here, since Karpyuk himself identifies his second cause as “the main reason.” Quoted out of context, this “main reason” seems nonsensical: Greece had no crowds because its institutions were … crowds? This seeming contradiction can be resolved only with reference to his proffered definition of “crowd.”

At the beginning of the article, he has adopted a definition of “crowd” as “a group of persons with common traditions intentionally acting together outside of existing channels to achieve one or more specifically defined goals.” It is the condition that crowds must act “outside of existing channels” which leads to his second, and “main,” explanation for the supposed absence of crowds. If a crowd is something that escapes, erupts from, or boils over existing “channels” in a sort of socio-psychic “flood,” and if we accept that Greek political institutions were themselves crowd-like in nature, then there was no need for further crowd actions outside of these institutions.

Already it is clear that one’s answer to the question “Were there crowds in ancient Greece?” depends entirely on one’s definition of “crowd.” To Karpyuk, a key requirement is that a crowd be unauthorized, paralegal or illegal: “It is necessary to note that an unorganized mass gathering was an extremely rare phenomenon for archaic Greece …” This claim comes near the beginning of his survey of “alleged cases of crowd activities in pre-Hellenistic Greece.” A few pages later he writes “I could find no sure trace [in Athens during the Peloponnesian War] of crowd activities, city riots and so on.” (Already the problems with Karpyuk’s conclusion are evident. If we go beyond his narrow time constraints, Ober has argued forcefully for a revolution in 508/7.)

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21 Karpyuk 100-01
22 It is unclear whether he means that the physical cities, their populations, or both, were too small. He expands: “There were very few places in ancient Greek cities where crowd activities could take place: agora, the theater, and maybe no more. Greek polis [sic] had no place for crowd activities …” (101). Probably he means less that the physical space was inadequate for crowds to gather, than that the population did not reach some critical threshold for crowd formation, but the distinction is not explicit.
23 Karpyuk attributes this definition to Hoerder.
24 Karpyuk only uses hydraulic imagery once, and that in psychological language removed from its figurative origins (“The psychological necessity for crowd activities could canalize in the assembly meetings,” p. 101), but we shall see that such language is very common in the discussion of crowds: Schnapp 5-7; Canetti 80-84; Theweleit passim.
25 Karpyuk 92, emphasis added.
26 Id. 92-100
27 Id. 96
28 In Morris & Raaflaub 1998.
Karpyuk’s stated definition of “crowd,” quoted above, is further restricted near the end of his introductory section. Discussing the evolution and social significance of the term ὄχλος in fifth-century Athens, he observes: “[Although] used frequently by the Greek authors in the meaning of “crowd,” [oriously] can also mean (and did in fact very often mean) the mob, the low strata of citizens, or non-citizens … i.e., it assumed social or situational characteristics … [T]here is no word in ancient Greek to designate the crowd separately from the mob …”29

Here Karpyuk’s flat statement, that “crowd as a social phenomenon” was absent from Greek life during the period in question, begins to make more sense. An ὄχλος is not a “true” crowd, because the term carries, or can be made to carry, a negative social charge, making it more the equivalent of the English word “mob” (or, although Karpyuk does not use this term, “rabble”). In his model, a “crowd,” properly so defined, cannot be laden with “social or situational characteristics” beyond those given in his earlier definition: group action outside existing channels, directed towards a specific goal. Further semantic loading, e.g. aristocratic disdain for a lower-class group, takes the term out of the realm of pure “crowd-ness.”

Even earlier than this, Karpyuk has opposed another term, “mass[es],” to his restricted definition of “crowd.” “[S]ocial historians and classicists … usually substitute the notion “crowd” for the notion “masses;”30 that is, they use the word “crowd” to describe a social object which he feels does not merit that label. As an example, he cites Millar’s work: “Fergus Millar in The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic … regard[s] “crowd(s)” as a synonym to “the masses” … [p]lacing “the populus Romanus – or the crowd that represented it – in the center of our picture of the Roman system.””31

Karpyuk does not provide a definition of “masses,” but this reference to Millar allows us to grasp at least some of what he means by the term.32 He objects to Millar’s substitution of “crowd” for populus/“mass.” The “masses,” then, are “the people” imagined as a corporate body, envisioned as separate from their elite leaders, yet most definitely not as instantiated in a specific gathering or gatherings of some portion thereof. If a “mob” is not a “crowd” because this is too specific and loaded a term – a group of members of a certain class – then the “masses” are not, and should not be confused with, “the crowd” for the opposite reason – “mass” is too general a concept, transcending any particular assembly of people.33 With both these semantic fields defined out of the picture, we are left with a narrow field in which to search for the “true” crowd.

Karpyuk, in the very first sentence of the article, proclaims a need to “define [his] field clearly.” This is followed by citations – quickly replaced by the definition quoted

29 Id. 81, emphasis original.
30 Id. 79
31 Ibid. fn. 2. The quote is from Millar 1998:1.
32 Some of the difficulty here may result from political/cultural difference. Karpyuk, a Russian (or at least Russophone; he is identified as a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences) scholar, is most likely the product of a political environment in which “the masses” is, or was at one point, a term freighted with significance unknown in Western/capitalist regimes. Anglo-American scholarship, in contrast to (post-) Soviet or even Continental work, may tend to be less politically engaged, with a greater disconnect between political terminology (“masses”) and “objective” scholarly discourse.
33 See fn. 43 below and accompanying text on the distinction between the “dispersed” and “aggregated” crowd.
above – of sociological and psychological definitions of “crowd.”34 Shortly thereafter, he notes that “[t]he pioneers in studying crowd behavior in historical contexts were the students of 18th-19th century Europe, such as Gustave Le Bon or George Rude.”35 This observation comes by way of discussing the nature of the sources used in modern crowd studies (e.g. police reports), citing the absence of equivalent sources for antiquity as a possible explanation for the “lack of scholarly interest”36 in Greek crowds. Still, it is further evidence that Karpyuk is concerned to fit his inquiry into the modern tradition of the study of crowd behavior. Such is his dilemma: after cataloguing, in the main body of his essay, a number of crowd-like events in the ancient Greek city, he is forced, due to the restricted37 model which he chooses to use, to declare these not to involve “real” crowds.

To justify my rejection of Karpyuk’s conclusion that the crowd was a nonexistent or unimportant phenomenon in archaic and classical Greece, and at the same time to justify my own method of inquiry in the following chapters, it now becomes necessary to provide a brief history of the modern theory of the crowd.38 This will place Karpyuk’s work in its broader intellectual context, revealing that his approach is only one of several possible ways of thinking about group behavior. In the end, I will adopt the understanding of crowd – for “definition” would be too restricted a term – found in the work of Elias Canetti, according to which “crowds” in the modern sense are just one point on a spectrum of human aggregations.

Writing in 1977, Robert A. Nye provides a useful summary of the origins and chief characteristics of the modern psychological and sociological theory of the crowd:

The intellectual origins of collective psychology are rooted in the protracted crisis which troubled European liberal political, social and economic theory from 1848 to 1914. … This crisis … was generally perceived to be a result of the destruction of the traditional patterns of life thought to have been characteristic of European society in the pre-industrial age. … Most writers agreed that crowds or other less physically unified collectivities experienced a new form of unity that was qualitatively

34 p. 79. Respectively: “an incidental aggregation, held together by a relatively extrinsic and temporary bond,” and “a group whose cooperation is relatively occasional and temporary, as opposed to that which is either instinctively or reflectively determined.” It is worth noting that this element of temporary grouping is not present in his preferred definition, which is, again, a “group of persons with common traditions intentionally acting together outside existing channels to achieve one or more specifically defined goals” (with the added provisos that this group be both factually existing in time and space, as opposed to the broader concept of the “masses,” and that it not be further characterized as socially low, as in the term “mob”).
35 p. 80
36 Ibid.
37 “Restricted” in a double sense: both by the general desire to align his inquiry with the modern study of the modern crowd, and his particular and peculiarly limited definition of “crowd” as against “mass,” “mob,” etc.
38 McClelland provides the most thorough history of the idea of the crowd in western political thought. The introduction to Schnapp and Tiews’s Crowds contains a brief but useful snapshot of the field today. In what follows I make no claim to a thorough survey; rather, I have chosen my examples and shaped my narrative to provide what I feel will be the most useful and suggestive account.
different from the group considered as a sum of its parts. This collectivity
was described as a being whose influence over the behavior of its
individual members contrasted unfavorably with the liberal ideal of the
rational and conscious human individual. The crowd was non-rational and
was dominated by the ‘unconscious’ and instinctive emotions that were
fused in the general diminution of conscious control that overcame
individuals participating in collective phenomena. Crowds were
accordingly incapable of reflective ratiocination or discrimination, and
ideas ‘suggested’ to them quickly universalized themselves through the
automatic mechanism of ‘imitation’ or ‘mental contagion.’ The leader or
leaders of collectivities were thus of central importance. …
Collective psychology was far from being an observational or
experimental discipline, and reveals behind its ‘scientific’ rhetoric the
anxious efforts of a generation of liberal intellectuals to make conceptual
sense of the world’s most perilous threats to ‘individualism.’…
By defining the problems and strategies of democratic elitism in these
ways, collective psychology lent a certain conceptual bias to elite-mass
theory that later theorists found particularly difficult to avoid.
The heritage that collective psychology bestowed upon elite theory …
consisted of a certain pathologically-imbued concept of the nature of
collectivities in democratizing societies, an authoritarian concept of
leadership that sprang from a hypnotically-conceived leader-crowd
relationship, and the assurance that elites would continue to play an
important role in policy-making despite all appearances to the contrary.
By defining the problems and strategies of democratic elitism in these
ways, collective psychology lent a certain conceptual bias to elite-mass
theory that later theorists found particularly difficult to avoid.\textsuperscript{39}

Nye’s work also serves as a marker for the point of theoretical exhaustion of sociological
discourse on crowd, with its origins in radical theoretical and revolutionary movements
of the early modern period and the elite reactions thereto. By the 1970s, mirroring the
trajectory of politics and ideology in the world at large, theories of group behavior had in
one corner of the academy ascended to the highly theoretical and “post-human” level of
such thinkers as Theweleit and Deleuze and Guattari, while in the field of political theory
proper they had gotten bogged down in a decades- and centuries-old ideological morass.
Nye criticizes this impasse, even as his work to some extent replicates its pathologies.
Just as the political and economic scene saw a (re)turn to the “right-wing” or
“classical” discourse of capitalist individualism following the exhaustion and collapse of
global leftism from the 1970s and especially 1980s, so too would the academic study of
collective action eventually be reborn as an individualist-behavioralist discipline drawing
on economics and game theory. These more recent developments will be surveyed briefly
below, but the story of how matters got to this point must first be related.

\textsuperscript{39} Nye 1977:12 ff.
Describing the consensus of the past century’s scholarship, Schnapp and Tiews, in the introduction to their anthology on Crowds, write: “The conviction in question held that … a quantitative and qualitative difference distinguishes modern crowds from their premodern counterparts. In some deep and essential sense, crowds are modernity. Modern times are crowded times.”

Specifically, both the appearance of the modern crowd, and the initiation of the discourse on and debate over its nature and worth, are dated to the French Revolution. Yet the first generations of this discourse subordinate the crowd to other concerns. The revolutionary crowd is praised or damned according to the author’s view of the desirability of revolution. Not until the close of the nineteenth century does the attempt to study the crowd, per se, begin. These latter works will attempt an objective study of the nature of crowd phenomena in themselves, rather than solely an argument about their political force. Of course the objectivity of these studies is very open to question, yet it is with the beginning of this more “scientific” discourse on the crowd that I will begin a more detailed narrative of the evolution of crowd theory.

Published in 1841, Charles Mackay’s Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds is sometimes included in surveys of crowd theory. Yet, despite its title, the book is not an examination of crowds per se, but rather of “panics” (mostly financial and political). The real object of study is “public opinion,” with crowds as only one possible manifestation of disturbances therein. Mackay’s work is indicative of a rising concern with what will come to be called “mass psychology,” but does not focus on crowds in the literal sense of aggregations of bodies in space.

The second round of European revolutions, in 1848, brought the role of the crowd further into the forefront of social and intellectual concern. Yet even the most vociferous advocates of radical change were not operating with a detailed theoretical model of the crowds, as crowds, which they hoped to unleash. In The Communist Manifesto, the physical aggregation of workers in factories under capitalism is posited as the dialectical process through which capital, in its irresistible drive towards consolidation and efficiencies, unwittingly provides the means of its own overthrow. But no clear

40 Schnapp and Tiews x
41 Jonsson outlines the “French beginnings of the discourse on the masses,” and (51-3) discusses Edmund Burke’s reaction against the revolution, more or less blaming him for negative views of crowd actions in later times: “[P]olitical collectives and social instability … were sealed together by Burke, and ever since then, they will refuse to come apart. They will not uncouple, because there emerges with Burke a discourse that will insist that the two are intrinsically related.” (53) Jonsson maintains that “Burke should be counted among the first modern analysts of mass politics and crowd behavior … [He] connect[s] the rule of number, of mass, to political violence and disorder … lay[ing] the foundation for the conception of the masses that will be gradually modified and refined throughout the nineteenth century, until, in the 1890s, it crystallizes into a purportedly scientific theory called mass psychology.” I have chosen this “crystallization” as the point to begin my survey in detail; Jonsson’s essay details the generations prior.
42 As Nye (1977 passim) observes, however, this new “objective” discourse on the crowd still bears many traces of its elite, reactionary origin.
43 Marx and Engels 229: “[W]ith the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number, it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more … The real fruit of their battles lies … in the ever expanding union of the workers.” The “greater masses” in the first sentence might be actual “aggregated crowds;” the “ever expanding union” in the second is the abstract or “dispersed” pan-European socialist network.
distinction is made between the proletariat as a “class,” on the one hand, and particular revolutionary “crowds” in action. Since the latter are assumed to emerge inevitably from the former, and both are putatively inevitable products of the (scientifically intelligible) progress of history, no sustained attempt is made to understand them in themselves. The revolutionary discourse, no less than the Burlean reactionary discourse, still keeps the crowd waiting in the wings, as it were, not yet ready for its own moment in the spotlight.

That moment can be dated, although with some inevitable arbitrariness, to 1895, with publication of Gustave Le Bon’s La Psychologie des foules (whose English translations have been titled The Crowd). In his introduction to the 1961 Viking Press edition, Robert K. Merton writes:

The enduring influence of Le Bon’s little book presents us with something of a riddle. When first published in 1895, it might have been fairly described as a vogue book, yet there must be something singular about a vogue that endures for two-thirds of a century.45

He offers this as his own supplement to a quote from Allport’s Handbook of Social Psychology: “[P]erhaps the most influential book ever written in social psychology is Le Bon’s The Crowd.” Yet Merton is anything but uncritically reverent:46

[T]he riddle deepens as we consider the character of the book. Probably no single truth in it has not been stated elsewhere more cogently …[S]ome conceptions set forth in the book are now known to be misdirected, misleading, or mistaken. And yet it remains indispensable reading for all of us who are students of mass behavior.47

Merton later lists Le Bon’s “ideological curiosities:”48 “[R]ecurrent traces of political conservatism, an unremitting hostility to every aspect of socialism, a distinct kind of racial imagery, and a picture of woman as weak and acquiescent …”49 Yet he asserts that “[A]ll these ideas lie only on the surface of the book. Once these are cleared away as so much ideological debris, Le Bon’s fundamental conceptions of crowd behavior remain reasonably intact, though incomplete.”

Viewed without charity, Le Bon’s work can indeed seem an expression of mere reaction, tainted with the racism and elitism of his social position. On the first page of his Author’s Preface, he introduces the concept of “race” as an essential, hereditary character

44 Merton xvi-xviii presents Le Bon in the context of his predecessors and contemporaries. xviii: “The squabble [over who’s influenced by whom] between … Le Bon [and his contemporaries] … holds interest for us only as a case of the multiple and at least partly independent appearance of essentially the same ideas at about the same time, this testifying that the ideas have become almost inevitable.” Schnapp and Tiews, in their introduction (ix), adopt Le Bon as the starting point of their survey.
45 Merton v
46 Allport himself, while acknowledging Le Bon’s importance in the field, rejected the concept of a “group mind” in favor of an insistence on methodological individualism.
47 Merton v-vi
48 Id. xxxix
49 Id. xxxvii-xxxviii
of human groups, before announcing that “[C]ertain new psychological characteristics of the crowd … are added to the racial characteristics and differ from them at times to a very considerable degree.” Even more troubling, in his Introduction he introduces a biological metaphor: “In consequence of the purely destructive nature of their power, crowds act like those microbes which hasten the dissolution of enfeebled or dead bodies. When the structure of a civilization is rotten, it is always the masses that bring about its downfall.”

The political dimension of Le Bon’s project is not reaction but adaptation. He seeks to assist the mainstream liberal/bourgeois/republican politician in understanding and controlling the crowd, in an effort to prevent the triumph of the radical/working-class/socialist tendency. If the rise of the crowd is irreversible, it is the result of a “profound modification in the ideas of the peoples.” Changes in the political system are the result, not the cause, of the new order, which was established in the realm of ideology before bearing fruit on the level of institutions. The century-long debate, sparked by the French Revolution, ended in a decisive victory for the proponents of “[t]he entry of the popular classes into political life … The introduction of universal suffrage … is not, as might be thought, the distinguishing feature of this transference of political power.”

Such, then, are the major elements of Le Bon’s worldview that render his views problematic. Blessed with the benefit of hindsight, we have long since learned to beware such essentialist and pseudo-scientific models. Yet there is much in Le Bon that transcends these limitations. He is no simple reactionary. His analysis of the crowd, shot through with veins of racism and misogyny as it may be, is not Burke’s “rhetoric of fear and disgust.” For one thing, by Le Bon’s time it was clear that the crowd’s role in politics was an established and growing fact, not something that could be argued away. The old order was gone forever.

The dogmas whose birth we are witnessing will soon have the force of the old dogmas. … The divine right of the masses is about to replace the divine right of kings. … Universal symptoms, visible in all nations, show us the rapid growth of the power of crowds. … Whatever fate it may

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50 Merton (ibid.), however, absolves Le Bon of “ethnocentric malevolence:” “‘Race,’ for Le Bon, was an ill-conceived idea corresponding loosely to what has since been described as national character structure.”
51 Le Bon 1961:3
52 Id. 18
53 Nye 1977:14
54 Le Bon 1961:13
55 15: “The progressive growth of the power of the masses took place at first by the propagation of certain ideas, which have slowly implanted themselves into men’s minds, and afterwards by the gradual association of individuals bent on bringing about the realization of theoretical conceptions.”
64: “The philosophical ideas which resulted in the French Revolution took nearly a century to implant themselves in the mind of the crowd ….”
56 p. 15
57 E.g.: crowds exhibit characteristics “almost always observed in beings belonging to inferior forms of evolution – in women, savages, and children, for instance.” (p. 36). The association of the feminine, the “savage” and the passive, is part and parcel of the ideological justification both for traditional domestic social structures and for foreign colonialism.
58 Jonsson 52
reserve for us, we shall have to submit to it. All reasoning against it is a mere vain war of words.\textsuperscript{59}

Le Bon begins the main body of his treatise by defining what he sees as the essential quality of a “crowd” (\textit{foule}):

In its ordinary sense the word “crowd” means a gathering of individuals … whatever be the chances that have brought them together. From the psychological point of view the expression “crowd” assumes quite a different signification … Under certain given circumstances … an agglomeration of men presents new characteristics very different from those of the individuals composing it. The sentiments and ideas of all the persons in the gathering take one and the same direction, and their conscious personality vanishes. A collective mind is formed.\textsuperscript{60}

This alleged “collective mind” is “[A]n organized crowd, or … a psychological crowd. It forms a single being …”\textsuperscript{61} The essential and peculiar nature of the crowd is that of a higher unity, a true entity formed of multiple individuals, who in forming a crowd lose their very individuality. It is no mere abstraction; a crowd exists and acts as a living thing. The member of a crowd “is no longer himself, but has become an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will.”\textsuperscript{62}

To Le Bon, these newly-minted automata are guided by “unconscious,”\textsuperscript{63} or “reflex”\textsuperscript{64} motives. Being a member of a crowd shuts off one’s ability to reason, reducing the collectivity to the lowest common denominator of human motives and abilities.\textsuperscript{65} This is true regardless of the intellectual abilities of the individual members themselves: “The decisions … come to by an assembly of men of distinction … are not sensibly superior to the decisions that would be adopted by a gathering of imbeciles.”\textsuperscript{66}

The reference to an “assembly” is not casual. Indeed, one great innovation of Le Bon’s work is that he extends his analysis of collective behavior to include participatory political institutions: juries, parliaments, and the mass electorate. He criticizes his

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{59} Le Bon 1961:16-7
  \item \textsuperscript{60} Le Bon 1961:23. Cf. Karpyuk’s definition at fn. 23 above and accompanying text.
  \item \textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{62} Id. 32. Scattered throughout the book are similes that resonate strongly with Homer’s: “An individual in a crowd is a grain of sand among other grains of sand, which the wind stirs up at will” (33); “[Crowds] are like the leaves which a tempest whirs up and scatters in every direction and then allows to fall” (37); “[C]rows in so many wars … have allowed themselves to be massacred as easily as the larks hypnotized by the mirror of the hunter” (Le Bon 1995:78).
  \item \textsuperscript{63} Id. 28. As discussed above, Le Bon’s concept of the unconscious, in stark contrast to Freud’s, is intertwined with his concept of “race”: “Our conscious acts are the outcome of an unconscious substratum created in the mind in the main by hereditary influences … which constitute the genius of a race” (Le Bon 1995:48). See also 1961:185.
  \item \textsuperscript{64} Le Bon 1961:37
  \item \textsuperscript{65} “[T]he crowd is always intellectually inferior to the isolated individual,” \textit{Id}. 33.
  \item \textsuperscript{66} \textit{Id}. 29; cf. 172, 180, 184. Compare the famous quote: “In all very numerous assemblies, of whatever character composed, passion never fails to wrest the scepter from reason. Had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates, every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob.” (James Madison, Federalist No. 55; Kramnick 336).
\end{itemize}
predecessors\textsuperscript{67} for restricting their inquiry to the “criminal” crowd (i.e., riots/“mobs”). This move is highly significant for the debate, ancient and modern, over the so-called “radical” democracy of classical Athens. In a sense, Le Bon is updating certain arguments of Plato and other Greek anti-democrats.\textsuperscript{68} Perhaps mass psychology, as well as philosophy, is in some sense a series of “footnotes to Plato?”

Le Bon assigns deliberative assemblies the same traits as other crowds: suggestibility, irrationality, inconsistency.\textsuperscript{69} Still, “[t]he suggestibility of parliamentary assemblies has very clearly defined limits . . .” These limits are, chiefly, two: the obligation of representatives to their constituencies,\textsuperscript{70} and the role of leaders within the parliament. Indeed, since in Le Bon’s view any crowd is essentially passive, they require at all times the direction of a leader if they are to work towards any specific goal.\textsuperscript{71}

Early in the work,\textsuperscript{72} Le Bon identifies two major causes of the crowd’s peculiar characteristics, one internal to the psyche of the individual crowd member, the other an inter-psychic process between these members. The first is “a sentiment of invincible power, which allows him to yield to [repressed] instincts which, had he been alone, he would perforce have kept under restraint . . . the sentiment of responsibility which always controls individuals disappears entirely.” This points directly at the most basic descriptive feature of a crowd: its multiplicity. “Power in numbers,” the proverbial phrase, is like an

\textsuperscript{67} Le Bon 1961:18-9
\textsuperscript{68} E.g., Id. 184: “It does not follow because an individual knows Greek or mathematics, is an architect, a veterinary surgeon, a doctor, or a barrister, that he is endowed with a special intelligence on social questions . . . With regard to social problems, owing to the number of unknown quantities they offer, men are, substantially, equally ignorant.” Here Le Bon seems to go past the “lowest common denominator” theory of the mob common to earlier reactionary thinkers, embracing the “Group Mind” model under which aggregation is itself pathological, without reference to the pre-existing qualities of the individual persons who come together to form a given group.

This passage simultaneously looks backwards to the works of Plato, and foreshadows the post-WWII epistemological arguments against central planning given by Friedrich von Hayek in \textit{The Road to Serfdom} and other works. For crowd theory in deep historical context, in a continuous survey from Plato to modern thinkers, see McClelland.
\textsuperscript{69} Id. 186-203
\textsuperscript{70} Le Bon’s discussion is limited to the post-Revolutionary assembly, with no reference to the democratic and representative institutions of antiquity. Presumably he would see the Athenian assembly, involving as it did “direct” rather than “representative” participation, to be less restrained by this consideration, and therefore more purely “crowd-like.”
\textsuperscript{71} “Men forming a crowd cannot do without a master, whence it results that the votes of an assembly only represent, as a rule, the opinions of a small minority,” p. 189. Cf. the “iron law of oligarchy,” the claim of some political scientists (first developed by Michels, 43 ff.), under which any political organization tends toward control by a relatively small group. On the role of the leader of a crowd, pp. 117-40. Still: “A leader is seldom in advance of public opinion; almost always all he does is to follow it and to espouse all its errors.” Le Bon’s concept of the role of the leader is nuanced. Despite his great power, the leader does not have the ability to shape the crowd’s opinions entirely to his will; he must work with its pre-existing characteristics. Much of his and other early social psychologists’ work is highly resonant with Plato, e.g. in the \textit{Gorgias}.

Nye’s (1977:30) observation on Michels is appropriately said of much turn-of-the-century discourse on crowds, whether historical, sociological or psychological: “The entire theoretical structure of \textit{Political Parties} seems to be an extended effort in self-consolation wherein Michels convinced himself that all efforts to improve the lot of the masses were bound to fail.”
\textsuperscript{72} p. 30
intoxicant, temporarily transforming each member of a crowd into a superhuman dynamo.

Le Bon calls the second cause of a crowd’s crowd-ness “contagion.” This is the link established between members of the crowd, as opposed to the aggrandizement of self within each member, and it is ill-defined. “Contagion is a phenomenon of which it is easy to establish the presence, but that it is not easy to explain. It must be classed among those phenomena of a hypnotic order … In a crowd every sentiment and act is contagious …” This is obviously a restatement of his initial definition of a crowd as a “collective mind.” Contagion is then re-cast as an effect of a third cause, “suggestibility,” which is likened to hypnotism. Here Le Bon is playing a sort of shell game, passing from one synonymous label to another, with no real success in defining why members of crowds experience this unifying link with the other members.

I have described Le Bon’s contribution at such length because it sets the parameters for much of the next generation’s, even the next century’s, discourse on collective psychology. For as Nye notes: “[M]ost subsequent commentators … were obliged to absorb or refute him; they could not ignore him.”73 And it is the dual nature of the crowd – a collection of individuals, who are somehow linked to form a collectivity treated as an entity – which poses the major problem.74 It is on the attempt to explain this link that Le Bon’s most prominent successor and critic focuses his attention.

Freud’s Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego has been called “fairly isolated in his larger work,”75 for asking the question “What are the emotional bonds that hold collective entities … together?” As the work’s title suggests, the solution to the riddle of the crowd is sought in the internal workings of the individual psyche. Yet right at the start of this short76 treatise, Freud blurs the distinction between group and individual psychology.77 Having thus incorporated the problem of mass behavior into his larger project, he then seeks to solve the problem posed by Le Bon in the terms of his own psychological model.78

Freud’s work occupies a problematic space in intellectual history. As one of the three titanic figures credited with revolutionizing modern thought (along with Marx and

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73 Nye 1995:4; Merton vi: “Le Bon’s ideas have made themselves felt almost as much among those who disagreed with them … as among those … who took them up substantially intact. Opponents could contradict what Le Bon had to say but they could not ignore it …”
74 Jonsson: “[H]istorians have been able to find out who those men and women were that constituted the revolutionary crowds … [T]he result is that the thing itself – the mass – dissolves and stands revealed as the great simplification it always was.” (p. 53). This tension, between historical inquiry and sociological understanding, will be addressed shortly.
75 Gay xxiii
76 At around 100 pages in the edition cited, it is about half the length of Le Bon’s work.
77 Freud 1959:1:
   It is true that individual psychology is concerned with the individual man [and his] … instinctual impulses; but only rarely … is individual psychology in a position to disregard the relations of this individual to others. In the individual’s mental life someone else is invariably involved … and so from the very first individual psychology … is at the same time social psychology as well. The relations of an individual to his parents … in fact all the relations which have hitherto been the chief subject of psycho-analytic research – may claim to be considered as social phenomena.
78 For a study that situates Freud’s work on this topic within the tradition of crowd theory I have been narrating, see Pick.
Einstein), his influence is in some sense inescapable; yet succeeding generations have rejected many of his conclusions and questioned his underlying biases. In the field of mass psychology specifically, his “leader model” is particularly problematic – yet it was this understanding of group dynamics that structured much of the mid-century discourse on fascism and totalitarianism.

A substantial portion of Merton’s introduction to Le Bon concerns itself with Freud’s reception of his predecessor. As Merton notes, the first chapter of Freud’s work, comprising almost a sixth of the total length, consists entirely of quotes from, glosses on, and critiques of Le Bon’s The Crowd. Freud casts Le Bon as a “problem-finder,” and himself as “problem-solver.” The chief critique is of Le Bon’s notion of “contagion;” Freud notes that “suggestion” is more a synonym than an explanation for this phenomenon.

Freud “us[es] the concept of libido for the purpose of throwing light upon group psychology.” In a characteristic move, the object of study – here, the “collective mind” identified by Le Bon as the fundamental characteristic of a crowd – is translated into the Freudian model of the psyche. The external link between members of a crowd, Freud asserts, is a secondary effect of the internal structuring of each member’s mind. “[T]he mutual tie between members of a group is in the nature of an identification … and we may suspect that this common [identification] lies in the nature of the tie with the leader.”

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79 For an early formulation of the trinity, offered at a time when two of its members still lived, see Freehof 1933. Darwin is often cited as a fourth, or as an alternative to one of these three
80 E.g. Eysenck.
81 Gay vii-xiv
82 Id. ix
83 Freud 1959:12: “We … wish only to emphasize the fact that the two last causes of an individual becoming altered in a group (the contagion and the heightened suggestibility) are evidently not on a par, since the contagion seems actually to be a manifestation of the suggestibility. Moreover the effects of the two factors do not seem to be sharply differentiated in the text of Le Bon’s remarks.” 27: “Le Bon traces back all the puzzling features of social phenomena to two factors: the mutual suggestion of individuals and the prestige of leaders. But prestige, again, is only recognizable by its capacity for evoking suggestion.”
84 On prestige as a system of social control, see Goode.
85 Cf. Totem and Taboo, where “sacred” emotions are argued to be expressions of a primitive familial psychodrama, or Civilization and its Discontents, where the “oceanic feeling” of transcendental oneness is explained in terms of the development of the individual ego.
86 Freud 1959:50. The postwar (re)turn to individualism and behavioral studies in the psychological and sociological sciences rejects this top-down leader-led model, replacing it with a “local” model whereby individual members of a group take their cues from the other members immediately surrounding them, rather than some central leader-figure. See especially Schelling. This “localism” evades the larger question of whether there is a “group mind” by focusing on the individual experience of being in (a corner of) a crowd. As Richard Brooks put it to me in conversation, “There may not be a mind in the group – but there is definitely a group in the mind.”
87 These more recent, economically informed understandings of group formation and behavior, in combination with Canetti’s less easily classifiable writings, fit out a more useful toolbox for investigating representations of group behavior in classical texts. Freud, and his predecessors and successors, both in his own psychological field and in the discourse of mainstream political science, are too concerned with the specific problematic of modern mass society to be easily applied to cultural products from antiquity. It is their “baggage” which needs to be cleared away before we can clearly address the question, not of whether “the” crowd existed in antiquity, but of what modalities of crowd are described in ancient texts.
Each member of the group “introjects” the leader as an “ego ideal,” a concept including that of “conscience” but extending to a broader range of function.\textsuperscript{87} Earlier Freud has chosen two groups as paradigms: the Church and the army. In these examples, each member of the group has incorporated that group’s leader (the figure of Christ for the Church; the figure of the Commander-in-Chief for the army) into their “ego ideal.” The bond between group members, then, is a secondary effect of the dynamic at work within their own mentalities.\textsuperscript{88}

This model is most convincing in the case of groups that have a clearly defined leader or venerated figure at their head. For such groups, Freud is ready to give us a formula: “A primary group of this kind is a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in the place of their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego.”\textsuperscript{89} Yet what of groups lacking a clear leader? At one point Freud suggests that groups can form around libidinal objects other than such a figure,\textsuperscript{90} but this possibility is not pursued in detail. Instead, after arriving at his formula defining a “primary group,” Freud moves on to the second part of his agenda as revealed in the title: the analysis of the ego. Much of what follows is highly technical and inseparable from a broader consideration of Freudian psychology, removing it from the scope of this survey.

One passage, however, is worth noting: Freud suggests that the individual may be seen as “ha[ving] a share in numerous group minds – those of his race, of his class, of his creed, of his nationality, etc. . . .”\textsuperscript{91} Here the individual subject can be seen as a sort of Venn diagram, occupying the point at which all his or her group memberships overlap. Freud contrasts these “stable and lasting group formations” to Le Bon’s “noisy ephemeral groups, which are as it were superimposed upon the others . . .” It is precisely these “noisy ephemeral groups” that I will attempt to trace within archaic and classical Greek texts.

\textsuperscript{87}Freud 1959:52 “[B]y way of functions we have ascribed to it self-observation, the moral conscience, the censorship of dreams, and the chief influence of repression . . . [I]t gradually gathers up from the influences of the environment the demands which that environment makes upon the ego and which the ego cannot always rise to . . .”
\textsuperscript{88}If Freud stands as the intellectual ancestor of later theorists such as Canetti and Theweleit, his contemporary Georg Simmel anticipates much of the work done in the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century by economists and sociologists. Avoiding the larger and only semi-empirical questions of whether and in what sense a “group mind” exists, Simmel attempted to isolate the fundamental units of social geometry. The essential problem of sociology, for Simmel, arises in the shift from a dyadic relationship to a triadic one. When three are together, there is always the threat that two will unite against the remaining one; all of the larger problems of group interaction develop from this fundamental dynamic. See, e.g.: Frisby, III:108 ff. Simmel 1908 is his masterwork.
\textsuperscript{89}Freud 1959:61
\textsuperscript{90}Id. 40:

We should consider whether groups with leaders may not be the more primitive and complete, whether in the others an idea, an abstraction, may not take the place of the leader . . . and whether a common tendency, a wish in which a number of people can have a share, may not in the same way serve as a substitute . . . The leader or the leading idea might also, so to speak, be negative; hatred against a particular person or institution might operate in just the same unifying way, and might call up the same kind of emotional ties as positive attachment.

Classicists have identified precisely this mechanism, of negative self-construction as by contrast to a denigrated group of “others,” at work in classical cultural production. See, e.g., Hall 1989; Cohen.
\textsuperscript{91}Id. 78
Freud’s work has the advantage of clarity. In place of Le Bon’s shifting vocabulary of “contagion,” “suggestion,” “hypnotism” and “prestige,” we are presented with a simpler, and seemingly more scientific, model of psychological investment. Another advantage of Freud, as contrasted with Le Bon, is that his model of crowd behavior relies less on racist and misogynist assumptions; rather, it infantilizes its objects of study. The traits – lack of ability to reason, fickleness – which Le Bon likened to the putative inferiority of “savages” and women, Freud attributes to a regression of the individual to an earlier stage of psychic development.\(^{92}\)

Finally, Freud’s work offers the attractive possibility of solving the individual/crowd dilemma decisively in favor of the latter. If the internal psyche is prior to the external bond, we can, as it were, put the crowd on the couch. The crowd, to Freud, acts as a collective mind because it is an aggregation of individual minds aligned in the same direction. Interaction between these individuals may strengthen the common alignment, but does not serve as its origin.\(^{93}\)

Not all of Freud’s disciples and successors were content with such an explanation of mass behavior. To some, an explanation of groups that focused on the internal dynamics of the individual psyche did not seem to account for the special nature of mass psychology. The attempt scientifically to explain the link between members of a group, pursued to the extreme, is epitomized in the work of Wilhelm Reich.\(^{94}\)

Reich’s career began within the Freudian school, but by the end of his life he had passed beyond the (admittedly vague) borders of “speculative psychology” into the land of the kook. Faced with the horrors of fascism and world war, Reich sought to explain these social pathologies as arising from the misdirection of psycho-sexual energy. He developed a concept of “orgone,” envisioned quite literally as a force, like electricity or gravity, flowing through and between individuals. When inhibited or perverted, this energy could be directed towards destructive ends; channeled deliberately by fascist leaders, it provided the impetus for war and genocide.\(^{95}\) In the postwar period, Reich took this concept to ever more literal heights, advising his audience to masturbate in specially designed boxes, the better to trap and recycle their “orgone.” Reich’s passage into kookdom was motivated by an understandable dissatisfaction with Freud’s solution of the dilemma of groups. As we will see, a variety of other thinkers, while avoiding Reich’s risible pseudo-scientific trappings, will nonetheless insist on blurring the line between the inter-personal and the intra-personal.

In the generation after the Second World War, the study of the crowd flows in two very different streams. Historians adopted more restricted definitions and more rigorous methodologies, while political scientists and general commentators broadened the scope of their inquiry.

\(^{92}\) The break is not complete, however. Freud introduces the concept of regression, and then immediately reverts to Le Bon’s own terms: “[The features of the crowd] so impressively described in Le Bon, show an unmistakable picture of a regression of mental activity to an earlier stage such as we are not surprised to find among savages or children.” At least women are, this time, exempt! Of course, Freud’s views carry their own hefty baggage, esp. that of phallo- and heteronormativity. Freud is not presented here as a definitive model, but as a stage in the development of the theory of the crowd.

\(^{93}\) Cf. Durkheim, analyzing religion as originating in primeval feelings of connectedness arising from our nature as social animals.

\(^{94}\) For an introduction, see Raknes.

\(^{95}\) See especially Reich 1980.
of their concern far beyond previous limits. Meanwhile, theorists of institutions and public choice identified problems with aggregate action at a more theoretical level, far removed from the “mob” in the street; economists began to study group formation and psychology in terms of individual preferences and aversions.  

First, the broadening scope taken by some authors. The classic statement of the postwar fear of, and conceptual expansion of, the crowd is Hannah Arendt’s *Origins of Totalitarianism*. Under her model, the effect of modernity is to dissolve traditional social bonds, resulting in the “atomization” of society. Traditional societies are structured, relatively rigid organizations; the modern masses are like a gas, aimless, dispersed and homogenized. Fascism and other forms of totalitarianism are the effects, not the causes, of these deep social transformations; only after the public has first been “atomized” can it then be restructured into the Stalinist or Hitlerite mold. In a traditional society, the individual subject is defined by his or her relationship to family members, neighbors, social superiors and inferiors, etc., in a dense web of allegiances and rivalries. After the totalitarian transformation, the individual subject is defined solely in reference to, and left entirely at the mercy of, the State.

Arendt’s book was first published in 1951. It expresses in dense, intellectualized form what can be found in contemporary bestsellers such as *The Lonely Crowd* and *The Organization Man*: a fear of “mass man,” of the increasingly large and impersonal scale of postwar society. John Plotz, in his contribution to the Stanford *Crowds* volume, reads these screeds against mass society as expressions of “worry about the unrestrained,

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96 E.g. Schelling, ch. 4: “Sorting and Mixing: Race and Sex” (137 ff.). At 149, Schelling uses diagrams to illustrate a “game” modeling “white flight” as a result of preference cascades. Picture a tabletop covered by black and white tiles in perfect alternation, in the form of a checkerboard. If each tile represents an individual who is happy being surrounded by 4 tiles of their own color and 4 of the other color, the group will be stable. However, a slight disturbance in the arrangement – a clumping of one or the other color of tile at some spot on the board – can, even if each tile’s aversion to “too many” of the other color tile surrounding them is quite weak, “cascade” until near-total segregation results.

Granovetter (1424) uses similar modeling to explain the outbreak of riots. If 100 persons are milling about on the street, we can imagine them arrayed along a spectrum from most to least prone to initiate violent action. Let the person whose threshold for violence is lowest cross over into aggression – by hurling a rock through a window, say – and his act might tip off the person whose threshold is second-lowest. Eventually all 100 people may be drawn into a riot, even if without that first mover the other 95 people would have remained peaceful.

See also Becker, one of the first major attempts to explain group identity and behavior on an “economic” rather than a “psychological” level. Becker attempts to explain racial discrimination as a “solution,” however morally reprehensible, to the problem of information costs. In the absence of perfect knowledge, he posits, people will rationally use “shorthand” signifiers to label individuals, predict their behavior, and evaluate their worth. Legal and interdisciplinary scholars such as Richard Brooks (forthcoming) have continued this tradition, conducting field experiments in, e.g., racial self-sorting on public beaches.

For a popularization of these preference models of group behavior see Gladwell.

97 Plotz contextualizes Arendt within a general postwar fear of the power of “the social,” before identifying a return, in the 1980s and 90s, to a pro-social message in sociology and political theory. This return is distinct from, although not necessarily incompatible with, the simultaneous turn in other academic circles towards a local/individualized model of group behavior.

98 Cf. Freud’s brief allusion, referenced above, to the individual as the meeting point of multiple “group” identities.
licentious, and determinedly egalitarian danger of crowds." Here we find Le Bon’s “dispersed crowd” taken to its furthest possible extent: all of society as one enormous crowd, faceless and stifling, omnipotent and threatening:

Whatever the precise nature of the long historical evolution of the bourgeoisie in the various European countries, the political principles of the mob, as encountered in imperialist ideologies and totalitarian movements, betray a surprisingly strong affinity with the political attitudes of bourgeois society, if the latter are cleansed of hypocrisy and untainted by concessions to Christian tradition. What more recently made the nihilistic attitudes of the mob so intellectually attractive to the bourgeoisie is a relationship of principle that goes far beyond the actual birth of the mob. …

[Completely unprincipled power politics could not be played until a mass of people was available who were free of all principles and so large numerically that they surpassed the ability of state and society to take care of them. The fact that this mob could be used only by imperialist politicians and inspired only by racial doctrines made it appear as though imperialism alone were able to settle the grave domestic, social, and economic problems of modern times. …

Hobbes affords the best possible theoretical foundation for those naturalistic ideologies which hold nations to be tribes, separated from each other by nature, without any connection whatever, unconscious of the solidarity of mankind and having in common only the instinct for self-preservation which man shares with the animal world. If the idea of humanity, of which the most conclusive symbol is the common origin of the human species, is no longer valid, then nothing is more plausible than a theory according to which brown, yellow, or black races are descended from some other species of apes than the white race, and that all together are predestined by nature to war against each other until they have disappeared from the face of the earth. If it should prove to be true that we are imprisoned in Hobbes's endless process of power accumulation, then the organization of the mob will inevitably take the form of transformation of nations into races, for there is, under the conditions of an accumulating society, no other unifying bond available between individuals who in the very process of power accumulation and expansion are losing all natural connections with their fellow-men. … For no matter what learned scientists may say, race is, politically speaking, not the beginning of humanity but its end, not the origin of peoples but their decay, not the natural birth of man but his unnatural death."

99 204; Plotz also phrases this as “popular sociology’s dependence on a paradigm that feared the social, particularly the social as manifested in crowd actions.”

100 Arendt 156 ff.
This, then, is one postwar tendency. At roughly the same time, a new kind of historical inquiry sought to revise and replace the Le Bon-influenced model of the crowd. George Rudé provides a classic example of this new history of the crowd. He identifies the period of his title as one of transition, from the premodern to the modern crowd. The goal is to “get beyond the stereotypes and probe into the crowd’s outlook,”101 to dissect “the crowd and its components … [before] return[ing] to the question … [of] the nature and importance of an event in history.” Where earlier theorists of the crowd, represented in this survey by Le Bon and Freud, focused on the “hypnotic” power of the leader, Rudé treats the crowd as an agent in its own right, with comprehensible goals and strategies to achieve those goals.

Throughout his introduction he is careful to define his work against this earlier tradition of mass psychology, which he regards as compromised by reactionary political sympathies. Characterizations of crowds as “fickle, irrational and destructive”102 are “hoary old preconceptions,” and Rudé – making no secret of his own sympathies for the revolutionary tendency103 – will have none of them.

He begins by giving a definition of “crowd” as:

[W]hat sociologists term a “face-to-face” or “direct contact” group, and not any type of a collective phenomenon, such as a nation, a clan, case, political party, village community, social class, the general “public,” or any other “collectivity too large to aggregate” … [W]e may exclude from our present consideration crowds that are casually drawn together, like sight-seers … “audience” crowds … who gather together in lecture hall matches or bullfights … In fact, our main attention will be given to political demonstrations and to what sociologists have termed the “aggressive mob” or the “hostile outburst” – to such activities as strikes, riots, rebellions, insurrections, and revolutions.104

Karpyuk’s definition of crowd, it is useful to recall, is as “a group of persons with common traditions intentionally acting together outside of existing channels to achieve one or more specifically defined goals.”105 The phrase “outside of existing channels” seems, in light of his conclusion that ancient Greece did not have “true” crowds, to mean to Karpyuk something like this “aggressive” or “hostile” component of Rudé’s object of study. It is important to note that by adopting a tightly restricted model of “crowd,” Rudé

101 Rudé 1964:11; see also Rudé 1967. His work “examines crowd events “from below,” analyzing the varied demographic makeup of Revolutionary multitudes and emphasizing the motivated and purposeful nature of crowd behavior” (Schnapp and Tiews xiii).
102 Rudé 1964:10
103 Id. 8-9. Especially noteworthy: Rudé criticizes both the reactionary and the revolutionary discourse for treating the crowd as an abstraction: to the former, the “mob;” to the latter, the “masses.” Cf. my earlier discussion of the first century of debate following the French Revolution. Rudé will concern himself throughout with the specific historical characteristics and political outcomes of crowd actions – especially the “food riot,” taken as the paradigm of the pre/early-modern crowd.
104 Id. 3-4
105 Id. 100-1
– and Karpyuk - are foreswearing precisely those types of mass aggregation – festival, audience, political assembly – which abound in our classical sources. Rudé explicitly defines his project against Le Bon’s: “Gustave Le Bon …being preoccupied with mental states rather than physical phenomena, includes in his crowd not only castes, clans and classes but electoral “crowds,” criminal juries, and parliamentary assemblies.” Yet in attempting to narrow his focus, Rudé is too restrictive; surely “assemblies” are physical phenomena? If Karpyuk positions himself towards Rudé’s end of the spectrum, I will seek a middle ground. While limiting my survey to the depiction of the “aggregated” crowd, I will adopt a much looser definition of “crowd” than do Karpyuk and Rudé.

While the model of crowd behavior influenced by Le Bon may have been compromised by right-wing politics, the new history of the crowd was not free of its own ideological commitments. “The American school of social psychology, having reached a somewhat similar conclusion [to Rudé’s and that of other “leftist historians”] regarding the agency of collectivities … found itself poised to react to the mass demonstrations of the 1960s and 1970s.” If Le Bon viewed the trend of his day towards ever-greater mass participation in politics with the horror of a reactionary, many of the postwar scholars had a reaction quite opposite, but equally political, to what seemed to be a resurgence of mass action in their own time, the period defined in historical shorthand as that of the war in Vietnam. The personal testimonies printed in the margins of Schnapp and Tiews’s *Crowds*, speaking fondly as they do of civil rights and antiwar protests from this era, are contemporary examples of the ease with which scholarly study of the crowd can blend into political championing of it.

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106 Again, it is important to note that studies of the classical crowd have focused on Rome for obvious reasons. With its much greater population, Rome exhibits group formations that are directly analogous to those found in modern metropoleis. By and large, classical Athens would not have had this type of “urban mob” – although in the Piraeus, especially during the Peloponnesian War, things begin to approach that level. Therefore, we will need to look elsewhere for depictions of crowds. Large-scale aggregations are to be found in descriptions of political assemblies (in tragedy and Homer, including the frequent trope of a στρατός in assembly), violent attacks (e.g. in Euripides’s *Andromache*), and feasts and festivals (Aristophanes’s *Frogs*; Euripides’s *Ion*).

107 Rudé 1964:3; “[I]n spite of [Le Bon’s] profession to distinguish between one type and another, he arrives at a generalized conception of the crowd that, disregarding all social and historical development, would be equally appropriate to all times and to all places.” This is precisely Canetti’s project, and the model I shall adopt. The point is is not that crowds are a “one-size-fits-all” phenomenon, but rather that there exists a range of crowd modalities, different examples of which are more or less present in a given historical moment and in that moment’s cultural productions.

108 xiii. For an example of this trend in social psychology, see e.g. *Crowd and Mass Behavior*, ed. Helen MacGill Hughes, 1972. From the Introduction: “Social movements today are often on a very large scale and have become normal aspects of daily life. Much behavior that used to be wholly private has now become public and political. Witness, for example, the Women’s Liberation Movement … Corresponding to this development the sociologists are focusing attention on social movements, who is attracted to them, and what becomes of these movements” (viii).

