3

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The audience of Athenian tragedy

The culture of classical Greece was a performance culture. It valorised competitive public display across a vast range of social institutions and spheres of behaviour. The gymnasium with its competitions in manliness, the symposium with its performances of songs and speeches, and the theatre become – with the spreading of Greek culture throughout the Mediterranean world in the wake of Alexander the Great – the key signs of Greekness itself. The dominant culture of Athens in the fifth century is particularly influential in the development of these institutions, and can be said to have invented the theatre. Yet in this, as in most respects, Athens is not a typical Greek city. For the unique institutions of Athenian democracy constitute a special type of performance culture. The lawcourts and the Assembly are the major political institutions of democracy, the city's major sites of conflict and debate, its citizens' major route to positions of power. Both lawcourts and Assembly involve large citizen audiences, public performance by speakers, and voting to achieve a decision and a result. Democracy made public debate, collective decision-making and the shared duties of participatory citizenship central elements of its political practice. To be in an audience was not just a thread in the city's social fabric, it was a fundamental political act. The historian Thucydides has Cleon, a leading politician of the fifth century, refer dismissively to the Athenians as *theātai tōn logōn*, 'spectators of speeches' (Thuc. 3.38); Athenian political ideology proudly highlighted democracy's special commitment to putting things *es meson*, 'in the public domain to be contested'. A discussion of the audience of Greek tragedy must take as its frame not modern theatrical experience but both the pervasiveness of the values of performance in Greek culture and in particular the special context of democracy and its institutions, where to be in an audience is above all *to play the role of democratic citizen*.

SOCIAL DRAMA AND AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Drama was a major political event in the Athenian calendar. I call it 'political' not in the narrow sense that 'political' is often used today but in the wide sense of 'pertaining to the public life of the polis' that Paul Cartledge has already outlined in this volume: the drama festivals were institutions in which civic identity was displayed, defined, explored, contested. This can be seen in the arrangements for the festival, the ceremonial performances by which the plays are framed and by the plays themselves. The most important festival for drama is the Great Dionysia, and I will focus first on different types of festival activity to show how widely diffused a sense of audience participation was at the Great Dionysia.

The calendar of events on the days before the plays were performed is not quite certain.[1] It included however: (*a*) the procession of the Statue of Dionysus to a temple on the road to Eleutherae, a village near Athens, and then back to the theatre precinct in Athens, where sacrifices and hymns were performed. In the second century BC, ephebes – young males on the point of the formal status of adult and full citizen duties – played a major role in this, and many scholars have assumed that this class of Athenians also performed this role in the fifth century. (*b*) There was, at least from 444 BC, a *proagōn*, a ceremony in which the playwrights and performers were presented in public and the subject of the plays announced. It is not clear what audience there was here, but Plato does describe the event as nerve-racking for the playwright Agathon (*Symp.* 194a). (*c*) The *proagōn* was followed by the spectacle of a massive ceremonial procession (called a *pompē*), which led to the sacrifice of bulls in the sanctuary of Dionysus. This *pompē* was particularly grand. The procession included a variety of sacred objects and offerings carried by various representatives. For example, a young girl of noble birth was chosen to carry a golden basket of offerings; ritual loaves of bread were carried, as were phalluses, which are often associated with Dionysiac worship (cf. Ch. 2 above). Resident aliens as well as citizens marched in special robes. So too citizens without any special role in the festivals could process. (*d*) The *pompē* may have been followed by a *kōmos*, a celebratory revel, though it is unclear if this is different from the *pompē*, or merely a description of the less formal conclusion of the procession and sacrifice.

These opening events thus engaged many Athenians either as selected representatives of particular classes or groups within the city, or more generally, as residents of Athens. The boundary between audience and

[1] For details of and sources for the following ceremonies, see Pickard-Cambridge (1988).

participants as the *pompē* progressed towards the sacrifice and its feast (and the *kōmos*) must have been increasingly indistinct. The festival is for – and participated in by – the Athenians as a body.

