


2015-4

# The Art of the Stage Machinist: A Dramatic Reconstruction of Aeschylus' Linear Tragedy, Prometheus Bound

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## Recommended Citation

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# The Art of the Stage Machinist

“A dramatic reconstruction of Aeschylus’ linear tragedy, *Prometheus Bound*”

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*Thesis submitted as partial fulfillment for the Honors Bachelor of Arts Degree*

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## INTRODUCTION – “Aristotle’s *Poetics*”

Aristotle’s *Poetics*, considered by experts to be the first extant work on dramatic theory, defines what constitutes a tragedy: ὁστὶν ὁ τῶν τραγῳδίαμιμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἰσχύσεως (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1449B, 23) / “Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude.”<sup>1</sup> Tragedy purposefully engages an audience and does not merely entertain. Its six inherent components include: μῦθος, ὄθη, καλλέξις, διάνοια, ὄψις and μελοποιία (Aris., *Poetics*, 1450A, 10) (plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle and song). However, with regards to ὄψις (spectacle), Aristotle is quick to state that:

ὁ δὲ ὄψις ψυχαγωγικὸν μὲν, ὀτεχνότατον δὲ καὶ ὀκίστα ὀκεῖον τῶς ποιητικῶς; ὀ γὰρ τῶς τραγῳδίας δύναμις καὶ ὀνευ ὀγῶνος καὶ ὀποκριτῶν ὀστὶν, ὀτι δὲ κυριωτέρα περὶ τῶν ὀπεργασίαν τῶν ὀψεων ὀ τοῦ σκευοποιῶν τέχνη τῶς τῶν ποιητῶν ὀστὶν. (Aris., *Poetics*, 1450B, 20)

On the one hand, spectacle is attractive, but on the other hand, it is the least attractive/useful of the final product and poetry. For indeed the power of Tragedy is without the assembly [of actors] and the responders. Yet, the one holding power over the stage effects is the technique/art more of the stage machinist than the poet himself.<sup>2</sup>

Aristotle’s position is that the text in and of itself should be strong, complete and able to stand on its own. According to Aristotle, the inferior additions of stagecraft and spectacle do not greatly add to the dramatic potential already evident in the poetry. Moreover, with regards to the μῦθος (plot), Aristotle believes that: τῶν δὲ ὀπλῶν μύθων καὶ πράξεων ὀ πεισοδιώδεις ἐῶσῶν χεῖρισται: λέγω δὲ ὀπεισοδιώδη μῦθον ὀν ὀτῶ ὀπεισόδια μετῶ ὀλληλα ὀτῶ εῶκ ὀς ὀτῶ ὀνάγκη εῶναι. (Aris., *Poetics*, 1451B, 35) / “The episodes of lengthy plots and of action are the most inferior. The ‘episodic’ ones I call are those that neither are adjacent to

<sup>1</sup> Howe 1924: 494. For future reference, this translation along with others from Aeschylus’ original text is my own. I cite George Howe Ph.D. because his own translation assisted me in clearly rendering Aristotle’s dense prose.

<sup>2</sup> Howe 1924: 495.

another and neither advance nor are necessary.”<sup>3</sup> A plot should be complex and contain an inherent beginning, middle and end. Tragedies should not be a continuation of scenes without any logical connection between them. Rather, they should build at climaxes with satisfying endings that are not highly predicated.

From these and various other assertions, tragic scholars have deemed that Aristotle and his *Poetics* set the standards for what can be considered a proper tragedy. Anthony Yu, in regards to episodic tragedies such as *Prometheus Bound*, states that:

The simplicity and immobility of the plot have led many scholars to wonder whether it is amenable to the kind of formal, structural criticism proposed by Aristotle and his modern disciples and whether its dramatic movement, if any, may be apprehended best by such categories as *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia*.<sup>4</sup>

Certain elements (and tragedies) have been left behind. These elements are the ones that make up the physical layout of the theatre and contribute to the production such as the masks, costumes, motion and emotional reactions of the actors portraying these characters.

Aristotle has established an important parameter for tragedy: stagecraft is secondary or even tertiary in producing a proper tragedy. The poetry is substantive enough. Yet, stagecraft is in fact an important facet of production. By definition, theatre is literature *performed* and not simply read, so stagecraft is essential. Stagecraft in Athenian times was a huge civic and financial investment that allowed the Festival Dionysia to run smoothly and with great reputation. Scholars must wonder what these tragedies looked like on the stage and not just on the page. Though Aristotle’s *Poetics* is the benchmark<sup>5</sup> for tragic study, the other facets of tragic production require equal if not more attention. Evidence that scholars do have regarding the

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<sup>3</sup> Howe 1924: 497.

<sup>4</sup> Yu 1971: 21.

<sup>5</sup> Various scholars aside from Yu (above) have pointed to Aristotle for his massive contributions to the study of tragedy in antiquity. A large number of these scholars also have pointed out the flaws of *Prometheus Bound* in its episodic structure as being a “faulty tragedy.” There are innumerable references to scholars who support Aristotle’s *Poetics* to mention in this thesis alone.

physical aspects of Athenian theatre production include images from vase paintings (specifically the Pronomos vase) that provide some inspiration as to costumes and masks. Also, the tangible (though tampered) remains of the Theatre Dionysia exist in Athens to assist scholars with recreating tragedy from the ground up. However, there are two obstacles standing in the way for one attempting to study stagecraft in antiquity: Aristotle's influential disregard and a lack of substantive evidence. One must look closer at reevaluating Aristotle's critique on tragedy in antiquity. We are pushing too many of these physical aspects of stagecraft aside that deserve attention and proper recognition.

A fully-realized, Attic, tragic production will provide valuable insight into the intricacies of stagecraft and spectacle. This insight allows readers to appreciate the meticulous details of constructing a piece of performance art that doesn't deal solely with words on the page. The driving purpose behind this thesis is not an egocentric odyssey which will allow me to direct, design and reconstruct a complete tragedy by myself. Rather, the deconstruction of an Attic tragedy allows us to more fully engage with a drama not solely through its textual intricacies but also through its physical aspects. After all, the words on the page do not adequately encapsulate a complete tragic production and the cathartic elements that accompany live theatre.

To address this task, I will be the director and restage a tragedy completely as if it were originally presented in Attic times. Based on both scholarly, secondary research and my experience acting in an Attic production, *Prometheus Bound*, I will restage every aspect of the production – masks, costumes, music, etc. – within the scope of *Prometheus Bound's* plot. *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus was chosen for a number of reasons. Although experts in the classical tradition look down upon *Prometheus Bound* as an inadequate tragedy (see Anthony Yu's aforementioned comments), it retains many admirable qualities. From a subjective

standpoint, *PB*<sup>6</sup> is not only a humanistic evaluation of risk and consequence, but also it highlights the dangers of tyranny under oppressive power (*Zeus/Kratos*). From an analytic perspective, the play is one of the shortest in the Attic canon and contains a fairly simple, linear plot. Therefore, it will be easier to work with its text to craft costumes, masks and dramaturgical staging, making it simpler for audiences and readers to follow. One could easily tackle a different text by Aeschylus, such as *Agamemnon* or *The Oresteia*, or a text by Sophocles or Euripides. However, I hope to establish first and foremost that *PB* remains a logical choice for approaching a thesis of this magnitude. Additionally, our Greek class staged a production of *PB*, and I performed as Prometheus. Because of this experience, I know first-hand the physical constraints for actors performing in the play and how the physical aspects of stagecraft bring life to Aeschylus' words.

As an added bonus, *PB*'s linear plot lies in direct opposition to what Aristotle constitutes as "fitting tragedy." Through this thesis I will not only argue for the value of stagecraft in antiquity but also will present an argument against the canonical standards of the *Poetics*: spectacle is as integral to the presentation as any other element and the linear plotline can produce a cathartically effective and satisfying tragedy.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Each chapter (save the first) represents a dramatic scene from *PB*. The thesis will progress in chronological order by both chapter and scene in the tragedy. At the beginning of each chapter, I will provide a small synopsis of the scene. Then, engaging with a variety of scholarship contributed by tragic experts, I will recreate a production taking place in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. that includes entrances, exits, masks, costumes, dramaturgy and movement of the various characters.

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<sup>6</sup> Since I will make innumerable references to *Prometheus Bound* throughout this thesis presentation, I will, for brevity's sake, abbreviate the tragic title from *Prometheus Bound* to *PB*.

The chapters will be as follows: **Chapter 1** – Understanding of the basic physical elements of the Theatre Dionysia, **Chapter 2** – Binding of Prometheus and the entrance of four principle characters (Bia, Kratos, Hephaestus and the protagonist, Prometheus), **Chapter 3** – Introduction of the chorus of Oceanids (Oceanus’ daughters) and Oceanus himself, **Chapter 4** – Emotionally-charged interaction between immortal Prometheus and mortal, bovine Io and **Chapter 5** – Hermes’ warnings to Prometheus with his eventual descent into Tartarus. To conclude my argument, I will evaluate the importance of stagecraft in modern theatrical productions. By consulting reviews from both modern adaptations of *PB* and other cultural approaches to Attic tragedy, I conclude by looking at the chronological structure of dramatic presentation and how tragedy has morphed and evolved over time, parallel to the episodic structure of *PB*.

