

On November 13th and 14th 2015, the Department of Classical Philology, Medieval and Neo Latin Studies of the University of Vienna hosted the international conference “Greek Theatre beyond the Canon”. The event was promoted by the FWF – Austrian Science Fund, which is Austria’s central funding organization for basic research, and was organised by Herbert Bannert (Head of Department), Raimund Merker, and the author of this report. It consisted of ten longer talks (45 to 60 minutes each) given in English by outstanding experts from eight different countries.

The main aim of “Greek Theatre beyond the Canon” was to select and discuss some of the most representative research approaches on non-canonical theatre. Such approaches have been flourishing over the last two decades, coming from Southern and Central Europe, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada. In spite of the variety of issues and research methods, a new emerging trend is clearly recognisable in the study of ancient Greek drama. Such approaches try to set free of the narrow time and space boundaries set by a highly selective canon, which focuses on only four 5th-century Attic playwrights and dooms the rest to the periphery of scholarly investigation. Recent volumes such as *Greek Theatre in the Fourth Century B.C.* (2014, eds. Csapo et. al.) and *Theatre outside Athens* (2012, ed. Boshier), as well as the renewed interest in non-canonical plays and playwrights are all signs of this highly productive turn.

In preparation for the conference, we identified a rather broad and eclectic range of subjects that still require thorough investigation: such as pre-classical theatre, Sicilian comedy, 4th-century and Hellenistic theatre, fragmentary plays, non-Attic theatre across the Greek-speaking world, and theatrical genres beyond tragedy and comedy. Yet, interestingly, most of the speakers chose 4th-century theatre as their field of investigation, thus establishing a clear focus for the conference.

In the following pages, I will briefly overview the main questions and issues that were discussed. The order merely reflects that of the talks during the conference.

Patrick Finglass (University of Nottingham): “The transmission of 4th-century tragedy”

Finglass opened the conference by broaching the fundamental issue of how, how long, and to what purposes the texts of 4th-century Attic tragedy were transmitted. Notoriously, with the only exception of *Rhesus*, later falsely ascribed to Euripides, none of these plays survived antiquity. This is the more surprising if we consider that authors such as Astydamos and Carcinus were not only extremely prolific, but also highly appreciated in Antiquity – in some cases, even more than the three tragedians of the canon. Also drawing on previous studies on the legacy and the transmission of dramatic texts, such as most recently those by Johanna Hanink, Finglass surveyed in a detailed and far-reaching fashion the literary and historical contexts in which both 5th- and 4th-century tragedies were produced and preserved, paying special attention to the papyrologic and epigraphic evidence. His overview of the existing records set a sound philological basis for all the subsequent discussions about 4th-century tragedy during our conference.

Gunther Martin (Universität Zürich): “Politics on the stage – comedy on the rostrum. On the relationship between theatre, courts and assembly in the 4th century”

Martin focused on the ways in which comedy and oratory interacted in the 4th century BC. He rejected the widespread opinion that Attic comedy had lost its political commitment by the end of the 5th century. He argued that, throughout the 4th century, references and allusions to public issues, to politicians, and to the political agenda did not disappear, but rather changed in their style and purpose, becoming somehow more “enigmatical” (cf. *Proleg. in Com.* IV, 10-14 Koster). In particular, after the oligarchic years, political comedy seems to go through a revival, trying to hark back to its old tradition of public relevance. The close-reading of selected sources shed light on how comedy and oratory were, indeed, two arenas of political discussion that not only influenced and fed each other down to the end of the democratic *polis*, but also showed similarities in the way they dealt with public figures.

Laura Gianvittorio (University of Vienna): “A choreographic approach to the *parodos* of *Seven against Thebes*”

Shortly before the conference, our invited guest Maria Pia Pattoni, who had announced a talk on Moschion TrGF F6 K.-Sn., had to call in sick. She was replaced by the author of this report, who broached the non-canonical issue of theatrical dance.

