

‘REALISM’ AND REFLECTIONS OF ART
IN AESCHYLEAN STAGE SETTINGS
(*PERSAE*, *SUPPLICES*, *THEOROI*)



ABSTRACT: Potential answers concerning the existence or not of specific stage structures in the Theatre of Dionysus, during the life of Aeschylus, may only be tentative and offered mainly on the basis of hints supplied by the texts themselves. Owing to the lack of further evidence, it is preferable to opt for the most straightforward and economical solutions (in terms of both complexity and cost). In this study I am dealing with two Aeschylean tragedies, *Persae* and *Supplices*, where the issue of the possible existence of specific stage installations or of a raised stage needs to be addressed. I will equally consider the fragmentary satyr play *Theoroi*, which raises the question of the possible influence of contemporaneous artistic styles upon stage constructions or objects.

THIS PAPER¹ DEALS with “spectacle” (*ᾠψις*), the Aristotelian qualitative element of drama most difficult to reconstruct;² moreover, with one of

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2. See esp. *Poetics* 6.1450b16-20; 14.1453b3-8); on Aristotelian *ᾠψις* see, among an extended bibliography, esp. Marzullo (1980); Halliwell (1986) 66-69, 337-343; Schmitt (2008) 511-512, 518-521, 729-732; Sifakis (2013); Marinelli (2018); Sifakis (2018). On Aeschylean *ᾠψις* see succinctly Podlecki (2013).

its most enigmatic aspects, that of the arrangement of the stage area. Certainly, any answer concerning the existence or not of specific structures within the Theatre of Dionysus may be offered only in conjunction with the study and interpretation of the texts themselves. Archaeology undoubtedly contributes valuable information and effectively the ground for the discussion, but for the period of Aeschylus we cannot reach plausible inferences solely on the basis of the archaeological testimony. In other words, we need to take simultaneously into account the way in which such structures are referred to within the text in order to arrive at potential conclusions as regards the form that they might have assumed if they indeed had been part of the theatrical space. As I seek to pursue this issue, in connection with *Persae* and *Supplices*, I shall equally engage with the question — primarily with regard to *Theoroi* — of the possible reflection of coeval artistic styles on stage constructions or props.

1. *PERSIANS*

1.1 Στέγος ἀρχαῖον

The play begins with the entrance song of the Persian Elders, the Guardians, *φύλακες* (4), of the Persian state, who express their anxiety over the fate of the mighty expedition against Greece. In lines 140-143, as the parodos is drawing to a close, the Guardians appear intent on taking a seat in a sheltered place in order to reflect on the possible outcome of the military campaign against Greece and its possible perils for the Persian state:

ἀλλ' ἄγε, Πέρσαι, τόδ' ἐνεζόμενοι
 στέγος ἀρχαῖον
 φροντίδα κεδνήν καὶ βαθύβουλον
 θώμεθα,

Come then, Persians.
 Let us seat ourselves in this ancient chamber
 and offer sound, deeply considered thought³

3. Translations of passages from extant Aeschylean plays are taken from Collard (2008) — with certain modifications.

The key question we are confronted with here is whether *στέγος ἀρχαῖον* indeed points to a sheltered area in the theatre — a stage building or façade — for which the Guardians are heading, before being forestalled by the unexpected arrival of the Queen. Concerning the thorny question whether there existed any kind of stage building at the time of the production of the *Persae* (472 B.C.), we usually take as a point of departure Wilamowitz's estimation that it is during the period between 467 (463 after the new dating of the *Supplikes*)⁴ and 458 that the Theatre of Dionysus must have undergone a substantial change via the introduction of a stage building: in plays earlier than the *Oresteia* this is not required.⁵ As Garvie notes, however, “we cannot entirely exclude the possibility that some kind of *skene* was already in existence at the back of the acting area, but unused for the purposes of this play.”⁶ The existence of such a stage construction, that would not have been strictly necessary for the staging of plays, might be construed as a hypothetical arrangement designed to cater for practical exigencies: it would have offered a place for actors to change costume, while also enabling them to move without being seen from one side entrance to the other.⁷ However, the existence of a drop of approximately two metres at the southern edge of the terrace of the orchestra does possibly render superfluous the existence of a stage construction of this kind. A suitable arrangement of the area at the lower level (possibly through the use of a canopy) would supply an acceptable solution; this could well have been the case in the *Supplikes* and the *Septem contra Thebas*. A key exponent of the opposite view, Librán Moreno, argues that lack of mention or use does not necessarily entail the absence of a stage structure.⁸ Such a line of thought is by no means groundless, but as researchers we are constrained to always provide the most straightforward and uncomplicated solution to the problems we are confronted with.⁹

4. On this issue see further.

5. Wilamowitz (1886); also, among a large bibliography, Arnott (1962) 4; Taplin (1977) 452-455; Fantuzzi (1990) 12-13; Scullion (1994) 69-70; Garvie (2009) xlv; Sommerstein (2010) 17-19. For the opposite view, see esp. Bethe (1924), Webster (1956) 8; Bees (1995); Librán Moreno (2002), Rehm (2002) 38, 239 (with reservations); Seaford (2012) 206-214, 337-339; Kampourelli (2016) 46-52. On this controversy see now Scullion (2013) 1348 (with updated bibliography). On the archaeological evidence (however scant) concerning the wooden Theatre of Dionysus, see Papastamati-von Moock (2015).

6. Garvie (2009) xlv.

7. Cf. Pöhlmann (1981) 135.

8. Librán Moreno (2002).

9. Although, in my view, her principal position cannot be accepted, Librán Moreno's study undeniably offers a useful overview of the evidence and relevant reflections. A similar ap-

To return to the *Persae*, the members of the chorus declare their intention to sit in the *στέγος ἀρχαῖον*,¹⁰ but this action of theirs is frustrated by Atossa's arrival. In fact, we may understand the entrance song of the chorus as signalling its arrival at the 'council chamber', their further logical move being to enter the building, something that never happens, owing to the approach of the Queen in the meantime. As she arrives, any intended movement of theirs is thwarted and they promptly fall in prostration in order to greet her.¹¹ Later in the play, the entry of the Messenger ushers in a wholly new situation. It is not only the lack of any real need for 'deliberation' any more, given the dramatic turn of events, but also, in a more 'realistic' take, the always pending arrival of Xerxes which prevents the Guardians from leaving the orchestra and entering the 'council chamber'. We may recall lines 529-531, where the Queen orders them to wait for Xerxes and console him, but also accompany him to the palace.¹² This unfulfilled expectation will be repeated by the Queen again in the aftermath of Darius' grim predictions (849-851). The chorus' role is thus directly connected with Xerxes' endeavour, as well as the expectation of his homecoming: the task of the Guardians is to greet their king with words of solace and to not let him become overwhelmed by the disappointment of defeat.¹³

In contrast with Phrynichus' *Phoenissae* — where a eunuch announced the defeat and was seen arranging the seats for the members of the Persian Council¹⁴ — Aeschylus presents his chorus in front of and outside the 'council chamber'. In this way he distances himself from the elder tragedian, but also performs an intertextual gesture, acknowledging Phrynichus' dramaturgical accomplishment.¹⁵ Hence, as Di Benedetto points out, the aura

proach is adopted by Bees (1995), with whose assessments we shall engage further on in this paper.

10. The verb *ἐνεζόμενοι* involves the sense of 'sitting in', not 'on': see Belloni (1988) 113; Willink (2008) 27; *contra* Broadhead (1960) 67.

11. See Rosenbloom (2006) 48; Ley (2007) 16; Garvie (2009) xlviii.

12. *καὶ παῖδ', ἐάν περ δεῦρ' ἐμοῦ πρόσθεν μόλη, / παρηγορεῖτε καὶ προπέμπετ' ἐς δόμον, / μὴ καὶ τι πρὸς κακοῖσι προσθήται κακόν* ("and as to my son, if he comes here before me, console him and escort him to the palace, so that he adds no further woe to the woes we have"). On the twin exits of the Queen see esp. Michelini (1982) 134-138; Jouanna (2009) 107-108.

13. Xerxes' arrival will eventually take place in line 907, signalling the beginning of the exodos, the protracted lament which seals the drama. As the play draws to its close, the chorus escorts the king towards the parodos which is supposed to lead 'to the palace'.

14. We gain this information from the *hypothesis* of the *Persae*: *ἐκεῖ ἐνδοῦχος ἐστὶν ἀγγέλλον ἐν ἀρχῇ τὴν Ξέρξου ἦτταν στορνύς τε θρόνους τινὰς τοῖς τῆς ἀρχῆς παρόδροις*; see comments in Wright (2006) 23-27: 24.