It is important to note that *PB* lies in the middle of a heated argument in current scholarship. Critics and experts question whether or not *PB* is a real, authentic Aeschylean tragedy.<sup>7</sup> Many experts note the stark differences between *PB* and the other Aeschylean tragedies, leading them to believe that an anonymous “other” may have penned *PB*. Authorship and questions of Aeschylean ownership continue to puzzle the many who evaluate tragic works. On one side of the debate, scholars like Everard Flintoff and Thomas Hubbard say that Aeschylus did in fact write *PB*. Flintoff specifically points to the date of *PB*’s publication and the context of the play in relation to other playwrights’ publications. For Flintoff, depending on when other tragedians printed, Aeschylus could have easily fallen in line and written *PB*. Hubbard looks more intently at metrical anapests and how *PB*’s patterns compare across the

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<sup>7</sup> For all intents and purposes, I believe that Aeschylus is indeed the author of *PB*. I qualify that statement within this section of my introduction so to avoid criticism that the thesis lies on unsupported grounds. While there is no clear-cut evidence for either side of the argument, I highlight the debate as demonstration of the current struggles of tragic scholarship.



board: “In sum, there is nothing in *Prometheus Bound*’s selection of *metron* types which is inconsistent with Aeschylus’ demonstrable technique of significant pattering; [...] there is much here that resembles Aeschylus’ technique.”<sup>8</sup> Hubbard believes that there is enough similarity between *PB* and Aeschylus’ definitive works – with regards to meter – to demonstrate Aeschylus’ authorship of *PB*. Scholars such as these refer to cross-comparison as a method for justifying Aeschylus’ authorship of *PB*.

On the other side of the debate, scholars like Mark Griffith and Oliver Taplin function as dissenting voices who do not believe that Aeschylus wrote *PB*. Griffith argues almost completely against Hubbard’s stylistic analysis, stating the occurrence of a number of *Eigenwörter* (distinct words not commonly found within an author’s canon or style) in *Prometheus Bound* does not match up: “The figures show that *Prom.* contained a greater number of words not found elsewhere in the surviving plays of Aeschylus [...] some of them quite common and familiar words.”<sup>9</sup> This evidence shows that the tragedy *PB* is very different in terms of syntax and word choice when compared to Aeschylus’ other tragedies. This could further prove that Aeschylus is in fact not the author of *PB* after all. Taplin, approaching the tragedy more historically and less metrically, finds error with claims of those who advocate for Aeschylus’ authorship of *PB*. By evaluating 11 of the most common pieces of “evidence” for Aeschylus’ authorship including the lack of comparative material, the date of publication and other facts as he undermines their argument with counterevidence of staging and logistical issues.<sup>10</sup>

I hope that by bringing up this current debate on scholarship that I have set the scene for the controversy surrounding *PB* and how I address any questions of authenticity. These tragic experts, regardless of their opinions on the *PB*’s authorship, have aided me in my research and

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<sup>8</sup> Hubbard 1991: 452.

<sup>9</sup> Griffith 1984: 282.

<sup>10</sup> Taplin 1977: 465-66.

their evidence and theories regarding Attic stagecraft assist me in laying the grounds for what I plan to uncover through my thesis research.

## CHAPTER 1 – “Physical Layout of the Theatron”

In order to bring a fully-realized production to fruition, one must reconstruct the theatre and context in which *PB* is produced. After all, the framework of the Theatre Dionysia demarcates how the actors move, what stagecraft can be utilized and how a spectator expects to receive an authentic Greek tragedy. Provided that Aeschylus’ tragedy was staged ca. 475-460 B.C.E,<sup>11</sup> the standard machinery applies for an early production of *PB*. This chapter will analyze the basic physical features of a standard Dionysian Theatre. First and foremost, the modern conceptions by which one interprets live theatre and the stagecraft accompanying it must be put to the side. If one cannot accept an alternative paradigm for evaluating Athenian stagecraft, one must accept an alternative paradigm. With regards to scenery and stage machinery, “In the Greek theatre the conventions were different [...] artificial lighting was impossible, the playwright could not distinguish the darkness of Hell from the brightness of Olympus [...] (and) actors wore contemporary costumes often distinguished only by a tiara.”<sup>12</sup>

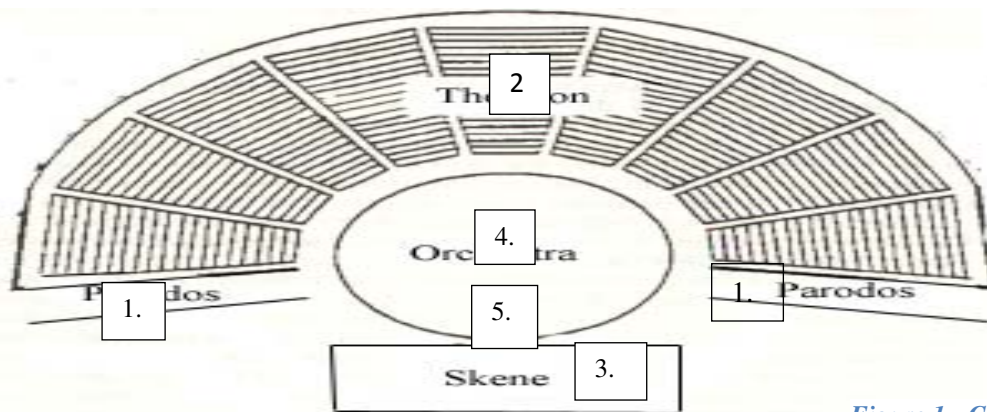


Figure 1 - Courtesy of David Wiles

### Parts of a Greek Theater

<sup>11</sup> Flintoff 1986: 86, 88. The date of the play still remains unknown. See David Grene’s (1991) translation introduction with detailed information on dating Aeschylus’ plays.

<sup>12</sup> Webster 1970: 1-2. Webster, for the record, purports a number of different claims in addition to theatre layout such as the number of the times that the Theatre Dionysia was rebuilt and the fact that the theatre was utilized even before the earliest Aeschylean tragedies were staged.

David Wiles sketches out a very simple and comprehensible model (Figure #1) of a Greek theatre as agreed upon by most scholars. At the center of the vast proscenium<sup>13</sup> space was the “dancing-place, or *orchestra*, a large level space cleared at the foot of a rise from which the maximum number of spectators could have a good view (4).”<sup>14</sup> Though little evidence remains of the original Athenian theatre, tangible and visible walking space proves that, “just enough masonry (remains) to show that it had a circular *orchestra*.”<sup>15</sup> The Festival Dionysia accommodated a vast number of spectators in which intimate theatre was not acceptable. The size and width of the theatre begins with the *orchestra* and branches out.

The “stage” proper was 45 ft. wide.<sup>16</sup> The distance from the front of the “stage” across the *orchestra* to the front row of spectators was 60 ft. (with some claiming that the size stretched to almost 70 ft. to include a much larger, Sophoclean chorus.).<sup>17</sup> The *parodoi*, or “wings” of the theatre, “formed the entrance through which the chorus approached the *orchestra* (1).”<sup>18</sup> Through such sides, townspersons, significant mortal characters and the Greek chorus entered and exited. Scholars hold that these *parodoi* were quite large so that a packed *theatron* (2) of 14,000 Dionysian spectators could witness these characters entering or leaving an action. Though simple in design, the theatre offered a choice of acting areas. The chorus was for the most part confined to the *orchestra* where there was room for complicated dances. Actors used the stage, though

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<sup>13</sup> This term comes from the Greek terms *pro* (forward) + *skene*. A proscenium is the standard theatrical space with an outward stage and a *theatron* audience all facing towards the action occurring. This type of theatre contrasts with a “thrust” stage where an audience is arranged like a peninsula on three sides of the stage or theatre-in-the-round where an audience completely surrounds the circumference of the performers.

<sup>14</sup> Arnott 1959: 32.

<sup>15</sup> Webster 1970: 6.

<sup>16</sup> For clarification purposes, I will say that the “stage” from here on out will refer to a location for the just the speaking actors, whereas the *orchestra* refers to the location for the chorus. Rarely do these groups of performers perform on each other’s section of the theatre, but it happens every so often.

<sup>17</sup> Webster 1970: 5.

<sup>18</sup> Arnott 1959: 35.

there was nothing preventing them descending the steps to mingle with the chorus or entering up the *paradoi*.<sup>19</sup>

The *skene*<sup>20</sup>, translated literally as “booth” or “tent,” establishes a perimeter along the back of the *orchestra* (3). Functioning similarly to a backdrop and what modern theatre goers would call a backstage area, the *skene*, “would have been a useful place to store properties, to allow actors to change costume and may have already existed as a temporary structure.”<sup>21</sup> In practice, the properties of the *skene* and its utility vary according to production. In this case, a *skene* could be used solely as a backdrop of the action. However, the many ways in which the *skene* was potentially used can be very helpful. “As the fifth-century *skene* (3) was made of wood, steps led down behind the scene-building to the ground level [...] to hide the operations of the mechanical devices that the dramatists used to such effect.”<sup>22</sup> An upper platform just above the *skene* was used to separate immortal from mortal entrances onto the stage. A small door adjacent to the *orchestra* (5) opened up to reveal the passageway between immortal *Ouranos* and mortal *Gaia*.<sup>23</sup> Not only did this doorway provide a powerful point of focus<sup>24</sup> but it also established a fulcrum of tension between immortality and mortality as dictated by the *skene*.

As director, I will now look more closely at *PB* and the general features of its staging. Since *PB* is located at a desolate cleft on the outskirts of the world, there can be rocks and other pieces of landscape to add realism to the staging. In order to create the environment of the craggy, desolate rocks, we can position other smaller rocks towards the front of the *orchestra* (so that the sight-lines of spectators are not blocked) and bigger rocks closer to the *skene*. T. B. L.

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<sup>19</sup> Arnott 1959: 36-37.

<sup>20</sup> The *skene* has remained one of the most controversial aspects of tragic stagecraft. Many scholars and experts disagree on the permanence of the *skene*, its use in Aeschylean, Sophoclean and Euripidean tragedies as well as its existence in the Festival Dionysia at all. I will further address *PB*'s use of *skene* more thoroughly later in Ch. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Storey and Allan 2005: 38.

<sup>22</sup> Arnott 1959: 38-39.

<sup>23</sup> Storey and Allan 2005: 38. *Ouranos* meaning the “heavens” and *Gaia* meaning “earth”

<sup>24</sup> Wiles 2000: 118.

