Submerged Literature in Ancient Greek Culture

An Introduction

Edited by Giulio Colesanti
and Manuela Giordano

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Maria Broggiato, Giulio Colesanti, Andrea Ercolani, Manuela Giordano,
Laura Lulli, Michele Napolitano, Roberto Nicolai, Riccardo Palmisciano,
Livio Sbardella, Maurizio Sonnino

Manuela Giordano
Out of Athens. Ritual Performances, Spaces, and the Emergence of Tragedy[*]

1 Introductory remarks

In this paper, I intend to map out some of the occasions which may have prompted the production of texts that are contiguous with tragedy. Employing the spatial dimension of tragedy as an orienting hermeneutic framework, the aim is to fathom, or at least estimate, the range of submerged texts surrounding tragedy, and identify the factors that might account for this genre's emergence.

When the hermeneutic model of submerged literature is applied to tragedy, two kinds of submerged texts stand out: on the one hand, and mainly on the synchronic axis,[1] there are texts designed to complement ritual performances; on the other, there are the submerged texts of tragedies and by tragic poets. Since the latter issue has been the object of other contributions in this volume, I will mainly concentrate on tracing the map of ritual performances and their attendant submerged texts. This inquiry, we shall see, is conducive to reframing tragedy itself.[2]

1.1 Definitions and landmarks

If we define 'occasion' as the living and encompassing context within which the phenomenon of an aesthetically marked discourse becomes significant,[3] tragedy may be defined in this respect as an '*agon*-based ritual performance enacted within the space of a *theatron*'. The term 'tragedy' is thus intended as

1 This synchronic perspective opens an altogether different line of inquiry from that of the 'origins and pre-history of drama' as undertaken by Csapo and Miller 2007. The present work sees tragedy as coterminous with other ritual performances, whilst also allowing to shed some light on the question of origins.
2 See Broggiato and Nicolai in this volume. On the history of tragedy in the ancient world see *TrGF I*, Mette 1977, Pickard–Cambridge 1988, Green 1994, Csapo and Slater 1995; for a collection of ancient epigraphic and literary evidence, Easterling 1997c, 2005, and 2006.
3 See Colesanti and Giordano in this volume.

tragedy-in-context, thereby incorporating, and somehow privileging, the non-textual dimension of tragedy.

This is a working definition, and stands, as definitions do, on slippery ground. I shall use it mainly as a heuristic tool, which is to say, as a guide through which to explore a largely unknown territory (whilst bearing in mind that 'the map is not the territory').[4]

In order to step onto firmer ground, however, and provide a guide to the arguments that follow, I shall state a few of the assumptions and methodological points underlying this investigation.

1.2 Space, hierarchy of contexts

The present essay builds upon a number of studies that have helped understand tragedy not only as an artistic textual product, but also as religious discourse, ritual performance, and political institution.[5]

In order to deal with 'tragedy-in-context', however, we require a model capable of taking into account all of the above-mentioned aspects and readings *simultaneously*. We must be able to represent them in their dynamic and meaningful interplay rather than as discrete provinces. Of course, these several aspects can (and often ought to) be the object of separate study; on the other hand, reducing tragedy to any of them would amount to a culturally determined misconception.[6] On the assumption that 'without context there is no communication', we may profitably reason in terms of contexts and hierarchies of contexts:[7] tragedy in itself is a context placed within larger contexts (the

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4 See Bateson 1972, 455 ff., and, on the use of 'mapping' in cybernetic explanation, 407 f.

5 Among the several studies I could not possibly account for exhaustively, I found Easterling 1993 and Sourvinou–Inwood 2003 to be particularly insightful on tragedy and ritual; for an overall appraisal of tragedy-in-context with particular attention to its social and political aspects, Vernant and Vidal–Naquet 1972 stand as a watershed in this field; see also Longo 1990, Goldhill 1990, Winkler and Zeitlin 1990, Easterling 1997a.

6 Including the risk of reducing tragedy entirely to its occasion, to be sure. See, in this regard, the important remarks of Finkelberg 2006. I have already discussed the issue of reductionism in Giordano 2005b; see also Griffith and Carter 2011.

7 Bateson 1972, 408. See pp. 405–416 for a fuller account. The idea of hierarchy of contexts drives us 'to seek for explanation in the ever larger units', *Idem*, 408. Bateson posits furthermore that a hierarchy of contexts within contexts is a 'universal for the communicational (or 'emic') aspect of phenomena', *ibi*

festivals, the polis, etc.)[8] – one in which 'religious' and 'political' issues are equally relevant in so far as they informed debate within the polis and were the object of public concern. In modern understanding, 'religion' and 'politics' stand as separate domains, to the extent of constituting an opposing pair.[9] The ancient Greeks, however, did not draw distinctions along the same lines.[10] In ancient Greece, we may say, the *public space,* at once concrete and symbolic, acted as the higher context; it is the larger unit encompassing what we would see as religious and political elements, and in relation to which those contexts took on their meaning.

From the earliest written documentation, the setting and management of Greek public spaces testifies consistently to the utter degree of integration and interconnection of the political and religious spheres within a common space. Homer described an area of the Achaean camp in front of Odysseus' ships, 'where there was their place of gathering (ἀγορή), where they gave sentences (θέμις), and whereby they also built altars of the gods (θεῶν ἐτετεύχατο βωμοί)', *Il.* 11. 808. Within the bounds of this space the functions we would discriminate as political (i.e. the assembly), judiciary (for the settling of disputes and quarrels), and religious (acting as sacrificial space) were thus combined.[11]

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8 I take the term 'interconnected' in the sense elaborated in Oudemans and Lardinois 1987. We may safely assume that for fifth century Athenian tragedy was at the same time a ritual forming 'part of the religious discourse of the polis', as the late Sourvinou–Inwood demonstrated with a wealth of material, Sourvinou–Inwood 2003; on the Great Dionysia as a performance 'integral to democracy in action', see particularly Cartledge 1997, Goldhill 1990, and 2000; Connor 1996a and 1996b.

9 The terms 'politics' and 'religion' in inverted commas will hereafter be used to highlight the etic use of these oppositions (i.e. 'what *we* would call politics as opposed or impermeable to religion'), and to caution against the unwarranted, if common, assumption that the ancient Greeks would class the phenomena under scrutiny in terms of the same opposition. See in general Geertz 1980, a ground-breaking study; for religion see Smith 2004, Zecharya 2007, and Nongbri 2008.

10 See for example Goldhill 1999, 20: 'the separation of 'religion' as a discrete aspect of polis life is quite misleading'. No integral treatment of the subject has been endeavoured so far, and such a misapprehension in fact keeps besetting scholarly debate, including debates on (the function of) tragedy.

11 Cf the similar space in *Il.* 18. 497–508, part. 504, where in the *hieros kyklos*, the 'polished seats', *xestoi lithoi,* are a sort of *prohedria ante litteram*. See Martin 1951, 19 and ff.; for an examination of Homeric gathering-spaces compared with archaeological evidence, see Longo 2010 part. 205–206, 210. Among the various spaces designed for the gatherings of the people, see particularly the agora in the island of the Phaeacians, enclosing a sacred space (*Od.* 6.