Athenaeus recounts that, at some point during *Seven against Thebes*, a dancer called Telestes enacted the events so skilfully as to make them manifest. There is no way of ascertaining whether Athenaeus refers to the first staging or to later re-enactments of the play. Either way, the most likely moment for Telestes’ dance would be neither the spoken, highly descriptive *Redepaare* nor the spurious final lament, as it has been assumed so far, but rather the lyric *parodos*. Recounting the offstage military events, this lyric would offer a constant flux of actions that can be mirrored by a dance that brings pyrrhic elements to the stage. Such a war dance would complement well the war report of the assaulted maidens, who describe the invisible siege concealed by the city walls with remarkable visual vividness.

Edith Hall (King’s College London): “Theatre and performance in the ancient Black Sea Region”

Over the past decade, Hall has devoted a number of papers to performance culture around the ancient Black Sea – a region which was widely neglected so far. Considering both textual and material evidence, she has investigated local playwrights and their theatrical traditions. In her talk, Hall focused on evidence concerning the following: Spintharos of Heraclea Pontica, who is said to have composed tragedies inscribing upon them the name of Thespis; Dionysus of Heraclea, who allegedly held splendid theatrical and choral contests in his city; Heraclides Ponticus, author of theatre-related treatises such as *On Passages in Euripides and Sophocles* and *On the Three Tragic Poets*; Chamaeleon of Heraclea, author of treatises such as *On Satyrs*, *On Thespis*, and *On Aeschylus*; and Diphilus of Sinope, an appreciated comic poet and actor dating back to Menander’s generation or shortly earlier.

Materials from this talk will be published in D. Braund, E. Hall, R. Wyles (eds.) *Theatre and Performance around the Ancient Black Sea* (forthcoming with Cambridge University Press).

Enrico Medda (Università di Pisa): “A text for performance: Cassandra in TrGF Adesp. F 649”

A number of recent papers have analysed TrGF Adesp. F 649: some of them hold that the anonymous author follows the *Iliad* and that Cassandra's account is 'televisionary', while others argue that the inspiring model is Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and that, accordingly, Cassandra is uttering a prophecy. After having carefully considered all previous interpretations of the fragment, Medda proposed his own. According to him, this was not a literary exercise but a text written for performance, which created a lively tension between scenic and extra-scenic spaces. The anonymous author was familiar with the conventions of classical theatre, and especially with Aeschylus' treatment of Cassandra. In his analysis of P. Oxy. 2746, Medda paid special attention to the puzzling *parepigraphe* ὀδῆ as well as to the controversial metrical analysis of the text. Probably, the most fundamental question to be addressed is whether the Hellenistic play conserved Aeschylus' epirrhematic dialogue or was rather presented as a musical version.

Vayos Liapis (Open University of Cyprus): “Astydamos' *Hector*. Re-inventing the canon in the 4th century”

Astydamas was an astonishingly prolific and popular playwright, and *Hector* is one of his most famous plays. Liapis' paper planned to discover as much as possible about this tragedy's content. To this end, he surveyed what we know about other plays that dealt with the figure of Hector in the 5th and 4th century as well as in Hellenistic theatre (also paying attention to TrGF II, Trag. Adesp. 649, which Medda had just analysed in depth: see above). The focus of the analysis was on some of the most representative fragments, preserved for the most part in papyri: TrGF I, 60 F**1h?, 60 F **1i?, 60 F 2, and 60 F** 2a?. Finally, Liapis argued that the iconographic evidence provided by an Apulian volute-krater from ca. 320 BC (Berlin Inv. 1984.45), which Oliver Taplin has interpreted as representing a scene from Astydamos' *Hector*, seems to contradict some textual evidence of the play.

An article based on this presentation is expected to be published as Liapis, V. (2016) 'On the *Hector* of Astydamos', *American Journal of Philology* 137: 61-89.