Webster states that, “We may then assume that objects representing rocks and possibly also a black-cloth representing the sea could be carried on swiftly when desired. Such would be the scenery for the *Prometheus* plays.”<sup>25</sup> Overall, I have established this preliminary idea for the standard Athenian set design. This will help lay the grounds for the remainder of my thesis project, since these clearly defined locations will serve as points of reference for readers throughout.

For now, our stage has been set. The *orchestra* (4) is the stage on which the actors perform, the *theatron* (2) is where spectators watch performances, the *parodoi* (1) is where characters/choruses can enter or exit, the *skene* (3) is our wooden backdrop or “scenic design” and the door (5) is that division between heaven and earth. Having established the basic outline of the Theatre Dionysia, I will shift my focus to *PB* and the qualities of stagecraft which will be incorporated in this full production. Integral to *PB* is the inclusion of the *ekkyklema* (*kyklos* = wheel + *ek* = out) or the “roll out cart” in addition to the *mechane* or *geranos* meaning “crane.”<sup>26</sup> These pieces of stagecraft are more commonly used for specific character entrances, the arrival of a divine figure or the controversial *deus ex machina* (“god out of the machine”) tragic endings. I will clarify the purpose of these pieces later in the thesis.

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<sup>25</sup> Webster 1970: 17.

<sup>26</sup> Storey and Allan 2005: 44-45.

## CHAPTER 2 – “Binding of Prometheus”

*PB* tells the story of an old god, Prometheus, who steals fire from Olympus and gives it to the mortals on Earth. Knowing well that the race of humans is doomed to annihilation by Zeus, Prometheus provides not only utility with the fire’s glow but also an understanding of crafts, hunting, home construction and knowledge as a result of this immortal sacrifice. As punishment, Zeus orders Hephaestus, the blacksmith, and Kratos and Bia, Zeus’ personifications of Might and Violence, to bind Prometheus to the farthest crag of the planet. This first section of the play (and my thesis) deals with the dragging of Prometheus onto the stage; the discourse and stichomythia – a series of rapid, one-line phrases – between Kratos and Hephaestus; Prometheus’ physical binding and the departure of Kratos, Bia and Hephaestus upon finishing the deed. This is the myth of Prometheus according to Aeschylus’ tragic telling.

### Entrance of the Four Principle Characters

The production begins in a different fashion when compared to most Attic tragedies. Traditionally, divine figures remark on the distressing events yet to unfold in the lives of mortal characters from heaven above. Instead, *PB* finds one immortal god (Hephaestus) and two personifications of Zeus (Kratos and Bia) dragging in another immortal creature (Prometheus). Because all four of these creatures are divine, the first entrance occurs through the door in front of the *skene* (5). The first line of text provides further evidence as to the positioning of the actors on stage for the first time:

Χθον□ς μ□ν □ς τηλουρ□ν □κομεν πέδον,  
Σκύθην □ς ο□μον, □βατον ε□ς □ρημίαν.  
□φαιστε, σο□ δ□ χρ□ μέλειν □πιστολ□ς  
□ς σοι πατ□ρ □φε□το, τόνδε πρ□ς πέτραις  
□ψηλοκρήμνοις τ□ν λεωργ□ν □χμάσαι  
□δαμαντίνων δεσμ□ν □ν □ρρήκτοις πέδαις. (Aes. *PB*. 1-6)

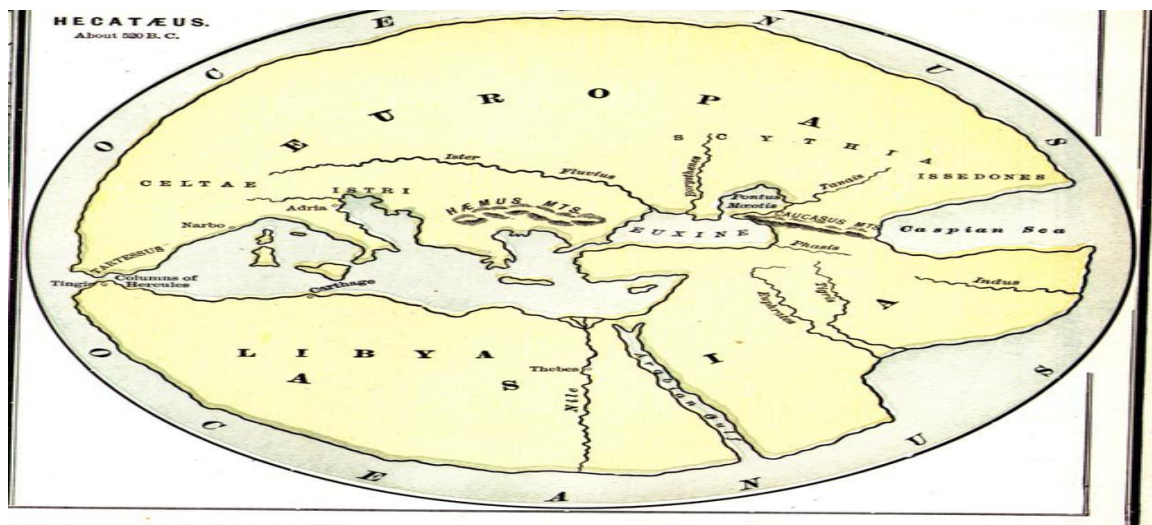
We have come to this final end of the world;

To the land of Scythia, to this untrodden location.  
 Hephaestus, it is necessary for you to obey the commands  
 That the Father has command you to, to nail this miscreant,  
 To the high craggy rocks  
 In unbreakable bonds of adamantine steel.<sup>27</sup>

The clues from the text emphasize a Scythian country, an “untrodden” area unseen by man and high craggy rocks at the “earth’s limit.” It is important to remember that the world in which *PB* takes place as well as Athenian global perspective is drastically different from what modern scholars know today.

There is much to learn from the Athenian worldview that could aid us in our understanding of the tragic stage. I will look further at cartographic details from the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. in order to lay the foundation for *PB*. Wiles emphasizes this claim when he says, “the Greek world at the start of the classical period looked rather like the playing space of a Greek theatre: a flat disk with [...] a strong focus point of balance.”<sup>28</sup> Based on these details and the following image, the tragic stage for *PB* will emulate the world map according to the Athenian perspective of the time.

Figure 2 - Hecataeus' Map (courtesy of Thomas G. Rosenmeyer)



<sup>27</sup> Though these translations are my own, David Grene’s 1991 translation aided me with the more difficult portions of Aeschylus’ text. I owe him credit for certain selections of vocabulary as well.

<sup>28</sup> Wiles 2005: 89.



The map of the world, according to Hecataeus from the 5<sup>th</sup> century, can be found in Figure #2. Note the large perimeter of the *Oceanus* surrounding the entirety of dry land. Also, the countries are extremely disproportionate in relation to each other. *Europa* (located in the northern hemisphere of the globe) occupies most of the map. Based on the clues provided in Aeschylus' original text, Kratos and Bia drag an ailing Prometheus down from his heavenly sentencing to a "Scythian" land at the farthest reaches of Earth. If the playing space of theatre is truly like the Greek world, based on physical evidence, Kratos and Bia's entrance would likely come from the *skene* trap door and move upstage left to the location of Scythia.<sup>29</sup> After all, the *skene* marks a physical boundary on stage (similar to the physical boundaries of ocean to land), and the positioning of Prometheus' binding farther from the center of the *orchestra* permits greater actions and movement from the other principle characters and chorus members.

This entrance is unique for a multitude of reasons. Not even until the time of Sophocles (assuming Aeschylus' wrote *PB* before Sophocles was active) do audiences witness the inclusion of a third speaking actor, so four human characters entering at once certainly intrigues. The entrance of four characters is an oddity that only appears in *PB*. The fact, Taplin points out, first and foremost, that, "This entry of four named characters all together seems to be unique in surviving tragedy. Admittedly one of the four, presumably Bia, remains silent, but that is inevitable with the limitation to three speaking actors."<sup>30</sup> It is also strange that this entrance contains a character designated solely as *muta persona* or "mute person."<sup>31</sup> This leads us to a discussion about the oddity of Bia, the personification of Violence.

### *Bia – the Silent Aeschylean Character*

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<sup>29</sup> "Upstage left" is a modern theatrical term. The cardinal "left" and "right" refer to the directions from an actor's point of view on stage. Also, "downstage" refers to the part of the *orchestra* closest to the audience and "upstage" refers to the section closer to a backstage or *skene* in the Attic sense.

<sup>30</sup> Taplin 1977: 240-241.

<sup>31</sup> Grene 1991: 64.

The question remains, why does Bia come on stage at all? Does this personification serve a purpose other than to contrast him/herself with the authoritarian Kratos? Some scholars question whether or not a fourth actor came onstage to represent Bia. After all, the presence of “violence” inherently manifests itself with the gruesome depiction of Prometheus’ binding. From this point, I will thoroughly examine Bia’s silence and relationship with Kratos in order to explain why this character’s entrance is significant and necessary for

Bia is present more or less to add *gravitas* to Prometheus’ suffering later in the play and to effectively contrast Kratos as a mirror to Zeus’ power and terror. By not saying anything, Bia maintains a looming presence, and silent characters like Bia play a prominent role in many of Aeschylus’ tragedies, such as Cassandra in *Agamemnon*. In *Stagecraft of Aeschylus*, Taplin suggests that Bia’s entrance is more of an artistic staging choice unlike any seen in Attic tragedy. Zeus must send both Kratos and Bia to accomplish the task because, “his two faithful proxies are callous and brutal, just as Zeus is harsh and tyrannical. The third party also makes possible Prometheus’ comparable silence [and] makes his eventual outburst the more effective.”<sup>32</sup> Taplin later remarks that, “it is indeed generally the case that characters speak immediately on entry. The dramatist would not normally want to bring on a character unless he had something to say.”<sup>33</sup> Bia’s entrance along with silent Prometheus and bantering Kratos and Hephaestus does not typically occur when tragedies are presented on stage. Yet, actors could easily enter on stage silent and unnoticed and throughout the crowd and, “no one would think of imputing any such silence to ‘luxuriousness’ or ‘stubbornness,’ or to anything else but technical necessity [...] the true ‘Aeschylean silences’ are the object of direct dramatic attention while they are in

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<sup>32</sup> Taplin 1977: 242.