Such a space is by no means an exceptional case in Homer and we may well take it as a blueprint for Greek public spaces. As a matter of fact, even a cursory glance at the Athenian agora (fig. 1) makes the continuity apparent. In the sacred area of the agora, shrines and statues of gods and heroes coexisted with political buildings (i.e. the Tholos), judicial courts (the Heliaea), and spaces for performances (e.g. the Orchestra), as 'pieces of the same continent', where divine, political, and spectacular domains were but intertwining threads of civic fabric, contexts within a context. This public space is a key to understanding the polysemy of the word *agon* in Athenian public discourse, a term whose meaning ranges from 'assembly', to 'judicial debate', to 'theatrical performance'. Within the fourth-century framework, gatherings took place in multi-functional spaces rather than in buildings, and these spaces were undifferentiated with regard to boundary discriminations (political, religious, spectacular that were drawn subsequently).[12]

1.3 Ritual and performance

I will refer to the term 'ritual' as it has been used in the last thirty years or so, particularly after the work of Geertz.[13] Evidence from anthropological fieldwork has shaken the long-held assumption of a ritual being strictly connected to a set of religious beliefs or the goals of individuals, by showing, on the one hand, the intrinsic ambiguity and instability of opinions and symbols in connection to ritual action[14] and, on the other, that ritual is a two-way communication, mostly involving questions about participation, civic identity, and empowering processes, far beyond the strictly 'religious' sphere.[15] This point should be

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266–267), stone seats (*Od*. 8. 6), and an orchestra for dancing and competitions (*Od*. 8. 109 and ff, 258 and ff).

12 This characteristic continued well into the fourth century, most markedly with the Gymnasium, on which see Delorme 1960. See also Nicolai 1987, 18–22.

13 See part. Geertz 1980, where he discusses the dynamics of power in the pre-colonial Balinese state, that he defines 'a theatre state', where 'the ritual life of the court, and in fact the life of the court generally, is (...) paradigmatic, not merely reflective, of social order', 13.

14 Goody 1977. For a discussion of this point, Bell 1992, 182–187 and Bourque 2000.

15 Bell 1992; Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994 speak of the 'unintentional intentionality of ritual action'. Bell convincingly argues that there is little use in understanding ritual as an instrument of a pre-existing doctrine or ideological purpose: 'ritual practices' she argues, 'are themselves the very production and negotiation of power relations', Bell 1992, 196. For ancient Greece see most notably Connor 1987 and his emphasis on civic ritual as a two-way

stressed, since in the domain of ancient Greek studies it is still common to narrow the scope of the term and understand 'ritual' solely as 'religious ritual'.[16]

A recent volume has significantly widened the scope of the term 'performance' with particular reference to democratic Athens,[17] showing that from the Assembly to the theatre and law-courts a practice of display and performance dominated the public arena. In this context, the audience took on a particularly active role in the sense that participating as a spectator was 'a fundamental political act' (a description particularly true and relevant for theatrical audiences).[18] The festival of the Great Dionysia was, in this regard, the foremost performance of fifth-century Athenian culture, where 'the combination and tension between plays and rituals' made the festival as 'the constitutive performance of the citizen as θεατής.[19]

The term *choros* can be aptly used as an indicator of the coexistence of the aforementioned aspects: a *choros* can be analyzed as having a religious dimension, being connected to a god as most *choroi* are; an *agon*istic dimension, in so far as *choroi* may perform to win a more or less formalized *agon* (from the *choroi* of Alcman to the Spartan *Gymnopaideiae*); and an inescapable socio-political dimension as they may represent (and catalyse the identity of) age-groups as well as subdivisions within the polis, such as the tribes in the Athenian dithyrambic *choroi*. To train and to perform in a *choros* was one of the ways to build and to display individual identity in and belonging to a community, be it that of Sparta or of democratic Athens, with the countless characterizations that each *choros* expressed: under the name *choros* we should probably understand the first and foremost basic educational training in the ancient Greek world.[20] C*horos* is the term by which Athenians metonymically defined tragedy itself.[21]

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communication; Giordano 2005a; Kowalzig 2007; on the flexibility of ritual in relation to the Great Dionysia see Sourvinou–Inwood 1994, and Goldhill 2000.

16 Particularly in the field of tragedy, see for ex. Scullion 2002, Csapo and Miller 2007, *passim*.

17 Goldhill and Osborne 1999. See also Kowalzig 2007, 43–55.

18 Goldhill 1999, 2, 5. On the inherent shifting of emic and etic perspectives in the very field of performance studies, see *I* Longo 1990, part. 15–17, had already pointed out the identity of spectators and citizens in the context of the dramatic contest. See Goldhill 1997 on attending the theatre as privileged place to exercise the 'civic gaze'. See Bierl 2009 for comedy.

19 Goldhill 2000, 47. I prefer to avoid the terms 'democracy' and 'democratic' as they should be further determined and scrutinized, in this and other contexts. On this still open and debated issue see Rhodes 2003 and 2011, Carter 2011, part. Duncan 2011, and Burian 2011.

20 Much work has been done on the function of the chorus: see Calame 1977, a watershed in this field, and, most recently Bacon 1994/95, Kowalzig 2007, Billings, Budelmann, and

2 Taking place

I have chosen to carry out my investigation by looking at the spaces that are homologous and comparable to the space of tragedy, as stated above.[22] Spaces and places are first of all pivotal coordinates of any occasion: space not only plays an overarching role as a context for the elements at stake, as has been already argued, it also does so in a most pregnant fashion. As Smith has insightfully observed, a ritual, as much as any performance, always *takes place* somewhere; places, indeed, are the semantic frame within which ritual action becomes informed as such.[23] Thirdly, space is a fundamental element of non-verbal communication: on the one hand, proxemics teaches us to see what Hall defined as the 'hidden dimension' – that is, the significance, codes, and impact of both spatial arrangements and the distance between the partners in an interaction (whether this be verbal or non-verbal); on the other hand, buildings, urban settings, and less marked social spaces also form an integral part of communicational interaction.[24] Homology of spatial setting may indicate homology of function, so that the analysis of spatial context through the proxemic lens may reveal what is understood and eloquently hidden in the Athenian cultural context, and yet opaque to our culturally determined understanding.

In the fifth century BCE, tragedy took place in specific surroundings, although these were by no means special, unique or 'native' to tragedy: if Athens is to be regarded as the motherland of dramatic theatre, it certainly was

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MacIntosh 2013, Gagné and Hopman 2013. On the role of choruses for education see the still fundamental Marrou 1964, 69–81.

21 See Parker 2005, 139, 'Athenians sometimes spoke as if drama was a matter of 'choruses for Dionysus' in just the same sense as a Spartan chorus singing a hymn to Apollo was a chorus for Apollo'. Indeed, the tragic poet requests a *choros* to the eponymous archon. On the ritual function of choral dances in tragedy, Henrichs 1994/5; on choral performances see Calame 1999, Calame 2013.

22 See Wiles 1997, who deals exclusively with the space of an already established theatre-building and with the performance space within it; my inquiry will be chiefly concerned with *theatra* as spaces for viewing and as antecedents of (and homologous to) the classical curvilinear theatre building.

23 See Smith 1992.

24 Hall 1966. Although proxemics mostly applies to verbal communication, Hall believed that the value of studying proxemics comes from its applicability in evaluating not only the way people interact with others in daily life, but also 'the organization of space in [their] houses and buildings, and ultimately the layout of [their] towns'. Hall 1963, 1003.

not the creator of the theatre building,[25] nor was theatre originally germane to dramatic contests.

In a pioneering work on ancient theatres, Anti set out on his investigation from the premise that 'we should deal with the theatre-building regardless of the events taking place therein. They could be of multifarious nature: religious, political, *agon*istic, merely spectacular etc.; they always take place without distinction in a theatre'.[26] Following his suggestion, we shall regard theatres in the Greek sense of *theatron* as 'a place for seeing' (LSJ), that is 'a space, slope or natural hollow whatsoever arranged for the vision of a spectacular event, where a place is provided for performers of the event and another space for the viewers'. Retrieving thus the pregnancy of the word *theatron,* allows us to better appreciate the integration of religion, politics, and spectacle in the very management of public spaces in ancient Greece.[27] As we have seen, spectacular, religious, and political elements are to a different degree all germane to performance, and they stand together as interconnected parts of the same public and spatial network.

Below, I shall review the spaces I have classed as structures for viewing (i.e., structures with a designated space for the audience and one for performing), and shall attempt to list a range of possible occasions and (submerged) texts designed for those spaces, as in a conceptual itinerary. The review is far from exhaustive, and the spaces under review are to be taken as significant instances of their class. Our itinerary sets out from the sanctuaries, then delves upon the agora to reach, finally, the southern slope of the Acropolis with the *theatron* of Dionysus Eleuthereus. It is hoped that this theatre will eventually appear somehow different from its customary image.[28] This would mark a success in one of the objectives of this investigation of submerged literature, namely that of decentralizing Athens.

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25 See on this point Anti 1947, 153.

26 *Idem*, 16. In spite of the shortcomings that led to a wholesale dismissal of his contribution, the work of the Italian archaeologist should not be disregarded in the reading and interpretation of ancient theatres, as it provides valuable tools for interpretation. His work is best known for the notorious thesis on the quadrilateral orchestra (a still debated issue, on which see Wiles 1997, 46 ff). Recent assessments have confirmed a quadrilateral orchestra for the fifth-century theatre of Dionysus Eleuthereus, see Moretti 2000, Csapo 2007, and Goette 2007.

27 See Csapo 2007, 90 for a further specification of the term as 'auditorium' in certain contexts.

28 Remarkable work has been done in this very direction by Wiles 1997, 44 ff.

2.1 First typology: sanctuaries

Several sanctuaries hosted different sorts of performances, not necessarily of a religious kind only; within the sanctuaries, a special space, a *theatron*, was devoted to performance.[29] Although it is highly plausible that the same applied to most sanctuaries, only in some are we able to identify an area for performance. In recent years, Nielsen has focused her attention on these spaces, functionally identified under the name of 'cultic theatres'.[30] These spaces range from the better known Eleusis and Brauron to Perachora and Sparta.[31] The structure of these cultic theatres was such as to allow room for an audience (the frontal staircase of a temple, an enclosed area, or even a *cavea*)[32] and a space for the action, which 'was often the central area of the *temenos* around the altar and so very close to the temple. Thus the temple itself might be used as a backdrop, while the altar could, in some instances, be used as a stage, as also could the *pronaos* (vestibule) of the temple'.[33]

The ancient Spartan sanctuary of Artemis Orthia (fig. 2) is an early example of a performance-space which had the altar and temple for centre, around which stood the space for the audience.[34] In the second century BCE, the Romans built an amphitheatre around the altar, emphasizing the central role of the altar and of the rituals connected to it.[35] The sanctuary was active from the ninth century at least; we know that, in the seventh century, Alcman instructed *choroi* of young girls in Sparta, and we may well imagine the setting to have been the very sanctuary of Orthia. Moreover, in the area of the sanctuary hundreds of

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29 Nielsen 2002 calls it 'a purely religious structure', 16. I obviously do not align with such an interpretation: it is well known that sanctuaries were multifunctional structures: places of refuge and protection, banks, archives, venues for dramatic performances (the sanctuary of Dionysus Eleuthereus, for instance).

30 *Ea* Anti 1947 named them 'religious theatres'.

31 For a survey of these *theatra* in Greece see Ginouvès 1972 and Nielsen 2002, 69–148.

32 See for example the *Odeion* of Argos and 'le théâtre à gradins droits', Ginouvès 1972. Nielsen 2002, 16, explains the high frequency of podium temples in Italy in relation to their functions as theatres.

33 *Eadem*, 16.

34 See Dawkins 1929, 52 ff.

35 The most ancient altar dates back to the ninth century BCE, and the first cultic building to the eighth cent., the Doric temple is of the sixth century. See Coudin 2009, 54–58. In Roman times, and possibly before then, the rituals by the altar, called *bomolochiai* (Plut. *Lyc.* 12.6), with the flogging of the ephebes, became particularly spectacular. See Brelich 1969, 134, Frontisi–Ducroux 1984.

clay masks were found among other *ex voto*, suggesting a possible use for dramatic purposes (fig. 3).[36]

The *Amphiareion* of Oropos, a healing and oracular centre, hosts a fifth-century stepped structure (fig. 4) intended as a sort of *cavea* for an audience; it has the altar as its centre, and an inscription explicitly defines it *to theatron to kata ton bomon*, 'the *theatron* by the altar'.[37]

Lacking appropriate evidence, we may only attempt to draw an open list of types of texts designed for the occasions which took place at these venues, and conjure up possible scenarios.[38] First and foremost we may cite processions and processional songs. Processions were among the most salient features of ancient Greek religious and public life, displaying an overt performative character.[39] They were, among other things, a way for the community to represent itself in its manifold aspects and subdivisions, as in the notorious instance of the *pompe* opening the Great Dionysia. According to several scholars, tragedy developed out of the singing of the *tragodoi* at the arrival of the procession;[40] from the point of view of proxemics, at any rate, processions bear more than a resemblance with tragedy. As Kavoulaki has remarked, 'at its most basic the theatrical performance consisted of an array of people (*choros*) moving along the *parodos* (...), reaching a *stasis* (station) to perform a ritual singing and dancing (*stasimon*) in honour of a god, and finally exiting (*exodus*)'.[41] The *theatra* in the sanctuaries may well have marked the arrival-point for processions, as witnessed with the procession of the Great Dionysia.

Alongside the *prosodoi*, we may enlist the ensemble of processional songs produced for the *pompai* as submerged texts.

Sacrifices and Sacrificial Songs. Sacrifice is by all means a ritual performance and an event to be staged at the sanctuary, as well as theatres: at the *theatron* on the altar of the *Amphiareion* at Oropos, a ritual performance

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36 See Coudin 2009.

37 IG VII 4255. See Petrakos 1996, Lupu 2003.

38 The types listed may overlap since they often belong to a continuous ritual setting, dithyrambs for example may be ranged at the same time as *choroi* and cultic hymns as well as sacrificial songs.

39 Aristophanes playfully parodied the processional mode of the Rural Dionysia in the well known passage of *Acharnians* (237–279). On processions see Kavoulaki 1999, a short but penetrating contribution.

40 Burkert 1990, 16–18, Sourvinou–Inwood 2003, 141–161.

41 Kavoulaki 1999, 295. The connection of procession with dithyramb has been thoroughly explored by Csapo and Miller 2007, see for ex. 8–9, 12–13.

focussing on sacrifice seems to have been customary.[42] The proxemic structure envisaged the god in the honorific position of first and foremost spectator, as main recipient of the ritual, whose benevolence and favour was to be secured and maintained.[43] The altar usually faced the temple and took centre position along the line of sight of the audience – a centrality to be regarded as far from merely symbolic. Sacrifices were never silent, and involved prayers, song, and dance.[44] Most of these celebratory texts did not survive the time of their performance.[45]

Ritual Drama. The issues involved in the association of 'ritual' and 'drama' are manifold and complex, and have been dealt with recently by Csapo and Miller.[46] For our present concern, under this conventional heading we may list mimetic representations in which one or more persons acted as a god (probably a priest), and which had the *theatron* at the sanctuary as their natural venue.[47] In a cursory listing we may first of all cite the *hieros gamos*, a particular form of ritual drama, first attested in the scene of Ares and Aphrodite in *Od*. 8. 266–366, as Palmisciano has shown.[48] In Athens, a *hieros gamos* was performed every year at the *Anthesteria* in the *Boukoleion*, with the archon *basileus* acting as

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42 On sacrifice as ritual performance see Jameson 1999.

43 See, on this point, Connor 1987.

44 See for ex. Plat. *Leg*., 7. 803e 'we should live out our lives playing at certain pastimes – sacrificing, singing and dancing – so as to be able to win gods' favour' (trans. R. G. Bury, slightly modified).

45 On prayers, see Giordano 2012.

46 Csapo and Miller 2007, 1–38 and *passim*. See also Nagy 2007, 121–122.

47 See in this regard the life-size clay masks found in the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia mentioned above, representing mainly a young type and an old type, suggesting performative use. On the ritual drama see the documentation gathered in Nielsen 2002. We may moreover mention the groups of *mystai* of Dionysus performing as gods, in the Athenian *thiasos* of Iobakchoi; Luc. *Salt*. 79 refers to a performance with satyrs, *boukoloi* and corybants, as well as to the *hieros gamos* of Ares and Aphrodite, Luc. *Salt*. 63. We are informed of the *Theoinia* and *Iobakcheia* celebrated at Athens by the *gerarai* (c. *Ne*. 78), the elderly women involved in various rituals, including the *Anthesteria*, on which see Robertson 1993, 231–238. Liban. *Ep*. 1212, 1213, ed. Foerster XI 293–294 says that 'these men are servants of Dionysus and they perform each year the myths of the god'. See also Plut. *Mor*., 2999 e–f, for a Dionysian group personifying the Minyads. Phil. *Vit. Ap*. 4.21, provides evidence of a sacred drama on the life of Orpheus, with groups of people personifying *horai*, *nymphai*, and *backhai*. On this passage see Hamilton 1992, 52.

48 Palmisciano 2012, part. 198–206.

Dionysus and the *basilinna* as Ariadne.[49] At the same Dionysian festival, ritual performances of a different kind were represented, onto which the *agones chytrinoi* were later grafted.[50] Nielsen has gone so far as to suggest that the mimetic structure of sacred drama be regarded as the middle term between the singing of hymns by the chorus *in propria persona* and the mimesis of tragedy.[51] Even without endorsing such a connection (one that touches upon the problem of the origins of tragedy), we may assume that ritual drama was somehow felt as connected to tragic telling,[52] and was quite widespread; admittedly, however, most testimonies are late and relate to the mysteries. On the subject of the notorious phrase *ouden pros ton Dionyson*, upon which much has been said, I should like to underline a neglected aspect: namely how the phrase seems intended to mark the absence of a signal element, *scil.* ritual drama, otherwise present at spatial and festive contexts comparable to the Great Dionysia, emphasizing the unfulfilled expectations of those who viewed a performance dealing precisely with the god's deeds and glory.

2.2 Second typology: the agora

As Kolb has shown, the agora as a gathering place and the theatre as a viewing place are tightly connected in the civic settings of ancient Greece.[53] We shall take as examples the agora of Sparta and of Athens.

The Agora of Sparta. The Spartan agora presently stands as a field submerged by olive trees, in blatant contrast to the constantly and rewardingly excavated agora of Athens (the 'cradle of all democracies', in modern readings and the cultural projections of contemporary scholarship).[54] Recent contributions have documented how the early assimilation of classical Sparta to Nazi Germany doomed Spartan studies (including archaeology) to utter neglect,

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49 [Aristot.] *Ath. Pol.* 3.5. See Pickard–Cambridge 1962, 1 ff; Simon 1983, 92–98; Spineto 2005, 76–86; Hamilton 1992, 56 disputes the notion that the *hieros gamos* took place at the *Anthesteria*.
50 Scholion *ad* Aristoph. *Ra.*, 218; Diog. Laert. 3. 56, Ath. 4. 130d.; cf Plut. *Dec. Or.*, 841 f, who also attributes to Lycurgus the introduction of the selection of comic actors at the *agones chytrinoi*. See partic. Spineto 2005, 119–123.
51 See also Nielsen 2002, 52.
52 See, on this point, Parker 2005, 141.
53 Kolb 1981.
54 See Sakka 2008.

amounting to a modern instance of a 'submerged culture'.[55] Greco has recently surveyed the remains of the Spartan agora, proposing novel interpretations: in particular, Greco was able to identify a circular building composed of two perfectly concentric round structures as the sixth-century Spartan *Skias*.[56] The building was designed by Theodorus of Samos (Paus. 3. 12. 10), and later served as a model for the Athenian *Tholos*, also known as *Skias*. Pausanias (3. 12. 10) reports that, in the *Skias*, Spartans *ekklesiazousin*,[57] a verb to be taken in the broad sense of 'to gather'. The purpose of this perfectly circular structure cannot be further ascertained, but we may safely regard the *Skias* as a *theatron*, used for diverse sorts of performances. We may cite, e.g., the *choroi* of the *Gymnopaediae*, following Pausanias' indication (3.11.9) of a place called *Choros* 'because at the *Gymnopaediae*, a festival that the Lacedaemonians take more seriously than any other, the boys perform dances in honour of Apollo'.[58]

The Agora of Athens. (fig. 1) The Athenian agora was similarly a multifunctional public space,[59] and, alongside its political and juridical functions, provided the setting for a host of rituals, first among which was the festival of the Great Dionysia. Neither Thespis and Pratinas nor the young Aeschylus performed their dramas at a theatre: at least until the 70th Olympiad (500/499 – 497/6), dramatic contests were performed in the agora, where temporary wooden scaffolds, called *ikria*, were set up to provide seating for the occasion. About two decades after the *ikria* ruinously collapsed in 499, construction of the theatre of Dionysus began. Still, even after the collapse of the *ikria*, several parts of the festivals were held in the agora.[60] The altar of the Twelve Gods, on the north-western part of the new agora, was one of the significant venues for the rituals: the statue of Dionysus was greeted in a *xenismos* and was probably accompanied by singing and dancing, whatever the connection with the rituals surrounding the *eisagogé apo tes escharas*.[61] Xenophon (*Hipparch.* 3.2–3) speaks of the *choroi* of the Dionysia paying homage

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55 On the standing of Sparta in modern scholarship, see Hodkinson 2010.

56 Greco 2011, 56–66. The wider circle has a diameter of 43. 30 metres, containing a perfectly concentric structure with a diameter of 16. 70 metres.

57 *Idem*, 62; Athenian *Skias*, *EM*, *s.v.*

58 On the *gymnopaediae*, see Brelich 1969, 138–140. Herodotus (6. 67) speaks more generally of a *theatron*.

59 See *supra*.

60 For documentation on the *ikria*, *Athenian Agora III,* ns. 524–528.

61 See the reconstruction offered by Sourvinou–Inwood 2003, 108 ff.

to the Twelve Gods and to other gods in the agora.[62] The Royal Stoa was probably another location for performances (possibly of a dramatic kind), since there is an early fourth-century inscription at the base of a Herm on the steps of the Royal Stoa recording the names of comic and tragic poets.[63] Finally, the main site within the agora for musical and choral performances was obviously the Orchestra, Pindar's dithyrambic fragment 75 being the best-known attestation.[64] The Orchestra was still a place for performance when the Romans built an Odeion on the site (Paus. 1.14.1; Hesych. *s.v.*).[65] Warning against the dangers of theatrocracy, Plato (*Laws* 817 b–c) attests that the agora continued to be a popular place for dramatic performances where stages were still set up (*skenas te pexantes*) wich somehow recalled the *ikria*.

Foremost among the submerged texts performed at occasions celebrated in the agora were certainly the c*horoi* and cultic hymns – a heading we should primarily take to cover the 'phallic hymns' and 'sacred songs' mentioned by Aristotle, though also a varied range of songs that were deeply embedded in Greek cultic life and were normal practice in civic education, as I have already pointed out.[66]

2.3 Third typology: *theatra* in the Attic demes

We are well informed about the dramatic performances taking place at the demes,[67] and also know that in some instances the *theatron* preexisted the dramatic *agones*. Of the four surviving theatres (out of the fourteen attested in the demes), we shall look in particular at those theatres of Rhamnous and Thorikos.[68]

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62 The passage, however, is not entirely clear, see Parker 2005, 317, n. 98.