15. We also know from the *hypothesis* that the first line of the *Persae* is a modification of

of dignity surrounding the stage building, which serves as the seat of the council, reflects on the area in front of it, investing it with a sense of solemnity, whereas the Persian *Φύλακες* may still be considered as, in a certain sense, ‘performing their duties’.¹⁶ An Aeschylean comparandum is the presence of the “tent” (*κλισίη*) of Achilles in the lost *Myrmidones*, that would offer an ‘intertextual’ frame for his appearance, since he would have been seen “within” his ‘Homeric’ tent, *εἴσω / κλισίας*,¹⁷ an arrangement that would bring unmistakably to mind the Iliadic narrative (1.327-330).¹⁸ In an analogous manner, the Guardians of the Persian kingdom perform in front of¹⁹ a building of symbolic value, which we may well imagine possessing a certain archaic gravity. Hence the reference to the *στέγος ἀρχαῖον* — far from being a furtive or superfluous mention — is conducive to the establishment of the status of the choral group, a well as of its central role within the play. Furthermore, the chorus provides advice to the Queen, who arrives at the stage area precisely *because* this is where the seat of the Guardians’ council is located.²⁰ The *Φύλακες* also supply the connecting link with Darius: they are the peers of Xerxes’ father and hence able to foreground, as they in fact do in the choral odes, the connection between past and present — even though in a manner not particularly flattering for Xerxes. As Di Benedetto aptly

the opening line of the *Phoenissae* (τάδ’ ἐστὶ Περσῶν τῶν πάλαι βεβηκότων): this verbal reminiscence clearly signals a shift in dramaturgical emphasis (see Rosenbloom 2006, 39; also Belloni 1988, 74-76; Garvie 2009, 50), but it may equally be read as a gesture of homage to Phrynichus: a thesis eloquently stated by Bury (1905).

16. Di Benedetto (2007a) 1048.

17. See Sommerstein (2008) 35. For a concise discussion of the *Myrmidones* see esp. Di Benedetto (2007b); now Cagnazzo (2019a), who aptly points out that a mere prop would probably suffice to denote the fact that the action is taking place inside — no elaborate stage construction would be needed (op. cit. 37); cf. Taplin (1972) 67; West (2000) 341. Also Hammond and Moon (1978) 371-372 on the possibility of the setting of the Aeschylean *Myrmidones* being reflected on a specific vase-painting (kylix, Briseis Painter, c. 480 BC, London, British Museum E 76).

18. τῶ δ’ ἀέκοντε βάτην παρὰ θιν’ ἀλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο, / Μυρμιδόνων δ’ ἐπὶ τε κλισίας καὶ νῆας ἐκέσθη. / τὸν δ’ εἶδον παρὰ τε κλισίῃ καὶ νηϊ μελαίνῃ / ἥμενον (“Unwilling the two of them went along the shore of the unresting sea, and came to the huts and the ships of the Myrmidons. Him they found sitting beside his hut and his black ship”; transl. A. T. Murray, rev. by W. F. Wyatt, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA 1999).

19. Not within it: see discussion further.

20. On this point see also Broadhead (1960) xlv. For this reason the argument formulated by Smethurst (1993, esp. 20) that “since the council chamber is not functional it is not visible” and consequently could have been left to the visual imagination of the spectators, underestimates the importance of the visual element (*ὄψις*) in Greek tragedy and Aeschylean drama in particular.

remarks, the action of the *Persae* takes place in an “external” area, in which, however, intersect lines that connect it with the “inner” area of the council building, but also with the offstage fictive palace, as well as, of course, the tomb of Darius, which symbolizes the wisdom of the older generations and the glorious past.²¹ The theatrical space is therefore well articulated and the tensions that run through it form, in the hands of Aeschylus, an expressive tool exploited in a particularly efficient manner.²²

Consequently, to the question whether the chorus ought to be understood as being inside the ‘council chamber’ (as Taplin argues) or outside, the most persuasive answer, in my view, is the latter. Firstly, as Garvie points out, it would be awkward for the poet to create for a few lines (ten to be precise: 140-150) the impression that we are ‘inside’, in order to promptly shift the action again to the ‘outside’.²³ The deictic *τόδε (στέγος ἀρχαῖον)* is also a strong indicator of the existence of a certain structure; conversely, if it were absent what would be the reason for referring to it in such a direct manner? Concerning the palace, we should reiterate that it must be invisible and imagined to be beyond the stage area; indeed, there is not even a hint at its presence within the theatrical space.²⁴ Among studies arguing to the contrary, most representative is that of Bees, who posits a grand stage building, possessing three doors and combining the role of palace, tomb and council building.²⁵ Against such a view the most pertinent argument, in my opinion, is that the relentless emphasis given to the exceptional wealth and splendour of the Persian state²⁶ helps create a mental image in the spectators that no wooden stage building or makeshift façade would ever do justice to. By contrast, the *στέγος ἀρχαῖον*, as well as the tomb of the late king, could well be imagined as possessing a certain archaic austerity and being relatively unadorned. In this sense, they could be more conveniently substituted with structures of symbolic rather than of literal semantic value.

If we accept, thus, the existence of something representing the *στέγος ἀρχαῖον* within the theatre, how could it be practically rendered? According to N. G. L. Hammond²⁷ we may posit a tent-like structure set up next

21. On Darius’ embodiment of the glorious past see, among many studies, Grethlein (2007) 381-388; Kyriakou (2011) 20-33.

22. Di Benedetto (2007a) 1048; cf. Di Benedetto and Medda (1997) 80-81.

23. Garvie (2009) xlix.

24. See esp. Jouanna (2009) 99.

25. Bees (1995) 84-92.

26. On this motif see succinctly Rosenbloom (2006) 49-53.

27. Hammond (1972) 426-427; similarly Melchinger (1974) 12-47; Willink (2008) 28.

to the orchestra, between the supposed remains of the east parodos and the old rock outcrop. The existence of this rock, which is of course hypothetical, was exploited in manifold ways in Aeschylean plays according to Hammond: in the *Persae* it could have represented the tomb of Darius.²⁸ As regards the *στέγος*, the tent-like structure would be open from both front and sides and would be equipped with seats.²⁹ A key defect of this supposition is that the existence of such a tent would hamper visibility from the east side of the spectators' area, without, on the other hand, catering for any practical needs, since the members of the chorus are effectively prevented from sitting due to the arrival of the Queen. A more modest suggestion is the one proffered by Sommerstein: namely that a certain kind of painted screen would suffice to suggest the *στέγος ἀρχαῖον*, one that would later be removed.³⁰ On the other hand, several scholars have posited a stage construction without a door, namely a wall or façade that would serve as the background of the action.³¹

In a different key it has equally been suggested, most prominently by Wilamowitz, that the *στέγος ἀρχαῖον* and the tomb are represented by the very same construction.³² In this construal the poet does not wish to prepare the spectators for the appearance of Darius, in order to preserve the spectacular character of his rise from the underworld and the concomitant surprise of the public. However, one may well counter that the opposite is actually the case: Darius is quasi-present from the very beginning in the play as the symbol of a bygone era and the exponent of a model of governance more successful than that of Xerxes.³³ Hence, regardless of whether the appearance of his ghost is expected or not, the tomb — which may well be imagined as having the recognizable form of a funerary monument — would embody a potent symbolic (and possibly to some extent enigmatic) presence

28. For a critique of Hammond's hypothesis, see esp. Bees (1995) 80-84; Di Benedetto (2007a) 1029-1038; Sommerstein (2010) 19-21.

29. Thus, it would offer a reminiscence of Phrynichus' *Phoenissae*, in which, as already mentioned, a eunuch was preparing the seats for the Guardians to seat on. For a similar view, see Willink (2008) 27; Jouanna (2009) 95.

30. Sommerstein (2010) 18.

31. See esp. Bethe (1924) 109; Belloni (1988) 113; Rehm (2002) 239; Garvie (2009) xlvii.

32. Wilamowitz (1886) 606-607; id. (1914) 42-43; Scullion (1994) 68-71; also, more recently, Bakola (2014); Kampourelli (2016) 90-107. Bees (1995, 84-92), as already noted, argues that the stage building would represent council chamber, palace and tomb of Darius; similarly Seaford (2014) 206-210.

33. See esp. 5-6=144-145: *Ξέρξης βασιλεὺς Δαρεϊογενής*; 164 (preceding the narration of the dream): *ἄλβον, ὃν Δαρεῖος ἤρεν*.

in the stage area from the very outset.³⁴ Besides, the very expression *στέγος ἀρχαῖον* may actually not be deemed an utterly vague designation of an edifice:³⁵ it effectively involves the non-negligible information that we are dealing with a certain kind of ‘roofed building’ within which deliberation is intended to take place;³⁶ indeed, how could it be later identified with an *ἔχθος*, a word that may by no means be considered as denoting a place to dwell within? The very expression *στέγος ἀρχαῖον* is, therefore, hardly fortuitous: *ἀρχαῖον* since it harks back to the world of the past, more specifically the glorious past represented by Darius; further, *στέγος*, a rare but simple word which does not need to entail something more than its core sense: a roofed structure, a *tectum*.