<sup>33</sup> Taplin 1972: 86.

progress.”<sup>34</sup> In many cases, these silences or silent characters are necessary just for the reconstruction of the play according to the tragedian’s script.

While there could be up to 14,000 spectators at any given performance and audience members would not be able to see specific details enacted onstage, yet, the addition of another character draws the attention of people to a physical counterpart to the Might of Zeus, Violence. Bia’s presence is visible and his entrance is essential for this stage production so to physically add a character that only represents something else and does not actually do anything. James Turney Allen supports this idea, stating that silence is a dramatic technique which aids the staging of a production: “What (is) more natural than to suppose that in some cases he may actually have tried the experiment of introducing silence solely for the sake of effect or a dramatic device?”<sup>35</sup> Therefore, Bia will enter with Kratos, Hephaestus and Prometheus at the beginning of my tragedy.

The first entrance has occurred from the *skene* trap door. Kratos and silent Bia assist Prometheus to his rock positioned upstage left (our metaphorical Scythian crag) lining the *skene* with Hephaestus in tow. Though the *skene* normally looks plain with no further embellishments, the backdrop could be painted blue<sup>36</sup> – further indication that this desolation borders the great *Oceanus*, away from civilization. Next comes the first major stage action of the play, the binding of Prometheus to the rock. It is important to evaluate not only the action being performed onstage but also the physical composure of the characters as they move and perform. As director, I must be sure to mold these characters into their respective roles so that they can do justice to the dramatic tension already evident in the text.

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<sup>34</sup> Taplin 1972: 83, 96.

<sup>35</sup> Allen 1907: 269-271.

<sup>36</sup> Taplin 1977: 246.

The binding of Prometheus positions the protagonist at his rock with Hephaestus doing the majority of the work. This is evident with Kratos' continuous hounding of Hephaestus, effectively placing himself in the role of commander. Zeus has bound each character to involuntarily perform a task, which lends to inflexibility not just for Prometheus. This disease of inflexibility consumes the majority of these characters, positioning themselves in roles that contrast and complement each other well in terms of emotional and physical composure. Karp explains this overarching more completely:

“Within *Prometheus Bound*, words for “inflexibility” are frequent and the metaphor of inflexibility is a recurring one. In the prologue, Zeus and his henchmen, *Kratos* (Power/Might) and *Bia* (Violence), are described in the most rigid and inflexible terms. They are called pitiless, bold or ruthless, describe themselves as stubborn and harsh-tempered and are placed in sharp contrast to Hephaestus, who is filled with pity for Prometheus. [...] Zeus himself is described as unbending, inexorable and hard to supplicate.”<sup>37</sup>

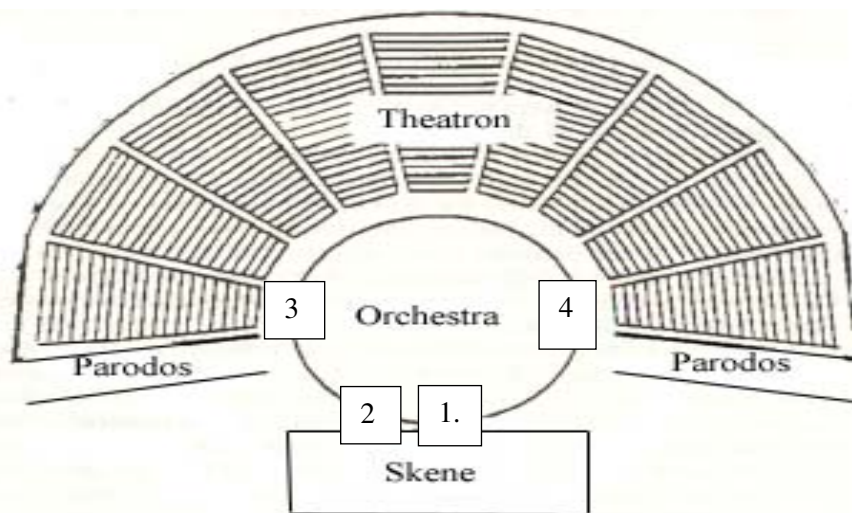
These clues indicate that the actors on stage will perform in certain fashions. Kratos and Bia retain strict postures to contrast with Hephaestus' sympathetic and reluctant attitude concerning his blacksmith duties: Κ: σὺ δὲ τὸ μηδὲν ὀφελόντα μὲ πόνει μάτην.

Η: πολλὰ μισηθεῖσα χειρωναξία. (Aes. *PB*, 43-45). Κ: “Do not cry over that which cannot help you at all” Η: “Oh handicraft of mine – that I deeply hate!”<sup>38</sup> Unbending and harsh in tongue, Kratos and Bia physically move away from Prometheus' rock. After he is neatly placed where he needs to be, the audience's primary focus shifts to Hephaestus' binding of Prometheus on the rock.

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<sup>37</sup> Karp 1996: 2.

<sup>38</sup> Griffith and Grene 1991: 66.



**Parts of a Greek Theater**

Referring back to the original drawing, Hephaestus, Kratos, Bia and Prometheus enter at the beginning of the play from door labeled (1). Hephaestus and Prometheus remain at the rock dictated (as already established from previous evidence) at upstage left labeled (2). Meanwhile, Zeus' personifications of Might and Violence, who force Hephaestus and do none of the actual binding, have the option to take position at opposite ends of stage right and stage left labeled at (3 for Kratos) and (4 for Bia). Though there is no concrete evidence for this positioning, one must pay close attention to the tangible constraints of the theatre. Kratos stays closer to Hephaestus and Prometheus in order to point out flaws in Hephaestus' handicraft as the work is done. Also, the center of the *orchestra* is reserved for the bulk of the chorus. The physical binding (necessitating great care from the actor playing Hephaestus) commences at this moment.

*The Presence of the Altar?*

Scholars debate over the presence of an altar at this moment in the play. Frequently (especially in Sophoclean tragedies), an altar was a fixed point of reference in the center of the *orchestra* often utilized for prayer, supplication or as a mediating source between mortal requests and immortal reception. In many ways, not having an altar was almost disrespectful to the gods,

especially Dionysus for whom the festival is named. The altar is very important because in Greek tragedy, “these gods are powerful and have to be honored, but they have no concern with the criteria of right and wrong. They usually like their worshippers to be pure, not physically polluted by a crime like murder.”<sup>39</sup> However, there is evidence that there is no altar in *PB* for a multitude of reasons.

To begin, the majority of the principle characters (save mortal Io) are immortal, so no mortal characters suffering in need of immortal intervention exist.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, the need for this tragedy to function like a prayerful extension or godly supplication<sup>41</sup> is non-existent. Also, these “worshippers”, i.e. Prometheus, have committed crimes two-fold: delivering fire to the mortals and complaining about their castigation by omnipotent Zeus. Finally, Prometheus, “although he is bent by suffering – bravely but boldly – does not bend his knee in supplication nor does he break under the crushing weight.

He declares that he will never yield to “honeyed persuasions (172).”<sup>42</sup> This production does not need an altar since the relationships between mortals and immortals are not one of prayer, supplication and retribution. In place of the altar, we have a “ritualistic” boulder on which multiple characters plead, bewail their sorrows and offer aid. Plus, the lack of an altar at the center of an *orchestra* provides greater mobility to the chorus on the *ekkyklema* and other principal characters.

#### *Elevated, Wooden Platform*

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<sup>39</sup> Wiles 2000: 8.

<sup>40</sup> Although, one could posit that Prometheus – though he constantly complains of Zeus’ unmoving tyranny – is an *immortal* being truly in need of immortal assistance. This juxtaposes the relationship of feeble mortality and divine immortality with the exception of Prometheus’ inclusion.

<sup>41</sup> Wiles 2000: 8.

<sup>42</sup> Karp (1996): 4.

In order that we pay further attention to Prometheus' words and actions, a raised platform on which Prometheus' rock is placed could aid both aurally and visually for an audience. Later, I will explain a physical need for this boulder, but there is no evidence explicitly advocating for it. "The plays of Aeschylus also show the need of a high platform in the pre-Periclean theatre [...] this high platform may also have been used in the *Prometheus Vincetus* during their first scene."<sup>43</sup> Further evidence also claims that the raised platform could assist a chorus exiting on the *ekkyklema*, but I will address choral concerns later in chapter 2. Arnott supports the idea of a raised platform to elevate certain characters as focal points with this sketch.