In the theatre itself, this process of participation and display continues. Before the plays themselves, at least from the middle of the fifth century, four ceremonials of evident importance took place:[2] (*a*) The ten generals, the leading military and political figures of the state, poured a libation. Only very rarely indeed in the calendar did these elected officials act as a group together in such a ritual. This emphasises the power and organisation of the polis under whose aegis the festival is mounted. (*b*) There was an announcement by a herald of the names of citizens who had benefited the state in particular ways and been awarded a crown for their services. According to the orator Aeschines, other announcements were once made at this time, such as proclamations of the freeing of slaves or honorific awards from foreign cities, until a law was passed limiting such announcements to those who had been honoured publicly by the polis itself (Aeschines 3.41–7). Again, the political frame of the polis is clearly highlighted. (*c*) There was a display of tribute from the states of the Athenian empire, where all the monies were paraded around the theatre – a ceremony that glorifies Athens as a military and political power. (*d*) There was a parade of ephebes whose fathers had been killed fighting for the state. These orphans were brought up and educated at state expense, and when they reached the age of manhood they were presented in the theatre, in full military panoply, and they took an oath promising to fight and die for the state as their fathers had before them. The duty of the citizen towards the military state is ceremonially displayed.

Each of these ceremonials in different ways promotes and projects an idea and ideal of citizen participation in the state and an image of the power of the polis of Athens. It uses the civic occasion to glorify the polis. The audience of the plays included those singled out by the pre-play ceremonials, and this special time in the theatre had the potential to become a highly charged moment in the political life of the city. The bitterly contested political row between Demosthenes and Aeschines in 330 was ostensibly on the subject of the presentation of a crown to Demosthenes in the theatre in 336 (Dem. *On the Crown*; Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon*) and Demosthenes' speech *Against Meidias* is predicated on the fact that Meidias punched Demosthenes in the theatre (cf. Ch. 1 above, p. 34). Demosthenes' account of Meidias' appearance at the Dionysia shows well the sense of personal honour at stake before the citizen body: 'Those of you who were spectators

[2] For details of and sources for these ceremonies see Goldhill (1990a).

at the Dionysia hissed and booed him as he entered the theatre, and you did everything that showed loathing of him ...' The orator's description of the scene is full of theatrical language, as the social drama of Meidias in the theatre becomes the subject of further debate on the stage of the lawcourt. The theatre was a space in which all the citizens were actors – as the city itself and its leading citizens were put on display.

The role of the *chorēgos* is represented in many ways in Greek writing – sometimes as merely a form of taxation on the rich to benefit the poor, sometimes as the perfect opportunity for the rich to benefit the city, as all good citizens should – but it is clear that being a *chorēgos* offered a special chance to glory in the full light of the citizens' gaze.[3] (It is as a *chorēgos* for his tribe's dithyrambic chorus that Demosthenes was hit by Meidias; hence the highly charged and public effect of the blow.)[4] The conspicuous expense of the lavish costumes, the possibility of victory in the context and thus its celebration, a grand personal appearance before the assembled city, presented the *chorēgos* with a magnificent occasion for self-promotion. So – inevitably – we hear about Alcibiades, the fifth-century citizen who was most prominent in the citizens' gaze, marching in purple before the amazed citizens, and also (from his enemies) about his outrageous arrogance towards the judges and other citizens in the competition (Dem. 21.143; Athen. 12 534c; Andocides, *Against Alcibiades* 20–4). The Great Dionysia was a festival in which men competed, not merely in plays or in dithyrambic choruses, but also as *chorēgoi* in the contests of status within the city.

The major festival at which drama takes place, then, is also itself a social drama. The audience participates in this drama as the body before whom and by whom prominent citizens' standing is constructed as prominent. As the city and its citizens are ceremonially on display on stage at the Great Dionysia, so the audience constitutes what may be called 'the civic gaze'.

THE AUDIENCE AS CITY

The size of this civic audience is estimated by scholars according to the size of the theatre – a task made more difficult since the theatre was rebuilt in stone by Lycurgus between 338 and 330 BC. A figure between 14,000 and 17,000 spectators is usually and plausibly given. Plato in the *Symposium* (175e) says that Agathon's victory in the tragic competition was gained 'before the witnesses of more than 30,000 Greeks'. This statement indicates more about the prestige and public glory of the Great Dionysia than the possible number of spectators. Plato's exaggeration is likely to come in part

[3] Peter Wilson's forthcoming work analyses this fully.