As regards now the form of the *στέγος ἀρχαῖον*, it is represented on stage, but there is no reason to suppose that its façade would have covered in terms of length the whole area subsequently occupied by the permanent stage building.³⁷ Truly a structure as simple as a porch would suffice; it could of course well include decorative elements connected in Greek imagination with Persian (or more broadly Oriental) art. However, the mere existence of Greek decorative elements with a certain ‘archaic’ aura would probably be adequate. Indeed, the metonymical, *pars pro toto* reference to *στέγος ἀρχαῖον* could well correspond to a stage structure embodying exactly a *pars pro toto* symbolic value. It is worth mentioning here, as a pertinent point of reference, the well-known Olive Tree pediment of the Athenian Acropolis³⁸ that belonged to one of the *οἰκήματα* of the Hekatompedon (Figure 1).³⁹ What is particularly noteworthy as regards this pediment is the

34. See already Bodensteiner (1893) 649; in such a way the *hypothesis* would also be vindicated: καὶ ἔστιν ἡ μὲν σκηνὴ τοῦ δράματος παρὰ τῷ τάφῳ Δαρείου. Cf. Taplin (1977) 106.

35. Pace Scullion (1994) 69-70; Kampourelli (2016) 88.

36. Cf. Belloni (1988) 113: “un simbolico στέγος che possa armonizzarsi con il ruolo dei Φύλακες. Dunque, non reggia, non βουλευτήριον, ma un *tectum* nel quale si esplicasse la custodia dei Venerabili, la sede di una πίστις aperta a luoghi e circostanze diverse, sollecitata a rivivere, dopo le tenebre di Salamina, gli anni luminosi di Dario.”

37. Cf. Jouanna (2009, 95-96), arguing that the *στέγος*, if it indeed exists, ought not to be confused with the later *σκηνή*.

38. Acropolis Museum n. 52; poros; length: 1,48 meters; height: 0,8 meters; dated at ca. 560-550 B.C.; see Pantermalis et al. (2013) 110; analytically Hurwit (1999) 113-117; Meyer (2017) 38-41.

39. Those *οἰκήματα* — mentioned in the Hekatompedon Decree, *IG I³ 4*, (on which see Butz 2010) — may have served as treasure-houses, *naiskoi* or ritual dining houses; see Hurwit (1999) 114-115; now Meyer (2017) 35-37. One may reasonably surmise that Aeschylus would have been familiar with the *οἰκήματα* featuring the Olive Tree pediment —before its destruction by the Persians in 480 B.C.



Figure 1. Olive Tree pediment, Acropolis Museum, photo by Yiannis Koulelis.

fact that the artist has succeeded in arranging within a restricted place both a building and a number of human forms. The building, represented by the porch, is slightly off-centre to the left, whereas the door is exactly at the centre of the pediment. The relief to the left depicts the wall of an enclosure, within which the branches of an olive tree spread upwards. One female figure stands at the door, while three more are preserved in mere fragmentary form to the left and right of the porch. We also discern a male figure to the left, of which only a thigh is extant. The interpretation of the scene has proved a particularly thorny question.⁴⁰ Most scholars now tend to view it as taking place on the Acropolis itself: namely, the building is construed as, for instance, the legendary temple of Athena (mentioned in the *Iliad*)⁴¹ or the palace of Kekrops,⁴² while the figures are usually considered as relevant to the Acropolis cult on the north side of the rock. One could equally read the whole scene as depicting the birth of Erechtheus.⁴³ Independently from the question of the possible reconstruction of the pediment, it is important

40. For an overview of different solutions suggested, see Meyer (2017) 39-41.

41. *Iliad* 2.546-551. See Hurwit (1999) 113-114, who adds that, if not mythological, the scene could be a generalized depiction of the Panathenaic procession.

42. In that case the figures depicted would be Kekrops and the Kekropidae; see esp. Santi (2010) 207-217, 318-328.

43. So Meyer (2017) 41.

to underline the fact that, as Meyer aptly points out, such a condensed rendering of a ‘setting’ in architectural sculpture is without parallel.⁴⁴ The artist has managed to proffer in a distinctively limited space (also in terms of height) the notion of a building via the depiction of the part of a roof and a door, whilst the olive, rendered through a relief — whose theatrical equivalent is the painted screen — completes the setting. Analogous inventiveness could have been displayed in the theatre, since the problem of limited space and the need to render ‘the part for the whole’ in a credible and adequate way is common to both.⁴⁵

1.2 The Tomb

We have already mentioned the scholarly view that the stage building is identified at a specific point during the play as the tomb of Darius. Among other potential objections we may note Garvie’s remark that Darius has died not long ago⁴⁶ and thus his tomb might not have been called a *στέγος ἀρχαῖον*. Arnott, on the other hand, believes that the tomb was represented by an altar, which would have been a fixed element of the raised stage on which the actors performed.⁴⁷ We recall here the *Choephoroi*, where there exists a stage building, as well as a tomb, that would most probably have been a movable construction possibly located in the orchestra. According to Garvie, Agamemnon’s tomb must have been situated in the centre of the orchestra; he actually renounces his earlier view⁴⁸ that it was within the orchestra but off-centre, in order not to coincide with the *θυμέλη*.⁴⁹ Accepting

44. “Eine derart ausführliche Angabe eines Schauplatzes ist im Bereich der Bauplastik ohne Parallele” (2017, 38-39); of note is her choice of the term ‘Schauplatz’ (‘setting’), a word with distinct theatrical overtones.

45. A comparable *pars pro toto* aesthetic is equally discernible on vase paintings inspired by dramatic performances. However, the Olive Tree pediment is a more apt comparandum, since it is three-dimensional and develops on a strictly horizontal axis (with no upper and lower plane). Moreover, the relevant vase paintings belong to the fourth century as a rule (Taplin 2007, esp. 28-30), whilst their ‘elliptical’ aesthetic is further conditioned by limitations in terms of development of artistic skill; see, for instance, Hughes (2012) 6, 69.

46. Actually only six years before the dramatic date of the play (486).

47. Arnott (1962) 59; similarly Poe (1989, 120-121), who expresses reservations as regards the positioning of the altar on the stage platform.

48. Garvie (1986) xliii.

49. See Garvie (2009) xlix-l. Marshall (2018, 29) also places Agamemnon’s tomb in the centre of the orchestra, while Bowen (2012, 15-16) considers it probable that it would have

now that there was no altar in the centre of the orchestra (*θυμέλη*), he prefers to place Agamemnon's as well as Darius' tomb in that very spot, "the strongest position in the theatre", as he characteristically notes.⁵⁰ Rehm also locates the tomb in *Persae* in the centre of the orchestra, while at the same time suggesting that Darius would appear on the roof of the stage building.⁵¹ According to Wilamowitz there must have been a raised platform in the orchestra,⁵² whose stairs initially serve as the seats of the council members, whereas later in the play they are regarded as the steps of the funerary monument.⁵³ The actor, who earlier impersonates the Messenger,⁵⁴ has enough time to change costume and appear, in a way not further specified,⁵⁵ under the empty inner space of the platform, from which he makes his sudden appearance. Taplin deems possible the existence of exactly such an installation, judging rightly, in my view, that its position could not have been in the centre of the orchestra. He instead suggests as a more probable location the southern edge of the terrace, precisely over the retaining wall, from the foot of which the actor would have climbed up.⁵⁶ As regards the form of the funerary monument, Taplin believes that it could have had a conical shape, given the expression *κόρυμβος ὄχθου* in the cletic hymn (659):

*βαλὴν, ἀρχαῖος βαλὴν, ἴθι ἱκοῦ,
ἔλθ' ἐπ' ἄκρον κόρυμβον ὄ-
χθου*

My king, my king of old, come to us, draw near;
mount to your tomb's high summit,

To my understanding, the expression *ἔλθ' ἐπ' ἄκρον κόρυμβον ὄχθου* conveys with adequate clarity the fact that Darius shall appear at the,

been located on the stage platform, but somehow off-centre, in order not to obstruct the stage door. This solution has the advantage that it accounts for the use of the expression *τύμβον δ' ἐπ' ὄχθῳ* in line 4. On the term *ὄχθος*, equally attested in *Persae*, see below.

50. Garvie (2009) l.

51. Rehm (2002) 239-240. The view that Darius appears on the roof is also shared by Rosenbloom (2006) 47-48, 88-89; Kampourelli (2016) 94-99.

52. *Estrade* in German (Wilamowitz 1886, 608).

53. Wilamowitz (1886) 607-608; (1914) 42-43; similarly Dale (1969) 119.

54. See Garvie (2009) l-li.

55. As he characteristically notes, "wie das geschieht, ist nicht überliefert, und der Philologe kann sich das nicht rekonstruieren" (1886, 608).