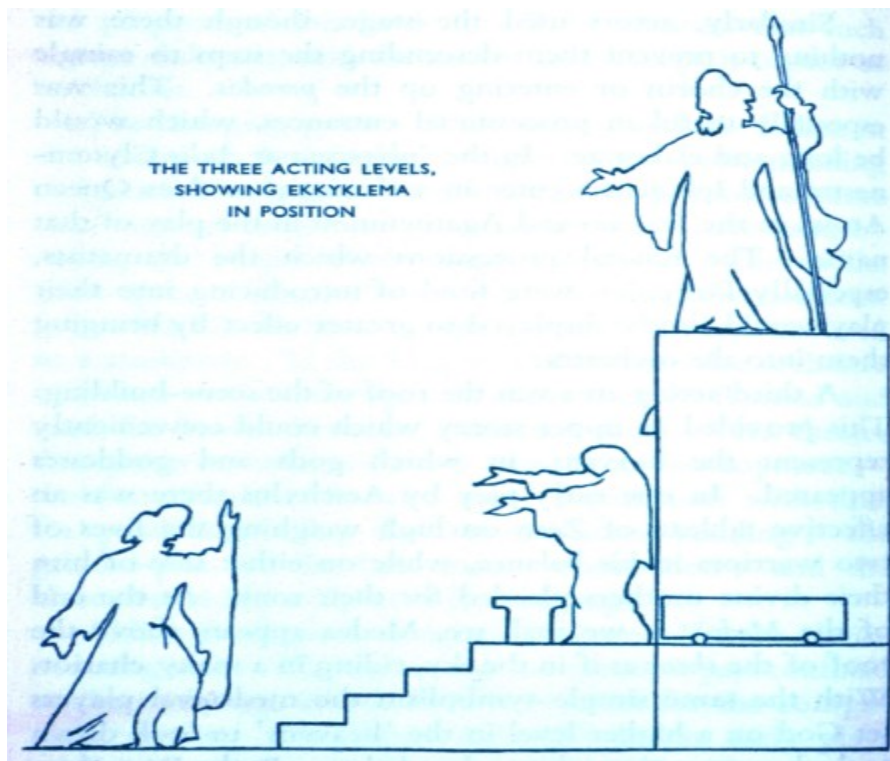


Figure 3 - Acting Levels  
courtesy of Peter D. Arnott

A principle character (potentially a choral leader) addresses a principle mortal character at the top of a raised platform. A divine figure commands and entreats from the small acting space above the *skene*. One can see at the bottom, hidden behind the trap door, is the *ekkyklema* on which a significant piece of stagecraft (dummy, props, etc.) or a chorus enters. This raised

<sup>43</sup> Webster (1970): 11-12.

platform, along with allowing spectators to better see an actor, pinpoints the adjacent trap door as significant for character entrances and exits. Also, a raised platform could mean better acoustics for important lines. I mentioned textual evidence that could suggest a raised platform at this moment. The raised platform not only assists with audibility and visibility of various characters who approach and interact with Prometheus (Hephaestus, Io, choral leaders, etc...) but it sets the inflexible Prometheus noticeably apart from the rest of the players on stage. Rosenmeyer points to textual references as evidence for a raised stage platform that would better enhance sound quality in the Theatre Dionysia.

In one such instance, the order of Might to Hephaestus to ‘step down, and collar his legs’ at *Prom.* 74. [This line] has a much easier explanation: Prometheus stands on a wooden platform raised slightly above the level of the dancing floor, and if Hephaestus is going to work on his legs, he is well advised to step down from the podium to a lower level of the dancing floor (*orchestra*) instead of bending or crouching and thus endangering the audibility of his speech.<sup>44</sup>

Already, these changes of design, movement and set placement highlight the benefits of staging a tragedy from scratch. Aside from inherent clues in the design, the evidence in text showcases the advantages of learning a text meant to be performed and not simply read. Readers would traditionally pass over these subtle moments in the play or ignore them altogether. Yet, by reconstructing such a tragedy, we uncover the nuances of *PB* (with even something so simple as a raised platform) that would otherwise not be evident. After all, “It (*Prometheus Bound*) was created in performance, not at a desk.”<sup>45</sup> Here, Rosenmeyer reinforces this need of stagecraft in tragedy.

### *Prometheus’ Binding*

As Hephaestus moves himself onto the raised platform, just stage-right of Prometheus, he sets out to bind him permanently for the rest of the play. No scholarly evidence claims that the

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<sup>44</sup> Rosenmeyer 1982: 46.

<sup>45</sup> Rosenmeyer 1982: 45.



production would use anything other than an actual rock on which to bind the actor.<sup>46</sup> It would take a substantial amount of money from a *choreogos* (producer) to have something manufactured just for a single production that would be strong and durable enough to hold someone for that amount of time. Therefore, Hephaestus will bind the actor on the rock, yet not actually bind him in the manner which Kratos' describes. I explain this first by analyzing Kratos' three commands which correlate to three specific parts of the body to bind.

Kratos:

βαλών νιν ἄμφω χερσῶν ἄγκρατεσθένει  
ἄιστρι θεῖνε, πασσάλευε πρὸς πέτραις. (Aes. *PB*, 55-56)

ἄδαμαντίνου νῖν σφηνῶς ἀθάδη γνάθον  
στέρνων διαμπῶξ πασσάλευε ἄρρωμένως. (Aes. *PB*, 64-65)

ἄ μῖν κελεύσω κῆπιθώξω γε πρὸς.  
χώρει κάτω, σκέλη δὲ κίρκωσον βίβη. (Aes. *PB*, 73-74)

Now place them around his hands: Strike the hammer down with force.  
Nail him to the rock.

Drive the obstinate jaw of the adamantine wedge right  
Through his breast: drive it with force.

I will continue to hound you and belittle you too! Get below  
Now, and hoop around his legs tight.

Kratos orders a binding that is threefold. First, Hephaestus must nail Prometheus' hands permanently to the rocks. Second, the dullness of an adamantine steel "wedge" is driven through his chest. Finally, his legs are hooped together as a means to hinder any possible movement: Readers must keep in mind one important fact: it is easy for a modern, post-Christian audience to picture and mime Prometheus' binding as similar to that of Christ's passion and crucifixion. Though scholars state that, "nailing was a method used in Roman crucifixion, and similar

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<sup>46</sup> Storey and Allan 2005: 102.

practices may not have been unknown to the Greeks of Aeschylus' day,"<sup>47</sup> this binding is very different. This binding will come to fruition in a manner that shall hurt neither performer (Hephaestus and Prometheus) in the process.

This is not the only way in which a director could bind Prometheus onstage. I employ these tactics that worked effectively when I played Prometheus. The use of cloth strips "nailed" (or in the case of the large rock, "wrapped around a small edge or chunk") to the rock for Prometheus effectively takes care of the hands<sup>48</sup>. It should also be noted that "two arms are given separate treatment" for dramatic emphasis.<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile, the rest of the body should be, "spread-eagled against a board, to which he was at least in some cases fasted by iron clamps across the ankles."<sup>50</sup> Staped bonds of metal cross the chest to feign wraps. They can be extended to the arms, but that remains unnecessary since the text calls for "nails" and not so much "bonds." The adamantine wedge driven through Prometheus' chest causes the majority of our problems.

We will bind Prometheus in the following way:

I suggest that the best way [...] is to see him as bound by semi-circular metal bands which are reinforced by nails, the blunt ends of which are broad enough for the term "wedge" to be applied to them. The transition of lines proposed by Kratos towards Hephaestus makes the relationship between wedge and chest-bands unintelligible.<sup>51</sup>

These bands could easily "lock" into small holes on the rock surrounding the actor.<sup>52</sup> It is at this point the actor's responsibility to feel and demonstrate with visceral facial expressions and lamentations the pain overtaking him as Hephaestus hammers. However, as Dyson points out, the actual binding, like Greek tragedy as a whole, is melodramatic and poetic in nature: "After,

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<sup>47</sup> Dyson 1994: 156.

<sup>48</sup> Taplin 1977: 243.

<sup>49</sup> Dyson 1994: 154.

<sup>50</sup> Dyson 1994: 155.

<sup>51</sup> Dyson 1994: 156.

<sup>52</sup> Dyson 1994: 155. Note that this evidence mixes a combination of scholarly opinion and speculation. The actual understandings of architectural "binding" onstage are scarce, so my conclusions are the result of the various propositions put forth over the years.

‘Drive a wedge through his chest’ the command to put bounds round his ribs can only be an extraordinary anticlimax. The further command [from Kratos] no longer requires that the bonds be made more secure.”<sup>53</sup> In the chronological pattern of “command, action and securing” between Kratos and Hephaestus for the first scene, this is one instance where the action has been completed without Kratos’ nagging. Therefore, the troublesome section of applying bonds and wedges to Prometheus’ chest moves along with efficacy and ease.

The most controversial section lays in binding the feet. Directors have a right to worry since the positioning of Prometheus on the rock cements his posture for the entire hour plus play. One would be tempted to have Prometheus sit on a small chair or stool in order to provide relief for whoever plays Prometheus. Yet, from my experiences in the role, the “daunting task” of remaining upright and erect for the entire play is not as difficult as it seems. The actor resting against as sturdy of a surface as a boulder provides respite enough from the trials of having to speak almost constantly for an hour’s length of time.

But how is Hephaestus to effectively (from a spectator’s point-of-view) bind his legs together? Once again, I turn to my course’s production of *PB* for assistance. The legs should not be “pinned” together permanently for the remainder of the play. Though Prometheus is ordered to “mount guard on this unlovely rock, upright, sleepless, not bending the knee,”<sup>54</sup> a mortal actor requires the ability to shift position and unlock legs so he does not pass out. As long as Hephaestus remains atop the raised platform and vigorously feigns the binding, Prometheus appears confined to his rock. Spectators cannot pinpoint stagecraft details as specific as this since many of them are too far away. Prometheus has now officially been bound onstage.

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<sup>53</sup> Dyson 1994: 154.

<sup>54</sup> Grene 1991: 66.

Throughout all of this toil, we need to address the actions and movements of Kratos and Bia on opposite sides of the *orchestra*. Bia does not need to necessarily do anything. After all, his silent presence (as dictated by aforementioned evidence) is enough to convey his significance there to an audience. Kratos meanwhile can gesture back to the raised platform and the actions of Hephaestus as he hounds the blacksmith on and on. All the while, for the purposes of acoustics, he must cheat out<sup>55</sup> to the audience so his mask's countenance and volume is not lost.

