

NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

PHOENISSAE 88–201 AND POLLUX' ΔΙΣΤΕΓΙΑ

Through the analysis of evidence gleaned from the texts of extant drama and dramatic fragments, Donald Mastronarde's "Actors on High" has demonstrated with great probability that the *skene* of the fifth-century theater was a building with a flat roof without a recessed, partial second story.¹ But if Mastronarde's article offers an example of how fruitful for a study of dramatic production close reading of texts can be, its interpretation of one dramatic scene, Antigone's appearance on high in the prologue of *Phoenissae*, points to a danger of which we should be wary: that of assuming too close a correspondence between what an individual text says and what the spectator saw.²

The scene is of particular interest because it is cited by Pollux in his testimony about the διστεγία (4.129–30), a passage sometimes regarded as evidence for a two-story scene-building: ἡ δὲ διστεγία ποτὲ μὲν ἐν οἴκῳ βασιλείῳ διήρης δωματίον, οἷον ἀφ' οὗ ἐν Φοινίσσαις ἡ Ἀντιγόνη βλέπει τὸν στρατόν, ποτὲ δὲ καὶ κέραμος, ἀφ' οὗ βάλλουσι τῷ κέραμῳ· ἐν δὲ κωμῳδίᾳ ἀπὸ τῆς διστεγίας πορνοβοσκοὶ τι κατοπτέουσιν ἢ γράδια ἢ γύναια καταβλέπει. Mastronarde, who translates διστεγία as "upper story" ("Actors," 255), questions the usefulness of this information about *Phoenissae* 88–201 on two grounds: 1) that Pollux is not talking about a *skene* of the fifth century;³ 2) that Euripides' text contradicts Pollux' staging, which, he believes, requires the scene to be played indoors, at a window. Mastronarde argues ("Actors," 256–57) that if Antigone appeared at a window there would be no need for Euripides to call attention to her climbing (100–106), because this would be concealed from view. The scene therefore will have been played on an open rooftop.

Mastronarde's first point is undoubtedly right. Pollux' procurers belong to New Comedy, and the attempts to use this passage as evidence for the *skene* of the fifth

1. "Actors on High: The Skene Roof, the Crane, and the Gods in Attic Drama," *ClAnt* 9 (1990): 247–94.

2. Mastronarde, "Actors," 253, recognizes that the "more or less naturalistic treatment of props and movements" in the fifth-century theater is limited by conventions. He clearly believes, however, that the producers of tragedy were willing to go to considerable lengths to achieve this naturalism. He allows the possibility, for instance, that Evadne at Eur. *Supp.* 980–1071 appeared on the *skene* roof, but believes (263–64, following C. Collard, *Euripides: "Supplices,"* vol. 1 [Groningen, 1975], 15–16) that it would have been "better" for her to jump from an ad hoc structure painted to represent a cliff.

3. I am not sure what Mastronarde, "Actors," 255, means by "the late Greco-Roman theater." I know of nothing in Pollux 4.115–32 that has to be attributed to the post-Hellenistic period. It is true that the towers and τεῖχος mentioned just before the διστεγία do not belong to a Hellenistic building. But the wall, at least, would not have been represented in any theater, except perhaps as painted background, and the reference to it probably derives simply from a word mentioned in a play, where it was not realized physically. If that is true of τεῖχος it is likely to be true of the other words mentioned in the two sentences preceding ἡ δὲ διστεγία. The indiscriminate mixing of words gleaned from literary texts with technical vocabulary about the theater is characteristic of Pollux; cf. in 4.121 συνθεάτρια (from Ar. frag. 487 Kassel-Austin) and θεατροκρατία (Pl. *Leg.* 701a).

century are misplaced.⁴ The second point is more open to question. The observation that lines 100–106 could not easily be played from inside the scene-building, at a window, seems to me to be likely but hardly certain.⁵ The notion, however, that the word *διστεγία* implies appearance at a window is probably wrong, for the word does not just mean “second story.” Since it seems to occur only here and in one other text (*Anecd. Par.* 1.19, a passage on theatrical properties that is derived from the same source as *Poll.* 4.127–30),⁶ it is very likely to be a technical term, referring to a place that might be occupied by actors in the façade of the *skene*’s second story.