109 E.g. Rorty; White.

110 Schnapp and Tiews cite the “millions worldwide who marched against the war in Iraq” as a sign that the era of the crowd might not yet have ended (xvi); yet, earlier in their Introduction, they acknowledge that this and other mass demonstrations are becoming “ever more ‘citational’ – they quote, sometimes in a nostalgic key, from a previous, now irrecoverable heroic era of crowds … The result is a decoupling of Le Bon’s equation between crowds and contemporaneity” (xi). If the “age of crowds” prophesied by Le Bon is
There is nothing inherently wrong with such political commitment. Indeed, truly “objective” scholarship, detached from the ideology of the author, may well be impossible. Yet the study of the crowd in particular has a tendency to split into two polarized tendencies. Crowds are either lambasted as dangerous, unthinking menaces, or praised as agents of positive social change. This polarization, expressed most starkly in the vast methodological gulf between Arendt and Rudé, transforms the investigation of the crowd into an extension of a larger political debate on the proper political order.

Two thinkers offer a way out of this impasse. Their works differ greatly from the mainstream tradition of crowd studies surveyed above – and from each other. While both have unmistakable (and contrary) ideological presuppositions informing their writings, their theoretical models, while not to be adopted wholesale, present a broader and more flexible framework through which to engage the subject of the crowd.

The first of the two is Elias Canetti. His *Crowds and Power*, while unmistakably part of the “crowd-phobic” strain of postwar thought, provides a series of models for thinking about crowds which have influenced my thinking. Some of these models, as will be shown in subsequent chapters, are of particular use for thinking about the representation of crowds in archaic and classical Greek texts. Canetti’s work is divided into scores of mini-chapters, with little or no unifying structure. Far from restraining himself, as Rudé does, to discussion of actual physical gatherings, Canetti treats as “crowd” phenomena everything from hyperinflation, to cultural understandings of death and the underworld, to the history of the world’s great religions. Particularly suggestive for thinking about Homer is his treatment of “crowd symbols,” defined as “collective units which do not consist of men, but which are still felt to be crowds.” Examples include sand, the ocean, and forests. Canetti never explicitly refers to Homer, but surely the frequent use of animal and natural similes for the mass behavior of the Greek and Trojan armies in the *Iliad* are performing similar cultural work.

I have already announced my intention to avoid, as much as possible, consideration of broader issues such as “public opinion” and “national image;” this aspect of *Crowds and Power* will have little impact on my investigation. Yet Canetti has much

truly over, or, at least, has shifted into something qualitatively different, this may have the beneficial effect of ending the tendency towards polarization in the discourse on the crowd, by rendering obsolete the dichotomy of championing-or-rejecting crowds in their contemporary political effects.

111 Canetti’s original German title was *Masse und Macht. Mass(e)*, as in Freud’s *Massenpsychologie*, is the German term corresponding to Le Bon’s *foule* and the English scholarly tradition’s “crowd.”

112 Canetti is most often identified as belonging to the “train” of Arendt (Plotz 204). But whereas Arendt’s *Origins* examines a particular historical moment (broadly defined, to be sure, but still with a discrete beginning – the rise of liberal-bourgeois European regimes and the emancipation of Jewry), Canetti’s work takes a much broader view. This makes it less useful as history and sociology, but more productive when applied, as “theory,” to the reading of texts far removed from the mainstream early-modern-to-postmodern tradition of crowd studies.

Bloom 1995 is a more recent attempt at a project similar in theme to (and similarly ambitious in scope as) Canetti’s.

113 Canetti 75-90. Rudé mentions Canetti’s treatment of “national symbols” as an example of “[S]ome writers in the field … choosing] to extend the crowd’s boundaries to encompass far wider horizons” (Rudé 1964:3). I will make use of Canetti’s brand of thought while restricting those “boundaries” to the depiction (or description) of “aggregated” crowds, in Le Bon’s sense – in Schnapp’s phrasing, “the physical massing of bodies in public spaces” (Schnapp, “Mob Porn” 3).
to say about crowds in the restricted, “aggregated” sense. First and most striking is his psychological explanation for their formation:

There is nothing that man fears more than the touch of the unknown … All the distances which men create round themselves are dictated by this fear … It is only in a crowd that man can become free of this fear of being touched. That is the only situation in which the fear changes to its opposite. The crowd he needs is the dense crowd, in which body is pressed to body … The more fiercely people press together, the more certain they feel that they do not fear each other. This \textit{reversal of the fear of being touched} belongs to the nature of crowds.\textsuperscript{114}

The essence in the crowd is not to be found, as in Le Bon and Freud, in hypnotic or libidinal attachments to a leader.\textsuperscript{115} Neither is the crowd to be viewed, as in the work of Rudé and the historians, as a political agent with rational goals. Rather, the crowd is the site of a psychological “discharge”: “[T]he moment when all who belong to the crowd get rid of their differences and feel equal.”\textsuperscript{116} It is the opposite of and antidote to all the hierarchies and separations structuring human life.\textsuperscript{117}

Unlike Le Bon’s attempt rigorously to categorize crowds,\textsuperscript{118} Canetti’s classifications always lead to one more instance, one more dimension of the question. Where the mainstream tradition of crowd studies, in both its left- and right- wing varieties, concerns itself with limiting and strictly defining the crowd, Canetti’s model is open-ended.

His first and most basic classification distinguishes the “open” and “closed” crowd.\textsuperscript{119} The “closed” crowd “renounces growth and puts the stress on permanence,” establishing a boundary between itself and the outside world, growing to a fixed limit and

\textsuperscript{114}Canetti 15-16; emphasis added.

\textsuperscript{115}In the later parts of \textit{Crowds and Power}, however, Canetti does devote much attention to the role of the leader – or, in his terms, the “survivor.” The “survivor” is he who creates masses of dead opponents, using the crowd of his own followers as a weapon, while remaining personally inviolable. In the atomic age, the “survivor” takes his ultimate shape as the leader of a nation with a nuclear arsenal, able to destroy the whole of humanity. This concept of leader-as-“survivor” (cf. Odysseus?) resonates with the Platonic understanding of the \textit{tyrant}, ever beset by, and commanding the attentions of, external crowds, while always governed by his own internal disorder and paranoia.

\textsuperscript{116}Canetti 17

\textsuperscript{117}At Canetti 303 ff., he details a theory of the “sting of command;” commands leave a physical imprint in those subject to them, and the moment of revolution comes when all these accumulated stings are unloaded in a group act of defiance against the structures and holders of power. Cf. my comments on \textit{Bacchae} 119 in Chapter Three.

\textsuperscript{118}Canetti 156: “Heterogeneous” v. “Homogeneous,” with sub-categories such as (for the latter) “Sects,” “Castes” and “Classes.”

\textsuperscript{119}Canetti 16-17. A later typology, at 48-63, categorizes by function five basic types of crowds, which will be discussed in further chapters when relevant to the Greek text under scrutiny: Baiting (e.g. a lynch mob), Flight (e.g. a crowd of refugees); Prohibition (e.g. a worker’s strike or Gandhian demonstration); Reversal (e.g. the storming of the Bastille; this “revolutionary” category comes closest to the sociological/historical category of the “true” crowd; and, finally, Feast (a gathering to celebrate and consume material abundance). However, the multitude of other material discussed throughout the book, little of which is placed within this five-fold list, suggests that this typology is \textit{not} meant to be exhaustive.
no more. It “sets its hope on repetition;” it marks a location and promises a regular return thereto. The Athenian assembly would surely fall under this category.

The “open” crowd – the “extreme form of the spontaneous crowd” – has “no limits whatever to its growth.” “The open crowd is the true crowd, the crowd abandoning itself freely to its natural urge for growth.” Like a cancer, it obeys only the laws of multiplication and aggregation, and “it disintegrates as soon as it stops growing.” It is more destructive, but shorter-lived, than the “closed” crowd, and it does not hold the promise of repetition. It is a “one-off.”

All the thinkers previously surveyed, with the exception of Freud, have insisted to a greater or lesser extent on the uniqueness of the modern crowd. Canetti here suggests that the distinction between the modern and earlier crowd phenomena is more one of quantitative scale than qualitative novelty: “Men might have gone on disregarding [the “open” crowd] if the enormous increase of population in modern times, and the rapid growth of cities, had not more and more often given rise to its formation.”

This is the element of Canetti’s project most useful for my inquiry. Ranging over cultures and epochs, his model treats crowds as, for all their variety, expressions of universal impulses. The danger is that of essentialism, of failing to distinguish the historical individuality of particular crowd events. Still, it is this translation of the problem of the crowd into one of scale that offers an alternative to the restricted Karpyuk/Rudé criteria for a “true” crowd. To Canetti, any physical aggregation of bodies may qualify as a crowd. The modern political crowd is a “step up” in scale, approaching closer to the “open” end of the spectrum, but it is not the only phenomenon worthy of the term “crowd.” The massing of bodies, and the treatment of these masses as entities in their own right, is a universal characteristic of human societies; my project will be to investigate this process as represented in archaic and classical Greek literature.

Some may read Canetti as a reactionary, in the mold of Le Bon, for assuming a universal, dangerous and destructive crowd. This would be inaccurate; rather, he outlines a continuum of crowds, from a small pack to a large multitude. At what quantitative level does a crowd begin? (“Three,” of course, is the proverbial answer). To Canetti, the crowd grows out of the “pack,” most simply in the form of a hunting party, but also forming around functions such as lament or dance. “The pack, in contrast [to sociological groups

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120 Canetti 20
121 Ibid.
122 Canetti 93 ff; a related and not fully distinguished concept is that of the “crowd crystal” (73-75), “[S]mall, rigid groups of men, strictly delimited … which serve to precipitate crowds.” The “rigid” nature imputed to these “crystals” by Canetti, in contrast with the “open” and fluid nature of the crowd proper, introduces a more explicit model of aggregated human activity as similar to molecular states of matter, with the “open” crowd as an unconfinable gas that soon disperses, as opposed to “denser,” more “rigid” groups, such as those created by military training, being more like solids or crystals. Canetti 312, in describing military training as producing “angularity … hardness and smoothness,” by the incorporation of repeated commands into the structure of the cadet’s body, anticipates in brief sketch the theoretical model of Theweleit. Cf. Connolly (81) on Canetti’s distinction “by which the crowd is strictly separated from the military unit.” Canetti 313: “Anyone who has to give commands in an army must be able to keep himself free of all crowds, whether actual or remembered. It is his training in the expectation of command which teaches him how to do this.” Although the distinction is never fully developed, the implicit contrast seems to be between the compact, strictly controlled, “solid” military troop on the one hand, and the amorphous, internally driven, “fluid/gas” of the “crowd” proper on the other.
such as “clan”), is a unit of action, and its manifestations are concrete.” While the “crowd” of the political riot, declared absent by Karpyuk, is indeed hard or impossible to locate in the epic and dramatic texts\textsuperscript{124} in a form analogous to those of modern mass actions, the “packlike” nature of many performance and audience crowds, and the dialectic between the aggregated group and the individual member, will be shown to inform our specimen passages in later chapters.

One special type of Canettian crowd is worth brief notice. This is the “double” crowd.\textsuperscript{125} The surest … way by which a crowd can preserve itself lies in the existence of a second crowd to which it is related … As long as all eyes are turned in the direction of the eyes opposite, knee will stand locked by knee … All … curiosity … is directed towards a second body of men divided from [the first crowd] by a clearly defined distance.\textsuperscript{126} The clearest example is that of war, in which “the aim is to transform a dangerous crowd of live adversaries into a heap of dead.”\textsuperscript{127} Later, the “two-party system of modern parliaments” is described as a sort of sublimated war, a display of one crowd’s numerical superiority over another.\textsuperscript{128} Perhaps this dynamic can be seen at work not only in the modern parliament.

As difficult to summarize as Canetti’s work is, at least its central theme is clearly that of the crowd, defined however broadly. Crowds and Power takes a natural and expected place in any survey of the history of crowd theory. The final author I will discuss, however, holds no such canonical place in this tradition.\textsuperscript{129} Indeed, the crowd as such plays only a tangential role in his work, yet it will help greatly in thinking about the psychological nature of the crowd and the individual’s relation to it. Where Canetti’s main use to us is as a theorist of the crowd-as-aggregation, Klaus Theweleit, writing a generation later, redirects us to the plane of individual experience – only to re-expand such experience back into the intersubjective forces at play in the crowd.

Earlier I located the central riddle of the crowd in its conceptual duality. We have seen that crowd theorists tend to slip between theories of the crowd, treated as an entity in its own right, and theories of the psychological mechanisms at work within the crowd’s

\textsuperscript{123} Canetti 94. In the discussion of the “pack,” and indeed throughout the work, Canetti blurs the line between sociology and what might be termed anthro-zoology; that is, he treats humans as animals, on a continuum with not only other primates, but occasionally with insects, birds, etc. See especially the chapter “The Entrails of Power” (pp. 203-24), with such sub-chapters as “The Finger Exercises of Monkeys.” For group behavior among primates, see de Waal. The classic general account is Morris 1967.

\textsuperscript{124} Though not in historiography, Ober (1996, 1998) argues for an understanding of the Athenian δῆμος as a revolutionary historical agent. The potential for historical group action “from below” is not limited to classical Athens. Indeed, Morris (1986:115-29) reads the Homeric corpus as a product of “the upheavals of the eighth century … attempt[ing] to fix against alternative constructions an elitist view of the heroic age” (this summary of his earlier work is at Morris 1996:31). Homeric epic may thus be a “photo-negative,” suggesting by its very omission of certain objects of representation that there were in fact challenges to elite dominance afoot during the period of its formation.

\textsuperscript{125} Canetti 63 ff.

\textsuperscript{126} In drama, does the dancing “pack” of the chorus onstage cement the assembled audience into a “crowd?” Such are the potential applications of Canetti’s model to the study of ancient Greece.

\textsuperscript{127} Id. 68

\textsuperscript{128} Id. 188 ff

\textsuperscript{129} For example, the Stanford Crowds contains no reference to his work, even in those essays which treat very similar material, e.g. Schnapp’s “Mob Porn.”
individual members. Is “mass psychology” founded on a useful fiction, or can Le Bon’s “collective mind” really be said to exist? Do the physical boundaries of the human subject present an ultimate boundary to psychic agency, or can we speak of aggregations of subjects as somehow more than and different to the sum of their parts? Such is the project of Theweleit’s Male Fantasies. 130

Theweleit begins with a survey of works by German veterans of the First World War, many of whom throughout the interwar period became proto-fascist paramilitary fighters, suppressing socialist uprisings throughout the greater Reich. The writings include letters, diaries, nonfiction works about the late war, and novels. Theweleit interrogates these texts to reveal their profound, fundamental misogyny. Over the course of hundreds of pages he identifies two opposed complexes of imagery, informing the extreme separation between sex roles characteristic of fascist ideology. On the one hand are those valorized characteristics associated with what Theweleit calls the “warrior male:” hardness, whiteness, purity, order, rigidity, impermeability. On the other, a nexus of threatening forces, against which the warrior male defines himself: softness, blood, mud, mixture, fluidity. The destabilizing inner sensations are projected onto – but, crucially, can also be provoked by – the social mixture and fluid movement of groups of bodies found in the revolutionary crowd. 131

The warrior male constructs psychic “body armor,” rigidly defining the boundaries of his body in a double containment: against the threatening tides without, but also to contain and freeze the flow of tides within. Theweleit develops at length the association between desire and water, establishing the fundamental status of this metaphorical link not just in German literature but throughout the western cultural tradition. 132 The experience of desire, similar to but less reified than Reich’s “orgone,” is felt by the warrior male as an internal motion of liquid, threatening to break through his “body armor” and dissolve the individual subject within the broader psychic sea. It is against this threat that the warrior struggles, and the goal of his struggle is to reduce what threatens him to a “bloody pulp,” leaving his own self safely dry, pure and hard.

Theweleit demonstrates that these proto-fascist warriors see the revolutionary crowd as a particularly threatening manifestation of “feminine” fluidity. “Theweleit takes us beyond any ground so far explored by feminist theory: from the dread of women to the hatred of communism and the rebellious working class … Always bear in mind that primal fear of dissolution.” 133 Socialism as a system, and particular mass actions of a revolutionary tendency, are spoken of and experienced as “rot, pulp, filth, dirt, slime”: that is, as a contaminating liquid tide threatening to eat away at the “waterproof”

131 The ancient phenomenon, both as actual cult practice and as object of artistic representation, of group ecstatic religious frenzy, especially in the cult of Dionysos, seems fully to anticipate this “postmodern” model of crowd psychology as tapping into “flows” which pass within and between the “individual” subject.
132 Ehrenreich, Introduction to Theweleit vol. I, notes that Theweleit’s project, while starting from a core of historically specific texts, has broader implications for the entire psychic economy of masculinity and sexual difference: “[Y]ou will want to look up from these pages from time to time and try to reassure yourself that you are reading about a certain group of men, of a certain class and nationality, who lived at a certain time now two generations behind us” (Theweleit I:x-xi).
133 Id. xiv
boundaries of the warrior male body. What the warrior male fears above all is “dissolution” of the self into the crowd.  

At the beginning of his second volume, Theweleit comes as close as he ever does to a concise statement of this psychic process and its political significance:

The emergence of revolutionary masses into the public arena occurs as a consequence of the rupturing of dams. At the same time, it threatens to undermine the internal dams of these men, as if their bodily boundaries might collapse under the pressure of the masses without. Their own inner mass “dissipates” into the mass which is outside, and the external mass comes to embody their own erupted interior … This gives us a key to the apparent contradictoriness of the fascist concept of the masses. Alongside his capacity to mobilize great masses of human beings, there exists within the fascist a simultaneous contempt for the masses … The contradictions cease to appear as such once we understand that the fascist has two distinct and different masses in mind … The mass that is celebrated is strictly formed, poured into systems of dams. Above it there towers a leader … To the despised mass, by contrast, is attributed all that is flowing, slimy, teeming … This recognition of the possible origin of terror perpetrated on the mass in a fear of the merging of the individual “interior” with that same mass may serve as a useful addendum to Elias Canetti’s insights in his Crowds and Power. The revolutionary mass may usefully be seen as an embodiment … of the erupted “interior” of the soldier male – an effluent that he perceives in thoroughly objectified form, as a repellent mixture of fluids streaming from the body.  

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134 Theweleit may be most useful for classicists in reading Homer. As detailed in Chapter Two, the Iliadic “crowd” is a backdrop against and through which heroic characters move and are recognized. The Homeric crowd offers safety to its members, but only at the price of anonymity. “Glory” may be precisely the preservation of individuality, the avoidance of merger into the larger group. Theweleit positions himself in the tradition of Reich, as opposed to Freud, in his insistence on the psychic “flowing” between subjects as an object of study (I.254; but see II.422, near the end of the work, where he criticizes Reich as too scientistic in his attempt to quantify these forces). He acknowledges his particular debt to a further theoretical model along Reichian lines: Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the “body without organs.” E.g. I.264: “The process of primary accumulation in industry … set[s] in motion streams of money, commodities and workers … Running parallel to that is a process of limitation, directed against the evolution of human pleasures. Deleuze and Guattari call the first process deterritorialization – the opening up of new possibilities for desiring-production across the “body with organs” – and the second process reterritorialization, which is the mobilization of dominant forces to prevent the new productive possibilities from becoming new human freedoms. We’ll next look at the course taken by reterritorialization in bourgeois history as a whole; that is, at how anything that flowed came to inspire the kind of fear that we have seen in our soldier males” (emphasis added). The revolutionary crowd offers the threatening promise of “new human freedoms” achieved through inter-subjective combination; fascist discipline harshly “reterritorializes” the warrior male’s mind and body through the construction of “body armor.”  

135 Theweleit II.3-7
Later in the volume, an illustration captures this distinction between the “strictly formed” and the “flowing” mass. Taken from a Nazi history textbook, the image juxtaposes two photographs of parades passing through the Brandenburg Gate. The socialist crowd in the picture from 1918 seems to lack a clear structure. Men and women in everyday working- and middle-class dress are moving in a broad group spread across the square, with no obvious leader(s). The second picture, taken in January 1933 at the moment of the Nazis’ ascension to power, shows a tightly compacted body of splendidly dressed soldiers, following a heil- and goose-stepping leader through the gate. Groups of spectators stand to each side – widely and clearly separated from the marchers, the “masses” here are reduced to the role of passive spectators. The warrior male psyche is maintained; group demonstration is acceptable only under such tightly “channeled” conditions.

If the classical canon is largely void of depictions of mass revolutionary action, this can be read in two ways. Either it means that such actions were always and everywhere absent from the ancient world, or it means that they were so threatening to the structure of values in which elite authors formulated their texts that they simply could not be directly represented in their ideological-cultural matrix. Crowds would then only appear in allegorical or phantastical forms.

Canetti and Theweleit approach the problem of the crowd, as it were, from opposite ends. Canetti, in his multiple typologies of crowd and “pack,” attempts to provide a morphology of the crowd-as-entity. Theweleit, through his detailed

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136 Theweleit II.80. Theweleit’s use of illustrations, on average once every two or three pages, is highly idiosyncratic. They are never referred to directly in the text, but rather illuminate his argument by subtle reinforcement and allusion. They range from medieval woodcuts to Hollywood publicity stills, with a particular concentration on propaganda from the first and second world wars. Only a small percentage of these images represent crowd formations; a much more common theme is the representation of individual female figures. For studies of the visual representation of crowds, see the contributions of Schnapp (“Mob Porn”), Poggi (“Mass, Pack and Mob: Art in the Age of the Crowd”) and Uroskie (“Far Above the Madding Crowd: The Spatial Rhetoric of Mass Representation”) in Schnapp and Tiews 2006.

137 Cf. Fritzsche, who discusses four periods of mass action, from the socialist uprisings of 1918-9 to the triumphant rallies marking the Nazi takeover in 1933, as “snapshots” illustrating the transformation of German society.

138 See esp. Theweleit I.429 ff.: “Dam and Flood: The Ritual of Parading in Mass.” 430-41: [A] ritual such as the ‘Entry March of the Banners’ becomes a public staging of the forbidden … For the moment, at least, [the fascist] felt privileged to be a stream himself, one small part of an enormous, tamed flood … In the course of the ritual, the fascist came to represent both his own liberated drives and the principle that suppressed them … That is how fascism translates internal states into massive, external monuments or ornaments as a canalization system, which large numbers of people flow into; where their desire can flow, at least within (monumentally enlarged) preordained channels; where they can discover that they are not split off and isolated, but that they are sharing the violation of prohibitions with so many others …

139 Most obviously, perhaps, in crowds of women, seen as less of a “real” political threat. E.g. in Aristophanes’s Lysistrata, Thesmophoriazusae and Assemblywomen, and especially in Euripides’s Bacchae. A similarly sublimated crowd representation may also be present in art and literature depicting the Gigantomachy and Centauromachy, for instance on the metopes of the Parthenon, where these scenes of group violence (along with the Amazonomachy, again featuring a group of violent women) are juxtaposed against the frieze’s properly ordered procession.

140 Of course, he also offers individualistic psychological explanations for the formation of crowds. Still, his overriding concern, and his use for my purposes, lies less in these passages than in his insistence on the
investigation of a specific historical-political problem, offers a complex model of the
ambivalent relationship between the individual and the group. I will adopt neither
scholar’s thought as a dogma or template, but will refer to their works when it will
illuminate the discussion of particular passages within the Greek text.

Let us briefly recall the major themes of this survey of the history of crowd
theory. The mainstream of this intellectual tradition is founded on the premise that the
modern crowd, often dated from the French Revolution and the subsequent spread of
mass political action, is in some qualitative way different from previous historical forms
of group behavior. At the close of the 19th century, Gustave Le Bon expresses and fixes
the long-term influence of a “reactionary” view of the crowd as an irrational “collective
mentality,” subsuming the identities of its individual members and reducing them to a
“primitive” intellectual level. This conceptual duality of the crowd, as a quasi-entity
composed of many individual subjects, is approached from different angles by the
various subsequent schools of crowd studies.

Freud, dissatisfied with the value of Le Bon’s “contagion” as an explanation of
the link between crowd members, explains this link in reference to his own model of
psychological function. To him, crowd members are united by virtue of having
introjected the same leader-figure or central concept into their psyches. This explanation
focuses on the “individual” plane of the group/subject duality of the nature of the crowd.
Later developments within the psychoanalytic tradition, carried to risible extremes by
Reich but recuperated and preserved for future scholars in the “anti-psychiatry” of
Deleuze and Guattari, return to the level of the link between crowd members, searching
for a way to understand the link between these members in terms of a movement of
psychic “energy.” The move from archaic epic to classical drama may correspondingly
be read as a move from a focus on the individual elite heroic leader figure to a more
communal perspective.¹⁴¹ Discussion in later chapters will show that the crowd in turn is
represented with more frequency and urgency (and as possessing heightened agency) in
drama.

Sobered by the horrors of war and totalitarianism, many thinkers in the 1950s
exhibit an extreme antipathy towards “mass society,” to some extent re-inscribing the
“reactionary” views of Le Bon. These writers are all in a sense descendants of Plato,
often independently arriving at arguments and characterizations formulated already in the
fourth century B.C.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ One must not over-emphasize this dichotomy, however. Haubold and Griffith 1998 respectively show
that there is much that is communal in Homer, and much that is elite in tragedy. In either genre the
relationship between One and Many is dialectical. What my survey attempts to show is the shifting
boundaries of what is available for representation in a given context; any social organization, and its
cultural products, will speak simultaneously from the perspective of the group and its individual members.
For a historian’s version of the evolving dialectic of One and Many in early Greece, see Starr.
¹⁴² On the surprising persistence of reactionary rhetoric across the centuries, see Hirschmann. Popper treats
the historical tendency in light of its extreme eruption in the mid-twentieth century.
Concurrently, a new school of history sought to recuperate the crowd as a rational political agent. Ideological polarization returns the study of the crowd, in a sense, to its pre-Le Bon state: subordinate to a larger political argument, trending away from an investigation of crowd dynamics on their own terms.

Two scholars offer different ways out of this impasse. Elias Canetti decouples the crowd from the post-French Revolution historico-political debate, by stressing the universal nature of crowds across human societies and epochs; if we renounce the quest for a strict definition of the “true” crowd, we are free to consider “crowd-ness” in the full spectrum of its various expressions. Klaus Theweleit’s study of the psychic economy of fascism is a provocative model of the relations between the individual and the group. Theweleit’s “flow” within and between subjects, while risking a return to the semi-quackery of Reichian “orgone” studies, offers also the possibility of a greater understanding of the riddle of the crowd, its seeming two-fold nature.

The stress laid by Theweleit on the ambivalent relationship between the fascist and the “mass” leads me to a preliminary caveat on the nature of our Greek texts. To a greater or lesser extent, they are all expressions of an elite worldview, bearing the class imprint of their authors (or, as in the case of the Homeric tradition, the economy of discourse through which they were produced over time). Thus when we examine these texts’ representation of the crowd we will find, as a recurring theme, the relationship between the elite individual and the broader social group as manifested in a wide range of “crowds” and “packs.” There is a delicate negotiation at work in the elite’s desire to participate in, and fear of being seen by, a crowd. Crowds of spectators, festivalgoers, etc., are a key part of the aristocratic social system, but in their aggregation they constantly suggest the possibility of group violence. The slippage between being a member of a group, being observed by that group, and being subjected to that group’s collective physical force, structures several of the textual moments I will discuss.

I am now able to specify why I think Karpyuk does not have the last word when he says that there was no “crowd” in archaic and classical Greece. We have seen that, by adopting a definition of “crowd” drawn from the discourse of 20th-century sociology, he is taking one of a spectrum of possible approaches to the subject. An analogy to a larger debate within the study of ancient history may be helpful. Eli Sagan summarizes the debate over the use of Marxian categories in the study of the ancient world:

After the [second world] war, a reaction set in, postulating that a backward projection of concepts from a capitalist to a precapitalist world had no validity. A serious thesis was expounded that not only was there no class struggle, but also there were no classes in the ancient world, in effect, that the development of various classes was, itself, the result of capitalism … My own approach finds the hypothesis of the existence of a “bourgeoisie”

\[^143\] Cf. in this context the work of Ober, most recently 2008. Part of Ober’s larger agenda is to defend Athens’s period of “radical” democracy against those who criticize it on ochlophobic grounds, and secondarily use it as a way of thinking about what participatory democracy could mean in today’s world.

\[^144\] See especially fnn. 532, 585.
and a “proletariat” [in classical Athens] inaccurate. And yet I would argue that there were such things as classes in ancient society, and a form of “class struggle,” but the latter must be accurately described.\textsuperscript{145}

Karpyuk holds that there were no crowds in the ancient world, implicitly allying himself with the tradition that sees “the” crowd as properly a modern phenomenon. By allowing for a looser definition of “crowd,” perhaps expressible as “an aggregation of bodies described as such; that is, with stress placed on their multiplicity and/or their acting in concert,” I hope to identify points within archaic and classical Greek texts at which a crowd, if not the (“true”) crowd,” can be seen. Expanding our focus in this way, I will still follow what Karpyuk announces as his method:

There are two obvious ways to look for appearances of crowds in ancient texts: first, to pick out all the words that are connected with crowds, and to study their usage. Second, to pull out of the context all the situations which indicate any trace of crowd activity or at least crowd existence.\textsuperscript{146}

This dissertation will mix these approaches. Each Chapter will trace all the relevant uses of particular words in a given author or genre. As identified by Karpyuk, ὀμίλος and ὄχλος are the two “smoking guns” which identify the description of a crowd-like grouping. To these I add ὀμαδός. In some instances, even in the absence of these and other crowd-words, I will examine a periphrastic description of a group to reveal the underlying concept of collectivity. Crowd scenes are often described by periphrasis. πολύ/πολλ- often signals a grouping of people; ἐν μεσσῳ can do the same. Homeric similes often emphasize plurality and numerosity, referencing animal groupings, piled leaves, or a series of waves. These are crowd images in the Canettian sense.

While periphrases will be examined, however, I have structured the inquiry, especially in the chapter on Homer, around a core of fixed terms. This is not only to provide structure; by sticking with these terms of more limited valence, rather than extensively exploring similes, which employ words such as “swarm” with multiple poetic and naturalistic valences, the focus on crowds \textit{qua} crowds will be tighter.

Karpyuk’s article establishes a contrast between terms which will lead me into the next chapter and beyond:

pływος surfaces for the first time during a period of the first half of the fifth century BC which was active in word coining and appearance of new concepts. At first it was used on a par with ὀμίλος, well-known since Homeric times, which also had the meaning of “crowd,” “unorganized gathering.” But ὀμίλος had the primary meaning of “connection with something, contact, affinity,” whereas ὄχλος belongs to a completely different semantic group\textsuperscript{147} ("anxiety, difficulty, inconvenience").\textsuperscript{148}

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\textsuperscript{145} Sagan 1994:249-50
\textsuperscript{146} Karpyuk 80
\textsuperscript{147} Cf. my comments on \textit{Medea} 337 in Chapter Three, where I question whether these “semantic groups” are truly “completely different.”
In addition to these two words, there are other terms which will trigger our “crowd detector.” πλη- words of “filling” and “fullness,” also of “mass” and (in the democratic context) majority, are often used to describe the actions and characteristics of “packs” and crowds. ἀθρ- words of “closeness,” in the sense of multiple objects gathered closely together,\footnote{Karpyuk 81.} are often used of military and other aggregations of bodies. This root is especially common in participles: A general or other elite figure will go somewhere ἀθροισας+ (crowd-noun), “having gathered together [an army, etc.]”. The frequency of this formulation suggests an underlying model of a “leader-principle,” similar to the Freudian model discussed above, by which elite figures can gather, shape and direct large groupings of other bodies.

Finally, one word – δῆμος – has a potential crowd valence,\footnote{The alpha in this root is not privative but intensive: a- + throos: many sounds. Thus, the root for “gathering” may be in its origin precisely a crowd descriptor.} even as it points the way to a more abstract political concept that comes to its full significance in rhetorical and other texts. Since this word has such a ‘thick’ meaning, and since discussing it would lead inevitably to political considerations beyond the scope of this study, I will mostly overlook it in favor of words whose ‘crowd-ness’ is more direct and univocal.

\footnote{And, in a striking and uncanny textual moment (Bacchae 725, see Chapter Three), of the “collective mouth” of the bacchants.}

\footnote{E.g. Iliad XXIV.776, cited in the following chapter, which describes the thronging Trojan mourners as apeiron demos.}
CHAPTER TWO
HOMERIC CROWD

Previous investigations of “Homeric society” have focused either on attempts to reconstruct the class structure of the society the poems purportedly reflect, or on the individual psyche of the elite subject depicted therein. Both approaches have their limitations. Both have neglected one object of representation: the crowd.

Studies of “Homeric psychology” have been largely studies of the individual. Whether they explain Homeric aggression as a product of the Oedipal complex, or as a struggle for status among elite males, they treat Homeric aggression, indeed all Homeric action, as an individual phenomenon. Even a recent study of violence in Homer applying insights from evolutionary psychology, where one might expect an investigation of group activity, is almost entirely individualistic in its focus.

This dissertation focuses on the crowd, rather than the individual. “Crowd” is an especially difficult word to define, as I have attempted to demonstrate in the preceding chapter. We will not investigate all representations of groups in Homer. Such an investigation would require book-length treatment in its own right, and would in any case be far too general for our purposes. What we are not looking for are descriptions of groups as such: as masses of people. Rather, we are looking for representations of the ὄχλος (ochlos), the Greek word which most closely approaches “crowd” in the sense of “mob” – an unruly, unauthorized gathering of people. In our search for the prehistory of the fifth-century ὄχλος, we must start with Homer, with the ways in which Homer represents the crowd.

In “The Structure of Authority in the the Iliad,” Walter Donlan posits “group authority” as a central theme in the poem, in tension with “position-authority.” In the end, the crisis in relations between elite figures is resolved by a reassertion of “collective” authority. His model stands in stark contrast to Marxian readings of Homer, which understand the poems as ultimately reinforcing an aristocratic ideology, even as they appear to question it. While Donlan may well be correct in reading the Iliad as an expression of a pre- or proto-aristocratic textual/historic moment, his article does not directly address the portrayal of the military crowd.

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152 Sagan 1979
153 Van Wees; Gottschall.
154 Gottschall
155 Haubold has studied the Homeric λαός. His study, however, is precisely not of the λαός as a “group among others” (ix, emphasis added), but rather as a sociological and ritualistic background theme to the Homeric epics.
156 Donlan 64-5: “Group-authority is the primal element, the matrix, as it were, of normal social interaction [among the early Greeks] … [I]ts historical foundation is prior, hearkening back to a time … where all action was essentially collective, and ‘leaders’ emerged according to the situational demands and fell back into the ranks.”
Geddes makes the contrarian argument that Homer does not depict “lower classes,” as distinct from slaves, at all.\footnote{Geddes 27: “I intended to isolate the lower orders in Homeric society and I have failed … As far as Homer goes, they hardly exist at all.”} Further, Geddes sees the assembly as a universal and fundamental institution in Homeric society, with no formal “rules preventing anyone who wanted from speaking.”\footnote{Geddes 31. Also 32: “Homer is scrupulous in calling attention to the state of public opinion at every stage and makes it clear that he considered it an important factor in the situation.”} This model of Homeric society leaves very little room for a permanent hierarchical social order.\footnote{Geddes 36: “The notion of kingship seems to be empty of content. Homeric kings … reveal nothing about any social structure in the real world.”} Geddes concludes: “[T]he poetry should be read again with less prejudice in order to understand exactly what ‘Homer’ society really is.”\footnote{Ibid. Prior to this political moment – indeed, hard on the poem’s opening lines – the Achaians already constitute a crowd, albeit not one formally summoned by figures in authority. At I.15 Chryses entreats all the Achaians, but most of all the two Atreids; at I.22 ἀλλοι πάντες Ἀχαιοί signify their desire to return Chryses’s daughter, but Agamemnon overrides this initial sign of popular approval (I.24-25).}

What follows is my attempt to “read with less prejudice” some passages in which Homer describes crowds as such: as masses of people acting more or less in unison. This survey will focus primarily on a few words, which all connote aggregation and/or closeness of persons. Certain other words, while unarguably describing groups, are less helpful for the project of isolating the crowd qua crowd. For example, στίξ, a “rank” or “line” of soldiers, is in the Iliad a purely military term, without the social and psychological valence of ὑμιλος. To examine every such collective noun in Homer would require a monograph in itself, and would be a study more of military terminology than of the crowd. Characters often move across or otherwise in relation to the “ranks,” but cataloguing these instances would be less useful than a focus on the terms that carry more weight of “crowd-ness.” These terms will be more “social” or “political,” and will tend to stress the collectivity of the persons composing them.

In the first book of the Iliad, Achilles ἀγορήνδε καλέσσατο λαόν (“called the people to assembly”).\footnote{I.54.} They gather, and Achilles begins the battle of words. Nowhere in the assembly-scene are the reactions of the audience described. At the end of the passage, the assembly is dissolved thus:

"Ὡς τῷ γ’ ἀντιβίοισι μαχεσσαμένῳ ἐπέπροσιν
ἀντετήτιν, λῦσαν δ’ ἀγορήν παρὰ νησίν Ἀχαιῶν.
“So the two, having battled with wrangling words,
Stood, and they broke up the assembly by the ships of the Achaians.”\footnote{I.304-05. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own, although I have consulted other versions in the case of especially difficult passages.} Even in their rivalry, the two elite commanders are linked by the dual article and participle as agents. They dismiss their audience, whose departure is no more described
than was its response to the debate as it occurred. In this first book, the crowd-as-political-audience is almost invisible.

Matters are very different in the second book. When Agamemnon calls a general assembly of all the troops, the actions and reactions of the crowd are described in detail. The first half of the second book of the *Iliad* can be read as a series of attempts to consolidate the unruly mass of the Greek army in a properly ordered form. Only when this consolidation is complete can the famous Catalogue of Ships follow.

On the advice of a dream-messenger sent from Zeus, Agamemnon first gathers a council of elites, then orders his heralds to call all the Achaians to assembly. To the preassembled group he assigns the task:

> ύμεῖς δ’ ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος ἐρημύειν ἐπέεσσιν.

But you restrain (the common soldiers) with words, each man in a different place.\(^\text{164}\)

(literally *allothen allos*: another-where [adverbial] another-man [noun], or more idiomatically “each man in a different place.”)

Agamemnon is seeding the larger group, about to assemble, with leaders who can act as “crowd crystals” or catalysts, influencing those around them to act properly. Each of these men is to wield asymmetric information to influence the behavior of the general assembly. The elite know Agamemnon’s true plan, but these are not the words (*ἐπέεσσιν*) they are directed to use. Rather, judging from the tone Odysseus will adopt later when speaking to a “common man” among the panicked crowd, the elite “ushers” of the general assembly are to use direct commands, drawing on their localized prestige and rhetorical advantages.\(^\text{165}\)

As it assembles, the crowd’s tumult and noise are captured in the bravura simile of the bees. The language of this passage stresses through dense repetition (*botrudon, halis, iladon*) the clustering of the assembling army into smaller sub-units:

> Ὠς ἄρα φανήσας βουλής ἐξ ἢρχε νέεσθαι, οἱ δ’ ἐπανέστησαν πείθουτο τε ποιμένι λαῶν σκιπτούχοι βασιλῆς, ἐπεσεύντο δὲ λαοὶ. ἤπει ἐθνεὰ εἰςι μελισσάων ἀδινᾶων, πέτρης ἐκ γλαφυρῆς αἰεὶ νέον ἐρχομενᾶων. βοτρυόν δὲ πέτονται ἐπ᾽ ἄνθεσιν εἰρηνοίσιν. αἱ μὲν τ’ ἔνθα ἄλις πεποτήσαται, αἱ δὲ τε ἔνθα. ὦς τῶν ἐθνεὰ πολλὰ νεῶν ἀπὸ καὶ κλισίων ἠμὸν προπάροιθε βαθείας ἐστιχώντων ἴλαδον εἰς ἀγορὴν. μετὰ δὲ σφισιν ὁ Ὀσσα δεδήι ὁτρύνουσα ἴέναι, Διὸς ἀγγελος. οἱ δ’ ἀγέροντο. τετρήχει δ’ ἀγορῆ, ὑπὸ δὲ στεναχίζετο γαία

\(^{164}\) II.75

\(^{165}\) On economies of prestige see generally Goode, with a brief mention of “Homeric Greece” as an example of a society with a “strong sense of personal honor,” while noting that “the norms for making public claims to prestige do vary from one society to another and across time” (21).
Speaking thus he led the departure from the council,
And the scepter-wielding princes rose and obeyed
The shepherd of the people. And the people rushed forward,
As go the tribes of thronging bees, ever-new coming
From a hollow rock. They fly in clusters over spring flowers,
Some wheeling here, some there, in bands.
So before the deep beach marched their tribes in abundance
From ships and huts, in troops to the agora. And among them
Burned Rumor, messenger of Zeus, urging them to go.
And they gathered. The agora shook, and the ground groaned
Beneath the people as they sat, and there was a homados. 167

Royal heralds eventually check their disorder with shouts, and the noise of
the multitude ceases:

έννεα δὲ σφεας
κήρυκες βοῶντες ἑρήτυων, εἰ ποτ’ ἀυτῆς
σχοίατ’, ἀκούσιαν δὲ διστρεφῶν βασιλῆων.
σπουδὴ δ’ ἔξετο λαός, ἑρήτυθεν δὲ καθ’ ἔδρας
παυσάμενοι κλαγγῆς.
But nine shouting heralds were checking them,
(To see if) they might ever refrain from their cry,
And give heed to the god-nourished princes.
The people seated in haste, and settled themselves in their places,
Ceasing their clamor. 168

Haubold observes of this moment:

As is traditional in early Greek epic, the people eventually form a space of
communal restraint which is marked by the noise they make on arrival.
Great care and energy go into organising the ‘turmoil’ (the word ὅμαδος is
often used in battle descriptions), but v. 99 also introduces an element of
collective will. The change from unstructured to structured social life is
made not without aetiological pathos. If anything, this is a beginning of
communal action. We cannot, of course, say whether for an early Greek
audience our scene would have been the most elaborate picture of
gathering the people. But certainly for an Iliadic audience it replays the
‘original’ assembly at the beginning of the Trojan war.
It comes as a shock that the assembly breaks down only a short while after
it has been called. ... 169

166 As discussed below, homados denotes specifically the noise made by a crowd.
167 II.85-96
168 II.96-100
169 Haubold 54-55 (emphasis added).
Agamemnon attempts to shame his audience by reminding them of their sheer size and putative outnumbering of their opponents by more than ten to one. Let not future men, he implores the crowd, hear that

μᾶς οὕτω τοιόνδε τοσόνδε τε λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν
ἀπρηκτὸν πόλεμον πολεμίζειν ἧδε μάχεσθαι
ἀνδρᾶς παυρότεροισι, τέλος δ᾽ οὐ πό τι πέρανται.
eἰ περ γάρ κ᾽ ἐθέλομεν Ἀχαιοὶ τε Τρώες τε,
ὅρκια πιστὰ ταμόντες, ἀρίθμηθημενει ἄμφω,
Τρώας μὲν λέξαι εὑρέστει δοσσὶ ἔσπει,
ἡμεῖς δ᾽ ἐς δεκάδας διακοσμηθεῖμεν Ἀχαιοί,
Τρώων δ᾽ ἄνδρα ἕκαστον ἔλοιπθαί οἰνοχοεῖεν,
πολλαὶ καὶ δεκάδες δευοὶς ὑποκύπτει.
Vainly thus fought for so long such a great host of Achaians
A war accomplishing nothing – and fought against fewer men,
But showed no end, no how. For if we Achaians and Trojans both
Were willing to strike oaths of truce, to enumerate both sides,
And the Trojans were counted, however many are householders,
But we Achaians were arranged into bands of ten,
And we bands each chose a Trojan man to be pour our wine,
Many bands of ten would lack a cupbearer.  

If Haubold is correct in identifying this second Achaian assembly as the birth of
"communal action" (a/k/a politics), Agamemnon’s image of a “census” of Greeks and Trojans – predicated, of course, on a truce – is the birth of political overreach. As the succeeding passage shows, Agamemnon has overestimated his control over his own people’s movement and obedience; counting and grouping the Trojans is far beyond his abilities. Nevertheless, his words emphasize the enormousness of the assembly, which in turn highlights the fact that what follows is a description of mass panic.

Agamemnon attempts reverse psychology on the crowd, imploring them to quit and go home. This provokes an explosive reaction in the assembly:

"Ὡς φάτο, τοῖσι δὲ θυμὸν ἐνι στήθεσαν ὄρινε
πάσι μετὰ πληθύν; ὡς οὐ βουλής ἐπάκουσαν.
Κινήθη δ᾽ ἀγορὴ φῆ κύματα μακρὰ θαλάσσης,
πόντου ἱκαρίου, τὰ μὲν τ᾽ Ἐὐρός τε Νότος τε
ἄφορ’ ἐπαίζεις πατρὸς Διὸς ἐκ νεφελάων.
ὡς δ᾽ ὢτε κινήσῃ Ζέφυρος βαθὺ λήμν ἐλθὼν,
λάβρος ἐπαιγίζων, ἔπι τ᾽ ἡμεῖς ἄστατες,
ὡς τὸν πάσα’ ἀγορὴ κινήθη, τοῖ δ᾽ ἀλαλητῶι
νήμας ἐπ᾽ ἐσσεύοντο …

170 II.120-28
171 πληθύς is another word used by Homer to describe groupings of people. The ring composition here makes it particularly clear that the word is to some extent synonymous with ὀμίλος.
“Thus he spoke, and he stirred the spirit in all their (the crowd’s) breasts,
Throughout the throng, as many as were not privy to the council.
And the assembly was moved like great waves at sea …
Like when Zephyr stirs, coming over the tall wheat …
So was the whole assembly of (the soldiers) moved. And they rushed
To the ships with a cry …”

The words of the elite speaker provoke a panicked reaction in the crowd. Those whose thumos is pricked are specified: they are the rank-and-file, all those who were not present at the earlier “council,” in which Agamemnon announced his intentions to test the resolve of the mass. Here, if anywhere in Homer, is a true crowd of “common” people – those excluded from a higher level of political knowledge.

Their reaction is likened to two natural phenomena: the waves of the sea, and rippling stalks of grain. The latter image maintains the separateness of the soldiers, while conveying their common motion under one impulse. The former image, that of the sea, suggests rather that the soldiers are a fluid mass, with bursts of motion breaking out here and there. Similes of crowd can either stress the multiplicity of that crowd – that is to say, the accumulation in one space of many essentially identical units – or blur the separation between the crowds’ constituents, making them seem like one larger entity.

Haubold says of the disruption of the assembly:
Agamemnon turns a structured world of groups and leaders in which all the responsibility for success or defeat rests on him … into a homogeneous social world of equally interested single agents who, qua ‘heroes’ … cannot escape the role they must play in the drama of their own downfall.

Haubold here seems to me to have things almost exactly backwards – or rather, to have identified only one of two coexisting dynamics. It is certainly true that Agamemnon’s performance in this second Achaian assembly (the first having witnessed his quarrel with Achilles in Book One) disrupts the “structured” audience. But when Odysseus, fixing the mess which Agamemnon has created, encounters individual “kings” and “men of the people,” he is not appealing to a series of “equally interested single agents” so much as attempting to reverse a crowd phenomenon: panicked flight can

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172 II.142-50
173 Cf. Theweleit, passim, on fluid as a universal theme in depictions of masses of people. Cf. also Reich’s theories of “orgone” as an all-pervading psychosexual energy.
174 Gone, however, is the potentially riotous bee-swarm of the men first assembling. Grain and water seem more passive; the crowd once duly assembled is a thing to be managed but presents no real threat.
175 Haubold 56
176 II.188 and 198
177 Strictly speaking the phenomenon is the disintegration of the totalistic political crowd into a series of smaller units, down to the level of the individual. These individuals are distinguished by class or role composition (compare II.188 with II.197), but it is worth noting that no distinction is drawn between the behavior of (as compared to Odysseus’s strategy in addressing) the panicked leaders and common soldiers.

The overall emphasis is on the breakup of the all-inclusive crowd into fragments. This is not to say, however, that these social fragments did not already exist in the superficially homogenous total
only be addressed at an individual level, in an attempt to “flip” some crowd members back into a more structured pattern which will hopefully spread throughout the mob.

Odysseus’s appeals to the “kings” and “commoners” are different, but only the first are even partially addressed as “agents,” rather than as members of a particular group. To the “king,” Odysseus says:

δαιμόνι’, οὐ σε ἕοικε κακόν ὁς δειδίσσεσθαι,
ἄλλ’ ἄντως τε κάθησο καὶ ἄλλους ἱδρω λαούς.
Good sir, it doesn’t suit you to panic like a wretch,
But sit ye down yourself and seat the rest of the people.178

Here he plays to his addressee’s vanity and self-perception as elite. However, he goes on to construct his addressee not as an individual psychological agent, but as a fellow member of a political cadre, and a social class:179

ἐν βουλή δ’ οὐ πάντες ἄκουσαμεν οἶον ἔειπε;180
Didn’t we all hear what (Agamemnon) said in council?

That is to say, “Weren’t you part of the elite crowd, the – as it were – upper house? Why are you acting as part of the mob? Why have you lost your elite knowledge? You have failed totally in your task of ensuring orderly behavior within your designated slice of crowd.”

Odysseus’s tone in addressing the “man of the people”181 is starkly different:

δαιμόνι’, ἀτρέμας ἦσο καὶ ἄλλων μέθον ἄκουε,
οἱ σε φέρτεροι εἰσί, σὺ δ’ ἀπτόλεμος καὶ ἀναλκις,
οὔτε ποτ’ ἐν πολέμῳ ἑναρίθμημος οὔτ’ ἐνὶ βουλή.
οὐ μὲν πῶς πάντες βασιλεύσομεν ἐνθαδ’ Ἀχαιοί.
οὐκ ἀγαθὸν πολυκοιράνη, εἰς κοίρανος ἔστω,
εἰς βασιλεύς, ὡς δῶκε Κρόνου πάις ἀγκυλομήτω
σκάπτον τ’ ἡμῆς δέμιστας, ἵνα σφίσι βουλεύησι.
Good sir, sit down with out fear and listen to others’ words,
Those who are better than you, for you are unwarlike and weak,
Nor are you to be counted either in war or in council.
For we Achaians won’t all be kings here. Multirulership isn’t a good.
Let there be one ruler, one king, to whom the child of crooked-scheming
Kronos gave the scepter and customs, that he may rule with them.182
These words would seem more appropriate if addressed to Thersites, who is about to have his moment. He truly is unwarlike, and insubordinate to boot; Odysseus will need to beat him into silence. However, the “man of the people” is instead addressed as if the average, rather than the worst, soldier were “unwarlike” and fit only to listen to and execute the commands of the elite. The scenes of assembly and panic are revealing of both “class” and “political” issues. We will miss this dynamic if we see this as a crowd of “heroes,” or any other type of “single agents”. The rank-and-file are not failed heroes; they are their own collective entity. Along the lines of Thomas Jefferson’s emendation of the New Testament to leave only the words directly uttered by Jesus, we can imagine a “worm’s-eye view” of the Iliad in which all individual actors are removed, leaving only the military and other crowds wrestling back and forth. The crowds are not (just) aggregations of potential or unnamed warrior individuals. They are their own thing, even if their potential agency is difficult to glimpse in this earliest stage of their representation.

GROUP AND SOUND
What words in the Homeric vocabulary denote what we would recognize as “crowd?” ὄχλος is not a Homeric word; its first appearance is in Pindar. In our investigation of crowd behavior in Homer, our investigation will focus rather on a pair of words: ὅµιλος (homilos) and ὅµαδος (homados). Etymologically, these words mean “together-group” and “together-sound.”

A: ILLIAD

"Οµιλός
Karpyuk likens ὅµιλος to ὄχλος, attributing to both “the meaning of ‘crowd,’ ‘unorganized gathering.’” This is at best an overstatement; as we will see, ὅµιλος is used to describe a variety of masses of people, rarely if ever with a clear connotation of being ‘unorganized.’ In the Iliad, unsurprisingly, it is used almost exclusively of the

183 See Rose 1988.
184 Karpyuk 81; LSJ s.v. θόρυβος is also not found in Homer. As will become clear through the investigation of these words, ὅµιλος:ὁµαδος:ὄχλος:θόρυβος::word for a crowd:word for collective noise made by that crowd. Snell (III:682-84): “Crowd, throng, mass, assembly, group: social, military and related bucolic/hunting uses … 1. Basic social, non-military use crowd, throng, concourse.”
185 N.B. the “group” is ἴλη, specifically a military band or troop. Snell: “-ιλ- either suffix or rel. to ἴλη.”
186 Welskopf (184-85):
Das Wort ὅµιλος und andere Bildungen mit dem Stamm kennen sich auf das Gewuehlt im Kämpfe beziehen … Es kann sich aber bei ‘homilos’ und den Ableitungen auch darum handeln, dass jemand mit anderen, besseren oder schlechteren Maennern Gemeinschaft hat. … ὅµιλος hat somit … nicht nur die sozial-technische Bedeutung eines Getuemmels oder Gewuehls, sondern kann auch in der verbalen Form den ethischen Sinn der Gemeinschaft mit Guten oder Schlechten annehmen.
187 Karpyuk 81.
What is worthy of note is this: in almost 80 occurrences of the word throughout the poem, it is only used in the nominative twice. Neither of these instances (discussed in detail below) denote a military group. The military ὰμίλος is never an agent. Rather, it is the field, or backdrop, against and through which heroic and divine characters move and act. They move καθ’ ὰμίλον (seventeen times), ἀν’ ὰμίλον (eight times), etc.; they are seen by other heroes ἐρχομένων προσάρωθεν ὰμίλον μακρὰ βιβάντα, “coming in front of the crowd, taking great strides.” They discover one another ὑστατον ὰμίλου ἐσταότα, “standing at the edge of the throng.” Ten times they “enter” or “mingle with” the ὰμίλος, e.g.:

ἡ δ’ ἀνδρὶ ἱκέλη Τρώων κατεδύσεθ’ ὰμίλον
In the likeness of a man, she entered into the crowd of Trojans.

If the crowd is the background against which heroes fight, the taunts and threats they issue show awareness of their relationship as elite individuals to the undistinguished mass. When Achilles confronts Aeneas, he asks him

Αἰνεία, τί σὺ τόσσον ὰμίλου πολλῶν ἐπέλθων/ ἐστης;
Aeneas, why have you approached to step so far out from the ὰμίλος?

In a display of ring-composition, this speech concludes with Achilles attempting to send Aeneas back into the crowd:

ἄλλα σ’ ἔγωγ’ ἀναχωρήσαντα κελεύω
ἐξ πλήθουν ἴναι, μηδ’ ἀντίος ἱστασ’ ἐμεῖο,
πρὶν τι κακόν παθέειν.
But I bid you to retreat and go back into the crowd,
Not stand face to face with me,
Before you suffer some harm.

For one elite warrior to “order” another one to retreat to the safety of numbers is a particularly stinging insult – one which highlights the Homeric vision of battle as a series of elite encounters contrasted to a background of undifferentiated groupings.

188 LSJ, second meaning.
189 Van Wees (1988) analyzes the relations between leaders and the rank-and-file in Homeric ideology.
190 E.g. II.209. On the contructions with ana and kata, see George (74).
191 III.22. Here the role of the ὰμίλος as “backdrop” to the actions of the heroic characters is most obvious.
192 XIII.459
193 IV.86, of Athena in disguise. Lattimore renders this “she merged among the Trojans assembled.” The ὰμίλος is, precisely, a group with which one merges and in which one loses one’s identity – whether as an individual human, or, as here, even as a god.
194 XX.178-79
195 XX.196-98
196 Cf. Glaucus’ image of the generations of men as leaves (VI.145-49), which captures the sense of the mass of men as at once ephemeral, fungible and at the mercy of the elements. No two snowflakes are alike,
Achilles’s message to Aeneas, while delivered with some irony, is accurate in its portrayal of the ὥμολος/πλήθος as a site of relative safety compared to the encounters between elite individuals. Under the guidance of such an elite leader, if the ὥμολος manages to hold together and follow that leader’s directions, its members will remain uninjured. For it is only by being singled out as a named hero, whether one with an elaborately narrated genealogy or one of the many figures for whom we have only a name, that one becomes a potential victim of elite wrath. To remain anonymous and unenumerated is to stay out of harm’s way—although it is also of course to remain unremembered, and is therefore definitionally incompatible with hero status.

During the fight over Patroklos’s body, Ajax’s successful marshalling of the troops highlights the contrasts between one and many, danger and safety:

Αἴας γὰρ μάλα πάντας ἐπώθετο πολλὰ κελεύων.
οὔτε τιν’ ἐξοπίσω νεκροῦ χάζεσθαι ἀνώγει
οὔτε τιν’ προμάχεσθαι Αχαίων ἐξοχον ἄλλων,
ἄλλα μάλ᾽ ἀμφ’ αὐτῶι βεβάμεν, σχεδόθεν δὲ μάχεσθαι. …
παυρότεροι δὲ πολὺ φθίνουσιν. μέμηντο γὰρ αἰεὶ
ἄλληλοις ἀν’ ὥμολον ἀλεξέμεναι φόνον αἰτύν.
For Ajax went to absolutely all of them, giving many orders.
He ordered no one to yield before the body,
Nor fight in front apart from the other Achaean,
But to step hard by him, and to fight from afar …
And far fewer of them were dying. For they remembered always to ward
off utter slaughter, (by bunching) in a ὥμολος with each other."

Later in the same book, the ὥμολος’s potential safety is confirmed. Achilles’s charioteer Automedon

ἔρια μὲν γὰρ φεύγεσκεν ὑπὲκ Τρώων ὀρυμαγδοῦ,
ἔρια δ’ ἐπαίξασσε πολὺν καθ’ ὥμολον ὡπάξων.
ἄλλ’ οὖχ ἦρει φῶτας, ὡτε σεβαίτο διώκειν.
οὐ γὰρ πως ἢν οἶον ἐνθ’ ἱερῶι ἐνί δίφρῳ
ἐγχει ἐφορμάσθαι καὶ ἐπίσχειν ὥκεας ἰπποῦς.
He easily fled out from under the Trojan tumult,
And easily he darted along the great ὥμολος.
But he could not kill men, when he rushed to chase them.
For, being alone in his chariot, he was not able to pursue with the spear
And hold his swift horses in check (at the same time)."

but for the purposes of this simile all leaves are much the same. Only heroic exploits and noble lineage, memorialized in verse, takes heroes out from the anonymous mass. 

197 XVII.356-65
198 XVII.461-65. On chariots as “taxis” taking elite characters to and from the battlefield, rather than as platforms for mounted attack, see Greenhalgh (9 and passim).
Here, a character of ambiguous status – identified by name but playing an auxiliary role as servant to another, indisputably heroic character – cannot crack the surface of the ὁµίλος. Therefore, he cannot single out any member of that group for a confrontation, which would trigger some sort of description of his opponent (whether merely a name or a more elaborate lineage) and mark them for possible death. The collective ὁµίλος is the object of heroic aggression in the sense of providing a “pool” of potential victims, but the epic way of death requires that these victims be individuated before their demise.

The protection offered by the ὁµίλος is certainly not absolute. An example of successful intrusion by Ajax into and election of a victim from among the ὁµίλος occurs earlier in the same book:

τὸν δ’ υίὸς Τελαµῶνος ἐπαίξας δι’ ὁµίλου
πλῆξ’ αὐτοσχεδίην …
The son of Telamon, rushing through the crowd, struck him (Hippothoos) at close range …

In the previous book, Patroklos’s death scene sets individual figures’ danger against the safety provided by the crowd. After Apollo strikes Patroklos, the first human to join in the killing is Euphorbos. Here the narrator directly addresses Patroklos, before shifting back into third-person description:

Pose τοι πρῶτος ἐφήκε βέλος, Πατρόκλεας ἵππευ,
οὐδὲ δάμασσ’. ὁ μὲν αὐτὸς ἀνέδραμε, μίκτο δ’ ὁµίλωι,
ἐκ χρυσὸς ἄρπάξας δόρυ μείλινον, οὐδ’ ὑπέμεινε
Πάτροκλον γνωμόν περ ἐόντ’ ἐν δηιστήτι.
Πάτροκλος δὲ θεοῦ πληγή καὶ δουρὶ δαμασθεῖς
ἀυὴ ἐτάρον εἰς ἔθνος ἐγχέζετο κηρ ἀλείνων.
“Ἐκτωρ δ’ ὡς εἴδεν Πατροκῆα μεγάθυμον
ἀυὶ ἀναχαζόμενον, βεβλήμενον ὦ ξία χαλκῶι,
ἀγχύμολον ρά οἱ ἥλθε κατὰ στίχας …
He first hurled a missile at you, horseman Patroklos,
But did not slay you. He thereupon ran away, and mixed with the ὁµίλος,
Snatching his ash spear from your flesh, nor did he remain-to-face
With Patroklos, unarmed though he was, in (one-on-one) combat.
But Patroklos, beaten by the strike of the god and by spear,
Sought to withdraw back to his “tribe” of companions and flee death.
But when Hektor saw great-hearted Patroklos
Retreating back, struck with the bronze spear,
He came near to him across the ranks …

199 XVII.293-94
200 ἔθνος in this sense is another “crowd word,” cf. II.87, 91. This is, as it were, a reversal of the “ethno-geographic” usage of ὁµίλος in Pindar and Aeschylus, discussed in Chapter Three. There, a crowd-term is used to speak of an entire nation of people; here, a term which normally means “group” in a broad demographic sense is used to denote a particular physical grouping of people.
Patroklos is only a few lines away from death. The contrast between Euphorbos’s and Patroklos’s motions in this scene illuminates the role of the ὡμόλος within the political economy of Homeric prestige. At the end of his aristeia, Patroklos in his glory is brought down by divine intervention, in the form of a blow from Apollo. His second, human attacker is in a sense merely “piling on” – dispensing a blow which further wounds but does not kill Patroklos, softened up by Apollo’s ambush as he is.

Having failed to achieve the glory owed to the killer of the most successful Greek berzerker to date, Euphorbos merges back into the ὡμόλος, becoming again an “extra.” He is temporarily safe from retribution, but by the same token his part in this death scene will not flower into a moment of true glory. 202 The safety of the ὡμόλος is precisely its anonymity. Patroklos, in his til-now triumphant rampage, exists at a level of social prominence and military excellence well above Euphorbos’s; unlike his hit-and-run opponent, Patroklos cannot return to the safety of numbers.

Unable to merge into the anonymous crowd, Patroklos - μεγάθυμος Πάτροκλος, we are reminded, trapped by his very excellence – is exposed to the predatory gaze of an even greater hero. Hektor sees that he’s wounded and swoops across the ranks to kill him. 203 Euphorbos’s strike, then, is an aborted effort from a character neither fully separated from the general ὡμόλος nor particularly distinguished within the list of minor characters. Patroklos is worthy of a greater opponent, and only the highly privileged and irreducibly singular Hektor can claim ultimate victory over Achilles’s body double.

The line at XVI.817 (ἂψδ᾽ ἑτάρων εἰς ἔθνος ἐγάζετο κηρ’ ἀλειφών) is a repeat of III.32. There the would-be retreater is Alexandros, and his pursuer Menelaos:

201 XVI.812-20

202 In the opening passage of Book XVII, the slain Euphorbos is likened to a cow killed by a lion.

203 XVI.818-21
As Menelaos, beloved of Ares, saw him coming,
Going out in front of the ὅμιλος with broad steps,
Rejoiced his heart like a lion coming across a great carcass,
Finding a horned deer or wild goat, hungry, and gulps it down
Fiercely, even if swift dogs and robust youths are rushing him,
So Menelaos rejoiced seeing godlike Alexandros with his eyes,
And saying he would punish the thief, leapt straightaway from his chariot
To the ground with his armor. And when godlike Alexandros saw him
Appearing in the front ranks, he was struck in his dear heart.
And fleeing death, retreated into his band of friends,
As when a man who sees a snake turns around and steps aside
In mountain glens, and a trembling seizes under his limbs,
And he withdraws, and paleness takes his cheeks.
So in turn did he enter the ὅμιλος of the mighty Trojans,
Alexandros god-like, fearing the son of Atreus.

Menelaos feels pleasure in seeing his intended victim step out in front of the ὅμιλος; this is both the thrill of the hunt, as well as an implicitly spectatorial pleasure. Alexandros (a man of exceptional beauty, by the way; Menelaos relishes his apparently imminent conquest of his wife’s seducer with an almost erotic joy) as imminent corpse thrills the one who “picks him out of a line-up,” so to speak. Menelaos pays no more attention to the background ὅμιλος than the simile’s lion does to the dog pack.

When Alexandros sees Menelaos “appearing in the front ranks” (ἐν προμάχοισι φανέντα) his reaction is quite different. Alexandros trembles and retreats back into the ὅμιλος. Being out in front is glorious, when you want to display yourself to others or when you’ve locked your sights on an inferior enemy. Still, when you lose control, of the fight or even, as here, of your limbs, best to rejoin the group, where you will not be called upon to perform individual feats of bravery and skill, and your chance of being targeted is greatly reduced. One must negotiate a tradeoff between glory and safety.

**Ὅμιλος as Agent**

Only twice in the poem is ὅμιλος, in the non-military sense of “any assembled crowd, throng of people,” the subject of a verb. The first occurrence is in the description of the Shield of Achilles:

\[
\text{πολλὸς δ’ ἵμερόντα χορὸν περίπτεσθ’ ὅμιλος/τερπόμενοι} \\
\text{“… and a great crowd stood round the lovely dancers, enjoying”}
\]

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204 III.21-37  
205 LSJ, first meaning; Snell calls this (III:682) the “[b]asic social, non-military use.”  
206 XVIII.603-04
The plural participle agrees with the conceptual plurality of the formally singular noun “crowd;” this plurality is further stressed by the adjective πολλός. The action performed by the ὁµιλος is merely to “stand around” the already round χορός, in keeping with the Shield’s overall pattern of concentric circles. This is the last scene described on the Shield, followed immediately by the encircling band of Ocean, the outermost limit.

The second and final occurrence of ὁµιλος in the nominative comes near the end of the poem, as Hektor’s body is wheeled inside Troy:

κλαίων δ’ ἀμφισταθ’ ὁµιλος
“and the crowd stood around, weeping.”

Again, the crowd is arranged in the manner of an audience; again there is a participle (singular, this time) describing their emotional reaction to what they see. From these two instances we see that a “crowd of spectators” is one potential meaning of ὁµιλος - a crowd whose actions are limited to passive observation and joyful or pitiful response to what they see. Yet while the Homeric ὁµιλος is distinctly passive, it does not seem to have the socially pejorative connotations which ὄχλος will carry in later literature.

The verbal form is also worthy of consideration. This verb has two major valences of meaning, which at first sight seem contradictory: “I: To be in company with, consort with … II: In hostile sense, join battle with.” Karpyuk notes of ὁµιλος that the “primary meaning [is] ‘connection with something, contact, affinity.’” This contact can be associative or hostile, and this ambivalence is at the heart of the phenomenon known as Crowd. If one is part of a crowd, one is “associated” with it; if one encounters a crowd

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207 The people in the agora depicted on the shield are specifically said to be grouped close together: λαοὶ δ’ εἰν ἄγορῇ ἔσαν ἅθροϊοι.
208 At 600, the chorus’s movements are likened to a wheel.
209 The roundness of group arrangement is stressed throughout the ekphrasis, especially at XVIII.504-05: οἱ δὲ γέροντες/ ἔπι ἐξητοίσι λίθοις ἱερῶι ἐνί κύκλωι (“and the old men sat on hewn stones in a sacred circle.”) Α κύκλος-crowd thus viewed externally as an aesthetic object, or internally from the point of view of one of its members, is a manifestation of proper order. From the perspective of an individual fearing or surrounded by a crowd, the κύκλος is an enveloping threat. Contrast (all tragic passages discussed in Chapter Three) Ajax 723 (a crowd surrounding Ajax) with 749 (the “tyrannic circle” as a place of elders and elites to deliberate, as on the Shield). At Orestes 919 the κύκλος of the agora is a site of contamination which the good yeoman farmer avoids entering.
210 XXIV.712
211 Particularly noteworthy is the Trojan crowd (δῆµος ἀπείροιν, XXIV.776) of female mourners in Book XXIV (707-14, etc.). They are portrayed without pejorative connotations, although it is also true that they and their actions are not described with the same terminology as the crowds examined here.
212 LSJ s.v.; cf. Snell: “Consort with, associate with … (2) be joined in battle with, fight with or against or among.”
213 Ibid.
from the outside, as it were, the encounter is likely to be at best unsympathetic, at worst fully “hostile.”

The first occurrence of this verb in the *Iliad* showcases its ambivalence:

Τυδείδην δ’ ὄυκ ἂν γνοίης ποτέροις μετείη,
 HttpServletResponseDispatcher μετ’ Ἀχαιοῖς.

But you [addressed to audience as a single “implied reader”] wouldn’t have known which side the son of Tydeus was on, whether he *homilei’d* with the Trojans, or with the Achaeans. 214

This passage highlights the double meaning of the word. It is difficult, if not impossible, to tell which meaning of ὀμιλεῖν is intended – “associating with,” or “fighting against.” Obviously, Diomedes will be associated with one army and joining battle with the other, but which is which? In the broader context of the poem, the answer is obvious – the audience knows that Diomedes is Greek - but at the micro-level, meaning is suspended.

Sometimes the verb does not merely connote “association” in the hostile or solidaristic sense. It is sometimes clearly used to mean “swarm” – to form a *homilos* in a sense we are interested in: e.g., in the simile of flies around Sarpedon’s corpse: οἱ δ’ αἰεὶ περὶ νεκρῶν ὀμίλεον. 215

“Ọμαδος”

“Noise, din, esp. of the confused voices of a number of men … noisy throng or mob of warriors … din of battle.” 216

Ọμαδος is the voice of the crowd. Two passages above all make this clear. The first, discussed already above, occurs early in the second book of the *Iliad*. After Agamemon has announced his plan to the council of leaders, the mass of the army rushes in, likened in a simile to swarms of bees. 218 As the men assemble:

τετρήξει δ’ ἁγορή, ὑπὸ δὲ στεναχιζόμενα γαῖα
λαῶν ἱζόντων, ὀμαδὸς δ’ ἦν.
And the assembly(-space) shook, and the earth groaned beneath the peoples as they sat, and there was a ὀμαδὸς. 219

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214 V.85-86. The passage goes on to explain this unreadability of Diomedes’s affiliation by likening him to a river in full stream (ποταμὼν πλήθον ἔοικός, at 87). For Theweleit, water is the ultimate image of crowd in its liberating and associative potential; a man whose energy converts him to a fluid state will accordingly blur group boundaries.

215 XVI.641, 644


217 II.86 ἔπεσσεύοντο δὲ λαοὶ

218 N.B.: two parallel adverbs are used in this simile, at II.89 and 93. Just as bees fly βοτρυδόν (“like a bunch of grapes”), so the “many tribes” (ἐθνα πολλά) come forward ἰλαδόν, “in troops.” The ἰλα- in this second adverb is a root of the word ὀμίλος, reinforcing the crowd-ness of the army as it assemble.

219 II.95-96
The ὁμάδος is a prodigious phenomenon, in its essence a product of the multiplicity of the crowd. Just as thousands of limbs moving in concert shake the very earth, the voices of thousands gathered together take on the dimensions of the roar of an earthquake.

A later occurrence of the word, again in the context of public assembly, confirms that ὁμάδος has already in Homer a political valence. Agamemnon and Achilles are ending their quarrel; Agamemnon prefaces his response to Achilles’s overture thus:

ὥ φίλοι ἠρωες Δαναοί, θεράποντες Ἄρηος, ἐσταότος μὲν καλὸν ἀκούειν, οὐδὲ ἔοικεν ὑββάλλειν. χαλεπὸν γαρ ἐπισταμένοι περ ἐόντι. ἀνδρῶν δ᾽ ἐν πολλῷ ὁμάδωι πῶς κόν τις ἀκούσαι ἢ εἰποι; βλάβεται δὲ λεγόσε περ ἐὼν ἀγορητής.

“O dear hero-Danaans, servants of Ares,
It is meet to listen to the speaker (literally “stander”), nor is it right
To interrupt, for that is harsh even for one who knows (sc. how to speak).
In a great ὁμάδος of men, how could one hear or speak?
He is interfered with, although he is a clear public speaker.”

This anxious captatio benevolentiae is unique in the poem. Elsewhere, the elite speakers perform their ‘flyting-contests’ in front of a mostly mute audience. Here we glimpse an alternative: that the masses assembled to view these performances might interfere, that they may go beyond passive reaction to elite speech, and become in their noisy multiplicity a threat to the successful performance. Agamemnon, a hero notably insecure in his position, is the appropriate character to voice this concern, which points ahead to future political possibilities that will be realized in fifth-century Athens.

Finally, one other instance of ὁμάδος is worthy of note, if only for its location in the text. The final line of the twelfth book, coming at the absolute low point in the Greeks’ fortunes (and, after the epic was divided into books, its precise midpoint), is this:

Δαναοὶ δὲ φόβηθεν νῆας ἀνὰ γλαφυρᾶς, ὁμάδος δ᾽ ἀλίαστος ἐτύχθη.
The Danaans fled-in-terror among their hollow ships,
And an endless ὀμαδὸς arose.\textsuperscript{223}

Here ὀμαδὸς is perhaps the quintessential crowd expression: the noise of panic. At this moment of rout, the Greeks are reduced to a brute mob, on the threshold of being overpowered by a momentarily triumphant crowd of enemies.\textsuperscript{224} The first half of the \textit{Iliad} begins with heaps of Greek corpses accumulating due to plague, followed shortly by a gathering of the army in proto-political assembly. It ends with the Greeks forming yet another crowd, this one in panicked disarray. Here the crowd on the Greek side previews the future “mob” of classical Athens, just as at the end of the \textit{second} half of the poem, the Trojan city’s crowd assembles to mourn its fallen champion.\textsuperscript{225}

**Periphrases**

There are several passages in the \textit{Iliad} that describe crowd behavior without using any of the special words already surveyed.\textsuperscript{226} These periphrases seem to come in places where the poem is groping towards some new object of representation: the political crowds, and the politics of crowding, which will achieve full expression in Aristophanic Athens.

Achilles accuses his Myrmidons of collective insubordination:

\begin{quote}

tαύτα μ’ ἄγειρόμενοι θάμ’ ἐβάζετε …

ῶς εἴπων ὄτρωνε μένος καὶ θυμον ἐκάστου.

μᾶλλον δὲ οὐτ’ ἄρθεν, ἐπεὶ βασιλῆς ἂκουσαν.

“Often you’d gather together and say these things against me …”

So saying, he stirred the strength and spirit of each.

And the ranks closed together more, when they heard from the king.\textsuperscript{227}
\end{quote}

The crowd draws tighter, enhancing its status as properly regimented, when its leader upbraids them for having taken to illicit (or at least, conducted without him there) gatherings directed against the leader.

In another moment, during a Trojan battlefield assembly, Hektor mocks his interlocutor, who wishes to retreat into the city:

\begin{quote}

κατ’ ὅµιλον τεῖχος ὑπέρβασαν, οἱ δὲ κατ’ αὐτάς ποιητὰς ἐπέφευγον πόλας, “and whirling around the homilos he called on the Trojans to o’erleap the wall, as he urged them on. And straightaway some Trojans leapt over the wall, while others poured in through the wrought gates themselves.” XII.467-69.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{223} XII.470-71; a very similar line occurs at XVI.296.

\textsuperscript{224} At his apparent moment of triumph, Hektor relies upon, indeed almost merges with, the Trojan homilos, which breaches the Greek defenses like a river pouring over a floodwall: κέκλετο δὲ Τρώασιν ἐλέζαμεν καθ’ ὁμὴν τεῖχος ὑπέρβασαν, τοῖ δ’ ὄτρωντι πίθοντα, αὐτίκα δ’ οἱ μὲν τεῖχος ὑπέρβασαν, οἱ δὲ κατ’ αὐτὰς ποιητὰς ἐπέφευγον πόλας. “and whirling around the homilos he called on the Trojans to o’erleap the wall, as they obeyed him as he urged them on. And straightaway some Trojans leapt over the wall, while others poured in through the wrought gates themselves.” XII.467-69.

\textsuperscript{225} As observed in fn. 210 above, the crowd of Trojan mourners is portrayed as orderly and decorous; cf. the orderly crowd that assembles to hear Pericles’s funeral oration at Thuc. II.34.

\textsuperscript{226} There are of course more depictions of groups and group action than can be discussed, even briefly, in this project. For example, the representation of the army in ranks, e.g. at II.244 ff., must be bracketed. I am most interested in the army, and in other Homeric groups, when they act either inappropriately or otherwise similarly to what in later texts are more directly recognizable as “crowds” in the pejorative sense of “mob.” Similarly, the souls of the dead in Od. xi. might be read as a crowd. As explained in the opening Chapter, I have focused this survey around the key terms homilos and homados to provide some structure and limit, while acknowledging that this analysis could be extended to many other Homeric passages.

\textsuperscript{227} XVI.207, 210-11
Aren’t you sick of being cooped up inside the walls?∧

This is all but our only glimpse of an urban crowd in either of the Homeric epics.229

While Iliadic armies are constantly in motion, in the social sense the poem’s “crowds” are quite passive, existing mainly to be manipulated by their heroic leaders and to serve as a backdrop for great deeds. As we will see, the Odyssean crowd is more variable, and at its active extreme foreshadows later representations of the “mob.”

B: ODYSSEY

Generally speaking, crowd words are significantly less common in the Odyssey than in the Iliad. Verbal and noun forms of ὁμαδ-, for instance, occur six times in the former and thirteen in the latter.230 Yet the ὁμιλος of this poem is, perhaps by virtue of this very limitation, more determinate and therefore more significant than those in its companion.

"Ὅμιλος"

Ten of fourteen total instances of the word in the Odyssey refer, directly or indirectly, to the suitors. The significance of this association will inform the concluding portion of this chapter. Setting this subject aside for the moment, here is a survey of the remaining occurrences:

Twice the word is used in the martial sense, with the passages again showing the double valence of the word. First, Odysseus boasts

"πρῶτος κ’ ἄνδρα βάλομι ὡποτέύσας ἐν ὁμίλοι"
Taking my mark, I’d be the first to hit a man in a ὁμίλοι of enemies.231

Later, he assures Achilles’s ghost that his son Neoptolemos

"οὐ ποτ’ ἐνὶ πληθυῖ μένεν ἄνδρῶν οὐδ’ ἐν ὁμίλωι, ἄλλα πολύ προθέεσκε, τὸ δ’ ἡνὸς οὐδένι εἶκον"
was never wont to stay in the mass (πληθυῖ) or throng (ὁμίλοι) of men, but he ran forward by far the first, yielding nothing in his might.232

Together these passages emphasize the ὁμίλος as a field against which an elite warrior demonstrates his prowess, either by being the first to leap out from one’s own ὁμίλος to attack the enemy, or by being the first to attack the enemy’s ὁμίλος. Either way, the ὁμίλος is an undifferentiated mass of fighters, apart from or against which the subject acts.

228 XVIII.287
229 Other examples are the mourners in Book XXIV mentioned briefly above, as well as the crowd watching the youths dance on the Shield at XVIII.603-06.
230 Gehring s.v.
231 viii.21
232 xi.514-15
Shortly before the first of the two passages quoted above, we find the single most figurative use of the word in the Homeric corpus, denoting not a crowd of people but a pile of stones. Odysseus has thrown his stone, and a disguised Athena proclaims:

Καὶ κ’ ἀλαός τοι, ξεῖνε, διακρίνει τὸ σήμα ἀμφαφῶν. ἐπεὶ οὗ τι μεμιγμένον ἐστίν ὀμίλωι, ἀλλὰ πολὺ πρῶτον.

“Yea, stranger, even a blind man could make out your mark by feeling it; for it is in no way mixed in with the mass (ὁμιλωι), but it is by far the first.”

The champion’s stone stands out far in front of the ὀμίλωι of the other competitors’ stones, a metonymic translation of the competitive function described above. Just as the hero is marked apart from the ὀμίλωι—as-background, whether on the battlefields of the Iliad or in the games of the Odyssey, so too is his stone not mixed with the ὀμίλωι of lesser competitors’ stones.

The word appears earlier in the eighth book, in the non-military “crowd of people” sense. A herald takes the blind bard Demodokos by the hand and

ἀρχε δὲ τῷ αὐτὴν ὁδὸν ἧν περ οἱ ἄλλοι
Φαῖνετοι οἱ ἄριστοι, ἀέθλια θαυμαμενόντες.
βὰν δ’ ἵμεν εἰς ἁγορήν, ἄμα δ’ ἔσπετο πουλὺς ὀμίλωις, μυρίοι. ἄν δ’ ἵσταντο νέοι πολλοὶ τε καὶ ἔσθλοι.

“He led him down the same road which the other Phaeacians, The best ones (travel), to be spectators at the games.
And they went forward into the ἁγορά, and together followed a great ὀμίλωι, countless. And youths, many and noble, stood up (as competitors).”

Here the multiplicity of the ὀμίλωι is hyper-emphasized: it is “great” and “myriad” (literally “in the tens of thousands”). The herald and bard, not themselves figures of the elite but in their service, take the path which the “best” (elite) Phaeacians take, when going to watch the games. Even the ἄριστοι can form a crowd of spectators, but the presence of a more “common” crowd is attested by the following lines.

After the “great throng” is assembled in the agora, the noble youths separate out from the many; they will be the active participants in the spectacles to follow. It is worth noting that while there are “many” (πολλοὶ) of these competitors, this “many” seems few in the wake of the triplicate multiplier above (πουλὺς ὀμίλωις, μυρίοι). Odysseus’s eventual feats of valor will distinguish him from his “many” elite rivals, who in turn are posed against a “countless” throng of non-elite spectators.

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233 viii.195-97
234 viii.107-10
Ὁ ἰλεῖν
The verbal form is even more strongly associated than the nominal with the suitors. Of fourteen verbal (including one participial) instances, all refer to them in some way.

Three times235 in the poem this line is repeated:

τοῖος ἐὼν μνηστρῆσιν ὀμιλήσειν Ὀδυσσεῖς.
“Oh, that Odysseus, being such a man, might join (battle) with the suitors …”

In context, it is clear that the verb is meant in the hostile sense. Still, the conceptual ambivalence is evident in the other appearances of this word.236 The second occurrence is clearly meant in the associative, non-hostile sense. In the second book, Aigyptios is the first to speak at the assembly called by Telemachos. Of his four sons, we are told, one followed Odysseus to Troy.

τρεῖς δὲ οἱ ἀλλοι ἔσαν, καὶ ὁ μὲν μνηστρῆσιν ὀμίλει,
Εὐρύνομος, δόο δ’ αἰέν ἔχον πατρῴα ἔργα.
He had three other (sons), and one associated with the suitors,
Eurynomos, but the (other) two still held their ancestral lands.237

The contrast with the above quotation could not be clearer. Odysseus’s friends and relatives hope that he will “join with” the suitors in battle, to conquer them while retaining (indeed, redeeming) his individual identity. Eurynomos “joins with” the suitors in the sense of becoming one of them, submerging his individual identity in the unruly ὀμίλος.238

Four uses of the verb239 describe Telemachos as “joining with” the suitors. He is told by Athena, disguised as Mentor, to return home and homilei with them. Shortly thereafter, he is described as doing so. Fifteen books later, Odysseus tells him to do the same. Finally, Penelope, inspired by Athena, announces her intentions:

Εὐρυνόμη, θυμός μοι ἐέλεδεται, οὐ τι πάρος γε,
μνηστήρεσσι φανήναι, ἀπεχθομένοισι περ ἐμης.
παιδὶ δὲ κεν ἐξομι ἐπος, τὸ κε κέρδιον εἶη,
μὴ πάντα μνηστήριαν ὑπερφιάλοσιν ὀμιλεῖν,
ὁ τ’ εὐ μὲν βάζουσι, κακῶς δ’ ὄςι δ’ ὄπιθεν φρονέουσι.
“To show (myself) to the suitors, hateful though they are still. But I would say a word to my child, and may it be for the better,

235 i.265, iv.345, xvii.136
236 For this ambivalence, see the discussion supra of Diomedes in the Iliad.
237 ii.21-22
238 The only other mention of this figure, at xxii.243, comes in a list of suitors “by far the best in war.” Eurynomos, then, seems to be part of an elite cadre within the suitors, but still very much defined by his membership in the group qua group.
239 ii.281, ii.381, xvi.271, xviii.164
Not to always be in the company (ὁµιλεῖν) of the o’erweening suitors, Who speak well to him, but intend ill (for him) in the future.240

Almost a third of the total instances of this verb, then, refer to Telemachos’s interaction with the suitors. Unlike Aigyptios’s son Eurynomos, Telemachos is able to homilei with them without becoming one of them. Homilei-ing with a ὅµιλος, then, does not necessarily entail loss of individual identity. It is precisely due to Telemachos’s “truly” elite nature241 that he can be set among this crowd of suitors without becoming one of them.242

Indeed, we are introduced to Telemachos thus:

Τὴν δὲ πολὺ πρῶτος ἴδε Τῆλεμαχὸς θεοειδής, ἥστο γὰρ ἐν μηστήρισι φίλον τετιμένος ἦτορ, ὁσσόμενος πατέρ’ ἐσθλὸν ἐνὶ φρεσίν, εἰ ποθὲν ἐλθὼν μηστήριον τῶν μὲν σκέδασιν κατὰ δώματα θείη …

Telemachos, godlike, saw her (Athena-in-disguise) by far the first, For he sat among the suitors grieved in his dear heart, Seeing in his mind his noble father, as it were coming from somewhere, And causing a scattering of the suitors throughout the household …243

Telemachos sits among the suitors yet is clearly apart from them. While they, in their numbers, entertain themselves with games, he alone sees the unusual new element of the situation. He sees his father’s divine patroness, while “seeing” in his mind Odysseus himself, arriving home and breaking up this throng of suitors. This first appearance of Telemachos and the suitors unfolds according to the dialectic of One and Many.244

Also worthy of note in the passage quoted immediately above is Penelope’s own relation to the suitors. While her son, as an elite male, interacts with the suitors as almost a peer (though they often treat him with great condescension), Penelope is separated from them by gender. She intends to appear to them, placing them in the role of a group

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240 xviii.164-68
241 Cf. Thalmann 1998:104 on the suitors as “debased” aristocrats. Cf. Rose (1992:99-100), who (following the lead of Whitman 1958:306-08) sees the suitors as oligarchs. Of the suitors’ suppression of popular discontent in the assembly in Book Two, he says “[t]his first, tentative opposition of the many and the few in Greek literature is met by a decisive shift to the relative numerical superiority of the few to the one king.” Indeed, if we depart from an anachronistically Marxist or otherwise modern understanding of crowd as solely a class/mass phenomenon, and adopt a Canettian model of crowd modalities, we see all the more clearly that whatever their class status, the suitors are definitely a group, relying on their sheer plurality to protect them and prone to unruly behavior. See Chapter Three for more explicit ancient descriptions of groups as unable to properly control their behavior, or carrying out coordinated and frenzied attacks.
242 This may be a working definition of a Homeric character: one who may be temporarily situated as a member of a group, without ever fully losing their individuality. Groups have collective names, characters proper ones.
243 i.113-16
244 The tension between One and Many is established from the poem’s opening lines. Odysseus sees the cities of ‘many’ men, but cannot save his followers and is the sole survivor of that group and the lone remaining Greek exile (i.1ff., 11-12); Poseidon alone of the gods is absent as the other gods assemble (i.26).
audience of a spectacle, while Telemachos is variously given advice for or against mingling with them.

"ÖZMAĐOS"

As with özülévı, the verb özadevı is the linguistic “property” of the suitors. All five instances of the verb have the suitors as their subject. Twice they roar at or in anticipation of the appearance of Penelope. At xvii.360, they raise a ruckus after the bard has performed, as Odysseus prepares to beg among them. Twice, they make a özados in anger at, or, after he begins to slaughter them, in fear of Odysseus. Whereas in the Iliad, özados is primarily the noise of the crowd as it gathers or flees, in the Odyssey another dimension is added: the crowd as “audience,” the crowd watching athletic performance.

It is time to examine directly the implications of the association between the words özüloç and özmađos and the suitors’ status as a group.

WHO ARE THE SUITORS?

What is the significance of these associations? In the Iliad, özüloç denotes the often-invisible mass of the army, around and among whom the “name” characters move and act. In the “poem of War,” it is unsurprising that this word would appear often, and have the meaning it does. In the “poem of Peace,” the word’s significance is less obvious.

Perhaps the first instance of the word in the Odyssey shows us the way. The disguised Athena addresses Telemachos (after he notices her in the scene quoted above):

"What feast, what özüloç here goes about? What’s it got to do with you? A banquet, or a marriage? For surely this isn’t a potluck. They seem outrageous, o’erweening, eating all around the house. A man would be wroth seeing (these) many shameful (deeds/things), At least anyone sensible who should come along."

A group acting so inappropriately cannot be participating in an ἔρανος, a “meal to which each contributed his share.” What, then, is this peculiar özüloç, which does not

245 The one occurrence of the nominal form, at x.556, comes as Elpenor awakes to the özmađos of Odysseus and the rest of the crew reveling in Circe’s house; the similarity to the suitors, in their never-ending party, is obvious.
246 i.365, iv.768. Both times the suitors make this collective noise after Penelope has retired. The noise is therefore directed not at her, but rather functions to unite the suitors as a collective (even though they are, individually, each expressing their desire to possess her). It is a homosocial staging of heterosexual desire.
247 Slater (1990) 217: “Hybris and thórúboç prevent all chance of peace-promoting song or charis.”
248 xviii.399, xxii.21
249 Of course, the crowd as audience appears in the Iliad, e.g. during the funeral games (XXIII.448: Ἀργείοι δ’ ἐν ἁγῶνι καθήμενοι εἰςορόντο). But that crowd is, of course, the military force in a different mode.
250 i.225-29
correspond to any proper category of gathering? It is precisely an anti-eranos, a meal at which none (bar Telemachos) contributes their share. Any “sensible” man would recoil at this display. The line makes this the only instance of ὅµιλος in Homer with a clear moral connotation.252

In relation to beggars and servants, the suitors are abusive masters; in relation to Odysseus’s family and estate, they are a ravenous horde.253 While the suitors are, taken individually, elite, as a collective they are the ὅµιλος of the poem. Homer either cannot or does not directly represent “lower class” crowds. If we search his corpus for something recognizable as a “mob,” we are led to the suitors.

Another unique usage, late in the poem, of the word ὅµιλος is of particular interest. At xii.263 (repeated by the narrator at 282), Odysseus exhorts his companions to μνηστήρων ἐς ὅµιλον ἀκοντίσαι, “fire into the ὅµιλος of suitors.” This is the only instance in the Homeric corpus where direct transitive contact is established between individual figures and a ὅµιλος. In The Iliad, figures move ἐς ὅµιλον, but they do not do anything to it. At this moment of Odysseus’s triumph over the suitors, contact is at last established between the elite individual and the mass (a mass of elites, to be sure, but a mass nonetheless). This is reminiscent of what Theweleit identifies as a primary fantasy of the fascist “warrior male”: to reduce the mob-which-threatens to a “bloody mass,”254 leaving in the aftermath of the violence the intact male ego, surrounded by the remains of his enemies.

Haubold255 examines a moment256 at which the suitors are referred to as λαοί, the Iliadic term for the general “people” of the army as contrasted with their heroic leaders. “[The suitors] often come close to turning into laoi, and there is always a residue of ambiguity as to what, precisely, their relationship to Odysseus should be.”257 Again, after Odysseus has slain the ringleader Antinoos, the suitor Eurymachus begs him to spare the rest, referring to them as “your people.”258 λαός does not emphasize the collectivity and physical aggregation of a group as do the words surveyed earlier in this chapter and throughout this dissertation, but it confirms that the suitors’ social status is in flux.

That the suitors are, individually, elite figures is indisputable; their status is what qualifies them to seek Penelope’s hand. And yet, when gathered together they constitute a

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251 LSJ s.v.
252 The Iliadic ὅµιλος as refuge, a group that provides safety at the cost of anonymity (discussed in detail above), may connote cowardice. While escape to the crowd may deserve “moral disapproval” as a violation of ideal standards of heroic performance, however, in these scenes any detectable sense of stigma does not attach to the crowd as a whole, as it does in this Odyssean passage.
254 Theweleit II:34, 274
255 Haubold 118-21
256 xvii.64: τὸν δ’ ἄρα πάντες λαοί ἐπερχόμενον θηεύντο ("And all the λαοί gazed at him as he approached.") Again we see the theme of sight, which informs the dialectic of One and Many in Homer and beyond: the gaze of the many directed at the one can be one of amazement, adulation or fear, as here or in spectator sports (Scanlon 278 and passim), or it can be a disapproving or threatening gaze, as in the interaction between a mob and Teucer described in Sophocles’s Ajax, discussed in Chapter Three. If we take from Canetti the precept that crowd phenomena are universal, the feelings of being part of, and being exposed to the gaze of, a crowd would also be a universal human experience. The representation of crowds in Greek literature offers us a window onto the modalities of this experience.
257 Haubold 120
258 λαός σῶν, xxii. 54-55.
In this sense, the prolongation of the courtship produces a sociological slippage. If Penelope were to accept one of them as a husband, he would in a sense become the new Odysseus. The disruptive crowd would be removed, and the elite system of ties between discrete individuals and families would be restored. As it is, the suspended courtship results in the accumulation of a mass of suitors, and a mass of even aristocratic individuals assumes the characteristics of a mob; it violates the traditional code of aristocratic behavior.

In the *Odyssey*, the suitors, acting as a collective, form a ὄμιλος in the worst sense. That is to say, they are a proto-ὄχλος.
CHAPTER THREE
TRAGIC CROWD

Tragedy is “about” crowds in three senses, only the last of which will structure this survey. First, it was performed before an assembly of something close to the entire population, or at least its male members. This is not a study of the audience, but it is worth starting with Beye’s vivid account of the importance of this aspect of the tragic context:

Tragedy was a public event. At Athens the Theater of Dionysus … was large enough to accommodate fourteen to seventeen thousand. The sense of the group, of community, was moreover enhanced by the fact that the audience sat together on stone benches without seat division so that arms, legs and haunches could touch, and emotions could race through the audience, physically making them over into one common response. … Performances were out of doors, in daylight, continuously, starting at dawn in a large arena, where there must have been constant movement, as at present-day sporting events. People leaving to relieve themselves, people going home to eat, hawkers selling food, these were moving elements of the panorama as much as actors and chorus … A large crowd is characteristically animal; the atmosphere is charged with passion and a tension that betrays the crowd’s volatile nature. Large crowds are not at all primarily rational and theater was in any case an emotional experience.

Secondly, since the chorus is an integral feature of the genre in its classical flourishing, every tragedy is in some sense “about” crowds, in that it features a homogenous group that speaks and moves as a collective. This chapter, however, does not aim to study the chorus, but rather to examine the third and most crucial way in

259 Carter 59 draws the same tripartite distinction (audience/onstage characters/description of offstage events) in his survey of tragic representation of the demos, a project with obvious connections to my own. We agree that references to offstage gatherings are “by far the most promising.”

260 On the difficulty of estimating the size of the “immense audience,” as well as whether or not women were part of it, see Pickard-Cambridge 1988:263. On this and other issues, Csapo and Slater 286ff. Roselli has recently (2011) produced a comprehensive study of Athenian audiences and the Athenian discourse on the audience. See especially Chapter 1, “The Idea of the Audience and its Role in the Theater.” For a parallel study of the cultural history of the audience in the United States, see Butsch.

261 Beye 243-44

262 Modern crowd theory, as discussed in the first Chapter, suggests that homogeneous crowds are elite fantasies, while the subversive or rebellious crowd is figured as mixed-gender, mixed-class, etc. Even when representing socially marginal types, then, the tragic chorus does not take the further step of presenting an internally mixed group. Only the offstage crowds of the Bacchae, as discussed below, constitute “mixed groups” in an analogous sense to the modern revolutionary mob.

263 Carter (63-65) cautions against what he calls “the collective fallacy: “It is easy [but perhaps misleading] to assume that, since twelve or fifteen is more than one, the chorus more naturally resembles a mass of people than it does the small group that it really is.” This may make it harder to read the chorus as standing for the demos, but it does not prevent us from seeing the chorus as a site of representation of crowd and crowd-like formations in the broader sense argued for in the first Chapter.
which tragedy deals with crowds: the descriptions given of crowds, groups and masses of people as such – whether words used to describe groups of characters onstage, or the construction through messenger speeches and other dialogue of crowds that exist “offstage.” Examining the range of such crowd construction will show that much of tragic discourse concerns the intentions and actions of offstage groups.

Euripides’s descriptions of groups, especially the two extreme cases of a mass political assembly and a violent conspiratorial mob, are much more frequent and extensive than either of the other tragedians’, even accounting for the larger size of the Euripidean corpus. Aeschylus mostly uses the terminology available already to Homer to describe groups, especially ὀμίλος; while occasionally using the newer word ὄχλος,264 his works lack such explicit descriptions of crowd behavior and psychology as are found in Euripides. Sophocles’s references are, almost without exception, even more indirect and allusive, with only a handful of instances of the words identified in the previous Chapters as pertaining to crowd.

A passage from the chorus’s entry-chant in Agamemnon serves as an example of this more allusive type of crowd representation:

δέκατον μέν ἔτος τόδε ἐπεὶ …
Μενέλαος ἀναί Ἀγαμέμνων …
στόλον Ἀργείων χιλιοναύτην
τῇδ’ ἀπὸ χώρας
ήραν, στρατιώτων ἄρωγήν …
This is the tenth year since …
Lord Menelaos and Agamemnon …
Raised a thousand-ship expedition of Argives
From this land, a rescue army …265

The army is not here – it has gone from this land, but:

ἡμεῖς δ’ ἀτίται σαρκὶ παλαιάι
τῆς τότ’ ἄρωγῆς ὑπολειφθέντες
μύμνομεν ἵσχὺν
ἰσόπαιδα νέμουσες ἐπὶ σκήπτροις.
We, on account of our dishonored ancient flesh,
Left behind from that long-ago rescue
Wait (here), resting our childlike strength on our walking-sticks.266

The chorus thus constructs an offstage aggregation of the community’s fighting-age men, by contrasting it to the onstage group they compose. Such construction of an offstage group is, in a sense, a “representation” of crowd, but in a very allusive and indirect sense. Euripides’s crowd discourse is much more frequent and direct. Therefore, I have

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264 Carter 48, 59 n.54 surveys some instances of tragic ὄχλος, concluding that it is “usually derogative” when not referring to the sheer size of an an enemy’s forces. As discussed in the next chapter, the word may have a less universally negative valence in comedy (esp. used of a festival crowd in the Frogs).
265 Agamemnon 40, 42, 45-47
266 Agamemnon 72-75
surveyed only selected scenes from Aeschylus and Sophocles, whereas my study of Euripides is much more complete, with each of his surviving plays receiving at least some attention.

AESCHYLUS

Persians

The Persians contains three out of the five instances of ὁχλος in Aeschylus’s surviving oeuvre, two out of seven uses of ὄμιλος,267 and eleven out of twelve instances of πλῆθος.268 On vocabulary alone, before considering the plot and themes of the play, we can already see that it is shot through with descriptions of great aggregations of people.

The chorus’s opening chant enumerates the military divisions sent by the provinces of the Persian Empire πολέμου στίφος παρέχοντες (“supplying a throng of war”).269 Throughout this opening passage, sections of the Persian army are described with words that emphasize sheer size: the rowers from the marshlands are δεινοὶ πλῆθος τ᾽ ἀνάρτημοι (“a multitude terrible and countless”); 270 Babylon sends πάμμεικτον ὅχλον σύρδην (“a mixed-together ὁχλος in a line”). 271 Even the dainty Lydians muster a throng of their own: ἄβροδιαίτων δ᾽ ἐπεται Λυδῶν ὁχλος (“and an ὁχλος of Lydians who live in luxury follows”).272

This Catalogue of Hosts is far from a simple expression of jingoistic pride at the size of the Persian forces, however. Rather, the old men forming the chorus are worried that with such an aggregation of the empire’s young men having been led off to war, a power vacuum has developed, since only two groups are left behind: they themselves, impotent with age, and a crowd of women:

ταῦτα μου μελαγχίτων φρήν ἀμύσσεται φόβῳ,
όα, Περσαϊκοῦ στρατεύματος, τούθε μή πόλις πύθηται
κένανδρον μέγ᾽ ἀστῳ Σουσίδος,
καὶ τὸ Κισσίων πόλισιν ἀντίδουπον ἁίστεται,
όα, τοῦτ᾽ ἔπος γυναικοπληθής ὄμιλος ἄπωών,
βυσσίνως δ᾽ ἐν πέπλοις πέσηι λακίς,
πᾶς γὰρ ἵππηλάτας καὶ πεδοστὶβῆς λεώς
σμήνος ὡς ἐκλέλοιπεν μελισσιαν σῶν ὀρχάμωι στρατοῦ …

267 These (at lines 123 and 1028) are discussed below; three occur in the Suppliants (lines 234, 355, 993, discussed above). The final occurrence is at Prometheus Bound 417, where it is deployed in the ethnographic mode as the chorus describes all the world’s peoples lamenting Prometheus’s punishment: Σκύθης ὄμιλος, “the horde of Scythia.”

268 In addition to line 40, quoted below, these occur at lines 166 (χρῆματων ἀνάρτημα πλῆθος, “a quantity of goods without men”); 334, 337, 342, 352, 413 (of the size of the Persian fleet); 429 (a host of evils); 432-33 (ἐὰν γὰρ τὸ ὅρα αὐτῷ, µήδει ἀµέρα µία πληθὸς τοιοούσιον ἄνθρωπων θανεῖν, “For well know this: never on a single day did so great in number a mass of men die” – a fitting epigraph for the play as a whole); 477 (a great host of woes); 803 (the select group of soldiers which Xerxes leaves behind). The only other occurrence of this word in Aeschylus is at Suppliants 469, where (as twice in the Persians, 429 and 477) it is used metaphorically (κακῶν δὲ πλῆθος ποταµῶς ὡς ἐπέρχεται, “a mass of evils comes on like a river”).

269 20; LSJ s.v. στίφος: body of men in close array (citing this passage).

270 Persai 40

271 Persai 53-54

272 Persai 42
My black-cloaked heart is torn with fear over this,
Ah! For the Persian army, lest the city learn that the great town of Sousa is
empty of men.
And the resounding Cissian city will sing out,
Ah! The woman-full ὀμιλος uttering this word, and a rending may fall on
their linen robes.
For the whole horse-driving and foot-stamping people have departed like a
swarm of bees with the leader of the army …

In the three Aeschylean plays surveyed here we can see a pattern. As the plays begin, a
male crowd is described as looming – raising dust by its approach in the Suppliants;
amassing in arms in Seven Against Thebes; forming a polyglot army in the Persians.
Onstage is left a smaller, weaker crowd formation: the suppliants themselves; the women
of Thebes; the impotent pack of old men forming the Persian chorus. While the men in
the prime of their youth are gathered offstage, left onstage is the actuality or potential of a
crowd of women or those otherwise coded as weak.

Χο. ἵνα μν λαός οὐ φυγαίχμας.
Ζε. ἀγαν ἄρειος. κατείδου δὲ πὴμ ἂελπτον.
Χο. τράπεντα ναύφαρκτον ἑρείς ὀμιλον;
Ζε. πέπλου δ’ ἐπέρρηζ’ ἐπὶ συμφοραί κακοῦ.
Χο. παππαὶ παππαὶ.
Cho. The Ionian people are not spear-fleeing.
Xe. (They are) fiercely warlike. And I saw a grief unexpected.
Cho. Do you speak of the routed ship-fenced ὀμιλος?
Xe. I tore my robe when faced with this evil event.
Cho. (Lamentation).

The horde offstage – ship-packed (with obvious political significance in contemporary
Athens) – communicates an emotional charge that converts the king into the head of the
lamenting group of “women” predicted at the beginning.

Seven Against Thebes
πληροῦτε θωρακεία, κάτι σέλμαιν
πύργων στάθητε, καὶ πυλῶν ἐπ’ ἐξοδοῖς
μίμουνες εὖ βαρσείτε, μηδ’ ἐπιλύδων
ταρβεῖτ’ ἀγαν ὀμιλον. εὐ τελεὶ θεός.
Man the breastworks, and stand on the scaffolds of the towers,
And, holding firm, be of good spirit, nor fear o’er-much this ὀμιλος
Of foreigners. God will perfect.

273 Persa 116-30
274 LSJ s.v. ναύφαρκτος.
275 Persa 1025-31
276 On collective and individual grief in tragic representation and audience response, see Loraux 2002.
277 LSJ s.v. σέλμα (citing this passage).
278 SCT 32-35
In the same way that Danaos’s observation of an approaching crowd of armed men will set the tone near the beginning of the *Suppliants* – where the group of women, central characters of the play, will be contested over by opposing groups of men – here Eteokles gathers the fighting men of Thebes, drawing them into a military crowd, to fight the invading ὅμιλος. From the opening speech of the play, *Seven Against Thebes* announces itself as a drama of the city besieged, formed into a war-crowd by the threat of a horde of invaders.

Ετ. ἀνδρῶν τάδ’ ἐστὶ, σφάγια καὶ χρηστήρια θεοῖσιν ἔρθειν πολεμίων πειρωμένους, σὸν δ’ αὕτο τὸ σιγάν καὶ μένειν εἰσὸ δόμων.
Χο. διὰ θεῶν πόλιν νεμόμεθ’ ἀδάματον, δυσμενέων δ’ ὀχλον πύργος ἀποστέγει. τίς τάδε νέμεσις στυγεῖ; Et. This is men’s work, to offer sacrificial victims to the gods When putting enemies to the test. But yours is to shut up And stay inside the home.
Cho. On account of the gods we inhabit an unconquered city, And the rampart wards off the ill-intentioned ὀχλος. What nemesis resents these things?

The ὀχλος here is that of the invading army. In Euripides’s plays of supplication and siege, e.g. the *Herakleidae*, attention will be drawn to the formation of disruptive and hostile groups within the city itself; in Chapter Four, we will examine the comic representation of the crowded city at siege.

*Suppliants*

After the opening choral ode, Danaos warns his daughters of an approaching group of men, conjuring the image of the Iliadic crowd, the crowd in arms.279

ὁρὼ κόνιν, ἀναυδὸν ἀγγελον στρατοῦ. σύριγγες οὐ σιγῶσιν ἄξονηλατοι. ὀχλον δ’ υπασπιστήρα καὶ δορυσσόν λεύσωξ ἵπποις καμπύλων τ’ ὀχήμασιν.
I see dust, silent herald of the host. The axle-whirling wheel-holes are not mute.
And I see an ὀχλος bearing shield and spear, With horses and with bent-(wheeled) chariots.280

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279 Taplin (1977: 201-03) argues against the traditional concept of “the spectacular Aeschylus” (203): “The armed men … are no mere spectacle for its own sake … The Argives have to have a strong force at their command … But the presence of armed men … also has a significance through contrast: all the power at Pelasgus’s command is no help to him in his vital decision …”

280 *Suppliants* 180-83
As he enters, the Argive king speaks of the titular chorus precisely as a crowd – one marked with signifiers of foreignness.\(^{281}\)

ποδαπὸν ὀμιλὸν τόνδ᾽ ἀνελληνόστολον
πέπλοισι βαρβάροις κατάπυκώμασι
χλιόντα προσφώνουμεν; οὐ γὰρ Ἀργολις
ἐσθῆς γυναικῶν οὐδ᾽ ἀφ᾽ Ἑλλάδος τόπων.

Whence this ὀμιλὸς which we address, unHellenically dressed, Luxuriant with barbarian robes and headbands? For this is not Argive women’s rainment, nor from the lands of Greece.\(^{282}\)

Danaos spies the crowd of Argive soldiers in the distance; the Argive king speaks of the crowd of Danaids as they appear before him on his entrance. Soon thereafter, as the king considers Danaos’s plea for asylum, he “sees” another crowd – this time a divine crowd that (he hopes\(^{283}\)) approves of the foreigner’s request.

ὁ ρῶκλάδοισι νεοδρόποις κατάσκιον
νεύονθ᾽ ὀμιλὸν τόνδ᾽ ἀγωνίων θεῶν.
I see a nodding ὀμιλὸς of gods assembled.\(^{284}\)
Ο’er-shaded by the fresh-plucked branches.\(^{285}\)

After the Egyptian Herald has come, made his threats and left,\(^{286}\) Danaos warns his daughters of the difficulty in gauging the character and friendliness of a strange ὀμιλὸς, and of the dangers posed by societal reputation to those who are not full members of their host society:

καὶ ταῦθ᾽ ἀμ᾽ ἐγγράφασθε πρὸς γεγραμμένος
πολλοῖσιν ἄλλοις σωφρονίσμασιν πατρός,
ἀγωνίωθ᾽ ὀμιλὸν πως ἔλέγχεσθαι χρόνωι.
πάς δ᾽ ἐν μετοίκῳ γλῶσσαν εὔτυκον φέρει
κακῆν, τὸ τ᾽ ἐπεῖν εὐπετές μύσαμα πως,
ὕμας δ᾽ ἐπαίνω μὴ καθαιρῇσθεν ἐμέ,
ὡραν ἑχοῦσάς τίμιδ᾽ ἐπίστεπτον βροτοῖς.

And write these words together with the many other notes
Of wisdom from your father: test out an unknown ὀμιλὸς over time,
For each man bears a tongue ready for evil in a foreign resident(’s case);
Easy it is to say slander. And I beg you not to disgrace me,

\(^{281}\) Cf. Hall 118, 130 on the chorus as “alien.”
\(^{282}\) Suppliants 234-37
\(^{283}\) The cited lines are followed by an expression of hope that the affair not damage the city: ἐὰν δ᾽ ἀνατον πράγμα τοῦτο χαράξῃσθαι, “but may this matter of the city-guests be harmless …” (356).
\(^{284}\) LSJ s.v. ἀγώνιος: “[E]ither gods in assembly, or the gods who presided over the great games …” (citing this passage).
\(^{285}\) Suppliants 354-55
\(^{286}\) Garvie (82) says of this passage that “[t]he change of subject is more abrupt than anything else in Aeschylus.”
You who possess beauty to-be-“turned”” for-men (for men’s gaze).  

Christian Meier’s political reading of the play recognizes the importance of the offstage assembly and its relation to the elite figure we see onstage:  

The people meet together at another place. … We only hear that Pelasgos, using the most persuasive rhetoric and references to the threat of the anger of the gods, elicited a unanimous decision to take in the women as resident aliens (metics). …  

Pelasgos goes before the people’s Assembly with clear intentions: he is no longer interested in hearing their opinions, but simply wants them to agree with his own decision. … This long process [of P’s attempt to avoid making a decision, his “long and meditative soliloquy” (id.), and his offstage encounter with the Assembly] does not merely set out the general problem of the necessity of making decisions. … Rather, it highlights the conflict between considerations of purely earthly expediency and the observance of god-given laws. At the same time, it has a bearing on the problem of the different responsibilities of the political leaders and the people. …  

This consisted in the question of how political decisions should be reached and, above all, who should make them. In the play it seems that, in the end, it is a matter for whoever happens to be leader. The people’s role is merely to endorse his decision through spontaneous approval and without the usual referendum.  

Contrast this with Theseus’s view of his relationship with the Athenian assembly in the Herakleidae, discussed below.  

SOPHOCLES  

Of the three great tragedians, Sophocles’s surviving works make the least use of the crowd-related terms we have identified. For example: ὁμιλος appears not at all; πλῆθος in the relevant sense appears only three times. While the difference on this point between Aeschylus and Sophocles may be a simple accident of preservation, Euripides, as discussed below, uses crowd terms with a frequency sufficiently higher as to obviously represent a difference in usage, not merely an artifact of preservation.  

While Sophocles does not often use the specific words we have identified, his characters at several points describe offstage group activity in a manner that highlights the crowd-ness of these groups. One passage surveyed below – Hyllos’s speech from the  

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287 *Cf. Alcestis* 1052: καὶ πῶς ἁκραίφνης ἐν νέοις στρωφωμένη/ἐσταί; (“And how will she be inviolate, “turned about” among the youths?”). As discussed below, tragic characters often express anxiety about women, especially young girls, being exposed to the gaze of men, particularly a group of men. Even before their entry into their host community has succeeded, Danaos warns his daughters that they must avoid public exposure. For his daughters to test out a homilos in a new place is not as simple a matter as it would be for a group of sons.  

288 *Suppliants* 991-95  

289 1993:87ff.
Trachiniae – makes no direct reference to the crowd, but nevertheless evokes the dialectic of One and Many to make a fitting close to this selective survey of the two tragedians whose work is less overtly concerned with mass behavior.

Ajax

The chorus enters warning Ajax that he is – and they are, as his followers - suffering reputational harm in the offstage zone of group meetings and common discourse:

ὡς καὶ τῆς νῦν φημεύης νυκτὸς
μεγάλοι θόρυβοι κατέχουσ᾽ ἡμᾶς
ἐπὶ δυσκλείαι …
[I am afraid], as with the night now waning
Great θόρυβοι are putting us in disrepute …

The chorus speaks here not of rumors, which can be transmitted by a single individual working quietly, but of θόρυβοι, outbursts of group noise which attempt to drown out and intimidate those who would oppose group will or try group patience.

290 Ajax 141-43
291 A few lines later (149 ff.), they do describe Odysseus precisely as spreading rumor, but only after here expressing their fear of the result of that rumor-spreading: outbreaks of θόρυβος.
292 Bers (4) notes this as “one of a number of terms in the play that strongly suggest the fifth-century courtroom,” citing Knox (1961:36; 1979). Knox includes thorubos in his list of juridical terminology in Ajax, at note 110. For thorubos in the assembly, see Tacon.
Swiftly would they cower in silence, voiceless.\textsuperscript{293}

Much of the chorus’s entrance-song, we see, is about groups and the relationship between groups and individuals. Elite and mass each fare best when they work together; in Ajax’s absence from the offstage “political” zone of assembly and opinion formation, his group of followers cannot help him. The chorus can pass between the world offstage, where crowds form and elites plot, and the scene onstage, confined to Ajax’s camp, but they are powerless to affect the action or to save Ajax from the forces aligning against him offstage. If only he would appear to confront those who assault him with \textit{θόρυβος}, he would drive them off in a group panic. But Ajax is trapped onstage, in his drama of elite honor and shame, and cannot go to confront the hostile group offstage (as can and do characters in other plays, especially those of Euripides, with varying degrees of success).

Later in the play, a messenger arrives onstage after the choral interlude following Ajax’s penultimate scene. When Ajax will next arrive, it will be to deliver his final speech before killing himself. Whereas his suicide is one of the rare instances in which violence is directly represented \textit{on} the tragic stage, the intervening messenger speech describes a scene of potential violence occurring \textit{off} stage. He describes Ajax’s brother, Teucer, as having almost been lynched by an angry crowd of Greek soldiers. I take this to be paradigmatic of the true nature of the “rebellious” crowd in tragedy: an offstage presence that looms in the consciousness of the heroic characters whose onstage actions and speeches form the business of the play.

This offstage crowd can take various forms: in Aeschylus’s \textit{Suppliants} or Euripides’s \textit{Orestes}, a political assembly; here, the Greek military \textit{λαός}, which in Homer (as discussed in Chapter Two) is mainly a passive backdrop for its leaders’ accomplishments but which here (as described by the messenger) almost crosses the threshold into the violence of lynch law.\textsuperscript{294} None of the words for or associated with crowds which we have surveyed occur in this passage, but the messenger nonetheless is clearly describing a scene rife with the potential of mob violence:

\begin{verbatim}
μέσον δὲ προσμολὼν στρατήγιον
κυθάρεται τοῦ πᾶσιν Ἀργείοισιν ὦμοι.
στέιχουσα γὰρ πρόσωπην αὐτὸν ἐν κύκλωι
μαθόντες ἀμφετήσαν, εἶτ᾽ ὁνείδεσιν
ἦρασσον ἕνθεν καῦθεν οὔτις ἐσθ᾽ ὅς οὐ …
λήγει δ’ ἔρις δραμοῦσα τοῦ προσωτάτω
ἀνδρῶν γερόντων ἐν ἐξυνάλλαγῇ λόγῳ.
Coming forth into the middle of the generals’ meeting place,
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{293} \textit{Ajax} 160-71
\textsuperscript{294} Griffith (2005:339-40):

Subordinates … occasionally … will voice [their] misgivings … and thus present a momentary lower-class perspective on the action. … In general, however, while such characters may mutter or grumble, the rank-and-file soldiers or sailors never make any concerted move to challenge their leader, and never take action on their own behalf – in marked contrast to the world of Old Comedy, and to actual Athenian political practice. While true as a general rule, this makes the event described by the messenger all the more noteworthy.
He is reviled by all the Argives at once. For knowing him as he approached far off, they stood around him in a circle, and they ripped him here and there with taunts, nor is there one Who didn’t … but the strife, running to the extreme, ceased, with an Exchange of words from the old men.  

When the messenger speaks of a prophecy whose imminent fulfillment he fears, the chorus asks of what he speaks and how he heard of it. The messenger explains:

τοσοῦτον οἶδα καὶ παρὼν ἐτύγχανον.  
ἐκ γὰρ συνέδρου καὶ τυραννικοῦ κύκλου  
Κάλχας μεταστὰς οίος Ἀτρείδων δίχα,  
ἐς χεῖρα Τεῦκρου δεξιάν φιλοφρόνως  
θεῖς …  
This much I know, (since I) happened to be present.  
For Calchas, stepping out from the council and royal circle, Apart from the Atreidae, grasping Teucer’s right hand with kind intent  

The τυραννικὸς κύκλος forms its own “crowd,” but one possessing the opposite attributes to those of the ephemeral mob which has just been dispersed. The messenger is positioned as an outsider with respect to both crowds. He describes as an external observer the incipient mob that formed on Teucer’s arrival, then stresses that he only knows what passed between the elite characters because he chanced to be present. Single figures stand out against a background of collective formations: Teucer is attacked by one and implicitly excluded from the other; Calchas steps out of the ruling “circle” to warn Teucer; the messenger, and through his words we the audience, “see” both from the outside.

Trachiniae  
An ὄχλος can sometimes threaten a character not with direct violence, but rather through a sort of reputational poisoning. The “crowd” can be a site of gossip and slander:  

Ἀγ. οὐκουν σὺ ταύτην, ἥν ὑπ’ ἀγνοίας ὀράις,  
Ἰόλην ἐφασκες Εὐρύτου σποραν ἄγειν;  
Λι. ποιοῖς ἐν ἀνθρώποις; τὶς πόθεν μολὼν  
σοι μαρτυρήσει ταῦτ’ ἐμοῦ κλείειν παρὼν;  
Ἀγ. πολλοίς ἀστῶν. ἐν μέση Τραχινίων  

295 Ajax 721-25, 731-32  
296 Ajax 748-52  
297 LSJ s.v. τυραννικός: κύκλος τ. – the circle or assembly of kings (citing this passage). Cf. Iliad XVIII.504, where the elders sit ἐπὶ ξεστοῖοι λίθοις ἱέρωι ἐν κύκλῳ (“on carved stones in a sacred circle”).  
298 The κύκλος is a spatial boundary, but by metonymic tranfer also signifies the groups occupying such spaces.  

66
ἀγοραὶ πολὺς σου ταῦτα γ᾽ εἰσήκουσ᾽ ὀχλὸς.

Mess. Didn’t you say that you were bring her, whom you look at (now)
With (feigned) ignorance, Iole, seed of Eurotos?

Li. Among which men? Who, coming from where,
Will stand as witness to you that he heard these things
From me, in my presence?

Mess. Among many of the townsemen! A great ὀχλος
Overheard these things from you in the middle of the
Trachinians’ agora!

Here two non-elite characters speak of the ὀχλος not as something to be feared or manipulated, but a commons of information, a site of community knowledge. We will find a description of this type of crowd-threat exploited to deadly effect by Orestes in the Andromache. This type of group may be what is often imagined as waiting around the entrances to cities – the group that will see you as you enter (discussed below in then sections on Andromache and Herakles), and which may send a bad rumor about you throughout the community.

Hyllos narrates the scene of his father’s poisoning from the perspective of a member of the crowd of spectators, until at a crucial moment Herakles singles him out of the crowd:

αἷπας δ᾽ ἀνησυχήσεν σίωψην λεώς …
κούδεις ἐτόλμησεν τάνδρος ἀντίον μολέιν …
tότ᾽ ἐκ προσέχουντος διάστροφον ὀφθαλμόν ἄρας εἰδὲ μ᾽ ἐν πολλῷ στρατῷ διακρυμμόντα, καὶ με προσβλέψας καλεῖ:
“ὦ παῖ, πρόσελθέ, μὴ φύγῃς τούτῳ κακῷ … ἀλλ᾽ ἄρον ἔξω, καὶ μάλιστα μὲν μὲθ᾽ ἐνταυθ᾽ ὅπως μὲν τις ὄψεται βροτῶν.”300
And the whole λεώς cried out for appropriate speech with a groan …301
And no one dared to come face to face with the man.
Then, raising his distorted eye from the smoke nearby,302
He saw me crying among the great army, and looked at me
And called on me: “O child, come forth, don’t flee from my suffering …
But take me out of here, and place me where no mortal will see me.”

As his father addresses him, Hyllos is yanked from the anonymity of the λεώς into the intimacy of the elite father-son relationship. He stands crying before his father, exposing his lack of decorum to the paternal gaze;303 the father in turn asks the son to remove him from the sight of the crowd that has just witnessed a public performance of piety gone disastrously wrong.

300 Trachiniai 783, 785, 794-96, 799-800
301 Davies comm. ad loc.: “a blasphemous paradox.”
302 LSJ s.v. πρόσεδρος (citing this passage).
EURIPIDES

The crowd and the political and social dangers posed are a central concern of Euripides’s work in all of its phases. The danger of a survey of Euripides is the opposite of the problem with Aeschylus and Sophocles. With those authors the challenge is to avoid chasing allusive, and possibly illusory, constructions of crowd; with Euripides, the danger is one of overload. It’s a question of isolating which passages are truly important.

Ochlos, for instance, which appears five times in Aeschylus and just once in Sophocles’s extant plays, appears some thirty times in the surviving works of Euripides. This 6:1 ratio between instances of ochlos in Euripides’s corpus against Aeschylus’s is no accident. The increased use of ochlos is evidence not only of a change in background political vocabulary – though, as Euripides’s career coincides almost exactly with the rise and fall of the radical democracy at Athens and the crisis period of the Peloponnesian War, it surely does in part reflect such a change – but also of a heightened salience of crowds and crowd behavior in the representational agenda of tragedy. This is confirmed by the fact that Euripides also uses the other crowd terms (homilos, e.g.) at a much higher rate than do his fellow tragedians. Euripidean crowds span the Cynetic spectrum, from a pack of assassins to the entire Greek army in assembly; Euripidean characters speak of the crowd as a real presence, and a clear danger.

Cyclops

As the only complete surviving satyr play, the Cyclops’s 709 lines - a mere two-thirds the length of the shortest surviving tragedies (and well under half the length of longer ones) – contain a large number of instances of key crowd words. In a now-familiar trope, Odysseus on his initial entrance speaks of the group already onstage:

\[
\text{τί χρήμα; Βρομίου πόλιν έοιγυμεν ἐσβαλείν.}
\text{Σατύρων πρός ἄντροις τόνδ᾽ ὀμιλοῦ εἰσορῶ.}
\text{What’s the deal? We seem to have landed at Bromiopolis.}
\text{I see a ὀμιλὸς of satyrs in front of some caves.}
\]

Odysseus and his men are themselves reduced to a group referent when the Cyclops himself appears:

\[
\text{ἐα. τίν’ ὀχλον τόνδ’ ὄρῳ πρός αὐλίοις;}
\text{λησταί τινες κατέσχον ἢ κλῖπτες χθόνα;}
\text{Hey! What’s this ὀχλος here I see before the caves?}
\]

304 The possible exceptions, as mentioned below, are the earlier “domestic” plays such as Alcestis and Medea. With so few of even Euripides’s works surviving, it is impossible to say whether this represents an actual shift in his representational agenda.

305 Cf., e.g., the Argive king’s entrance in Aeschylus’s Suppliants, discussed above: ποδαπὸν ὀμιλοῦ κ.τ.λ.

306 Seaford 1984 comm. ad loc.: “[F]or the original audience this phrase might be tinged with a suggestion of the Athenian spring festival of the Anthesteria, in which it seems that satyrs participated ...” It also suggests that arrivals to a town could expect to find a ὀμιλὸς or ὀχλος at its gates, and to draw information from this group’s appearance or discourse.

307 Kyklops 99-100
Have some pirates or robbers occupied the land? 308

A ὠμιλος may not be dangerous, but this variation in repetition suggests that an ὀχλος is more likely to be so. The first word was used almost as if synonymous with χορός, purely a description of the satyrs as a group of dancers on the stage; ὀχλος in the second passage more clearly has the sense of an enemy “horde” or “throng” (Arrowsmith translates it simply as “crowd”).

Throughout the play Odysseus explains his motivations in terms of the dialectic of One and Many. 309 At 199 he explains to Silenos why he and his men will not run from the approaching Cyclops:

ἐπεὶ τὰν μεγάλα γ´ ἢ Τροία στένοι,
εἰ φευξόμεσθ´ ἐν´ ἀνδρα, μυρίον δ´ ὀχλον
Φρυγῶν ύπεστήν πολλάκις σὺν ἁςπίδι.
Since great Troy would groan,
If we fled from one man; I often with my shield
Withstood a countless ὀχλος of Phrygians. 310

This passage simultaneously humanizes the monstrous Cyclops, referring to him simply as “one man,” and dehumanizes the “Phrygians,” merging them into a numberless and faceless enemy horde.

Odysseus later describes the horrors inside the Cyclops’s cave, contrasting his individual reaction to the initial murders with that of his surviving companions:

ἐγὼ δ´ ὁ τλήμων δάκρυ´ ἀτ´ ὀφθαλμῶν χέων
ἐχριμπτόμην Κύκλωπι καθιακόνουν.
ἄλλοι δ´ ὅπως ὀρνιθες ἐν μυχοὶς πέτρας
πτηξαντες εἰχου, αἴμα δ´ οὐκ ἐνήν χροι.
But in my suffering, shedding a tear from my eyes,
I approached the Cyclops and attended him.
But the others stayed trembling in the recesses of the rock
Like birds, and there was no blood in their flesh. 311

He then explains to the chorus leader that he cannot bear to save himself by abandoning his friends:

σιγάτε νυν. δόλου γὰρ ἐξεπίστασαι.
χώταιν κελεύω, τοῖσιν ἀρχιτέκτοισιν
πείθεωθ´. ἐγὼ γὰρ ἀνδρας ἀπολιπών φίλους
τοὺς ένδου ὅντας οὐ μόνος σωθήσομαι.
[κάιτοι φύγοιμ’ ἀν κάκβεβηκ’ ἀντρου μυχων.
ἀλλ´ οὐ δίκαιον ἀπολιπτέντ’ ἐμοῖς φίλους

308 Kyklops 222-23
309 Cf. Odyssey viii.21 and xi.514-15, discussed in Chapter Two, where Odysseus’s speaks of his and Achilles’s individual exploits against a backdrop of ὠμιλος and πληθύς (both allied and hostile).
310 Kyklops 198-200
311 Kyklops 405-08
ξῦν οἴσπερ ἤλθον δεύρῳ σωθῆναι μόνον.]
Be quiet now. For you’ve learned about my trick.
And when I give the order, obey your overseers.
For I can’t save myself alone, leaving my friends inside.
[Indeed I’d like to flee and have stepped out of the folds of the cave.
But it’s not just to leave my friends, those with whom I came here,
And save myself alone.]312

In their initial conversation, Odysseus asks Silenos about the social organization of the island:

Οδ. τίνες δ’ ἔχουσι γαϊάν; ἢ θηρῶν γένος;
Σι. Κύκλωπες, ἀντρ’ ἔχοντες, οὐ στέγας δόμων.
Οδ. τίνος κλύοντες; ἢ δεδήμευται κράτος;
Σι. μόναδες313. ἀκούει δ’ οὐδὲν οὐδεὶς οὐδένος.
Οδ. Who possesses this land? A race of beasts?
Σι. The Cyclopes, dwelling in caves, not the roofs of houses.
Οδ. Obeying whom? Or is power wielded by the δήμος?
Σι. (They are) singletons. No one listens to no one, no how.314

Later, Odysseus observes that wine has made Polyphemos desirous to interact with his fellow monsters, in the form of a κῶμος, a characteristically group activity:

ἐπὶ κώμου ἐρπεῖν πρὸς κασιγνήτους θέλει
Κύκλωπας ἡσθείς τώιδε Βακχίου ποτωί.
He wants to go on a κῶμος to visit his Cyclops-relatives
Now that he’s buzzed on this drink of Bacchus.315

To execute his plan, Odysseus will need to prevent the Cyclops from seeking the company of others:

Κυ. μισῶ τὸν ασκόν, τὸ δὲ ποτόν φιλῶ τόδε.
Οδ. μένων νυν αὐτοῦ πίνει κευθύμει, Κύκλωψ.
Κυ. οὕ χρή μ’ ἀδελφοῖς τούδε προσδούναι ποτού; …
Οδ. ὃ τάν, πεπωκότ’ ἐν δόμοισι χρή μένειν.
Κυ. ἣλίθιος ὅστις μὴ πιὼν κώμον φιλεῖ.
Οδ. δ’ αὖ μεθυσθεῖς γ’ ἐν δόμοισι μείνῃ σοφός.
Κυ. τί δρῶμεν, ὃ Σιληνέ; σοι μένειν δοκεῖ;
Σι. δοκεῖ. τί γάρ δεὶ συμποτῶν ἄλλων, Κύκλωψ;

312 Kyklops 478-82. On 480-82, Diggle: “del. nescioquis.” Seaford 1984 comm. ad loc. sees a “decisive case for deletion,” noting that “[t]he interpolator seems to have used material from 407[.]” If so, the interpolator agreed with me in noticing in that earlier passage a similar opposition of the One to the Many, despite the absence of a word such as µόνος there.
313 Seaford 1984 comm. ad loc. argues for the rejection of the variant νομάδες (L). μόναδες stresses the isolation of each individual Cyclops, and heightens the contrast with the passages quoted next.
314 Kyklops 117-20
315 Kyklops 445-46
Cyc. I hate the wineskin, but I love this drink.
Od. Stay here, drink of it and be cheery, Cyclops.
Cyc. Shouldn’t I pass on some of this drink to my brothers? …
Od. Good sir, a drinker should stay at home.
Cyc. That man’s a fool who, drinking, doesn’t love a κόμιος.
Od. The man who stays at home when drunk is wise.
Cyc. What shall we do, O Silenos? Does it seem right to you to stay?
Sil. It does. For what need is there of other drinking buddies, Cyclops?\(^{316}\)

Odysseus, with Silenos’s assistance, counteracts this newfound impulse towards sociability by appealing to the Cyclops’s selfishness. There is no need to join a group, he assures him; no need for any ἄλλοι, Silenos seconds. Remaining alone, the Cyclops is soon attacked by Odysseus and his companions. The isolated monster is brought down by humans working together.

\textit{Alcestis}

\textit{Alcestis} has among the fewest references to crowds of any of Euripides’s surviving plays.\(^{317}\) Its concerns are almost entirely “domestic,” with little sense of the larger civic sphere – let alone political or military institutions – in which other plays situate group activity. Still, Admetus’s marriage and subsequent bereavement take place within a broader network of relations between elite families, and his description of his wedding night reveals the connection between individual elite life experiences and the groups that gather to celebrate them:

\[\text{o σχήμα δόμων, πῶς εἰσέλθω, pῶς δ’ οἰκήσω, μεταπίπτοντος δαίμονος; οἶμοι, πολύ γὰρ τὸ μέσον. τότε μὲν πεύκαις σὺν Πηλιάσιν σὺν θ’ ὑμεναίοις ἔστειχον ἕσω φιλίας ἀλόχον χέρα βαστάζων, πολυάχητος δ’ ἔπετο κόμιος τὴν τε ἥλιον ἐκένισαν καὶ’ ὀλβίζον ὡς εὐπατρίδαι κάτ’ ἀμφοτέρων ὄντες ἀριστέων σὺζυγες ἔιμεν.}
\[Ω form of my palace, how can I enter, How can I dwell (here), once my daimon has changed? For “the middle” (the distance or change between now and then) is great. Then, with Pelian torches and with wedding songs I strode inside, holding the hand of my dear bride, And a great-voiced κόμιος followed and blessed me and her now dead, (Saying) that we were of noble birth on both sides, and were yokemates of gentility.\(^{318}\)

\(^{316}\) Kyklops 529-31, 536-540
\(^{317}\) The play is unique in that it is the only surviving play performed as the fourth of a set that is not a satyr-play. See Buxton 2003:184-86; on satyr-play generally, Harrison & Ambrose.
\(^{318}\) Alcestis 912-21
Shortly after this he explains that his wife’s death has trapped him in a double bind:

'ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐνδον ἐξελάει μ’ ἔρημια ...
τὰ μὲν κατ᾽ οἶκους τοιάδ’. ἐξωθεν δὲ με
γάμοι τ’ ἐλώσι Θεσσαλῶν καὶ ἐξανέξομαι
γυναικοπληθεῖσι. οὐ γὰρ ἐξανέξομαι
λεύσσων δάμαρτος τῆς ἐμῆς ὁμήλικας.
For the loneliness inside will drive me out …
So much for matters at home. But outside,
The weddings and get-togethers of Thessalians, full of women,
Will drive me (back again). For I won’t be able to stand
Seeing the agemates of my wife.'

The death of Alcestis does not just deprive Admetus, as an individual, of companionship.
It also renders him unable to attend further social gatherings of the sort he has just been remembering. Gatherings full of women – gatherings at which there will be groups of women, or of women together with their husbands – will only make him feel the pain of loss and singleness more acutely.

**Medea**

Crowds are even less present in *Medea* than *Alcestis*. One line does, however, deploy a crowd-word in a non-crowd sense. Kreon is attempting to expel Medea from his kingdom by main force:

**Κρ.** τάχ’ ἐξ ὑπάθων χειρὸς ὑσθήσηι ἔλθαι.
**Μη.** μὴ δὴ τοῦτό γ’, ἀλλὰ σ’ ἄντομαι, Κρέον.
**Κρ.** ὀχλουν παρέξεις, ὡς ἑοίκας, ὡ γύναι.
**Cr.** Swiftly you’ll be thrust out by force
At the hand of one of my attendants.
**Med.** Not that – but I implore you, Creon.
**Cr.** You seem to provide an ὀχλος, woman.

Stevens translates ὀχλον παρέξειν as “to be a nuisance. … ὀχλος in the sense “nuisance”, “trouble”, as distinct from the usual sense “crowd” may in itself have a colloquial flavor.” Whatever the subtleties of the word’s register, it is particularly appropriate for a scene of violence with the potential to attract a crowd and threaten public order.

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319 *Alcestis* 944, 950-53
320 ξ/σύλλογος is a very broad word for “gathering;” elsewhere in Euripides it is often used of a military force, esp. in *Iphigenia at Aulis*.
321 Cf. the much more unusual use of ὀχλος at *Hecuba* 1014, discussed below, where I detect a conscious pun or unconsciously motivated connection of some kind.
322 Note that this verb is related to the ωστι- words identified in Chapter Four as typical descriptors of crowd behavior, e.g. at *Acharnians* 24.
323 *Medea* 335-37
324 1976:56-57
Stevens notes that the regular way of saying this is πράγματα παρέχειν. He cites other examples of this alternate phrase in literature of the period, including Helen and Orestes 280-82. The former is deployed in a context with similarities to that of the passage from Medea:

Both passages feature a clear power/class relation, as the king (or here his servant) accuses a weaker opponent of disrupting his rule by the creation of an ὀχλος at the gates. However, the passage from Orestes resonates with that from Medea along lines of gender:

ὀχλος as “nuisance” experienced between individuals, then, is not always distinct from ὀχλος as a disruption of proper social relations – whether between rulers and ruled, men and women, or (as in Medea) both.

Herakleidae

The “Children of Heracles” is the first Euripidean play to acknowledge the role played by social, political and military crowds in the life of the polis. A line in Iolaos’s opening speech is part of a series of Euripidean passages confirming that the confinement of women indoors is intended to protect them from mixing with, and especially from being seen by, the crowd.

ἐγὼ μεν ἀμφὶ τοῖς καλχαίων τέκνοις, ἢ δ’ αὖ τὸ θῆλυ παιδὸς Ἀλκμήνη γένος

325 Helen 437-39
326 For disruptions at the threshold of a ruler’s house or tent, cf. IA 317, 605; Rhesos 45.
327 Orestes 280-82
328 Following the order of the plays as presented in Diggle’s OCT. I use temporal/sequential expressions like “first,” “already,” etc., throughout this Chapter mainly as a framework for structuring the survey faute de mieux, and make no claims to discovering a trend in Euripides’s work over time that tracks on to any societal changes – although it is perhaps not entirely coincidental that the Bacchae and IA, his final plays, each have offstage crowds (of quite different types) playing central roles in the plot. (I would argue that Euripides’ work as a whole is much more concerned with crowds than his predecessors’, and that this development does track societal and political trends.)
329 Cf. Acharnians 257, discussed in Chapter Four; Orestes 108: ἐς ὀχλον ἔρπειν παρθένοισιν οὐ καλὸν.
ἔσωθε ναοῦ τοῦ ᾿υπηκολισμένη
σώζει, νέας γὰρ πάρθενος αἰδούμεθα
ἵλοι πελάζειν κατάπωμοιστατέοι.
I ‘ponder deeply’ about these boy-children. Alcmene for her part
Keeps the female brood inside this temple, clasped within her arms.
For we are ashamed to have young virgin girls
Come near the ὀχλός and “stand suppliant at the altar.”

As he enters a short time later, King Demophon uses this same word while demanding to
know why his citizens have gathered at this temple precinct:

λέξον, τίς ὀχλόν τοῦ ἀθροιζετα τυχη;
Tell me, what circumstance gathers this ὀχλος?

The characters have used the same word, but their attitudes toward the ὀχλός are distinct.
Iolaos speaks the language of norms, propriety and piety – as well as a hint of elite fear of
the commons, a theme Euripides will develop in increasing focus and detail as his career
progresses. Demophon, on the other hand, views an ὀχλός not as a site of threat to
vulnerable female members of his household within the societal economy of display and
prestige, but rather as a political threat. Crowds that form without the knowledge and
approval of a town’s ruler threaten his authority.

Indeed, later in the play Demophon tells Iolaos that
cαι νῦν πυκνα  ἄν συστάσεις ἄν εἰσίδοις,
tῶν μὲν λεγόντων ὡς δίκαιος ἤ ἔνοις
ἰκέταις ἀρήγειν, τῶν δὲ μωρίαν ἐμοῦ
κατηγορούντων. εἰ δὲ δὴ δράσῳ τῷ,
oīkteis ἤ ἔδε πόλεμος ἔχαρτυτει.
And now you’d see close “knots of men assembled,”
With some saying that I’m right to come to foreign suppliants’ defense,
But others denouncing my folly. But so yeah, if I do this,
Already domestic war would be at hand.

Small, ephemeral groups of passersby, drawn together for a while to watch a display of
elites in distress, pose little threat to community order. These more turbulent and factious

330 LSJ s.v. καλχαίνω; Gladstone trans. “see to the safety of.”
331 LSJ s.v. ἐπιβωμοστατέο.
332 Herakleidai 40-44
333 ἄθρ-/ἄθρ- words, as seen already in Chapter One, are common descriptors of crowd action and
characteristics. See especially the discussion of Andromache 481 below.
334 Herakleidai 122
335 Cf. Carter on “this kind of demos, unseen and potentially critical of its leaders” (74).
336 πυκνας could be read to refer either to the dense composition of the individual groups of disputing
citizens, or to the closeness/frequency of distribution of these groups as between themselves – here a group,
there a group, everywhere a group.
337 LSJ s.v. σύστασις.
338 Herakleidai 415-24
groupings – συστάσεις – are different. If unchecked, they have the potential to spread until the entire community is a stage for οἰκείος πόλεμος, a periphrasis for the most extreme form of internally directed group violence: στάσις.

As the focus of offstage concern shifts from the city’s internal reaction to the arrival of the suppliants to the army’s performance beyond the city walls, the sheer size of the opposing force is emphasized:

Io. πόσον τι πλήθος συμμάχων πάρεστ’ ἔχων?
Θε. πολλοὺς, ἄριστους δ᾽ ἄλλον οὐχ ἔχω φράσαι.
Iol. Coming with how great a πλήθος of allies is he here?
Servant Many. I don’t have another number to declare.

The crowd of onlookers offers a moral and social threat to Alkmene’s female wards, and the formation of factions within Athens’s citizenry threatens the political order, but the approach of a great military host threatens the community’s very existence.

**Hippolytos**

In her opening speech, Aphrodite complains that rather than seek sexual intimacy with his fellow humans, Hippolytos communes with Artemis:

χλωράν δ᾽ ἃν ὑλῆν παρθένωι ἐξυνόν ἂει
κυσίν ταχείας θήρας ἐξαιρεί χθηνός,
μείζω βροτείας προσπεσών ὀμιλίας.
Always together with the maiden, across the green wood
He clears out wild beasts from the land with swift hounds,
Always falling in with company (ὦμιλία) greater than mortal.

Aphrodite narrates Hippolytos’s arrival and draws attention not to his divine companion – for she is not present yet – but rather the group of human companions which follows him onstage:

πολύς δ᾽ ἄμ’ αὐτῷ προσπόλων ὀπίσθόπους
κόμος λέλακεν …
A great κόμος of attendants walking-behind
Shouts out together with him …

Later, the nurse chides Phaedra for inappropriate public behavior, exposed to the eyes and ears of the crowd:

339 Carter 81: “We should not read democratic practice into this speech: the πυκνὰς … συστάσεις are not plenary assemblies but a series of tight-knit factional groups; and (unlike Pelasgus or Theseus in other plays) Demophon has led his city into a likely war without consultation of any kind.”
340 Herakleidai 668-69. For the trope of a speaker’s inability to recount the army’s size in tragedy, see Rhesos 309. The locus classicus is of course Iliad II.488 ff., introducing the Catalogue of Ships.
341 Hippolytos 17-19
342 Hippolytos 54-55
ὦ παῖ, τι θροεῖς;
οὐ μὴ παρ’ ὀχλωι τάδε γηρύσηι,
μανίας ἐποχοὺν ρίπτουσα λόγον;
O child, what are you saying?
Surely you won’t voice these things in front of an ὀχλος,
Hurling out speech that rides on madness’s back?^{343}

The private life of the elite is vulnerable to the prying gaze and attentive ear of the crowd – whether a group of servants as here, or the people at large in a social and political sense. As this survey reveals, the political crowd becomes a more frequent and urgent object of representation over the course of Euripides’s career. Later in the play, it is Hippolytos’s turn to receive a similar warning from the nurse:

ό μῦθος, οὐ παῖ, κοινὸς οὐδαμῶς ὀδε.
This tale here, O child, is in no way public.^{344}

Then, in his confrontation with his father, Hippolytos expresses his own frustration with the disconnect between elite intimacy and public display:

ἐγὼ δ’ ἀκοψος εἰς ὀχλον δούναι λόγον,
ἐς ἠλικας δὲ καλύγους σοφώτερος,
ἐχει δὲ μοιραν καὶ τόδ’. οἱ γὰρ ἐν σοφοῖς
φαύλοι παρ’ ὀχλοι μουσικωτεροί λέγειν.
ὅμως δ’ ἀνάγκη, ξυμφοράς ἄφιμένης,
γλῶσσαν μ’ ἀφεῖναι.

But I’m not fancy when it comes to giving a speech to an ὀχλος,
But I’m a bit cleverer when speaking to my peers – and few of them.
This too has its part.^{345} For those more skilled at speaking before the ὀχλος
Are held as base among the wise. All the same, it is necessary, with
Disaster imminent, for me to loosen my tongue.^{346}

At the end of the agon, Hippolytos wishes for a double of himself to witness his grief:

εἰθ’ ἦν ἐμαυτὸν προσβλέπειν ἐναντίον
στάνθ’, ὡς ἐδάκρυο’ ὀία πάσχομεν κακά.
If only it were possible to stand across from myself
And look me in the face, that I might weep over the evils I suffer.^{347}

^{343} Cf. LSJ s.v. ἔποχος; Barrett comm. ad loc.: “A strange metaphor.”
^{344} Hippolytos 609
^{345} Barrett comm. ad loc.: “These two lines (988-89) add nothing to his plea … and serve only to underline his contempt for the occasion.” To the extent that they are rhetorically superfluous, they suggest all the more strongly the salience of the ὀχλος in the formation of elite self-understanding.
^{346} Hippolytos 986-91
^{347} Hippolytos 1079-80
Barrett observes: “He is on the verge of tears, yet too proud to shed them for himself; hence this rather odd wish that he could become another person to weep for his own misfortune.” Read together with his preliminary comment about his preferred audience, however, Hippolytos’s concern here is not simply “pride.” He wants an audience for his performance – here, to witness the sincerity of his emotional response to the conflict with his father as evidence of his innocence – but he wants that audience to be as similar and sympathetic to him as possible.

The “few peers” of his ideal audience at line 987 are here replaced with the ultimate peer: oneself, duplicated. According to the “lowest common denominator” understanding of the crowd, by which it is not a problem per se but only because it entails the aggregation of disparate social elements (including the majority that are φαύλοι), replicating oneself – or, since that is impossible, limiting the gathering to ἡλίκες δὲ κώλιγοι – will remove the threat the crowd poses. Of course, if the trouble with crowds is something to do with multiplicity and aggregation itself, rather than the character of the individuals who come together (the “Group Mind” view), screening participants will not solve the problem.

After Hippolytos’s departure into exile, a messenger brings news of his death.

This crowd echoes both Aphrodite’s original description of Hippolytos’s hunting band (ὄπισθόπους), as well as Hippolytos’s own statement of the company he prefers (ἡλίκων). However, where in the earlier passage Hippolytos’s preferred audience (987) would be ὄλιγοι, here his band of companions is said to be μυρία. The sympathetic messenger’s exaggeration of the band’s size highlights its impotence. In this moment, the group can neither threaten nor assist the elite figure; all it can do is watch helplessly as the curse of death against him is fulfilled.

Andromache

It is in Andromache that political violence is first explicitly narrated. As a preliminary matter, the titular character reproaches Hermione with language that gives us a view of Hippolytos’s sociology of rhetoric from the other side:

οἱ γὰρ πνεόντες μεγάλα τοὺς κρείσσους λόγους

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348 *Hippolytos* 1178-80
349 The ὄμω in ὀμήγυρις emphasizes the homogeneity of this band of elite companions. Even when exaggerated into “countless” numbers, its elite status prevents its transformation into a true “crowd” (contrary to the transformation of the suitors argued for at the end of Chapter Two). Thanks to Mark Griffith for this observation.
350 For a close reading of the Messenger’s speech – albeit one that does not analyze the events qua group violence – see de Jong 2003:379-82.
The high-and-mighty – the few – do not lightly suffer losing an argument to the lowly – the many. Later in the play the chorus expresses what at first sight might appear to be an aristocratic explanation for why this should be so:

Here the chorus expresses anti-crowd sentiment in its most extreme form (the “Group Mind”). They do not say that a crowd is worse than an individual at making decisions because it is dragged down to its lowest common denominator. Nor do they say that otherwise intelligent people get less intelligent as they grow in number. Rather, they appear to be saying that multiple strong minds are in aggregate worse at getting things done than is one, even one weaker, mind.\footnote{This extreme pessimism regarding group deliberation prefigures the quote from Federalist No. 51: “Had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates, every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob.” Cf. the debate at Herodotus 3.80 ff., especially Megabyzus’s contention that ὁμιλοῦ γὰρ ἀρημίου οὔδὲν ἔστι ἄξυμπτωτέρων οὔδὲ υβριστότερον, “nothing is more lacking in wisdom nor more insolent than a useless homilos” (3.81.1). For a rare alternative view, see Aristotle, Politics 1281b, arguing that collective opinion may in some instances be superior to an individual’s.}

\footnote{LSJ s.v. πνέω: “giving themselves airs” (citing this passage).}
\footnote{Andromache 189-90}
\footnote{Andromache 471-75, 479-485}

For in cities, twofold tyrannies get no better results than one,
Grief upon grief and στάσις for the citizens,….
And when swift winds knock sailors around,
A double judgment of minds at the tiller
And a packed crowd of wise men is weaker
Than an inferior mind with sole authority.
Indeed, accomplishment (comes from) one, in the home
And across cities, when they want to find out the proper time.\footnote{Taken at face value, this would a priori problematize collective action – unless the meaning is that a single intelligence is better specifically in periods of crisis. Since it is in such periods that swift and correct decisions are most valuable, however, this sentiment casts serious doubt on the wisdom of entrusting a leadership role to any πλήθος άθρόου tasked with a leadership role.}
In the play’s central agon, Peleus taunts Menelaos with aspersions against the chastity of Spartan women, and contrasts Helen’s trifling character with the enormous force assembled to retrieve her:

κάπετ’ ἐκείνης οὐνεχ’ Ἐλλήνων ὀχλον
tosóνδ’ ἀθροίσας ἤγαγες πρὸς Ἰλιον:
And so for her sake you gathered such a great ὀχλος
Of Greeks and led it to Ilium?355

Already in the Herakleidae, at 122 and 668, we have seen that crowd-terms such as ὀχλος and πλῆθος are routinely used of military forces, and that ἀθρφο- adjectives and verbs are often used to describe their appearance and behavior. Here we see that the social economy of military command is tied to the psychic economy of sexuality. The futility of the Trojan War, as elsewhere in Euripides,356 is summed up in these two lines: so many men died in battle as a result of the failure of one elite marriage.357

In his final speech of the agon, Peleus goes beyond his particular criticisms of the expedition to critique the basic assumptions of merit and responsibility undergirding the ideology of elite dominance:

ὅταν τροπαία πολεμίων στήσῃ στρατός,
οὺ τῶν πονούντων τούργον ἠγούνται τόδε,
ἄλλο στρατηγὸς τὴν δόκησιν ἄρνυται,
ὅς εἰς μετ᾽ ἄλλων μυρίων πάλλων δόρυ,
οὐδὲν πλέουν δρῶν ἐνός, ἔχει πλέιω λόγον.
When an army sets up trophies of triumph over enemies,
They don’t recognize the task as the work of those who labored over it,
But the general gets the reputation – he
Who is one guy wielding a spear among countless others,
Doing no more than one (man’s share) – but he has a greater account.358

Here the dialectic of One and Many, which in the Cyclops was the mode in which Odysseus expressed his heroic unwillingness to abandon his companions, is reversed. Leaders still do stand out against a backdrop of “extras,” as in Homer - but this distinction is undeserved, as they are really just component parts of a fighting force, no more inherently worthy than any other soldier. If we question elite dominance, the One starts to look less like a survivor and more like a parasite.359

Note too that this contradicts the sentiments of the chorus discussed above. If one controlling mind is required to achieve the right results, shouldn’t that mind’s owner get

355 Andromache 605-06
356 E.g. Troiades 864.
357 See especially IA 1264, discussed below; also Aeschylus Agamemnon 62 and passim.
358 Andromache 694-98
359 Completing the reversal, the mass of nonheroic common people becomes the survivor. Carter 84: “The demos, and with it the broader community of the polis, is generally a survivor in a literary genre [tragedy] marked by suffering and death.”
more recognition? Euripides’s plays are consistently polyvocal, with a full range of elite ideology and non-elite counter-ideology expressed by the characters.

Menelaos disengages from his confrontation with Peleus by disavowing any intention to initiate violence inside the town:

εγὼ δὲ πρὸς βίαν μὲν ἐς Φθίαν μολὼν
οὔτ’ οὔν τι δρᾶσιν φλαῦρων οὔτε πείσομαι.
But I won’t do nor suborn any act of violence
On a visit to Phthia. 360

The liminal spaces at the edge of established centers of human habitation pose to the arriving stranger a heightened threat of group violence. Despite Menelaos’s finely worded renunciation of the use of force when coming in/to the city, Andromache fears violence will erupt in just such an uninhabited place:

ὁρα δὲ μὴ νόιν εἰς ἐρημίαν ὄδου
πτηζαντες οἱ δὲ πρὸς βίαν ἄγωσι με,
γέροντα μὲν σ’ ὀρώντες, ἀσθενὴ δ’ ἐμὲ
καὶ παῖδα τόνδε νήπιον. σκόπει τάδε,
μὴ νῦν φυγόντες εἴθ’ ἀλῶμεν ὑστερον.
Beware, lest those guys, hiding in a deserted spot on the road,
Carry me off by force, once they see that you’re an old man,
I’m weak, and this child is still an infant. Look out,
Lest escaping now we’re then caught later. 361

Andromache is wrong about the location and victim, but right about the inevitability of a violent resolution to the conflict. In his narration of the events leading to Neoptolemos’s death, the messenger stresses the role of groups:

ἐπεὶ τὸ κλεινὸν ἠλθομεν Φοίβου πέδου,
τρεῖς μὲν φαενάς ἠλίου διεξόδους
θέας διδόντες ὀματ’ ἐξετίμπλαμεν.
καὶ τοὺθ’ ὑποπτον ἦν ἄρ’, ἐς τε συστάσεις
κύκλους τ’ ἐξόρει λαὸς οἰκήτωρ θεοῦ.
Ἄγαμέμνονος δὲ παις διαστείχου πόλιν
ἐς οὖς ἐκάστῳ δυσμενεῖς οὐδα λόγους,
“Ὅρατε τούτων…;”
When we came to the famed plain of Phoebus,
We spent three courses of the sun giving our eyes
Over to sight-seeing. 362 And it seems this was suspicious.
And the λαὸς that dwells in 363 the temple
Went off into clumps and cliques.

360 Andromache 730-31
361 Andromache 752-56
362 See Stevens comm. ad loc. for construction of this difficult passage.
363 LSJ s.v. οἰκήτωρ.
And the son of Agamemnon stalked through the city
Uttering hostile words into the ears of each man (he met).
“Do you see that man ...?” [Orestes accuses Neoptolemos
Of intending to loot the temple.]364

At Herakleidae 415, Demophon spoke of συστάσεις disrupting public order as if they
were spontaneous formations: καὶ νῦν πυκνᾶς ἀν συστάσεις ἀν εἰσίδοις. Here the line of
sight through which the crowds are invoked is not that of the addressee. The visitors to
Delphi direct their sight, presumably, to its temples (much as today’s modern tourists
do!) – all the while falling under the gaze of a suspicious and hostile public.

κὰκ τοῦδ’ ἐξώριει ρόθιων ἐν πόλει κακῶν,
ἀρχαίοι τ’ ἐπληροῦτο βουλευτήρια
ἰδίαιι365 θ’ ὅσοι θεοῦ χρημάτων ἐφέστασαν
φρουράν ἐτάξαντ’ ἐν περιστύλοις δόμωις.
And from this a wave of evil went about in the town,
And the council-chambers filled with officers366
And privately, however many who looked after the god’s affairs,
Posted a guard in the columned halls.367

Orestes’s slanderous words have caused a “wave” (ρόθιον)368 of opinion and group
formation to ripple through the town, with acts of coordination both inside (here) and
outside (the “conspiratorial” groups named earlier) formal and appointed offices of
community action.

ἡμεῖς δὲ μῆλα, φυλλάδος Παρνασίας
παιδεύματ’, οὐδὲν τῶνδε πω πεπυσμένοι,
λαβόντες ἠμὲν ἐσχάρας τ’ ἐφέσταμεν
σὺν προξένοις μάντεοιν τε Πυθικοῖς. …
But we, in no way aware of these things,
Had with us our sheep, reared on leafy Parnassus,

364 Andromache 1085-92
365 Cf. Orestes 445, where Menelaos raises the possibility of individuals pursuing “rough justice” on their
own account (ἰδίαι πρὸς ἐγχώρων ἢ πρὸς Ἀργείας χερὸς;), only to be contradicted by Orestes, who accepts
that those threatening him do so with the force of community will.
366 Diggle’s text. Stevens comm. ad loc. prefers to read ἄρχαι δ’ ἐπληροῦτ’ ἐς τὰ βουλευτήρια ἰδίαι
θ’ ὅσοι … “and the civic authorities flocked into the council chamber and unofficially (i.e. not waiting for
the ἄρχαι) those responsible for temple treasures posted a guard.” Stevens notes “There is no indication of
what part these sentries took in the subsequent proceedings.”
367 Andromache 1096-99
368 See below for a discussion of ρέ-/ρόθ- words for crowd response and the underlying “hydraulic” model
of group psychology. Stevens comm. ad loc.: ‘a wave of malice and resentment began to surge through the town.’ The primary sense of
ρόθος and cognates seems to be a combination of noise and movement, and these words
are most often used of the surge and roar of the waves, and hence also of a shouting and
surging crowd, e.g. Hes. WD 220; cf. S. Ant. 259; ibid. 413.
LSJ cites this instance as evidence of an alternate definition of ρόθιον as “tumult, riot[.]”
And stood at the altars with our proxenoi and the Pythian prophets. …
[Asked his purpose, Neoptolemos responds that he has come to repent.]

With the hostile group waiting for him not taking the form of a manifest crowd, but rather a conspiratorial squad, Neoptolemos and his group advance to the altar. Their attempt to achieve ritual cleansing is thwarted by Orestes’s plan:

κάνταυθ’ Ὅρεστοι μῦθος ἰσχύων μέγα ἐφαίνεθ’…
And thereupon Orestes’s story was revealed as having great force …

Neoptolemos’s declaration of his good intentions is outdone by the pre-existing “wave” of rumor that has set the scene for mob action. The present speaker is overpowered by one who spoke in advance to groups elsewhere – by one who has pre-seeded the social scene with packs of violent partisans.

τῷ δὲ ξιφήρης ἄρ’ ύψιστήκει λόχος
dάφνης σκιασθεῖς, ὡν Κλυταμίστρας τόκος
eὶς ἦν, ἀπάντων τῶν δὴ μιχανορράφος.
χῶ μὲν κατ’ ὄμμα στὰς προσεύχεται θεών,
ioi δὲ οξυθήκτας φασσάναις ὄπλισιμένοι
κεντουσ’ ἀπευχή παίδ’ Ἀχιλλέως λάβραι. …
And waiting for (Neoptolemos) was a band of swordsmen
Hidden in the laurel, of whom the offspring of Clytaemnestra
Was one – contriver of all these things.
And as he stood with eyes downcast and prayed to the god,
They, armed with sharp-tipped swords,
Stabbed the unarmed child of Achilles unaware …

The squad (or, in Canetti’s terminology, the “pack”) of assassins is described in terms of One and Many, betraying the basic ambivalence in the concept of the crowd first seen in Homer. Orestes is just one among the others, but as author of the plot, he is somehow pulling the strings of the entire group. At this point he drops out of the narrative, however, and the attacking mob is described purely as a collective:

βοᾶὶ δὲ Δελφῶν παῖδας …
tῶν δὲ οὐδεν οὔδεις μυρίων ὄντων πέλας
ἐφθέγξατ’, ἀλλ’ ἐβαλλον ἐκ χειρῶν πέτροις.
πυκνὴ δὲ νιφάδ’ πάντωθεν σποδούμενος
προὔτεινε τεῦχη κάφυλασσετ’ ἐμβολὰς
ἐκεῖσε κάκεισ’ ἀσπίδ’ ἐκτείνων χερί.
ἀλλ’ οὔδεν ἦνον, ἀλλὰ πόλλ’ ὄμοι βέλη,
ioιστοί, μεσάγκυλ’ ἐκλυτοὶ τ’ ἀμφώβολοι

369 Andromache 1100-03
370 Andromache 1109-10
371 Andromache 1114-19
And he shouted at the children of Delphi …

But none of the countless ones nearby made any sound,
And they struck him with rocks from their hands.

He stretched out his armor and guarded himself from the missiles
But they accomplished nothing, but there were many missiles,

As he guarded himself from the missiles. But as they stood around him
In a circle, not giving him room to breathe,

Emptying the flock-receiving hearth-ring of the altar
Leaping the leap with his feet which Troy knew, he
Advanced towards them. And they like doves seeing a hawk
Turned their backs and fled.

The pack closes in in a circle (κύκλωι), only to be driven away in mindless panic, trampling one another to escape from the hero rampant. The scene is reminiscent of the common Homeric simile \(^{372}\) of a pack of hunting dogs encountering a lion or other wild animal — but the setting here is not the field of battle, but rather one of Greece’s holiest sites. The mob, like a flock of birds, makes the whole precinct ring with its panic, until a mysterious voice rallies it to complete the assassination:

\[ \text{κραυγὴ δ’ ἐν ἑφὴμοισι δύσφημοι δόμοις} \]
\[ \text{πέτραισιν ἀντέκπλαγξ’, ἐν εὐθίᾳ δὲ πῶς} \]
\[ \text{ἐστὶ φαεννοὶς δεσπότις στίλβων ὁπλοῖς,} \]
\[ \text{πρὶν δὴ τὶς ἀδύτων ἐκ μέσων ἐφθέγξατο} \]
\[ \text{δεινὸν τι καὶ φρικώδες, ὄρσε δὲ στρατὸν} \]

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\(^{372}\) *Andromache* 1124, 1127-43

\(^{373}\) E.g. *Iliad* XI.548-57, XVII.61-69. Lion similes are common in the *Iliad* but rarer in the *Odyssey*; the “victimized lion” is confined to the *Iliad*, with the exception of the lion ἀνδρῶν ἐν ὁμίλωι at *Od.* iv.791-93 (describing Peneleope). For an analysis of the lion similes in the *Odyssey*, and an argument that taken together they show some degree of “conscious artistry,” see Magrath; see also Glenn (examining Odysseus’s encounter with Nausicaa, where the lion frightens and scatters a group instead of being attacked by one).
An ill-voiced shout in the home of good speech
Rang out from the stones. In full light then he stood
The lord gleaming in his shining armor,
Before some voice from the middle of the sanctum
Shouted out something wild and hair-raising,
Rousing the force and turning it to the fight.
Then the child of Achilles fell, struck in the ribs
By the sharp-pointed sword, [at the hands of some Delphian
Man, whoever killed him], among many others (dead).
As he fell to the ground, who didn’t jab a sword, who
Didn’t throw a rock, to strike him? His whole fair-formed hide
Was wrecked by savage wounds.374

The crowd is rallied by “someone.” While the voice is understood to be Apollo’s, the text does not say that;375 coming as it does at the inflection point between rout and rally, it may also be read as the expression of the group’s will – the restoration of collective intent overpowering the elite individual in his glorious last stand.

Hecuba

Hecuba introduces the army as crowd, both as a potentially chaotic and violent group actor, and as a body that engages in deliberative assembly. As the entering chorus in Sophocles’s Ajax warns the titular character of the trouble brewing for him offstage, so too the chorus of Euripides’s Hecuba enters with news of a “crowd gone wild” offstage whose actions and reactions mean doom for the interests of an onstage elite character.

For it’s said to have been decided
In the full meeting of the Achaean
To make of your child a sacrifice to Achilles.376

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374 Andromache 1144-55
375 Stevens, comm. ad loc., asserts that “[i]t is clear from 1161-5 that the narrator holds Apollo to be responsible … The indefinite ἔτις is used elsewhere in similar contexts either because the identity of the deity is uncertain or to add a touch of mystery.” But τις can also be “everyman,” or more pointedly “mass man,” the prototypical and anonymous member of a group. See de Jong 1987; see also Carter 53ff. on single demotic characters as “common-man” stand-ins for the community as a whole.
376 Hecuba 107-09
The language here is that of contemporary politics; the army here is clearly standing in for the Athenian assembly. The detailed description of the speakers and the crowd’s reaction to them, then, can be taken as representing roles and behavior characteristic of mass political gatherings:

πολλῆς δ’ ἔριδος συνέπαις κλύδων,
δόξα δ’ ἐχώρει δίχ’ αὐν Ἑλλήνων
στρατῶν αἰχμητήν, τοῖς μὲν διδότων
tύμβῳ σφάγιον, τοῖς δ’ οὐχὶ δοκοῦν.

And a wave of great discord crashed,
And a double opinion went through the spear-bearing Army of Greeks – to some it seemed right to make this Sacrifice to the tomb – to others it didn’t.

Both in tragedy and comedy verbs of “flowing” are used to describe the behavior of different types of crowds, but this is the clearest example of a “hydraulic” model of crowd psychology.

Having as he did relations with the prophecy

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377 Gregory comm. ad loc.: “The contemporary terminology serves to sharpen the spectators’ awareness of parallels or contrasts between the mythical past and their own present.” See generally Meier.
378 Note that (as in other descriptions of assembly scenes, e.g. that in Orestes) the speakers’ words are not presented in direct discourse, but rather indirectly and briefly summarized. The description is thus focused not on individual rhetorical technique, but rather precisely on the crowd’s reaction thereto.
379 Hecuba 116-19
380 E.g. Rhesos 290-91, reproduced below: πολλῆι γὰρ ἡχήι Θρήκιος ἰέων στρατὸς ἐστειχε: Andr. 1096 (discussed above) of the ῥόθιον ἐν πόλει κακοῦ.
381 E.g. Acharnians 23-26, discussed in Chapter Four: οἱ πρωτάνεις ἢκουσιν … άβροι καταρρέοντες.
382 Orestes 901 (discussed below) provides a useful comparison. There, too, an assembly is divided between praise and blame of a speaker; the verb in that passage is ἐπιρροθέω, ultimately deriving from an onomatopoeic root ῥοθ-. The link between crowd-noise and water/the noise may be due to sonic similarity, a concept of the fluidity and volatility of crowd reactions, or some combination of the two. In Aristophanes’s Ecclesiazusae, discussed in Chapter Four, the description of the assembly at which Praxagora seizes power is similarly focused on crowd reaction rather than the content of speakers’ addresses.

For an example from Latin literature, see the simile at Virgil Aeneid 1.148-53 where Neptune’s calming of the stormy seas is likened to a leader’s quelling of an incipient riot. The “hydraulic” understanding of group behavior could not be more explicit.

On hydraulic crowd imagery, Theweleit passim; for the sea and rivers specifically, Canetti 80-84.
Bacchant. But the twin sons of Theseus, scions of Athens,
Were utterers of double speeches, but with one intent
Both proposed to crown the Achillean tomb with fresh blood,
And said Cassandra’s bed should never be put before Achilles’s spear.\textsuperscript{383}

Agamemnon is seeking to protect his private pleasures and public face – just as he strips Achilles of both simultaneously in the first book of the \textit{Iliad}. The sons of Theseus, dual ὄζω of a city synonymous with popular government and mass deliberative assembly, devalue such elite individual concerns in comparison to the ritual and symbolic needs of the army as a whole. Now that he is dead, the figure of Achilles is a rallying point and node of common identification for the entire Greek army – serving the role of a “leader figure” introjected into the individual soldiers’ sense of themselves, along the model of Freudian mass psychology – and an affront to the honor of his memory insults the army as a whole and outrages the passions of the individuals who comprise its rank and file.

The chorus continues its description of the assembly session:

\textit{σπουδαὶ δὲ λόγων κατατεινομένων ἥσαν ἵσαι πῶς, πρὶν ὁ ποικιλόφρων κότις ἡδυλόγος δημοχαριτῆς Λαερτίάδης πείθει στρατιάν μὴ τὸν ἁριστὸν Δαναῶν παντῶν δούλων σφαφίων οὐκ ἀπωθεῖν}.

And enthusiasm\textsuperscript{384} for the contending speeches
Were more or less equal, before the complex-minded
Sweet-talking, δῆμος-pleasing “knife,”
Son of Laertes, persuaded the army
Not to spurn the best of the Danaans on account of the sacrifice of slaves.\textsuperscript{385}

Odysseus’s skill with words, and his ability to engage with the δῆμος on its own terms, give him the power to channel, or steer (or cut) through, the “flow” of crowd sentiment.\textsuperscript{386} It is unclear whether his oratory would be capable of making the mass switch its already settled opinion, but when the opposing sides are equally poised, he can provide the catalyst for a resolution and the triumph of one faction.

Odysseus then enters, and announces the result he has just brought about as if he were not its author and sponsor. Just as the chorus did initially, he delivers the news in the political language of contemporary Athens, speaking not of what \textit{he} has persuaded the group to do, but rather of what seemed good \textit{to them}; his own role in guiding their action is elided.

\textit{γύναι, δοκῶ μὲν σ’ εἰδέναι γνώμην στρατοῦ ψηφόν τε τὴν κραυχεῖσαν. ἀλλ’ ὁμος φράσω.}

\textsuperscript{383} \textit{Hecuba} 120-29
\textsuperscript{384} LSJ s.v. σπουδή: “zeal for the conflicting arguments.”
\textsuperscript{385} \textit{Hecuba} 130-35
\textsuperscript{386} See Buxton 1982, esp. 12-16, for a study of persuasion in tragedy.
Woman, I think you know the judgment of the army And the vote that has been cast. But all the same, I’ll announce it. It has been decided by the Achaeans to sacrifice your child Polyxena To the standing mound of Achilles’s tomb …

Posing as an authorized medium for transmitting the will of the collective, he warns Hecuba not to resist this will:

οὐσθ’ οὖν ὁ δρᾶσον. μήτ’ ἀποσπασθῆς βίαι μήτ’ ἐς χέρων ἀμιλλαν ἐξέλθης ἐμοὶ …
So you know what to do. Don’t draw her away by force, Nor enter into a contest of hands with me …

Odysseus combines an appeal to legitimacy with a threat of superior force. In effect his warning echoes the words of Kreon to Medea, discussed above: he is warning her not to ὀχλον παρέχειν, “cause a disturbance.” Only one ὀχλος - which, he conveniently omits to mention, is subject to manipulation at his own hands – can legitimately choose violence; individual resistance to its decrees will lead to a bad end.

In a short span of lines, Hecuba presents two different accounts of the precise nature of Odysseus’s demagogic powers. First, she reacts furiously to his arrival and proclamation:

ἀχάριστον ὑμῶν σπέρμ’, ὦσοι δημηγόρους ζηλοῦτε τιμᾶς, μηδὲ γιγνώσκοισθε μοι, οἱ τοὺς φίλους βλαπτοῦντες οὐ φροντίζετε, ἢν τοσὶ πολλοῖς πρὸς χάριν λέγεσθε τι.

Your breed is most unpleasant, all you who seek public speaking honors. May you not make my acquaintence, who harm your friends without Thinking of it, if you can say something that gratifies the masses.

Here Hecuba castigates Odysseus for his disordered values: he places the pursuit of popular politics above elite friendship networks. As framed by her attack, he is in thrall to the commons, wooing it like a besotted lover to the expense of his other obligations. Shortly thereafter, however, Hecuba asks Odysseus to plead her case before the Argives assembled. In doing so, she assures him that his powers come not from special attentiveness to the crowd’s whims, but rather from a quality of personal charisma:

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387 Hecuba 218-21
388 Hecuba 225-26
389 Hecuba 254-57
390 Michelini (154-55): “The play … takes no stand vis-à-vis democracy and the rule of the ochlos; instead, it uses this theme to mark a contrast between world views.”
391 Ibid.: “The theme of the ochlos serves also to bridge a necessary gap in the play’s structure. Rhetoric typically is exercised before ochloi and plete; but Hekabe, because of the limitations of the drama, must exercise it on individuals. Emphasis on the ochlos reinjects into Hekabe’s impromptu discovery of the arts of peitho the political elements that would otherwise necessarily be absent.”
τὸ δ’ ἀξίωμα, κἂν κακῶς λέγης, τὸ σὸν
πείσει. λόγος γὰρ ἐκ τ’ ἀδοξοῦντων ἰὼν
κάκ τῶν δοκοῦντων αὐτὸς οὐ ταύτὸν σθενεῖ.
But your reputation, even if you should speak poorly,
Will persuade. For a speech coming from those without esteem
Does not have the same force as one from those with it.392

In explaining to Hecuba why he cannot do as she asks, Odysseus grounds the
necessity for appeasing the mass in this particular instance in the need to preserve the
possibility of manipulating future gatherings:

τί δὴ τ’ ἐρεῖς, ἢν τὶς αὖ φανῇ
στρατοῦ τ’ ἀθροισις πολεμίων τ’ ἀγωνία …
[If we revoke the decision to honor Achilles posthumously,]
Indeed, what would someone say, if there should ever appear
A gathering of the army and a contest of enemies …393

The elites cannot muster an army or engage with the enemy on their own. Their prestige
and leadership qualities must be maintained if they are to have any chance of raising a
sufficient force and successfully prosecuting a war.

Talthybios’s description of Polyxena’s death repeatedly notes the behavior of the
crowd of spectators:

παρὰν μὲν ὀχλὸς πᾶς Αχαικοῦ στρατοῦ
πλήρης πρὸ τύμβου σὴς κόρης ἐπὶ σφαγάς,
λαβὼν δ’ Ἀχιλλέως παῖς Πολυξένην χερὸς
ἐστημ’ ἐπ’ ἄκρον χώματος, πέλας δ’ ἐγὼ.
λεκτοὶ τ’ Ἀχαιῶν ἐκριτοὶ νεανία,
σκίρτη μὸσχον σὴς καθέξοντες χεροῖν,
ἔσποντο. πλήρες δ’ ἐν χεροῖν λαβὼν δέπας
πάγχρυσον αἱρεὶ χειρὶ παῖς Ἀχιλλέως
χοᾶς θανόντι πατρί.
The entire full ὀχλὸς of the Achaean army
Was there around the tomb, (waiting) for your daughter’s slaughter,
And the child of Achilles, taking Polyxena by the hand
Set her at the top of the mount – and I was nearby.
And youths adjudged and picked out from the Achaeans
To contain the leaping of your calf,
Followed. And the child of Achilles, taking a full solid-gold ritual dish
In his hands, raised up libations to his dead father.394

392 Hecuba 293-95
393 Hecuba 313-14
394 Hecuba 521-29
The size and comprehensive nature of the gathering is emphasized by the redundant πᾶς and πλήρης. As in the Achaeian assembly in the second book of the *Iliad*, discussed in Chapter Two, an elite cadre distinct from the larger group is “seeded” throughout it to help maintain order – here, by bringing the victim to the altar while separating her from the threat of attack by the crowd-as-mob. Talthybios then relates his own role in controlling the assembly as a whole:

σημαίνει δὲ μοι
σιγήν Ἀχαιῶν παντὶ κηρύξαι στρατῶι,
κάγω καταστάς εἴπον ἐν μέσοις τάδε:
Σιγάτ', Ἀχαιοί, σίγα πᾶς ἔστω λεώς,
σίγα σιώτα. νήμειμον δ' ἔστησʾ ὀχλον.
And he gave me the sign
To proclaim silence to the whole Achaeian army.
And taking my stand in the midst (of the crowd) I said these things:
“Quiet, Achaians! Let the whole λεώς be silent,
Quiet! Hush!” And I set the ὀχλος up motionless.

Talthybios brings order to the crowd not by a display of his own authority, but rather as a representative of the high command, even of the army as a whole.

τοσαύτ' ἔλεξε, πᾶς δ' ἐπηύξατο στρατός. …
λογάσι δ' Ἀργείων στρατοῦ
νεανίας ἔνευσε παρθένον λαβεῖν. …
λαιοί δ' ἐπερρόθησαν Ἀγαμέμνων τ' ἄναξ
ἐϊπεν μεθεῖνα παρθένον νεανίας. …
ὁ δ' οὐ δέλων τε καὶ δέλων οὐκτων κόρης
τέμνει οἰδήρω τε πνεύματος διαρροάς.
κρουνοὶ δ' ἐχώρουν. ἢ δὲ καὶ θυμισκοῦσ' ὀμὼς
πολλήν πρόνοιαν ἐξεν εὔσχήμων πεσεῖν,
κρύπτουσ' ἃ κρύπτειν ὀμματ' ἀραγήνων χρεών.
Thus he spoke, and the whole army prayed with him.
And then he nodded to the youths selected from the Argive army
To seize the maiden …
But then he, wanting and not wanting (to kill her) out of pity,
Cut with steel the girl’s windpipe.
And the springs (of blood) gushed forth. And she, dying,
Nevertheless showed great forethought in falling modestly,
Hiding those things that should be hidden from the eyes of men.

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395 Loraux (1987:44) sees the chosen band of youths as needed to overcome Polyxena’s “virginal refusal to be ‘seized and hoisted.’” Read together with these other passages, however, the cadre can be understood as also protecting Polyxena in the last moments of her life against the chaotic violence of the mob, while transporting her to the site of solemn sacrifice. Cf. *Andromache* for an offensive, rather than protective, instance of crowd-seeding.

396 *Hecuba* 529-33

397 *Hecuba* 542, 544-45, 553-54, 556-70
Even in death, Polyxena observes the code of female isolation from the crowd. Out of respect for the nobility and modesty of her death, the group here polices itself – even as it divides into different work-gangs, losing the unity of the crowd at a spectacle - with no need for the chosen youths, or a figure such as Odysseus in the second book of the *Iliad*, to remonstrate them:

επεὶ δ᾽ ἄφηκε πνεῦμα θανασίμωι σφαγῆι,
oùδεις τὸν αὐτὸν ἐχεῖν Ἀργείων πόνον,
ἀλλ᾽ εἰς ἱκετεύον τὴν θανούσαν ἐκ χερῶν
φύλλοις ἐβαλλον, οἱ δὲ πληροῦσιν πυρὰν κορμοῦσεν φέρουτες πεικίνουσ, ὃ δ᾽ οὐ φέρων
πρὸς τοῦ φέροντος τοιᾶδ᾽ ἡκουεν κακὰ:
“ἲστηκας, ὃ κάκιστε, τῇ νεάνιδι
οὐ πέπλον οὐδὲ κόσμον ἐν χεροῖν ἑχων;”

But when she gave up her breath to the deadly slaughter,
None one of the Argives held the same task,
But some strewed her corpse with leaves from their hands,
Others assembled her pyre by bringing pine-logs,
And the one not carrying (anything) heard these sorts of curses
From the one carrying: Are you standing there, O wretch,
Not having a robe or some decoration-gift for the maiden in your hands?398

Hecuba reacts to the narrative of her daughter’s death by personifying the many troubles facing her, turning them into a crowd to match the crowd whose bloody entertainment has just been described:399

ὦ θύγατερ, ὦκ οἴδ᾽ εἰς ὅτι βλέψω κακῶν,
pολλῶν παρόντων. ἦν γὰρ ἄψωμαι τινος,
tόδ᾽ οὐκ ἔαι με, παρακαλεὶ δ᾽ ἐκέιθεν αὖ
λύπη τις ἄλλη διάδοχος κακῶν κακοῖς.
O daughter, I don’t know to which of my woes I should look,
Since so many of them are present. For when I grasp on to one,
Another won’t let me, but some other grief taking its turn with
Woes upon woes calls me thither again.400

Shortly thereafter, she implores Talthybios to return to the Argive assembly and restrain the ὀχλός from any fresh outrages it might work:

σὺ δ᾽ ἐλθὲ καὶ σήμυνον Ἀργείωις τάδε,
μὴ διγγάνειν μοι μηδὲν ἄλλες εἰργαῖν ὀχλον

398 *Hecuba* 571-78
399 Arrowsmith picks up on this connection, translating these lines as “O my child,/ how shall I deal with this thronging crowd of blows,/ these terrors, each with its petition, clamoring/ for attention?  If I try to cope with one,/ another shoulders in, and then a third/ comes on, distracting, each fresh wave/ breeding new successors as it breaks.”
400 *Hecuba* 585-88
τῆς παιδός. ἐν τοῖς μυρίωι στρατεύματι ἀκόλαστος ὀχλος ναυτική τ’ ἀναρχία κρείσσων πυρός, κακὸς δ’, ὦ τι δρῶν κακὸν.

But you go and declare this to the Argives:
Not to let anyone touch my child, but keep the ὀχλος back.
For in a countless army the ὀχλος is unchecked,
And the sailors’ anarchy is stronger than fire,
And the man who does no wrong (is held) a coward.  

Here a different kind of “peer pressure” is pictured operating between the members of the crowd. Where above Talthybios assured Hecuba that the soldiers encouraged in each other behavior respectful of her dead child, here Hecuba fears that the common soldiers acting as a mob will enforce an inverted system of values, condemning as cowards those who do not participate in the imagined desecration of her daughter’s corpse. The talk of an anarchic mob of sailors has obvious resonance with contemporary Athenian society; elite fear of the unruly masses is rarely as explicit in tragedy as in this passage.

In her dialogue with Agamemnon, Hecuba deploys a striking image:

ἐνὸς μοι μύθος ἑνδείξις ἔτι.
ἐἴ μοι γένοιτο φθόγγος ἐν βραχίσσιν καὶ χερῶι καὶ κοίμαισι καὶ ποδῶι βάσει ἢ Δαϊδάλου τέχναισιν ἢ θεῶι τινος, ὥς πάνθ᾽ ἀμαρτηὶ σῶν ἐξοιτο γουνάτων κλαίοντ᾽ ἐπισκήπτοντα παντοίους λόγους. 

My speech yet lacks one thing.
If only I could have a voice in my arms
And my hands and my hair and the tread of my feet
Through the arts of Daidalos or one of the gods,
So that the all together might grasp your knees
Clamoring and calling on you with all sorts of speeches.

401 Hecuba 604-08
402 Gregory comm. ad loc. notes that Hecuba is “[s]peaking as an aristocrat … voic[ing] the disdain for the undisciplined mob that was associated with the oligarchic point of view in fifth-century Athens.” She references [Xen.] Ath. Pol 1.5 for the trope of unchecked and unlearned masses in contrast to sober and restrained elites. On revolution and counter-revolution in fifth-century Athens see generally Lintott 125ff. On the specific issue of stasis in Athens as represented at Thucydides III.82, see Price; Orwin; Edmunds (analyzing Thucydides’s “ethics” as reflected in the passage, without commenting on political violence as a specifically group phenomenon).
403 Gregory comm. ad loc. cites parallels, e.g. (Choephoroi 195) that of Electra wishing Orestes’s hair could speak; she observes “These literary parallels suggest that (pace Michelini …) the audience would apprehend Hecuba’s appeal as powerful rather than bizarre.” Michelini (152) calls the figure “bizarre” and “grotesque.” “The theme of physical decorum is raised also by the strange physicality of the image: to the conventions of moral, verbal, and physical behavior, Hecuba continually opposes a grotesqueness that is the appropriate expression of an inverted cultural tradition.” Neither commentator, however, remarks on the significance of the image in the context of Hecuba’s criticism of Agamemnon as subservient to the will of the masses. Similarly, Mossman 129-30 considers whether the passage is “grotesque” (concluding that Hecuba is “praying not to be transformed into some strange beast, but that she might undergo a [ ] kind of liberation of energy”), but does not make the connection I identify here.
404 Hecuba 835-40
In other words, Hecuba wishes to become a one-woman assembly, with speakers and roaring crowd all embedded in her body.

Agamemnon replies to her pleas for assistance by saying that he would like to help her but fears the army as a body of opinion and a political mass:

εἰ πώς φανείη γ’ ὡστε σοὶ τ’ ἑχειν καλῶς στρατῶι τε μὴ δόξαμι Κασσάνδρας χάριν Θρήκης ἀνακτὶ τόνδε βουλεύσαι φόνον. ἑστιν γάρ ἦ ταραγμὸς ἐμπέπτωκε μοι. τὸν ἄνδρα τούτων φίλων ἤγειται στρατός, τὸν κατθανόντα δ’ ἐχθρόν. εἰ δὲ σοὶ φίλος ὃδ’ ἑστι, χωρὶς τούτῳ κοῦ κοινὸν στρατῶι. πρὸς ταῦτα φρόντις’ ὦς θέλουτα μὲν μ’ ἑχεισ σοὶ εὐμυπνούσαι καὶ ταχὺν προσαρκέσαι, βραδὺν δ’, Ἀχαιοῖς εἰ διαβληθήσομαι. [I wish that] it somehow would come about that things go well for you, But that I not seem to the army to have plotted murder against the lord of Thrace for Cassandra’s sake. For this is where disturbance falls on me. The army considers that man as a rather good friend, and the dead (boy) As an enemy. If the (boy) is dear to you, this is separate and not In common with the army. Think on these things. Know that you have Me willing to work on your behalf and quickly come to your defense, But slowly, if I should be brought into discredit with the Achaians.

Hecuba reads this not as a simple concern for reputation, but as an expression of fear of violence at the hands of the group. Her response is explicitly a rebuke of this “enslavement to the crowd”:

οὐκ ἑστι θυτῶν ὅστις ἑστ’ ἑλεύθερος. ἦ χρημάτων γάρ δούλος ἑστὶν Ἠ τύχης ἦ πλῆθος αὐτῶν πόλεως ἢ νόμων γραφαὶ ἐλέγουσι χρήσασθαι μὴ κατὰ γνώμην τρόποις. ἐπεὶ δὲ ταρβεῖς τώι τ’ ὀχλῳ πλέον νέμεις, ἑγὼ σε θησά τουδ’ ἑλεύθερον φόβου. σύνισθι μὲν γάρ, ἦν τι βουλεύσω κακῶν τώι τούδ’ ἀποκτείνειν, συνδράσωσι δὲ μη. ἦν δ’ ἐξ Ἀχαιῶν θῷρυβος ἦ πικουρία πάσχοντος ἄνδρος Θρήκης οἷα πείσεται φανῇ τις, εἴργη μὴ δοκῶν ἐμὴν χάριν. There is no mortal who is free.

For (each one) is a slave either to goods or fortune Or the mass or indictments under the law of the city Constrain him to use ways not according to his judgment. But since you fear the ὀχλος and revere it over-much,
I will set you free of this fear. For share the knowledge if I plot
Some ill against the man who killed (my child), but do not
Share in the act. And if there arises a θόρυβος or drive to help
The man of Thrace as he is suffering, hold them off without seeming
(To do it for) my sake.407

After this discussion of the menace posed by the army-as-crowd, the discussion turns to
the potentially violent group to which Hecuba belongs:

Ag. τίς σοι ξυνέσται χείρ; πόθεν κτήσῃ φίλους;
Ek. στέγαι κεκεύθασ’ αἰδέ Τρωιάδων ὄχλουν. …
Ag. καὶ πῶς γυναιξίν ἀρσένων ἔσται κράτος;
Ek. δεινόν τὸ πλῆθος σὸν δόλωι τε δύσμαχον.
Ag. δεινόν. τὸ μέντοι δῆλω μέμφομαι σθένος.
Ag. What band will be there with you? Whence will you acquire friends?
Hek. These tents conceal an ὄχλος of Trojan women.
Ag. And how will women have power over men?
Hek. A crowd’s formidable, and, combined with deception, hard to fight.
Ag. Formidable indeed. However, I scorn female strength.408

Fixated on the traditional code of heroic values, in which women are
fundamentally passive and nonthreatening, Agamemnon cannot understand that a πλῆθος
is dangerous whether composed of men or women. This failure to comprehend the threat
is repeated by the victim of the plot, as he is drawn into the tents by the lure of further
riches while disregarding the threat posed by the group of women that waits within:

Ek. σκύλων ἐν ὄχλωι ταἰσθέ σώζεται στέγαις.
Po. πού δ’; αἰδ’ Ἀχαιῶν ναῦλοχοι περιπτυχαί.
Ek. ἰδίαι γυναίκων αἰχμαλωτίδων στέγαι.
Po. τάνδον δὲ πιστὰ κάρσένων ἑρμεία;
Ek. οὐδέν Αχαιῶν ἕνδου ἀλλ᾽ ἡμεῖς μόναι.
Hek. [The gifts are] kept safe in a “heap”409 of booty in these tents here.
Po. Where? These are the enclosures of the Achaean naval force!
Hek. The tents of the captive women are set apart.
Po. And things inside are trustworthy, and bereft of males?
Hek. None of the Achaean women are inside, but only we alone.410

Note well Hecuba’s rhetorical sleight-of-hand. No man is inside, she assures her
unwitting victim, only ἡμεῖς μόναι: we-females-alone. But if you add one μόνη to

407 Hecuba 864-75
408 Hecuba 879-80, 883-85
409 From my survey of early Greek drama and epic I conclude that this use of ὄχλος to mean an
accumulated mass or heap of things is quite unusual, if not unique. While it may be simple coincidence, I
find the use of this word in this context another indication that the threat posed by groups, whether of
armed men or even of unarmed women, is a central theme of this play.
   For “heaps” as crowd symbols, see Canetti 87 ff.
410 Hecuba 1014-18
another to another to another, soon you have a πλήθος. By portraying the women as captives, victims, set apart and isolated, she conceals the fact that when gathered together even these seemingly helpless figures can be dangerous.

After his offstage blinding and the murder of his children, Polymestor staggers onstage to relate the horrors inflicted on him by the πλήθος whose dangers he belatedly appreciates:

κατ᾽ ἐκ γαληνῶν πῶς δοκεῖς προσφεθεγমατῶν
εὐθὺς λαβοῦσαι φάσγαν᾽ ἐκ πεπλῶν ποθὲν
κεντοῦσι παίδας, αἳ δὲ πολυπόδων δίκην
ξυναρτάσσασαι τὰς ἐμὰς εἶχον χέρας
καὶ κόλα. παιοὶ δ᾽ ἀρκέσαι χρήσεως ἐμοῖς,
εἰ μὲν πρόσωπον ἐξαισθαίνὴν ἐμὸν
κόμης κατείχον, εἰ δὲ κινοῖν χέρας
πλήθει γυναικῶν οὐδὲν ἤνυτον τάλας.
And then when things were calm - can you imagine? –
Suddenly taking swords from somewhere in their robes
They stabbed my children, and they in the manner of many-feet
Snatched up and held by hands and limbs. And wanting to come
To my children’s rescue, if I raised my face they pulled me down
By my hair, if I moved my hands – because of the mass of women
I was unable to accomplish anything, wretch that I am.

Earlier in the play, Talthybios described a crowd of men watching a woman stand motionless before the threat of death. Now we are given a description of one man paralyzed by a crowd of women. *Hecuba* presents the offstage crowd at its two extremes of size: the entire army in assembly, and a pack of women in secret conspiracy.

**Suppliants**

In a sense this play is the most political of Euripides’s works, with extensive discussion by characters of the relative merits of democratic and other forms of government. Yet the discussions are abstract. The people assemble offstage, but their deliberations are not described in detail as they are in, e.g., *Orestes* (discussed below). In this respect the crowd in Euripides’s *Suppliants* is more like that in Aeschylus’s play of

411 Gregory comm. ad loc. prefers Diggle’s suggestion (from a conjecture by Verrall) to the codices’ text πολεμίων δίκην, “in the manner of enemies”: “[A] comparison of the Trojan women to “octopuses” is both bizarre in itself and inconsistent with Polymestor’s straightforward reportage … [T]he expression is consistent with other references in the text to the women’s presumed harmlessness and unexpected ferocity.” I disagree: the image of the women as octopi stresses that they are acting not as individuals but as a group organism or pack of attacking beasts. Octopi are “bizarre” precisely because they exceed the bounds of anthropocentric individuality, in that they are single beings with many times the extremities that humans (or indeed any creature their size) possess. As in the famous textual and sculptural figure of the death of Laocoon, the coordinated action of seemingly separate entities is fundamentally uncanny.

πολεμίων is the more conservative choice; I offer the above as a defense of reading πολυπόδων, but I would argue even without the latter that the specifically group nature of the violent action described (especially in light of the gendered status of the group) is key to the horror of the scene.

412 *Hecabe* 1160-1167

413 Thalmann (1993:146) declares this scene “frankly pornographic.”
the same title than it is like those in some of Euripides’s other works. The gatherings of people which are pressing concerns, evoked and constructed by the onstage characters’ words, are for the most part not political but military - although the former are not totally absent from the text.

In his opening encounter with Theseus, Adrastos blames his decision to lead the disastrous expedition against Thebes on, quite literally, crowd noise:

Aδ. νέων γὰρ ἀνδρῶν θόρυβος ἐξέπλησέ με.
Θη. εὐφυχίαν ἐσπευσάς ἀντ’ εὐβουλίας.
Ad. For the θόρυβος of young men drove me out of my senses.
Th. You placed your zeal in strong spirit, rather than good counsel.414

It is unclear whether we are to picture Adrastos as *intimidated* by the youths’ noisy enthusiasm – as Agamemnon fears his own army’s collective opinion and potential for mutiny in *Hecuba* and *I.A* – or, as it were, *intoxicated* by it. Did he react as one conforming to the will of the many, or was he subsumed in and possessed by that will?

Later in their dialogue, Theseus accuses Adrastos of almost the opposite mistake:

ές δὲ στρατείαν πάντας Ἀργείους ἄγων …
κέρδους οὐνεκ’, οὐκ ἀποσκοπῶν
τὸ πλῆθος εἰ τι βλάπτεται πάσχον τάδε.
Leading all Argives into a military expedition …
For the sake of profit, not looking out for the πλῆθος,
Whether it was suffering any damage from all this.415

Was Adrastos’s error to be heedless of the common good, or to be subservient to the common will? These are not logically exclusive alternatives – one can capitulate to the will of a momentary majority without considering whether that majority’s desires are actually good for the bulk of the people – but they do run the relationship between the one and the many in opposing directions. Adrastos was either swayed by or neglected the wellbeing of the youthful crowd, but in either case his actions and motivations are cast in reference to those of the group.

Theseus, by contrast, has a clear sense of his position as a leader with respect to the group he leads:

dόξαι δὲ χρήιζω καὶ πόλει πάσηι τόδε,
dόξει δ’ ἐμοῦ θέλοντος. ἀλλὰ τοῦ λογοῦ
προσδούς ἔχοι μ’ ἀν δῆμον εὐμενόστερον.
καὶ γάρ κατέστησ’ αὐτόν ἐς μοιναρχίαν
ἐλευθερώσας τὴνδ’ ἱδόψηφον πόλιν.
λαβὼν δ’ Ἀδραστοῦ δείγμα τῶν ἐμόν λόγων
ἐς πλῆθος ἀστών εἰμι. καὶ πείσας τάδε,
λεκτοὺς ἀθροίσας δεύρ’ Ἀθηναίων κόροις

414 *Suppliants* 160-61
415 *Suppliants* 229, 236-37
I want this motion passed also by the city as a whole; It will pass with me behind it. But giving my people a speech I should have them in a favorable mindset. For I constituted them as a monarchy, Freeing the City of Equal Votes. And taking Adrastos as a visual aid to my speech I will go before the πλῆθος of citizens. And persuading (them) of these matters, I will gather Select Athenian youths and come here.\textsuperscript{416}

A character with Odyssean ἀξίωμα here expresses confidence in his ability to win over mass opinion. Adrastos is portrayed as swayed by the will of a group of young men, but heedless of the interests of the masses; Theseus will persuade the masses to do what he wants, which – happy coincidence! – will be good for them as well.\textsuperscript{417} Where Agamemnon in \textit{Hecuba} (and again in \textit{IA}) is afraid to face the group, Theseus is confident that his past beneficence will win him a successful hearing before a mass audience.

Theseus’s plans for what happens after his motion passes repeat a pattern we have already seen: an elite cadre (often of of young men) will be selected for a special task. In the Argive assembly in the second book of the \textit{Iliad},\textsuperscript{418} in preparation for the sacrifice of Polyxena in \textit{Hecuba},\textsuperscript{419} even in Orestes’s multi-stage plan for Neoptolemos’s assassination in \textit{Andromache},\textsuperscript{420} smaller groups of carefully selected individuals are deployed in attempts to channel the otherwise potentially riotous larger crowd.

Returning from the assembly, Theseus reports that his expectations were met – but he describes his reception in brief and general terms:

καὶ μὴν ἐκούσα γ’ ἀσεμένη τ’ ἔδεξατο
πόλις πόνου τόνδ’ ως θέλουτά μ’ ἠσθετο.
And indeed, the city received me willingly, even pleased, As it knew I was in favor of (accepting) this task.\textsuperscript{421}

The offstage political crowd is not a site of threat, or indeed of much importance, in this play as compared to others surveyed. Instead, the group whose offstage presence will drive much of the rest of the action is an army. The potential for military conflict is created immediately after the lines quoted above, as a Theban herald enters and engages Theseus in terms that continue the theme of political relations between the One and the Many:

\textsuperscript{416} \textit{Suppliants} 349-57
\textsuperscript{417} Monarchy is here idealized, and adapted to Athenian democratic ideology, as the rule by an enlightened leader of a unified and orderly people. Cf. Thucydides 2.65 on Pericles’s relationship with the people of Athens.\textsuperscript{418} II.75, discussed in Chapter Two.
\textsuperscript{419} \textit{Hecuba} 525, discussed above.\textsuperscript{420} \textit{Andromache} 1097-99, discussed above. That passage is difficult to construe (see Stevens comm. ad loc.), but definitely seems to involve a distribution of functions among multiple sets of selected participants.\textsuperscript{421} \textit{Suppliants} 393-94
Her. Who’s tyrant of this land? Whom do I need to make my Announcement to ...

Thes. First off you’ve started your speech falsely, stranger, Seeking a tyrant here. For this city’s not ruled by one man, But is free. For the people rule in turn With yearly successions (of office) …

Her. For the city from which I am here is ruled By one man, not by an ὀχλος.422

The Theban herald, in warning Theseus of the coming war, describes how a group voting in an assembly lacks the proper perspective and awareness of risk necessary to make correct decisions:

ἐλπὶς γὰρ ἐστ’ ἀπιστον, ἣ πολλὰς πόλεις συνὴψ’ ἁγουσα θυμὸν εἰς ὑπερβολάς. ὅταν γὰρ ἔλθη πόλειος ἐς ψήφου λεώ, οὐδεις ἐθ’ αὐτοῦ θάνατον ἐκλογίζεται, τὸ δυστυχεῖς δὲ τούτ’ ἐς ἄλλον ἐκτρέπει. εἰ δ’ ἦν παρ’ ὅμια θάνατος ἐν ψήφου φοραί, οὐκ ἂν ποθ’ Ἑλλὰς δοριμανῆς ἀπώλλυτο.

For Hope is untrustworthy, she who brings together (in conflict) Many cities, leading their spirit into overconfidence. For when war comes up for a vote of the people, No one yet counts on his own death, But attributes this ill fate to another. For if death were in one’s eye in the casting of the vote, Then spear-mad Hellas would never perish.423

The play’s characters thus offer two symmetrical accounts of the pathologies of individual-group dynamics that arise when mass bodies make decisions of life and death. Just as Theseus accused Adrastos of looking to his own profit rather than the common good, so the herald accuses individual voters in a democratic majority of assuming all benefit will flow to themselves while projecting all future harm onto “someone else.”424

The messenger’s speech relating the Athenian victory over the Theban army offers another model of interaction between one and many:

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422 Suppliants 399, 403-07, 410-11
423 Suppliants 479-85
424 In terms of American politics: “Don’t tax you, don’t tax me, tax that fellow behind the tree,” attributed to Senator Russell Long.
There was screaming and wailing of the young and old Throughout the town, and they filled up the temples in panic. … [Theseus assures the Thebans he is not there to massacre them.] One must choose this sort of general, who is mighty in horrible times And who hates an insolent λαός …425

Solicitous of the needs of his own δήμος, and careful to position himself neither as their slave nor their master but as one who cares what they have to say and trusts that they will listen to and follow his advice, Theseus takes a different approach to another town’s λαός. The people of Athens he calls to assembly and persuades with speeches, charisma and memories of his past good deeds; the people of Thebes he drives into a panic, causing them to gather together not as voting citizens but suppliant refugees.

Electra

The Electra is, in comparison to many of Euripides’s other plays, relatively crowdless. Since its plot material and overall structure bear similarities to those of the Orestes, the contrast between these two works helps us appreciate when and how Euripides does, in other plays, heighten the salience of the threat from the offstage crowd. The one crowd scene described in the play, while superficially resembling other such descriptions, resolves itself quite differently and reinforces the distinction between this and other texts.

Orestes reflects on the irony that a poor farmer, typically an object of contempt to those of his own elite status, has been the one to preserve the royal family’s honor:

οὐτός γὰρ ἀνήρ οὐτ’ ἐν Ἀργείοις μέγας
οὐτ’ αὖ δοκήσει δοσμάτων ὤγκωμένος,
ἐν τοῖς δὲ πολλοῖς ὄν, ἀριστος νῷρεθή.
οὐ μὴ ἀφρονήσεθ’ οἶ κενῶν δοξασμάτων
πληρείς πλανάσθε, τῇ δ’ ὄμιλίαι βροτῶν
κρινεῖτε καὶ τοῖς ἥθεσιν τοὺς εὐγενεῖς;
For this man’s not a great one among the Argives,
Nor will he seem to bear the gravitas of breeding,
But being among the many, he was found to be the best.
Won’t you who wander full of empty conceits stop being witless,
And judge the well-born by company and character?426

425 Suppliants 726-28
426 Electra 380-85
ὁμιλία here should be read as “company” in the social sense. Orestes is telling the (internal and external) audience to not judge people on dyadic contact with them, but rather to take part in a ὁμιλος that contains them – to engage in group contact with them as a way of testing their worth, rather than looking at their group membership status alone. The farmer who has married his sister is, to Orestes, just one member of the masses, “one among the many.” This is the dialectic of One and Many in a different sense than we have seen it before: the farmer remains One of Many, instead of standing as One against Many, as heroes do – but Orestes urges the audience to consider whether any given member of the Many may be the right one for some particular task.

When interrogating the old townsman about Aigisthos’s movements and defenses, Orestes wants to know whether his enemy has gathered the right sort of pack around him:

Ορ. πόσων μετ’ ἀνδρῶν; ἢ μόνος δμώων μέτα;  
Πρ. οὐδείς παρῆν Ἀργείος, οῖκεία δὲ χείρ.  
Or. With how many men? Or alone with house-slaves?  
Pr. No Argive was present, but a household band.427

Satisfied that Aigisthos has no “men” with him, only slaves – a troop to be sure, but a troop comprised of negligible members – Orestes sets his plot in motion. The messenger later relates the confrontation of the “household band” with the heroes Orestes and Pylades:

Seeing them, the servants straightaway ran for their spears,  
Many to fight against two. And Orestes and Pylades, they made their Stand with manliness, brandishing their weapons in front of them …  
But they (the servants), when they heard (O&P’s) words, held back their Spears, but (Orestes) was recognized by some old man who had been In the palace long ago. And straightaway they crown your brother’s head, Rejoicing, ululating.428

What in Andromache – and even in IT, though without fatal result - was a scene of mob triumph, here becomes a joyous reception and a restoration of a dynasty’s dominance

427 Electra 628-29  
428 Electra 844-47, 851-55
over its subjects.\textsuperscript{429} Orestes and Pylades are themselves plural, or more precisely dual, giving them just enough “safety in numbers” to ward off the larger but weaker group they confront. Prompted by the one among its number who perceives the true identity of their elite victims, the group subordinates itself to those elite characters. The “lynching” scenario of Many against One, of the sort familiar from the Andromache, is here avoided in two ways: the doubling of that One into Two, and the presence in the otherwise hostile band of one “good” servant.

\textit{Herakles}

As we have seen before – e.g. in Aeschylus’s \textit{Suppliants} and in the \textit{Cyclops} – characters often announce that they see a group, either as that group enters or as they themselves enter to confront the group already on stage. Herakles does this in words loaded with social meaning:

\begin{quote}
έα. τι χρήμα; τέκν’ ὀρὼ πρὸ δωμάτων
στολισοίσι νεκρών κράτας ἐξεστεμένα
ὀχλωι τ’ ἐν ἄνδρων τὴν ἐμὴν ξυνάφορον
πατέρα τε δικρύοντα συμφορὰς τίνας;
Hey! What’s the deal? Do I see my children before my house
With ribbons on their head in the get-up of corpses
And my wife in an ὀχλος of men
And my father bewailing some disastrous events?\textsuperscript{430}
\end{quote}

At \textit{Herakleidae} 44, among other moments, we have seen that upper-class ideology demands that women be isolated indoors, specifically to be shielded from the eyes (or, as at \textit{Acharnians} 257, discussed in Chapter Four, from the thieving hands) of the ὀχλος. In Herakles’s absence, his family has been completely exposed to just such a social threat. His entrance and reaction to seeing his family out of doors and his wife in an “ὀχλος of men”\textsuperscript{431} confirm the salience of the crowd and its connection to entrances and exits.

\begin{quote}
pολλοὺς πένητας, ὀλβίους δὲ τωὶ λόγῳ
δοκοῦντας εἶναι συμμάχους ἄνας ἔχει,
oἱ στάσιν ἐπώνυμοι καὶ διώλεσαν πόλιν
ἐπὶ ὀραγαίοι τῶν πέλας …
ὅφθης <δ> ἐσελθών πόλιν. ἐπι δ’ ὀφθης, ὥρα
ἐχθροὺς ἀθροίσας μὴ παρὰ γυνώμην πέσηις.
The king has many paupers – who seem to be rich by their speech –
As allies, who made στάσις and destroyed the city
For the sake of snatching from those nearby …
You were seen coming into the city, and since you were seen
\end{quote}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{429} Compare Hippolytos’s wish (1079-80) for a double self to witness his grief. What was there a desire to populate an \textit{audience} to a \textit{rhetorical} encounter is here fantasized as two elite fighters resisting a \textit{crowd} in \textit{violent} conflict.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{430} \textit{Herakles} 525-28}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{431} Specifying that a crowd is composed of men is unusual. The reverse is more common (e.g. \textit{Phoenissae} 197 ὀχλὸς γυναικῶν; \textit{Bacchae} 1058 θῆλυν ὀχλον). That Herakles draws attention to the gender of the crowd highlights the taboo violated here.}
Beware lest, gathering your enemies together,
You fall, contrary to (your) intention.\textsuperscript{432}

Herakles here is warned of the possibility that he might meet essentially the same reception as does Neoptolemos in Delphi at the end of \textit{Andromache}. By arriving in town he may have caused his enemies to ac\textsuperscript{433}cumulate (ἀθροίσας). Once again, crowds (the “many” lackeys of the king) gather at,\textsuperscript{434} and reputational information radiates from, the liminal point of entry to the polis.

After his recovery from madness Herakles bitterly reflects:

\begin{quote}
φέρ᾽ ἀλλ᾽ ἐς ἄλλην δὴ τιν’ ὀρμήσω πόλιν;
κάπειθ’ ὑποβλεπώμεθ’ ὡς ἐγνωσμένοι,
γλῶσσης πικρὰς κέντρισι ἱκληδουχούμενοι.*
But come now, should I head off to some other city?
And then I would fall under suspicion as I am recognized, “Kept in check”\textsuperscript{435} with sharp pricks.\textsuperscript{436}
\end{quote}

The text appears to be corrupt, and the precise meaning is obscure, but one thing is clear: Herakles dreads moving to another community and falling under the suspicious and envious eyes of another group. As in the warning given to him earlier in the play, so now he himself expresses the fear that the zone of social interaction at the threshold of and inside a new city will be a hostile field.

\textit{Trojan Women}

Hecuba mourns her fallen circumstances, remembering her large brood of children who, while numerous enough to form a crowd in their own right, were no common folk but rather of the highest social order:

\begin{quote}
η μὲν τύραννος κας τύρανν’ ἐγημάμην,
κάσταυθ’ ἀριστεύοντ’ ἐγεινάμην τέκνα,
οὐκ ἀριθμὸν ἀλλὰς ἀλλ’ ὑπερτάτοις Φρυγῶν.
I am a royal, and married into royalty,
And thereupon I bore children most excellent,
Not solely for (sheer) number, but the most elite of Phrygians.\textsuperscript{437}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{432} \textit{Herakles} 588-91, 593-94
\textsuperscript{433} This participle appears elsewhere in this survey: at \textit{Helen} 51, \textit{Phoen.} 78 and \textit{Andromache} 606 of a general assembling and leading an army; at (E.) \textit{Suppliants} 356 of selecting a cadre of youths to implement the people’s vote; at \textit{Ion} 664 of gathering friends to attend a feast. This is the only instance discussed in this chapter in which the heroic figure’s act of “gathering” a crowd is unintentional and indeed (potentially) self-destructive.
\textsuperscript{434} It is not explicitly stated that these “many” have actually themselves seen Herakles approach. They may be an intermediate step in the transmission of this information, as with the σωστάσεις in \textit{Andromache} which gather between Orestes’s slander and the eventual formation of the lynch mob.
\textsuperscript{435} LSJ s.v. κλειδουχέω (Att. κληδ–), citing this passage.
\textsuperscript{436} \textit{Herakles} 1286-88
\textsuperscript{437} \textit{Troiades} 474-76
The chorus assigns blame for the downfall of Troy not to its leaders, but to the λεώς entire, the “race as a whole” (πᾶσα δὲ γέννα), giving in to the joy of its own collective singing, as each member of each age-group joins in:

άνα δ᾿ ἐβόασεν λεώς
Τρωιάδος ἀπὸ πέτρας σταθεῖς. …
tίς οὐκ ἔβα νεανίδων,
tίς οὐ γεραιὸς εἴ δόμων;
κεχαριμένοι δ᾿ ἀοίδαις
dόλιον ἔσχον ἄταν.
πᾶσα δὲ γέννα Φρυγῶν
πρὸς πύλας ωριμάθη …
The Trojan leōs raised a cry
Standing around the Trojan rock …
Who of the girls didn’t shout,
Which old man didn’t come out of his house?
Enticed by hymns
They brought about deceptive destruction.
The whole Phrygian race
Rushed for the gates.438

Menelaos enters with an entourage of attendants. He refuses to name his wife, so angered is he still by her betrayal, and notes with what appears to be grim satisfaction that she is now merely one among the large number of captive women held by the Greeks. He dispatches his pack of servants to bring her out of the tents by force:

ἡκὼ δὲ τὴν Λάκαιναν …
ἀξων. δόμωις γὰρ τοῖσι ἐν αἰχμαλωτικοῖς
cατηρίθμηται Τρωιάδων ἄλλων μέτα. …
ἀλλ᾿ εἰα χωρεῖτ’ ἐς δόμους, ὀπάους,
κομίζετ’ αὕτην τῆς μιαφωνωτάτης
cόμης ἑπιστάσαντες.
I come to get the Laconian woman …
For she’s numbered in these captive women’s quarters
With the other Trojanesses. But hey – go into the quarters,
Servants, bring her out dragging her by her most foul hair.439

Helen’s first question on reunion with her original husband is a political and group-conscious one:

Ελ. γνώμαι440 τίνες
"Ελλησι καὶ σοι τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς πέρι;
Με. οὐκ εἰς ἀκριβές ἔλθεν ἄλλ᾿ ἀτας σφρατὸς

438 TROIADES 522-23, 527-32
439 TROIADES 869, 871-72, 880-82
440 Cf. IA 26, discussed below, where Agamemnon says that the pollai gnomai of the group can wear down an (elite) man’s life.
κτανειν ἐμῶι σ’ ἐδωκεν, ὃντερ ἥδικεις.

Hel. What thoughts do you and the Greeks have about my life?

Men. It hasn’t come to a point, but the whole army gave you to me to kill
– The army, which you’ve done wrong.441

Menelaos attempts to shift some portion of responsibility for this decision to the group, just as Odysseus on his entrance in Hecuba spoke not of his own wishes but of the army’s choice – even though we know these to coincide, and indeed that the latter was a result of the manipulative pursuit of the former.

Menelaos threatens Helen with the wrath of the offstage crowd – execution by stoning is quintessentially an act of group violence442 – thus explicitly wishing on her the death of Neoptolemos in Andromache: βαίνε λευστήρων πέλας (“Hie thee to a stoning!”).443 We know from the rest of the epic tradition that no such fate awaits her, but this still stands as the most direct invocation by one onstage character against another of the collective offstage threat.

The chorus, cheated in their and Hecuba’s desire for Helen’s death, enumerate their woes: conquered city, dead husbands, and a crowd of crying children being led away one by one:

τέκνων δὲ πλήθος ἐν πύλαις
dákrysi*κατάφρα στένει* βοάι βοάι:
“μάτερ, ώμοι, μόναν δὴ μ’ Ἀχαιοὶ κομίζουσι σέθεν ἀπ’ ὁμώτων …
Α πλήθος of kids at the gates cries with tears, * hanging on their mothers’
Necks* it shouts, shouts, “Mother, ah! me, the Achaeans are carrying
Me alone away from your eyes …”444

We have ὀχλοι, and other crowd-words, of women and men. Here we see the ultimate image of captive suffering: a group of children, the one group on whom aggregation confers no advantage of strength. The Hecuba demonstrates that a sufficient number of women (ἡμεῖς μόναι, 1018) acting together can be every bit the offstage threat as an angry assembly or squad of assassins. Yet in this play, as they stand onstage, the captive women can only helplessly mimic their children’s cries as they are taken away.

One of those children received as his lot not separation and slavery, but death. As the last ship prepares to depart, Hecuba receives from Talthybius the body of the infant Astyanax (unnamed in the play). She accuses the Greeks of cowardice, insisting that this last murder was completely unnecessary, since:

441 Troiades 899-902
442 Rosivach surveys the sources and concludes that stoning was “far from … common” at Athens; indeed, there are only two verified instances in the fifth century. He notes (234) the tragic allusions to stoning, concluding: “An incidental threat such at this which comes to naught is almost certainly the playwright’s own invention, conditioned by his contemporary environment and meant to serve a particular dramatic purpose, not an inheritance from the epic tradition.”
443 Troiades 1039
444 LSJ s.v. κατήορος. Diggle app. ad loc.: “κατάρρυτα exspectes.”
445 Troiades 1089-92
Sometimes even a leader and countless followers flourishing in battle are not enough. Hekuba’s brood of children, each a lord among men; all the land’s fighters; their glorious leader – all are gone now. Only mourning remains.

**Iphigenia among the Taurians**

*IT* is unique in providing us an account of a “lynch mob” – of the type described as almost forming in *Ajax*, and successfully forming in *Andromache* – from the perspective of one of the mob’s members. That perspective is one that fully appreciates “strength in numbers”:

πρὸς εὔτραφεῖς γάρ καὶ νεανίας ἕξους
φαύλους μάχεσθαι βουκόλους ἕγονομεθα.
πολλοί δ’ ἐπιληψθηκαν οὐ μακρωὶ χρόνωι.

We thought shepherds poor for fighting
Against well-raised and youthful strangers.
But in no long time we came to our full number.447

As in *Electra*,448 characters of low social status (there slaves, here peasants) hardly count as opponents for elite figures. But when their contingent has swelled to become “many,” they are ready to attack – suggesting the dawning of self-consciousness on the part of an individually weak but collectively powerful majority.

πίπτει δὲ μανίας πίτυλον ὃ ἔξονος μεθείς …
ἐμφρασμένα δ’ ἀνάιξας ὃ ἔξονος πεσήματος
ἐγνώ κλύδωνα πολεμίων προσκείμενου
καὶ τὴν παροῦσαν συμφοράν αὐτοῦ πέλας
ὦιμωξὲ θ’ ἡμείς δ’ οὐκ ἀνίμενοι πέτροις
βάλλοντες, ἀλλοσ ἀλλοθεν προσκείμενοι …
ἀλλ’ εἰ φύγοι τις, ἀτεροι προσκείμενοι
ἔβαλλον αὐτούς, εἰ δ’ τούσδ’ ὦσαίτο,
ἀυθὴς τὸ νῦν υπείκου ἠρασεν πέτροις.

And the stranger fell, giving up to the pulse449 of madness …
But coming to his senses, the stranger leapt up from his swoon.
He became aware of the wave of enemies bearing down on him
And the present disaster near the two of them, and moaned.

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446 *Troïades* 1162-63
447 *IT* 304-06
448 *Electra* 628-29, discussed above.
449 Platnauer comm. ad loc.: “Another nautical metaphor, πίτυλος being used particularly for the rhythmic beat of oars,” referencing *Heracles* 816 and 1189. Cropp translates as “[t]he stranger fell, throwing off the assaults of madness.”
But we didn’t let up pelting him with rocks, another setting on him from another place\textsuperscript{450} ... But if one guy should flee, the others would lay into him and throw. If one should push himself away, quickly the one now yielding would strike with (more) rocks.\textsuperscript{451}

Numbers confer strength in two ways: the ability to attack simultaneously from multiple points, and the ability to trade off attacks and to fall back under cover from one’s allies. The members of this crowd are only differentiated to the slightest degree – and yet this is a departure from other descriptions of mob violence, e.g. that in \textit{Andromache}, where the crowd surges and falls all of a piece. Here, perhaps because the scene is related by one of the members of the group, we see that inside a mob there can be specialization of function and distribution of responsibility, if only in an improptou and haphazard way.

\[ \text{ἀλλ’ ἣν ἀπιστον, μυρίων γὰρ ἐκ χερῶν} \]
\[ \text{oúdeis tὰ τῆς θεοῦ θύματ᾽ εὐτύχει βαλὼν.} \]
\[ \text{μόλις δὲ νῦν τὸλμη μὲν οὐ χειρούμεθα,} \]
\[ \text{kύκλω ὅ ἐπεἰβαλόντες ἔξεκόψαμεν} \]
\[ \text{πέτροισι χειρών φάσγαν᾽, ἐς δὲ γῆν γόνυ} \]
\[ \text{καμάτωι καθεῖσαν.} \]

But it was unbelievable! – For out of those countless hands

No one hit the target, casting at the god’s victims.

With toil and difficulty we still didn’t overpower him,

But throwing from all around them we struck

Their swords with stones from out (their) hands,

And they sank to their knees on the ground in fatigue.\textsuperscript{452}

The herdsmen finally defeat their noble prey by attrition. A volley of stones striking loose a brandished sword is a fitting figure for the triumph of an untrained and unarmed mob against an elite and well-armed fighter. Just as accumulated drops of water can wear through a huge rock, so can repeated blows from individually trifling missiles take a huge cumulative toll.

\textit{Ion}

As she enters, Ion addresses his mother – though neither of them yet knows their true relationship – in confusion over her departure from the normal behavior of those visiting the precinct of Apollo:

\[ \text{où πάντες ἀλλοι γυάλα λεύσοντες θεοῦ} \]
\[ \text{χαίρουσιν, ἑνταύθ’ ὁμιᾷ σὸν δακρυρροεῖ;} \]

Where all others rejoice seeing the hollows of the god,

There your eye flows with tears?\textsuperscript{453}

\textsuperscript{450} Cf. discussion of ἀλλὸς ἀλλοθεν as describing crowd behavior at \textit{Iliad} II.75 in Chapter Two above.

\textsuperscript{451} \textit{IT} 307, 315-19, 325-27. A difficult passage. Cropp translates these last two lines as “Still, as each fled, the others pressed forward and bombarded them; and as they repelled these, in turn who had been retreating would pound them with stones.” Cropp 91.

\textsuperscript{452} \textit{IT} 328-33
The ἄλλοι here are not aggregated at the same time, but are the serial accumulation over time of all others Ion has encountered in the course of his duties. Still, Creusa’s reaction is marked as an individual aberration from the group norm. Crying when others do not – or even, as in the scene in the Trachiniae discussed above, having one’s crying singled out for notice while others’ reactions are left unspecified – is an especially stark instance of the isolation of One against the Many.

After their mutual recognition, Xouthos instructs his son to prepare for departure by calling together a type of crowd new to our survey: the crowd as party. Here the community, or some notionally representative section of it, will come together not in political deliberation or military exertion, but for food, drink and fun.454

ἀλλὰ τῶν φιλῶν
πλήρωμι ἄθροισάς βουθύτωι σὺν ἠδονῆι
πρόσειτε, μέλλων Δελφίδ' ἐκλιπεῖν πόλιν.
But gathering a πλήρωμα of your friends
With ox-sacrificing pleasure make an announcement,
Intending as you are to leave the Delphic city.455

As discussed above in relation to Herakles 594, this is language (πλήρωμι ἄθροισάς) that tragedies more often deploy in a military or (as in Herakles) political-violence context. Here we see that Euripides’s “lighter” plays456 can use the same constructions to evoke gatherings offstage with a very different emotional valence. Descriptions of crowds and groupings, this suggests, are not area-specific accretions to tragedy, frequent only to the extent that war and political violence are independently motivated objects of representation, but are, rather, expected and integral features of the tragic world in whichever cross-section a given play reveals.

Of the Good Crowd of revelry – of which this feast to be thrown is a more restrained version, but which it resembles in being a gathering without menace – a variant is seen at Frogs 218 ff, discussed in Chapter Four. There, an ὄχλος – under that name – is uniquely portrayed as not threatening, even with noticeable affection. In the instant scene, πλήρωμα is already a neutral word as crowd-terms go, so the oddness of an aggregation of people being described without any sense of threat is less striking.

κῆρυξ ἀνείπε τὸν θέλοντ' ἕγχωριῶν
ἐς δαίτα χωρεῖν. ὡς δ' ἐπληρώθη στέγη,
στεφάνοις κοσμηθέντες εὐόχθου βοράς
ψυχήν ἐπλήρουν. ὡς δ' ἀνείποι ἠδονήν
< > παρελθὼν πρέσβυς ἐς μέσον πέδουν
ἔστη, γέλων δ' ἔθηκε συνθέπτυοις πολύν

453 Ion 245-46
454 For feasts as events for the whole community, as opposed to the private symposium, see Schmitt-Pantel. See generally Slater 1991; for the symposium, see Murray.
455 Ion 663-65
456 In its “happy ending” and (relatively, but not entirely) nonviolent plot, although certainly not in its length or difficulty!
πρόθυμα πράσσων.
The herald announced that (every) man of the inhabitants who wanted to
(Could) come to the feast. And when the tent was filled,
Decked out with wreaths, they took their soul’s fill
Of well-heaped provender. And when they slackened their pleasure
< an old man came over to the middle of the ground and stood,
And caused the diners great laughter, performing such earnest (tricks).\textsuperscript{457}

The tent fills with people; the people fill themselves with food;\textsuperscript{458} they then relax and
laugh at the antics of a clown. Here they exhibit the same pattern of error as that of the
people of Troy at \textit{Troades} 531-32. A group lulled by pleasure (there the rejoicing song;
here the food and wine) admits a seemingly harmless vehicle of concealed death into
their midst.

To my positing the diners as a “good crowd,” not posing a threat to the onstage
elite characters as I have argued is the tragic norm, it might be objected that the group
which gathers for the feast will threaten Creusa when her murder plot is discovered.
However, the description of what ensues from that discovery in fact takes steps to
mediate the reaction of those surrounding her through the system of formal justice. The
diners’ reaction in any case is only given as a passive one of surprise, and this comes at
the earliest evidence of the plot, before it is necessarily clear what is happening:

\begin{quote}

\textit{ἐθάμβησεν δὲ πᾶς
θοινατόρων ὥμιλος ὁρνίθος πόνους.}
And the whole ὥμιλος of feasters was amazed
At the struggles of the bird [poisoned by the drugged wine].\textsuperscript{459}
\end{quote}

Ion takes the guests with him to the nobles (κοιράνοισι, 1219), who \textit{vote} for Creusa to be
executed – with no description given of the voting process. At the end of the servant-
messenger’s speech, he says

\begin{quote}

\textit{πᾶσα δὲ ἐπιτεί πόλις
τὴν ἀθλίως σπεύσασαν ἀθλίαν ὀδόν.}
The entire city looks for her,
Wretchedly hurrying on this wretched path.\textsuperscript{460}
\end{quote}

But this is a mere figure. Creusa is not exposed to the gaze of the crowd in a direct and
truly threatening way. Mediated through first a celebratory gathering, then a formal
deliberative process, her crisis can eventually result in a happy ending through onstage
discovery rather than offstage violence.

\textsuperscript{457} \textit{Ion} 1167-73
\textsuperscript{458} Cf. \textit{Bacchae} 281: Dionysus frees mortals from grief ὅταν πληθῶσιν ἀμπέλου ῥόης, “when they are
filled with the flow of the vine.” Here the flowing is within an individual (cf. Theweleit \textit{passim}), not
between individuals as in the “flowing” of noise and opinion in an assembly.
\textsuperscript{459} \textit{Ion} 1205-06
\textsuperscript{460} \textit{Ion} 1225-26
Helen

Helen’s opening speech gives an aetiology for the Trojan War which places blame on the excessive crowdedness of the earth:

πόλεµον γάρ εἰσῆνεγκεν Ἑλλήνων χθονὶ
καὶ Φρυξὶ δυστήµοισιν, ὡς ὀχλοὺ βροτῶν
πλήθους τε κουφίσειε μητέρα χθόνα
γνωτόν τε θεί τὸν κράτιστον Ἑλλάδος. …

For he brought war to the land of the Hellenes
And to the wretched Phrygians, that he might
Lighten mother earth of the ὀχλος and πλήθος of mortals
And make famous the strongest man of Hellas …

It is not just that great numbers have perished from the earth; those left standing have been scattered and reconcentrated in the wrong places. Helen bemoans all this: the many gone, and the many who are left too far (she thinks) from her.

κάγῳ μὲν ἐνθάδ᾿ ἐίμ’, ὁ δ᾿ ἄθλος πόσις
στράτευμ᾽ ἄθροίσας τὰς ἐμὰς ἀναρπαγὰς
θηρὰν πορευθεὶς ἱλίου πυργώματα,
ψυχαὶ δὲ πολλαὶ δὴ ἐμ᾽ ἐπὶ Σκαμάνδριος
ροϊσίν ἔθανον.

And I’m here, but my suffering husband
Gathering an army, hunts after my kidnappings
Having crossed over to the towers of Ilium.
And many souls died by the Scamandrian banks
On my account.

In his entrance-speech, Menelaos expresses the sort of fear of the crowd that we have seen elsewhere being projected onto females by male characters. This reinforces the connection, already seen in Andromakhe and Herakles, between arriving in a place and encountering a crowd.

ὅνοµα δὲ χῶρας ἔτεις ἦδε καὶ λέω
οὐκ ὁἶδ᾽. ὀχλον γὰρ ἐσπεσεῖν ἡµιχυµόµην,
κρύπτων ὑπ᾽ αἰµοὺς τὰς τύχας.
But I don’t know the name of this land here, or its people.
For I am disgraced to fall in with an ὀχλος, hiding my circumstances
From shame.

Towards the end of the play, the servant describes a group escape by boat. Sitting closely together, the Egyptian sailors churn up the sea’s flow:

461 Helen 38-41
462 Helen 49-53
463 Helen 414-15
The other folk sat man by man on the left and right walls, Keeping swords hidden under their clothes, And the waves were filled with a roar, As we heeded the orders of the commander. 464

Castor, the deus ex machina of the play, ends his speech with one final reference to masses of men – here as a social comment with an epic flavoring, naming the common people as “without number”:

τοὺς εὐγενεῖς γὰρ οὐ στυγοῦσι δαίμονες, 
tῶν δ᾽ ἀναριθμητῶν μᾶλλον *εἰσιν οἱ πόνοι.*
Spirits don’t hate the well-born; Rather, toils are the province of the countless. 465

Phoenician Women
Iokaste speaks of her son Polyneikes as offstage, but coming towards the city at the head of a large force:

ὁ δ᾽ Ἀργὸς ἐλθὼν, κήδος Ἀδράστου λαβὼν, 
πολλὴν ἀθροίσας ἀσπίδ᾽ Ἀργείων ἀγεῖ. 466
And he, going to Argos, and obtaining a marriage-relation With Adrastos, gathered a great force of Argives and leads it.

The servant then engages in a teichoskopia with Antigone, drawing her attention to the size of the approaching army:

σκόπει δὲ πεδία καὶ παρ᾽ Ἰσμηνοῦ ῥοᾶς
Δίρκης τε νάμα πολεμίων στράτευμ᾽ ὅσον 467.
Look at the plains and by the banks of the Ismenos And the current of Dirce – how great an armed force of enemies! 468

She asks about a particular enemy officer, whose importance she infers from the group following him:

τίς δ᾽ οὗτος … ὀμμασὶ γοργὸς
eἰσιδεὶν νεανίας,
λοχαγός, ὡς ὀχλὸς νῦν ὑπέρωι ποδὶ 
pάνοπλος ἄμφηπει:

464 Helen 1573-76
465 Helen 1678-79
466 Phoenissae 77-78
467 Cf. IA 1258
468 Phoenissae 101-12
But who’s this youth … terrible to see with the eyes,
A troop-leader, as (evidenced by) the fully-armed ὀχλος
Which attends him with following foot?469

After this teichoskopia, the servant urges Antigone to go back inside. This attempt to confine an elite woman indoors is highlighted by a reference to its ultimate violation: a group of women together, moving through important civic space.

ὀχλος γάρ, ὡς ταραγμὸς470 εἰσῆλθεν πόλιν,
χωρεὶ γυναικῶν πρὸς δόμους τυραννικοῦς.
For an ὀχλος of women moves towards the tyrant’s palace
As a disturbance goes throughout the city.471

Polyneikes’s description of his own foray into civic/mass space as an elite/solitary figure shows an awareness of the risks of ambush:

οὕτω δὲ * τάρβους * ἐς φόβον τ’ ἀφικόμην
μὴ τις δόλους με πρὸς κασιγνήτου κτάμηι,
ὡστε ξιφῆρε χεῖρ ἐχὼν δι’ ἄστεως
κυκλῶν πρόσωπον ἤλθον.
I came with such a fearful dread lest some traitor on my brother’s Behalf kill me, that I went through the town with sword-bearing hands
Turning my face in a circle.472

He later explains why he must come and fight despite these fears. In the Suppliants Adrastos attributed his foolish invasion – once its folly was, after the fact, evident – to his having yielded to or been intoxicated by the shouting of “young men.” Here, Polyneikes alludes to his companions on the current adventure as in some sense forcing him to prosecute this war:

πολλοὶ … πάρεισι … ἀναγκαίαν δὲ μοι διδόντες.
Many … are here … and placing compulsion on me.473

At IA 511, Agamemnon similarly speaks of the entire army as placing “compulsion” on him and his brother to sacrifice Iphigenia.

469 Phoenissae 145-49
470 Cf. line 1406, where the brothers are surrounded by the taragmos of (shields clashing in) battle. Both passages describe a sound caused by a larger group – of frightened townswomen or of fighting soldiers – by reference to royal characters (either to their homes, in an Odyssean note, or to their heroic single combat, as in the Iliad). The emphasis on the reception of crowd activity by elite characters is in keeping with the Euripidean increased focus on the relations between the two.
471 Phoenissae 196-97
472 Phoenissae 361-64. Note that he attempts to replicate (in a defensive posture) the “circle,” which has already been noted as the characteristic form of group attack, and which has obvious resonances with choral staging.
473 Phoenissae 430-32
Iokasta demands that Polyneikes consider how many lives are to be lost, and what his reception in his adopted community will be on his return after such a loss:

πῶς Ἀργος ἥξεις μυρίους λιπῶν νεκρούς; ἐρεὶ δὲ δὴ τις: “ὦ κακὰ μυστεύματα Ἄδραστε προσθείς, διὰ μᾶς νύφης γάμον ἀπωλόμεσθα.

How will you come (back) to Argos, leaving countless corpses?

Indeed, someone will say: “O Adrastos, having made a bad wedding-Match, you were destroyed for the sake of one bride.”

This reverses the relationship between intimate life and group behavior seen in *Alcestis*. There, an elite marriage is disrupted, and the consequences are cast as a loss of Admetus’s ability to socialize. Here, we see it from the other side – an elite marriage (which would have been celebrated in some group setting) resulted in a concentration of the fighting-age males, and eventually the loss of a great number of them.

Ετ. καίτα σὺν πολλοίσιν ἣλθες πρὸς τὸν οὐδὲν ἐς μάχην; Πο. ἀσφαλῆς γάρ ἔστ’ ἀμείνων ἢ βρασὺς στρατηλάτης. Ετ. And then you came with many men against one ὡ(γ)δὲ ἐν τῇ μάχῃ? Πο. For a cautious general is better than a bold one.

Eteokles sarcastically weighs the size of his brother’s army against his own supposed weakness. This is a male variation on a common tragic trope: weighing thousands of lives lost against the sole figure of Helen. Polyneikes justifies the size of his force as prudence. Where Iokasta read the size of the army as a sign that countless members of it would die, Polyneikes seems to be justifying its scale from a concern to *insure* its individual members’ safety and its collective chances of victory.

Κρ. σμικρὸν τὸ πλῆθος τῆς δε γῆς, οἱ δ’ ἀφθονοι. Ετ. ἐγώδικα κεῖσαι τοῖς λόγοις ὄντας βρασεῖς. Κρ. ἔχει τιν’ ὄγκον τάργος Ἑλλήνων πάρα. Ετ. θάρσει. τάχ’ αὐτῶν πεδίον ἐμπλήσσω φόνου. Κρ. θέλομ’ ἀν. ἀλλὰ τοῦθ’ ὀρῶ πολλοὺ πόνου. Ετ. ήσι οὐ καθέξω τειχέως ἔσω στρατον. Κρ. Αὐτός ἡ πληθος of this land is small, while they are countless. Ετ. I know the type that’s bold – in words. Κρ. Αὐτός ἡ πληθος of this land is small, while they are countless. Ετ. I know the type that’s bold – in words. Κρ. Argos too has some reputation among the Greeks. Ετ. Be bold! Soon I’ll fill their plain with slaughter. Κρ. I’d be willing; but I see that’ll require a lot of work. Ετ. (Know that) I won’t keep my army inside its walls.

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474 Phoenissae 579-82
475 Phoenissae 598-99
476 E.g. Andromache 605-06 (discussed above).
477 Mastronarde comm. ad loc.: “Reputation for proud standing <in warfare>.”
478 Phoenissae 715-20
The contest of taunts between the two rulers threatens to spill over into a general rout, “fill[ing] the plain with blood.” At the end of the passage just quoted, Eteokles speaks of the army he commands as if it is a pack of dogs or herd of cattle over which he has complete control. Tiresias will warn where this illusion of control leads:

πολλοὶ δὲ νεκροὶ περὶ νεκροῖς πεττοκότες
Ἀργείᾳ καὶ Καδμείᾳ μείξαντες μέλη
πικροὺς γόους δώσουι Θηβαιοὶ χθονὶ.
And many corpses falling beside corpses
Argive and Kadmean mixing their limbs
Will give bitter lamentations to the Theban land. 480

The larger the force an unsuccessful invader brings, the more corpses he will leave behind him when defeated. 481

Orestes
In a by-now familiar pattern, the opening speech establishes the “presence” of an offstage gathering of people:

κυρία δ᾽ ἡδ᾽ ἡμέρα
ἐν ἣ διοίσει ψήφου Ἀργείων πόλις,
εἰ χρῆ βασιῶν νῷ λευσίῳς πετρώματι …
This day is designated (as the one) in which
The city of Argives will cast a vote,
Whether we two should die by stony execution … 482

We have seen assemblies act like mobs, and actual mobs stone characters to or near death; here Electra’s fear is that the former will lead to the latter.

Or. κύκλωι γάρ εἰλισσόμεθα παγχάλκοις ὄπλοις.
Me. ἰδίαι πρὸς ἑχθρῶν ἢ πρὸς Ἀργείας χερὸς;
Or. πάντων πρὸς ἀστῶν, ὡς θάνω. βραχὺς λόγος.
Or. We are cooped in on all sides (“in a circle”) by bronze arms.
Men. By enemies (acting on) private (motivations), or by an Argive band?
Or. By all the townsmen, that I (should) die – a short speech. 483

479 Cf. IT 1437, where Athena commands Thoas to παύσαι διώκων ἰδίαι τ᾽ ἐξορμῶν στρατοῦ (“stop chasing [them] and sending out the ‘flood of (your) army’”). Platnauer notes that the phrase “flood of (an) army” is “a common and, to a Greek, a natural metaphor,” and that the exact same phrase is found at Persians 412. Flowing is indeed a “natural” metaphor for crowd movement (see Canetti), as it is for the circulation of signs of approval within that crowd; cf. discussion of ῥέθ/ροθ above.
480 Phoenissae 881-83
481 Cf. Canetti, as discussed in Chapter One: a heap of corpses is the ultimate end of the logic of the “double crowd” (violent confrontation between groups).
482 Orestes 48-50
483 Orestes 444-46
Menelaos, as is typical of the Atreidae in tragedy, is a political being who fears the wrath of the people en masse. He asks if Orestes faces an armed group of private rivals, or a guard duly established by the people’s vote. Eventually he will explain to Orestes that he cannot help because the group at his command is simply not large enough:

τοῦ δ’ αὐ ὄνασθαι πρὸς θέων χρήζω τυχεῖν.
ήκω γὰρ ἀνδρῶν συμμάχουν κενὸν δόρυ
ἐχόν, πόνοις μυρίοις ἀλώμενος,
σμικράς σὺν ἄλκη τῶν λελειμένων φιλῶν.  
I pray to the gods that I might happen on a way to accomplish it.
For I come having an spear(-force) empty of allies,
Caught up in countless toils,
With a small force of my friends who have been spared.

His parting advice to Orestes is to go with the flow of popular opinion, no matter how fickle and foolish. This is the crowd seen from the perspective of the out-of-power politician with contempt for it, not affection and respect as exhibited by Theseus in the Suppliants.

ὅταν γὰρ ἣβαι δῆμος εἰς ὅργῃν πεσὼν,
ὀμοιον ὡστε πῦρ κατασβέσασι λάβρου,  
For when the δῆμος exhibits youthly vigor, falling into a rage,
It’s just like fire, furious (and hard) to extinguish.
But if someone calmly yields to it as it insists upon him,
Hanging loose and staying ready for the right time,
It’ll probably blow over. And if it lets up its gusts,
You’ll easily meet with however much you want from it.
[For there is a certain (capacity for) pity in it, and a great spirit,
A possession most valuable for the one who keeps a lookout].

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484 Odysseus is characterized, somewhat similarly, as being extremely attentive to the crowd, but without the element of fear.
485 Cf. Andromache 1098, where different groups of people guard Neoptolemos, some ἰδίαι, some in a public capacity.
486 Orestes 688-91
487 This phrase creates a sense of a much larger group left offstage – here, because they are dead. Cf. introductory note to this Chapter on the allusive construction of offstage crowd in the Agamemnon; cf. also the dialectic of One and Many, in the survivor mode, discussed in the Odyssey survey.
488 Cf. Pindar Pyth. 2.87 ὁ λάβρος στρατός.
489 On fire as “crowd symbol,” Canetti 75-80.
490 Orestes 696-703
To the “politician,” the crowd presents two faces: the threatening one of rage, and the manipulable one of pity and θυμός. To Orestes, the elite individual who has violated fundamental taboos and wants only to be left alone, there is no possibility of waiting until the crowd’s wrath “blows over.” The mass may be like a child in its irrationality and lack of self-control, but it is not powerless like a child; quite the contrary.

Pylades enters, giving this play’s first eyewitness account of the crowd as it forms offstage:

θάσσου ἢ μ’ ἐχρῆν προβαίνων ἐκόμην δι’ ἀστεως, σύλλογον πόλεως ἀκούσας ὡντ’, ἱδὼν δ’αὐτὸς σαφῶς …
τί τάδε; πώς ἔχεις; τί πράσσεις, φιλταθ’ ἥλικων ἑμοί καὶ φίλων καὶ συγγενείας; πάντα γὰρ τάδ’ εἰ σύ μοι.

It was necessary that I make by way forward and come quickly
Through the town, hearing that there was an assembly of the city,
And seeing (so) clearly myself …
What’s this? How are you holding up? What are you doing, dearest
To me of my agemates and friends and relation(s)?
For you are all these things to me.\textsuperscript{491}

After reporting his sighting of the σύλλογον,\textsuperscript{492} Pylades affirms his ties with Orestes along multiple lines of elite connection, as if to ward off the specter of the commons in assembly. When Pylades suggests flight to avoid punishment at the hands of the many, Orestes reminds him that the threat is not just a political/legal one of institutions and processes, but is already manifest as a physical group surrounding them:

Or. ὡσπερ ἕκει πόλις πρὸς ἔχθρων σῶμα πυρηνήμεθα.
Py. (Yes,) I saw the streets of the town all fenced round with arms.
Or. Just like as it were a city, we are fenced round our bod(ies) with
Towers by our enemies.\textsuperscript{493}

The streets are where an unauthorized mob gathers; they are also where barricades and checkpoints are put up by an established government to control movement. Presumably the faction that desires Orestes’s and Electra’s deaths could send those now guarding them to kill them, without bothering to hold a vote. Still, there is something special – and especially threatening to the elite characters, who would rather welcome direct combat

\textsuperscript{491} Orestes 729-30, 732-33
\textsuperscript{492} This word is used most often of a large gathering of military forces, e.g. IA 514, 825, 1545. However, at Alcestis 951, Admetos uses it in the plural (ξύλλογοι γυναικοπληθεῖς) to describe the social gatherings among his friends and agemates which his wife’s death has caused him to dread.
\textsuperscript{493} Orestes 760-62. The word may not apply to only one particular type of crowd, therefore, but seems negative/threatening in most or all of its occurrences.
for the chance to win military glory – about doing it “by the book” and through the formal processes of popular sovereignty.\footnote{Canetti (188-89) understands parliamentary voting as sublimated group combat. The demonstration of one side’s superior numbers is meant to indicate that they could have triumphed in combat, had it come to that.}

In the passage of stichomythia leading to Orestes’s decision to speak before the assembly, he and Pylades express a view of the crowd’s potential for both good and bad actions which seems to contradict blanket condemnations of groups offered elsewhere in this and other plays.

\begin{quote}
Ορ. δεινον οι πολλοι, κακοουργους οταν έχωσι προστάτας.
Πυ. αλλ’ οταν χρηστους λάβωσι, χρηστα βουλεύουσ’ άει.
Ορ. ειεν. ες κοινον λέγειν χρη.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Or. The many are a dreadful thing, when they have scoundrels for leaders.
Py. But when they get worthy ones, they always deliberate worthily.
Or. Well then! I must speak to the commons.\footnote{Orestes 772-74}
\end{quote}

Does the crowd’s capacity to do harm, paired with its inability to deliberate properly, always and everywhere lead it to do the wrong thing? For Pylades, at least at this moment, the answer is no. The many will be led towards bad actions by bad leaders and good actions by good leaders. Obviously the ideal course of action would be for Orestes to present himself to them as a potential leader, but Orestes is no Theseus, and a fusion of interests between leader and people is not an option here.

Even within this immediate passage, however, the tone of the references to the mass slips back into a more decidedly negative register. Pylades proclaims his devotion, and intention to stand by his friend in this crisis, in terms that explicitly denigrate the hostile community as a “mob.” \circloi in this instance bears the full weight of elite condemnation, and evokes from Orestes a reaffirmation of the value of elite comraderie:

\begin{quote}
ώς έγώ δι’ ἀστεώς σε, σιμιρά φροντίζων ὀχλου, οὐδέν σιχυνθεις ὀχήσω. …
τούτ’ ἐκείνο, κτάσθ’ ἐταίρος, μή το συγγενές μόνον.
ώς ἀνήρ ὅτις τρόποισι συντάκηι, θυραιός ὁν, μυρίων κρείσσων ὀμαίμων ἀνδρι κεκτήσατε φίλος.
Py. I will carry you through the town, thinking little of the ὀχλος …
Or. This is the thing: get you friends, not just relative(s).
As a man wastes away from events, when he’s far from home –
A friend is better to possess for (that) man than a thousand blood-
Relatives.\footnote{Orestes 801-02, 803-05}
\end{quote}

The chorus-leader tells Electra that her brother πρὸς δ’ Ἀργεῖον οἴχεται λέων (“is going before the Argive λεώς”).\footnote{Orestes 846} Immediately thereafter, a messenger arrives to narrate the proceedings:\footnote{Orestes 846}
That makes the scene all the more important for this survey.

A more general one, less directed at contemporary Athenian figures than at the volatility of the mass itself, Cleophon: “The satire (such as it is) is debate but rather a series of speeches” — and dividing the crowd’s response: “Τις χρησιει λέγειν …”

I see an ὀχλος on the march and sitting on the hilltop, Where they say Danaos, giving justice to Aigyptos, First gathered the λαὸς into common seats. And I asked one of the townsmen what gathering this was I saw … And he said: “Don’t you see that Orestes draw near, Coming to run a deadly contest?” … And when the ὀχλος of the Argives got full, The herald stood up and said: “Who wishes to speak? …”

The ὀχλος moves and sits as one. It is packed together — first in aitiological verb, and then as present-day noun. The messenger speaks to some τίς - the singular personification of the community as “everyman,” whereas the ὀχλος is notionally the community as all men.

Talthybios speaks first; he is critical of the matricides, but the narrative does not specify which penalty he proposes, exile or death. Diomedes follows, arguing for banishment, and dividing the crowd’s response:

έπερρόθησαν δ’ οἱ μὲν ὡς καλῶς λέγοι, οἱ δ’ οὐκ ἐπῆμον. κατί τῶδ’ ἀνίσταται ἁνήρ τις ἄθυρόγλωσσος, ἱσχύων θράσει. [Ἀργείοις οὐκ Ἀργείοις, ἡμαγκασμένος, θορύβωι τε πίσυνος κάμαβει παρρησίαι, πιθανός έτ’ αὐτούς περιβαλεῖν κακῶι τινι. ὅταν γὰρ ἡδύς τις λόγοις φρονών κακῶς πεῖθι τό πλῆθος, τῇ πόλει κακῶν μέγα …] And some raised a shout that he spoke nobly, But some did not agree. And on his heels stood up

498 This is the lengthiest description of a political assembly in tragedy, indeed in drama. The closest comic analogue is that in the Knights, discussed in Chapter Four — though that description is significantly different, in that it is delivered by one of the participants (and the ultimate victor) in a back-and-forth contest of demagoguery. Here, the scene is narrated by an uninvolved observer, there is no back-and-forth debate but rather a series of speakers, and the outcome is disastrous for the protagonist.

Willink 231 cautions against the traditional reading of this scene as a satire specifically directed at Cleophon: “The satire (such as it is) is general rather than specific.” If the critique of the assembly is in fact a more general one, less directed at contemporary Athenian figures than at the volatility of the mass itself, that makes the scene all the more important for this survey.

499 Orestes 871-74, 877-78, 884-85
500 Cf. the anonymous τίς who rallies the lynch mob in Andromache, discussed above.
Some guy with no check on his tongue, strong in boldness.

[An un-Argive, 
Trusting in θόρυβος and unlearned free speech,
Yet persuasive (enough) to get them involved in some evil. 
For when someone sweet in speech (but) plotting evil
Persuades the πλῆθος, it’s a great evil for the city …]^{502}

Here the interpolation^{503} makes the implicit critique of crowd psychology explicit, 
reinforcing the theory of the crowd articulated by Pylades earlier: crowds do nothing good or bad, but leaders (whether elite individuals or otherwise anonymous rabblerousers) make it so.

Opposed to this “un-Argive” speaker is another anonymous citizen whose turn comes next:

ἄλλος δ᾽ ἀναστὰς ἔλεγε τῷδ᾽ ἑναντία,
μορφῆι μὲν οὐκ εὑρωτός, ἀνδρείος δ᾽ ἀνήρ,
όλιγάς ἄστι κάγορας χραίνων κύκλοιν,
αὐτοπρογός, οἴτε καὶ μόνοι σῶζουσι γην,
ξυνετῶς δὲ χωρεῖν ὁμόσ ὁτίς λόγοις θέλουν …
And another stood up and spoke things opposing that one, 
Not good to look at in form, but a man’s man, 
“keeping aloof from”^{504} the circle of the agora,
A smallholder, the only kind who save the land, 
Willing and able to walk it like he talks it …^{505}

As one who shuns crowd-sites, it is not surprising that this speaker’s words lack mass appeal (his speech seems good only τοῖς γε χρηστοῖς, 930). Orestes then speaks on his own behalf, unsuccessfully.

ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἐπείθ᾽ ὀμιλοῦν, εὐ δοκῶν λέγειν.
νικαὶ δ᾽ ἐκείνος ὅ κακὸς ἐν πλῆθει χερῶν,
ὁς ἴππορευε συγγονοῦν σε τε κτανεῖν …
But he didn’t persuade the ὀμιλος, (although) seeming to speak well, 
But that one won – the scoundrel – in a πλῆθος of hands^{506},

^{502} Orestes 901-08
^{503} For my purposes, the distinction between “authentic” and “interpolated” text is irrelevant, provided that the interpolation was added within a sufficiently short time span from the original composition as to provide evidence of the same thought system. See Mastronarde (39-49) for problems of interpolation generally and in the Phoenissae.
^{504} LSJ s.v. χραίνω, citing this passage; cf. Chapter Four for agora as a site of crowding and social contamination, especially Acharnians 843. For κύκλος designating a zone of crowd formation, cf. discussion above of Ajax 749. Sharing en mesoi is a common trope of democratic or “middling” ideology; a Canettian perspective may suggest a primeval root for this sort of talk (individually less powerful people gather together in a hunting-pack, to bring down an animal or a fellow human before sharing the spoils in a feeding-pack).
^{505} Orestes 917-21
^{506} Schwartzberg 448: “Acclamation took the form of shouts or murmurs or … the estimation of waved hands: what is salient is that these votes were heard or observed qua unified whole, rather than counted.”
Who proposed killing your brother and you …

Defeated on the field of mass deliberation and with only a day’s reprieve left, Orestes leaves as part of a pitiful, powerless group. Gatherings of aristocratic φίλοι, in a city ruled by the δῆμος, can neither persuade the masses nor fight against them honorably. As at the end of Troiades, all that is left is to mourn:

πορεύει δ᾽ αὐτὸν ἐκκλήτων ἀπὸ
Πυλάδης δακρύων, σὺν δ᾽ ὀμαρτούσιν φίλοι
κλαίοντες, αἰκτήροιντες. ἔρχεται δὲ σοι
πικρὸν θέαμα καὶ πρόσοψις ἁθλία.  
Pylades, crying, led him from the “committee,”
And friends went with them crying, expressing pity.
And he’s coming to you – a bitter spectacle and grievous sight.

Reinhardt explores the social dynamics of this assembly and its aftermath:

The people’s assembly took its typical course. Some of it reminds one of the trial which is best known to us from this period: the people’s trial of Socrates… nine years after the performance of Orestes … Out of personal rancour ancient aristocracy [in the person of Tyndareus] joins forces with the most extreme radicalism [represented by the unnamed demagogue]. … So, now, there they stand, driven victims, surrounded by an inescapability which leaves nothing to be desired … Internally they are plagued by guilty consciences; externally, they suffer inhumanity, failure on the part of kinsfolk, opportunism, vengefulness, incitement of the mob, alienation, hostility of all around them … [this ellipsis in original] This is not the inescapability of destiny … In this inescapable situation, not the work of
the gods, but of man alone, what does the nobly born aristocrat do? [H]e … take[s] his destiny heroically upon himself … he does not lose his dignified bearing. ⁵¹²

Finally, the play’s last description of group behavior strikes an oddly comic note, as Helen’s foreign slave describes the rout of his compatriot servants at the hands of the conspirators:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{άνα} & \text{ δὲ} \text{ δρόμαδες} \varepsilon\thetaορον \varepsilon\thetaορον \\
\text{άμφιπολοι} & \text{ Φρύγες} \ldots \\
\text{And the Phrygian house-slaves ran ran runnings} & \ldots ⁵¹³
\end{align*}
\]

While the elite are helpless before a city’s aroused ὀχλος, compensatory fantasies of triumph over a group of foreign inferiors may still be available.

**Bacchae**

The political and military assembly-crowds of such plays as _IA_ and _Orestes_; the squad of assassins in _Andromache_; even the murderous group of women in _Hecuba_ – all are groups which could form in the real world. The _Bacchae_ constructs groups that obey none of the limitations of natural and social reality, blurring lines between male and female, Greek and foreign, human and animal, and finally living and non-living. An encounter with the crowd in its most blended and plural form destroys the unity of the privileged male subject’s psyche, before resulting in actual physical dismemberment. Just as Freud appropriated the figure of Oedipus as a lens through which to examine the intimate psychology of the family, Pentheus might stand as a symbol for two problems of mass psychology – the status of groups-as-a-whole, and the effects of group contact on the individuals who constitute and encounter them. ⁵¹⁴

Dionysos opens the play by proclaiming his heritage, followed by his itinerary:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Μήδων} & \text{ ἐπελθὼν Αραβίαν τ᾽ εὐδαιμονα} \\
\text{Ἀσιαν} & \text{ τε πᾶσαν ἣ παρ᾽ ἀλμυρὰν ἀλά} \\
& \text{κεῖται μιγάσιν "Ελλησι βαρβάροις θ᾽ ὀμοῦ} \\
& \text{πλήρεις ἡχουσα καλλιπυργώτους πόλεις},
\end{align*}
\]

⁵¹² Reinhart 37
⁵¹³ _Orestes_ 1416-17
⁵¹⁴ This is, at best, a slightly new angle on an old problem: the nature of the Dionysiac experience. Nietzsche’s work is the unavoidable starting point, the literature on which has become voluminous in its own right (see, e.g., Silk & Stern; Porter). In the past generation of scholarship, Seaford (1994, especially Chs. 7-8) analyzes the Dionysiac as a democratic phenomenon with a deep ritual past; but see Segal 1997:382 for problematization of this as it applies to tragedy generally and the _Bacchae_ specifically (“The model seeks to polarize institutions [e.g., the household/the polis] that the Greeks generally view as complementary rather than antithetical[].”). Seaford 2006:6-12 provides a useful overview of scholarship on the Dionysiac from Nietzsche to the present day; see also Henrichs 1984. Henrichs 1994 returns the focus to the representation of Dionysus and the Dionysiac cult in tragedy, as distinct from the larger issue of the cult itself in Greek religion and society.

I wish only to suggest that a reading of the Dionysiac, both in actual cult and literary representation, may be enriched by attention to the specifically group behavior of its participants, with reference to modern sociological and psychological theories of the crowd.
ἐς τήνδε πρώτην ἠλθον Ἑλλήνων πόλιν …
Coming through Media and prosperous Arabia
And all Asia which lies by the salty sea
Having full fair-towered cities with Greeks
And barbarians mixed together,
I came to this city of Greeks first …

The cities where he has been are home to mixed populations of Greeks and non-Greeks. Recall from Chapter One that a common refrain of elite criticism of the crowd is that it mixes disparate social elements: men and women, citizens and foreigners. Dionysos’s visit to Thebes will cause all these types of mixing and more.

καὶ πᾶν τὸ ἡλικιωταὶ Καδμείων, ὡσαι
γυναῖκες ἔσαν, ἐξεμπλη δευμάτων.
ὁμοῦ δὲ Κάδμου παιοῦ ἀναμειγμέναι
χλωρώσαι ὑπ’ έλαταις ἀνοφέρουσαν ἢνται πέτρας.
And the whole female seed of the Kadmeians, however many
Are (married) women, I have driven out of their houses in a frenzy.
And mixed together with the daughters of Kadmos they go among the
Roofless rocks under the green pines.

As they romp in the mountains, the women of Thebes mingle together with no regard for
their social position. The entire female “seed” of the town frolics cheek-to-jowl with
princeses.

The chorus of worshippers enters, summoning all devotees of the god to come to
the streets. At Orestes 761 Pylades spoke of the streets as being filled with armed men;
here the specter of streets filled with an unarmed but frenzied throng of women provides
an alternative vision of the mob. Orestes portrays aristocrats caught in a sort of internal
siege (ὡσπερεὶ πόλις πρὸς ἐχθρῶν σῶμα πυργηρούμεθα, 762); Bacchae translates the
threat of organized violence into a phantasy of women run amok.

ἰτε Βάκχαι, ἢτε Βάκχαι,
Βρόμιον παῖδα θεόν θεου
Διώνυσον κατάγουσαι
Φηγείων ἐξ ὀρέων Ἑλλάδος εἰς εὐρυχόρους ἀγνίας, τὸν Βρόμιον.
Come Bacchae, come Bacchae,
Bringing Bromios, the son of God,
Dionysus down from the Phrygian mountains into the streets
That are wide for dancing, Bromios.

αὐτίκα γά πᾶσα χορεύσει,
Presently the whole earth will dance
When Bromios leads his thiasoi
To the mountain! To the mountain! Where dwells
The female-sexed όχλος
Stung away from their looms and shuttles by Dionysus.  

Unlike the όχλος of the commons in political assembly (framed positively in both Suppliants, and negatively in the Orestes), or the όχλος of a victorious and potentially rioting army (Ajax, Hecuba), the female-gendered όχλος does not run wild due to some inherent wild energy or by the behest of a human demagogue. Instead, Dionysos “stings” (οἰστρηθεῖς) the women to move them out of their “proper” domestic sphere, beyond the bounds of the polis, out into nature. This move to the mountains dissolves barriers of class, gender and ethnicity; it goes further than that, to blur the boundaries between animate and inanimate, as the rocks and the trees and the very earth itself join in the song and the dance.

Tiresias attempts to persuade Pentheus to permit Dionysos-worship by analogizing the gods’ love of cult to Pentheus’s own vain pride in public recognition of his greatness and authority:

οὐ χαίρεις, ὅταν ἐφεστῶσιν πῦλαις
πολλοὶ, τὸ Πενθέως δ᾽ ὄνομα μεγαλύνη πόλις.
You are happy when many folk sit by your gates,
And the city makes great the name of Pentheus.

This is yet another variant of the dialectic of One and Many. Those with “great names” are singular, with characteristics and lineages allowing for lengthy description and praise; those who flock to adore and beseech them are “extras,” with nothing to offer their leader besides his joy in their numbers. One asserts itself against Many, if need be, by fighting against or evading its grasp, as do Orestes and Ajax; still, how much better to have Many come to One and seek guidance of their own accord?

Pentheus rebuffs Kadmos’s subsequent attempt at persuasion, shrinking from his very touch:

οὐ μὴ προσοίσεις χείρα, βακχεύσεις δ᾽ ιὼν,

519 Bacchae 114-19
520 Canetti 58, 303 ff. develops a theory of the “sting,” by which commands given by social superiors implant a “sting” within those obliged to carry them out. These “stings” accumulate until in a revolutionary moment the vector of force is reversed, and all the past “stings” erupt in violence from below. If we can transfer this theoretical model from class to gender hierarchy, female Bacchizing may be understood as a revolt against the accumulation of the “stings” of seclusion and subordination.
521 Bacchae 319-20
522 Cf. the second line of OT, where Oedipus asks why the populace θοάζετε in supplication.
μηδ’ ἔξομόρξηι μωρίαν τὴν σὴν ἐμοί;
Will you please not put your hand (on me), but go on reveling;
You’re not going to wipe your foolishness off on me, are you?

The first messenger describes in more detail what Dionysos and the chorus have hinted at: the bacchants are mingled together in an indecorous heap:

ὄρῳ δὲ θίασους τρεῖς γυναικεῖων χορῶν …
ηὐδὸν δὲ πᾶσαι σῶμασιν παρεμέναι …
ὃς ἐς ὑπὸ ἐλιπόλουζαν ἐν μέσαις
παρενεθέσας βάκχαις ἔξ ὑπὸν κινεῖν δέμας …
I see three thiasoi of female dancers …
They all slept with their bodies splayed out …
Your mother ululated standing in the middle of the Bacchai
To move their bodies out of sleep …

Agave stands among the group and rouses it to action. Their bodies, which have been strewn in savage slumber, rise at her command to resume their crazed pursuits.

ξυνήλθωμεν δὲ βουκόλοι καὶ ποιμένες
κοινῶν λόγων δώσοντες ἀλλήλοις ἔριν
[ὡς δεινὰ δρώσι ταυμάτων τ’ ἐπάξια.]
καὶ τις πλάνης κατ’ ἁστυ καὶ τρίβων λόγων
ἐλέξει εἰς ἀπαντάς … εὔ δ᾽ ἡμῖν λέγειν
ἐδοξεῖ, βάμινων δ᾽ ἐλλοχίζομεν φόβας
κρύσαντες αὐτούς, ἢ δὲ τὴν τεταγμένην
ὡραιν ἐκίνουν θύρον ἐς βακχεύματα,
"Ἰακχοῦ αὐραώι στόματι τὸν Δίος γόνων
Βρόμιον καλούσαι. πάν δὲ συνεβάκχευ’ ὄρος
καὶ θύρες, οὐδὲν δ᾽ ἢν ἀκίνητον δρόμωι …
We cowherds and shepherds came together
To engage each other in a contest of civic speech
[About how they were doing things dreadful and wonder-worthy.]
And some bum about town and waster of speeches
Spoke before us all … And he seemed to speak well to us,
And hiding ourselves in the leaves of bushes we lay in wait.
At the arranged hour, they shook the thrysus (and went) into their revels,
They called on Bromius offspring of God with a collective mouth,
And the whole mountain reveled with them and the beasts,
And nothing was motionless in their running …

The shepherds hold a mini-assembly, but this attempt to replicate a traditional political community order is no match for the divinely crazed mob; the force of the collective

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523 Cf. Acharnians 843 on contamination being “wiped” onto one through physical contact.
524 Bacchae 343-44
525 Bacchae 680, 683, 689-90
526 Bacchae 714-18, 721-27
organism trumps deliberation by multiple individuals. The bacchants invoke their god ἀθρόωι στόµατι, “with a gathered [collective]” mouth, and all human and other animals begin swift and uncontrolled movement.

Here the offstage crowd is a threat not only to onstage elites, but to the shepherd-messenger as well. The threat posed by the Bacchizing crowd expands past all categories to dominate onstage/offstage relations throughout the play. Dionysos initiates Pentheus’s downfall by exploiting his desire to see the Bacchants in their illicit unity:

The god assures the human ruler that no one will see him travelling in women’s clothes, assuring him that the streets, the potential field for the formation of a hostile or mocking crowd, will be empty:

The final messenger relates Pentheus’s inability to see the ὀχλος, which will destroy him on arrival at its camp:

The “bum about town” is a miniature of the failed leadership demonstrated by Pentheus throughout. Dodds comm. ad loc. notes that “this is a type which Eur[ipides] elsewhere portrays with little sympathy … [the] town-bred demagogue,” citing Orestes 902 ff., quoted and discussed above.

Cf. Knights 670, discussed in Chapter Four, where the council speaks ἐξ ἑνὸς στόµατος in their final and conclusive expression of approval and loyalty to their new demagogic champion. Hecuba 836 ff. offers the inverse image: instead of a group of people speaking with one collective mouth, there one woman wishes she had voices all over her body, to become a one-woman crowd.

Bacchae 734-35
Bacchae 811
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532 codices: νόθων, which Dodds (comm. ad loc.) “see(s) no reason to doubt.” νόσων suggested by Jackson, CQ 35 (1941).
Not seeing the female ὄχλος, daring Pentheus said these words:
O stranger, from where we’re standing I can’t reach the maenads
With my eyes – (I must be) sick.
I would see straight the dirty doing of the maenads.  

His wish is not fulfilled. Rather, in accordance with the dialectic of One and Many, the vector switches from One spying on Many to that same One falling under the Many’s hostile collective gaze:

ὤφθη δὲ μᾶλλον ἢ κατεὶδε μαίναδας
But he was seen by, more than he caught sight of, the maenads …

In classic “pack” tactics, seen in other descriptions of group attacks against one or two individuals, the bacchants stand κύκλωι around Pentheus, and apply an innumerable collective “hand” to flush him out of his post:

ἔπει δὲ μόχθων τέρματ’ οὐκ ἕξηντον,
ἔλεξ’ Ἀγαυή: “φέρε, περιστάσαι κύκλωι …”
αἱ δὲ μυρίαν χέρα
προσέθεσαν ἐλάτητι κάζανετασαν χθονός.
Since they had not reached the goal of their toils
Agave said: “Come, stand around in a circle …”
And they reached out their myriad hand to the fir tree
And ripped it out of the earth.

At the moment of Pentheus’s final agony, the ὄχλος serves as a chorus in the modern understanding of that word: a group providing background accompaniment to the central action. As leveling and unifying as the Bacchic madness is, the daughters of Kadmos still have “feature” roles in the event:

'Ἰνώ δὲ τάπι θάτερ' ἐξηργάζετο
ῥηγυσα σάρκας. Αὐτοῦ ἡ τ’ ὄχλος τε πᾶς
ἐπείχε βακχών. ἢν δὲ πᾶς ὁμοῦ βοή,
ὁ μὲν στενάξων ὅσον ἐτύγχαν ὑπνεών,
αἱ δ’ ὠλόλυζον.

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533 *Bacchae* 1058-62
534 This dynamic (the sudden shift in position from being one of a crowd of spectators to becoming the object of that crowd’s gaze) is, I would argue, fundamental to the ancient experience of crowds. In a performance culture, as in a regime of participatory democracy, one is used to watching performances as part of a crowd. The anonymous safety of crowd membership is fragile, though; if one loses bodily control or otherwise acts inappropriately, one risks becoming the object of the plural gaze. This risk may have been especially threatening for elite individuals; see below for the question of elite crying.
535 *Bacchae* 1075
536 One clear difference is that this attacking group has a leader, Agave, while the mobs in *Andromache*, *IT*, etc., do not. Orestes begins the process that leads to Neoptolemos’s death, but is not portrayed as leading the actual attack.
537 *Bacchae* 1105-06, 1109-10
And Ino, ripping his flesh,  
And Autonoe and all the ὄχλος  
Kept on Bacchizing. And all everywhere was shouting,  
He groaning so long as he was still breathing,  
They ululating.\(^{538}\)

Faced with the awful realization of what she and her sisters have done, Agave asks how they came to be in the space outside the city. Her father explains that the experience was not hers or her sisters’ alone, but a leveling moment shared with the entire community:

Αγ. ἥμεις δ’ ἐκείσε τίνι τρόπωι κατήραμεν;  
Κά. ἐμάνητε, πᾶσα τ’ ἐξεβακχεύθη πόλις.  
Ag. But in what way did we end up there?  
Κά. You went crazy, and the entire city was Bacchized.\(^{539}\)

In the play’s final moments, Kadmos announces his fate, in an echo of the play’s opening lines:

βαρβάρους ἀφίξομαι  
γέρων μέτοικος, ἐτὶ δὲ μούστι θέσατον  
ἐσ’ Ἐλλάδ’ ἀγαγείν μιγάδα βαρβάρων στρατόν.  
I will go to the barbarians an old-man immigrant,  
But it is yet prophesied for me  
To bring a mixed army of barbarians into Greece.\(^{540}\)

Dionysus has brought his mixed group from the east to unify the community of Thebes in ecstatic frenzy. Kadmos will now make a reverse journey before returning at the head of his own mixed horde.

**Iphigenia at Aulis**

Of all Euripides’s plays, this is the one in which the offstage crowd most dominates the onstage action.\(^{541}\) From the opening moments, Agamemnon’s every move is checked by the force of popular opinion. In his dialogue with the old man at the play’s beginning, he equates the influence of the divine on human lives with the influence wielded by public opinion – the γνῶμαι πολλαὶ possessed by οἱ πολλοί.

τὸτὲ μὲν τὰ θεῶν οὐκ ὀρθωθέντ’  
ἀνέτριψε βίον, τὸτὲ δ’ ἀνθρώπων  
γνῶμαι πολλαὶ  
καὶ δυσάρεστοι διέκναισαν.

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\(^{538}\) *Bacchae* 1129-33  
\(^{539}\) *Bacchae* 1294-95  
\(^{540}\) *Bacchae* 1354-56  
\(^{541}\) Carter 82: “The plurality of city-states in *Iphigenia at Aulis* gives us a plurality of generals; as a result we can observe a range of elite reactions to a single, influential mass of people.”
At one time divine matters, not going aright,
Wear down a man’s life; at another, the opinions
Of men, many and implacable, scrape it to bits.\(^{542}\)

In his first extended speech, Agamemnon describes the coming together of the Greek forces. With the army now all in the same place, there they sit, an excessive accumulation of men with no place to go.

τοῦντεύθεν οὖν Ἐλληνες Αἴαντες δορί,
τεύχη λαβόντες στενόπορ’ Ἄυλίδος βάθρα
ἡκουσι τήδε, ναοὶν ἀστίσιν θ’ ὠμοὺ
ἵπποις τε πολλοῖς ἁρμασίν τ’ ἑσκημένοι …
ἡθροιμένου δὲ καὶ ξυνεστώτος στρατοῦ
ἡμεθ’ ἀπλοίαι χρώμενοι κατ’ Ἄυλίδα.

And thereupon the Greeks sprang to the spear,
Taking arms they come to the narrow-portaled edge
Of Aulis here, equipped with ships and shields together
And many horses and chariots,
And with the army gathered and convened,
We sit here, not sailing, suffering in Aulis.\(^{543}\)

The chorus enters, expressing its desire to see the assembled host of soldiers, weapons and horses. This violates the norm of female confinement and isolation from the crowd; if they see the army, the host army may see them – and worse. Anxiety regarding this possibility, and the desire to keep women away from the crowd, is expressed in both comedy\(^{544}\) and tragedy.\(^{545}\)

πολύθυτον δὲ δι’ ἄλσος Αρτέμιδος ἠλιθθον όρομένα,
φοινίσσουσα παρηκ’ ἐμὲν
αἰσχύναι νεοθαλεῖ,
ἄσπιδος ἔρμα καὶ κλισίας
ὀπλοφόρους Δαναῶν θέλου’
ἵππων τ’ ὀχλον ἱδεόθαι.

I stirred myself and came through the grove of Artemis, home of much Sacrifice, reddening my cheek with fresh-blooming shame,
Desiring to see the bulwark of the shield and the arms-bearing barracks
Of the Danaans, and the ὀχλος of horses.\(^{546}\)

As Menelaos struggles with the old man, Agamemnon comes out of his quarters and asks:

τίς ποτ’ ἐν πύλαισι θόρυβος καὶ λόγων ἄκοσμια;
Whatever is this θόρυβος and disorderliness of speech at my doors?\(^{547}\)

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\(^{542}\) IA 24-27

\(^{543}\) IA 80-83, 87-88

\(^{544}\) Acharnians 257

\(^{545}\) E.g. Herakleidae 44, discussed above.

\(^{546}\) IA 185-91
We have not yet seen a disturbance between only two people called a θόρυβος. Agamemnon is perhaps excessively crowd-shy, anticipating the wrath of the masses to come when his subterfuge is discovered.

A messenger runs in to tell Agamemnon of his daughter’s arrival and the interest shown in it by the crowd:

ἔγὼ δὲ πρόδρομος σής παρασκευής χάριν ἕκω. πέπυσαι γὰρ στρατός — ταχεία γὰρ διηῖξε φήμη — παίδα σήν ἀφιγμένην. πᾶς δ’ ἐς θέαν ὀμιλοίς ἔρχεται βρόμῳ, σήν παίδ’ ὅπως ιδὼσιν, οἱ δ’ εὐδαιμόνες ἐν πάσι κλεινοί καὶ περιβλεπτοὶ βροτοῖς.
I come running ahead for the sake of your preparation.
For the army has learned — for rumor goes through (it) quickly — That your daughter is arrived. And the whole ὅμιλος comes to this sight At a run, that they might see your daughter. For the fortunate are famous Among all people, and to-be-looked-at by mortals.\textsuperscript{548}

This is a clear statement of the social version of the dialectic of One and Many. One woman’s arrival brings the whole ὅμιλος, for the fortunate – expressed in gender-neutral terms – are objects that attract sight. The anxiety over female exposure to the crowd is here confirmed: crowds are indeed greedy for the sight of noble young women.

ἡ δυσγένεια δ’ ὡς ἔχει τι χρήσιμον.
καὶ γὰρ δακρύσαι βαδίες αὐτοῖς ἔχει ἀπαντᾶ τ’ εἰπεῖν. τῶι δὲ γενναίῳ φύσιν ἀνολβα πάντα. προστάτιν δὲ τοῦ βιοῦ τὸν ὄγκον ἔχομεν τῶι τ’ ὅχλωι δουλεύομεν.
ἔγὼ γὰρ ἐκβαλείν μὲν αἰδοῦμαι δάκρυ,
τὸ μὴ δακρύσαι δ’ αὐθίς αἰδοῦμαι τάλας, ἐς τὰς μεγίστας συμφορὰς ἀφιγμένος.
Ill-birth does hold some value.
For they can easily cry, and say everything.
But for the one noble by nature, life is unhappy.
We have a commander’s pomp in life – And we are enslaved to the ὅχλος.
For I am ashamed to shed a tear,
But again, I’m ashamed to not cry, wretched me,
Coming into the greatest difficulties.\textsuperscript{549}

Crowds do not feast on the sight of women alone. Elite individuals of both genders are subject to the gaze of those who constitute the ὅχλος. Crying is a luxury afforded only to

\textsuperscript{547} IA 317. Cf. 605; Rhesos 45.
\textsuperscript{548} IA 424-29
\textsuperscript{549} IA 446-53
those who blend in to the larger crowd, whose emotional volatility is accepted and not ascribed to any individual. Elite characters have anxiety about how their actions and reactions will be evaluated by normal people – especially when those people are gathered together in a crowd.

The weight of this monitoring and judgment by the many wears on Agamemnon, who now explicitly names them as the force constraining his actions:

\[ \text{Ag}. \text{ ἀλλ᾽ ἥκομεν γὰρ εἰς ἀναγκαίας τύχας,} \]
\[ \text{θυγατρὸς αἰματηρὸν ἐκπράξαι φόνον.} \]
\[ \text{Me. πῶς; τίς δ᾽ ἀναγκάσει σὲ τὴν γε σὴν κτανεῖν;} \]
\[ \text{Ag. ἀπὰς Ἀχαιῶν σύλλογος στρατεύματος.} \]
\[ \text{Me. οὐκ, ἄν νῦν εἰς Ἀργοὺς <γ>' ἀποστείληις πάλιν.} \]
\[ \text{Ag. λάθοι ἂν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐκεῖν' οὐ λήσομεν.} \]
\[ \text{Me. τὸ ποίον; οὔτοι χρῆ λίαν ταρβεῖν ὀχλόν.} \]

\[ \text{Ag.} \text{ But see, we have come to compelling circumstances,} \]
\[ \text{(That will force me) to perform the bloody slaughter of my daughter.} \]
\[ \text{Men.} \text{ How? Who will compel you to kill your girl?} \]
\[ \text{Ag. The entire gathering of the armed force of Achean!} \]
\[ \text{Men.} \text{ Not if you dispatch her back to Argos.} \]
\[ \text{Ag. I might do that unseen – but I won’t escape the army’s notice.} \]
\[ \text{Men.} \text{ What’s this? One should not fear the ὀχλός over-much.}^{550} \]

The Greek σύλλογος στρατεύματος (the convocation of the army) compels his actions just as the Furies do Aeschylus’ Orestes’s – by looming as an offstage threat at least as importantly as by their onstage appearance.

Odysseus, whose mastery of and strong association with the soldiers in assembly was stressed in Hecuba, here is identified as able to sway the masses due to close personal association with them:

\[ \text{Me. οὔκ ἔστ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ὅτι σὲ κἀμὲ πημανεῖ.} \]
\[ \text{Ag. σοικίλος ἀεὶ πέφυκε τοῦ τ' ὀχλοῦ μέτα. ..} \]
\[ \text{oὐκοῦν δοκεῖς νῦν στάντε' ἐν Ἀργείοις μέσοις} \]
\[ \text{λέειν α' Κάλχας θέσαρτ' ἐξηγήσατο ...} \]
\[ \text{Men.} \text{ There’s no way that Odysseus can cause trouble for you and me.} \]
\[ \text{Ag.} \text{ He’s always been clever, and (sided) with the ὀχλός ...} \]
\[ \text{Can’t you see him standing among the Achives} \]
\[ \text{To proclaim those prophecies which Kalchas interpreted ...}^{551} \]

The chorus welcomes Iphigenia:

\[ \text{μὴ ταρβήσῃ νεωστὶ μοι μολὼν} \]
\[ \text{κλεινόν τέκνον Ἀγαμέμνονος,} \]
\[ \text{μηδὲ θόρυβον μηδ' ἐκπληξίων} \]
\[ \text{ταῖς Ἀργείαις} \]

\[ ^{550} \text{IA 511-17} \]
\[ ^{551} \text{IA 525-26, 528-29} \]
Fear not, famous child of Agamemnon newly arrived –
Let us *xenai* present neither θόρυβος nor confusion to Argive *xenai*.\(^{552}\)

Agamemnon attempts to get his wife to go home, problematizing her relation towards the ὅχλος:

οὐ καλὸν ἐν ὅχλωι σ’ ἕξομιλεῖσθαι στρατοῦ.
It’s not fitting for you to be in/out\(^{553}\) of company in the army’s ὅχλος.\(^{554}\)

Achilles soon greets her with words reinforcing the norm under which women stay far away from great aggregations of men:

τίς δ’ εἶ; τί δ’ ἡλθες Δαναῖδων ἐς σύλλογον,
γυνὴ πρὸς ἄνδρας ἀστίσιον πεφαργμένοις;
Who are you? Why have you come to the gathering of the Greeks,
A woman come before men fenced round with shields?\(^{555}\)

Clytemnestra begs Achilles to help her, since she cannot hope to have a positive encounter with the mob of sailors and other non-heroic hangers-on:

ἀφίγμαι δ’, ὡσπερ εἰσορᾶς, γυνὴ
ναυτικὸν στράτευμα ἄναρχον κατὶ τοῖς κακοῖς θρασύ,
χρήσιμον δ’, ὅταν θέλωσιν.
I come, as you see, a woman, to the naval force (that’s) unruly
And bold to do evil – but (also do do) things of use, when they wish.\(^{556}\)

Achilles in turn warns her not to bring Iphigenia out for him to see her, for fear that the army gathered too close together will be prone to slanderous talk\(^{557}\):

οὐ µήτε σήν παῖδ’ ἔξεγαι ὄψιν εἰς ἐμὴν
µήτ’ εἰς ὑπείρης ἀμαθῆς ἔλθωσιν, γύναι.
στρατὸς γὰρ ἀθρός, ἀργὸς ὧν τῶν οἰκοθέν,
λέοχας ποιηρὰς καὶ κακοστόμους φιλεῖ.
Don’t you bring your daughter out into my sight\(^{558}\)
Nor let us come upon ignorant slander, woman.
For the army is gathered, being unoccupied and away from home.\(^{559}\)

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\(^{552}\) *IA* 602-06

\(^{551}\) *IA* 735. LSJ s.v. ἕξομιλεῖω reads this instance of the verb as meaning “to be away from one’s friends, be alone in the crowd.” The question is whether the ὅμιλος is the military one that Agamemnon wants to keep her from, or the household one to which he urges her to return. The ambiguity of meaning is telling: one is always part of one *homilia* or other, and the goal of the elite is to identify and stick to the proper one.

\(^{554}\) *IA* 735

\(^{555}\) *IA* 825-26

\(^{556}\) *IA* 912-13

\(^{557}\) Cf. Chapter Four for the effects of crowding on civic discourse, and vice versa, as portrayed in comedy.

\(^{558}\) Cf. 1357, *Andromache* 480, *Orestes* 772.

\(^{559}\) Walker trans. “Crowded, idle, and away from home.”
And it loves wicked and foulmouthed gossip.\textsuperscript{560}

The sight of Iphigenia convenes crowds and fuels the reputational economy of gossip and slander. Achilles fears this, but at this stage Agamemnon’s fear is more directly of group violence. Achilles will not learn how serious this threat is until these two worlds have fused later in the play.

Clytemnestra condemns Agamemnon for excessive caution and paying too much attention to the desires of and potential attacks from the crowd:

κακός τίς ἔστι καὶ λίαν ταρβεῖ στρατόν.
He’s some coward, and he fears the army too much.\textsuperscript{561}

Agreeing to try to persuade the masses to spare Iphigenia’s life, Achilles warns her not to come looking for him

µή τίς σ᾽ ἵδη στείχουσαν ἐπτομένην
Δαναῶν δι᾽ ὦχλου.
Lest someone see you striding distraught through the Danaans’ ὦχλος.\textsuperscript{562}

Agamemnon explains to Iphigenia that the army is under some sort of group frenzy:

µέμηνε δ᾽ Ἀφροδίτη τις Ἐλλήνων στρατῶι
πλεῖν ὡς τάχιστα βαρβάρων ἐπὶ χόνα
παῦσαι τε λέκτρων ἀρπαγάς Ἐλληνικῶν. …
ἀλλ᾽ Ἐλλάς, ἢ δεῖ, κἀκεῖ κἂν ἁρπαγέ, κἂν µὴ ἁρπαγέ,
θῶσαι σε. τούτου δ᾽ ἴπποι καθέσταμεν.

Some Aphrodite has raged in the army of Hellenes
To sail ASAP to the land of barbarians
And stop their seizing of Hellenic marriages. …
(It is) Greece\textsuperscript{563} for whom it’s necessary, whether
I want to or not, to sacrifice you. And we are constituted
Weaker than it (the army).\textsuperscript{564}

Again Agamemnon blames the Many for his failures of leadership as One.

Iphigenia announces the return to the stage of Achilles with the first example in this play of the now-familiar tragic trope of announcing that one sees an approaching group. This appears to be some sub-set of the greater army, which stays offstage but whose shouts the characters can hear (see below):

ὦ τεκούσα µήτερ, ἀνδρῶν ὦχλον ἐἰσορῶ πέλας, …
Ἄχιλλεα τόνδ᾽ ἵδειν αἰσχύνωμαι …
O mother who bore (me), I see an ὦχλος of men\textsuperscript{565} nearby …

\textsuperscript{560} IA 998-1001
\textsuperscript{561} IA 1012
\textsuperscript{562} IA 1029-30
\textsuperscript{563} As opposed to Menelaos (mentioned in the omitted lines).
\textsuperscript{564} IA 1264-66, 1272-73
I’m ashamed to see this man Achilles …

Achilles faces a check from “all Greeks” in a different sense than that expressed by Agamemnon near the beginning of the play. Agamemnon fears them as a political community first and foremost, Achilles more as a lynching mob. Here we find our most extensive discussion between two elite onstage characters concerning the threat of an offstage mob. If Achilles were only “weaker than marriage,” he would be better off. Instead he, like Agamemnon, is weaker than the assembled army as an entity with its own desires and prejudices – it’s just taken him longer to realize it.

Αχ. δείν’ ἐν Ἀργείοις βοάται … Κλ. τίς βοΗ; σήμαινε μοι. 
Αχ. ἀμφὶ σῆς παιδὸς… ὡς χρεῶν σφάξαι νῦν. Κλ. *κούδεις ἐναντία λέγει;* 
Αχ. ἐς θόρυβον ἐγὼ τιν’ ἀυτὸς ἡλυθούν … Κλ. τίν’, ὡς ἀλλ’; 
Αχ. σῶμα λευσθῆναι πέτρωσι. Κλ. μῶν κόρην σώζων ἐμῆν; 
Αχ. αὐτὸ τοῦτο. Κλ. τίς δ’ ἄν ἔτηγ σώματος τοῦ σοῦ διέγειν; 
Αχ. πάντες Ἐλλήνες. Κλ. στρατὸς δὲ Μυριμδόων ὦ σοι παρῆν; 
Αχ. πρῶτος ἦν ἐκείνος ἐχθρὸς. Κλ. δὴ ἀρ’ ὀλωλαμεν, τέκνου. 
Αχ. οἱ μὲ τὸν γάμον ἀπεκάλουν ἑσσων, ’ Κλ. ἀπεκρίνω δὲ τί; 
Αχ. ἄλλ’ ἐνικώμην κεκραγμοῦ. Κλ. τὸ πολὺ γὰρ δεινὸν κακόν. 
Αχ. ἄλλ’ ὕμως ἀρήξομεν σοι. Κλ. καὶ μαχηὶ πολλοίσιν εἰς; 
Ach. A dreadful shout is about among the Argives. 
Κλ. What shout? Tell me. Ach. It’s about your daughter … that it’s necessary to kill her. * Κλ. And no one is speaking against (this)? * 
Ach. I myself came into some θόρυβος … Κλ. What (did you encounter), O xenos? Ach. (I almost) got my body stoned with rocks. Κλ. What, trying to save my girl? Ach. That’s it. Κλ. Who would dare to touch your body? Ach. All the Hellenes. Κλ. Wasn’t the troop of Myrmidons at your side? Ach. Yeah – it was my first enemy! Κλ. Ah, we are lost, child. Ach. They called me out as subordinate to this marriage. 
Κλ. And what answer did you make? Ach. (None,), but I was conquered by the clamor. Κλ. A great (gathering of men) is a formidable evil. 
Ach. But none the less, I will defend you. Κλ. And will you, one, fight with many?568

Clytemnestra’s last line in the exchange quoted is a skeptical expression framed in the dialectic of One and Many. Achilles may be the individually best of the fighters, but she doubts his ability to stand against a large number of his fellow-soldiers.

Κλ. ἥξει δ’ ὀστίς ἄψεται κόρης; 
Αχ. μυρίοι γ’, ἄξει δ’ Ὀδυσσεύς. Κλ. ἀρ’ ὁ Σισύφος γόνος;

565 Cf. Phoenissae 197
566 IA 1338, 1341
567 Diggle’s apparatus transmits Vitelli’s conjecture: οὐδεῖς <δ’ οὐδ’> ἐν ἀντίοιον; Achilles’s response seems to follow more naturally from this prompt (which suggests someone positioned spatially in confrontation with the mob) than from an inquiry about mere rhetorical opposition.
568 IA 1346-47, 1349-58
Ach. αὐτὸς οὖτος. Kl. ἵδια πράσσων ἢ στρατοῦ ταχθεὶς ὑπὸ; Ach. αἱρεθεὶς ἐκὼν.

Kl. Who is coming, who will take hold of my daughter?
Ach. Many (will come), but Odysseus will lead her away.
Kl. What, the seed of Sisyphos? Ach. That’s the one.
Kl. Acting on his own accord or dispatched by the army?
Ach. Selected (for the task, but plenty) willing.  

Still hung up on his individual honor, Achilles wants to fight on against all odds. Iphigenia, however, has realized – as has Agamemnon in his own way – that true agency and exceptionalism do not always call for resisting the crowd. Sometimes one must simply surrender to it. Odysseus is best suited of all to deal with the crowd, for his yielding to it, indeed his merging with it, ensures him mastery over it.

Rhesos
This play is unique in the Euripidean (and pseudo-Euripidean) corpus in that its crowds are entirely military, with their actions occurring in the middle of war rather than before or after it. It is the only surviving play set in the spatial midst of an actual war, in the “no man’s land” between opposing camps. As such, its descriptions of groups are of little interest for this survey except insofar as they confirm impressions and echo usages discussed above. There is very little of the dynamic of offstage threat against onstage individuals, since threat is ambient in this type of military setting, rather than concentrated in one assembly or other crowd.

E.g.:

πολλῆς γὰρ ἡχὴ Θρήκιος ῥέων στρατὸς
ἐστείχε. θάμβει δ’ ἐκπλαγέντες ἵμευν …
The Thracian army flowed on with a great roar.
But we ran, struck with fear …

στρατοῦ δὲ πλῆθος οὐδ᾽ ἂν ἐν ψήφου λόγῳ
θέσθαι δύναι ἂν, ὡς ἀπλατοῦ ἢν ἴδειν …
You would not be able to peg the size of the army with the reckoning of a Pebble (by abacus or with counting-tokens), so endless was it to see …

ὦδ᾽ ἐγγὺς ἢσται κοῦ συνήθροισται στρατώι …
The army rests nearby, and it’s not drawn up together …

The play ends on a fittingly martial note of group action, as the chorus leader drills his fellows:

πείθου βασιλεῖ. στείχωμεν ὀπλοῖς

569 IA 1361-64
570 Rhesos 290-91
571 Rhesos 310-11
572 Rhesos 613
Heed the king. Let us march arrayed in armor
And make these things known to our alliance. 573

We have seen that tragedy speaks of crowds in much more explicit terms than those available to Homer. Euripides in particular shows intense concern, especially in his later plays, with what might be termed the “political crowd,” and the dynamic of an onstage crowd threatening onstage elite characters is well established in his work. Turning now to comedy, I hope to show that Aristophanes’s plays express an even more pronounced concern with crowds and their effect on Athenian society.
CHAPTER FOUR
ARISTOPHANIC CROWD

The tragic crowd may threaten individual elite characters, but it does not alter the broader social context in which these characters act. The comic crowd, by contrast - especially in its political manifestations – is a constant vehicle for critique of Athenian politics and society, through which class and gender conflict, mob violence and revolution are prismatically figured. The importance of the offstage crowd reaches its apex in Ecclesiazusae, where it transforms the Athenian government into a gynocracy by a sort of parliamentary coup. Onstage, comedy is freer than tragedy to feature actors representing the crowd directly.574

Empty Pnyx and Full Market

By happy coincidence, Aristophanes’s surviving oeuvre opens with a description of crowd behavior. As the play opens, Dikaiopolis enters the otherwise empty stage and lists his life’s major woes and joys, before explicitly framing the action to come in terms of the dialectic of One and Many.575 After enumerating pleasurable and miserable political and artistic performances he has witnessed in the past, he directly addresses the emptiness of the stage:

574 Carter (58) notes, for instance, that only comedy can “allegorise” an assembly meeting onstage.
575 Carter (57-58) notes that the staging emphasizes the size of the crowd to come and aids in the illusion of a relative few representing many: “The assembly scene in the prologue of Acharnians works, I think, because it begins with Diceaeopolis sitting alone: any addition to this will seem by comparison more busy.” On questions of Aristophanic performance generally, see Revermann.

Have I been bit beneath the brows as now,
When, with regular assembly on for dawn,
The Pnyx here’s empty; in the agora
They gossip up and down, flee the red rope.
The prytaneis have not come – late they’ll come,
Then how’dja think they’ll shove each other round
the first bench, flowing down all packed together.
But as to how peace shall be no one cares.
O city city!
I always come and sit first in assembly.
And when I’m alone, I saw, I yawn, I stretch, I fart …
But now I come prepared without reserve
To shout, to interrupt, to mock the speakers
If any speak on subjects past the peace.
But here are these noonday prytaneis!
Wasn’t I saying? This is what I was talking about;
Each man shoves his way to the front row.

Dikaiopolis identifies two problems with the collective behavior of his fellow-citizens: at first, they are not gathered in the proper place; when they do arrive, they behave in a chaotic and tumultuous fashion. Their physical improprieties (jostling and shoving for pride of place) are echoed in – and, if we credit Aristophanes with an implicit theory of crowd psychology, may actually contribute to – their disregard of the proper subject for debate.

The others should be present from the start; it is time to assemble, and there are important matters to discuss. Instead they λαλοῦσι κάνω και κάτω, undisciplined in both motion and speech; only Dikaiopolis is where a citizen should be and prepared to act as a citizen should act. He predicts – a prediction instantly confirmed – that the prytaneis will enter ἁθρόοι καταρρέοντες, “flowing down crammed together.” This fluid imagery anticipates some of the modern anti-crowd discourse discussed in the first Chapter. Combined with the double occurrence of ωστι- root verbs, it established that crowds – or at least, this particular crowd – are, for Aristophanes’s hero, violent and disordered things.

As we examine descriptions of group behavior in characters’ words throughout the Aristophanic corpus, we will find them at the heart of his critique of contemporary politics and society. But for now, the contrast posed by Dikaiopolis’s opening soliloquy establishes the basic problem: the crowd is not where it should be. Here it is empty, there (“offstage,” as in tragedy) it is full – but full in the wrong way and for the wrong reasons.

The crowdedness of public space, and the fear of violence or social contamination therefrom, is a theme that runs throughout Aristophanes’s plays. Later in the Acharnians, Dikaiopolis warns his daughter as she takes part in his private staging of the Rural Dionysia:

Πρόβατε, κάν τῶχλωι φυλάττεσθαι σφόδρα
μή τις λαβών σου περιτράγηι τὰ χρυσία.

576 Ach. 17-30, 36-42
March on! And be very wary of the crowd,
Lest someone unbeknownst to you “nibble” your gold (jewelry).

Here the ὀχλος appears, for the first time in our survey, in its full social sense: as a crowd composed of all types of people - including, apparently, thieves. Dikaiopolis’s initial list of complaints does not explicitly cite the increased crowdedness of Athens under the Spartan siege, but the contrast he establishes between city and country does frame the difference between the two in terms of the presence or absence of a monetary economy. Buying takes place in the agora, which is the site of the offstage crowding he has just decried:

στυγῶν μὲν ἀστυ, τοῦ δ᾿ ἐμὸν δήμον ποθῶν,
ὅς οὐδεπωπότ᾿ εἶπεν ἁνθράκας πρίων . . .
ἀλλ᾿ αὐτὸς ἐφερὲ πάντα χῶ πρίων ἀπῆν.
(I sit here) hating the city, longing for my deme,
Which never yet said “buy coal!” …
But on its own brought forth all things – and the buyer went off. 578

οἰ δ᾿ ἐν ἁγοραί λαλοῦσι (line 21), while lacking a verb or noun of crowding per se, conveys a sense of an offstage crowd, strengthened by resonance with other textual moments: the crowd behavior of the selfsame οἱ upon their imminent arriv-al, and passages elsewhere in Aristophanes which confirm the link between the agora and the crowd implicit in the opening speech. 579 Dikaiopolis’s private market is touted by the chorus (recently converted from opposition to support of him) precisely as a place where one will be free from the unpleasant experience of being in a crowd:

οὐδ᾿ ἄλλος ἀνθρώπων ὑποψωνῶν σε πημανεῖ τι,
οὐδ᾿ ἐναπομένεται Πρέπις τὴν εὐρυπρωκτίαν σοι,
οὐδ᾿ ὡστιεὶ Κλεωνύσσι.
χλαῖναν δ᾿ ἐξὸν φανὴν δίει
κού ἐνυπνικῶν σ᾿ ὑπέρβολος
dικῶν ἀναπλήσει.
No other man will bug you, shopping sneakily, 580
Nor will Prepis rub his wide-ass-ness on you,
Nor will you bump up against Kleonymus.
But clad in a bright cloak you’ll pass through
And Hyperbolos won’t run into you
And infect you with lawsuits. 581

577 Ach. 257-58
578 Ach. 33-34, 36
579 E.g. Peace 1000, Wealth 787.
580 Olson comm. ad loc.: “[T]he prefix presumably suggests stealthy action . . . i.e. buying up everything good before other people have a chance . . .” Henderson (3:163) translates the participle ὑποψωνῶν as “cutting into the queue.” Whatever the precise meaning of this hapax legomenon, it clearly is an annoyance perpetrated by another person – of whom, the chorus leader assures the audience, this new fantasy market will contain none.
581 Ach. 842-47
In addition to theft, then, other disasters can befall an individual trapped in a crowd: social/sexual contamination, even the threat of prosecution. As we will see later in this Chapter, particularly in the discussion of the Wasps, the δίκαι that threaten the patrons of wartime Athens’s crowded market are themselves home to dangerous crowds of a different type. Note the repetition of the root ὀστ-, which strengthens the association of market-crowd and assembly-crowd: the action of bumping into each other exhibited by the prytaneis on their entering the stage at the beginning of the play is the same action which we are here assured does not occur in the play’s fantasy of a “private market.”