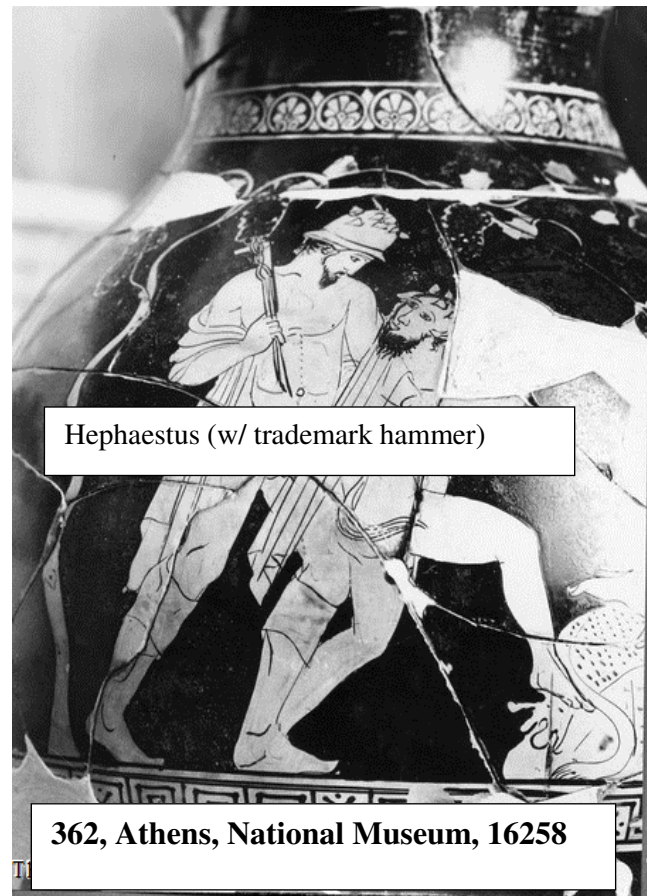
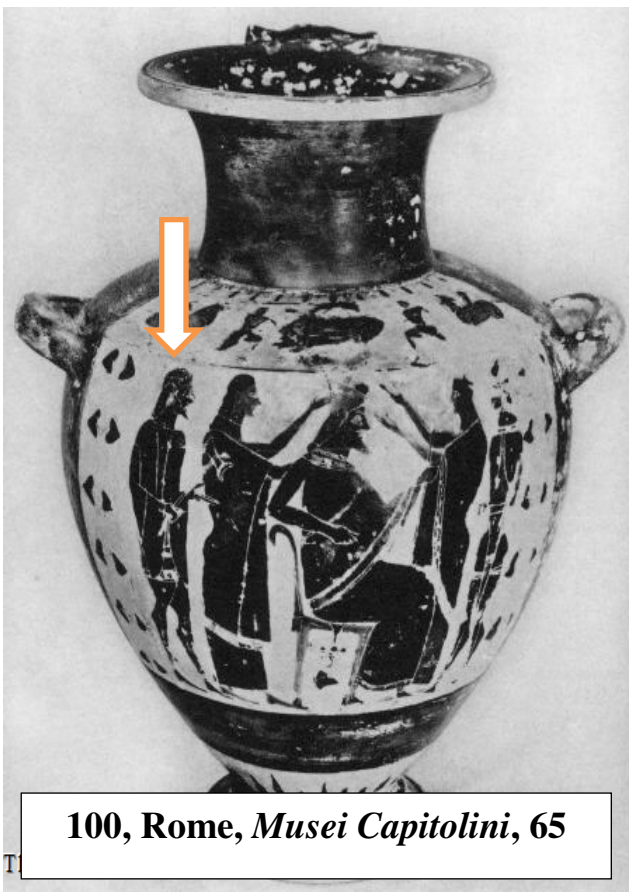
Once Prometheus has been completely bound, Kratos, Bia and Hephaestus will exit the stage. There is nothing remaining for them to do onstage. These three actors will exit through the side *skene* door adjacent to the *orchestra*, the same location from where they entered. The last actor to leave will be Kratos, because he has one final taunt to deliver to Prometheus. Subjectively speaking, his presence onstage prompts an emotionally-charged soliloquy, a final message to Prometheus from Zeus himself:  $\nu\tau\alpha\theta\alpha\ \nu\ \beta\rho\iota\zeta\epsilon\ \kappa\alpha\ \theta\epsilon\ \gamma\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\ /$   $\sigma\lambda\ \phi\eta\mu\acute{\epsilon}\rho\omicron\iota\sigma\iota\ \pi\rho\omicron\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}\theta\epsilon\iota.$  (Aes. *PB*, 82-83) “Now be insolent here; now, having stolen the God’s gifts, you give them to the creatures of the day.” This penultimate warning to Prometheus signals the departure of three characters and the emergence of the protagonist’s first words onstage.

### *Costumes and Masks of Kratos, Bia and Hephaestus*

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<sup>55</sup> This is another modern theatre term. To “cheat out” means to keep your body constantly angled (between 35 and 45 degrees) subtly to an audience. See the conclusion for more modern examples of how these theatre terms are applied to contemporary productions.

Before discussing the choral emergence and the second of episode of Aeschylus' *PB*, it is essential to remark on the masks, costumes and appearances of the four characters just introduced. In order to more fully understand the properties of costumes and masks for certain characters, we shall turn to vase paintings. These depictions provide significant clues as to how ancient artists viewed mortal beings and immortal characters. The rest of these clues will come from textual analysis.



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Evident in these two manifestations of the blacksmith God (the most vivid depictions available to us through ancient pottery) is his trademark, two-headed hammer. This could be the most

<sup>56</sup> All images are courtesy of the Beazley Archives from Oxford, England. Specific citations made with each photo.

important facet to Hephaestus' ornate costume on stage. This hand-held object or "attribute,"<sup>57</sup> could be helpful for spectators in discerning which characters were onstage, especially if they were not expressly addressed. Taplin remarks on this, stating that, "Props and costumes (attributes) are a particularly straightforward means for the dramatist to put his meaning into a tangible, overt form."<sup>58</sup> Therefore, Hephaestus will enter with a two-headed hammer not only for aesthetic purposes but also to immediately distinguish himself.

The actor portraying Hephaestus will move with purpose yet in a slow manner. Aiding this understanding of movement in Hephaestus is the limp that commonly accompanies this figure in Greek mythology. The presence of a limp depends on the general knowledge of the *Iliad* (1. 590-594).<sup>59</sup> There is a sense of dramatic irony: "Hephaestus too, not only Prometheus, will be deprived of the free use of his limbs, and he too will suffer as a result of his kindness and sympathy."<sup>60</sup> Hephaestus damages himself as much as he damages Prometheus as a result of the binding. Ironically, these pains come from the same tyrant, Zeus.

Stephen Fineberg supports this Hephaestus-limp theory, pointing to other vase paintings (ones not presented above) as further support for its frequent occurrence in Attic works of art: "Hephaestus' lameness is indicated explicitly by his right foot [...] it seems plain here that Hephaestus can barely walk [...] and is a figure of diminished status."<sup>61</sup> Continuing with the idea of bound v. unbound characters, Hephaestus appears constricted by a physical deformity in a similar way that Prometheus is beset by unyielding torture. Hephaestus will limp on his right foot with his upstage left arm wielding his trademark two-headed hammer.

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<sup>57</sup> This is another modern term applied to an object in antiquity. The more modern definition of this would be a "prop" or "stage piece."

<sup>58</sup> Taplin 1981: 56.

<sup>59</sup> Pavlovskis 1989: 369.

<sup>60</sup> Pavlovskis 1989: 369.

<sup>61</sup> Fineberg 2009: 292.

Also suggested by the vase paintings (above) is the length and shape of his beard. A beard, denoting characteristics like age, class and wisdom, defines the character. Interestingly enough, the Attic tragic mask and beard were usually one and the same: “Clearly, ‘mask,’ ‘actor’ and ‘character’ are all related terms but are still separable.”<sup>62</sup> The color, shape and features of a mask thereby dictated the features of the beard and even hairstyle. C. W. Marshall breaks down the mask/hair/beard interplay:

“Similarly, there were three age categories for adults, each of which is a notational generation apart: ‘characters in tragedy are either young or in the prime of life, or old; and the old are very old indeed. . .there are not subtle gradations of age.’ [...] There are therefore six basic mask types.”<sup>63</sup>

- i. Old Man (*geron*) – dark face with white beard and hair; perhaps bald;
- ii. Mature Man (*aner*) – dark face, dark beard and hair;
- iii. Young Man (*ephebos*) – dark face, dark hair, no beard;
- iv. Old Woman (*graus*) – pale face, white hair;
- v. Mature Woman (*gune*) – pale face, dark hair, mature hairstyle;
- vi. Young Woman (*kore*) – pale face, dark hair, youthful hairstyle;<sup>64</sup>

It is interesting to note that there is a lack of variation in the characters in *PB*. The majority (save the Oceanid chorus and Io) can be described as older gods who have been around since Zeus’ new ascension to the throne. However, this early classification aids with assigning the proper mask size, hair style and beard shape to each respective character. Hephaestus, in this instance, due to his age and based on the “pointedness” and dark color of his beard would fall under the category of *aner*, or Mature Man. The mere existence of a beard highlights his status as a God and to his being older, while the ruggedness of character would appear most likely in his worn face and in the darkness of his beard. Now, some may ask the question, why would we not place Hephaestus more under the category of *geron* or Old Man considering his age? I

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<sup>62</sup> Marshall 1999: 192.

<sup>63</sup> Marshall 1999: 191.

<sup>64</sup> Throughout the remainder of this thesis presentation, I will make reference to this legend of sorts to assist with mask designation, beard length and specific countenance features for various characters.

propose that based on the exigency and vitality which his handicraft commands of him and the fact that Hephaestus is the son of Zeus and Hera<sup>65</sup>, there is generational gap. Using Marshall's evidence, these masks clearly defined generational gaps, therefore putting Hephaestus' age (while still older) at a lower benchmark than some of the other gods.

Identifying costumes is a more difficult process, as there were not standards of costumes used across the board. Even the basic, agreed-upon footwear, *kothornoi*, does not apply universally to a majority of tragedies. In order to properly clothe a number of these characters in *PB*, specifically Kratos, Bia and Hephaestus and Prometheus in this first chapter, it is essential to study vase paintings as we already have done and examine historical evidence for further assistance. Webster claims that Aeschylus has already set himself apart from the other tragedians in terms of an odd mixture of ornateness and minimalism with his design: "Aeschylus considerably altered costume and footwear and introduced frightening and colored masks. Yet, the information provided by these objects (mask and costume) is surprisingly minimalistic."<sup>66</sup> By minimalism, I mean that we should not pay as much attention to costumes of those Aeschylean characters without evidence as to those that are highly decorated and kingly.