[4] See Wilson (1991).

at least from the use of 30,000 as a conventional – and not wholly improbable – figure for the number of citizens in Athens. For whatever the actuality of numbers and constitution of the audience, it was repeatedly said that 'the whole city' was in the theatre, or, more grandly, 'all Greece'.

A formal collection of even 14,000 citizens, however, makes the Great Dionysia the largest single body of citizens gathered together not only in the Athenian calendar but also throughout the Greek world, except perhaps for the Olympic games (for which figures are not readily available) or for certain major battles. The Assembly in the fifth century held around 6,000 citizens – also often termed 'the city', 'the whole city' – and the lawcourts had juries chosen from a panel of 6,000 citizens: numbers of the jurors varied from court to court and from case to case, but were certainly larger than present-day juries – the lowest figure we have is 200, the highest 6,000.[5] The only event to come close to the Great Dionysia in scale and grandeur is the Great Panathenaea, a festival held every four years. The Panathenaea was, as the name suggests, a festival for all Athens, where the central event was a huge procession (*pompē*) to the Parthenon, in which all groups of the city were represented. This procession is pictured on the frieze of the Parthenon.[6] The *pompē* was followed by athletic games and musical and poetic competitions in which competitors from across Greece competed. (There is a Panhellenic element in the Panathenaea too.) This remarkable spectacle, like the Great Dionysia, projected and promoted a glorious image of the polis of Athens as a polis – it displayed the city as a city to the outside world and to itself.[7] Yet even in the Panathenaea there was not the focused attention provided by the stage and the huge audience of citizens. The sheer scale of the Great Dionysia invests the social drama with an immense importance.

It is certain that a very large majority of this huge audience was made up of Athenian citizens – adult enfranchised males. Many texts treat the 'proper or intended' audience of tragedy as the collectivity of citizens. I will discuss the implications of this when I consider questions of audience response and tragic teaching. Here I shall look first at how the citizen body is organised within the theatre, and secondly at the other members of the audience.

In Greek theatres, seating is divided into wedges of seats called *kerkides*, and even before Lycurgus rebuilt the theatre, the seating was divided in a fascinating way.[8] There was a block of seats called the *bouleutikon* which was reserved for members of the *boulē*, the executive council of 500 citizens

[5] See MacDowell (1978) 36–40. [6] See Osborne (1986).
[7] For discussion and bibliography see Goldhill (1991) 171–85.
[8] For an interesting if overstated discussion see Winkler (1990b) 37–42.

who prepared and enacted the business of the policy-making Assembly (Aristophanes, *Birds* 794, with schol.; *Peace* 887). These 500 citizens were appointed by lot, as were most officials in democratic Athens, and there was a compulsory geographical spread of councillors, since each of the ten tribes provided fifty councillors. It is worth recalling here that the dithyrambic competitions are between choruses of fifty from each tribe, and also that each tribe was required to provide a list of names from which the judges of the competition were selected – one from each tribe, by lot. These organisational principles, and in particular the special seats of the *boulē*, highlight the authority of officials of the democratic state on the one hand, and, on the other, the formal socio-political organisation of the *dēmos*.

It is also clear that the ephebes who were paraded as war orphans had special honorific seats (Aeschines 3.154); and the scholia to Aristophanes and Pollux – both very late sources – tell us that the ephebes as a class had special seating (Pollux, *Lexicon* 4.122 (see also Hesychius s.v. *bouleutikos*); schol. to Aristophanes, *Birds* 794). This conforms with the ephebes' special role at the Dionysia in the transfer of the statue of the god and the opening sacrifice, which, as I have already mentioned, is also attested only in late inscriptional evidence. The changing nature of the formal institutions of the ephebes, however, makes it unwise to assume that what was true of the second century BC was true for the fifth century. So it cannot be assumed with certainty that the whole class of ephebes had special seating. None the less, at the very least it is clear that the special seats allotted to the war orphan ephebes distinguish – ceremonially and spatially – a group of those who are about to assume their full duties as citizens.

There is also reason to suppose that each block of seats was reserved for a particular tribe. There are three pieces of evidence for this hypothesis.[9] First, there is (once again) very late inscriptional evidence that shows that in Hadrian's time – some four hundred years after the death of Sophocles – the *kerkides* were allotted to particular tribes. It is often assumed that this may reflect earlier practice also. Second and most importantly, tickets for the theatre have survived, lead tokens dated to the fourth century or earlier, which are inscribed with tribal names.[10] This may imply that tribal affiliation was important in seating arrangements and from an early date. Third, and of least use, a fragment of a comedy called *Female Power* by Alexis, which has its woman speaker complain of having to 'sit in the last of the *kerkides*, like foreigners' (Alexis fr. 41), seems to suggest that foreigners had a special block of seats. This may imply that particularised blocks of

[9] See Winkler (1990b) 39–41, following Pickard-Cambridge (1988) 270.
[10] See Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 270–2.

seats did exist, but without a context the fragment remains tantalising. While again no certainty is possible, the hypothesis of tribal seating reflects strikingly both the other tribal aspects of organisation in the festival, and the festival's spatial representation of socio-political division.

There were also honorific seats – *prohedriai* – in the front rows of each block. These were reserved for particular priests, notably priests of Dionysus himself, and for particular dignitaries. In democratic Athens, there was a marked tension between on the one hand collective endeavour, the ideology of citizen equality, and the pre-eminence of the state over the individual, and, on the other, the desire for individual honour, conspicuous personal display and familial pride. The spatial dynamics of the audience – with blocks of citizens, and certain authoritative or representative groups or individuals distinguished by honorific seats – dramatises this central dynamic of Athenian social life. As the audience of the Great Dionysia constitutes 'the civic gaze', so the audience is seated in ways which map the constitution of the citizen body. The Great Dionysia, ceremonially and spatially, puts the city on display.

What, then, of non-citizens? Which and how many non-citizens attended the theatre? Some of the answers to these questions are straightforward, others involve great controversy. There are four groups to be considered, foreigners (*xenoi*), resident aliens (metics), slaves, and women. I will look at each in order.

Foreigners were certainly present at the Great Dionysia, and it is likely that there were increasing numbers, particularly from neighbouring states, as the fame of the festival spread and theatre began to have great cultural capital (cf. Ch. 1 above). There is, however, no substantial evidence for the numbers of foreigners – certainly the rhetoric which proclaims events at the Dionysia happening 'before all Greece' cannot be taken as an indication of very large numbers of foreigners. Whether there was a separate section for foreigners (as suggested by the fragment of Alexis) or not, we have no notion of how admission was organised. However many foreigners in general were present, the Dionysia was also used in particular to honour foreign dignitaries[11] or benefactors of the state – which in some cases meant the honour of foreign ambassadors, in the *prohedriai*, watching the tribute they themselves had been compelled to bring, as it was paraded in the theatre. This sense of the city on display internationally at the Dionysia is contrasted by Aristophanes with the Lenaea, a secondary drama festival,[12] where, as one of his characters put it, 'there are no foreigners present yet ... we are just ourselves' (*Acharnians* 502–7). This statement of the complete absence of foreigners at the Lenaea need not be taken literally; but it does indicate how at the Great Dionysia the heightened awareness of the presence of foreigners in the audience, particularly the official representatives of foreign states, increased the sense of the festival as an arena of maximum public self-awareness and self-promotion for the city and the citizens.

Metics – non-citizen resident aliens – were also present, both at the Dionysia and at the Lenaea. It is not known if they had special seats, but, as at the Great Panathenaea and at the *pompē* of the Dionysia, where they probably marched in special robes,[13] they are singled out by Athenian writers specifically as being present as a group. Again, we have no evidence of how admission was organised or how many metics attended.

With slaves and women we enter more contested waters. It is often said that slaves definitely could attend the Dionysia (though it is also always assumed that not many did). An inscription indicates that the 'assistants to the Council' – eight slaves in public service – had special seats in the theatre, presumably with the *boulē*.[14] There are, however, only three pieces of evidence for other slaves, all far from compelling, though each is from the fourth century BC. The first is also used for the case of women at the Dionysia. In Plato's *Gorgias* (501e–502d), Socrates argues that music and poetry, unlike philosophy, aim at the pleasure of an audience rather than its education; and that even tragedy, the most serious art form, is a type of 'demagoguery'. This is part of an extremely rhetorical attack on 'rhetoric', where poetry and drama are assimilated to rhetoric. Socrates concludes his critique of the arts: 'Therefore we have now found a type of rhetoric aimed at a populace (*dēmos*) such as is composed of children and men and women together, slave and free, a rhetoric I do not much admire; for we have said it is a type of fawning (*kolakikēn*).' Although tragedy has been Socrates' last and most difficult example, his conclusion is not solely about tragedy (and does not mention any performance context at all); rather, he is concerned with all arts as types of demagoguery. His conclusion does not imply an audience of slaves (or women) for tragedy; rather, Socrates is denigrating the promiscuity and amorality (*kolakeia*) of a rhetoric which can only pleasure its audience; the failure of this type of (democratic) rhetoric to distinguish properly between audiences or to recognise how an audience may be bettered is expressed in a typically (aristocratic) Greek way by