63 See Thompson1976, 87.

64 The flattering dithyramb won Pindar a statue in the agora, probably near the Orchestra. See Parker 2005, 318, and n. 100 arguing for a performance by the altar of the Twelve Gods.

65 See Thompson 1950, Anti and Polacco 1969, 192–196.

66 Aristot. *Poet*. 1449a12, 'the phallic songs which survive as institutions in many cities to this day', τὰ φαλλικὰ ἃ ἔτι καὶ νῦν ἐν πολλαῖς τῶν πόλεων διαμένει νομιζόμενα; see also *Pol*. 7, 7, 1342 a 7–11, on *hiera mele*.

67 On performances at the demes, see Whitehead 1986, in part. 215–220, Plat., *Rep*. 475d. Pickard–Cambridge 1988, 45–51; Mikalson 1975, Parker 1987; Csapo and Slater 1995, 124–132; Csapo 2010, 89–95; on theatres at the demes, see Arias 1934; on festivals see Mikalson 1977 and Parker 1987, Wilson 2000; and on the funding system of theatres at the demes see Wilson 2010.

68 See Wiles 1997, 23–36.

The theatre of Rhamnous is better described as a *theatron* (fig. 5) since it exploits a natural slope for spectators and a terrace for performance. It was the chief public space of the deme and a focus for the demesmen's public attention, with sacrificial altars, seats of honour, and stone tablets as 'vicarious spectators, occupying the honorific front row'.[69] The theatre also served as agora for the people of Rhamnous, as an inscription explicitly attests;[70] further, it was the destination to which the sacred way led – the point of arrival for a procession trailing up the hillside along the sacred way. In terms of proxemics, the design of this space reveals the centrality of the procession: instead of facing the centre of the performance area, as would be expected, the *prohedria* seats face eastward, as if to welcome the arrival of the procession.

Thorikos, home to the tragic poet Carcinus, is a site of paramount importance in the archaeology of Greek theatres, since its fifth-century theatre (whose most ancient foundations date back to the sixth century) is the only standing theatre of the period.[71] Its stone structure rests against a natural slope (fig.6); it has a quadrilateral orchestra, and linear stone terraces to seat the audience. The theatre was the space of public gatherings at Thorikos, and was the context for diverse events: assemblies, sacrifices, dramatic contests. Although most of the communal performances held at Thorikos revolved around public sacrifices,[72] it seems that over the course of the fifth century dramatic performances bore the upper hand: what is especially significant to our theme is that this theatre should have emerged to attract audiences from all of southern Attica. Recent studies have shown that the names of the *choregoi* were regularly recorded, and that their appointment was (at least on occasion) awarded by means of something comparable to an auction, a token of the prestige the community bestowed on dramatic performances.[73]

Conceived as multifunctional spaces to fulfill the functions of sanctuary, agora, and *theatron*, these theatres could host processions (as the proxemics of the seats of honour in the theatre at Rhamnous suggest), sacrifices, possibly ritual drama, *choroi*, and, from the fifth century onwards, dramatic performances as well.

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69 *Idem*, 24.

70 Kolb 1981, 72, n. 24, on Rhamnous 66–72.

71 Anti 1947, 45–47. The *koilon* was provided with marble benches, from the mid-fifth century, the first in Attica, Van Looy 1994, 17.

72 On the calendar of Thorikos, see AC 52, 1983 150–174, ll. 57–62; Whitehead 1986, 194–199.

73 On the lists of *choregoi* and dramatic inscriptions, see Summa 2001 and 2006. For plausible interpretations of the practice of bidding for the appointment as *choregos* see Wilson 2007a.

2.4 Fourth typology: the *theatron* of Dionysus Eleuthereus

The examination of earlier theatre structures, cursory though it has been, brings to light an almost wholly neglected fact: the spatial conception of the theatre of Dionysus was by no means original. Sometime after the *ikria* collapsed in the agora, the Athenians identified the sanctuary of Dionysus Eleuthereus, on the southern slope of the Acropolis, as a suitable place for dramatic contests. In order to visualize the fifth-century theatre, we should resort to the idea of a *theatron* rather than a theatre: in keeping with the practice of their time, fifth-century tragedians staged their plays within a *space*, and *not* a building. Recent excavations have made it possible to reconstruct fifth-century performance spaces (fig. 7) as composed of an earthen rectangular orchestra, removable stage and scenery, low trapezoid terraces formed by *temporary* rising tiers of wooden benches,[74] the temple on the western side, and the altar (where sacrifices took place) at the centre of the orchestra.[75]

Elements of continuity and innovation stand out. On the one hand, the *theatron* still conforms with the type we first discussed, the *theatron* at sanctuaries; this is unsurprising, since the separation of the sanctuary from the theatre only took place in the fourth century.[76] Much in the likeness of the theatres in the demes, furthermore, the theatre of Dionysus also served as an institutional space for the Assembly that followed the festival, as well as other gatherings on which we are ill informed.[77]

With regard to the submerged texts performed at the theatre on the Acropolis, among which dithyrambs and satyr drama stand out, I will only

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74 See Moretti 2000. Csapo 2007, 105–107, argues convincingly for the impermanent character of the fifth-century *theatron*. See also *supra*,

75 The traditional estimate of the seating capacity (amounting to over 10,000 people), should be reduced to about 7,000. See for example *Idem*, 97–98.

76 See Wiles 1997, 55–56.

77 Kolb 1981 argues that Athens would not have invested so much work for five days a year; much like the *Odeion* where trials and gatherings regularly took place. Martin 1951, and Longo 1988 have similarly argued for the political priority of the theatre building, but see, *contra*, Hansen and Fischer–Hansen 1994, 51–53. Csapo 2007, 106–107 reassess the question, drawing attention to the fact that in the fifth century the Athenian assembly met but rarely in the theatre of Dionysus, since its capacity 'was in fact smaller than or equal to the *ekklesiasterion* of the Pnyx and (…) seating was only available in the theatre during the festival season', 107. The proxemic homology with the Pnyx and with its transformations is however highly meaningful, see Wiles 1997, 34–36.

touch upon the first type, as satyr drama has been already dealt with.[78] Although no cultic dithyrambs are extant[79] a small set of texts performed at the Great Dionysia survives: their fortune, undoubtedly, reflects the reputation enjoyed by their authors, Pindar and Bacchylides. Choral performance was certainly the central event of the occasion: to each of the ten tribes, the performance of dithyrambic *choroi* represented the occasion for self-definition and self-assertion before the polis, and, no less importantly, because of the long and heated preparation it required, it counted probably as much as the sung text, if not more. It is indeed plausible that, unlike tragedy, the focus of the occasion was on the *agon* over the text. In support of this reading we may note that victory was assigned to the tribe and not to the poets (with the subsequent staging of the tripods along the route leading from the agora to the theatre),[80] and that, unlike tragic poets, the dithyrambic poet could be, and often was, a foreigner (possibly of Panhellenic renown), whereas the *choreutai* had to be strictly Athenian tribesmen.[81]

3 The emergence of tragedy

Because they were transmitted orally and nested in tradition, the texts produced for most ritual performances were most often doomed to submersion. We may certainly agree with Palmisciano that 'as long as Greek culture was oral/aural and poetry was linked to an occasion, the only factor capable of causing a poetic genre to disappear was the disappearance of the occasion that produced it'.[82] Tragedy, on the other hand, whilst being framed within the proxemic and cultural oral context of ritual performance, soon enough emancipated itself from the strictures of *hic et nunc* performance and took on a course quite unlike

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78 See Easterling 1997b, and Palmisciano in this volume, 'Dramatic Actions'. For dithyramb see in general Zimmermann 1992, Ieranò 1997, Kowalzig and Wilson 2013.

79 On cultic dithyrambs see Cerri 2009, who assigns the loss of the text to the ephemerality of their ritual destination, which 'prescribed a *hic et nunc* improvisation'. See Csapo and Miller 2007, 8–9, D'Alessio 2013.

80 See Zimmermann 1992, 36 and *passim*.

81 See Ieranò 2013.

82 See Palmisciano, 'Oral Poetry', in this volume. See Kowalzig 2007, 6–7 for submerged choral songs having 'the shape of traditional oral hymns which were only picked up by tradition when they presented peculiar features'. See however Budelmann 2013, for arguments suggesting early reperformances of texts beyond the original occasion.

dithyramb and satyr drama, as Finkelberg has shown.[83] No theory has so far provided a sufficiently satisfactory account for the resilience of tragedy; as a contribution to the debate on this unresolved issue, I can only propose to offer a few additional considerations.

3.1 *Agon* and excellence

With the exception of a few attested instances, it would seem that the submersion of the typologies of texts discussed above was neither determined nor prevented by the competitive nature of the occasions at which they were performed.[84] Contrariwise, the competitive nature of the Great Dionysia does seem to have contributed to the prestige of tragedy and of individual tragic texts, since 'it was not simply the way the play was executed but what the play was that was important'.[85] The competitive nature of the occasion, we might say, triggered some sort of butterfly effect, which led to the texts becoming par*agon*s of excellence not just to all Athenians, but also beyond the city bounds. Competition at the Great Dionysia may thus have played a comparable role vis-à-vis tragedy to the competitive performances of Homeric texts at the Panathenaea: in both cases, the *agon* instituted a principle of selection and fostered an interest in the quality of both the texts and the performance aspect *per se*, over and above their conventional and ritual character. The Panathenaea and Great Dionysia were also instrumental, in the long run, in the preservation of Homeric and tragic texts alike, as argued by Rossi.[86] Over the years, the festival of the Great Dionysia became increasingly central to the Athenian agenda and grew in magnificence,[87] attracting an international audience; the Panhellenic dimension of the Great Dionysia certainly enhanced the effort for

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83 Finkelberg 2006.

84 See Budelmann 2013, 95 who rightly notes that 'competition does note void ritual embedding, but it does insistently prompt considerations of skill and comparison with other songs: it makes a difference to the balance'.

85 Osborne 1993, 33.

86 Rossi 2000, 169, 'nel giro di pochi anni [Atene] avviò due operazioni di controllo dei testi: la redazione pisistratea dell'epica e l'organizzazione dei concorsi e delle rappresentazioni drammatiche'. Connor 1989 thinks that the Great Dionysia were established after the overthrow of the Pisistratids as a celebration of Athenian freedom.

87 Tragedy previous to that of Phrynicus and Aeschylus, and going back to whatever the name Thespis represents, was probably submerged because of its proximity with other ritual performances.

textual and performative excellence, and became in time another obvious factor of emergence.[88] Athenians came to regard the tragic *agon* as being the high point of the festival, an impressive showcase for Athenian discourse.[89] As Longo first highlighted, several civic ceremonies were held and proclamations made before the tragic *agones* 'to be celebrations of the polis and of its ideology':[90] tributes paid by Athens' allies were paraded in a procession, generals poured libations, panoplies were bestowed on war orphans, honorific crowns were awarded, the slayers of aspiring tyrants were thanked with a special award.[91] Bearing the obvious affinities of ritual and spatial context in mind, we may venture to say that the competitive slant of tragic performance and the concern with artful excellence that ensued are the ingredients that made tragedy as an occasion emerge over other ritual performances.[92] The esteem in which these texts were held in antiquity also played an important role in their diffusion: Easterling has in this sense argued for 'a close interconnection between the popularity of certain plays in the repertoire and the demand for written copies'.[93]

3.2 The *theatron* of Dionysus Eleuthereus

For all its elements of continuity with previous structures, we should not underestimate the impact of the creation of the Athenian *theatron*. Our cursory

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88 See Hall 1989, 160–165, Easterling 1994, Taplin 1999, Spineto 2005, 277–287, Scodel 2001, Carter 2011. I cannot take issue here with some of the problems implicit in some of these contributions, I will just note that the Athenian 'local' dimension does not contradict her Panhellenic aspiration, as Athens' endeavours in the fifth century were oriented to featuring prominently on the Panhellenic scene, and the framework of the Great Dionysia is but the perfect scene to stage Athenian primacy among the other Greeks.

89 See Wilson 2009, 16–17 and Wilson and Hartwig 2009, 18 with epigraphical evidence, 22–23.

90 Longo 1990 (originally published in 1976), 16. On these civic ceremonies, see Goldhill 1990, Goldhill 2000, and Wilson 2009.

91 Tributes of the allies: Isoc. *de Pac.*, 82; Aristoph. *Ach.* 496–508 and scholium *ad* 504; libations of the ten generals: Plut. *Cim.* 8.7–9; panoply to the war orphans: Aeschin. *in Ctes.* 153; honorary crowns: *de Cor.* 120 and *IG* I³ 102, on which Wilson and Hartwig 2009.

92 Much as Athenian festivals and sacrifices were famous for their brilliance and lavishness, as in [Xenophon.], *Ath. Pol.* 2. 9. Similarly Athenian processions were regarded as 'emerging' over the other 'not for their nature but for their excellence', Kavoulaki 1999, 299; see also Connor 1996a, 87–88 and Athens as a 'festival society'.

93 Easterling 2006, 4.

examination of the diverse *theatra* has made apparent a seemingly neglected aspect: the very fact that a structure should be expressly constructed for viewing was unprecedented on the Panhellenic scene. In response to the disaster of the *ikria*, the Athenians furnished a space *explicitly designed* for the dramatic *agones* of the Great Dionysia: not only had the *ikria* of the agora proven fatally dangerous; they had henceforth become insufficient to host the growing crowds of spectators pouring in from all over Athens and beyond for the dramatic contests. True though it is that the theatre also served other functions, the whole purpose of its creation was to host the Great Dionysia, as we have seen, although this happened well into Aeschylus' career, decades after the dramatic contests had first been celebrated. The fact that a space chiefly intended for the Great Dionysia (albeit framed in the traditional setting of the sanctuary) should be distanced from the traditional agora resulted in the creation of something novel and distinct from other ritual performances, placing the dramatic element under a spotlight. In the agora and theatres at the demes, the venue for drama continued to be spatially undifferentiated; in Athens, the new venue created a short-circuit (the effects of which were enhanced by the surfacing of Attic tragedy on the Athenian public scene), and became a chief factor for the emergence of the events that took place therein.

3.3 The Athenian trademark

The festival of the Great Dionysia in general, and tragedy in particular, featured Athens as the 'best of the Greeks'; the event confirmed itself as central to the Athenian agenda and was perceived as a quintessentially Athenian feat, with a correlate in the fact that 'symbolically, the public expenditure marks each year's tragedies as the best effort of the Athenian polis'.[94] Tragedy was, first and foremost, *civic tragedy*; it was imbued with the Athenian debating style, which was part and parcel of Athenian public discourse and identity; finally, the Athenian seal lay in the requirement that the members of the tragic chorus be Athenian, as well as the poets and the *choregoi*.[95] Aristophanes' *Frogs* and

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94 Scodel 2001, 220, on the subject see also Wilson 2011. On the 'Athenianness' of tragedy see Carter 2011, and Griffith and Carter 2011.

95 Scholion *ad* Aristoph., *Pl.*, 954, where it is said that strangers could partake in the chorus at the *Lenaea* and metics could undertake the *choregia*. This is all the more interesting as the *Lenaea* were regarded an 'intimate' festival in comparison with the Dionysia. For the civic

Lycurgus' canon clearly prove the centrality of tragedy for the city in the fifth and fourth centuries respectively.

This is not to deny the Panhellenic dimension of Attic tragedy; it is rather to say that, particularly in the instance of tragedy, Athens inverted the flow of talented poets and valuable texts 'from import to export'.[96] Starting with Pisistratus, Athens had long been busy appropriating the best poets and texts from those which enjoyed Panhellenic renown; with tragedy, however, Athens inverted this tendency and became herself the centre for the production of texts and poets acclaimed and sought after throughout the Greek world: these texts and poets now bore an unmistakable Athenian trademark, Panhellenic *qua* Athenian.

Moreover, if we discounted the vested interest of the Athenian polis in preserving the texts, we could hardly account for the selective process whereby a number of poets and texts were intentionally saved from submersion. Significantly, the process began with Aeschylus, who was canonized among his contemporaries and could already be regarded as a survivor by the time he was dead.[97]

3.4 Reperformance

The practice of reperforming 'old drama' (the *palaion drama*) was another compelling factor of emergence: starting as early as 386 BCE,[98] the practice suggests that, early on in the fifth century, the Athenians appreciated the value and significance of these texts *as texts*, independently of the *hic et nunc* context of the performance.[99]

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meaning of the *choregia* see Wilson 2000, 12–21 and *passim*. For 'civic tragedy', see Giordano 2006a and 2006b.

96 As Scodel 2001, 223 has phrased it, 'with tragedy and later comedy, Athens had a native product to export'.

97 *Vit. Aesch.* 12, schol. *ad* Aristoph. *Ach.* 10. For the fortune of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* in the fifth century, see Easterling 2005, part. 30–34.

98 *Fasti*, IG II² 2318, 201–203. See Pickard–Cambridge 1988, 99–100; Easterling 1997b; Taplin 1999, Nervegna 2007, Csapo 2010, 83 ff.

99 Taplin 1999, 37 backdates the practice to the time of Herodotus; Pöhlmann had actually come to the same conclusion: see the discussion of Scodel's paper in Scodel 2001, 226; and Finkelberg 2006.

In the third century BCE, *agones* were expressly held to bring ancient tragedies, ancient comedies, and ancient satyr dramas back on stage (most probably in the form of excerpts performed by virtuoso actors). Before long, reperformances became 'a crucial development for the formation of acting troupes who travelled round the different festivals of the Greek-speaking world.'[100]

3.5 Lycurgus' canon

Through the practice of reperformance first, and then more markedly with Lycurgus' canon, tragedy came to stand as the first and most significant case of a living canon and of the canonization of a genre. At about the time at which Heraclides Ponticus composed a treaty *On the three tragedians* (fr. 179 Wehrli), the politician Lycurgus established a public text sanctioning the survival of the tragic triad as canonized into the material memory of text and images, consistently with his agenda:[101]

> τὸν δέ, ὡς χαλκᾶς εἰκόνας ἀναθεῖναι τῶν ποιητῶν, Αἰσχύλου Σοφοκλέους Εὐριπίδου, καὶ τὰς τραγῳδίας αὐτῶν ἐν κοινῷ γραψαμένους φυλάττειν καὶ τὸν τῆς πόλεως γραμματέα παραναγινώσκειν τοῖς ὑποκρινομένοις οὐκ ἐξεῖναι γὰρ παρ᾽ αὐτὰς ὑποκρίνεσθαι

> Lycurgus decreed that bronze statues be made of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; that their tragedies be copied and preserved under public auspices (or 'in the city archives'),[102] and be read aloud to (or 'collated for') the actors by the city clerk: for they were not permitted to perform contrary to these (*scil.* copies). Plut. *Lifes of the Ten Orators*, 841 (transl. R. Scodel).

Lycurgus' initiative is paradigmatic of what Rossi identified as the agency of the polis in governing the preservation of texts.[103] Scodel rightly notes that the philological tenor of the initiative (the ostensible establishment of a correct text as such) is quite secondary to the proclamation of 'the tragedians as worthy of

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100 Easterling 2006, 4. For the phenomenon of reperformance and of the spreading of drama in Sicily and Southern Italy, see Bosher 2012.

101 Lycurgus invested a great deal in promoting the 'image' of Athens, and paid particular attention to theatre, building the stone theatre of Dionysus. On the politics of Lycurgus, see Parker 1996, 242–255.

102 According to Kovacs 2005, 382, the expression ἐν κοινῷ refers to a 'combined copy of their plays', on the assumption that official copies of the tragedies were already kept. See *infra*.

103 Rossi 2000, 169–170.

regulated performance on the Homeric model' and as an outstanding constituent of Athens' national treasure.[104] Battezzato, in this regard, has rightly likened the tragic texts to the body of laws and legal documents, in so far as they were read aloud by the *grammateus* and preserved in the polis' archive – a parallel illustrative of the exceptional status of tragic texts in the fourth century.[105] Moreover, Lycurgus' institution of the text as Athenian *agalma* is to be assessed jointly with the parallel strategy of erecting statues of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides in the theatre beside those of Miltiades and Themistocles: we may read these acts as the construction of a social memory and of collective identity grounded in that memory, whereby the past is framed as significant and authoritative for the present, and 'the word and the marble' are cast as the treasure of the Athenian people.[106]

This canon, on the other hand, also determined the *ipso facto* submersion of most contemporary tragic poets (in spite of their celebrity), as in the instance of Alcidamas II.[107] Yet, only a minute fragment remains of even the triad – and not necessarily the most significant. As Easterling has pointed out with regard to Sophocles' tragedies, 'the small sample transmitted through the manuscript tradition may be unrepresentative of Sophocles' work as perceived by contemporaries or by readers and audience who knew many more of the plays, including the satyr dramas'.[108]

These remarks fall short of accounting for factors of emergence after the fourth century, since the cultural framework I have attempted to outline does not also account for the subsequent development of tragedy as an export, a turn whereby tragedy chiefly came to signify a text out of (its original) context.[109] The factors of submersion were manifold, and the fate of individual texts needs to be investigated along different lines from those that have so far been customary.[110]

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104 Scodel 2007, 151.

105 Battezzato 2003b, 11 ff.

106 It would also be worth considering the influence and interest of single *gene* in preserving certain tragedies over others: see for example the interest of Lycurgus in Euripides' *Erechtheus*, as argued by Sonnino 2010, 110–119. As for the case of gentilitian role in the organization of Great Dionysia in general, Sourvinou–Inwood 2011, 312–339 has convincingly argued that no *genos* had a particular connection with the festival.

107 A most striking case since he was honoured with a statue while he was alive and before the setting up of the three statues of the tragic triad: see Scodel 2007, 147–149.

108 Easterling 2006, 3. See also Nervegna 2007, 41 for a close scrutiny of the new formats and codes, serving school teachers and singers alike, under which the texts were transmitted.

109 On this, see Gentili 1979.

110 See for example Battezzato 2003a.

Transmission, by and large, was determined by the agency of actors, as Easterling has shown;[111] it was also correlated to a text's multifunctionality, understood as the appropriateness of a text to the specific purposes and agendas that arose in future periods.[112]

111 Easterling 2006, 2, maintaining, furthermore, 'a more flexible approach, which recognizes that one performance medium might modulate into another, and indeed that there is nothing inherently wrong with such developments'. See also Csapo 2010, 85–89.

112 Easterling 2005, 25. I like the term 'multifunctionality' better than 'universal potential' in Taplin 1999, 56, as the term 'universal' tends to convey some degree of evaluative connotation.
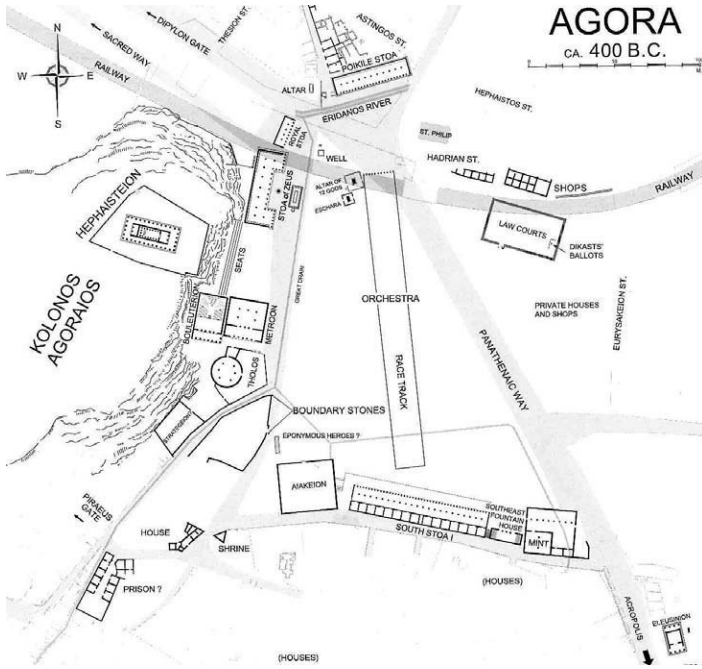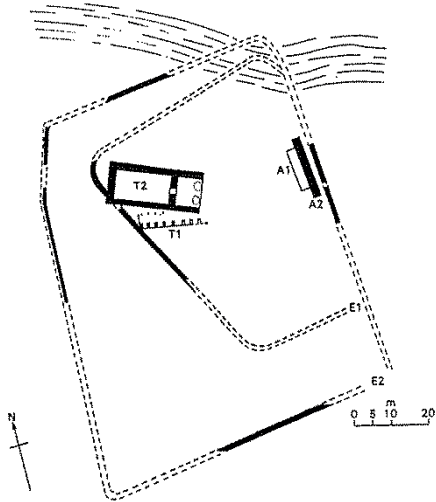
Fig. 1 The Athenian Agora (Camp 2010)

Fig. 2 Sparta, Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia (Stibbe 1996)

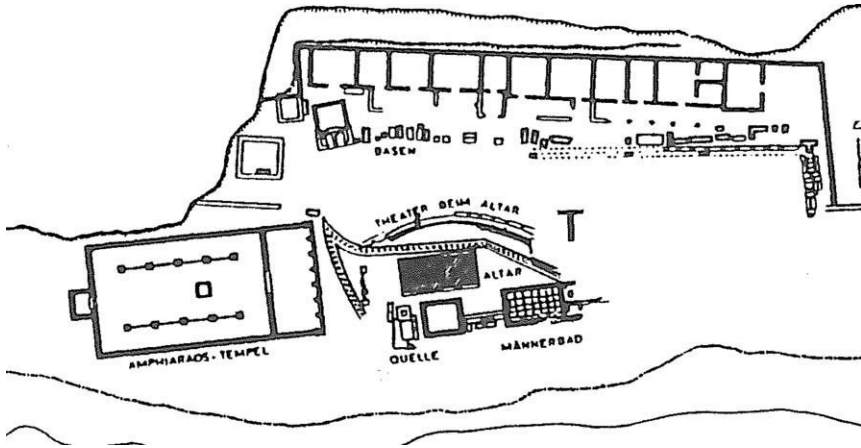**Fig. 3** Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia, Mask (Photo courtesy of Riccardo Palmisciano)

Fig. 4 Oropos, *To theatron to kata ton bomon* (Nielsen 2002)

A Altars
B Battlements
H Statue of hero
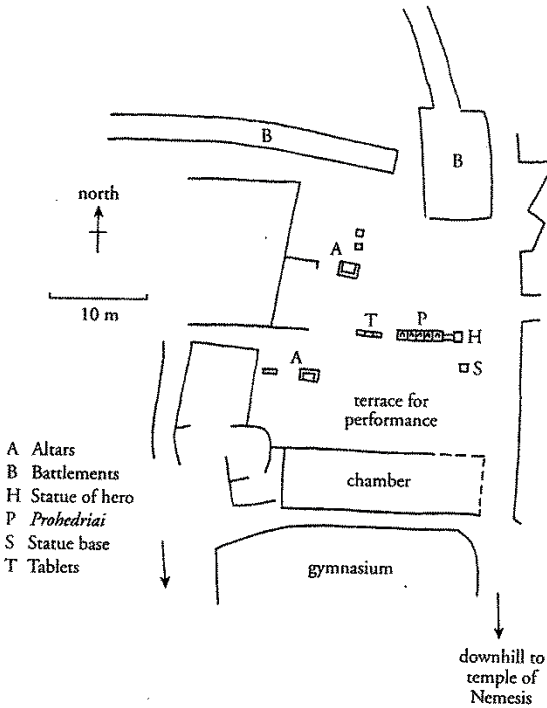P *Prohedriai*
S Statue base
T Tablets

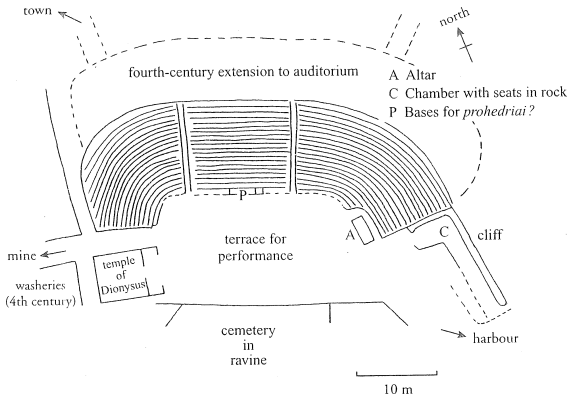**Fig. 5** The *theatron* of Rhamnous (Wiles 1997)

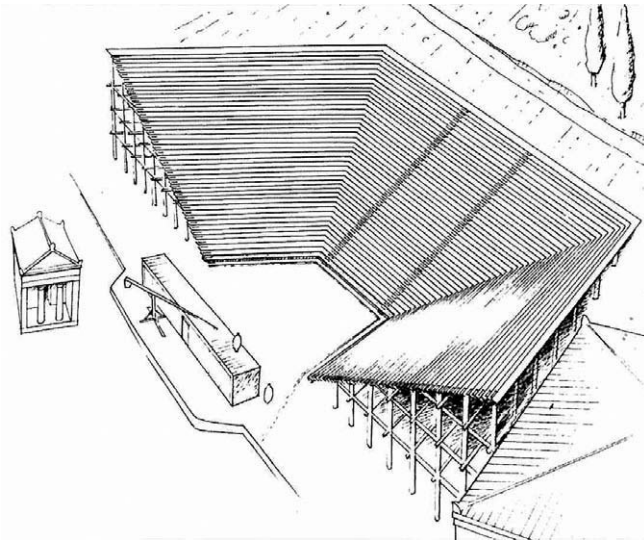Fig. 6 The *theatron* of Thorikos (Wiles 1997 and satellite image)

Fig. 7 The *theatron* of Dionysus Eleuthereus at Athens, fifth cent. BCE (hypothesis of reconstruction by N. Bresch, from Moretti 2000)

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Contributor

Manuela Giordano is Research Fellow and Lecturer of ancient Greek literature at the University of Calabria. She has published a number of essays and monographs on historical- anthropological questions, Homer, tragedy (*La supplica. Rituale, istituzione sociale e tema epico in Omero*, 1999; *La parola efficace*, 1999), and a commentary on the first book of the *Iliad* (2010). She is currently writing a book on civic tragedy.

Università degli Studi della Calabria
Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici
87036 Arcavacata di Rende (CS)
e-mail: man.giordano@gmail.com