Webster goes on to say that, "We are well documented for the costume of tragedy from the end of the fifth century, but for the earlier period we have little to go on. [...] sleeved chiton and boots were part of the classical tragic costume."<sup>67</sup> Webster believes that many of the costume arrangements came from the earliest performances in honor of Dionysus. It could be that Dionysian worship prompted the earliest designs of mortal and immortal costumes alike. Therefore, in order to more accurately assign a costume to our Hephaestus, he shall wear a

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<sup>65</sup> Though there are different mythological accounts with different details, scholars agree upon the age gap between Zeus and Hephaestus.

<sup>66</sup> Webster 1970: 35, 57.

<sup>67</sup> Webster 1970: 35-38.



medium sized cloak/toga figure that leaves room for his arms and legs to move around. As I have mentioned before, dressing a character is very subjective and depends on the money fronted by a *choreogos* (producer) and stylistic choice: “The costuming was lavish, outlandish or derelict as the plot demanded.”<sup>68</sup> This simple linen fabric covers enough of the body for protection, and that is all that we need.

Moving on to Kratos and Bia, these characters are tricky to flesh out in terms of look and style. There is little to no pictorial record existing that depicts these characters clearly enough to discern. Additionally, with regards to masking, “age and sex alone are important for masks.”<sup>69</sup> These figures have neither age nor sex. They are mere personifications. It is up to the director and *choreogos* to further personify these already complex personifications of Zeus.

The small fragments of vase paintings show Kratos and Bia looking nearly identical. However, Bia frequently is depicted beard-less and with a longer mane of hair. Scholars speculate that Bia is oftentimes effeminized to give further complement to the masculine, authoritarian Kratos. For this production, both Kratos and Bia will have longer cloaks covering the majority of their body. The masks (as suggested by Webster) may be decorated with ornate and graphic detail considering their other-worldly essence. Bia will be fully cloaked (hopefully with fabric covering his head permitted that it does not impair his vision) and remain beardless with a longer, more *graus*-style of wispy hair. Kratos, consequently, will also remain fully cloaked, yet will wear more of a *geron*-style<sup>70</sup> of mask to demarcate him as older and with balding, white hair. The reason for aging Kratos and Bia is because they are extensions of Zeus, the old tyrant who is not only wise but also violent, terrible and marvelous all at the same time. It is logical to extend that senescence onto his personifications.

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<sup>68</sup> Rosenmeyer 1982: 52.

<sup>69</sup> Marshall 1999: 192.

<sup>70</sup> Marshall 1999: 195.

*Pictorializing Prometheus – his Costume, Mask and Behavior*

Now, there is the task of depicting Prometheus. As I mentioned previously, it is difficult for a modern audience to envision Prometheus without conjuring images of Jesus' crucifixion. In fact, contemporary artwork (pictured below) beautifies Prometheus' struggle and even fixates his body in a "crucifix-like" position similar to that of Christ. Zuhre Indirkas comments on the transformation and renewed interest in Prometheus following Jesus' death:

"These centuries (about 1 C.E. to 4 C.E.) were a period during which Christianity was spreading and pagan philosophies sought to renew themselves, most notably in the form of Neo-Platonism and Prometheus underwent another interpretation that was in line with the Neo-Platonist world view. [...] Prometheus' search for divine fire was an allegory for the creation of man as a result of 'Divine Will' and the aid of 'Divine Fire.' [...] (his depiction) nevertheless also appeared in Christian iconography as a visual element."<sup>71</sup>



*Figure 4 - "Prometheus" by Jose Clemente Orozco (Photo courtesy of Pomona College)*

Christianity is not the only factor which has significantly impacted an audience's perspective on Prometheus. Let us return to the binding action that I have previously mentioned

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<sup>71</sup> Indirkas 2012: 114.

so that I may extrapolate more on this. Taplin brings up the “dummy theory” with regards to staging Prometheus getting bound to the rock. According to Taplin, “Throughout the play Prometheus’ body was represented by a giant dummy (at least ten feet high, it seems) whence an actor concealed inside spoke his part.”<sup>72</sup> Rosenmeyer agrees with these sentiments regarding an unfounded theory: “his (Hephaestus’) pinioning and hammering has left its mark on a modern theory that Prometheus was represented by a huge wooden dummy, with the actor speaking its lines behind it.”<sup>73</sup> However, this theory can be dismissed for a number of reasons.

First and foremost, Prometheus must remain onstage at all time. Audiences attending a Greek tragedy desire entertainment and a thrilling show to behold. If there is a lifeless dummy onstage substituting for Prometheus, then the focal point of the production becomes dull and the fulcrum of the show falls apart. Taplin also refutes the dummy theory with two practical examples: “Assuming that this play followed a trilogy by *Prom Lym.*, then how did Prometheus leave his binding place? How does he leave following his descent to Tartarus? And, are Kratos and Bia expected to enter each carrying one end of a rigid, giant dummy?”<sup>74</sup> Taplin refutes this idea with practical alternatives. From my perspective having portrayed Prometheus, it would be increasingly difficult to give Prometheus full volume either inside of a costume or behind a rock. I cannot image the difficulties that would persist in the large Theatre Dionysia. The dummy theory will not hold up for *PB*, and there will be no dummy.

Looking more intently at Prometheus’ physical composure and movement, it can be deduced that Prometheus is the most liberated of any character in the play. He constantly repeats the phrase, “death he cannot give me”<sup>75</sup> knowing that his immortality prevents Zeus from

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<sup>72</sup> Taplin 1977: 243.

<sup>73</sup> Rosenmeyer 1982: 46.

<sup>74</sup> Taplin 1977: 244.

<sup>75</sup> Grene 1991: 105.

terminating his pure existence. Also, being the seer that he is, Prometheus, “says that whatever he did, he did it knowingly and that, in full awareness of what he has done, he is also ready to put up with whatever consequences may arise from any judgments that his actions were a crime.”<sup>76</sup>

With this knowledge in hand, Prometheus has the liberty onstage of moving his head and his hands (retaining the sense of “bound” as much as possible) as much as he wants with zeal.

Practically every other character fears intense repercussions for either defending or interacting with Prometheus, yet Prometheus does not fear repercussion as much.

Once again, we shall turn to vase paintings for some assistance in depicting Prometheus’ mask and costumes:



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Multiple vase and iconographic paintings depict Prometheus as both strong and feeble. This interesting dichotomy refers to the inflexibility that Prometheus feels, knowing well that he retains his mental gift of foresight and his physical strength yet feels diminished under Zeus’

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<sup>76</sup> Indirkas 2012: 112.

<sup>77</sup> “Prometheus Bound,” Laconian Black-figure Amphoriskos. (*photo courtesy of Vatican City Museums*)



cruel treatment. In the same vein, Prometheus is depicted oftentimes completely naked or semi-clothed in comparison with the other figures depicted on the vases with him. For example:



*Figure 5 - 310028, Florence Museo Archeologico Etrusco 76359*

In this image, we see the rescue of Prometheus by Heracles and his archery skills. Note the elaborate display of armor and craft in Heracles' outfit compared with the simplicity of Prometheus. This assists us greatly in crafting out Prometheus' potential costume. He would only require a small amount of clothing (weather permitting) that would cover up his body from the breast-line down to his knee. For safety purposes, thicker pieces of wool can be wrapped around

his arms and legs to prevent raw chaffing from Hephaestus' chains. His mask will most likely resemble that of an Old Man or *geron* due to his older age and the toils he has and will endure. Plus, his pictographical record demonstrates a disheveled, longer beard similar to that of an older man that is wise in age yet untamed due to his binding to the rock.

We have developed the characters for Prometheus, Kratos, Bia and Hephaestus. The first entrances, exits and stage actions have occurred. From this meticulous analysis of costumes, staging and adding physicality to an ancient body of work, we can already see that stagecraft deserves importance in the study of Attic performance. Once these last characters leave, the following scenes will add further nuance to this already established stagecraft.

## CHAPTER 2 – “Chorus of Oceanids and Oceanus”

At this point in the tragedy, following Prometheus’ lengthy monologue, the chorus enters. The chorus, as in any other tragedy, serves as a means of questioning and identifying characters that enter and exit the stage. The chorus is made of nymph-like creatures referred to as the “Oceanids” or daughter of Oceanus. Oceanus, like Prometheus, is one of the older gods who rules over water. The chorus makes its entrance, questions Prometheus’ plight and questions why Prometheus is at this farthest point of Earth. After a number of rebuttals made by Prometheus and the Oceanids, Oceanus enters (supposedly on a broad-winged, large-taloned eagle) and attempts to convince Prometheus that he should speak with Zeus about the bound god’s release. Prometheus rejects this plea, stating that Oceanus will only cause more problems and further provoke Zeus’ anger if he does this. After Oceanus’ departure, the Oceanids once again engage in a series of strophes and antistrophes that bemoan Prometheus’ situation and offer comfort to a god tortured so.

### Entrance of the Oceanid Chorus

It is interesting to first note how these creatures appear onto the stage. Prometheus dramatically hints at the entrance of a group of individuals by saying:

□ □ □α □α.  
τίς □χώ, τίς □δμ□ προσέπτα μ□ □φεγγής,  
θεόσυτος, □ βρότειος, □ κεκραμένη;  
□κετο τερμόνιον □π□ πάγον  
πόνων □μ□ν θεωρός, □ τί δ□ θέλων;  
□ρ□τε δεσμώτην με δύσποτμον θεόν  
τ□ν Δι□ς □χθρόν, τ□ν π□σι θεο□ς  
δι□ □πεχθείας □λθόνθ□ □πόσοι  
τ□ν Δι□ς α□λ□ν ε□σοιχνε□σιν,  
δι□ τ□ν λίαν φιλότητα βροτ□ν.  
φε□ φε□, τί ποτ□ α□ κινάθισμα κλύω  
πέλας ο□ων□ν; α□θ□ρ δ□ □λαφρα□ς  
πτερύγων □πα□ς □ποσυρίζει.  
π□ν μοι φοβερ□ν τ□ προσέρπον. (Aes. *PB*, 114-127).