Toph Marshall (University of British Columbia): “P. Oxy. 5189 and the edges of theatre”

P. Oxy. 5189 preserves a fragment from a mime of the 6th century AD, which is striking for its slapstick, violent, and openly sexual humour. Since its publication in 2014, this fragment has attracted much attention: Edith Hall at the “Archive of Performance of Greek and Roman Drama” devoted an event to it in 2014, and Dirk Obbink is running a research project about it in Oxford.

Drawing on research conducted with his colleague Melissa Funke, Marshall considered the papyrus fragment from the point of view of theatrical staging, and planned to shed light on the popular, non-canonical performance culture of the late Roman era. In particular, he focused on stage directions, character notations and identification, setting, and stage movements. In pursuing this approach, Marshall's background not only as a classical scholar but also as an experienced stage performer made a real difference.

Lucía Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén (Universidad de Oviedo): “On a fragmentary quote and its context (Sophron fr. 3 K.-A. = Athenaeus XI 480 B)”

This talk as well was devoted to the non-canonical theatrical genre of mime. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén started by outlining some of the main problems posed by mime in general, (a scarcely documented genre) and by Sophron’s work in particular. According to ancient testimonies, the most remarkable features of this author’s mimes were their literary character, the use of the Syracusan dialect, and the lack of music. Albeit limited, the evidence of ca. 170, mostly very brief fragments preserved under Sophron’s name seems to confirm this description.

The main purpose of Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén’s contribution was the analysis of Sophron’s fr. 3 K.-A., the only fragment which can be ascribed with certainty to the mime *Ταὶ γυναικεῖς αἰ τὰν θεόν φαντι ἐξελάων*. She considered virtually all the literature available on the subject, and paid special attention to the context in which the fragment is quoted, Athenaeus XI 480 B, also providing a detailed synopsis of all evidence of Sophron in the *Deipnosophists*.

Heinz-Günther Nesselrath (Universität Göttingen): “A minor but not uninteresting poet of Athenian Middle Comedy: Epicrates of Ambracia”

Epicrates of Ambracia was a minor representative of Athenian Middle Comedy. Nesselrath discussed some of his longer fragments: fr. 3 K.-A., which describes the once famous, yet no longer charming hetaira Lais; fr. 5 K.-A., in which a slave complains about his own condition and the insulting behaviour of his masters; fr. 6 K.-A., which portrays a boasting cook; and fr. 8 K.-A., where a customer complains that he did not get the girl he was promised. The survey provided valuable insight into the variety of topics chosen by Epicrates and typical of 4th-century comedy more generally: from the everyday life of the lower classes to open misogyny, from hyperbolic culinary delights to sex. The longest fragment of Epicrates’ work (10 K.-A., 39 lines) applies the philosophical reasoning of Plato and his Academy pupils – such as correct definition and analytic diaeresis – to as humble an object as a pumpkin: this confirms how philosophy, philosophy teachers, and philosophical language continued to be a target of parody even in Middle Comedy.

Eric Csapo (University of Sydney): “Two comic reliefs from the agora and the organization of comedy in 4th-century Athens”

The only iconographic evidence available of a comic chorus in performance comes from the fragments of two marble reliefs from the Athenian Agora (S2098, S1025 and S1586), which date back to ca. 350-340 BC. Csapo identified them as choregic monuments and as the only surviving *pinakes* commemorating a dramatic victory in Athens. Yet, while victorious *choregoi* of dramatic contests used to dedicate *pinakes* to Dionysus in his Sanctuary below the theatre, these reliefs were found in the Street of the Tripods. To explain this and other problems concerning the reliefs, Csapo suggested that, in the 4th century BC, commemorative practices for comic victory had become more akin to those for dithyrambs, and that the two reliefs may show such an influence.

After having addressed these archaeological questions, Csapo turned to the interpretation of the information that the relief fragments may offer with regard to stage performance, also comparing this iconographic evidence with Pollux’ description of the ranking of comic choruses.

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