[11] See Aeschines 3.76, where Demosthenes is said to have been hissed by the audience for his servility towards the Macedonian ambassadors.

[12] For details of the Lenaea see Pickard-Cambridge (1988) 25–42; cf. Ch. 1 above.

[13] See Suda s.v. '*askophorein*'.

[14] See Pickard-Cambridge (1946) 20; a stone from the late fifth-century theatre is inscribed ΒΟΛΗΣ ΥΠΗΡΕΤΟΝ, 'servants of the council'. This inscription is surprisingly not quoted in the standard discussions of the presence of slaves in the theatre.

suggesting that such rhetoric mixes hierarchical, social categories normally kept separate (adult/child, male/female, slave/free).

The second piece of evidence is from Theophrastus, who in his work *The Characters* (9.5) characterises the 'Shameless Man' as a figure who would buy tickets for foreigners (*xenoi*) but then take 'his own sons and their tutor' to the plays. Taking a slave to the theatre here, however, may be part of the character's 'shamelessness' – '*and* their *tutor*!' – a transgression rather than a norm of Athenian practice. The third and least telling passage comes from Aeschines, who claims that in earlier years the time before the plays was used by citizens to announce the manumission of slaves. So, it may be inferred, slaves may have been present for this announcement (though, of course, slaves who are in the process of being freed). There is no other evidence for the presence of slaves in the audience of the theatre. The invisibility of slaves is a well-known problem in ancient sources; conversely, there are several occasions where slaves are explicitly said to attend religious events, such as the Anthesteria. It is hard from this evidence to come to a certain conclusion about the presence of slaves, except the public officials, at the Dionysia. If they did attend, they were not described by any available Athenian writer as part of the 'intended or proper' audience. The invisibility of slaves is a social and not just a historiographical factor.

The presence of women at the Great Dionysia is a hotly contested subject, with more extensive implications for our understanding of the audience and the nature of the dramatic performance (cf. Ch. 1 above, pp. 29–30). Unfortunately, there is no single piece of evidence that can offer a clear and direct answer to the problem. Consequently, the debate has tended to rely on analogies with other Athenian festivals, general suppositions about the role of women in Athenian culture, oversimplified interpretation of difficult and ambiguous sources, and, all too often, mere hypothesis – 'gut feeling'. I shall not be able here to deal with all the material that has been brought to bear on the issue.[15] I will outline first the very few uncontested 'facts of the case'; second, I will look at the passages in ancient writers which those who believe women were present argue to be the strongest evidence; third, I will look at the arguments from analogy with other festivals and from the position of women in Athens. Finally, I will look at the implications of this debate for our understanding of the audience of tragedy.

Let me begin, then, with what I take to be uncontested facts. No women participated directly in the writing, production, performance or judging of the plays. No women could claim money from the funds which assisted

[15] I have considered the arguments in fuller detail in Goldhill (1994a).

Athenian citizens to attend the plays (the Theoric Fund, discussed below). At least one female took part in the *pompē*: the sacred basket was carried by a specially chosen, well-born – i.e. citizen – unmarried female (*parthenos*). Beyond this, however, each piece of material that has been brought to bear is open to question.

