EGERT PÖHLMANN

NEW ARGUMENTS FOR A SKENE BUILDING
IN EARLY GREEK TRAGEDY: SECOND THOUGHTS

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ABSTRACT: The spectacular excavations of Chr. Papastamati-von Moock in the theatre of Dionysus Eleuthereus in Athens have *inter alia* given clear evidence for a rectangular wooden theatre above the holy precinct of Dionysus, including a rectangular orchestra in the first half of the 5th century BC, if not earlier. This rules out the assumptions of A. Müller and U. von Wilamowitz about a circular orchestra in early fifth century and a high mound, the πάγος, in the middle of it (so Wilamowitz) or at its eastern border (so Hammond). There remains the question if there was a skene building in the Dionysus Theatre before the *Oresteia* (458 BC). The evidence of the dramatic texts, especially the *Supplices* (463 BC), the *Seven against Thebes* (467) and the *Persae* (472 BC), points to a covered gallery with side entrances near the *eisodoi*, with a door in the middle, if needed, and an exit at the top of it for roof scenes. The stage building was primarily used by actors, who had to change their costumes unseen by the spectators; this was crucial also for pre-Aeschylean tragedies, which were performed by only one actor. Traces of a wooden stage building are found outside Athens, in the Amphiareion of Oropos and Thorikos, namely limestone blocks with square depressions on their top side, in which posts for the wooden framework of the skene building were inserted. Perhaps two such blocks can be identified too in the theatre of Dionysus.

1. INTRODUCTION

IN 1886 ALBERT MÜLLER brought together in his valuable *Lehrbuch der griechischen Bühnenalterthümer* the bulk of literary information about ancient theatre with the growing number of known theatre buildings. For the beginnings of theatre in Athens he followed Aristotle (*Poetics* 1449a 9-15) deriving tragedy from dithyramb and adding a folkloristic touch from Maximus Tyrus: Ἀθηναίοις δὲ ἡ μὲν παλαιὰ μοῦσα χοροὶ παίδων ἦσαν καί ἀνδρῶν, γῆς ἐργάται κατὰ δήμους ἱστάμενοι, ἄρτι ἀμητοῦ καὶ ἀρότου κεκονιμένοι, ἄσματα ἄδοντες αὐτοσχέδια ('In Athens old music consisted of cho-

ruses of children and men, farm hands coming from the demoi, singing, whilst being still dusty from harvesting and ploughing, improvised songs'). Thus, the dancing place of the κύκλιοι χοροί became the first orchestra.[1]

In the same year, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, closely following Müller's conceptions, rejected the existence of a skene building in the tragedies of Aeschylus before the *Oresteia* (458 BC).[2] Instead, he postulated merely a circular orchestra for the beginnings of Greek theatre: "Für den Rundtanz, den κύκλιος χορός, ist ein runder Platz, den die Zuschauer im Kreise umstehen, das Nächstliegende, das Angemessenste... Es war keine große Sache, im heiligen Bezirke ein Rund aufzumauern oder zu pflastern, so etwas wie eine große Dreschtenne".[3] For the tragedies before the *Oresteia* Wilamowitz invented in the middle of the circular orchestra a kind of a high platform, the "Pagos"[4], which could be used in the *Prometheus* (probably spurious, about 430 BC)[5] as a rocky cliff, in the *Seven against Thebes* (467 BC) and *Supplices* (463) as an altar, and in the *Persae* (472 BC) as a council chamber and later as a tomb: "Es ist mitten auf dem Tanzplatz eine Bühne, Estrade ist dem Deutschen wohl deutlicher, deren Stufen zu Anfang die Sitze des Rathauses, weiterhin die Stufen des Grabmonuments vorstellen: aus ihr kommt Dareios hervor; der Schauspieler, der als Bote bis 514 sprach, hat also Zeit und Gelegenheit gehabt, sich bis 687 umzukleiden und unter die Estrade zu gelangen, doch wohl ungesehen: wie das geschieht, ist nicht überliefert".[6]

Wilhelm Dörpfeld thought to have found evidence for a circular orchestra in the theatre of Dionysus in the 5th century BC. On 19.4.1886 he informed Albert Müller by letter: "Vor dem Bau des 4. Jahrhunderts gab es im Dionysosbezirk nur eine große kreisrunde Orchestra, von welcher unter dem Bühnengebäude des Lykurg noch Reste erhalten sind. Ein festes Bühnengebäude hat aber im 5. Jh. nicht existiert, sondern nur eine aus polygonalen Steinen erbaute Orchestra von ca. 24 m Durchmesser".[7] To corroborate his theory in favour of the circular orchestra Dörpfeld assembled the following pieces of evidence:

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1. Müller (1886) § 1 (origin of the theatre); § 14 (Thespis and the first actor); Id. p. 1 nr. 2: Maximus Tyrus *Dissert*. 37 p. 205 Reiske.
2. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1886) and (1914) esp. 114-118 about *Prometheus*.
3. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1886) 603-605.
4. See below pp. 127-28.
5. Taplin (1977) 240; Bees (1993, 70-72) pleading convincingly for 430 BC.
6. Wilamowitz (1886) 608.
7. Müller (1886) 415.

(1) the traces of a levelled rocky outcrop on a surface of 5x5 meters at the beginning of the East Eisodos (V),[8]

(2) 4,235 meters of a curved wall of polygonal limestone blocks (R = SM1) by the east side of the Lycurgan Stage Building,

(3) 1,85 meters of a straight wall of poros blocks (Q = J3) in the western side of the stage building.

Dörpfeld did not include in his reconstruction another straight wall of polygonal limestone blocks parallel to the west eisodos (D = SM3).

Nonetheless, as early as 1928 W. Wrede and K. Lehmann-Hartleben published findings of rectilinear slabs and blocks with archaic inscriptions from a proedria of the Dionysus Theatre, which cannot be reconciled with the theory for the circular orchestra of Wilamowitz and Dörpfeld, but point to a rectilinear orchestra before 413 BC.[9] This evidence, however, was ignored for years.[10] Moreover, Elizabeth Gebhard's thorough investigation demonstrated that the remains put forward by Dörpfeld are not situated in a circle and might by explained otherwise.[11]

Wilamowitz had tried primarily to resolve the stage problems of the probably spurious *Prometheus* on the basis of his 'Pagos-Theory'. This idea was modified by N.G.L. Hammond,[12] who sought to find the πάγος, which is mentioned four times in the *Prometheus* and three times in Aeschylus' undisputed plays,[13] in the aforesaid rocky outcrop (V) before its levelling in the east eisodos of the Dionysus theatre.

In the light of the spectacular new excavations in the Dionysus theatre by Christina Papastamati-von Moock[14] however, the presumed circular orchestra of Wilamowitz and Dörpfeld in the early theatre of Dionysus, the 'Pagos-Theory' of Wilamowitz and the 'Pagos' of Hammond on the rocky outcrop at Dörpfeld's V, which were still influential until Oliver Taplin's

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8. "Eisodos" (side entrance), not "parodos" (so Taplin 1977, 449) avoids clashes with "parodos" (first song of the chorus). For the meaning of the *eisodoi* see Taplin 1977, 45 f.

9. Wrede and Lehmann-Hartleben in Bulle (1928) 55-60, 61-63, pl. 6, figs. 8-11 and pl. 7.

10. See Pöhlmann (1981).

11. Gebhard (1974) esp. 432.

12. Hammond (1972) and (1988).

13. See *Prometheus* 20, 117, 130, 270, *Supplices* 189 (πάγος ἀγωνίων θεῶν) and *Eumenides* 685, 690 (the πάγος Ἄρειος).

14. See Papastamati-von Moock (2014), (2015) and (2020).

masterly *Stagecraft of Aeschylus*,[15] are now ruled out. In more specific terms, Papastamati found a grid of postholes in the bedrock for the wooden substructions (ἴκρια) of a rectangular theatron of the first half of the 5th century BC, which framed a rectangular orchestra on three sides. In the south-west and south-east corners of the orchestra were the *eisodoi* to the theatre, which means that Hammond's rocky outcrop at V was levelled at the latest about 500 BC. In the south of the orchestra a terrace wall from the east to the west eisodos, which included the aforesaid polygonal walls R and D, separated the orchestra from the lower precinct of the theatre.[16]

2. A SKENE BUILDING IN THE DIONYSUS THEATRE BEFORE THE *ORESTEIA*?

Nevertheless, there remains the question whether the theatre of Dionysus Eleuthereus in the late 6th and the first half of the 5th century BC had a skene building, which could have been located between the rectangular orchestra and the aforesaid retaining wall. Some debated cases of limestone blocks with postholes for the rectangular frame of a tent (σκηνή) in theatres in and outside Athens will be addressed later (see below p. 153-55). First, one has to ask if the texts of the extant tragedies give evidence for a skene building before Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. But this question meets the following difficulties:

Greek dramatists inserted staging directions very sparingly.[17] At the same time, all information which is necessary for the understanding of the action is included in the dramatic texts. Such hints may concern acoustic or visual effects, announcements of actors' movements or descriptions of the place of action and its periphery. However, many of these indirect stage-directions were not represented in the scenery but were addressed only to the imagination of the spectators, as Amy Marjorie Dale aptly demonstrated in her seminal article on "Seen and Unseen on the Greek Stage".[18]

Moreover, Greek tragedy, which relies on dramatic illusion, cannot include references to the skene building as such, but must refer to dramatic locations, such as 'council chamber', 'tomb', 'palace', while Greek

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15. See Taplin (1977) *passim*, esp. 448 f.; 453.
16. See Papastamati (2015) fig. 18.
17. Taplin (1977) 15 nr. 1, Taplin (1977 a).
18. Dale (1969); Pöhlmann (2000c).

Comedy, which can make fun with the breach of illusion, may refer to the stage building *per se*, as in *Peace* 731 (περὶ τὰς σκηνάς), and its equipment, the ἐκκύκλημα and the μηχανή,[19] as in 425 BC in *Acharnians* 408f. (*ΔΙ. ἀλλ᾽ ἐκκυκλήθητ᾽ … ΕΥ. ἀλλ᾽ ἐκκυκλήσομαι*).

Therefore, it is advisable to tackle the aforesaid obstacles by avoiding the "unseen" evoked by indirect stage directions. The best evidence for "seen" elements offers hints to movements of the chorus and of actors. Conventions of stagecraft too may allow to infer elements of the scenery, as it is the case with a convention detected by Martin West, the 'nesting chorus', as we shall see below (pp. 139-41, 143, 146-47). Moreover, there is a peculiar convention, which I would label as the 'hesitating chorus'. This convention applies to all tragedies and satyr-plays of the 5th century (with the exception of Euripides' *Helena*) and can be explained only on the basis of the existence of a (wooden) stage-building in the theatre of Dionysus.

The first example of the 'hesitating chorus' is found in the *Persae*. Therefore, the implications of this convention concern, of course, all early tragedies of Aeschylus. Besides, a stage building is imperative also for practical reasons already for the tragedy before Aeschylus, which included the chorus and only one actor, who had to change mask and costume to perform different roles, whilst being unseen by the audience. This is not possible without a stage building. The aforesaid convention, which is linked with the existence of a stage building from early drama onwards, will be put forward first by a series of examples.[20]

3. THE 'HESITATING CHORUS'

Aeschylus

Let us begin with an extraordinary scene from the *Agamemnon* (458). After Cassandra has entered the palace (1330), the chorus hear Agamemnon's death cries from within (1343, 1345) and immediately engage in a discussion as to whether to call for help, enter the palace or await further developments (1345-72). A decision is finally taken to enter the palace in order to find

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19. See Taplin (1986).
20. This convention was investigated in Pöhlmann (2002b) and (2003) and is addressed here in an expanded version in the light of the results of the excavations of Christina Papastamati-von Moock.

out what is afoot, but then the doors open and the bodies of Agamemnon and Cassandra appear on a wheeled platform, the eccyclema,[21] followed by Clytemnestra, who explains the reasons for her deed.

A parallel scene from the *Choephoroi* will serve as a counterexample. Aegisthus is lured by the chorus into the palace (848), whereupon his death cry is heard (869). But here the members of the chorus do not consider intervening, as they are on the side of the siblings. And as Clytemnestra is in her death throes, the chorus extoll the liberating crime of Orestes and in doing so they prepare the way for the appearance of the eccyclema[22] with the bodies of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra (972-73).

The situation after the death cry of Agamemnon in itself makes it imperative that the chorus, being closely associated with Agamemnon, come immediately to his rescue.[23] However, a dramatic convention appears to stand in its way: the chorus clearly may not enter the skene building. Aeschylus neatly sidesteps this conflict between the demands of the situation and dramatic technique by means of the remarkable aforesaid discussion scene, which impedes the intended entry of the chorus into the palace.

There is a relevant scene, albeit differently motivated in the *Persae*: after the parodos (65-139), the members of the chorus explain their wish to take up position in the skene and discuss the situation there (140-43):

> ἀλλ’ ἄγε, Πέρσαι, τόδ’ ἐνεζόμενοι
>   στέγος ἀρχαῖον
> φροντίδα κεδνὴν καὶ βαθύβουλον
>   θώμεθα.

> Well, Persians, let us take seats in this old building,
> in order to deliberate carefully and sensibly.[24]

Wilamowitz allowed the chorus to take up their position on the steps of the outer edge of the στέγος ἀρχαῖον, which does not emerge from the text.[25] T.G. Tucker's translation, which suggests the meaning: "let us go sit within

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21. It is a controversial issue whether Aeschylus used the eccyclema; see Taplin (1977) 442 f.; 325-27.
22. See Taplin (1977) 357 (corpses brought out by mutes).
23. See Fraenkel (1950) 642-644; Thiel (1993) 359-362.
24. English translations of Greek passages are mine, unless otherwise stated.
25. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1914) 43.

this venerable hall", renders both the wording and the situation precisely.[26] All the same, Oliver Taplin, who along with Wilamowitz allows for a skene not earlier than *Oresteia*, comments on Tucker's translation: "this is ingenious, but it would mean that their intention was never fulfilled".[27] But this is the precise sense of the passage, indeed: the members of the chorus advance in anapests towards the skene and express their vain wish to enter the palace and discuss the situation. The meaning of στέγος emerges from two parallels from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*: In 310 f. στέγος is used by the watchman of the palace roof (Ἀτρειδῶν ἐς τόδε σκήπτει στέγος φάος), and in 1186 by Cassandra of the palace itself (τὴν γὰρ στέγην τήνδ').[28]

The chorus of the *Persae* is, of course, prevented from entering the stage building by the convention which is already familiar from the *Agamemnon* and which will be confirmed by a series of parallel instances, where the chorus is denied access to the skene. Therefore, the members of the chorus must once more be diverted from their intention in some way. This happens in the *Persae* when Queen Atossa enters. The noblemen of the chorus notice her (150-154), fall to their knees in welcome and enter into a dialogue with her. In this way, their intention to enter the skene, which could not have been carried out in any case, is abandoned.

Sophocles

In the preserved plays of Sophocles the chorus often has a motive for entering the skene. But Sophocles knows how to reconcile the conflict between the πιθανόν and the convention in a thoroughly inobtrusive way. The clearest example of this comes in the *Ajax*: after the parodos (134-100) Tecmessa informs the chorus in great detail of Ajax's madness and goes so far as to urge the sailors of Salamis to enter the tent and support their master (329):

> ἀρήξατ' εἰσελθόντες, εἰ δύνασθέ τι.

enter and bring help, if you can.

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26. Tucker (1935).
27. Taplin (1977) 454 n.2.
28. See Bees (1995) 87.

Immediately after this, Ajax's cries of anguish are heard coming from the skene (*333, 336, 339, 342 ff.*), and the chorus prepare to open the door of the tent (*344 ff.*). Instead, this is done by Tecmessa (*346 ff.*), and Ajax is carried out on the eccyclema amidst the slaughtered cattle. In this way, the interior of the skene is transferred out onto the performance area for a lengthy period of time (*348-595*), and the members of the chorus are able to offer Ajax their support, according to the wishes of Tecmessa, without contravening a convention.[29]

In the *Antigone* the title character's tomb is off stage, while Queen Eurydice dies inside the palace. The latter has heard from a messenger of the end of Antigone and her son (*1192-1243*) and without further ado goes off into the skene building in silence. The chorus fear the worst and communicate their concern to the messenger (*1244 ff., 1251*); the latter goes off into the palace instead of the chorus to see what is afoot (*1255*), whereupon Creon appears bearing the dead body of Haemon (*1257 ff.*) and the messenger returns from the palace to report Eurydice's suicide (*1277-1283*). Finally, the gate opens, and the corpse of Eurydice is brought out on the eccyclema (*1293, cf. 1298*).[30] Sophocles here has preserved the convention by allowing the messenger to enter the skene instead of the chorus.

Like Eurydice, Jocasta, too, in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* enters the palace with a deeply significant *aposiopesis* (*1072*) after failing to prevent the interrogation of the shepherd; she must now anticipate that the secret about Oedipus, which she has seen through, will inevitably come to light. Her behaviour troubles the chorus. Just as in the *Antigone*, the silent exit makes the chorus fear the worst (*1073-1075*). Oedipus, however, misunderstanding the situation, dismisses the fears of the chorus (*1076*) and after a choral song interrogates the shepherd (*1110-1181*), who explains to him the predicament he is in. Promising disaster, he goes into the palace. After a further choral song a servant emerges from the house to tell how Jocasta has taken her own life and how Oedipus has blinded himself (*1232-1285*). An indication for the use of the eccyclema (*1287 ff., 1294 ff.*) prepares the audience for the entry of the wheeled platform bearing the bodies of mother and son, but instead the blinded Oedipus is led out of the palace (*cf. 1429*).[31]

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29. See Newiger (1990) 39 f.
30. Cf. Müller (1963) 264.
31. See Newiger (1990) 40. Euripides too is frustrating the expectation of the spectators in *Medea* and *Orestes*: see below p. 135 and n. 36.

In the *Oedipus* Sophocles prevents the intervention of the chorus by means of Oedipus' objection. He uses a similar device in *The Women of Trachis*: Deianeira has realized that she had sent Heracles not a love potion, but a deadly poison with the "Nessos' garment". She takes the chorus into her confidence, who try to console her (663-733), whereupon Hyllus enters with a report of the agonies of Heracles and curses his mother (734-812). Deianeira goes without a word into the palace despite the attempts of the chorus to defend her (813-14). Yet Hyllos deflects the intervention of the chorus (815-820) and wishes on her the same agonies as those of Heracles. For that reason, the members of the chorus do not intervene again and hear cries of pain coming from the house (863-867). Finally, the nurse emerges from the house to report Deianeira's suicide (871-946).

In the *Oedipus at Colonus* the skene building, as in the second part of the *Ajax* or in Aristophanes' *Birds*, represents a grove which can be entered by a central door. Oedipus and Antigone conceal themselves therein (113-116). The chorus, searching for the pair, do not follow them inside, choosing instead to persuade them at length to leave their hiding-place (138-169). The reason for this is the fact that the grove of the Eumenides is a taboo for the inhabitants of Colonus (125 ff., 130 ff., 153-156): a faint trace of the convention which forbids the chorus to enter the skene.

The search scene in the *Ichneutai* has technical similarities with the above: here the central door of the skene represents, as in the *Philoctetes* and *Cyclops*, the entrance to a cave. The satyrs are in search of Apollo's cattle (39 ff., 58 ff.), having already discovered the tracks of a herd (94-108). Suddenly, instead of the braying of the cattle (107 ff.), they are surprised to hear the sound of a lyre and are scared of the unidentified noise (118-124). Old Silen cannot initially hear a thing (125-169) and rejoins the Satyrs in their search (170-196). Arriving at the cave, he too hears the lyre and wishes to hide. However, he is restrained by the Satyrs (197-210), who are anxious to know what is lurking in the cave. When an attempt to call someone out of the cave fails, Silen, instead of dispatching the chorus, calls for a cacophonic dance, after which the nymph Cyllene emerges from the interior (211-214). As the parallel scene in the *Cyclops* (see below) demonstrates, the chorus is denied access to the skene building in a satyr play as well, a convention which is easily disguised by the traditional cowardice of the satyrs themselves.[32]

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32. Seidensticker (1979) 237; 239.

Euripides

The chorus occasionally has a reason to enter the skene building in Euripides too. But, unlike Sophocles, Euripides uses the conflict between convention and situation to create dramatic effects, occasionally drawing on Aeschylus, as in the following scene from the *Hippolytus*.

Phaedra, having been rejected by Hippolytus, has informed the chorus of her resolve to commit suicide as a means of punishing him (722-731). The choral song which follows ends with a vision of Phaedra hanged in her bridal chamber (767-75), after which the nurse rushes out of the house and calls for help (776/77).[33] At first, however, the chorus remain unmoved (778/79). Now the nurse demands a knife with which to cut Phaedra free (780/81), whereupon the chorus embarks on a discussion, reminiscent of that in the *Agamemnon*:[34] some of the girls wish to go into the house and release Phaedra from the noose (782/83), others would rather leave this task to men (784) or else warn against over-eagerness (785). The corpse has, in the meantime, long since been taken off and laid on the bier, according to the nurse's instructions (786/87). The chorus can do no more than take note of this (788/89). Then Theseus appears (790), and, after a clear signal for the use of the eccyclema (808-810), the wheeled platform carries the body out of the palace.

Just as in the *Agamemnon*, the chorus in the *Hippolytus* is employed to inform the audience of the action taking place inside the skene building. The resulting conflicts are averted on both occasions by the aforementioned discussion scenes, which have a delaying function.

The infanticide in the *Medea* is prepared for in a way similar to the suicide of Phaedra: after Medea has learned of the deaths of Creusa and Creon, she explains to the chorus that she must now kill her children (1236-1250) and goes off into the house. After two choral stanzas, the children are heard crying for help (1271 ff., 1277 ff.),[35] and the members of the chorus consider whether to force their way into the house (1275 ff.):

> παρέλθω δόμους; ἀρῆξαι φόνον
> δοκεῖ μοι τέκνοις.

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33. See M. Hose (1990) 278-86.
34. See pp. 129-30.
35. As to the 'off-stage-cries' see Arnott (1982) 38-43.

> Shall we enter the palace?
> I think we must avert the murder of the children.

However, Jason's entrance after the end of the kommos (1271-1292) renders such an intervention pointless. Shortly after this, the chorus announce the death of the children (1306-1309), and, although the potential use of the eccyclema is signposted (1313-1316: Jason wishes to open the gate by breaking it and kill Medea), Medea appears to the surprise of the audience[36] on a suspended winged chariot with the dead children (1320-1322).

In the *Medea* the determination of the chorus to enter the stage building loses its impetus because of an unexpected entrance. We know this device from Aeschylus' *Persae* and Sophocles' *Ajax*.[37] Euripides uses the device in two subsequent occasions. In the *Andromache* the chorus is urged by the nurse to enter the palace to prevent Hermione from committing suicide (815-819), a request which becomes redundant when, shortly afterwards, Hermione rushes out of the house, wailing but alive (822-824). Likewise, in the *Hecuba* the chorus considers forcing its way into the tent to lend its support to Hecuba against Polymestor (1042 ff.), when Hecuba herself appears, having committed the deed (1044-1048), followed by the blinded Polymestor (1060 ff.) and the bodies of his children on the eccyclema (1051 ff.). This renders the intention of the chorus superfluous.

In Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* a ritual ban prevents the chorus from forcing its way into the skene building.[38] In the *Ion* Euripides follows a similar practice: having admired the works of art at the Temple of Apollo (184-218), the members of the chorus express their desire to view the interior of the temple (220 ff.). However, Ion is forced to prohibit this, the chorus not yet having made a sacrifice (228 ff.). Euripides could have easily spared himself this extra complication, but the curiosity of the chorus gives Ion the opportunity to describe the interior of the temple (222-225).

The cowardly satyrs from Sophocles' *Ichneutai*[39] turn up again in Euripides' *Cyclops*. Odysseus has explained to the chorus how he wishes to blind Polyphemos. The satyrs are impressed and offer their support

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36. In the *Orestes* (1296 ff.) the expectations of the spectators are similarly challenged; see Arnott (1982) 41-43; Arnott (1983) 25-27.
37. See pp. 131-32, 136-37.
38. See pp. 133, 136.
39. See pp. 133, 136.

(469-475; 483-486; 596-599), but when Odysseus urges them to accompany him into the cave (630-632), they have second thoughts: the chorus leader asks Odysseus to nominate the first of them (632-634), but a section of the chorus gratefully declines (635 ff.). Others suddenly become lame (637-639), whilst a further group is blinded by flying ashes (640 ff.). As an alternative they offer to perform a magic song, which can be sung at the entrance to the cave (643-648) and which obviously has the function of communicating the action taking place in the cave to the audience (656–662).

4. THE 'HESITATING CHORUS': OVERALL REMARKS

Taking all of the aforementioned remarks into consideration, it can be deduced that in 12 out of 32 tragedies and in two satyr plays the members of the chorus are prevented from entering the skene building due to a dramatic convention, even when their motive to do so could not be more urgent. The plot-features employed to disguise this conflict between convention and credibility can be categorised thus:

1. The chorus deliberates the advisability of entering the stage building, in order to prevent a murder or suicide, and does so for such a long time that the death actually takes place (*Agamemnon; Hippolytus*).

2. The unexpected entrance of a character restrains the members of the chorus from fulfilling their intention (*Persae; Medea; Hecuba*).

3. The entrance of the victim renders the intention of the chorus pointless (*Ajax; Andromache; Hecuba*).

4. An actor opposes the intention of the chorus (*Women of Trachis; Oedipus Tyrannus*).

5. An actor enters the skene building instead of the chorus (*Antigone*).

6. A ritual ban prohibits the entry into the stage building (*Oedipus at Colonus; Ion*).

7. The traditional cowardice of the satyrs weakens their intention to enter the skene building (*Ichneutai; Cyclops*).

These respective plot elements usually serve to prepare the way for entrances from the stage building at the climactic moment of the plot, whether through the door (*Oedipus Tyrannus, Ichneutai, Andromache*) or on the eccyclema (*Agamemnon, Ajax, Antigone, Hippolytus, Hecuba*) or alternatively on the *mechane* (*Medea*). They are often provoked by cries from within

the skene building.[40] The chorus can, together with other actors, indirectly convey to the audience the off-stage action, which would otherwise be inaccessible to them.[41] Once such a convention is available, it can be used figuratively, indeed playfully. An example of this would be the curiosity of the chorus in the *Ion* to view the forbidden interior of the Temple of Apollo, which is completely unnecessary for the plot.

The oldest example of all is the intention of the chorus in the *Persae* to enter the στέγος ἀρχαῖον, which is averted by Atossa's entrance. This reveals that the aforesaid convention, which is inextricably linked with the stage building, belongs to the oldest inventory of dramatic techniques, which developed decades earlier than Aeschylus' *Persae*, *Seven* and *Supplices*. It might be as old as Thespis' one actor-tragedies, as we shall see.[42]

Of course, the chorus of old comedy as well has sometimes the intention to enter the skene building. But old comedy does not aim at maintaining the dramatic illusion like tragedy and satyr play.[43] Therefore, old comedy does not use the elements of action described above (see pp. 129ff.), which aim at maintaining the πιθανόν.

5. RULE AND EXCEPTION: EURIPIDES' *HELEN*

Admittedly, the question of the purpose of the aforesaid convention is open. The only exception to the rule can help us further here: in Euripides' *Helen* the chorus accompanies Helen into the stage building, in order to consult an oracle (327-385), which results in the unusual structure of the beginning of this play.

After the prologue delivered by Helen (1-67) and her dialogue with Teucer (68-163), there follows, instead of a parodos, a kommos of Helen and the chorus (164-251). The ensuing dialogue between Helen and the chorus (252-329) ends with the advice to her to enter the palace, in order to ask the priestess Theonoe, sister of the Egyptian king Theoclymenus, about the fate of Menelaus. But the chorus intends to accompany her into

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40. See Arnott (1982) 38-43.
41. See Hose (1990) 257-86.
42. See Dale (1969) 260 f.
43. See Taplin 1986.

the skene building presenting a reason by means of which Euripides disguises his disregard of an important convention (327-29):[44]

θέλω δὲ κἀγὼ σοὶ συνεισελθεῖν δόμους
καὶ συμπυθέσθαι παρθένου θεσπίσματα·
γυναῖκα γὰρ δὴ συμπονεῖν γυναικὶ χρή.

But we too want to enter together the palace with you
and ask with you for the oracles of the virgin.
For women must share trouble with women.

Subsequently, instead of the first stasimon, there follows another kommos of Helen and the chorus (330-385), after which the title-character and the chorus enter the skene building. The performance area becomes empty, whereupon Menelaus enters to set out his situation in a new prologue (386-334). After a dialogue between Menelaus and an old servant (435-514) the chorus reappears with a second parodos song (515-527), and Helen follows (258-59):

ἥδ᾽ αὖ τάφου τοῦδ᾽ εἰς ἕδρας ἐγὼ πάλιν
στείχω, μαθοῦσα Θεονόης φίλους λόγους.

I shall return again to my seat at this tomb,
having learned the welcome words of Theonoe.

After that, the recognition and the intrigue take place, resulting in the deception of Theoclymenus and the escape of Helen and Menelaos.

It is obvious that the exit of the chorus into the skene represents a deep caesura, after which the play must in effect begin anew with a second prologue[45] and an epiparodos.[46] Richard Kannicht has shown that the exit of the chorus in *Helen* facilitates a scene which would not be feasible if the chorus were present, namely the second prologue, in which Menelaus can initially describe his position without witnesses (386-434).[47] This necessity justifies not only the exit and re-entrance of the chorus (μετάστασις χοροῦ,

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44. Kannicht (1969) 2: 103.
45. Kannicht (1969) 2: 122.
46. Kannicht (1969) 2: 146.
47. Kannicht (1969) 2: 103, 121, 146; Arnott (1982) 35-37.

ἐπιπάροδος),[48] but also its entrance into the skene building, which is, with the exception of Euripides' *Helen*, otherwise completely avoided.[49] As a rule, fifth-century tragedy clearly means to keep the chorus in the orchestra from the parodos to the exodos, thus preserving structural unity.

6. EVIDENCE FOR A SKENE BUILDING IN AESCHYLUS' *PERSAE*

According to the afore-discussed convention, we have to accept a skene building for Aeschylus' earlier plays, not only in *Persae* (472), but also in *Seven Against Thebes* (467), *Supplices* (463) and perhaps earlier.[50] The question that now arises concerns the evidence of the dramatic texts for a skene building.[51]

In the *Persae* (472) the east eisodos leads to the Persian capital, the west eisodos abroad, towards the direction of Greece.[52] The stage building is referred to as στέγος ἀρχαῖον (140 f.: 'old building'). The chorus enters from the east eisodos with anapaests (1-64) and delivers the parodos in the orchestra (65-139). After that the chorus approaches the skene building.

This movement is another convention (the 'nesting chorus'), which was detected by Martin West: after or during the parodos the members of the chorus withdraw from the orchestra and approach the skene building, where they remain for the next epeisodion, after which an actor or the chorus-leader directs the chorus back into the orchestra for the first stasimon or an equivalent choral interlude.[53]

In the *Persae* the intention of the chorus to enter the skene building (140 f.: ἀλλ' ἄγε, Πέρσαι, τόδ' ἐνεζόμεοι στέγος ἀρχαῖον) is detained by the

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48. For μετάστασις χοροῦ and ἐπιπάροδος see Pollux IV 108. Other cases: *Eumenides* 231-44; *Ajax* 814-66; *Alcestis* 746-861; *Rhesus* 564-674; *Ecclesiazusae* 311-477. See Pöhlmann (1989).

49. The chorus may enter from the skene building; see *Eumenides* 179 (ἔξω κελεύω τῶνδε δόματων τάχος); *Choephoroi* 22 (ἰάλτος ἐκ δόμων ἔβαν).

50. Bees (1993) 50-65 has demonstrated that it is not possible to stage the *Prometheus* in a way which respects the text, the known conventions of stagecraft and the archaeological data as well.

51. Bees (1995) 73-106, with extensive report of the dispute. For the contrary view Taplin (1977) 453 following Wilamowitz (1886).

52. This distribution is arbitrary; see Taplin (1977) 449-451.

53. West (1990) 11-13, who thinks that the 'nesting chorus' is a peculiarity of the early plays of Aeschylus, for which he accepts no skene building. But see the 'nesting chorus' in *Agamemnon* 258-63 und 351-354, traces of it in *Choephoroi* 84-86. 581 f., *Prometheus* 277-283 (the chorus withdraws to the orchestra), Eur. *Phoenissae* 277-279.

appearance of queen Atossa (see above pp. 131, 137), who enters from the
east eisodos by chariot (607-9):

> *Τοιγὰρ κελευθὸν τήνδ' ἄνευ τ' ὀχημάτων*
> *χλιδῆς τε τῆς πάροιθεν ἐκ δόμων πάλιν*
> *ἔστειλα.*
>
> I took the same way from the palace again
> without the splendour and the chariot used the first time.[54]

Having announced Atossa (150-254), the chorus opens a dialogue with the
Queen (155-248) and finally announces a messenger from the west eisodos.

After the first message about the disaster of the Persian army (249-255)
the chorus and the messenger perform a kommos (256-289) in front of the
stage building.[55] Atossa enters in a dialogue with the messenger and the
chorus, followed by the messenger speech (290-516).

After 514 the Messenger leaves from the east eisodos, enters the skene
building from the side and changes mask and costume for his next appear-
ance as Darius (681). Atossa prepares her exit towards the palace (524: *ἐξ
οἴκων*, 530: *ἐς δόμους*), expressing her wish to pray and prepare offerings
(517-531) and asking the chorus to console Xerxes and escort him into the
palace, if she does not meet him in time (529-30):

> *καὶ παῖδ', ἐάν περ δεῦρ' ἐμοῦ πρόσθεν μόλη,*
> *παρηγορεῖτε καὶ προσπέμπετ' ἐς δόμους*
>
> And as for my son, if he arrives here before me,
> console him and escort him to the palace.

After that, she leaves from the east eisodos. The members of the chorus,
preparing for the first stasimon by a passage in anapaests (532-547), eventu-
ally announce their withdrawal from the skene building to the orchestra for
their song: *κἀγώ δὲ μόρον τῶν οἰχομένων αἴρω δοκίμως πολυπενθῆ* (546 f.:
'We also extol the deplored fate of the dead deservedly'). After the first sta-
simon (548-597) Atossa reappears addressing the chorus as *φίλοι* (598). She

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54. The use of a chariot is debated: See Taplin (1977) 70-79.
55. For *κομμὸς* and [*μέλος*] *ἀπὸ σκηνῆς* (monody of an actor) see Aristotle *Poetics* 1452b18;
    b24f.: *κομμὸς δὲ θρῆνος κοινὸς καὶ ἀπὸ σκηνῆς.*

has come back on foot from the palace (ἐκ δόμων 607 f.) and wants to invoke the dead Darius from his tomb through libations (598-622); the chorus approaches the skene in anapaests (623-632) and sings the second stasimon, a cletic hymn in which Darius is invoked to appear on the roof of the skene building: ἔλθ᾽ ἐπ᾽ ἄκρον κόρυμβον ὄχθον (657: 'Rise to the top of the barrow'). After the second stasimon (633-680) the ghost of Darius appears indeed on the roof of the skene building. Having entered with a monologue (681-693) he engages in a kommos with the chorus (694-706), after which he is informed of the plight by Atossa (707-758) and brings forward his own estimation of the situation (759-842). Finally, he descends again into his tomb, where he changes mask and costume, in order to enter as Xerxes in 908: ἐγὼ δ᾽ ἄπειμι γῆς ὑπὸ ζόφον κάτω (839: 'But I go off to the dark under the earth'). Atossa addresses the chorus (843-851) announcing the arrival of Xerxes and her exit to the palace (849: ἐκ δόμων), from where she wants to fetch a better outfit for her ragged son. However, she does not meet him, as she has already foreseen. Evidently, Aeschylus wants Xerxes to perform the mournful end of the *Persae* alone.[56] After that, the chorus sing the third stasimon (852-906).

Subsequently, Xerxes enters (907-917) from the west eisodos. The chorus, having welcomed Xerxes with pity (918-930), begin an amoibaion with him (931-1077), which leads Xerxes to the palace through the east eisodos (1046, 1069: δόμοι) and the chorus to the town (1071: ἄστυ).

7. SHIFTING OF SCENERY

As we have seen (see above pp. 139-41), the skene of the *Persae* represents an old building (στέγος ἀρχαῖον) from the beginning to 547. But from 600 to 851 the skene clearly represents Darius' tomb. Aeschylus disguises this shifting of scenery by a fluid change of the designations of the skene building: the στέγος ἀρχαῖον of the first episode is described in 647 f. as ὄχθος, and finally in 684 and 686 as τάφος.

Shifting of scenery can be managed in two ways. The aforesaid fluid change of the designation of the skene building in the *Persae* might point to a 'refocusing' of the scenery: after Atossa's return from the palace and the return of the chorus from the orchestra, following the first stasimon, the locale represented by the skene building has tacitly changed in the imagination

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56. See Taplin (1977) 119-121.

of the audience.[57] Thus, the middle of the skene building remains the only place of action, as the hypothesis of the *Persae* declares: ἔστιν ἡ μὲν σκηνὴ τοῦ δράματος παρὰ τῷ τάφῳ Δαρείου ('the place of action is near the tomb of Darius'). Therefore, the chorus does not move from the centre of the stage. At the same time, Taplin has pointed to several hints to the unity of place.[58]

There is only one more similar case of a shifting scenery in Aeschylus, that is, the beginning of the *Choephoroi*: 1-584 are performed at the tomb of Agamemnon (4: τύμβον ὄχθος), the place of a libation (149-166). But after the first stasimon (585-651) the action shifts to the palace of the Atreidae (δόμοι 656 f., 658, 663). There is no trace of a third place of action. Since in the *Agamemnon*, which precedes, there is only one place of action, namely the palace of the Atreidae, the shifting scenery in the *Choephoroi* might have been managed by means of 'refocusing', as in the *Persae*.[59]

If, on the contrary, not imaginary 'refocusing', but real shifting of scenery is intended, the chorus must leave the stage and enter again with a second parodos (epiparodos) at the new place of action.[60] This holds true for the *Eumenides* (231, 244), and *Ajax* (814; 866 and 872).[61] In the Alcestis (746, 872) and *Rhesus* (564, 675) the new place of action is only mentioned in a report. Nevertheless, the chorus must leave the stage and reappear with an epiparodos. Old comedy uses different ways for shifting the scenery.[62] For *Helen*, see above pp. 137-39.

8. EVIDENCE FOR A SKENE BUILDING IN AESCHYLUS' *SEVEN AGAINST THEBES*

In the *Seven against Thebes* (467) the skene building is referred to as θεῶν ἅδε πανήγυρις (219 f.) and τάνδ' ἐς ἀκρόπολιν (240: 'the acropolis there'). It is the place of cult-statues (βρέτη 96; 99; 185; 121; ἀγάλματα 265). Few scholars

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57. On the 'fluidity' in the designation of dramatic locale in the *Persae* see similarly Seaford (2012) esp. 206-210. See also Dale (1969) 119; Taplin (1977) 103-107, 116-119 calls in doubt the skene in *Persae* with dubious subterfuges: the στέγος ἀρχαῖον were an indoor-outdoor scene (Taplin [1977] 454), whilst the ghost of Darius used an underground entrance, χαρώνιοι κλίμακες (447 f.).
58. Taplin (1977) 107.
59. See Taplin 1977, 336 f., 338-340.
60. See Taplin (1977) 384-387.
61. Pöhlmann (1986), Pöhlmann (1989).
62. Pöhlmann (1995).

identified the acropolis with the palace of the Labdacids, as A.W. Pickard-Cambridge,[63] who found a convincing argument on the basis of the similar openings of the *Seven* and *Oedipus Tyrannus*: Aeschylus begins with Κάδμου πολῖται, χρὴ λέγειν τὰ καίρια (*Sept.* 1: 'Citizens of Cadmus, I must say what is in time'). Following Aeschylus, Sophocles begins the *Oedipus Tyrannus* with the gathering of silent supernumeraries: Ὦ τέκνα, Κάδμου τοῦ πάλαι νέα τροφή (*OT* 1: 'Children, young breed of the old seed of Cadmus'). In both cases, the king of Thebes, Eteocles or Oedipus respectively, emerges from his palace to address his citizens, before a messenger and the chorus enter. W. Schadewaldt also identifies the acropolis with the palace, from which the eisodoi lead to two of the seven doors of Thebes.[64] The hostile army of the Argives is to be imagined behind the stage building.

In *Seven against Thebes* Eteocles in his prologue (1-38) sends the citizens to the walls (31: ὁρμᾶσθε πάντες). After that, a messenger enters from an eisodos, informs Eteocles that seven champions have been elected to attack the seven doors (39-68) and leaves from an eisodos. Eteocles also enters the palace after a prayer (69-77).

Subsequently, the chorus of Theban women enter from one of the eisodoi to the orchestra and sing the entrance song (78-180), in which they convey an imaginary picture of the hostile army to the spectators. They want to approach the statues of the gods (98-99):

> […] ἀκμάζει βρετέων
> ἔχεσθαι· τί μέλλομεν ἀγάστονοι.
>
> It is time to cling to the statues of the gods.
> Why do we hesitate lamenting aloud?

Later, they reach the palace, in front of which the statues (219 f.: θεῶν ἅδε πανήγυρις) have been assembled: αὐτοῦσαι πελαζόμεσθα (144: 'lamenting we came near'). Now they can implore Athena (130), Poseidon (131), Ares (135), Aphrodite (140), Apollon (144), Artemis (148) and Hera (152). Again, West's convention of the 'nesting chorus' can be observed.

After the parodos Eteocles, having entered from the palace (182), detects the wailing chorus, condemns the choral lamentations and threatens every offender with stoning (181-202). In the following amoibaion (203-244)

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63. Pickard-Cambridge (1946) 36 f.
64. Schadewaldt (1974) 120.

Eteocles and the chorus reach some mutual understanding, and after a stich-omythic dialogue (245-264) Eteocles, again according to West' s convention, can ask the chorus to withdraw from the stage building and to sing the first stasimon in the orchestra (265-68):

> καὶ πρός γε τούτοις, ἐκτὸς οὖσ᾽ ἀγαλμάτων,
> εὔχου τὰ κρείσσω, ξυμμάχους θεούς·
> κἀμῶν ἀκούσασ᾽ εὐγμάτων, ἔπειτα σὺ
> ὀλολυγμὸν ἱερὸν εὐμενῆ παιώνισον

> In addition, keep your distance from the statues of the gods
> and pray for the best, for the gods as allies.
> Having heard my prayer, sing the victory song,
> the sacred cry pleasing to the gods.

After that Eteocles leaves from an eisodos at 286 in order to find seven antagonists for the seven hostile champions. The first stasimon (287-368) again conveys an imaginary vision of the battlefield. Then the Messenger and Eteocles come back from different eisodoi (369-73):

> ὅ τοι κατόπτης, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, στρατοῦ
> πευθώ τιν᾽ ἡμῖν, ὦ φίλαι, νέαν φέρει …
> καὶ μὴν ἄναξ ὅδ᾽ αὐτὸς Οἰδίπου τόκος
> εἰς ἀρτίκολλον ἀγγέλου λόγον μαθεῖν.

> The messenger, as it seems to me,
> brings us, my dear, from the army a new report …
> and our king himself, the son of Oedipus,
> comes at the right moment to learn news from the messenger.

The Messenger informs Eteocles that the Argives at the Proetid Gate have established Tydeus as champion, against whom Eteocles places Melanippus (375-416). The two speeches are framed by a choral strophe in dochmiacs (417-421). This structure is repeated six times (422-676), until eventually Eteocles decides to fight against his brother Polyneices. At 651f. the Messenger has already left: […] σὺ δ᾽ αὐτὸς γνῶθι ναυκληρεῖν πόλιν ('find out yourself now how to steer the ship of your city'). Eteocles, having been armed (677-684), defends his decision to fight against his brother in an amoibaion with the chorus (685-719) and leaves at 719 from an eisodos. Af-

ter the second stasimon (720-791) the messenger returns bringing a message of victory (792-802), which is followed by a stichomythic dialogue with the chorus describing the mortal combat of the two siblings (803-819). The exit of the messenger is followed by the third stasimon (820-860), which ends with the the onstage appearance of the corpses of Eteocles and Polyneices: τάδ' αὐτόδηλα, προὖπτος ἀγγέλου λόγος (847: 'The case is self-evident. The words of the messenger come into sight'). This passage (847-860) is followed by the announcement of Antigone and Ismene escorting the corpses of their brothers. With these lines (861-874) and the later entrance of a Herald (1005), who tries to forbid Polyneices' burial, the doubts about the authenticity of the end of *Seven against Thebes* begin. With the Herald, Antigone and Ismene the tragedy would require three actors. Contradictions of content and structural problems concur. Oliver Taplin has pertinently summed up all relevant questions about the authenticity of *Seven against Thebes* 1004-77 and the lines which he convincingly considers to betray reworking and interpolation.[65] In view of these uncertainties the end of this tragedy does not offer reliable evidence about staging.

9. EVIDENCE FOR A SKENE BUILDING IN AESCHYLUS' *SUPPLICES*

In the *Supplices* (463) the stage building is mentioned as πάγος θεῶν (189: 'rock of the gods'), ἀγάλματα (192: 'place of statues'), ἀνάκτων κοινοβωμία (222: 'common altar for these ruling gods'), ἕδρα πολύθεος (423 f.: 'seat of many gods'), ἱκετάδοκος σκοπή (713: 'vantage point and shelter for people seeking refuge') and ἀλκά (832: 'shelter'). The gods assembled at this altar are Zeus, Apollon, Poseidon and Hermes (209-221); they are perceptible by the chorus by distinctive marks (218, 755 for Poseidon: τρίαινα, 'trident'). The west eisodos leads to the direction of the town of Argos, the east eisodos to the direction of the Argolic gulf, the harbour.

In the *Persae* and in the *Supplices*, the chorus delivers the prologue, which is no sign of archaic structure, but one of two possibilities.[66] For we know that the model of Aeschylus' *Persae*, the *Phoenissae* of Phrynichus (476), had the prologue delivered by an actor (*TrGF 3* F8). The chorus, representing the 50 daughters of Danaus, enter with anapaests (1-39) and sing the parodos (40-175) in the orchestra.

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65. Taplin (1977) 169-191.
66. Taplin (1977) 61-65.

Danaus, having entered with the chorus,[67] informs his daughters that he sees clouds of dust from the direction of the town of Argos (in the west eisodos), hears the noise of wheels and sees horses and chariots. Thus he advises the chorus to sit on the rock of the gods (188-89):

> ἄμεινόν ἐστι παντὸς εἵνεκ᾽, ὦ κόραι,
> πάγον προσίζειν τόνδ᾽ ἀγωνίων θεῶν.

> It is better, virgins, in any case
> to sit down at this rock of fighting gods.

Again we have a case of West's 'nesting chorus'. The wording (προσίζειν) is very close to the respective wording of the *Persae* (140: ἐνεζόμενοι). The chorus agrees (204-208) and moves from the orchestra towards the skene building to the side of Danaos: θέλοιμ᾽ ἂν ἤδη σοί πέλας θρόνους ἔχειν (208: 'Even now I wish to sit by your side'). Thus it emerges that Danaus stood in front of the stage building from the beginning. After a stichomythic dialogue (209-212) Danaus announces the entrance of king Pelasgus of Argos (222-233), who in a long dialogue (234-346) and an amoibaion (347-437) is informed of the situation and the claim of the virgins: they have refused to marry the 50 sons of Aegyptus out of their own decision (8: αὐτογενεῖ φυ-ξανορίᾳ), as an oracle had foreseen the death of their father Danaus for this reason.[68] Pelasgus is initially hesitant but is ultimately compelled to consent when threatened by the virgins that they will hang themselves from the statues of the gods: ἐκ τῶνδ᾽ ὅπως τάχιστ᾽ ἀπάγξασθαι θεῶν (465: 'to hang ourselves most quickly from the statues of these gods'). This does not mean that there was a series of statues in front of the stage building, considering that we have been told that the gods are identified by distinctive marks only (see above p. 142). Pelasgus sends Danaus away to the town: he has to lay down the holy branches brought by the chorus on altars in the town: σὺ μὲν, πάτερ […] κλάδους δὲ τούτους […] βωμοὺς ἐπ᾽ ἄλλους δαιμόνων ἐγχω-ρίων […] θές (480-483: 'Aged father of these virgins, take these branches in your arms and place them on other altars of gods of this town'). After 500-503 Danaus is escorted to Argos: ἡγεῖσθε βωμοὺς ἀστικούς, θεῶν ἕδρας (501: 'escort him to the altars in the town, the seats of gods'). Then Pelasgus

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67. *Supplices* 1 ff., Taplin (1977) 193 f.
68. This was proved by Sicherl (1986) on the basis of many scholia, esp. Schol. *Supp.* 37: λέκτρων ὧν θέμις εἴργει: διὰ τὸ μὴ θανατωθῆναι τὸν πατέρα.

summons the chorus to leave the altar and go to the orchestra: ἱερὸν κατ᾿ ἄλσος νῦν ἐπιστρέφου τόδε (508: 'approach now this plain grove'). The king then leaves from the east eisodos, in order to get a favourable decision for the virgins from his people (504-523). Again, we have an instance of West's 'nesting chorus', who withdraws from the skene building and sings the first stasimon (524-599) in the orchestra.

At 600 Danaus comes back with good news: the people have voted for Danaus and the Danaids (600-624). Then the chorus move with anapaests (625-629) to the orchestra and sing the second stasimon there (630-709). Danaus describes in full detail (710-723) what he is seeing from the direction of the east eisodos, namely the flagship of the Egyptians, its parts and its crew and the other ships of the fleet and their manoeuvres, now from a peculiar vantage point (713-14):

> ἱκεταδόκου γὰρ τῆσδ᾿ ἀπὸ σκοπῆς ὁρῶ
> τὸ πλοῖον, εὔσημον γὰρ …
>
> from this vantage point and shelter of suppliants
> I see a ship, since it is clearly visible.

Then Danaus tries to sooth the chorus with the promise to fetch help from Argos: ἐγὼ δ᾿ ἀρωγοὺς ξυνδίκους θ᾿ ἥξω λαβώ (726: 'I shall come back with supporting helpers'). He also tries to dissipate the anxiety of the virgins in an amoibaion (736-763), after which he again announces his departure and quick return from Argos (764-775): ἐγὼ δὲ θᾶσσον δεῦρ᾿ ὑποστρέψω πόδα / πράξας ἀρωγήν … (774 f.: 'But I shall come back quickly, bringing help'). He enters the skene building at the west eisodos, in order to change mask and costume, as he has to enter as Herald from the east eisodos. After the exit of Danaus (775) the chorus sing the third stasimon (776-835) and withdraw from the orchestra to the skene building: βαῖνε φυγᾷ πρὸς ἀλκάν (832: 'go and flee to the place of shelter'). Then the Egyptian Herald enters (838-841) and tries to drag the Danaids to the ships in an amoibaion with the chorus (842-910). This is forestalled by the entrance of king Pelasgus (911).

The look-out-scene of Danaus from the σκοπή (710-733) resembles the shorter description of the approaching chariots of Pelasgus from Argos (180-183) from the west eisodos (see above p. 146). Taplin labelled correctly both look-out-scenes as 'mirror-scenes',[69] which is true, but does

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69. Taplin (1977) 100-103 and 210.

not mean that they were staged in the same way. As a rule, the chorus sing the parodos and the stasima on an empty stage.[70] This does not happen in both cases. Danaus enters together with his daughters and stays at the πά-γος during the parodos, and it is from there that he performs his first look-out-scene (176 ff.). Since in the case of the second look-out-scene there is no hint before 625 for an exit of Danaus, Taplin keeps Danaus during the second stasimon (630 ff.) on stage,[71] in front of the σκοπή, from where he makes Danaus perform his second look-out-scene (710 ff.).

But since, *pace* Taplin, a stage building must also be assumed for the *Supplices*, the ἱκετάδοκος σκοπή (713: 'vantage point and shelter for suppliants'), given the astonishing abundance of detail in Danaus' description of the harbour scene (see above p. 146), must point to a scene on the roof, as in the *Persae* (see above p. 141) or the look-out-scene in the *Agamemnon* (1-39).[72] If Danaus performs his look-out-scene on the roof of the skene building, his movements can be explained more easily:[73]

In 625-629 the chorus move with anapaests for the stasimon into the orchestra, while Danaus, without any hint in the text, leaves the stage towards the west eisodos, from where he enters into the stage building. He then appears on the roof for his look-out-scene (710-735). During the ensuing amoibaion with the Danaids (736-763) he stays there. Having announced his come-back (774 f.), he goes inside the stage building, in order to dress as Egyptian Herald, who enters at 838 and fights with the chorus in an amoibaion (838-841, 842-910).

The Herald is driven away by Pelasgus (911-953) and enters the skene building at the harbour-side in order to change mask and costume, as he has to re-enter at 980 as Danaus from the other side, that is, from Argos, quickly (θᾶσσον), according to his promise. Pelasgus asks the Danaids to move off into the town (955: στείχετ' εὐερκῆ πόλιν), after having given them information about their place of stay (954-965). The chorus express gratitude and ask Pelasgus to send Danaus back (966-979): πέμψον δὲ πρόφρων δεῦρ' ἡμέ-τερον / πατέρ' εὐθαρσῆ Δαναόν (968 f.: 'send kindly hither our brave father Danaus'). These lines signpost the exit of Pelasgus and, at the same time, announce the appearance of Danaus, who arrives as soon as 980. Moreover,

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70. See Taplin (1977) § 5, 49-60.
71. See Taplin (1977) 209-211.
72. See Taplin (1977) 276 f.
73. So Bees (1995) 96-98.

with the lines that follow, the chorus introduce a secondary chorus of hand-maids, for whose existence there was no hint before (977-79):

> τάσσεθε, φίλαι δμωίδες, οὕτως
> ὡς ἐφ' ἑκάστῃ διεκλήρωσεν
> Δαναὸς θεραποντίδα φερνήν
>
> Dear maids, line up thus,
> as Danaus has alloted the duty of attendance
> to each one of you.

Taplin has masterly treated the problems which arise from the belated exit of Pelasgus at 969 and the unexpected appearance of the secondary chorus of handmaids.[74] But as they do not concern the evidence for the use of the stage building, we may disregard them.

After these lines, Danaus thanks the citizens of Argos for their help and gives his daughters advice for appropriate behaviour in the town (980-1013), with which they agree (1014-1017). Finally, a long exodos (1018-1073) announces the departure of Danaus and the chorus from the west eisodos towards Argos.

10. THE STAGE BUILDING IN THE EARLIER TRAGEDIES OF AESCHYLUS

The existence of the stage building in the earlier tragedies of Aeschylus was inferred from the convention of the 'Nesting Chorus' and of the 'Hesitating Chorus' (see above pp. 139-41 and pp. 129-37 respectively). As we have seen, the stage building may be referred to in various ways, namely in the *Persae* (see above pp. 139-41) as στέγος ἀρχαῖον, ὄχθος, κόρυμβος ὄχθου and τάφος, in the *Seven against Thebes* (see above pp. 142-45) as θεῶν ἅδε πανήγυρις and ἅδε ἀκρόπολις and as the place of statues (βρέτη 96, 99, 185, 121, ἀγάλματα 265), while in the *Supplices* (see above pp. 145-49) as πάγος θεῶν, ἀγάλματα, ἀνάκτων κοινοβωμία, ἕδρα πολύθεος, ἱκετάδοκος σκοπή and ἀλκά. For these manifold hints, which the spectator has to assemble in his imagination, the stage building offers a neutral background.[75] Sometimes

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74. Taplin (1977) 222-230, 230-238.
75. Painting of the scenery of stage buildings (*skenographia*), which excludes 'refocusing',

the dramatic locale represented in this background may change ('Refocusing'), as in the *Persae* (see above pp. 141-42).

Evidence for the equipment of the stage building can be gathered from the movements of the actors. In the *Persae* (see above pp. 140-41) Atossa has two exits (161, 598) and two entrances (530, 851), Xerxes one exit into the palace (1069), which might point to a door in the stage building. But the palace of the *Persae* seems to be offstage.[76] In the *Seven against Thebes* (see above pp. 143-44) the exit of Eteocles into the palace (77) and his entrances from the palace (1, 182) point to the existence of a door in the middle of the stage building. There is no hint to more than one door in the early tragedies of Aeschylus.

In the *Persae* (see above p. 141) and in the *Supplices* (see above p. 148) the movements of the actors attest two roof scenes. Therefore, the middle of the stage building must have had a stable roof with an opening and a ladder for the entrance from beneath. Since Darius as well as Danaus have contact with the actor and the chorus below in their roof-scenes, the height of the skene building is limited for acoustic purposes.

But the most important function of the stage building, for which the *Persae* and *Supplices* give clear evidence, is its use in scenes where one of the two actors, whom Aeschylus uses until the *Oresteia*,[77] has to change mask and costume unseen from the spectators, in order to re-enter performing another role.[78]

In the *Persae* the messenger, who is on stage from 249 to 514, leaves by the west eisodos, enters the stage building after 514 from the side, puts on the outfit of Darius and appears at 681 on the roof of the skene building, where he remains until 842. After his exit from the roof he changes mask and costume inside the skene building again, in order to play Xerxes, and enters again by the west eisodos.

In the *Supplices* Danaus after 624 leaves the stage (without any hint in the text) by the west eisodos (towards Argos), unnoticed by the chorus, who sing the second stasimon (630-709). Having entered the stage building from the side, he appears at 710 on the roof, where he performs his great look-out-scene (710-775). Having prepared his exit with the promise to provide help,

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was introduced by Sophocles (Arist. *Poet.* 1449a18 f.). Vitruvius (*De architectura* VII praef. 11) credits Agatharchus with this invention, which is erroneous; see Rumpf (1979). The painter Agatharchus of Samos lived at the end of the 5th century BC.

76. See Bees (1995) 88f. for a door; contra Taplin (1977) 453 f.
77. See Taplin (1977) 185 f.
78. See Dale (1969) 260 f., assuming a skene building as early as Thespis.

he descends into the stage building, where he changes mask and costume to play the Herald, and leaves the stage building by the east eisodos (towards the harbour), from where he has to enter as Herald at 836. Driven away by Pelasgus at 953, he enters the skene building from the east eisodos (harbour), changes again mask and outfit and enters as Danaus from the west eisodos (Argos) at 980 in time (774: θᾶσσον), according to his promise.

From these movements of the actors it can be deduced that the skene building had entrances at every end near the eisodoi and that it had to cover the whole distance (about 27 metres) between the eisodoi in the theatre of Dionysus.[79] Moreover, the stage building had to be covered at full length. As it could be seen from the wooden auditorium from above,[80] a mere wall would have spoiled the intended effect of the unseen change of outfit.

Wilamowitz, who denied the existence of a skene building in Aeschylus' early tragedies to the benefit of his "Pagos", had, nevertheless, to suggest a way of changing the outfit of actors in the *Persae* (see above p. 126). Indeed, this constraint, which we have seen that it was imperative in the *Supplices* too, is a stronger proof for the existence of a skene building in the early tragedies of Aeschylus, and not only there, as I am about to suggest.

Aeschylus, who is credited with the introduction of the second actor,[81] took part in the Dionysiac contest for the first time in 499/496[82] and won his first victory in 484.[83] The tragedy before Aeschylus[84] from 535/532 onwards had only one actor, which was introduced by Thespis of Ikaria,[85] according to Aristotle: τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ὁ χορὸς εἰσιὼν ᾖδεν εἰς τοὺς θεούς, Θέσπις δὲ πρόλογόν τε καὶ ῥῆσιν ἐξεῦρεν. ('At the beginning the chorus entered singing hymns to the gods. After that Thespis invented the prologue and the speech').[86] There is no safe evidence for the structure of the tragedies with one actor, chorus-leader and chorus. But long parts in the *Persae, Seven against Thebes* and *Supplices*, which are performed by only one actor

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79. See Papastamati (2015) 67.
80. See Papastamati (2015) 71 fig. 18.
81. See Aristotle *Poetics* 49a 15-17; Diogenes Laertius 3, 56, Vita Medicea 15. For the third actor see Aristotle *Poetics* 1449a 18 f. (Sophocles), Vita Medicea 15 (Aeschylus), Dicaearchus in the Vita Medicea 15 = fr. 76 Wehrli (Sophocles), Themisthios *or.* 26 p. 316 d (Aeschylus). The third actor is used in the *Oresteia*. Evidently his introduction was debated.
82. See the *Suda* s.v. Θέσπις.
83. See *Marmor Parium* (*TrGF* III Aeschylus T G 54a).
84. See Pöhlmann (2002a).
85. Thespis took part in the Dionysiac contest with a δρᾶμα for the first time in 535-532; see *Marmor Parium* (*TrGF* I 1 Thespis T 1,2).
86. Themistios or. 26 p. 316 d; cf. similarly Diogenes Laertius 3.56.

arguing with the chorus leader and the chorus can give an idea of tragedies of this kind.[87] It goes without saying that a tragedy with only one actor, but three roles needs still more changes of outfit than a tragedy with two actors and three roles like the *Persae* or *Supplices*. A simple structure like *Prologue* (*by an actor?*) – *Parodos* – *Episode* – *Stasimon* – *Episode* – *Stasimon* – *Episode* – *Exodos* would need for one actor to change his outfit up to three times, as compared with a play with two actors. Therefore, A.M. Dale assumed a stage building as early as the beginnings of Greek tragedy.[88]

11. FURTHER EVIDENCE FOR THE SHAPE OF THE EARLY SKENE BUILDING

The imperative conventions for the chorus as the 'nesting chorus' and the 'hesitating chorus' have given evidence for the existence of a skene building in the early tragedies of Aeschylus and perhaps even earlier (see above pp. 139-49); the conventional movements of actors (see above p. 149-52) have given scope to reckon the shape of it: the skene building, a long covered gallery vis-a-vis the theatre and parallel to its eisodoi with entrances at both ends, had a door and in its middle a reinforced area with an exit from below. It was covered at full length in order to make the unseen change of outfit of actors possible. Its height was limited, in order to allow the contact of the actor on the roof with the chorus and the actor below.

Other information about the shape of the skene building is provided by the term itself: the σκηνή was first of all a soldier's tent, which appears for the first time in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (452 BC) denoting a camp of the tents of the mythical Amazons on the Areopagus.[89] These tents were rectangular boxes of cloth on a wooden frame, as one may see on a wall-painting of Pompei, a copy of an original of 325 BC, which is an iconographic representation of *Iliad* 1.326-47, showing Achilles and Briseis before her tent at the seaside.[90]

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87. See Pöhlmann (2002a) 20 f.
88. Dale (1969) 260 f.
89. Aeschylus *Eumenides* 686 σκηνάς; Herodotus 6,12: σκηνὰς πηξάμενοι; Sophocles *Ajax* 3; 218; 754: 796: tent of *Ajax* at the seaside; Euripides *Hecuba* 1289; 1293: tents of the Achaeans at the seaside.
90. Communication of the late Hans Lauter (1980). See Pfuhl (1923) vol. II § 863; III pl. 655; Schefold (1952), 144-146, pl. 51.

Aristophanes in *Peace* (421 BC) is the first to use the word with the meaning "stage-building" (731: περὶ τὰς σκηνάς).[91] The plural indicates that the stage building consisted of more than one tent box. Xenophon in the *Cyropaedia* (6.54), in comparison, provides information about the posts upon which the skene building was founded: *Τοῦ δὲ πύργου, ὥσπερ τραγικῆς σκηνῆς τῶν ξύλων πάχος ἐχόντων* ('Towers for siege with wooden posts as thick as the posts of a tragic scene building'). As Xenophon left Athens in 401 BC for his expedition with Cyrus to Persia, and was exiled to Sparta after his return in 394, his words can be regarded as a recollection of the stage building in Athens at the end of the 5th century BC. More details about the skene building were brought forward by archaeological findings:

Dörpfeld, when mapping out the theatre of the Amphiareion of Oropos, noticed four limestone blocks (about 60x60 cm wide) with post-holes (about 20x20 cm wide) *in situ* inside an older skene building.[92] This is a narrow chamber, which Goette tentatively dated to the first half of the 4th century BC. The rear side of this chamber consisted of breccia. Breccia was also used for the first, rectangular phase of the theatre, which later included a circular orchestra and a proskenion of stone. On the aforesaid blocks posts for the wooden front side of the old skene chamber were founded, a possibility which Dörpfeld had already taken into consideration.[93] Later, a wall of poros blocks was built as the back wall of a new proskenion, which superseded the old wooden front and had deeper foundations. Therefore, the front half of the aforementioned four blocks was cut off. The details of the building history of the theatre in the Amphiareion were finally settled by Goette.[94]

In the theatre of Thorikos, the first phase of which is dated to the first half of the 5th century BC on the basis of ceramic findings, Dörpfeld found no evidence for a wooden skene building.[95] The orchestra of Thorikos is trapezoid with rounded edges at the side of the auditorium, which was built in two phases in stone. At its left side was a temple of Dionysus. An earlier and a later retaining wall supported the orchestra on the front side. Two metres below the orchestra is an extended necropolis. Immediately

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91. See Taplin (1977) 452. In Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* 658 σκηνή is a booth on the market place.
92. Dörpfeld (1886) pl. 3; Dörpfeld (1896) 100-109; 101 fig. 15.
93. Dörpfeld (1896) 103.
94. Goette (1995a) 259 f.; Goette (1995b) 39.
95. Dörpfeld (1896) 109-11; Goette (199) 12 f.; Frohning (2002) 35 f., Abb. 32-39; Goette (2015) 84 fig. 2.5; 105 nr. 25.

FIGURE 1: Blocks with Postholes in the Theatre of Thorikos. Photo Pöhlmann.

under the later retaining wall there are two nearly square blocks of limestone (width about 90 cm x 100 cm) with square postholes (about 15 x 15 cm) on their smoothed upper face. Sides and bottom remained raw (see FIGU-RE 1)[96]. They might have fallen down from the border of the orchestra, where Goette tentatively supposed that there was a row of 16 such blocks with post holes dug into the ground for a wooden skene building. Frohning similarly associated these two blocks with a wooden skene building in Thorikos and published a good picture of them.[97]

Postholes for the framework of a wooden skene building were used where a skene building of stone was not possible or not wanted, even in Hellenistic theatres: Dörpfeld described a series of postholes of the Hellenistic phase of the great theatre in Pergamon, where a street crossing the orchestra made a permanent skene building impossible.[98] As regards the theatre of Dionysus in Athens before 450 BC, Goette considered two limestone blocks, which Bulle had already published,[99] to be blocks with postholes for a wooden skene as found in Thorikos and the Amphiareion

96. We thank R. F. Docter for permission to take photographs on the site.
97. Goette (1995) 12 f. nr. 18, fig. 2a; Frohning (2002) 36, Abb. 38.
98. Dörpfeld (1896) 150-153, fig. 61.
99. Bulle (1928) pl. 6, figg.12-14 and fig. 18/19. See Wirsing (1928).

FIGURE 2: Dionysos-Theatre, Blocks NK 4754/4755 (back row),
Blocks NK 4756/5066 (front row). Photo Pöhlmann.

in Oropos.[100] This is wrong in one of the two cases (Wirsing 1928, pl. 6, fig. 18/19).

Christina Papastamati-von Moock[101] has found under the scattered material on the site an exact counterpart for this block (see FIGURE 2, back row). This pair of twins now has the inventory numbers NK 4754 and NK 4755. Both blocks are cubic, smoothed at all sides and pierced at a slight angle by a large rectangular hole. Papastamati has found the place where these blocks belong: two holes in the back on both sides of the so called fundament T, which had already been noticed by Lehmann-Hartleben.[102] Moreover, she found a block of breccia which restores precisely the westernmost hole in the fundament T.[103] On this basis, she was able to offer an entirely convincing reconstruction of a bipod crane ($\mu\eta\chi\alpha\nu\dot{\eta}$) on the fundament T, the two beams of which were inserted into the inclined holes of the aforesaid blocks and connected at the top with a traverse beam, at the middle of which the crossbeam with its counterpoise were attached. Thus, she could also explain the puzzling wide opening in the back wall of the skene H: it

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100. Goette (1995) 24 f., nr. 58.
101. Papastamati (2014) 65-72 figs. 1.36-1.40.
102. Lehmann-Hartleben (1928) pl. 6 fig. 4-7.
103. Papastamati (2014) 68 f. Fig. 1.40.

was indispensable for the lateral movements of the crossbeam.[104] Hence, the proposal of a monopod crane by the late Otto Lendle[105] is ruled out.

Papastamati has also found a counterpart (see FIGURE 2, front row) for the other block mentioned by Goette (Wirsing 1928, pl. 6 fig. 12-14). Both of these blocks now have the inventory numbers NK 4756 and NK 5066.[106] Their smoothed upper face is circular with a diameter of about 75 cm. In the middle of the upper face there are square depressions, as in the Thorikos blocks (NK 4756: 24 x 24 x 13 cm; NK 5066: 29 x 30 x 13 cm). At the bottom of these square depressions are bowl-like traces of a hinge. The sides of both blocks are only roughly worked and not fit to be joined with rectangular blocks. Evidently they were also dug into the ground like the postholes in Thorikos (see above and FIGURE 1). The aforesaid square depressions seem to point to the use of these two blocks as postholes,

Papastamati explains the bowl-like traces at the bottom of the aforesaid square depressions of these blocks by the use of perpendicular rotating windlasses, which were parts of the *μηχανή* described above for the horizontal movements of the crossbeam.[107] Given the lack of a convincing reconstruction of such an equipment the possibility remains, to explain the blocks NK 4756 and NK 5066 with Goette as remains of the framework of a wooden skene building of the Theatre of Dionysus Eleuthereus from 500-450, which were reused later for the *μηχανή*.

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104. Papastamati (2014) 69-72, fig. 1.41/42.
105. Lendle (1995).
106. Papastamati (2014) 67-68, figs 1.38/39. We thank Ch. Papastamati for permission to take photographs on the site.
107. Papastamati (2014) 70.

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UNIVERSITY OF ERLANGEN

egert.poehlmann@fau.de