In any case, the *διστεγία* of *Pollux* 4.129–30 must be an open balcony or a terrace, rather than a mimetic representation of an upper-story window, because 1) it can accommodate vigorous physical activity (the throwing of roof-tiles), and 2) it can conventionally represent a roof. In fact, it must very often have represented a roof. The *γράδια* and *γύναια* who sometimes look down from the *διστεγία* are probably, like the *πορνοβοσκοί*, people engaged in the selling of sex. The old woman is to be associated with a comic mask, the *γράδιον λυκαίνικον* of *Pollux* 4.150, which must be the mask of a procuress. The word *γύναιον* may be, as Liddell and Scott s.v. says, a term of endearment, but it is as often one of contempt. The *γύναιον* of *Demosthenes* 25.57, for instance, is a woman of loose morals. If such women, as well as *πορνοβοσκοί*, are sometimes presented in New Comedy from a *διστεγία* that is because of a traditional association of prostitution with the roof.⁷ Thus *Pollux*’ location of *Phoenissae* 88–201 in the *διστεγία* is not, as *Mastronarde* believes, inconsistent with *Euripides*’ text, even if we grant, for the sake of argument, that the scene was set fictionally on a rooftop. For when *Antigone*, in a Hellenistic production of *Phoenissae*, looked out from a *διστεγία*, she was standing in a place that the audience would have been prepared to identify as a roof. The old servant’s command *εἶσθα δῶμα* would have made perfect sense, and there is no reason to believe that the whole scene could not have been played exactly as it is written.

Since I have already admitted that the scene-building of the fifth century probably had no second story, the question of *Pollux*’ reliability as a witness for the Hellenistic period may seem irrelevant. On the contrary, I think that what *Pollux* says about the *διστεγία* should remind us of something important about Greek dramatic production. Convention played an important role. The *διστεγία* could represent either a rooftop (*κέραμος*) or an upper-story apartment (*διῆρες δωμάτιον*), and context told

4. See *Mastronarde* “Actors,” nn. 21 and 23.

5. Lines 100–106 do not necessarily have the function of providing verbal cover for *Antigone*’s ascent after she supposedly has become visible at line 100. The old servant, after all, has preceded her up the “ancient cedar stair” (100) without verbal accompaniment. These lines may be intended to emphasize the unusual nature of such an appearance by a maiden and perhaps to indicate the difficulty of reaching such a position for one dressed in female costume.

6. See my paper, “The *Περίακτοι* and Actors’ Entrances,” *Hermes* 121 (1993): p. 382, n. 32.

7. H. Herter, “Die Soziologie der antiken Prostitution im Licht des heidnischen und christlichen Schrifttums,” *JbAC* 3 (1960): p. 87, nn. 326–27. Thus *Zeno frag.* 246 (von Arnim): . . . ἔνθα καὶ ἑταιρικῶς κεκοσμημένοι, ὥσπερ ἐπὶ τέγους καθεζόμενοι, διημερεύουσιν; cf. *Aeschin.* 1.74, *Din.* 1.23, *Polyb.* 12.13.2, *Poll.* 7.201. The expression ἐπὶ τέγους does not, of course, have to mean “on top of the roof,” but *Polybius*’ τῶν ἀπὸ τέγους ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος εἰργασμένων and *Pollux*’ τὴν δὲ πόρνην . . . ἐρεῖς . . . καὶ στεγίτιν, indicate that it does. At *Joseph AJ* 19.357: τοὺς ἀνδριάντας τῶν τοῦ βασιλέως θυγατέρων ἀρπάσαντες δημοθυμαδὸν ἐκόμισαν εἰς τὰ πορνεία καὶ στήσαντες ἐπὶ τῶν τεγῶν ὡς δυνατὸν ἦν ἀφύβριζον. . . . the τέγη where the mob placed the statues of the king’s daughters, which they reviled, were the roofs of the brothels, because the buildings themselves in the same sentence are called πορνεία. Solicitation of passersby from above the street, which must have been common enough, did not necessarily take place from a flat roof, of course. Cf. n. 15 below.

the spectators what, at the moment, it was supposed to be. That Greek drama's treatment of properties and of movements within the playing area was "more or less naturalistic" (above, n. 2) so that the correspondence between these things and the text would have been considerable, is probably more true than false and certainly is a useful rule of thumb.⁸ But we should not allow it to become a rigid principle. For if the Hellenistic *διστεγία* could represent what it was not, so could the roof of the Classical *skene*. Actors representing gods who appear on high, for instance, may take a stand on the roof.⁹ What we read in the text is a fiction, which was not perfectly reflected in the reality of what the spectators saw.

That having been said, it is time to notice that Pollux' inscenation of *Phoenissae* 88–201 is in fact guided by a clue in the text of that play. The reason why Pollux' source used the phrase *διῆρες δωμάτιον* was not that he had seen a production of the play in which Antigone appeared from a place in the upper façade of a Hellenistic theater. It was because he was familiar with *Phoenissae* 88–90, where Euripides causes the old servant to say to Antigone, *ἐπεὶ σε μήτηρ παρθενῶνας ἐκλιπεῖν μεθήκε μελάρων ἐς διῆρες ἔσχατον*. . . . Mastronarde argues that the word *διῆρες* in this context must refer to the roof of a two-story building or a rooftop terrace.¹⁰ The lexicographical tradition, however, is clear that the word, when it refers to a part of a building, means upper story or upper-story apartment,¹¹ and the few instances of its use elsewhere seem consistent with that meaning. We cannot say with certainty whether Plutarch's discouraged philosopher, who (*Mor.* 2.77E) is said . . . *ὀλίγου δεῆσαι καταβαλεῖν ἑαυτὸν ἐκ τινος διήρου*, was thinking of a window or a roof; but a probable prologue speaker in Plato Comicus fragment 120 (Kassel-Austin) must be indicating to the spectators a fictional room in the *skene* when he says, *ὁρᾶτε τὸ διῆρες ὑπερῶν*.¹² The adjective *ἔσχατον*, as Mastronarde says, probably means "outermost," or "outermost part of."¹³ Thus when Euripides says *ἐς διῆρες ἔσχατον* instead of *δόμων* . . . *ἐπ' ἄκρων*, as at *Orestes* 1574, or *[ἐ]πὶ τοῦ τέγους* (*Ar. Vesp.* 68, *Nub.* 1502) he probably is asking his audience to imagine a balcony or terrace at the level of an upper story. This, of course, does not have to mean that behind the "balcony" a recessed second story, which would have made the use of the crane difficult,¹⁴ was physically represented. The scene could perfectly well have been played from an open roof without scenic background.

8. O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford, 1977), 28–39, who also argues that the presentation of Greek tragedy is generally naturalistic, uses this term (p. 28), conceding that, "the relationship between text and action is not always straightforward and is not uniform."

9. Mastronarde, "Actors," 282–84, lists 20 occasions where he believes it conceivable that this takes place.

10. In his commentary (*Euripides: "Phoenissae"* [Cambridge, 1994]), ad 90) Mastronarde lists four possible meanings, one of which he rejects—for this context—with the claim that no upper-story room was represented on the roof. The other three imply, he believes, a position on the roof above a second story or a terrace at that level. See also "Actors," p. 257, n. 26. Cf. n. 14 below.

11. Poll. 1.81: *εἴτα ὑπερῶα οἰκήματα, τὰ δ' αὐτὰ καὶ διήρη; Etym. Magn.* 274.25, s.v. *διήρης* (also citing *Phoenissae*): *ὁ ὑπερῶος οἶκος; Phot.* δ 572, s.v. *διήρης; ὑπερῶον*. Cf. Hsch. δ 1755, s.v. *διήρης; Moeris* 195.6 (Bekker), s.v. *διήρης*.

12. At *Ar. Eq.* 1001, *Plut.* 811, and *Antiph.* 113.3, *ὑπερῶον*, used as a noun, can only be a room. Mastronarde, "Actors," 289, suggests the possibility that the word in frag. 120 is a gloss on *διήρης*.

13. Mastronarde, "Actors," n. 26.

14. Mastronarde, "Actors," 255. He contemplates (n. 23) the possibility that *διῆρες ἔσχατον* refers to a balcony but rejects it in the belief that that would require a structure on the roof.

Euripides' reason for staging this scene on the roof is obvious enough. His reason for introducing the phrase διήρεξ ἔσχατον is less obvious. I would like to speculate, however, that it has something to do with his characterization of Antigone. As Mastronarde so well emphasizes in his defense of the scene's authenticity, one of its purposes is to establish her virginal innocence (*Phoen.* 89, 94, 193–98) and the modesty that she must abandon (cf. 1275–76). If an appearance of a woman on a roof bore, for the spectators, implications of brazen self-exhibition, perhaps the poet's purpose was to signal to them that that was not where the fictional Antigone should be imagined as standing.¹⁵

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15. Exactly opposite considerations may have influenced the staging of another scene, which begins at Ar. *Eccl.* 877. E. Fraenkel, "Dramaturgical Problems in the *Ecclesiazusae*," *Kleine Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie*, vol. 1 (Rome, 1964), 475–76, argues that at *Eccl.* 884 both the young girl and the old woman are on the roof, in front of a recessed upper story which represents a γυναικωνίτις. R. G. Ussher, *Aristophanes: "Ecclesiazusae"* (Oxford, 1973), p. xxxii and ad 884, however, believes that the girl is looking out her upper-story window (cf. *Eccl.* 698), although he admits the possibility (p. xxxii) that she is on the roof. If at 884 Aristophanes did present one or both women on top of the skene the motive may have been to emphasize the sexual aggressiveness of the new woman. Mastronarde, "Actors," p. 257 and n. 28, p. 282, because of the need to give the effect of height, believes that the girl may well have been stationed on the roof, but only with the help of scenery that would have represented an upper story with a window.

CELEUS RUSTICUS: A NOTE ON OVIDIAN WORDPLAY IN *FASTI* 4

At *Fasti* 4.507–8, Ovid describes how Eleusis acquired its current reputation as a famous shrine of Ceres:

sors sua cuique loco est: quod nunc Cerialis Eleusin
dicitur, hoc Celei rura fuere senis.

The transformation of Celeus in the ensuing episode from King of Eleusis, as previously identified in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (96–97, 475), to humble rustic is generally explained as an instance of Ovid's fondness for ringing changes on the Hellenistic "hospitality theme":¹ "The welcome given to Theseus by the poor old woman in Callimachus' epyllion *Hecale* set the tone (and fashion) for episodes like the hospitality of Celeus to Ceres, or Hyrieus to Jupiter and Mercury (5.499–534) or that of Baucis and Philemon (*Met.* 8.629–720)."²

Ovid's predilection for innovation and experimentation with well-known tales is itself well known: the variant versions of the rape of Proserpina in the *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*, in the latter of which occurs this transformation of Celeus, have served from Heinze to Hinds as a textbook case for the discussion of the interplay of

1. See the appendix so titled in A. S. Hollis, ed., *Callimachus: "Hecale"* (Oxford, 1990), 341–54.
2. E. Fantham, ed., *Ovid: "Fasti" Book IV* (Cambridge, 1998), ad 4.508.