The most important texts that have been utilised to demonstrate the presence of women in the theatre in the classical period come from Aristophanes and from Plato. (Late anecdotes – such as the famous story that women had miscarriages at the first sight of Aeschylus' Furies entering the theatre – are of most dubious value, since there is no doubt that women did attend the theatre in these much later periods, and these stories are often invented from the cultural perspective of the late writers in response to particular passages in the plays themselves.) In Aristophanes' play *Peace*, the hero and his servant are throwing barley into the audience (962–7): 'Has everyone got some barley?' asks the hero; 'There's no one among these spectators who hasn't got barley', says the slave; 'But the women haven't got any', says his master; 'Well, their husbands will give it to them tonight', replies the slave. The word for barley grains (*krithai*) is the same word in the plural as a slang term for penis (*krithē*). So the joke can easily be understood (though not translated) as saying 'all the spectators have their barley / a penis', 'women don't have barley / a penis', 'their husbands will "give it to them" tonight'. This humour does not depend on the presence of the women in the theatre at all. Conversely, it has been assumed that the women sit too far back to be thrown the barley; thus the joke has a spatial as well as a bawdy point. Both readings of the line are acceptable. Critics have found it possible to decide between them only by claiming that one reading gives a 'better joke' than the other. It is not easy to see how this could be adequate for proving or disproving the presence or absence of women in the theatre.

The other major passages come from Plato. I have already looked at Socrates' dismissal of tragedy and the other arts as a rhetoric aimed at a *dēmos* made up of children, women, men, free and slave. The *Laws* is also regularly quoted as saying 'tragedy is a form of rhetoric addressed to "boys, women and the whole crowd"'.[16] This quotation is extracted from a speech of 'The Athenian Stranger', the *Laws*' leading figure, who in setting up his imaginary constitution is dismissing some imaginary tragic poets from the city. He says (*Laws* VII 817b–c) that 'since we too are poets' – but the law is our art – 'do not suppose that we will casually allow you into our midst to set up your stages/pavilions (*skēnai*) in the market place and bring in your

[16] Henderson (1991) 138. This, together with Podlecki (1990), forms the fullest defence of the presence of women.

actors with their fine voices (much louder than ours) and permit you to declaim before children, women and the whole throng'. This tells us nothing about the audience of the Great Dionysia, though much about Plato's rhetoric of denigration. These travelling players (with their louder voices than the 'poets of law', the philosophers) are not allowed to set up in the market place and have an influence over those most likely to be influenced by such people – children, women, the throng (*okhlos*). Similarly, at *Laws* II 658, where Plato is again attacking the associations of pleasure and art, the Athenian stranger specifies tragedy as the pleasure of 'educated women, young men and perhaps almost all the general public'. Leaving aside the customary Platonic denigration of tragedy by associating it with women, youth, and the masses, does the specification of '*educated* women' imply that *only* educated women knew tragedy, and if so, does it imply a theatrical audience or an (educated, and thus small) reading public? So – a passage less commonly quoted – at *Laws* VII 816e the Athenian stranger warns against letting any free person, man or woman, *learn* (*manthanein*) comedy, although they must watch it to learn the difference between 'the serious' and 'the ridiculous'. Plato's interest here is in the training of the 'wise person' (*phronimos*) and in the dangers of the seductions of literature. He advises that only slaves or foreigners should be allowed to perform comedy. Hence, it must not even be taken seriously or learnt by a free person. The education in the Athenian Stranger's utopia clearly does not tell us much about the Great Dionysia, but the idea of a free woman 'learning comedy' may help in understanding the contact of 'educated women' with tragedy.

These are the passages that are taken as the strongest positive evidence for women's attendance at the Great Dionysia, and they are not compelling. There are also no addresses to women as audience, though many addresses in comedy to all classes of men. We are told many details of women's attendance and practice at other festivals; none of women at the theatre. So, the general questions can be framed as follows: is the absence of mention of women at the Great Dionysia a chance effect of our lacunose sources? Or, since women's presence in male company is surrounded by many taboos in Athenian culture, is there an Athenian protocol of invisibility for women on this most public of occasions? Or is the silence a significant indication of the difference between the Great Dionysia and, say, the Great Panathenaea, at which women processed as representatives of women as a group within the city? This is, in other words, not just the usual difficulty of constructing an argument from silence, but rather a more specific and significant problem of the 'conspiracy of silence' with which women's history is particularly concerned.

Can analogies with other festivals or what we know about women's roles

in Athens help us? (Cf. Ch. 1 above, pp. 28ff.) Women no doubt were excluded from certain major political institutions such as the Assembly. Nor could citizen women, it appears, attend the lawcourt as witnesses, even when they were principals of the case, and any presence of women in the court is hard to prove.[17] They could not sit in the court as jurors; and there were clearly strong taboos associated with any appearance – even in the speech of others – in such a public arena.[18] At the Great Panathenaea, however, a festival for the whole city, women as a group within the city were publicly represented in the *pompē*. Indeed, in many religious spheres women's participation was fundamental. So, is the theatre to be thought of as more like the Assembly or more like the Great Panathenaea?

Let us start from one of the uncontested facts and consider female presence in the *pompē*. 'It is hard to believe', writes Jeffrey Henderson, 'that the basket carrier who led the procession of the Great Dionysia was the only female present or was barred from watching the plays.'[19] He offers in support of this claim the evidently important role of women in religion and the relaxation at times of festival of the normal restrictions on female mobility. Yet there are many other elements of the *pompē* and women's roles in religion that would need to be taken into account before we can assent to Henderson's appeal to likelihood. First, the basket-carrier is a *parthenos*, a category in Greek thought surrounded by particular taboos, one who would appear before male eyes only when protected by ritual – as here.[20] But what of the other *parthenoi*? Are we to assume that they too processed? Is it further to be assumed that this high-born *parthenos* and other citizens' wives and daughters took part in the *kōmos* at the end of the *pompē* (when they could not attend a symposium)? Why is there no consideration of other cults where individual or selected *parthenoi* are mentioned? But even if women did process in the *pompē*, does this imply anything for the theatre itself? For it is hard to see what cultic role women could be said to perform here, or how the wives and daughters of citizens could appear before the citizens' gaze without the formal protection of ritual. The theatrical performances were on different days, and less involved with obviously cultic activity. If women were present, where did they sit and how did they get there? Henderson assumes that there was special seating at the rear for women (on the highly dubious basis of the passage of Aristophanes' *Peace* and the Alexis fragment, both quoted above); and also

17 Todd (1990) 26. Todd, like Bonner (1905), wrongly assumes women's regular presence in court: see Goldhill (1994a) 357–8, following Fernandes.
18 See Schaps (1977). 19 Henderson (1991) 136.
20 On the *parthenos*, see e.g. King (1983); Lloyd (1983) 58–111; Sissa (1990a); Dean-Jones (1994).

that women 'attended in the company of other women' since 'the husbands would be unlikely to have come to the theatre or departed from the theatre with their wives.[21] It is hard to believe – to use Henderson's argumentation – that well-born women wandered to and from the theatre with their friends. What this exchange of rhetorical appeals makes clear, however, is that it is only on the basis of a general understanding of women's roles in Athens and in Athens' different festivals that a view of the likelihood of female attendance at the theatre can be asserted; but also that the very variety of possible ways of constructing such analogies makes it hard to offer the certain conclusion – for or against the presence of women – that most scholars do.

One reason why scholars have been unwilling to admit that the evidence is so inconclusive is that the presence or absence of women in the theatre has important implications for the festival as a whole.[22] The frame of drama is determined by its audience. If there are only men and predominantly Athenian citizens present, then the plays' evident concerns with gender politics and with social debate and with the practice of deliberative life within the city become questions addressed to the citizen body as a body: it is as citizens that an audience may be expected to respond. The issues of the play are focused firmly through the male, adult, enfranchised perspective. If there are women present, although the 'proper or intended' audience may remain the citizen body, there is a different view of the city on display, and while the citizen perspective remains dominant, it is in the gaze of citizens and their wives that the plays are enacted. So, Henderson can write 'some passages in Aristophanes virtually call out for partisan cheers from such [indecorous or unruly] women', as if the tensions on the stage are to be rehearsed within the audience.[23] It remains intensely frustrating, then, that a question of such importance in the understanding of Greek drama cannot be securely answered, even though some of the implications of an answer can be sketched.

The social drama of theatre finds a map of the city in the audience: whether women are to be thought of as a silenced presence on the map or an absent sign, the audience represents the body politic.

TEACHING THE CITY

There was a fund called the Theoric Fund, established by the city probably under Pericles, which made payments to the citizens to enable them to attend the theatre (cf. Ch. 1 above, pp. 000). Any citizen inscribed on a deme roll – the deme was the local organisational and residential unit of the polis in which every citizen had to register – could claim the price of a ticket (usually taken to be two obols, the wages of an unskilled working man for a day). This fund was protected by law: it was a prosecutable offence even to propose changes to the fund. It is easy to infer that attendance at the theatre was regarded as a citizen's duty, privilege and requirement. This sense of theatre as a civic act is enforced by repeated statements that poets are 'the teachers of the people'. Indeed, Plato's attacks on tragedy as dangerous demagoguery are in part at least precisely because of the position of tragic theatre within the discourses of the polis. The playwright was a *sophos*, a privileged and authoritative voice, who spoke to the city. Tragedy indeed rapidly entered the formal and informal teaching institutions: it was learnt for performance at symposia, read and studied, and from the fourth century on widely disseminated throughout the Greek world. Plato and Aristotle – our two most extensive, written audience responses to the teaching of tragedy – differ greatly in their appreciation of tragedy's didactic mode. Both, however, recognise its power over an audience. Both treat it as making a serious contribution to the construction of a citizen.

We also have a few late anecdotes of wild or unruly audience response, and of fiercely partisan crowds – the educational aspect of tragedy certainly did not efface its competition or its spectacle. The theatre's semi-circular form with its scenes of debate and deliberation clearly invite audience engagement. So too the plays themselves offer a fascinating insight into a dynamic between the plays and audience, as the collective on the stage – the chorus – repeatedly dramatises a response to the action, as the collective in the theatre – the audience – itself makes a response. Neither partisan engagement, nor unruliness, nor even the plays' spectacle, are to be contrasted with the educational force of tragedy. If tragedy teaches, it is certainly not only in its pronouncements or dramatic engagements. For what this study of the audience of Greek tragedy has tried to show is that it is by participating in the festival at all its levels that the Athenian citizen demonstrated his citizenship, and it is by staging the festival that the city promoted and projected itself as a city. That Athenian tragedies can provoke, question and explore this sense of citizenship and of the city remains testimony of the remarkable power and openness of this democratic institution.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Although there are many scattered comments on the audience of Greek tragedy, the most stimulating of which are to be found in Winkler (1990b), there is no full

[21] Henderson (1991) 142.

[22] See e.g. Goldhill (1986) 57–167; Zeitlin (1990); Winkler (1990b); Henderson (1991) 144–7.

[23] Henderson (1991) 146. He does not make the same case for the slaves and foreigners and metics . . .

discussion in English. On the question of women's presence see Henderson (1991), Goldhill (1994a) and the collection of testimonia in Podlecki (1990). On the dynamics of collectivity, individuality and display, see Wilson (forthcoming). On the festival as a festival, see Connor (1989); Goldhill (1990a); Sourvinou-Inwood (1994).

4

OLIVER TAPLIN

The pictorial record

By 300 BC or so Athenian tragedy had become the property of every Greek city, performed in its local theatre and reflected in its visual arts. This iconic prominence was sustained throughout the Graeco-Roman world for the next 600 years and more. That is why, for example, many of the wall-paintings discovered at Pompeii and Herculaneum show tragic subjects, and even more include the motif of the tragic mask. These provide their own interest, but this chapter will concentrate on the period from 500 to 300 BC, the era when Athens was still the active centre of drama. It will also concentrate mainly on painted pottery, if only because very little that is relevant survives of the wall-paintings, sculpture, metal-work or other art-forms.

As is amply shown throughout this *Companion*, tragedy was a major prestigious event within the cultural and political life of classical Athens. Pottery-painting was, by comparison, a humble and domestic art-form. Detailed paintings in the red-figure techniques were, none the less, an especially Athenian achievement; and, like drama, this Attic product was disseminated to all corners of the Hellenic world. While many of the vessels were standard and mass-produced, many others display elaborate workmanship, and must have been objects which expected individual attention. A fair number, furthermore, represent mythological and heroic scenes; and they do so in a dignified and serious style – at first glance not unlike that of tragedy.

Throughout the world's museums and galleries there must be something of the order of 100,000 Athenian decorated vases from the canonical 'golden age' of tragedy (say 499 to 406 BC) – and those presumably represent well under 1 per cent of the total produced. We might, then, expect quite a few illustrations or reflections of that peculiarly fashionable and Athenian form of heroic narrative, tragedy. This expectation turns out to be drastically unjustified.

I know, in fact, of only two fifth-century paintings that can plausibly be

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