Ah! Ah! Alas! Alas!  
What sound, what sightless smell approaches me?  
Immortal, mortal or both?  
Has it ventured to this point on earth,  
To gaze on my sufferings?  
What is its desire?  
You look at me, a God chained and bound  
The most hated enemy of Zeus of  
The Gods that enter Zeus' palace,  
On account of my exceeding love for man.  
What is that? The rustle  
Of flapping bird wings close? The air flutters  
With a stroke of wings so gentle.  
All that come to me causes fear.

A number of things are unique about this entrance and the way in which Prometheus describes those coming forth. First, it is a rather lengthy introduction. This makes sense considering a few different things: 1.) Prometheus has the power of forethought, so the fact that he “senses” the presence of another so quickly is explicable. 2.) Prometheus has supposedly been bound to a crag that is isolated, elevated and far away from civilization, so the presence of another being is sure to incite a soliloquy full of questions. 3.) The entrance of a chorus would require a good amount of time considering the number of persons stepping on to the stage not to mention props, costumes or attributes.<sup>78</sup> Following the aural cues from Prometheus' early monologue, the choral actors can wait offstage for the right moment to enter. From a stagecraft perspective, these choral actors have time to adjust their costumes and props if necessary and enter at just the right moment. Additionally, Prometheus' cues of “birds' wings,” “strokes of wings” and “sightless scent” need not represent actual wings or smells. Spectators would have expected no illustrious bird or great smells to accompany an entrance of characters already so majestic since they understood the constraints of a 5<sup>th</sup> century Athenian production. Here, I

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<sup>78</sup> Taplin 1977: 250.



concede that the text provides what stagecraft cannot. This imagery of a large bird is more poetic and beautiful than a device of stagecraft.

This now leads to the entrance of the Oceanids on to the *orchestra*. We have already established that the *skene* backdrop in addition to the upstage door serve as a boundary between the mortal and immortal realms. It would make sense that the Oceanids, nymph-like and daughters of an old god, should appear above the *skene*, address Prometheus who is utterly confused by this interaction and then descend as a bevy. However, John Davidson points to a few difficulties with placing a chorus on high:

It seems highly unlikely, however, that a roof-top entry song would have been a practicable proposition for a group of 12 or 15 *choreutae*. Moreover [...] the very idea of such an entry song flies suspiciously in the face of the normal practice by which the venue of the arriving chorus is their tailor-made dancing area, the *orchestra*.<sup>79</sup>

Davidson looks not only to the impracticality of placing such a large group upstage and on top of the *skene* but also to the prolonged wait that it would force audiences to endure. It would require a long time to get all of these actors from above the *skene* down to the *orchestra*. The wooden *skene* backdrop would also hinder their eyesight and most importantly, their volume as they address Prometheus for the first time.

Thus, the chorus shall enter, in two symmetrical groups, on either side of the *paradoi* or cheek walls on SL and SR of the *theatron*.<sup>80</sup> This stage direction aligns more closely with Alan Sommerstein's definition. It is plausible for the Oceanids to enter from the *paradoi* because of their "particular point of origin" that may not be associated with the divine:

κτύπου γὰρ ἄχ' ἄλυβος  
δι᾽ ἔξεν ἄντρων μυχόν, ἄκ

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<sup>79</sup> Davidson 1994: 34.

<sup>80</sup> While *theatron* is a term we know well, SR and SL refer to those cardinal stage directions of the modern theatre. SR means "Stage Right" and SL means "Stage Left." Additionally, a cheek wall refers to an opening usually downstage of the main performance exit. I may use the term cheek wall to mimic the use of the *paradoi*.

δὲ πλῆξέ μου τὴν θεμερῶπινα ἀδῶ:  
σύθην δὲ πέδιλος ἄχ' πτερωτῶ. (Aes. *PB*, 132-135)

For the bronze sound echoed  
Throughout the depths of this cave and rid from us  
A modesty; unsandaled  
We sped fourth on our chariot with its wings.

The text states that the Oceanids have come from a cavern that reverberated with the pang of Hephaestus' handicraft. Sommerstein's view of the *paradoi* purpose: "the two passages were associated by convention with particular points of origin or destination (the market-palace, the harbor or even the countryside)."<sup>81</sup> Their point of origin adequately mirrors the utilization of *paradoi* according to Sommerstein.<sup>82</sup> The Oceanids will enter – with equal numbers of roughly six to seven members – on either side of the *paradoi* as opposed to the stairwell from behind the top of the *skene*.

Another issue comes up when the Oceanids mention their "chariot of wings" and "swift rivalry of wings."<sup>83</sup> Though spectators should expect a grand, winged cart, the most plausible substitute for such a feat of stagecraft will require use of the *ekkyklema* or "rolled-out cart." It can be painted with vibrant colors and adorned with feathered wings attached to the cart. Since the chorus is to enter from the *paradoi* as opposed to the small door from behind the *skene*, there will be more room for the carts to come in and off the stage. Their illustrative dance allows them to convey the airiness of flight while they make their place on the *orchestra* in order to converse with Prometheus. The description of these characters in flight and on "chariots of wings" is more stated rather than actually performed: "the chorus is characterized as Oceanids, winged water-nymphs, daughters of the sea-god Oceanus; they seem to make their first entrance probably in

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<sup>81</sup> Sommerstein 2010: 19.

<sup>82</sup> Sommerstein 2010: 20.

<sup>83</sup> Fineberg 1986: 95.

dance, illustrative of flight.”<sup>84</sup> It should not be an issue attaining two *ekkyklema* for both groups so long as the financial *choregos* is willing to produce the funds necessary. Also, spectators will be able to see both members of the chorus and Prometheus because Prometheus rests on an elevated, wooden platform.

At this moment, the chorus, beseeching Prometheus to share his turmoil with them, has made a triumphant entrance onto the stage. For the remainder of the first part of this scene (up until line 284), the chorus speaks with Prometheus. Not a lot of stage action occurs. For this reason, I will now speak on three important topics concerning the chorus: dress/costumes, emotional behavior and music. These three components will make up the remainder of the “stage action” of the chorus since they simply remark on the situation at hand. Occasionally, a choral leader steps forth and addresses a principal character. Those instances will be mentioned as they come up.

#### *Costumes and Masks of the Oceanid Chorus*

The masks and costumes of the Oceanids differ greatly from those of other characters in the play. They are described as playful nymphs who are much younger than the majority of the other characters in the play. After all, Zeus, Prometheus and Oceanus are some of the oldest gods according to Hesiod while Io and Hermes have aged drastically due to their lackey positions beneath Zeus. This youth gives more freedom and mobility to the chorus throughout the tragedy: “Those under yoke, harness or prod stand in thematic contrast to such as Oceanus’ fairy-tale bird and his daughters which require none of the normal constraints.”<sup>85</sup> It is their dress, actions and masks which separate the chorus from the rest of the characters on stage.

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<sup>84</sup> Arnott 1989: 25.

<sup>85</sup> Fineberg 1986: 98.

These are some collected images of nymphs, fairies and other assorted choral members from vase paintings that could aid in depicting the look of this chorus for a production of *PB*:



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*Figure 6 - Rome, Candelori Collection (1989) - Munich "Oceanid"*

These creatures are beardless, carefree and scantily clad. In some instances, nymphs wear shoes, like the standard *kothornoi*, but for the most part, they are shoeless and naked. They would most likely wear the *kore* or “young female” mask that accompanies a character that is dark-haired, pale-skinned and flowing in hairstyle.<sup>86</sup> The closest depiction that scholars have of an Oceanid showcases a creature dressed with fruit and vine. It is possible that these creatures could be the most ornate in their headdresses or masks, with a collection of weeds, vines and other flora. Considering the fact they are creatures of the sea, they will more than likely accessorize with sea-motif objects. Depending on how much a *choreogos* is willing to produce, the masks and costumes of the Oceanid chorus could be minimalistic or magnificent. An attribute such as an *aulos* or “reed-pipe” or a scroll/scepter could distinguish a chorus leader/music leader from the remainder of the chorus.<sup>87</sup>

What of the emotional composure and behavior of the chorus on stage? Though women were not allowed to perform as actors during the Festival Dionysia, *PB* uniquely stands out as one of the few tragedies with an all-female chorus.<sup>88</sup> The Oceanid chorus remains at an awkward position where they try and keep Prometheus’ best interests at hand yet still push him to escape: Chorus: ἄθλου δὲ κλυσιν ζήτει τινά / Pro.: λαφρὸν ἴστις πημάτων ἔξω πόδα. ἔχει παραινέειν νοθετεῖν τε τὸν κακὸς πράσσοντα. (*Aes. PB*, 264-267) “Chorus: Find a resolution for your toils. Pro: It is easy for those with a foot outside to advise and pity the one acting poorly.” This female chorus tries its hardest to be sympathetic with the miseries of Prometheus, but at the same time, they come off as naïve and coy. As one can see from the text above, Prometheus becomes angry with the chorus on account of its ignorance and the fact that they are free of foot and he is not. This vision of bound and unbound feet becomes quite apparent

<sup>86</sup> Marshall 1999. 192.

<sup>87</sup> Taplin 1978: 8.

<sup>88</sup> deForest 2010: 8.

since there are, “five images of encumbered and unencumbered feet based on the ped- (or pod-) root.”<sup>89</sup> This flexibility allows the chorus to move in a way that is free-wheeling and youthful in opposition to Prometheus’ immobility onstage. This leaves the actors playing the chorus in a difficult position. They are racked with guilt yet innocent about the miseries of the world outside. Though these choral members dance and sang together in fluid moments and equal distance in all directions,<sup>90</sup> there was probably hesitation, resistance and societal fear in their moves as they cavorted about the stage in song.

### