

AESCHYLUS' *LAÏOS*

TrGF III, T 58a + F 451v (+ p. 231) + 451s 6 + 451n
(P.Oxy. 2256 Fr. 2, 4, 1, 6, 8)



ABSTRACT: The author, continuing the work done by former scholars, investigates a number of fragments of POxy. 2256, which partly compose the Hypothesis (Title, Didascalia, Hypothesis proper, *Dramatis personae*) and the prologue of Aeschylus' *Laïos*, the first play of the Theban tetralogy. He corrects away the palaeographic misreadings that hindered some fragments to be joined together, but also rejects the joining of 2256 fr. 9a-b in the group, i.e., the fragment dubbed "Dike-Drama", which, as he firmly believes with others, comes from a satyr-play. Two large fragments from the prologue show that the play opens with Laius returning to Thebes from his exile, at the same time introducing, through their statues, two goddesses, Artemis Eucleia and Athena Zosteria, who will guarantee wealth, prosperity, and peace for the citizens. The statues of the goddesses, whose setting up in the agora at Thebes was attested by Sophocles *OT* and Pausanias, are added to those of the other guardian gods of the city and remain on stage till the end of the trilogy in *Septem contra Thebas*.

THE PUBLICATION IN 1952 of the hypothesis of one of the plays of Aeschylus' Theban tetralogy that survived in P.Oxy. 2256 together with numerous other fragments of the tragedian (Edgar Lobel, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, XX, 36 ff.) provoked an exhaustive series of comments that were published thereafter.¹ From the title of the play that should have been found in the papyrus fr. 2 survives only the last letter, a large upsilon between two highlighting horizontal strokes: $\overline{\Upsilon}$. The likeliest option is the one proposed the next year after the publication by Bruno Snell (*Gnomon* 25, 1953, 438): $\Lambda\Lambda\iota\omicron\varsigma$ | $\Lambda\iota\varsigma\chi\Upsilon\alpha\omicron$]Y. If we could assert that the contents of the papyrus were arranged in groups of tetralogies, then supplementing $\Lambda\Lambda\iota\omicron\varsigma$ would be compulsory, since the didascalia could be found only before the first play of the tetralogy. Such an assertion is, however, completely improbable, and the likeliest proposition is that the Aeschylean plays were presented separate-

1. I am very grateful to Sotiris Tselikas for substantial assistance.

ly, perhaps under the alphabetical order of their title. Of the four titles of the tetralogy, it was only *Λαῖος* that had fewer letters than the genitive *Αἰσχύλου*, something that would explain why no visible traces remained in the left-hand side of the papyrus. The title *Σφίγξ* is equal-sized, but one should expect *Σφίγξ σάτυροι* or *σατυρική* or rather a shortened *σατν*. Of course, *Σφίγξ σατ]ν* | *Αἰσχύλου*] or *Αἰσχύλου*] | *Σφίγξ σατ]ν* are possible, but the satyr-play conjecture is excluded, if the Hypothesis of the papyrus fr. 4 has to be joined with the didascalia. Both above and under the]Y, there is sufficient unwritten area for supplementing either [*Λαῖος*] | [*Αἰσχύλο*]ν or [*Αἰσχύλο*]ν | [*Λαῖος*]. Aesthetically preferable is the first, which is corroborated, I do not know how decisively, by the observation of the fragment ἐκ τῆς Μουσικῆς ἱστορίας (Dionysius of Halicarnassus? Rufus?) that supplements Aeschylus' *Vita*: αἱ τῶν δραμάτων ἐπιγραφαὶ προγράφονται τοῦ ποιητοῦ, Νόβη Αἰσχύλου, Ὀμήρου δὲ Ἰλιάς. The claim may theoretically imply that, unlike the other poetic genres, in drama it is the characters that predominate and not the poets, but in practical terms it facilitates the alphabetical edition.

The papyrus fr. 2 of P.Oxy. 2256 gives the relics of the title and the main body of the didascalia. To its end, Radt (*TrGF* III, p. 231, introd. to *Λαῖος*) adds fr. 1, where the end of the Hypothesis and the beginning of the *dramatis personae* are included, but at fr. 451v he rejects Mette's (his fr. 169) proposal that the papyrus fr. 4, where the main part of an unnamed Hypothesis survives, should also be connected with fragments 2 and 1. Radt's argument against the proposal was that the papyrus fr. 4 ends *προλογί[ζ](ω)(ν)*, as Lobel published it, whereas fr. 1 starts with *ζων Λαῖ[ος]*. However, Lobel's reading of fr. 4 was erroneous, as it ends *ΠΡΟΛΟΓΙ* with no gap whatsoever, while fr. 1 starts clearly with *ΖΩΝ*. Simply, what usually occurs in papyri and Mss whose scribes plan their prose text to be flush with the right-hand margin, the scribe, seeing that the complete *ΠΡΟΛΟΓΙΖΩΝ* would disfigure the alignment, extended the horizontal of *Γ* almost to the end of the column's margin, crossed this horizontal with the vertical of the *I*, and covered the end of the line with a ^ that serves more as a filler than as a modern hyphen indicating the division of the word at the end of the line. A slash (/) after the last iota of *τ[ετρ]αλογία* marks the end of the didascalia, whereas another filler (7) appears between the hypothesis proper and the *dramatis personae*. Thus, *ΖΩΝ* continues normally in line 1 of the fr. 1. G. O. Hutchinson, *Aeschylus Septem contra Thebas*, Oxford 1985, p. xviii, notes that Mette's joining of P.Oxy. 2256 fr. 2 + 4 + 1 is impossible. He does not specify whether his judgment depends on the *προλογί|ζων* argument or on an examination of the fibres. In any case, fr. 1 is positioned under fr. 4 and to its left, so that no

vertical fibres are coincident with the latter. Hutchinson says nothing about the other fragments of the same papyrus.

Further, I do not understand why Snell considers the supplement $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\acute{o}\kappa\epsilon\iota\tau\alpha\iota\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ |\ [\Theta\acute{\eta}\beta\alpha\iota\varsigma]$ 'wohl zu lang'. Obviously, he must have counted the missing letters but not measured the space on the papyrus. In my measurement, *ΘHBAIC* has exactly the size needed. The pattern of the cuts of the papyrus, in which the left-hand edge of fr. 4 coincides with the right-hand edge of fr. 1, determines also the size of the supplements in fr. 4: it must be approximately equal to the reading $\zeta\omega\nu\lambda\alpha\lceil$ of the first line of fr. 1. By reducing the area until the left-hand margin Snell was obliged to replace the self-evident $\gamma\epsilon\lceil[\rho\acute{o}\nu\tau\omega]\nu$ with the unlikely $\gamma\epsilon\lceil[\rho\alpha\iota\tilde{\omega}]\nu$. The only point where the letters needed for the supplement are fewer is at line 4 $\sigma\nu\nu\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\eta\lceil[\kappa\epsilon\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}]\kappa$. We should, however, take into account the scribe's habit in this Hypothesis to leave short or long gaps before some typical words or phrases (*ante* $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\acute{o}\kappa\epsilon\iota\tau\alpha\iota$, *ante* $\sigma\nu\nu\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\eta\lceil[\kappa\epsilon\nu$, *ante* $\delta\ \pi\rho\omicron\lambda\omicron\gamma\acute{\iota}[\zeta\omega\nu$, and many more in the didascalia of the papyrus fr. 2). It seems then that similarly the scribe left a short gap *ante* $\acute{\epsilon}]\kappa\ \pi\omicron\lambda\iota\tau\tilde{\omega}\nu$. These supplements ensure that the plot of Aeschylus' *Laïos* takes place in Thebes and that the title character performs the prologue.

I reproduce below the reconstructed text of the Hypothesis.

$\overline{A}A\overline{I}O\overline{C}$]

T 58b R. (P.Oxy. 2256 fr. 2)
= DID C 4a Sn.

$\overline{A}ICX\overline{Y}A\overline{O}]\overline{Y}$

- ἐπὶ ἄρχοντος) Θεαγ]ενίδου Ὀλ[υ]μπιάδος [ο]η['] ἔτει] α[
ἐνίκα Αἰσχύλ]ος Λαῖωι, Οἰδ[ί]ποδι, Ἐπ[τ] ἐπὶ Θήβαίς,
5 Σφιγγὶ σατύ(ροις).] δεύτερος Ἀριστίας ταῖς τοῦ πα-
τρ(ος) Πρατίνου τραγωιδ[ί]αις. τρι[τ]οῦς [Πο]λυ-
φράσμων] Ανκουργε[ί]αι τ[ε]τρ[ο]αλογίαι.

- ἡ μὲν] σκηνὴ τοῦ δρᾶ-
ματο]ς ὑπόκειται ἐν
10 Θήβαις,] ὁ δὲ χο(ρὸς) συνέστη-
κεν ἔ]κ πολιτῶν γε-
ρόντων]ν. ὁ προλογί-
ζων Λαῖος.

451v R. (P.Oxy. 2256 fr. 4)

p. 231 R. (P.Oxy. 2256 fr. 1)

τὰ π[ρ]όσω[πα τοῦ δράματος
 Λαί[ος]

—

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1 sq. Λαίος] ' Αἰσχύλο]v Snell, [Οἰδίπο]v[ς Lobel, [ἐπὶθέσεις ' Λαῖο]v Zuntz (*PCPhS* 27, 1981, 82; *Hermes* 111, 1983, 261) 3 ἐπὶ ἄρχοντ(ος) Snell secundum Argum. pap. 2256 fr. 3 (Aesch. *Supp.*), ἐδιδάχθη ἐπὶ Lobel secundum Argum. cod. M Aesch. *Sept.* (acc. West) | ἔτει] α[' ἐνίκῃ Αἰσχ. (quamquam ā[expectaveris) sodales seminarii Thessalonicensis (Kakridis, *Ἑλληνικά* 13, 1953, 171, *Acme* 8, 1955, 92), ἐνίκῃ] α ' Lobel 4 Ἐπτ' leg. Ts., Ἐπτὰ spatio non sufficit | Θήβαις pap.^{pc} 6 πα'[τρὸς Πρατίνου]v Snell, πα'τρ' Parsons (ap. Hutchinson, *Aeschylus, Septem* contra Thebas, xviii), πα'τρὸς αὐτο]v Lobel 8–13 coniunxit Mette, omnia ad Λαῖον referens; contra dix. plerique 10 Θήβαις] Ts. post Mette qui perperam ἐν [Θή]βαις prop., ἄρχει]v Snell ('Θήβαις wohl zu lang') 11 sq. γε[ρόντων]v Lobel, γε[ραιῶ]v Snell 12 sq. προλογί[ζων] leg. Ts., προλογί[ζω]v] (v) ' Lobel

Irrespective of the Hypothesis, there have been many attempts at joining some of the numerous fragments of P.Oxy. 2256 (89 fragments in Lobel's edition, 90 by adding P.Gen. inv. 98, as proposed by Maria Serena Funghi and Maria Chiara Martinelli, 'P. Gen. inv. 98: Eschilo?', *Analecta Papyrologica* 8–9, 1996–7 [1998], 7–17). Lobel recognized the connection of 2256 fr. 6 = fr. 451s 6 R. with 2256 fr. 8 = fr. 451n R., which he placed in consecutive columns (6 at the bottom and 8 at the top of the respective columns), placing also on palaeographical grounds fr. 7 to the left of 6, fr. 25 under 8, and fr. 24 to the right of 8. Br. Snell, *Gnomon* 25 (1953), 439, similarly connected fragments 6 and 8, adding 2256 fr. 11 and 12 = fr. 451s 11 and 12 R., but also the large fragment 2256 fr. 9a–b = fr. 281a–b R., i.e., the Dike-fragment, which Lobel inclined to consider a satyr-play. Ed. Fraenkel, 'Vermutungen zum Aetna-Festspiel des Aischylos', *Erano*s 52 (1954), 61–75 (= *Kleine Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie*, Roma 1964, 1, 249–262), ascribed the joined fragments, the Dike-fragment included, to Aeschylus' *Aetnaeae*. His proposal was based on the information offered in Aeschylus' *Vita* 9 (ἐλθὼν τοῖνυν [scil. Aeschylus] εἰς Σικελίαν Ἰέρωνος τότε τὴν Αἴτνην κτίζοντος ἐπεδείξατο τὰς Αἰτναίας οἰωνιζόμενος βίον ἀγαθὸν τοῖς συνοικίζουσι τὴν πόλιν), which, as he believed, tallies well with the dispatch of the goddess of Justice by Zeus to a certain place on earth (P.Oxy. 2256 fr. 9a–b = Dike-fragment) as well as with the references to peace, splendour, and prosperity for a certain city that occur in P.Oxy. 2256 fr. 6, 8. H. J. Mette, *Die Fragmente der Tragödien des*

Aischylos, Berlin 1959 (also *Der verlorene Aischylos*, Berlin 1963, 187–191), joined even more fragments of P.Oxy. 2256: 11, 13, 9a-b, 12, 7, 6, 8, 24, 25 (= Mette's frs. 528–537), ascribing them reservedly to a satyr-play, which he names 'Das Dike-Drama', following Lobel, who speaks, however, only for the Dike-fragment (9a-b).

Henceforth, scholars are divided between these two main directions, both however connecting the Dike-fragment with P.Oxy. 2256 fr. 6, 8 and their appendages. I select, from the recent treatments of the subject: (a) satyr-play, e.g., Antje Wessels, 'Dike-Drama' in *Das griechische Satyrspiel*, edd. R. Krumeich, N. Pechstein, B. Seidensticker, Darmstadt 1999, 98–106; (b) *Aetnaeae*, e.g., P. Totaro, 'La fondazione di Etna e le *reliquiae* delle *Etnae*' in *La storia sulla scena*, ed. Anna Beltrametti, Roma 2011, 149–168.

I believe that the Dike-fragment (P.Oxy. 2256 fr. 9a-b = 281a, b R.) is beyond doubt a satyr-play and has nothing to do with the *Laiōs* fragments. I shall also propose that the poetic fragments P.Oxy. 2256 fr. 6 and 8 come from *Laiōs*, and must be placed right after the Hypothesis of P.Oxy. 2256 fr. 2+4+1, belonging to the prologue mentioned in the Hypothesis, and so the speaker is Laius. Fr. 6, where the bottom margin is visible, must cover the lower part of the column that contains the Hypothesis, while fr. 8, where the top margin is visible, must belong to the next column. These are of course no more than speculations yet unproved. We shall attempt to attain some proofs through the text printed below and the commentary that will follow. I have not attempted to join the smaller fragments proposed by Lobel, Snell, and Mette, because they give no continuous text as fragments 6 and 8 do, though they really seem to come from the close vicinity of the large fragments. First, the restored text:

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].[. . . 451s 6 R. (P.Oxy. 2256 fr. 6)

]

] πεπραγμένη·

ο]υς ἄγω πόλει

5 ἐπ]ικλήτους βροτοῖς

] μὲν ἡ πέλας

ν]εμεῖ πόλ[ιν]·

π]έμπειν μέγα·

ἐσ]τιν Εὐκλείας θεοῦ·

10 αὖτη μὲν οὕτω·] δῖα δ' ἦδε τιμία

- δαίμων πόλ[ε]ς ζωννῶσα μὴ σπείρειν κακ[ά, 451n R. (P.Oxy. 2256 fr. 8)
 ἀλλ' ἡδον]ήν τὰ τ' ἐστὶν εἰρήνην βροτοῖς.
 ταῦτ' οὖν ἐ]παίνῳ τήνδε· τι[μ]αῖ γὰρ πόλιν
 ἐν ἡσυχ[οισι] πράγμασιν καθημένην·
 15 δόμων τ' ἀέξει κάλλος ἐκπαγλού[μ]ενον (5)
 ἄ]μιλλαν ὥστε γειτόνων ὀλβωι κρατεῖν·
 οἱ] δ' αὖ φντεύειν ἡδ[ε] γῆς ἐπ' ἐμπολᾶς
 θυ]μῳι λέληνται δαΐας πεπανμέ[νοι
 σάλ]πιγγος, οὐδὲ φρονοῖ[οις] ἐξαισίω[ς
 20 c. 5]π[ι] []αν[(10)
 κά]τθαν· εἰ δὲ [

1]γ[ο]υς vel]τ[ο]υς Mette 4 Mette; hoc vel ο]υς ἀγῶ, ο]υσα ᾿γῶ? Radt 5 Ἡ | ἐπ]ικλήτους?
 Radt, πολ]υκλήτους Snell 6 vel]μεν | Ἡ | ἡ vel ἡ 7 ΕἰποΑ[. .] | γ]εμεῖ Mette, ἡρ]εμεῖ
 Ferrari, ν]εμεῖ? Radt 8 Γ vel Τ edd.; certe Γ | ΜΕΓΑ· punctum ignorant edd. | π]έμπειν
 μέγα ' σημεῖον ἡμῖν ἐσ]τιν Mette 9 certe ΤΙ; Α potius quam Ι Lobel | ΕΙ | ΟΥ· Εὐκλ.
 Ts., εὐκλ. omnes 10 initium e.g. suppl. Ts. | 'The letters after [primum] δ much rubbed;
 of the first only a dot level with the tops of the letters, next χ or perhaps λ' Lobel, δ λ ν
 Mette, δ ονδε Radt; leg. Ts. | Δ' ΗΔΕΤΙΜΙΑ 11 initium suppl. Ts. |] c Lobel, hoc vel] ε
 Radt | πόλ]ε[ι]ς suppl. Ts. | ὦ, ὦ | χωννῶσα, c ὦν Νῶσα, c cιν Νῶσα ?? Lobel, ζῶννῶσα Mette;
 Radt, cum Lobel consentiens, ζωννῶσα scriptum fuisse negat 12 initium e.g. suppl. Ts.
 |]γτέτ' ? Lobel,]γτάγ' Mette, ἄπα]ντά γ' supplens, τότ' ? Snell (ap. Merkelbach, APF 16,
 1958, 102),]γτ' τ' Radt,] ΝΤΑΤ' Ts.,] ν τὰ τ' legens. 13] 'a spot level with the tops
 of the letters' Lobel; ἐγῶ δ' ἐ]παίνῳ ? Snell (l.c.), θεὸν δ' ἐ]παίνῳ Lloyd-Jones, μάλιστ' (vel
 τορῶς δ') ἐ]παίνῳ vel σεβοῦντα]ς αἰνῶ Vysoký (LF 6 [81], 1958, 7sq.), ταῦτ' οὖν ἐ]παίνῳ
 Ts. | ΔΕ· / ΑΙ 14 ΗΝ· 15 ΓΑΟΥ 16 ΩC 17 ἡ] δ' αἶ ? Lobel, ἡ] δ' αἶ Stark (Maia
 n.s. 8, 1956, 84), ἡ] δ' εἶ Merkelbach, οἱ] δ' αἶ dub. Radt | ἡδ[ε] in οἱ δ[ε] (ΟΙ superscripto)
 et hoc fort. in ἰδ[ε] (Ο delete) inepte mutavit corrector | punctum ante lectiones superscrip-
 tas non est interpunctio | ΕΠΕΜΒΟΛΑC : Π supra Β a correctore scriptum; ἐπ' ἐμβ/π-, ἐπ'
 ἀμβ/π-, ἐπ' ἐμβολαῖς omnia Lobel, ἐπ' ἀμπολάς? (ἀναπολεῖν 'arare') Radt, si versus excidit
 post 17; ἐπεμβολάς Radt in textu 18 θυ]μῳι? Lobel, ὄγ]μωι? Radt | ΑΕ | λέληνται : Dor.
 λῶ confert Sutton (Glotta 55, 1977, 213) recte, λίπτομαι (coll. Aesch. Sept. 355, 380) con-
 fert Lloyd-Jones, λέλινται Lobel, λελίηται? Radt | ΔΑΙ 19]ΠΙΓΓ[ΟΥ]ΔΕ : supra dele-
 tum ΟΥ corrector ΟCΟΥ scripsit | ΠΙ | φρονοῖ[ων] Lobel, φρονοῖ[οις] Ts. | CΙ | ἐξαισί[ων] ?
 Snell, ἐξαισίω[ς] Ts. 20] [] ὦν Lobel,]π[ι] [] []αν [Ts.; μεμνη]μ[έν]οι Mette 21 'τθ
 suggest κατθαν or τνθόν Lobel, κά]τθαν leg. Ts., dub. proponens νῶν κά]τθαν

1–3. From the first verse only the low ends of two vertical strokes survive fol-
 lowed by a tiny trace. Mette plausibly enough supplements]γ[ο]υς or]τ[ο]υς.
 Nothing survives from the next two verses, but in the right margin of the
 third verse, the word πεπραγμένη is written, flanked by two dots, rather a

variant reading than an interpretation. Metrically it covers a full iambic metron, possibly the end of an iambic trimeter. What has been carried out in the past is uncertain, but, if the perfect participle is found in the prologue, it may well refer to the unknown starting point of the tragedy. Might the subject be 'peace', 'restoration of legitimacy', vel sim.?

4. The first surviving letter looks like ι, but the vertical is much longer than what is usual in iota. It is no doubt Υ with its top fork effaced. Combined with]ικλητους in the next verse, it must be the accusative plural ending of a second declension noun or the relative οὗς, if the reference is to a masculine plural object of ἄγω.

5. To Snell's πολ]υκλήτους I prefer Radt's ἐπ]ικλήτους, 'called in as allies', even though it does not seem to occur in poetry. ἐπικαλέω/-ομαι is also rare in poetry, but ἐπικέλομαι is predominantly poetic. Obviously those called in are gods. It is interesting that the speaker asserts that he is leading gods to the city as allies of the citizens. How could such a thing ever happen in drama? Or could ἄγω mean simply, just like ἐπάγω (LSJ s.v. I 4), 'bring in, invite as aiders or allies'? No doubt the issue is about new gods or new hypostases of gods that are being introduced to the city by the speaker. But what would the visual application of this introduction be? Be that as it may, I am henceforth using, instead of 'lead in', the equivocal 'introduce, -ction'.

6–7. ἡ πέλας must refer to one of the gods that are being introduced to the city, a female one, who will hereafter hold sway over or manage the city. It is uncertain whether the speaker indicates the goddess closest to him or refers to her as one who will be standing by, supporting, that is, the city. In the second possibility, Η may possibly stand for the relative ἥ. The punctuation at the end of line 7 is in the papyrus.

8. It is uncertain what 'big' this goddess is supposed to send (to the citizens?). σημεῖον (π]έμπειν μέγα 'σημεῖον ἡμῶν ἐσ]τιν) Mette, neglecting the high dot at the end of the verse. I would prefer κλέος; e.g., κλέος π]έμπειν μέγα· 'καὶ γὰρ τόδ' ἔργον ἐσ]τὶν Εὐκλείας θεοῦ; see next item. Theocr. 22.214–5 καὶ ἡμετέροις κλέος ὕμνοις | ἐσθλὸν ἀεὶ πέμπετε (sc. Τυνδαρίδαι). μέγα κλέος is very common.

9. The usual interpretation takes εὐκλεια as a common noun: 'of the god's (or the goddess's) glory'. I prefer Εὐκλείας θεοῦ, the goddess in whose honour Boeotians and Locrians used to set up altars and statues in every marketplace (Plut. *Arist.* 20.6–8). We shall return to this goddess, when speaking specifically about Thebes. However, Eucleia's worship is expanded in Greece. After the battle of Marathon, an hieron is established in Athens where she

is worshipped together with Eunomia. In the second half of the 4th century, Eurydice, the mother of Philip II of Macedon, dedicates a statue to Eucleia (*SEG* 33:556 *Εὐρυδίκη Σίρρα Εὐκλείαι*); Chrys. Saatsoglou-Paliadeli, ‘*Εὐρυδίκη Σίρρα Εὐκλείαι*’ in *Ἀμητός. Festschrift for Prof. M. Andronikos*, Thessaloniki 1986, 733-744. Finally, in a 3rd century BCE Paros inscription (‘Mnesiepes inscription’, *SEG* 15:517, II 6), a Delphic oracle is recorded prescribing the institution of a precinct in honour of Archilochus, and of sacrifices to a number of gods among whom Artemis Eucleia is mentioned.

10. Since *δῖα δ’ ἥδε τιμία* obviously starts introducing another goddess whereas the previous verse ends with punctuation in the papyrus, what remains for the first hemistich of this verse is a phrase concluding the introduction of Eucleia. *αὐτῇ μὲν οὕτω* is given *exempli gratia* among many similar phrases employed by tragedians and others (*Sept.* 422 *τούτῳ μὲν οὕτως ...*, *Ag.* 950 *τούτων μὲν οὕτω*, *Cho.* 453 *τὰ μὲν γὰρ οὕτως ἔχει*, *PV* 500 *τοιαῦτα μὲν δὴ ταῦτα*, *Soph. El.* 696 *καὶ ταῦτα μὲν τοιαῦτα*, *Eur. Andr.* 361 *ἡμεῖς μὲν οὖν τοιοῖδε*, *al.*); Fraenkel on *Ag.* 950, pp. 431 f.

11. Uncertain traces of the middle stroke of an epsilon are followed by a short completely rubbed out area which can accommodate only iota. What follows next is a clear *c*. The next letter looks ‘like the bottom left-hand of *δ* or *ζ*’ (Lobel), but its upper part is undetectable. Since *ΔὼΝΝΥCΑ* does not make sense, it is reasonable to resort to *Z*, whose upper part may have been scribbled in a flawed manner. However, by enlarging the photograph, I discern that a tiny piece containing the upper part of *ζ* has been chipped off and was then placed slantwise, thus giving the impression of ‘the back of *c*’, to which Lobel likens it. With Mette, I read quite certainly *ζὼννῦca*, not *χὼννῦca*, *c.ὼν Nῦca*, *c.ὲν Nῦca* as attempted by Lobel. *δῖα δ’ ἥδε τιμία | δαίμων πόλ[ε]ι[ς] ζωννῦσα*, with *ἔστιν* implied, as is very frequent in tragedy when introducing a new person or indicating a place. *δῖα*, or rather substantivized *Δῖα*, is evidently a daughter of Zeus and refers to Athena. This verifies the claims that fr. 451n R. continues the text of fr. 451s R. in a new column, since *Ζωστηρία* was an epithet of Athena. Hsch. ζ 261 *Ζώστειρα· Ἀθηνᾶς ἐπίθετον ἐν Βοιωτίᾳ*; *Lex. Seguer.* 261.32 Bekk. *καὶ Ἀθηνᾶ ζωστήρα*; Steph. Byz. 298 Mein. (s.v. *Ζωστήρ*) *τιμᾶται καὶ Ζωστηρία Ἀθηνᾶ ἐν Λοκροῖς τοῖς Ἐπικνημιδίοις*. Also, a number of inscriptions: Schwyzler, *DGE* 319.2 (Delph., at the precinct of Athena Pronaia, vi/v BCE) [*Ἀ*θ]άναϊ Ζῶστῆρία; *IG* I³ 369.92 (Att., 426/5) *Ἀθῆναίης Ζῶστῆρίας*; *IG* V,1.1116 (Lacon.) [*Ἀ*]θαναία[ι] [*Ζ*ῶσ]τῆρία; *IG* VII 548 (Tanagra) *Ἀθάνας Ζω[στε]ι[ρ]ίας*. We shall have to return to this goddess later on.— *δαίμων*, and not *θεά* or *θεός*, is proposed for aligning the

supplement with the left-hand margin. For the same reason *Ὀγκα* (see below) is ruled out. If a proper name is necessary, I would propose *Παλλάς* which fits the space precisely, but I am not certain that it is, since *δα* or *Δα* seems to be substantivized. 'And here is the daughter of Zeus, the noble goddess who girds up the citizens ...'. *πόλεις* in the sense 'civitates, cives, bodies of citizens', as often in Aeschylus: *Su.* 8, 273, 357, 942, *Ag.* 532, 605, 638/40. Not *βροτοῦ*], both for size considerations and for avoiding the conflict with 12 *βροτοῖς*.

11–13. *μὴ σπείρειν* from *ζωννῶσα*, as an infinitive of purpose: 'who girds the citizens up not for sowing evils'. *μὴ σπείρειν κακά* suggests *ἀλλά* + accus. sing. (because of] γ) of a noun meaning the opposite of *κακά*. I propose *ἀλλ' ἡδονῇ*, 'but pleasure, happiness', but other alternatives may be possible. *ἐστίν* must be used here somehow like 'compose, constitute'. *ταῦτ' οὖν ἐ]παινῶ τήνδε* rather in the usual sense 'praise' than 'recommend, advise'. The two alternatives, sufferings, on the one hand, and joys with peace, on the other, reflect the double capacity of Athena, *Πρόμαχος* and *Ἐργάνη*, and the double usage of *ζώννυμι*, 'gird up for battle' (*Il.* 11.15, and frequently in the *Iliad*) and 'gird up for labour' (*Hes. Op.* 345). I suppose that the metaphorical use of *σπείρειν* was chosen precisely for associating the activities of the goddess with her main function as *Ἐργάνη*, which was working the soil and farming.

13–16. Being a patron goddess of many a Greek city (*Πολι(σ)οῦχος vel sim.*), she is also their combatant protectress (*Πρόμαχος*), ensuring that the protected citizens enjoy the benefits of peace. At the same time, she exalts admirably the wealth and the beauty of the city, so that it prevails over its neighbours. It is clear by now that the speaker does not speak generally of the cities protected by Athena, but of the particular city to which he is introducing the goddess together with Eucleia.

17–18. Restoration and understanding are hampered by several errors committed by the scribe. No doubt the opening of the verse must be *οἱ δ' αἶ* (Radt interrogatively). *ἔλβωι κρατεῖν | ἡ]δ' αἶ φντεῖν* (Stark) would be absurd, if the city was supposed to prevail over its neighbours in wealth *and* to cultivate plants. After finishing with the goddesses, the speaker, with a construction *κατὰ τὸ νοούμενον*, passes now on to the mortals (*οἱ δ' αἶ* = 'and the mortals in turn', i.e. 'after the goddesses'), the citizens of the city in question.— In the middle of the verse, the scribe corrects the originally written *ἡδέ* to *οἱ δέ*. I am not sure whether the horizontal stroke in the centre of the superscript *ο* aims at crossing out the letter and introducing *ιδέ* ('and'). There is no doubt that the initial reading (*ἡδέ*) is the correct one, since a partition of *οἱ*

δὲ... οἱ δέ is unthinkable, and the rare ἰδέ has its iota short. The dot in front of the correction (*·OI superscriptum*) is not a punctuation but a diacritical mark referring to the new reading that would be repeated enclosed between dots in the margin (here torn off); see line 3 above (*·πεπραγμένη·*) or in fr. 9a.37 of the same papyrus (281a Radt; Dike play) ὅ·ζοι pointing to the marginal variant *·σταζ[οι]*. Obviously the juxtaposition of the closely sounding at the time of the copying of P.Oxy. 2256 (2nd /3rd c. CE), οἱ δέ, ἡδέ, and possibly ἰδέ, confused the scribe, who attempted all possible options. In any case, the citizens are eagerly engaged in agriculture *and*, as I shall propose, the trade of their field products.— *επεμβολας* pap.^{ac}, *επεμπολας* pap.^{pc} This gave rise to numerous proposals (*ἐπ' ἐμβολάς, ἐπ' ἐμπολάς, ἐπ' ἀμβολάς, ἐπ' ἀμπολάς, ἐπ' ἐμβολαῖς*), mostly by Lobel. Radt notes: 'expectaveris "alii plantare, alii arare cupiunt" [...], sed quomodo hoc e Graecis eliciendum sit non liquet'. He is not more specific, but 'arare' refers to *ἐπ' ἀμπολάς* from *ἀναπολεῖν*, 'plough'; cf. his supplement ὄγ[μωι]. However, I believe that speaking of the general wealth of a city, it is less appropriate to distinguish between agriculture and horticulture as it is to complete the agricultural cycle by adding the revenue from trading the relevant products. Therefore, *ἐπ' ἐμπολάς*, the corrected reading, is necessary, and γῆς ἐμπολαί is not the business of real estate but the commerce τῶν ἀπὸ γῆς (Arist. *Pol.* 1258b 17 ff.). Radt is right in translating *λέληνται* as 'cupiunt'. As for the form, it seems that Sutton is right in proposing 'a previously unattested middle perfect of λῶ'. Actually, *λέληνται* (the acute is in the papyrus) is legitimated by Hesychius' article λ 616: *λελημένοι· λελημένοι (-ληι- cod.). διανοοῦμενοι. ἐν τούτῳ (ἐν τῷ νῶ?) τὸ λῆμα ἔχοντες. λεληματίσθαι γὰρ τὸ τῇ διανοίᾳ πρὸς πᾶν ὀρμητικῶς ἔχειν*. The Hesychius article, especially with τὸ τῇ διανοίᾳ πρὸς πᾶν ὀρμητικῶς ἔχειν, perhaps suggests less the sense 'cupiunt' than ὥρμηνται, 'were eager for/to'.

18–20. The *supra lineam* supplemented omission of *σάλ[πιγγ]* οὐδὲ clarifies the sense: *δαῖας πεπανμέ[νοι | σάλ]πιγγος, οὐδὲ φρουρί[οις] ἐξαισίω[ς | κλπ.* Mette's proposal for 20 *μεμνη[μ[έν]οι* is reasonable, but I cannot make out the writing. The horizontal of the initial π is faintly visible, but the second letter looks like an ι crossed out with a short stroke. If, contrary to its appearance, it is an epsilon, then *ἐ[πεμ[β]αίν]* is possible. Cf. *Sept.* 634 *πύργοις ἐπεμβάς*. If *δαῖας σάλπιγγος* implies the defensive war, the adverb *ἐξαισίως*, 'lawlessly', clearly suggests offensive warfare, of which the citizens were also relieved. Then, the repetition *δαίων* in the opening of 20 would be appropriate not only palaeographically but also stylistically. In any case, peace and success are not merely wished for as gifts of the goddesses, but they appear to be a real fact following a war experienced by the citizens.

21. 'τθ suggest *κατθαν* or *τυτθον*; neither can be excluded, but *a* in one case, *o* in the other would be rather anomalously made' (Lobel). However, *a*, with the ink of its lower part peeled off but still visible, is certain and even might be saved the underdot. Three letters seem to be missing before *κα*; e.g. *νῦν κάτθαν*· εἰ δὲ [? Obviously, the subject of *κάτθαν*(ε) is hidden in the relics of line 20.

After having investigated the text, it is now time to examine the validity of the proposal that the two fragments come from Aeschylus' *Laïos*, and specifically from its prologue. The Hypothesis (fr. 451v R. + P.Oxy. 2256 fr. 1), as reconstructed above, states *ὁ προλογίζων Λαῖος*, something verified in the ensuing characters' list, where *Λαῖ[ος]* holds the first place.

If then Laius is the speaking character in the two fragments in question, it is surprising to hear him declaring that he is introducing certain gods to the city, i.e., Thebes. Two goddesses are specifically mentioned: 9 Eucleia and 10–11 Athena Zosteria. What is more, the two goddesses mentioned seem to be present and visible to the audience, if we read at 6 ἡ πέλας and at 10 ἡδε. Whether there were more of them or not, depends on whether the poetic text followed right after the introductory paratext in the first column of the play. This question can be answered only after an elaborate inspection of the vertical fibres on the back side of the papyrus, an inspection I am unable to make.

Be that as it may, in order to gain a complete initial column, we should first add, with quite generous spaces at the joints, the height of the separate units that make up this introductory paratext (fr. 2+4+1: title, author name, didascalia, hypothesis proper, dramatis personae). Especially difficult is to calculate the height of the dramatis personae, since, apart from the surviving *Λαῖ[ος]*, we do not know the number of the other characters. Further, we do not know whether the names were written in one or two columns. However, the paragraphos placed under *Λαῖ[ος]* must indicate that the names were written continuously in one line, as is often done in medieval MSS of Aeschylean plays. At any rate, adding the sum of the paratext height to the height of fr. 6, which gives the poetic text in the bottom part of a column, we still have a written column shorter than the only full column of P.Oxy. 2256 surviving, the fr. 9a, i.e., the Dike-drama. In terms of height, the fr. 9a written column is 20.8 cm. high, whereas the sum total of the *Laïos* column units is c. 17.8–19.5 cm., depending on the size of the spaces between the units. In terms of text quantity, the verses missing cannot be more than 3 to 6, and they obviously come from the point of meeting of paratext and text, i.e., from

the beginning of the tragedy. Could more gods be mentioned in these initial missing verses or in the column of fr. 8, after line 21? Both alternatives seem unlikely, because (a) the missing lines are insufficient while the words 4–5 ο]υς ἄγω πόλει ... ἐπ]ικλήτους βροτοῖς seem to be opening the reference to the gods (the two o-stem nouns or pronouns, 4 ο]υς, 5 ἐπ]ικλήτους, need not necessarily suggest male gods), and (b) after 17 οἱ] δ' αἶ, the issue seems to have passed from the gods to the citizens of Thebes. If so, we may have to be content with the two goddesses.

With Laius performing the prologue, it is only natural that the city in question is Thebes. We have already supplemented in the Hypothesis ἐπόκειται ἐν | Θήβαις], but the supplement by no means can be considered unequivocal. In any case, at what point of the myth can Laius enter his city introducing two deities who will ensure success and peace, following a war? From a maze of versions, what can be made out is that Laius, after the death of Labdacus, his father, remained in Thebes during the regency of Lycus. However, in revenge for the humiliating treatment of Antiope by Lycus, her twin sons Zethus and Amphion fought against and defeated him, conquered the city and killed or incapacitated Lycus, declaring themselves kings. Finally, they drove out of Thebes Laius who fled to the royal court of Pelops in Pisa. During the rule of Amphion and Zethus, they built in a miraculous way the famous walls of Thebes. When they perished, both after the violent death of their children, Laius returned to Thebes.

I believe that the dramatic time of *Laios* is precisely the time point of this return. If 21 νῦν κα]τθαν' is correctly supplemented, the reference must be to the death of the previous king, Amphion or Zethus, whoever of them died last. E.g., Ἀμφίων δ' ἄναξ | νῦν κα]τθαν'; cf. Eur. *Antiope* fr. 48.98 Kamb. The Thebans had to fight against Amphion and Zethus when the brothers confronted Lycus, but their succession was made peacefully. However, why is Laius accompanied in his return by gods? The two goddesses are specifically related to Thebes. We already mentioned the testimony of the Boeotian Plutarch about the worship of Artemis Eucleia in Boeotia and Locris (*Arist.* 20.6–8) βωμὸς γὰρ αὐτῇ καὶ ἄγαλμα κατὰ πᾶσαν ἀγορὰν ἵδρυνται, καὶ προθύουσιν αἱ τε γαμούμεναι καὶ οἱ γαμοῦντες. She was a local heroine of Opuntian Locris, daughter of Heracles and niece of Patroclus. Her worship, because of her state of virginity, was syncretized with that of Artemis. So, the festival of Eucleia in Boeotia was coupled with that of Artemis (*CID* 1.9D.7 κηῶκλεια κάρταμίτια). We have seen above her late occurrences, but also that already in the early 5th century, thanks to her 'speaking' name (= glory), she had been coupled with Eunomia (= law and order)

— and later with more Eu- personifications. If the proposal made above can be true (8–9 κλέος π]έμπειν μέγα· | καὶ γὰρ τόδ' ἔργον ἐσ]τὶν Εὐκλείας θεοῦ), Aeschylus must be making a wordplay with her name. In the 2nd century CE description of Thebes by Pausanias, it is said that in the site of the agora, already deserted when Pausanias travelled there, close to the graves of the Niobids (9.17.1) Ἀρτέμιδος ναός ἐστιν Εὐκλείας, Σκόπα δὲ τὸ ἄγαλμα ἔργον. Scopas' statue is, of course, posterior, but it may have been set up for replacing or coupling up an archaic statue. The latter is described by Sophocles in *OT* 158–167, where the Chorus invoke three gods for help: Athena, Artemis and Phoebus. The invocation to the second of them (160–162) mentions Artemis Eucleia as positioned in the agora:

γαιάχόν τ' ἀδελφεὰν (sc. of Athena)
 Ἄρτεμιν, ἃ κνκλόεντ' ἀγορᾶς θρόνον
 Εὐκλεα θάσσει.

The Mss give εὐκλέα or εὐκλεᾶ (Eust. εὐκλεῇ) connecting it with θρόνον, but most editors accept Elmsley's conjecture *Εὐκλεα*, which depends on Schol. Soph. *ad loc.* Εὐκλεία· Ἄρτεμις οὕτω παρὰ Βοιωτοῖς τιμᾶται. No matter whether Sophocles states the name of the goddess verbatim or makes an indirect hint of her, there can be no doubt as to the identity of the goddess. Thus it appears that her ἔδος, her seated statue, was set up in the Theban agora, where Pausanias many centuries later saw her temple. It is questionable what κνκλόεντ' ἀγορᾶς θρόνον means. Jebb considers it a hypallage for κνκλοέσεως ἀγορᾶς θρόνον, but his rendering 'throne consisting of the round marketplace' is not convincing. Yet, I believe that no hypallage is necessary, and what is implied is a small round temple in the agora, a sort of tholos, that housed the seated statue of the goddess. It is very important that Artemis Eucleia is also named γαιάχοχος, here = πολιοῦχος, fully compatible with 7 ν]εμεῖ πόλ[ιν], 'will inhabit, possess, manage, support the city'; cf. Aesch. *Sept.* 271–2 θεοῖς | πεδιονόμοις; *Ag.* 88 θεῶν τῶν ἀστυνόμων; *Pers.* 853 πολισσονόμον βιοτᾶς; *Cho.* 864 ἀρχάς τε πολισσονόμονς.

The second goddess, Athena, is not specifically characterized in *OT* 158–159:

πρωτὰ σε κεκλόμενος, θύγατερ Διός,
 ἄμβροτ' Ἀθάνα,

Pausanias is, however, again elucidating. After the mention of the temple of Artemis Eucleia, in the same paragraph, he adds: 9.17.3 *πλησίον δὲ Ἀμφιτρούωνος <ἀνάθημα> δύο ἀγάλματα λίθινα λέγουσιν Ἀθηνᾶς ἐπικλήσιν Ζωστήριος· λαβεῖν γὰρ τὰ ὅπλα αὐτὸν ἐνταῦθα, ἥνίκα Εὐβοεῦσι καὶ Χαλκώδοντι ἔμελλεν ἀντιτάξεσθαι. τὸ δὲ ἐνδύναι τὰ ὅπλα ἐκάλουν ἄρα οἱ παλαιοὶ ζώσασθαι· καὶ δὴ Ὅμηρον, Ἄρει τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονα ποιήσαντα εἰκέναι τὴν ζώνην (Il. 2.479), τῶν ὁπλῶν τὴν σκευὴν φασιν εἰκάζειν. Pausanias' interpretation of the epithet, no doubt reflecting the popular interpretation given by the Thebans, limits the wider sense we attempted to give to Zosteria when commenting on line 12 about its usage in Aeschylus. On the other hand, it is remarkable that, just like Eucleia, she is also mentioned with regard to her local worship in Locris, though not the Opuntian Locris, as Eucleia, but the Epicnemidian: Steph. Byz. 298 Mein. (s.v. Ζωστήρ) *τιμᾶται καὶ Ζωστήρεια Ἀθηνᾶ ἐν Λοκροῖς τοῖς Ἐπικνημιδίοις.**

However, what would the scenic representation be, in other words, how would this introduction of two gods into the city be visually represented? We have seen above that their description is in both cases supplemented with reference to statues set up in the agora of Thebes. It is reasonable then to assume as a fact that the gods' presence in the drama is symbolized by their statues. In two scenes of Aesch. *Septem*—significantly the third play of the tetralogy that starts with *Laios*—we find relevant references. At 217 f. Eteocles is addressing the panicked Chorus: *ἀλλ' οὖν θεοὺς | τοὺς τῆς ἀλούσης πόλεος ἐκλείπειν λόγος.* The Scholia *ad loc.* remark: *λέγεται γὰρ ὅτι, ὅταν ἔμελλε πορθηθῆναι ἡ Τροία, ἐφάνησαν οἱ θεοὶ τοῖς Τρωσὶν ἀνελόμενοι ἐκ τῶν ναῶν τὰ ἀγάλματα αὐτῶν.* At 304 ff. the Chorus are addressing the city gods, apparently represented by their statues: *ποῖον δ' ἀμείψεσθε γαίης πέδον | τᾷσδ' ἄρειον, ἐχθροῖς | ἀφέντες τὰν βαθύχθον' αἴαν | ὕδωρ τε Διρκαῖον ...;* And the Scholia *ad loc.* note: *εἴρηται δὲ καὶ ἐν Ξοανηφόροις Σοφοκλέους (452 R.) ὡς οἱ θεοὶ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰλίου φέρουσιν ἐπὶ τῶν ὄμων τὰ ἐαντῶν ξόανα, εἰδότες ὅτι ἀλίσκεται.* Euripides exploits the theme in the prologue of the *Troades*, where Poseidon appears abandoning the city: 25 ff. *λείπω τὸ κλεινὸν Ἴλιον βωμούς τ' ἐμούς· | ἐρημία γὰρ πόλιν ὅταν λάβῃ κακὴ, | ροσεῖ τὰ τῶν θεῶν οὐδὲ τιμᾶσθαι θέλει.* And at 1071 ff., the Chorus are addressing Zeus: *φροῦδαί σοι θυσίαι χορῶν τ' | εὐφημοὶ κέλαδοι κατ' ὄρ|φραν τε παννυχίδες θεῶν, | χρυσέων τε ξοάνων τύποι,* where noticeable is the reference to *χρυσέων ξοάνων τύποι.* The *Septem* Scholia both times comment on references to the ancient Greek belief that the patron gods of a city abandon it when its conquest by the enemy is imminent. Noteworthy is, however, that the belief is associated with the presence and the removal of the gods' statues.

Anyhow, Thebes is not conquered in the *Septem*, and the gods need not abandon it. Yet, as we discussed above, Thebes had been conquered in the past by Amphion and Zethus, who drove Laius, the legitimate king, out of the city. Nothing is known about the city gods, whether they abandoned the city or not, with or without their statues. On the contrary, given the relations of the conquerors' mother Antiope with Zeus and of Amphion's filial relation with the father of the gods, as well as Antiope's association with Aphrodite and of the twin brothers with Hermes, I would consider the abandonment of the city by the gods rather unlikely. Furthermore, the rule of Amphion and Zethus has by no means been adverse on Thebes. They offered her the famous citadel, built miraculously by Amphion, while Zethus offered her through his wife (*Θήβη*) the name she will be known thereafter in history. The subsequent contrast with Artemis and Apollon, which led to the extermination of their wives and children, or at least only Amphion's, and then to the tragic death of both brothers, does not seem to be related with the conquest of Cadmeia by them. Even after their death, they enjoy heroic honours on their graves.

Further, though there are many references to the gods abandoning a conquered city, there is none, to my knowledge, to gods returning to a liberated one and to restored kings leading the gods back. Therefore, it is possibly likelier that, with Laius' return, i.e. with the restoration of the Labdacids to the throne, two new deities or different hypostases of old deities were added to the list of the guardian gods of Thebes, deities who will specifically ensure, even with their eloquent names, peace and prosperity for the city. The addition is witnessed through temples and statues in the agora, and symbolically illustrated as entrance into the city through the guidance of Laius. They have entered Thebes, but do not seem to have returned there. After all, the verb used in line 4 is *ἄγω* not *κατάγω*. Yet, though the situation is quite different, the conception of the gods entering or leaving the country with their representative image is the same. Only, to save Aeschylus from the crude image of Sophocles' *Ξοανηφόροι*, where the gods carry their wooden images on their shoulders, we can surmise that the goddesses are already symbolized by their statues placed on the stage, which represents the agora of Cadmeia. Tragically, however, the inception of this new era of euphoria signals also the start of the family tribulation whose thread from generation to generation will be unrolled in the Aeschylean trilogy.

What remains stable during the vehement changes in the course of the story is the attendance of the gods, in other words of their statues, that serve as stage props, demonstrably in the first and third dramas, *Laios* and *Septem*,

but no doubt in *Oidipous* too, though nothing survives from it. Combining these elements, it is reasonable to infer that *Laiōs* opened with the title character standing at the marketplace of Cadmeia, right after his return from exile. We can guess that his first words would have been a version of the typical saluting prayer to the native land of the returning or arriving fighter or traveller or exile: e.g., Aesch. *Ag.* 503 ff. (return of the Messenger, *ὦ πατρῶν οὔδας Ἀργείας χθονός*, | ... | *νῦν χαῖρε μὲν χθών, χαῖρε δ' ἡλίον φάος*), *Cho.* fr. 1 (return of Orestes, prologue, *Ἐρμῆ χθόνιε, πατρῶ' ἐποπτεύων κρᾶτη*, | ... | *ἦκω γὰρ εἰς γῆν τήνδε καὶ κατέρχομαι*), fr. 143 (*Mysoi*) R. (arrival of Telephus at Mysia, prologue of his servant, *ὦ Κάϊκε Μύσιαί τ' ἐπιρροαί*), fr. 451k R. (prologue?, *θεῶν μ' ἐν εὐχαῖς πρῶτα προσβέβυν σέβ[η] | ×-ἰ]κνοῦμαι*), Eur. *HF* 523 ff. (return of Heracles, *ὦ χαῖρε μέλαθρον πρόπυλά θ' ἐστίας ἐμῆς*), *Or.* 356 ff. (return of Menelaus, *ὦ δῶμα, τῇ μὲν σ' ἡδέως προσδέρομαι | Τροίαθεν ἐλθών*), fr. 558 (*Oineus*) Kann. (return of Diomedes, prologue, *ὦ γῆς πατρώας χαῖρε φίλτατον πέδον | Καλυδῶνος*), fr. 696 (*Telephus*) Kann. (coming of Telephus, prologue, *ὦ γαῖα πατρίς, ἦν Πέλοψ δόριζεται, | χαῖρ'*), and several more parallels from comedy.² Laius is supposed to have brought along two goddesses, Artemis Eucleia and Athena Zosteria, whose statues in the opening of the play are already set up in the agora. We mentioned above Soph. *OT* 158–167, where the Chorus invoke a triad of guardian gods (164 *τρισσοὶ ἀλεξίμοροι*), no doubt at the marketplace of Thebes: Athena, possibly *δῖα* or *Δῖα*, since her only specification in *OT* is *θύγατερ Διός*, Artemis, explicitly or by implication identified as Eucleia, and Apollon specified as *Φοῖβος ἐκαβόλος*, but elsewhere in the same passage as Paean, i.e., healer of the plague that afflicts the Thebans in *OT*, or Lykeios. If this third male god has to be added here too, the only place I can imagine this could be done is the opening formal salutation. Cf. the beginning of the prologue of *Choephoroi*, with Orestes invoking Hermes. It is better, therefore, to take Apollon as already established in Thebes and the two incoming goddesses forming with him the protecting triad of *OT*. In *Laiōs*, the two deities that are introduced are represented, as mentioned above, by their statues on the stage that represents the agora of Thebes. The stage must have already been furnished with statues of other guardian gods. The design can be reconstructed from the third play of the trilogy, the surviving *Septem contra Thebas*. There, the panic-stricken Chorus have recourse to the images of the gods for help (93–99):

2. My thanks to Eirini Papadopoulou for her assistance in locating the relevant passages.

- 95 *τίς ἄρα ῥύσεται, τίς ἄρ' ἐπαρκέσει*
θεῶν ἢ θεῶν;
πότερα δῆτ' ἐγὼ <πότερα> ποτιπέσω
βρέτη δαιμόνων;
ἰὼ
μάκαρες εὐεδροί.
ἀκμάζει βρετέων ἔχεσθαι· τί μέλλομεν ἀγάστονοι;

In the rest of this introductory melic part and the stasimon that follows, the Chorus supplicate in front of each image: 104–7 Ares, 116–128 Zeus, 129–31 Pallas (Athena), 131–5 Poseidon, 137–9 Ares again, 140–5 Cypris (Aphrodite), 146–7 Lykeios (Apollon), 148–9 Artemis, 152–3 Hera, 154–5 Artemis again, 159–61 Apollon again, 162–3 Dia (Athena), 164–5 Onca. With regard to the last two, *καὶ δῖ ὄθεν* was D. Young's palmary emendation of the unmetrical *καὶ Διόθεν* (*GRBS* 13, 1972, 5–38, esp. 20). However, his subsequent connection of *δῖ(a)* with Onca is defective both in colometry (unwarranted synapheia between two double dochmiac metrical units) and in meaning ('in battles a blessed queen' is desperate). No doubt, both Dia and Onca are epithets of the same goddess, Athena (*Sept.* 487 Ὀγκας Ἀθάνας, 501 Ὀγκα Παλλάς), but different epithets referring to different statues of the same gods are quite common (Athena Parthenos, Athena Promachos, Athena Polias).

All other references seem consistent with what we know about Thebes. She no doubt predominated over her neighbours in architectural splendour and prosperity, and her wealth came from agricultural production and commerce. At the same time her seven-gated fortification walls were so prominent that their construction entered the realm of legend. All we knew about *Laios* depended on two or three book fragments and a few references to Laius in the *Septem*. To start from the last, the oracle of Apollon that warned Laius to die childless or else he would harm his city (*Sept.* 742 ff.) must have been referred to in *Laios*. The oracle must have contained the reference to the exposure of the yet unborn Oedipus (fr. *122 R.), but also to the murder of Laius (fr. *122a linked with 354 R.). Both fragments consist of abstruse words or arcane customs, which remind of the riddling oracular language: 122 *χυντρίζειν* for 'expose in an earthen vessel' and 354 (= 122a) *ἀποπτῦσαι δεῖ καὶ καθήρασθαι στόμα* with reference to the purification of the murderer. Fr. 121 R. *ἀράχρον* as genitive of either *ἀράχνης*, *ὅ*, or *ἄραχρος*, *ὅ*, is unimportant.

Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek Myth. A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*, Baltimore 1993, p. 491, postulates a scenario for the action of *Laios*:

‘the drama probably began with Laios setting out from Thebes (for Delphi?) and ended with a messenger speech announcing his demise at a crossroads’. At least the opening he proposes is now disproved, though the messenger sent to or rather coming from Delphi and announcing Apollon’s obscure oracle is absolutely necessary. But if the oracle was a warning to Laios against begetting children, the visit to Delphi must have taken place before Oedipus’ birth. Thus, the announcement of Laios’ murder at a crossroads in the end of the play is impossible, as it would stretch the dramatic time out to a period of many years, during which Oedipus should have been born and grown up, before arriving at Thebes. The actual point of the announcement seems to be at the beginning of the next tragedy, *Oidipous*, with fr. 387a R. forming part of the messenger’s speech.

Unfortunately, the papyrus text does not help much in adding to the reconstruction of the story of the play, beyond the surmise that it started with the return of Laios to Thebes and the restoration of the Labdacid dynasty, that the stage setting consisted of statues of the guardian gods in the agora of Thebes, and the guess that two goddesses in particular were added to the city gods of Thebes and may have something to do with the story’s progress. However, the wealth and the prosperity of Thebes can only collaterally be related with the main theme of *Laios*. The emphasis placed on these qualities of the city would be meaningless if the tragic development of the story did not show that they are under threat. The initial position of the play in Aeschylus’ Theban trilogy must be associated with the first stage of the curse that haunted the Labdacids for at least three generations. Whether the story has to do only with the disobedience of Laios to Apollon’s oracle, as the testimony of the *Septem* indicates, or another myth intervened for explaining the reason of the oracle (the curse of Pelops following the abduction and rape of Chrysippus by Laios and the boy’s subsequent suicide?), it is quite unsafe to guess.