Bowie compares the pre- and post-private-peace cities to Hesiod’s Just and Unjust cities in Works and Days:

Athens before Dicaeopolis’ treaty is a city in which violence is regular, just treatment hard to come by, visitors like the Megarian starving, sexuality disordered and political management in the hands of two classes opposed to the mature citizens presumed to be the natural masters – the young and the foreign. In Dicaeopolis’ private world, there is peace and plenty; visitors are, if not exactly given ‘straight judgments’, at least welcomed and to some extent fed, family life is untroubled and sexuality appears more ‘normal’.  

We have seen all of these contrasts expressed in the play in terms that suggest or explicitly make a connection with crowds. The zones of economic and political interaction are both too crowded and internally disordered. Interpersonal violence, contamination by contact with sexually and otherwise “disordered” persons, commodification and commercialization, and political institutions dominated by careless mobs are all characteristics of the over-crowded comic city.

The market is the most obvious site of crowding in the Aristophanic city, but characters describe similar scenes elsewhere, for example in Lysistrata:

582 Bowie 19
583 The adjective κνεφαία must refer to the speaker, odd as this seems in literal translation.
584 Lys. 326-32
Again we see an ὀστι- verb used to describe the physical experience of being part of a crowd. It is found here in close conjunction with two of our key crowd words: ὄχλος and θορύβος. These words, then, are not limited to descriptions of the political or even the “public” (i.e., male) crowd, but can describe any agitated aggregation of bodies. Here the mixing of social strata which modern theorists take to be an essential feature of “the” crowd is present in an extreme form: the chorus of free women speaks of coming into forced contact with slaves.

Another description in Aristophanes of a busy market is less condemnatory, while stressing more explicitly the association of the agora with crowds. Having returned to earth, Trygaeus in the Peace beseeches the goddess Peace to reveal herself and save the Greeks from war and want:

καὶ τὴν ἀγορὰν ἡμῖν ἁγαθῶν ἐμπλησθῆναι …
καὶ περὶ ταύτας ἡμᾶς ἀθρόους ὄψωνούντας τυρβάζεσθαι
Μορύχωι, Τελέαι, Γλαυκέτηι, ἄλλοις τένθαις πολλοῖς …
And fill our market with all good things …
And amid them may we all packed together,
Buying our groceries, be crowded up against
Morychus, Teleas, Glaucon, many other gluttons …

Here the speaker positively yearns to experience crowding, even contact with disreputable objects of mockery – the exact scenario contrasted by the chorus of Acharnians to the emptiness Dikaiopolis’s fantasy market. But in this case, the stress is on all the good things that the postwar market will offer its patrons. The packing-in of customers is a second-order effect of the plenty that Peace will bring, whereas during wartime it is caused by the crowdedness of the besieged city itself. Those undesirables whom market-going brings one into contact with are here not sexual deviants and demagogues, but gluttons – in the context of wartime deprivation and peacetime glut, a more forgivable failing. Even in this more positive portrayal, the market is still presented as a place of crowded bodies and unpleasant encounters.

The Good Old Days and the Bad New Ways of Group Behavior

It is more than just the war and the siege, however, that have caused the improper distribution and collective behavior of people in civic space that Dikaiopolis laments. Throughout Aristophanes’s plays, complaints are made that people are gathering together in the wrong places and in the wrong manner, and the war is not always to blame.

In the central agon of the Clouds, the “Better Argument” begins his brief for the superiority of the older generation by stressing their proper comportment in group settings:

λέξω τούς πρεσβυτέρους, line 959.

585 Peace 999-1000, 1005-09
586 τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους, line 959.
The passage describes the feeling of being laughed at by a crowd what is clearly a crowd, and to characterize it negatively as voyeuristic and callous. In particular, the point is not (only) the psychological experience of the “lover,” but the vulnerability to the erotic gaze experienced by the boys in formation.

These processions of boys in training, the Better Argument insists, featured bodies packed close together (ἀθρόους) while still maintaining proper order (εὐτάκτως). In descriptions of bad, “modern” crowds, such as Dikaiopolis’s, these terms would be mutually exclusive. Later, the Better Argument describes how his teachings can help restore proper behavior:

θαρρών εμὲ τὸν κρείττω λόγου αἵρει.  
κατιστήσει μισεῖν ἁγορᾶν καὶ βαλανεῖων ἀπεχεσθαι,  
καὶ τοῖς αἰσχροῖς αἰσχύνεσθαι καὶ σκῶττη τίς σε φλέγεσθαι …  
ἀλλ᾽ οὖν λιπαρός γε καὶ εὐανθῆς ἐν γυμνασίοις διατρίψεις,
οὐ στωμύλλων κατὰ τὴν ἀγοράν τριβολεκτράτες’, οἴατ’ περὶ αὐτὸν, ὦδ’ ἑλκόμενος περὶ πραγματίου γλισχραντιλογεξεπιτρίπτου, ἄλλ’ εἰς Ἀκαδήμειαν κατάδυν ὑπὸ ταῖς μορίαις ἀποφθέγξει στεφανωσάμενος καλάμωι λευκῷ κατὰ σώφρους ἠλικιότος …

Have the courage to pick me, the better argument.
And you will learn to hate the agora and keep away from the baths,
And to feel shame at shameful things, and to be inflamed if someone mocks you …
But you’ll spend your time shiny and flourishing in the gyms,
Not babbling three-obol jokes through the agora, those of today,
Nor dragged (to court) over some bit of hair-splitting-pettifogging-bareface-knavish business,
But running off to the Academy, under the sacred olive trees,
Crowned with white reed, (as second) after a wise agemate …

The properly instructed youth will shun the agora – which we have already established as a place for negatively-characterized crowds – and the bath houses. These establishments are also the scene of improper groupings in these degenerate latter days, as the Better Argument will complain not much later in the agon:

ταῦτ’ ἐστὶν, ταῦτ’, ἐκεῖνα
ἀ τῶν νεανίσκων ἄεί δι’ ἡμέρας λαλοῦντων
πλήρες τὸ βαλανεῖον ποιεῖ, κενᾶς δὲ τὰς παλαιόστρας.
That’s it – that! – these are the things which make our bathhouse full
Of youths talking idly, but the wrestling-houses empty.

Dikaiopolis, introduced as a would-be participant in politics, complains in the Acharnians that the crowd is in the agora, not the assembly. Here the Better Argument complains that his Worse counterpart’s sophistries have filled the baths at the expense of the wrestling schools – that the crowds of young men have traded decent manly exercise of times past for luxury (and perhaps sexual dalliance?).

Note too that these young men are λαλοῦντων- “chattering” or “gossiping” – precisely the same verb which Dikaiopolis applies to the offstage crowd he describes at Clouds line 21 (οἱ δ’ ἐν ἀγορᾷ λαλοῦσι κάνω καὶ κάτω). In the Frogs, Aeschylus accuses Euripides with language directly echoing that of the Better Argument in the Clouds:

Αἰ. ἐὰν αὖ λαλιάν ἐπιτηδεύσαι καὶ στωμύλλαιαν ἐδίδαξας,
ἡ ἑξεκόννων τὰς τα παλαιόστρας καὶ τὰς πυγάς ἐνέτριψεν
tῶν μειρακίων στωμύλλαιων, καὶ τοὺς Παράλους ἀνέπεισεν
ἀνταγορευέν τοῖς ἁρχουσιν. καίτοι τότε γ’, ἥνικ’ ἐγώ ᾐών,
οὐκ ἥπισταντ’ ἀλλ’ ἢ μᾶζαν καλέσαι καὶ ἰρυππαπα’ εἰπεῖν.
Δι, νὴ τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα, καὶ προσπαρδεῖν γ’ εἰς τὸ στόμα τῶν θαλάμακι,
καὶ μυθώσαι τὸν ἐξοσιτον κάκβας τίνα λωποδυτήσαι.
νῦν δ’ ἀντιλέγει κούκκέτ’ ἐλαύνει. πλεῖς δευρί καύθης ἐκείσε.

Aeschylus. Then you taught them to look after chatter and babble,
Which has empied out the wrestling schools and worn off the asses
Of babbling young men, and convinced the crew of the Paralos
To talk back to their leaders. And yet then at least, when I was alive,
They knew nothing but to call for their bread and say “heave ho!”

Dionysos. Yes, by Apollo, and to fart into the mouth of the bottom-
bencher,
And rub shit on their messmate, and, disembarking, steal someone’s cloak.
But now he (= the crewman) talks back and rows no more. And they sail
hither and yon. 594

Again, new ways of talking and thinking, constituting a new value system, have
emptied the erstwhile sites of proper training. Here the negatively coded crowd is not in
the agora or bathhouse, but is rather the crew of a ship. Crowd talk here moves beyond
gossip into “backtalk,” which in the naval context borders on mutiny.
The crowdedness of a ship’s crew is stressed by Dionysos’s talk of farting and
shitting on one’s neighboring crewman. The threat of bodily contamination at close
quarters has been raised earlier (at Acharnians 843, discussed above) where a crowded
market contains people who might “wipe (their) wide-assedness off on you.” The special
case of the rowers as a “mob” that poses a political threat is hinted at here in “talking
back to the leaders.” The physical result of the ship’s crew engaging in improper
collective behavior results in their craft sailing “back and forth” (δευρὶ καῦθης ἐκείσε),
just as Dikaiopolis spoke of those in the agora “chattering up and down” (κᾶνω καὶ
κάτω). An aggregation of bodies combined with a decline in social values results in
disordered and aimless motion.

The political crowd as passive audience and object of manipulation

Aristophanes’s characters, then, are prone to complaining that the wrong
public places are empty and full, and that the people who gather in the full places
are acting improperly. In the democratic polis, political and dikastic assemblies
were crowd events especially central to civic life. Several plays contain extensive
descriptions of these crowds. The former (deliberative assemblies) tend to be
described as passive audience-like crowds, similar to the assemblies in Homer.
The latter (dikastic assemblies or mass juries) are portrayed as more active, and
additionally as malicious – but this second set of portrayals plays down or
allegorizes away the multiplicity of its object.

In the Knights, the Sausage Seller returns triumphantly from the meeting
of the boule to narrate his successful manipulation of that mass deliberative body,
in a first-person account of the one exerting control over the many. On entering
the chamber, the Sausage Seller relates:

ἣ βουλή δ’ ἀπασ’ ἀκροωμένη
ἐγενέθ’ ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ψευδατραφάξους πλέα,
κάβλευε νάπυ καὶ τὰ μέτωπ’ ἀνέστασεν.
κάγωγ’ ὅτε δῆ ’γνων ἐνδεχομένην τοὺς λόγους
καὶ τοὺς φενακισμοῖσιν ἐξαπατωμένην. ...
The entire council listening became full of “false orach”\(^{595}\)
At his hands, and it glared mustard and scrunched up its faces.\(^{596}\)
And when I saw (the council) was taking in his words,
And being deceived by his tricks …\(^{597}\)

Elsewhere Aristophanes describes crowds as susceptible to flattery;\(^{598}\) here they are
initially moved by the Paphlagonian not praising them, but rather slandering others:

ἡδειδε κατὰ τὸν ἵππον … καὶ ξυνωμότας λέγων … (“He attacked the knights …
and called them conspirators …”). It is the mark of a simple and easily manipulated mind
– here, a “group mind” – to respond eagerly to praise of it and blame of others.
The Sausage Seller then describes his interruption of the Paphlagonian’s
denunciatory speech:

ἀνέκραγον: ἤ βουλή, λόγους ἀγαθοὺς φέρων
εὐαγγελίσασθαι πρῶτος υἱὸν βούλομαι.
ἐξ οὗ γὰρ ἡμῖν ὁ πόλεμοι κατερράγη,
οὐπῶπτον ἄφυας εἶδον ἀξιωτέρας.
ἡ [sc. Βουλή] δ᾽ ἐνθέως τὰ πρόσωπα διεγαλήνισεν.
εἰτ’ ἐστεφάνουν ὑμῖν ἐξαγγέλια.
I shouted: “O council, bearing good tidings,
I wish to give you the good news first.
For from the time the war first broke out,
I’ve never seen cheaper sardines!”
And (the council) straightaway calmed its faces.
Then they proposed a crown for me, for my good news.\(^{599}\)

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595 LSJ s.v. ψευδατράφαξου. Rogers comm. ad loc.: “[A]n emblem of rapid growth … of lies;” Neil
agrees. Merry: “herb used in seasoning sausage … biting and pungent.”
596 N.B. the slippage between singular and plural here. While ascribable to the demands of meter, this
variation (along with the explicit ἐξ ἔνος στόματος later) suggests that crowds were conceptually neither
securely singular nor plural in the author’s mind – an ambivalence central to modern theories of the crowd,
as discussed in Chapter One.
597 Knights 629-33
598 E.g.: Acharnians 371 (where the rural origin of the crowds’ members, here the Acharnians themselves,
is cited as a mark of exceptional manipulability); 637-38 (where the chorus leader in the parabasis credits
the author with “stopping you from being excessively deceived by foreigners’ words” [παύσας υἱᾶς
ξενοκοίτας λόγοις μὴ λιῶν ἐξαπατάσθαι] which “set you on the top of your asses” [ἐπ’ ἄκρων τῶν
πυγίδων ἐκάθησθε]).
599 Knights 642-43, 646-47
In response to the Paphlagonian’s appeal to the crowd’s suspicion of others, the Sausage Seller redirect their attention to a higher concern: their own appetites. Their faces, drawn and glaring as the Paphlagonian spoke, are now smoothed over. It is implied that the speakers take cues as to how to address the audience by monitoring their facial expression and other physical reactions. Continuing to speak, the Sausage Seller reduces them to a state of gaping eagerness with his suggestion that they seize others’ property to accumulate even more food (thus fusing the greediness of the belly with the acquisitive power of a state decree):

κάγω φρασα
αὐτοῖς ἀπόρρητον ποιησάμενος, ταχύ,
ίνα τὰς ἀφύας ὄνοιντο πολλὰς τούβολου,
τῶν δημιουργῶν ἔμμεθεν τὰ τρύβλια.
οἱ δ’ ἀνεκρότησαν καὶ πρὸς ἐμ’ ἐκεχήρεσαν.
And I suggested to them, making it “unspeakable” (classified),
That in order to buy many sardines for an obol,
That they gather together all the workmen’s bowls.
And they clapped and gaped at me.  

Now that the crowd’s extreme response to appeals to its appetite has been established, the Paphlagonian tries to top the Sausage Seller’s food announcement by proposing a mega-sacrifice (and subsequent feast):

ὁ δ’ ὑπονόησας, ὁ Παφλαγών, εἰδὼς ἁρὰ
οἰς ἡδὲθ’ ἢ βουλὴ μάλιστα ῥήμασιν
γνώσμην ἔλεξεν …
ἐπένευσεν εἰς ἐκείνου ἢ βουλὴ πάλιν.
κάγωγ’ ὡτε δ’ ἡγὼν τοῖς βολίτοις ἤττώμενος,
δημοσίηις βουαῖν ὑπερηκόντισα …
ἐκαραδόκησεν εἰς ἐμ’ ἢ βουλὴ πάλιν.
But suspecting, the Paphagonian, knowing well the words by which the council is most pleased, made a motion [to sacrifice 100 cows] …
And the council “nodded” (switched their approval) back to him.
And when I realized I was being defeated by cow patties,
I upped the stakes to two hundred cows …
And the council looked back at me.

The crowd’s fickle allegiance is exaggerated to the point of absurdity. The refrain ἡ βουλὴ πάλιν (“the council looked back”) suggests an image like that of spectators at a tennis game, tracking a ball back and forth with movements of their head and eyes. “Two hundred cows” is the final round of bribe and counter-bribe; the Sausage Seller has won and the crowd is about to turn on the Paphlagonian.

ὁ δὲ ταῦτ’ ἀκούσας ἐκπλαγεὶς ἐφληνάφα.

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600 Knights 647-51
601 Knights 652-54, 657-59, 663
καθι' ειλκουν αυτον οι πρυτανεις χοι τοξοται, 
οι δ' έθουρηουν περι των αφυων εστηκοτες. 
ο δ' ήντεβολει γ' αυτους ολην μειναι χρονον ...
οι δ' εξ ενος στοματος απαντες ανεκραγου ...
εκεκραγεσαν τε τους πρυτανεις αφιεναι.
ειθ' υπερεπηδων τους δρυφακτους πανταχη.
And struck out of his wits from hearing these things, he babbled.

And the prytaneis and the archers dragged him away,
And they (the council) had stood
and were making a θορυβος
About the sardines.
And he begged them to stay a little while …
But they all shouted from one mouth …
And they shouted for the prytaneis to depart.
And then they leapt over the court railings in all directions.⁶⁰²

The paradoxical unity and multiplicity of crowd is revealed in these last lines, as the council speaks “from one mouth” shortly before scattering “in all directions.” Before dispersing, the crowd raises a θόρυβος over that which first caught their attention away from their former favorite demagogue: the promise of something good to eat.

Crowd as political faction and the parliamentary coup
The plot of the Assemblywomen hinges on a particular crowd tactic: planting a dense cluster of conspirators within a large but diffused assembly to throw a vote. Before executing the plan, Praxagora warns her followers not to reveal their true nature:

Πρ. ιδου γε σε ξαινουσαν, ἥν τοῦ σώματος
ουδέν παραφίναι τοῖς καθιμένοις ἔδει.
οὐκοῦν καλὰ γ’ ἀν πάθοιμεν, εἰ πλήρης τύχοι
ὁ δήμος ἢν κάπειθ’ ὑπερβαίνουσα τις
ἀναβαλλομένη δείξει τὸν Φορμίσιον.
ἡν δε έγαθεζώμεσα πρότεραι, λήσομεν
ἔντειλάμεινα βαϊμάτια. …
Γυ. καὶ πῶς γυναικῶν θηλύφρων ξυνουσία
δημηγορήσει; …
Πρ. οὐκοῦν ἐπίτηδες ξυνελέγημεν ἐνθάδε,
ὅπως προμελετήσωμεν ἀκεῖ δεῖ λέγειν;
οὐκ ἀν φθάνοι τὸ γένειον ἀν περιδομένη
Ἀλλαὶ θ’ ὅσαι λαλεῖν μεμελετηκασί που.
Γυ. τὸς δ’, ὃ μὲλ’, ἡμῶν οὐ λαλεῖν ἐπίσταται;
Praxagora. Look at you: knitting! You who ought not reveal any part of your body to those seated. For we wouldn’t experience good things, if the demos happened to be full(ly present that day) and some woman stepping up and hitching up her cloak should show her Phormisios.⁶⁰³
But if we take our seats first, we will go unnoticed, wrapped up in cloaks …

602 Knights 664-67, 670, 674-75
603 Henderson comm. ad Frogs 965: “A politician whose beard resembled female genitalia.”
**Woman.** And how can a female-minded company of women speak in public?

**Praxagora.** Isn’t that why we’ve gathered here,
So that we can work out what we need to say there?
Don’t jump the gun putting on your beard –
And (I say the same to) all others who have worked out how to λαλεῖν.

**Woman.** Who among us doesn’t know how to λαλεῖν?604

Praxagora has gathered her conspirators here (ξυνελέγημεν ἐνθάδε) to plan their coup there. The staging here is the inverse of that at the beginning of the Acharnians, where the Πνυξ here is empty (ἔρημος ἢ πνὺς αὐτή, Acharnians 20) because the prytaneis (and presumably the rest of the council) are goofing off over there (οἱ δ’ ἐν ἀγοραὶ λαλοῦσι κάνω καὶ κάτω, 21). In both cases, the group is “chattering” – the prytaneis λαλοῦσι, while the women learn to λαλεῖν. These multiple points of connection or echoes between the two passages confirm that crowds and groups are important in Aristophanes’s plays, that the crowds are closely connected to political assemblies, site of crowds par excellence, and that these crowds behave improperly in both word (λαλ- and deed (ὠστι-, discussed above).

The chorus’s first exit outlines the planned parliamentary coup, and critiques urban assembly-goers in terms oddly similar to Dikaiopolis’s:

χωρόμενεν εἰς ἐκκλησίαν ὄνδρες. …
ὅπως δὲ τὸ σύμβολον λαβόντες ἐπείτα πλησίοι καθεδούμεθ’ ὡς ἂν χειροτονώμεν
ἀπανθ’ ὅπως ἂν δεῖ τὰς ἡμετέρας φίλας …
ὁρα δ’ ὅπως ὁθήσομεν τούς δὲ τούς ἐξ ἀστεως ἡκοντας, ὅσοι πρὸ τοῦ μέν, ἢνικ ἐδει λαβεῖν ἐλθόντ’ ὀβολὸν μόνον, καθηντὸ λαλοῦτες ἐν τοῖς στεφανώμασιν, νυνί δ’ ἐνοχλοῦσ’ ἄγαν.

Let’s move to the assembly, men! …
And when we’ve got our ticket, let’s sit down close by that we may vote
For everything our girlfriends (propose) …
See that we shove those coming from the city, they who before, when the rule was he who came got only one obol, sat chattering in the wreath (shop)s – but now they ἐνοχλοῦσι somethin’ fierce.605

By now the cluster of concepts is familiar: the civic space is empty, or too crowded, or occupied too late, but at any rate there is a problem of groups or their absence; when groups are not where they should be, they talk inappropriately (λαλοῦσι). Indeed, a perversion of speech as part of general cultural degeneration can be blamed for causing this problem of crowds-in-space (cf. discussion above of Clouds 990-91, Frogs 1069).

The assembly – as with the council in the Knights, and deliberative and other crowds throughout tragedy – meets offstage.606 Returning from it, Chremes explains to

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604 Eccl. 93-99, 110-11, 116-19
605 Eccl. 290, 296-303
Blepyrus why he has come back without his obols, describing the execution of Praxagora’s plan:

Χρ. πλείστος ἀνθρώπων ὀχλός,
όσοι οὐδεπότεν, ἣλθ᾽ ἄθροις ἐς τὴν πύκνα.
καὶ δήτα πάντας σκυτοτόμοις ἤκάζομεν
ὄρωντες αὐτούς, οὐ γὰρ ἄλλ᾽ ὑπερφυῶς
ὡς λευκοπληθῆς ἦν ἰδεῖν ἦκλησία.
ὦστ᾽ οὐκ ἔλαβον ὅτ᾽ αὐτοὺς ὤτ᾽ ἄλλοι συχνοὶ ...

Βλ. ἀτὰρ τί τὸ πράγμ᾽ ἦν, ὅτι τοσοῦτον χρῆμ᾽ ὀχλού607
οὔτως ἐν ὃραι ξυνελέγη:
Χρ. τί δ᾽ ἄλλο γ᾽ ἦ
ἐδοξε τοῖς πρωτάνεισι σωτηρίας
γνώμας καθεῖναι τῆς πόλεως: καὶ ἐυθέως
πρῶτος Νεοκλείδης ὁ γλάμων παρείρπουσεν.
κάτειθ᾽ ὁ δῆμος ἀναβοῖν τόσον δοκεῖς ...

metα τοῦτον Εὐαίων ὁ δεξιώτατος
παρῆλθε γυμνός, ὡς ἐδοκεῖ τοῖς πλείοσιν.
αὐτὸς γε μεντοφασκεῖν ἰμάτιον ἐχεῖν.
κάτειθ᾽ ἔλεξε δημοτικότατος λόγους. ...

μετὰ τούτο τοῖν εὐπρεπὶς νεανίας
λευκὸς τις ἀνεπήδης ὁμοίος Νικίας
δημηγορῆσων, κατεχείρησεν λέγειν
ὡς χρῆ παραδοῦναι ταῖς γυναιξὶ τὴν πόλιν.
εἰτ᾽ ἐδορύβησαν κανέκραγον ὡς εὗ λέγοι,
τὸ σκυτοτομικὸν πλῆθος, οἱ δ᾽ ἐκ τῶν ἄγρων
ἀνεβοβόρυξαν.

Βλ. νοῦν γὰρ εἶχον, νὴ Δία.
Χρ. ἄλλ᾽ ἦσαν ἤπτους, ὃ δὲ κατεἰχε τῇ βοῆι,
ταῖς μὲν γυναίκας πόλλ᾽ ἄγαθὰ λέγων, σὲ δὲ πολλὰ κακᾶ.

Chr. The hugest ὀχλος, so big as never before, came ἄθροις to the Pnyx.
And yeah - when we saw them we made them all for shoemakers
(lit. “leathercutters”),
Well, no, but the assembly was damned full-pale to look at.
So I got nothing – not me, not a lot of other guys. …

Bl. But what was the deal, that got together so great a thing of an ὀχλος?

Chr. What else but that the prytaneis proposed debate about the city’s
salvation? And then first Neocleides straightaway shuffled up.
How much d’you think the δῆμος shouted then? …

606 Although (Carter 58) “the report is the more vivid since we have already seen the women rehearsing for
the meeting.”
607 Cf. Thesmo. 280-1, where the throng of celebrants entering the sanctuary is described solely by
periphrasis, without any crowd-noun: καμοέων τῶν λαμπάδων/ ὄσου τὸ χρῆμ᾽ ἀνέρχετ᾽ ὑπὸ τῆς
λιγνύος (“Burning lamps/How great a thing of a ____ goes up (to the sanctuary) through the smoke”). The
speaker there is Euripides’s kinsman, right as he begins his infiltration of the festival in the guise of a
woman. In that case, the absence of a noun describing the group may be for lack of one appropriate to
describe a non-political, non-disruptive group – but see the discussion of the Frogs below for evidence that
ὀχλος in the context of cult can have a positive, or at least neutral, valence.
After that, Euaion the cleverest came forward “naked” (Henderson: “wearing only a shirt”), as it seemed to most. However, he announced he had a cloak. And then he spoke the most δημοσιας speech. … OK, then after that a seemly youth Sprang up, some pale guy like Nikias, To speak before the people (δημηγορήσων) And he essayed to say that it was time to hand the city to the women. And they made a θορύβος and shouted that he spoke well, The shoemaking πλήθος, But those from the fields “made deep rumbles” (Henderson.)  

**Bl.** For they had sense, by God! **Chr.** But they were fewer. And he (the “seemly youth”) suppressed them with a shout, saying many good things about women – and many bad about you.608

Praxagora’s group is referred to at the beginning of this passage as an ὀχλος, and at the end as a πλήθος. In between the two descriptions of the smaller, denser, conspiratorial cadre, however, the speakers’ addresses are all framed by reference to the δῆµος. It boos down the first; the second speaks words most adapted to it. The third speaker who comes forth δηµηγορήσων carries the day with a pre-arranged θόρυβος. Being denser (ἀβρός), a crowd reaction started by Praxagora’s ὀχλος/πλήθος would be more likely to spread, on a model of local reactions to rhetoric spreading in a communicative or mimetic network. The rural delegation produces its own noise, but is overwhelmed, as the speaker checks them τῇ βοη. Plato’s nightmare vision of democratic crowds as a contest of mindless noise (as quoted in the Postscript) is already implicit in Aristophanic descriptions of the political process.

πλήθος elsewhere in Aristophanes can carry two shades of meaning: “the people” as general audience and political entity, and “the masses” contrasted to some opposing faction. Under a majority-rule regime, these concepts are difficult to distinguish, but a particular occurrence may have more or less of the sense of one or the other. At Acharnians 317-18, Dikaiopolis pitches it in a way close to balanced between these two senses:

κἂν γε μὴ λέγω δίκαια μηδὲ τῶι πλήθει δοκῶ, ὑπὲρ ἐπιξήνου θελήσω τὴν κεφαλὴν ἔχων λέγειν. And if I don’t seem to the πλήθος to speak justice, I’ll be willing to speak with my head on the chopping-block!

Olson comments: “τῶι πλήθει: ‘the majority’ or ‘the mass’, i.e. the Athenian people generally.” And here these two senses are indeed fused: he is speaking to a group aroused by patriotic ire, to excuse himself from charges of disloyalty to the city itself. But this is an “i.e.” which doesn’t always operate. On a matter of national sentiment such as war, literally life and death, it may be easier to elide the potential gap

608 Eccl. 383-88, 394-99, 408-11, 427-35
between *everyone* and *the majority*, but other mass deliberative contexts – for instance, a lawsuit with regional or class loyalties polarized on either side – can generate a more acute awareness of the gap between, on the one hand, the πλῆθος gathered together at any given moment (let alone the sub-πλῆθος of a majority on a given motion or verdict), and, on the other, the *whole* body of citizens or community members.609 I would say the δῆμος,610 but the passage above shows that this word can mean a momentary gathering or faction too.

When Dikaiopolis calls the group to which he’ll plead his case the πλῆθος, that word can indeed be read as denoting the polity as a whole, with one man, having outraged it, now forced to appeal to it as a collective. In his speech, he will observe that an insult to national pride can cause crowd behavior to spread from the assembly and occupy the entire city:

> ἥν δὲ ἄν ἡ πόλις πλέα θορύβου στρατιωτῶν …  
> (If a Spartan had impounded goods from a minor Athenian ally),  
> The city would be full of a θορύβος of soldiers … 611

A city at war is the ultimate scene of a crowd,612 and the ultimate affront to the polity is for one man to oppose the city united. Indeed, when Dikaiopolis is about to begin his *apologia* after his visit to Euripides, the Chorus explicitly and reductively frames the scene in the dialectic of One and Many:

> τί δράσεις; τί φήσεις; <έν> ἵδι υν  
> ἀναίσχυντος ὡν σιδηροὺς τ᾿ ἀνήρ,  
> ὡς τι πάρασχων τῇ πόλει τὸν αὐχένα  
> ἀπασι μέλλεις εἰς λέγειν τάναντια.  
> What will you do? What will you say? Now know well,  
> You are shameless and a man of steel,  
> Who, sticking your neck out to the city,  
> Intend to say the opposite of what *all* say – (you who are) *one*.613

In a paratragic, surreal cross between a capital treason trial and a lynch mob, a πλῆθος can stand in for all the people in perfect synecdoche; one man can stand against

609 This is to say that Carter’s “collective fallacy” applies to more than just poetic representation.

610 At *Wealth* 570 the two words are directly linked: (οἱ ρήτορες) … ἐπιβουλεύουσι τε τῶι πλῆθει καὶ τῶι δήμῳ πολεμοῦσιν (“The political speakers) plot against the πλῆθος and make war on the δήμος”). Here, Poverty blames the ρήτορες’ ability to accumulate wealth through public service for their becoming enemies of the “mass” and the “people;” this populist rallying cry comes shortly after Chremylus’s likening the poor “rabble” to a swarm of flies (at 535 ff., discussed below).

611 *Ach*. 545-46

612 Garland (100) describes the lines that immediately follow (550-52: as portraying “the corporate bustle of the Piraeus.” Garland’s book takes as its epigram a quote from Jacob Bronowski’s *The Ascent of Man*, reading in part: “A city is stones and a city is people; but it is not a heap of stones, and it is not just a jostle of people.” It certainly is not just a jostle of people, but any city – especially in its markets and ports, especially during wartime displacements and siege conditions – definitely is, on one level, a “jostle of people.”

613 *Ach*. 490-94
all. But any time a vote is taken, there will be a losing side. The myth of total participation and consent will be called upon to bridge the gap between formal and actual unity, and the contest will be shown as one between two or more groups of people.

Democratic majorities are repeatedly disparaged by Aristophanic characters, either through attacks on their competence or by problematizing the fiction that a majority vote at a particular meeting is a reliable expression of what “the people” think. “(The losing side of a vote) had good sense!” says Blepyrus. “But they were fewer,” rebuts Chremes – and numbers trump reason. “I was elected!” insists Lamachus. “(Yes – by) three cuckoos!” retorts Dikaiopolis. Just because a temporary majority at an ill-attended, ill-informed gathering does something doesn’t make that thing wise or just.

The use of πλῆθος to describe a socio-political faction in a positive sense is clearest in examples of demagogic flattery. In his explanation of the joys of jurying, Philokleon tells of how politicians, specifically the historical (if obscure) prosecutor Euathlos and the pun-caricature Kolakonymos (“Flatter-name,” one of Aristophanes’s many jabs at the popular politician Cleonymos, “Fame-name”), address the jurors and

οὐχὶ προδέσσειν ἴμας φασίν, περὶ τοῦ πλῆθους δὲ μαχεῖσθαι
Insist that they won’t betray us, but will fight on behalf of the πλῆθος.

Bdelykleon soon throws this language back at his father, blaming the loss of nine-tenths of the imperial revenue on

τούτους τούς “οὐχὶ προδέσσω τὸν Ἀθηναίων κολοσυρτόν, ἀλλὰ μαχοῦμαι περὶ τοῦ πλῆθους ἀεῖ.”
Those ones (who say) “I’ll never betray the Athenian rabble, But I’ll always fight on behalf of the πλῆθος.”

In a domestic political context, if one fights on behalf of X, one must be fighting for them against Y. Politics is exposed as a struggle between groups rather than the actions taken by an organic whole.

Bdelykleon’s repurposing of Philokleon’s quoted political catchphrase shows that a πλῆθος can be an ὀχλός – the word meaning, on its face, simply “mass” or “majority” can be easily linked to or equated with the “rabble” (κολοσυρτός). At Wealth 536, the same word is used by Chremylos as he blames Poverty for producing figurative and literal crowds of wretchedness:

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614 Ach. 598: Λαμ. ἐχειροτούνησαν γάρ με/ Δικ. κόκκυγες γε τρεῖς. Lamachus desperately repeats “They elected me!” a few lines later; Dikaiopolis ignores this the second time and appeals directly to the class and status resentments of the chorus.
615 MacDowell comm. ad loc and at 482.
616 Wasps 593
617 Wasps 666-67
618 At Lysistrata 170 the Spartan Lampito speaks of “your Athenian rabble” (Henderson), as contrasted with Spartan men who will be easily persuaded, using the word ρυάχετον, from a root meaning “flowing.” Cf. the unruly assembly crowd at the beginning of Acharnians that enters ἄθροι καταφρέοντες; the disorder of Athenian deliberative bodies renders the entire polity fluid and unstable.
What good can you supply except a κολοσυρτός of bathhouse blisters And starving kids and old women? And the host of lice, mosquitoes and Fleas, which I can’t list to you on account of the πλῆθος (Henderson: “too numerous to enumerate”),
Which bug us, buzzing around our head, And waking us up say: “You’ll go hungry! GET UP!”

Crowds of the wretched poor are the product of Poverty personified – as are the crowds of pests that infest the houses of the poor. The effect of listing these together is to dehumanize the former and personify the latter: the insects βοµβοῦσαι, just as the titular gang of jurors in the Wasps will shout down those who come before them.

Plurality in comic anti-democratic language is linked both with deprivation and with bodily vulnerability. In the Assemblywomen, dictatrix-elect Praxagora promises a bright future for the city:

μὴ λωποδυτῆσαι, μὴ φθονεῖν τοῖς πλησίον, μὴ γυμνὸν εἶναι μὴ πένητα μηδένα, μὴ λοιδορέσθαι …
No more clothes-stealing, no envying those near you, No “being naked,”
No verbal abuse …

This is the eliminationist vision of social and economic harmony: no one will be exposed to public eyes or hostile hands, envy will not arise from a perceived inferiority to those around one; difference will be eliminated, and with it the unsightly poor by ones and in their crowded numbers.

Returning to Assemblywomen 432, we find πλῆθος used in a third sense. Here it is not the myth of the people as a whole, nor the majority (neither in the sense of the “masses” nor, at least not explicitly, as a majority of a particular assembled crowd), but rather the decisively-acting group in a situation of mass deliberation. The passage does not explicitly say that Praxagora’s group by themselves outnumber the rest of the assembly – just that they constitute an unprecedented ὄχλος which moves and sits together ἀθρόος.

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619 Wealth 535-39
620 Cf. Henderson’s rendering of γυμνός at 409 as “wearing only a shirt,” cited above. Cf. also Peace 685: ἀπορῶν ὁ δήμος ἐπιτρόπου καὶ γυμνὸς ὡς (“The people, at a loss for a guardian and being naked …”). Euaion the demagogue finds it to his advantage to appear “naked;” “nudity” is a socio-economic disadvantage that Praxagora promises to eliminate. Appearing (nearly) naked before a group of spectators is an apt figure for the vulnerability of the individual or minority against an angry group or majority.
621 Eccl. 565-67
Mass political meetings can be criticized for two kinds of crowd-based flaw. Not only are they rowdy and fickle as a whole (δήμος; πλήθος in the inclusive sense), but they are subject to coordinated manipulation by “packs” at the sub-crowd level (ὀχλος; πλήθος in the local sense). Groups form elsewhere in the city, engage in talk at best idle and at worse treasonous, and then flow into the assembly with their own biases and agenda. The pathologies of group behavior pervade the Aristophanic representation of democracy.

The chorus leader uses πλήθος in the restricted sense of himself and his fellow jurors at Wasps 267: τι χρήμα δ’ όντ’ της οίκου τηδεία συνδικαστής/ πέτονθεν, ώς ού λείπει δεύο πρός τό πλήθος; ("What’s the matter with our fellow-juror, the one from out this house, that he isn’t appearing hither towards our πλήθος?"). Here, the πλήθος is a group of people who will arrive in the politico-juridical scene as a precollected group, but one that seeks only the pleasures of the routine exercise of democratic power. In the Assemblywomen, the πλήθος carries off a coup.

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623 For a political “pack” cf. Knights 852-53, of the Paphlagonian’s allies: ὁράς γάρ αὐτῶι στίφος οἶον ἐστὶ βυρσοπωλῶν/ νεανίων (“For you see what a στίφος of young men who hawk leather there is around him ...”). Occupational and other class groupings would be natural sites of faction-formation in the assembly.

624 Peace 632

625 On the dislocations and concentration caused by the siege, and the effect on civic discourse, cf. Eccl. 243-44, where Praxagora explains how she learned the art of public speaking:

ἐν ταῖς φυγαῖς μετὰ τάνδρος δικημένο ἐν πυκνῷ: ἔπειτ' ἀκούοντας ἐξειμαθὼν τῶι βιτώροις.

In the “flights” (Henderson: “displacements”) I lived with my husband on the Pnyx. And listening there, I learned the whole thing from the speakers.

Cf. Thuc. II.16 for concentration within the city and the resulting disruption of social and religious order. For φυγαί in this sense see Ussher comm. ad loc.

626 Groups can be labeled along axes other than class and occupation, e.g. πρεσβυτέρων ὀχλος Wasps 540; ἐομός γυναικῶν Lysistrata 353.
For I, Trygaeus of Athmonum,  
Am deserving of many (plaudits) from you (addressing the chorus),  
Having freed from terrible toils  
The popular ὡν  
And the farming λεώς …  

So Aristophanic characters do not only characterize groups and crowds negatively. Even in the same play, crowd vocabulary can carry diametrically opposed social meaning at different times. In the Frogs, the first, titular chorus refers to a time

When the hangover-party ὄχλος of the λαοί  
Came through my holy precinct at the (festival of) holy Jugs.  

Despite its drunkenness, the ὄχλος here is not the object of elite scorn. Rather, it represents the people as a whole, transcending class divisions in ritual unity. The second chorus summons another image of ὄχλος-as-the-whole-community later as it begins the parabasis:

Muse, step into the sacred dances and come for (to put) delight in my Song, (coming to) see the great ὄχλος of the λαοί (i.e., the audience).

Elsewhere in the Frogs, however, crowd terminology carries its more typical negative social significance. Hades’s slave explains to Xanthias that Euripides’s recent ascendancy in the underworld arts scene is due to his popularity with

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627 Peace 917-22. For solidarity between farmers, cf. Wealth 223-26: “Call my fellow-farmers (τοὺς ἑυγεγερωμένους κάλεσον) – you’ll probably find them working hard in the fields – so that each of them, being present here, can take his share with us of this Wealth here.”
628 Frogs 218-19
629 Frogs 674-76. For similar language applied to the audience-as-crowd, cf. Knights 162-63: δευρί βλέπε./ τὰς στίχας ὅρας τὰς τῶν ἄγας των λαῶν; (one character breaks the ‘fourth wall’ to ask another: “Look there! Do you see the ranks of the λαοί?”). If the polity’s constituent groups, especially when they are deliberating over their economic and other interests in the assembly, are labeled as the “farming λεώς,” the “rowing λεώς,” etc., then the group τῶν λαῶν is the ideal aggregation of all such λαοί: the true formation of that which majority-rule voting and other democratic procedures can only imperfectly and metonymically display, The People United. Carter 59ff. observes that direct address of the audience is almost entirely absent from tragedy (one of the basic features differentiating it from comedy), apart from a few contested instances.
Οικ. τοίς λωποδύταις καὶ τοίσι βαλλαντιστόμοις καὶ τοίσι πατραλοίσι καὶ τοίσι χωρόκοις,
ὅπερ ἐστ᾽ ἐν Ἀιδών πλήθος, οἱ δ᾽ ἀκροβιοῦντες ... ῥυπεμάνησαν ... 
ὁ δήμος ἀνεβόα κρίσιν ποιεῖν ...
Δι᾽ α. τῶν πανούργων: Οἰκ. νῆ Δι᾽ ...

SLAVE: The cloak-stealers and wallet-cutters, and the father-beaters
And wall-diggers (burglars), which are the majority in Hades (or, “who
are a πλήθος,” i.e., who form a group constituency like Praxagora’s posse
of “shoemakers”), and listening, they ... went nuts ...

The δήμος cried out to hold a trial (of skill between Aeschylus and
Euripides) ...

XANTHIAS: (The δήμος) of criminals? SLAVE: Yes, by God ...

Earlier, on hearing the ruckus inside Hades’s palace, Xanthias had asked

τίς οὕτος οὖνδον ἐστι θόρυβος καὶ βοή

χώ λοιδορησίμως;

What’s this θόρυβος and outcry and trash-talking inside?631

The slave replies

πράγμα, πράγμα μέγα κεκίνηται, μέγα
ἐν τοῖς νεκροῖς καὶ στάσις πολλή πάνυ.

A matter, a great matter’s in motion, great

Among the dead, and a στάσις very large

(Henderson: “and very intense factionalism”).632

Here we find the term for the disaster that lies at the end of the road of the crowd:
στάσις, a city’s self-destruction through uncontainable group violence.633 In this
imagined underworld society it is less apocalyptic, but it still generates things associated
with crowds in the real above-ground world: crying and shouting, and verbal abuse
(λοιδ-, which in the Assemblywomen Praxagora promises to eliminate, as discussed
above; the appearance here of a word from this root confirms that this too is a crowd-
word).

Resuming the proper distribution of bodies in civic space

The monologue at the beginning of the Acharnians identifies two problems with
groups: people do not gather together where and when they should, and they act
improperly when they do so. The popular assemblies may be portrayed as an innovation
of degenerate times, but they are accepted by all as a social fact – and recognized as a site
of inter-group tension and sublimated class warfare:

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630 Frogs 772-76
631 Frogs 756-77
632 Frogs 759-60
633 See Lintott 252 ff. and passim. For Thucydides’s discourse on stasis, see fn. 400 above.
ἐκκλησίαισιν ἦν ὃτ’ οὐκ ἐχρώμηθα
οὐδὲν τὸ παράπαν …
νῦν δὲ χρωμένων
ό μὲν λαβὼν ἀργύριον ὑπερεπηνεσεν,
ό δ’ οὐ λαβών εἶναι θανάτου φήσ’ ἀξίους
τοὺς μισθοφορεῖν ζητούντας ἐν τῇ κλησία.

Time was when we made no use of assemblies at all …
But now, as we do use them, the one who gets money
praises them excessively,
But the one who does not get money declares deserving of death
Those coming to the assembly seeking to draw pay. 634

Dikaiopolis claimed that people were arriving too late, shoving each other over pride of place, and refusing to consider important proposals of peace. If attendees are now drawn there partly for mercenary reasons, the crowding and improper talk of the agora will surely infect the deliberative body even when people do bother to show up. The chorus leader in Wealth assures Chremylus that monetary incentives will retain the chorus of farmers as allies for his plan:

θάρρει. βλέπειν γὰρ ἀντικρυς δόξεις μ’ Ἀρη.
δειδόν γὰρ εἰ τρισμιδὸλοι μὲν οὖνεκα
ὡστιζόμεθ᾽ ἐκάστοτ’ ἐν τῇ κλησίαι,
αὐτὸν δὲ τὸν Πλούτου παρείην τωι λαβείν.
Buck up. For soon you’ll think you’re looking at Ares.
For if we shove our way in every time to the assembly
For three obols, it’d be awful if I passed up the chance to grab Wealth Himself! 635

After Wealth’s eyesight has been restored, and the redistribution of his favors to the truly deserving has begun, Chremylus’s slave Cario describes the god’s approach: ἔρχεται. / ἀλλ’ ἦν περὶ αὐτῶν ὄχλος ὑπερφυὴς ὁδός (“He’s coming, but there was an extraordinarily big ὄχλος around him.”) 636 When Chremylus arrives with Wealth, he boasts of his newfound celebrity:

ἐμὲ γὰρ τίς οὗ προσεῖπε; ποῖος οὐκ ὄχλος

634 Eccl. 183-184, 185-188. Ussher comm. ad loc:
There is no suggestion of a legal disability (to draw attendance-pay). The words do, however, imply that some Athenians (apart from those who came late on any one occasion) could not, for private reasons, get to meetings. Their chagrin revealed itself in strong denunciation of their luckier fellows, and the system.
To me, more seems at stake here than where one lives or any other such “private reasons” which might prevent attendance for logistical reasons. That no one otherwise eligible to participate in the assembly was barred from receiving pay does not mean that the institution of attendance-pay would have been seen as legitimate by everyone. Such pay has the purpose of subsidizing attendance by the non-elite, those without excessive leisure; as such, it both symbolically and functionally strengthens the democracy – and draws crowds.

635 Wealth 328-31
636 Wealth 749-50
περιστεφάνωσεν ἐν ἀγορᾷ πρεσβυτικὸς;
Who didn’t greet me? What elderly ὄχλος
Didn’t crown me in the agora?\textsuperscript{637}

Wealth and the promise of its broader distribution attract people in crowds. If the democratic practice of gathering in assemblies is dysfunctional – and Aristophanes’s characters all seem to agree that it is – then the distribution and discipline of groupings must be reformed.\textsuperscript{638} Several later comedies – *Lysistrata, Assemblywomen, Wealth* – offer different fantastical options for such reform. *Wealth*’s proposal of redistribution, matched in political reality by an increase in subsidies for citizen participation, is one way of restoring the balance of crowds between market and assembly.

Comedy is paradoxical: it is at once both a more direct representation of present social reality and a more open medium for expressions of fantasy and play. Throughout his career, Aristophanes used both modes to address the problem of crowds in the context of radical democracy and the Peloponnesian War. Whereas Homer’s crowds have little or no social concreteness, and tragic crowds are mostly represented as an implacable offstage threat, Aristophanes plays with the crowd through a full range of modalities, using it to think Athens as it is, as it was, and as it might be.

\textsuperscript{637} *Wealth* 786-87

\textsuperscript{638} For a reading of *Wealth* as an “essentially conservative” response to the crisis of the Athenian “social, economic and political order” – albeit one decked out with an “apparently revolutionary surface-action” – see Olson 1990 (quotes from p. 4).
When, I said, many of them sit together in assemblies, courts, theaters, army camps, or in any other gathering of a mass of people in public and, with a loud uproar, object excessively to some of the things that are said or done, then approve excessively of others, shouting and clapping; and when, in addition to these people themselves, the rocks and the surrounding space itself echo and redouble the uproar of their praise or blame. In a situation like that, how do you think – as the saying goes – a young man’s heart is affected? How will whatever sort of private education he received hold up for him, and not get swept away by such praise and blame, and go be carried off by the flood wherever it goes, so that he will call the same things beautiful or ugly as these people, practice what they practice, and become like them?

Plato, Republic 492b5-c8

Such was the rigor with which the mass of the people was prepared to be controlled in the theatre, and to refrain from passing judgment by shouting.

Plato, Laws 700d1-2

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639 Trans. Reeve (185-86).
640 Trans. Saunders (1389).
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