56. Taplin (1977) 117-118; similarly Sommerstein (2010) 21.

presumably pointed, apex⁵⁷ of a ‘mound’⁵⁸: presumably a pyramidal (?) funerary monument. Taplin, however, though at first positive towards such an interpretation, in the end opts for the solution of the *fossa scaenica*, for two reasons. Firstly, he claims that the beating of the ground by the dancers with their hands would be coupled in a spectacular manner with a possible apparition of Darius from below the ground. Further, and more importantly, he considers it more apt for Darius to appear within the orchestra and the choreography to revolve around him.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, in my view, one may equally sensibly consider that the ἀρχαῖον τάφος or παλαιὸν δέος (696, 702), experienced by the Guardians, would be better conveyed if we posit some distance between them and the Ghost. The expression σέβομαι προσιδέσθαι (694) ought to be more credibly understood if the two are clearly separated and the eyes of the Guardians are collectively turned towards Darius.⁶⁰ Simultaneously, their moves — or their immobility for that matter — would be facilitated if the whole of the orchestra is at their disposal, both during the cletic hymn and when Darius makes his appearance. Thirdly, the exchange between Darius and Atossa would be more opportunely staged if the three dramatic agents (Darius, Atossa and Chorus) are optically separated in a clear manner from a spatial point of view — namely if Darius does not mingle with the chorus. A fourth point is that the expression ἐπ’

57. We may remember here the Homeric expression ἄκρα κόρυμβα, used to denote the protruding stems of the ships (*Il.* 9.241), whereas in Herodotus we encounter the expression ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄρεος τὸν κόρυμβον (7.218).

58. Derivative of ὄχθη; see Beekes (2009) s.v.; also LSJ s.v.: “eminence, bank, hill”, but also “barrow” or “mound” as in *Persae*. For an analytical discussion of the meaning of ὄχθος in both *Persae* and *Choephori*, see Di Benedetto (2007a) 1043-1044. We may pertinently recall the Latin word *tumulus*, that can refer to both a round hill or knoll and a burial mound or grave; see *OLD*² s.v.

59. See Taplin (1977) 116-119.

60. The σέβας of the Guardians (694-695) is based on respect but more precisely expresses ‘inhibition’ towards the ghost of Darius: see Cairns (1993) 206-207, 212; cf. the use of σέβομαι in *Hom. Il.* 6.167; with Graziosi and Haubold (2012) 124. Such an ‘inhibitory’ sense of σέβας is better conveyed through both the distance and the elevated position of the late king within the stage area. One may also take into account the possibility of the fragmentary vase-painting discussed by Hammond and Moon (1978, 371-374) indeed having been inspired from Aeschylus’ *Persae*: one may discern there “members of the Chorus falling back aghast at the sight; ... one grasps his forehead, and the hands of another appear back-turned and raised aloft”. This is clearly a response to the rise of Darius happening up high. See further Hammond (1988) 16-22. On these hydria fragments (Leningrad Painter, 480-450 BC, American School of Classical Studies at Athens, T 1144, Corinth Excavations), see also Beazley 1955, 305-306.

ἄκρον κόρυμβον ὄχθον presupposes an elevated position.⁶¹ Darius must have appeared somewhere high within the theatre. His elevated position would in turn contribute to the sense of awe that he inspires, which is magnified through his presumably elaborate costume.⁶² We also need to take into account that an appearance from an elevated position would be particularly apposite for a king who is being invoked as θεός (643) and θεῖος ἀνάκτωρ (651) in the cletic hymn.⁶³ Even though to some extent exaggerated,⁶⁴ this notion of the ‘divine’ king reflects the real Persian belief of the king as a person situated at the intersection between the human and the divine worlds.⁶⁵

The next question is where such a funerary monument might have been located within the theatre. In my view it could have been partially off-centre in the area beyond the orchestra, adjacent to the στέγος ἀρχαῖον.⁶⁶ The two constructions could, therefore, have been situated next to each other in the southern part of the terrace beyond the periphery of the orchestra. Whether they would have been connected with a kind of background in the form of a painted screen — an arrangement that would facilitate the moves of the actor impersonating Darius — is a valid question. In any case, a convenient solution would have easily been found.⁶⁷ What could then be the most likely form of the tomb? The three words ἄκρος κόρυμβος ὄχθον are eloquent enough, in my view: with adequate clarity they refer to an installation that possesses a certain height and must have a conical form, as already noted, ending in an angular peak — namely not a frustum shape with a level upper surface. To this description corresponds fully the tomb of Cyrus the Great (ca. 598-530) in Pasargadae, “a free standing monument almost unique in the Achaemenid

61. The suggestion by Bakola (2014, 7) that Darius’ apparition is effected on purpose in a space different than the one envisaged by the Chorus (namely from the presumed entrance of the stage building), apart from being entirely speculative, would entail a rather risky undermining of the theatrical semiotics of the performance.

62. On the importance of royal robes in Persian court ritual, see Llewellyn-Jones (2013) 56-66; on ‘oriental’ dress in Greek tragedy, see particularly Wyles (2010) 241-253; ead. (2011) esp. 9-11, 19-21, 80-87.

63. On this point see also Willink (2008) 27.

64. Cf. the earlier greeting of Atossa as θεοῦ μὲν εὐνάτειρα Περσῶν, θεοῦ δὲ καὶ μήτηρ (157); with comments by Garvie (2009) 99-100.

65. On the position and role of the king in Persian religion see Briant (2002) 240-254, esp. 241.

66. For a similar spatial positioning of the two stage constructions, see Belloni (1988) 13; cf. Broadhead (1960) xlv.

67. The drop at the southern edge of the terrace of the orchestra could equally have been exploited; see above.



Figure 2. Tomb of Cyrus the Great, Pasargadae.

Empire”:⁶⁸ a pyramidal construction with a rather simple outline consisting of a six-tiered stepped platform and a chamber (cella) with a gabled roof on top (Figure 2).⁶⁹ This monument dates back to circa 540-530 B.C., about at least sixty years before the performance of the *Persae*.⁷⁰ I wish to lay emphasis on precisely this fact, because we need to take into

68. Boucharlat (2013) 509. Generally on Cyrus the Great and his reign, see among a large array of studies, Mallowan (1985); now Brosius (2019) and the other contributions in Shayegan (2019).

69. The platform was 13.20 meters long and 12.20 meters wide at its base, while the entire monument rose about 11.10 meters above the original ground level. See detailed archaeological discussion of the monument (with detailed drawings) in Stronach (1978) 24-43; also id. (1985) 838-841; Fedak (1990) 31-33; Boardman (2000) 53-60; Henkelman (2012) 940-943, esp. 942; Canepa (2018) 211-215. It is noteworthy that the ancient sources focus on the interior of the chamber rather than on the exterior. As Arrian (*Anabasis of Alexander* 6.29) informs us, inside the chamber were to be seen a couch with gold feet, some ornaments with precious stones, precious weavings and a gold sarcophagus. Arrian preserves the story of its finding by Alexander in a profaned state and its subsequent restoration; see useful commentary by Sisti and Zambini (2004) 572-575. It is equally noteworthy that the monument is described as being in the midst of a royal grove with all sorts of trees.

70. A *terminus post quem* is the existence of Lydian stylistic elements: the monument cannot be earlier than 547 (date of the capture of Sardis); see Stronach (1985) 840.

account the temporal lag marking the flow of information from Persia to mainland Greece⁷¹—and we refer to information that could become widely known in Athens, especially via artistic depictions.⁷² It is noteworthy that Persepolis, a city whose construction began during the reign of Darius, is not mentioned by Greek authors until the time of Alexander the Great.⁷³ Of course, the real tomb of Darius is situated near that city and by no means has the shape suggested by Aeschylus in *Persae*: it is carved, in monumental dimensions, high on a rock.⁷⁴ As opposed to the relative temporal proximity of that monument, the many decades that had passed since the erection of the tomb of Cyrus until the performance of the *Persae* would be perfectly sufficient for it to become known in Greece through descriptions and artistic representations.⁷⁵ In terms of architectural style it is worth noting that Cyrus' tomb displays a synthesis of Iranian, Anatolian and Greek elements.⁷⁶ As regards its shape, the pyramidal, stepped platform highlights the elevated position of the king both within this life and beyond.⁷⁷ It has

71. Generally on the question of the accuracy of the historical information found in *Persae*, see Garvie (2009) ix-xvi.

72. Not mere rumours or isolated reports that would fail to achieve wider dissemination; hence I would opt for a more cautious stance than the one adopted by Hall (1989, 74-76) or Seaford (2012, 208).

73. See Boucharlat (2013) 512-517: 512; also Brosius (2013) for an overview of the presence of Achaemenid Iran in Greek sources and Morgan (2016, 125-188) regarding the Athenian outlook on the Achaemenid empire. On Persepolis, see Olmstead (1948) 272-287; Wilber (1969); now Henkelman (2012) 943-950 and analytically Soheil (2018) 24 ff.; detailed archaeological exposition in Schmidt (1953), (1957) and (1970).

74. The height of the rock itself is almost 64 metres, whereas the entrance level of the tomb is 15 metres above ground level. It is situated in the area Naqsh-e Rostam; see Wilber (1969) 75-76; Dandamaev and Lukonin (1989) 336-339; Boucharlat (2013) 516-517; Soheil (2018) 84-88; analytically Schmidt (1970) 80-92. On the discovery of Persepolis and its 'afterlife' in subsequent centuries, see Mousavi (2012) and Soheil (2018) 187-211.

75. All the more so since it belongs to a wider architectural type, represented, among other monuments, by the Tomb of the Daughter (Gur-e Dokhtar); see Fedak (1990) 33. Conversely, it is not possible to accept Kampourelli's (2016, 90-94) suggestion that Darius' tomb in the *Persae* (identified with the purported stage building) could have been modelled after his actual funerary monument in Persepolis.

76. The pyramidal form must be an emulation of the ziggurats of Elamite architecture. However, the fact that the upper three steps are marked off from those below recalls the normal Greek treatment of the *κορυφή*; in addition to that, the *cyma reversa* moulding under the gabled roof is Ionian. See Stronach (1978) 43; Fedak (1990) 32-33; Boardman (2000) 57. Influence was certainly not one-directional; note the probability of Persian architectural traits in the Tholos of the Athenian Agora and the Odeion; see succinctly Morgan (2016, 150-154) with further bibliography.

77. See Rabadjiev (2016, 288), who draws a contrast with tomb constructions featuring staircases leading *down* to the burial chamber.

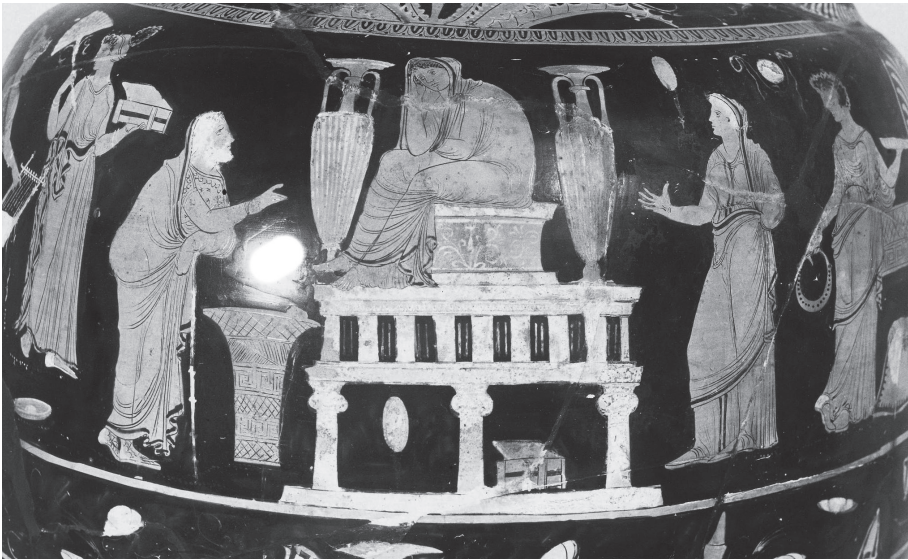


Figure 3. The mourning Niobe; amphora from Taras by the Varrese Painter.

also been suggested that the burial on a high position may conform to Zoroastrian or pre-Zoroastrian faith in the need to avoid the defilement of the sacred element of the earth.⁷⁸ More importantly, via the massive stonework and smooth surfaces of the monument, possessing a minimum of decorative detail, “the tomb creates an indelible impression of dignity, simplicity, and strength”.⁷⁹ Interestingly, therefore, a stage ‘replica’ of the tomb would effectively need to ‘recreate’ the austerity of the original, rather than to resort to an unadorned style as a necessary solution owing to the inevitable limitations of scenographic resources.

The stage installation could practically consist in a wooden stepped construction, at the top of which would be added a miniature ‘chamber’ with a gabled roof. This installation could well possess only three sides and an inner ladder via which the actor could climb to the highest level. Its construction would entail no practical difficulty, whereas, with slight modifications, this movable installation could easily serve as a tomb or an altar in another play, possibly even of the same tetralogy. It suffices to mention a parallel case of terraced stage installation representing a tomb in Aeschylean

78. See esp. Stronach (1978) 43, n. 75; id. (1985) 841. On royal burial customs in Persia, also Dandamaev and Lukonin (1989) 336-339.

79. Stronach (1985) 839; cf. id. (1978) 26.

drama: I am referring to the tomb of Niobe in the homonymous drama, a heroine who had become famous for her prolonged silence on stage, as she remained veiled, mutely grieving her children.⁸⁰ As regards the setting we possess the testimony of vases from Magna Grecia; more precisely, instead of the vases depicting the tomb in the form of a *naiskos*, closest to the Aeschylean performance must be the amphora from Taras by the Varrese Painter (Figure 3)⁸¹ On that vase we see a rather large — “stage-like” according to Taplin⁸² — elevated terraced cubic construction on which Niobe remains seated in her perennial silence, prominent within the theatre, being the object of focus of both actors and spectators.

2. *Supplices*

One may well concur with Bowen that, in the case of this play, simplicity of plot goes in tandem with an economical arrangement of the stage setting.⁸³ Of course we ignore the potential stage requirements of the other plays of the tetralogy: *Egyptians*, *Danaids* and *Amymone*. As regards the date of the performance we may keep the generally accepted one of 463, but we need to be aware of the fact that this dating is not absolutely certain, since it rests on the testimony of a papyrus informing us that Sophocles was equally competing at the same year’s Dionysia.⁸⁴ At the beginning of the play, after the parodos and as the king of Argos approaches with his retinue, Danaus summons his daughters, the chorus, to find refuge at the altar of the ἀγώνιοι θεοί, situated in an elevated area, on the πᾶγος (188-190):

80. Cf. Aristophanes’ satire in *Frogs* 911-926, where Achilles’ comparable silence in the lost *Myrmidones* is equally mentioned: see Totaro (2010) 157-163. On ‘Aeschylean silences’ see the classic article by Taplin (1972) and 58-62 on *Niobe*; Podlecki (2013) 133; on *Niobe* also Frassoni (2008) 59-109; Cagnazzo (2019b); Wright (2019) 46-48.

81. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Taranto, n. 8935; see esp. Taplin (2007) 74-77; more recently, Rebaudo (2012), offering an analytical overview of the ‘mourning Niobe’ theme on vase paintings; also Keuls (1978).

82. Taplin (2007) 75.

83. Bowen (2013) 24. Given the discussion above, we may take as a point of departure the absence of a stage building; see, among a large bibliography, Papadopoulou (2011) 77; Sommerstein (2019) 37; *contra* Bees (1995) 92-98. A stage building is also not ruled out by Friis Johansen and Whittle (1980, 3).

84. See extensive discussion in Scullion (2002) 87-101, after Garvie (1969) 1-140. Now Sommerstein (2019) 41-42: “any year between 470 and 459 inclusive”.

ἄμεινόν ἐστι παντὸς οὔνεκ', ὃ κόραι,
 πάγον προσίξειν τόνδ' ἀγωνίων θεῶν.
 κρεῖσσον δὲ πύργον βωμός, ἄρρηκτον σάκος.

it is better for every reason, my daughters, to go and sit at this altar-mound of the assembled gods: an altar is stronger than a towering wall, it is an unbreakable shield.

The conclusion that can be reached is a simple one: from the orchestra where they are situated, the women are asked to move to another, elevated location, defined as *πάγος*, hence as a 'hillock'.⁸⁵ On the *πάγος* there is an altar of the *ἀγόνιοι θεοί*,⁸⁶ which is demonstrated through the deictic *τόνδε*.⁸⁷ We must note here that Danaus stands on the *πάγος* already from line 176, given the fact that he possesses visibility and is able to discern first from the parodos (the one leading "inland" to Argos)⁸⁸ the army approaching on chariots, with king Pelasgus at the forefront (180-183): *ὄρῳ κόνιν, ἄναυδον ἄγγελον στρατοῦ* / ... / *ὄχλον δ' ὑπασπιστῆρα καὶ δορυσσόον* / *λεύσσω ξὺν ἵπποις καμπύλοις τ' ὀχήμασιν* ("I can see dust, the voiceless messenger of an army ... and I see men in a mass, armed with shields and spears, together with horses and round-fronted chariots.").

Meanwhile, with the invocations of the chorus being imminent,⁸⁹ Danaus renews the plea to his daughters to take their position on the *πάγος* and the *korymbaia* responds in a manner rendering clear that the women are already in the process of moving, even though they have not completed their shift of position (208, 207): *ΧΟ. θέλοιμ' ἂν ἥδη σοὶ πέλας θρόνους ἔχειν* /

85. A small rocky hill as a rule, though in Sophocles' *Ichneutae* (221) there is a mention of *χλοερὸν, ὑλώδη πάγον* ("grassy, wooded hillside"; translation by O'Sullivan and Collard 2013, 361).

86. *Ἀγόνιοι θεοί* means "assembled gods", cf. *Ag.* 513; with Friis Johansen and Whittle (1980) 151.

87. 189 *τόνδ'* is Turnebus' emendation of the manuscripts' *τῶνδ'*, that would refer to the gods, more precisely to their statues in the stage area. *τόνδ'* is accepted by Page in his OCT edition (1972); see also Friis Johansen and Whittle (1980) 151; Sommerstein (2019) 143-144; *contra* West in his Teubner edition (Stuttgart 1990); Bowen (2013).

88. As Bowen (2013, 25) points out, the Danaids enter from the right parodos — the one leading to the sea — and so do the Egyptians; on the other hand, from the left come Pelasgus, the Argive soldiers and Danaus himself, while in the end "all go out left, to Argos, home and safety".

89. After Danaus' rhesis the suppliants invoke a number of gods, one by one: Zeus (211), Apollo (214), Poseidon (218) and Hermes (220).

ΔΑ. μή νυν σχόλαζε (“CHO. Please, I would like a seat close by you now. DA. Don’t delay then”).⁹⁰ The phrase σοὶ πέλας affirms precisely the fact that Danaus is already on the πάγος. Further, he again urges his daughters, when they have finished their invocations, to honour the gods who are worshipped on it (222-223):

πάντων δ’ ἀνάκτων τῶνδε κοινοβωμίαν
σέβεσθ’[ε].

Revere the altar shared by all these kingly gods;

The word κοινοβωμία⁹¹ denotes the common altar of the gods who are venerated on the hillock. How many statues ought we to imagine? Most probably we see the statues of all Twelve gods, as well as an altar of the Twelve gods, following the model of the homologous Athenian altar in the Athenian agora.⁹² The statues can be imagined as standing in proper arrangement behind the altar, in order not to impede the view or access to it.⁹³ Concerning the likely artistic style of the statues, we shall offer a tentative suggestion later. As regards their number, it is not necessary that they be actually twelve, since they may only conform with the number of the gods invoked by the suppliant women. Admittedly, both the existence of statues that are left without any veneration or, equally, the silent offering of honour appear to a certain extent ungainly solutions, yet the main reason for positing the existence of twelve statues is because it conforms with the threat of the women to hang themselves from them (455-467).⁹⁴ This threat becomes immediately and fearfully perceivable by Pelasgus and the spectators if the statues are of the same number as the suppliant women.

But how could the πάγος itself be represented on stage? The simplest and most functional hypothesis is that of a raised stage platform, disguised as a “mound”, that would be situated centrally in the southern part of the

90. Concerning the numbering and transposition of those lines I follow M. L. West’s edition.

91. A *hapax*; see Friis Johansen and Whittle (1980) 178; Sommerstein (2019) 222.

92. See Sandin (2005) 18 (busts or statues); Bowen (2013) 188; Sommerstein (2019) 90.

93. See Papadopoulou (2011, 77), who rightly underlines that the altar “is of central dramatic significance as the place where the Danaids are seated for protection”. According to Bowen (2013, 25), we may imagine “a row of twelve statues of gods”, whereas the altar would be situated in the middle of the statues.

94. For this reason they may well be above human height; see Friis Johansen and Whittle (1980) 4, 366-369.

terrace, beyond the orchestra.⁹⁵ From the raised level of this platform Danaus would have better visibility towards the *parodoi*, as is the case in lines 180 ff., but also later, when he discerns from the opposite *parodos* (the one leading ‘to the sea’) the ship of the Egyptians (713-714):⁹⁶

ἰκεταδόκον γὰρ τῆσδ’ ἀπὸ σκοπῆς⁹⁷ ὄρω
τὸ πλοῖον·

for from this watch-point which received us as suppliants I can see the ship

Di Benedetto⁹⁸ rightly emphasizes the prominence of optical stimuli (e.g. ὄρω, λεύσσω), in contrast with *Septem contra Thebas* where the aural stimuli are dominant (especially in the *parodos*).⁹⁹ Hammond situates the raised area of the *κοινοβωμία* on the rock that had supposedly remained near the eastern *parodos*.¹⁰⁰ However, apart from other considerations, such an off-centre positioning creates obvious problems related to the differing (sometimes overly limited) visibility from the *πάγος* to the *parodoi*, but also from various points within the spectators’ area to the *πάγος* and the stage action by extension. Of course, these are problems attending to Hammond’s theory more generally. Concerning Bees’ opinion that there exists a stage building and that the *ἰκεταδόκος σκοπή* (713) is in fact its roof, it suffices to note that it complicates matters without reason.

We may thus assume with reasonable confidence the existence of a raised platform. However, before settling the issue, it is worth taking into account Rush Rehm’s view —not least owing to its potentially wider application in Aeschylean plays (as, for instance, in *Choephoroi*). Rehm believes that the altar is situated in the orchestra, while around it are located the statues. According to him the stage arrangement involving a raised platform has the drawback that a large part of the action (in fact two thirds of it,

95. For this construal see esp. Taplin (1977) 192-193, 441-442; Friis Johansen and Whittle (1980) 3-4; Poe (1989) 118-120; Sandin (2005) 15-16; Ley (2007) 19; Papadopoulou (2011) 77-79; Bowen (2013) 24; Sommerstein (2019) 38.

96. On these lines see esp. Bowen (2013) 292; Sommerstein (2019) 284.

97. *Σκοπή* is a rarer form in place of the more common *σκοπιά* (“high place, from which one may keep watch”); see Friis Johansen and Whittle (1980) 72-73. On the *σκοπή* being identical with the *πάγος*, see Taplin (1977) 198.

98. Di Benedetto (2007a) 1040-1041.

99. On aural stimuli, visualization and synaesthetic imagery in the *parodos* of *Septem*, see Marinis (2012); Trieschnigg (2016); Bierl (2018) 28-30.

100. See Hammond (1972) esp. 406-409; 417-418.

excluding the choral odes) is performed with the chorus being situated on the raised stage rather than in the orchestra. He also considers it inexpedient for Pelasgus to address the suppliant women, in lines 234-523, from a lower level, namely from the orchestra, whereas they are themselves on the *πάγος*.¹⁰¹ Far from being a problem, though, this ‘displacement’ of Pelasgus effectively highlights the fact that the whole action unfolds within a public space — since the arrival of the Danaids affects the whole city — and not in front of the royal palace, as the king himself stresses.¹⁰² On the contrary, the numerous group of the Argive armed men led by Pelasgus, who may have entered on three or four chariots,¹⁰³ would have ample space to spread out within the orchestra. Besides, such a move would be symbolic of the fact that Argos actually belongs to them, whilst, on the contrary, the stay of the Danaids in the city remains provisional and insecure.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, the move of the chorus to and fro within the theatrical space more than once in the play renders optically their precarious position,¹⁰⁵ but also the peculiar import of the supplication, which entails a high moral claim and presupposes the closeness (also a spatial one) to the gods who receive honours in their precinct. In addition to that, the fact that Pelasgus addresses from a lower position the suppliants visualizes the strong claim on protection which they invoke¹⁰⁶ —in other words the holiness of the supplication and thereby the difficult dilemma faced by the king: *πολλαχῇ γε δυσπάλαιστα πράγματα* (468).

101. Rehm (1988) 301-302. On the swapping of place between Danaids and Pelasgus in the theatrical space see also Sommerstein (2010) 114.

102. See lines 365-367: *οὔτοι κἀθησθε δωμάτων ἐφέστιοι / ἐμῶν· τὸ κοινὸν δ’ εἰ μιáινεται πόλις, / ξυνηῇ μελέσθω λαὸς ἐκπονεῖν ἄκη*. (“You are not suppliants of any hearth of mine, I tell you! If the city is polluted as a community, let the people make it their united concern to work out remedies”). As Pattoni (2011, 129) aptly remarks, “[i]l fatto che il drama non si svolga davanti alla reggia ha anche l’importante conseguenza di ridurre la libertà d’azione individuale dello stesso re.”

103. Cf. Taplin (1977) 201.

104. See Mitchell (2006, 216-218) on the dual nature of the Danaids as insiders and outsiders in Argos. On Aeschylus’ *Supplikes* and the issue of Athenian *μετοικία* see Bakewell (1997); id. (2013) 34-58.

105. As Ley (2007, 20) points out, the presence of the chorus on the mound “is indicative of its insecurity”; see also Papadopoulou (2011) 78; Bowen (2013) 25.

106. See relevant reflections in Turner (2001); Brill (2009) esp. 169-171.

3. *Theoroi or Isthmiastae*

We have already discussed one tragedy (*Persae*), concerning which we have suggested the existence of stage installations and another (*Supplices*) that is not in need of a stage building of any kind. It remains for us to approach one more Aeschylean play — a satyr drama this time — that possesses a stage building or at least a stage façade, but also raises an additional issue, the possible connection with coeval art. It is a drama with a double title, *Theoroi* or *Isthmiastae*: *θεωροί* since the Satyrs are visiting the sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmus and *ἰσθμιασταί* because they seek to take part in the athletic games organized at the festival of Isthmia.¹⁰⁷ The comical dimension of the play thus rests, as it is often the case in this genre, on the fact that the Satyrs are involved, either out of curiosity or through coercion, in adventures that are foreign to their regular activities as members of the retinue of Dionysus:¹⁰⁸ in this drama, it is athletic contests that they wish to engage in.¹⁰⁹

As regards the date of the play we are in complete ignorance. If it is earlier than 475/474, according to an indication in the text,¹¹⁰ then we may simply posit a stage façade rather than a building with doors, in order to represent the sanctuary of Poseidon (*δῶμα ποσειδῶνος*, *TrGF* fr. 78a, l. 18), in front of which the Satyrs are located. In the passage that we shall examine, the Satyrs are conversing with a certain person, whose identity is far from clear; he could well have been Sisyphos, the king of Corinth, who would have appeared in the play as the founder of the Isthmian games¹¹¹ — but this is only one of the solutions suggested. That person addresses the Satyrs as follows (1-2):

107. For comprehensive editions and discussions of this fragmentary play, see Krumeich et al. (1999) 131-148; Pozzoli (2004), 152-178; Sommerstein (2008) 82-99; Lämmle (2013) 306-312; O'Sullivan and Collard (2013) 266-281, with additional bibliography.

108. See esp. Krumeich et al. (1999) 28-29.

109. On the Satyrs as athletes and on athletics in satyric drama, more generally, see Voelke (2001) 261-272; Pritchard (2012); Lämmle (2013) 353-354.

110. The reference to the pine wreath, *σὺ δ' ἰσθμιάσεις καὶ πίνθος ἔστ[ε]μένος* (fr. 78c, l. 39) has been considered by Broneer (1962, 259-260) as pointing to a date prior to the year 475/474, when the crowning with wild celery was established. However, especially since the temple of Poseidon was surrounded anyway by a pine grove, this is not conclusive evidence; see Krumeich et al. (1999) 132 n. 10; Sommerstein (2008) 95 n. 17.

111. So Krumeich et al. (1999) 134 n. 15. Theseus is another possibility; see O'Sullivan and Collard (2013) 268.

ὁρῶντες εἰκὸν[ς] οὐ κατ' ἀνθρώπους [
ὅπη δ' ἂν ἔ[ρ]θῃς, πάντα σοι τάδ' εὖσεβῆ.

... seeing likenesses of more than human [...]. However you act, it will all be within the bounds of piety.¹¹²

The *εἰκόνες* mentioned here are presented as possessing some traits beyond the human norm: οὐ κατ' ἀνθρώπους.¹¹³ The unidentified speaker must have departed and now the Satyrs address one another (5-7):

ἄθροσον εἰ []
εἰδῶλον εἶναι τοῦδ' ἐμῇ μορφῇ πλέον
τὸ Δαιδάλον μ[ι]μημα· φωνῆς δεῖ μόνον.

observe whether ... this image is more (*like*) my own (*form*). It's a likeness by Daedalus! It lacks only a voice.¹¹⁴

These portraits/images are subsequently described as offerings to the god (11-12):

εὐκταῖα κόσμον ταῦτ[α] τῷ θεῷ φέρω
καλλίγραπτον εὐχάν.

I'm bringing these prayerful gifts to the god to glorify him, a beautifully-painted votive!

Here we learn that *εἰκόνες* are simulacra of Satyrs; moreover, that this similarity with *themselves* shall bring distress to their mother, who will believe that she actually is seeing her very sons: οὕτως ἐμφερέης ὅδ' ἐστίν (17). Further, in lines 18-20, where it becomes clear that the Satyrs are situated in front of the temple of Poseidon, the order given to them is to hang the *εἰκόνες* (κάπιπασσάλευ' ἕκαστος, 19), obviously on the walls of the temple.

112. Text and translation from Sommerstein (2008); for an analytical critical apparatus and commentary for fr. 78a, ll. 1-22, see Sonnino (2016) 40-41.

113. Among proposed supplements, one of the most persuasive is οὐ κατ' ἀνθρώπους [καλάς; suggested by Terzhagi and adopted now by Sonnino (2016).

114. Translations for this and the following quotation from O'Sullivan and Collard (2013) 273.

Those images will serve, in addition, an apotropaic function, hindering unwanted visitors (*ἐμπόρων κωλύτορ*[α, 20).

What are those *εἰκόνες/εἰδωλα*?¹¹⁵ Several opinions have been voiced: it is not clear whether we are dealing with full-body depictions or mere heads; also, it is far from evident whether they are paintings or sculptural works — or, more probably, a combination of both. Some scholars believe that painted boards (*πίνακες*) of wood or clay are meant here,¹¹⁶ while others speak of statues.¹¹⁷ Stieber actually connects those supposed statues to the *εὔμορφοι κολοσσοί* mentioned in *Agamemnon* (414-419)¹¹⁸ that are hated by Menelaos since they remind him of Helen whom he misses dearly.¹¹⁹ In my view, most persuasive, though not conclusive, is the suggestion that we are dealing with masks;¹²⁰ actually, as Marconi has pointed out, during his visit to Sicily Aeschylus would have seen satyric faces on archaic decorations of temples or as antefixes (something that would explain the apotropaic character of the *εἰκόνες*).¹²¹ An indication corroborating this view is the expression *Δαιδάλον μίμημα*, which must refer to a three-dimensional representation.¹²² Indeed, Daedalus was primarily renowned as an eminent sculptor, whereas Daedalic works are characterized not merely by the high artistic skill they embody, but also by their ‘life-like’ quality.¹²³ It suffices to recall the Pindaric *Κηληδόνας* (“Charmers”) of *Paean* 8 (65-83): golden statues that sang

115. The confluence of aesthetic vocabulary of figurational terms — *εἰκόν, εἰδωλον, μίμημα, γραφή (καλλιγραφία)* — in this fragment is rightly underlined by Zeitlin (1994) 138.

116. See esp. Krumeich et al. (1999) 142-144; analytically id. (2000).

117. Most recently Ferrari (2013) 199-202. For a survey of different solutions offered, see O’Sullivan and Collard (2013) 270; Sonnino (2016) 42-44.

118. On this passage see esp. Medda (2013) and id. (2017) 263-266.

119. Stieber (1994) esp. 99-108.

120. This interpretation, already advanced by the first editor, Lobel (1941, 14 n. 1), has been further elaborated by Fraenkel (1942); see also, among an extended bibliography, Setti (1952) 216, 235-236; Hourmouziades (1984) 52-53; Zeitlin (1994) 138-139; Marconi (2005); Sommerstein (2008) 83; Di Marco (2013) 129-131; Lämmle (2013) 307; additional references in Sonnino (2016) 43 n. 8. For a detailed critique, see now Iovine (2013), arguing that the *εἰδωλον* must be a statuette, while the *εἰκόνες* ought to be masks or *πίνακες*.

121. Marconi (2005) esp. 81-90; already Fraenkel (1942) 244-245: the antefix as an innovation. See also Di Marco (2013) 129-131.

122. Although the epithet *καλλιγραφία (εὐχά)* would more easily recall a painted image (hence a *πίναξ*), the colouring of three-dimensional objects is — *pace* Krumeich (2000) 177-178 — not self-evident to the extent that it would be superfluous to be mentioned: see Kaimio (2001) 57. On painted masks in Greek drama, see also Hall (2006) 100-101. Concerning the creation of theatrical masks in classical Athens and the materials used, see Hughes (2012) 166-177 (with emphasis on comedy).

123. Generally, for the testimonies on Daedalus see *DNO* s.v. “Dädalus”; also Frontisi-

in a perilously enticing manner and are characterized as *δαίδαλμα* (81).¹²⁴ Similarly, we recall the Daedalic statues which, if not tied down, may walk away and leave, according to the ironic statement of Socrates in the Platonic *Meno*.¹²⁵ Yet, how may those traditions possibly be connected with *Theoroi*?

Firstly, we may discern an element of exaggeration in the exclamations of the Satyrs —an exaggeration germane to the well-attested satyric motif of the surprise and enthusiasm of the Satyrs as they discover something newfangled or unfamiliar.¹²⁶ This exaggeration may possibly account for the characterization as *Δαίδαλον μ[ε]γ[αλ]υμμημα* of an object that is not a statue, hence a ‘full-sized’ Daedalic creation. Still, the specific question which arises, concerning to the manner of their representation on stage, is which artistic style characterizes those works hung by the Satyrs at the temple. In this regard the mask has the advantage of providing a clear picture to the audience and of highlighting specific traits.¹²⁷ Given, of course, our uncertainty concerning the date of the play, it would not be wise to rule out Stieber’s suggestion that ripe to late archaic art is recalled here in a manner analogous to



Figure 4. Kore n. 671, Acropolis Museum, photo by Socratis Mavrommatis.

Ducroux (1975) 95-117; Kassel (1983). On ‘life-like’ and/or Daedalic statues, see also Marinis (2019) 311-314, with more bibliography.

124. See analysis by Weiss (2016, esp. 243-249; esp. 244); in a similar key, discussion by Power (2011). More generally on this passage see Rutherford (2001) 216-231.

125. *Meno* 97d.

126. See esp. Voelke (2001) 173-299; Lämmle (2013) 371-380.

127. Something rather difficult in the case of painted *πίνακες*, on which the images of the Satyrs would hardly be visible and identifiable; see Kaimio (2001) 58.

the *εὐμορφοὶ κολοσσοί* of the *Agamemnon*. As she explains, the very word *κολοσσοί*, with its antique patina, points to specimens of late archaic art,¹²⁸ such as a number of korai from the Athenian Acropolis —an eminent example of which is n. 671, displaying a glad, but also restrained facial expression, along with linear patterns, a certain stiffness coupled with simplicity and clarity of form in the delineation of the body (Fig. 4).¹²⁹ The associative link with archaic style could well be reinforced by the tradition, preserved by Porphyry, that Aeschylus used to express himself on the “ancient” statues in the following manner: *καίπερ ἀφελῶς πεποιημένα θεῖα νομίζεσθαι, τὰ δὲ καινὰ περιέργως εἰργασμένα θαυμάζεσθαι μὲν, θεῖον δὲ δόξαν ἦττον ἔχειν* (“though naively made, were reckoned divine, whereas the new ones, though most skilfully made, provoked admiration but had a lesser sense of the divine”).¹³⁰

While the point on the late archaic associations of the *κολοσσοί* of *Agamemnon* is well-taken, it is, however, far from certain whether Aeschylus seeks to trace here a similar connection. I would submit to this if we were speaking about the *ἀρχαῖα βρότη* of the gods in *Septem contra Thebas*, for instance, or the analogous *βρότη* of the *Supplices*.¹³¹ Yet, concerning *Theoroi* it is tempting enough to consider that a different form of sculptural art is possibly implied, one that emerges during the early classical period. This opinion has been expressed by Sörbom,¹³² who believes that the late archaic and early classical art, with its more pointed realism, conforms better to the works described so emphatically as *ζωοῖσιν ὁμοῖα* —to recall a Pindaric expression.¹³³ The statuary complex of the Papposilenus from the Theatre of Dionysus, whose archetype belongs most probably to the latter half of the fifth century BC (Fig. 5),¹³⁴ is closer to the kind of art insinuated

128. Stieber (1994) esp. 108-114.

129. Attic/Ionic; marble; height: 177 cm; found west of the Erechtheion; dated around 520 B.C.; at the Acropolis Museum. See Karakasi (2003) 115-147 for a general overview of the Attic korai as artifacts; further 161-165, 168-171 for tables with comparative data. On kore n. 671, see Karakasi op.cit., esp. 168-169 and pl. 259; also Brouskari (1974) 76; Pantermalis et al. (2013) 135. Further on the Acropolis korai (and the varying interpretations of their identity), see Hurwit (1999) 125-126; Keesling (2003) 97-161; Stieber (2004); Meyer (2007); Sturgeon (2019) 279-281, 291.

130. *De abstinentia* 2,18 = *TrGF* T 114; translation by Clark (2000, 62).

131. See *Sept.* 211-212; also e.g. 96, 98; *Supp.* 430, 463; with Sommerstein (2019) 211. Cf. the *Eumenides* (e.g. 80, 242, 409) where *βρότας* denotes the ancient statue of Athena; on that statue see Hurwit (2004) 17. On the word *βρότας* see Beekes (2009) 238.

132. Sörbom (1966) 41-53.

133. *Ol.* 7.52: see Marinis (2019).

134. Marble; height 1,13 m; dated around 440-430 BC (the copy is of the second century BC); National Museum n. 257, now in the Acropolis Museum. See briefly Kaltsas (2001)

here.¹³⁵ This highly expressive Papposilenus, who also bears an exceptional resemblance to Socrates' portraits,¹³⁶ wears a theatrical fleecelike coat, suggesting the *μαλλωτὸς χιτὼν*, but wears no mask; he carries the child Dionysus over his left shoulder,¹³⁷ who in turn holds a tragic mask.¹³⁸ The statuary complex reflects, in a distinctly self-conscious manner, the merging of the mythical, Dionysiac and theatrical identity of the Silen, whose face essentially "is a mask brought to life".¹³⁹ In an analogous manner, at the performance of the *Theoroi* the audience may have witnessed a 'doubling' of the Satyrs' 'face' and mask, with the difference that both are satyric, while the 'face' is itself a mask as well.¹⁴⁰ As Froma Zeitlin points out, "[w]ith these facsimiles of their dramatic personae, the satyr-spectators (*theōroi*) put on their show before the eyes of another spectator on stage, and once having fixed the masks in place, they too may regard their look-alike doubles



Figure 5. Papposilenus with baby Dionysus holding a mask, Acropolis Museum, photo by Yiannis Koulelis.

119; Pantermalis et al. (2013) 70. Analytical discussion in Stampolidis (1982-1984); now Charalabopoulos (2012) 159-178 and 165 n. 21 on the dating; also Capra (2018) 72 n. 32.

135. On the emergence of the classical style in sculpture, see concisely Adornato (2019).

136. On Socrates as Satyr, see Charalabopoulos *ibid.* and Lissarague (2013) 243-245.

137. Inspiration from Sophocles' *Dionysiskos* is possible; see Capra *op. cit.* On this fragmentary play see Krumeich et al. (1999) 250-258; Lämmle (2013) 404-405.

138. On the iconographical theme of actors or choreuts holding masks, cf. the satyric dancers on the Pronomos vase, with their theatrical masks in their hands: see Csapo (2010a) 19-23 and (2010b) 89-94.

139. See Charalabopoulos (2012) 164-165.

140. On the metatheatrical potential of the scene, see Zeitlin (1994) 138-139; Kaimio (2001) 56-58; Dobrov (2007) 252.

in a reciprocity of gaze.”¹⁴¹ At the same time, Aeschylus’ *Theoroi* may equally involve, as already suggested, an allusion to emergent artistic trends: to works of art *satis ad veritatem adducta*.¹⁴² Indeed, the ludic atmosphere of satyr drama would enable Aeschylus, however loyal to archaic aesthetics, to showcase a certain artistic development or, even, to make a jocular reference to the innovative forays of contemporary artists.

To conclude, whatever hypotheses we may form on the staging of ancient plays, they are fundamentally precarious, given that we are not merely dealing with archaeological data that are fractional and unclear, but also for another important reason. We lack knowledge of a basic parameter, namely of the amount of money that the *khoregos* was willing to specifically submit for the stage setting (props, stage installations and their decoration, carpets, tents etc.). Indeed, what amount of money did Pericles actually disburse for *Persae*? We may recall here the reservations wisely voiced by Wilamowitz concerning the attempt at reconstructing ancient stagecraft.¹⁴³ Why? Because the words, the syntax, the metric patterns, however contorted they might possibly be, eventually possess a delimited character, whereas in the case of stage installations a basic parameter is missing —one, moreover, that can fundamentally change the state of things. We are, thus, obliged to follow a certain methodological principle: namely to opt for the most straightforward and economical solution (in terms of complexity and cost). Hence, while outlining working hypotheses of this kind, we are not claiming to have reached any definitive solution, but that we may have discovered a reasonable means of approach that could shed light on stage practice concerning a specific play or even a certain period of time.

Besides, I wish to emphasize something regularly highlighted in scholarship: the fact that the new element introduced by the *Oresteia* (among extant plays) is actually not the stage building itself, but the use of the stage door. Therefore, there is no reason to suppose that earlier plays could not conceivably have been performed amid intricate stage installations or in front of adorned façades. It is for this reason that I chose to deal with *Theoroi*: because this play poses in a rather pressing manner the question of the

141. Zeitlin op.cit. On the mask as a marker of the mimetic nature of theatre, see also Halliwell (1993) 201-202.

142. Cicero, *Brutus* 18.70, on Myron’s sculptural works; see Douglas (1966) 60; Pollitt (1974) 132-134; Marchese (2011) 289-290. On ancient passages involving assessments of archaic / early classical art, see succinctly Adornato (2019) 299-300.

143. See above, n. 55.

artistic elaboration of stage constructions or props. It is ultimately possible that the study of stage arrangement will lead us to a novel outlook on ancient Greek theatre more broadly: to view it as an art with manifold aspects, some of which somehow still remain overlooked.

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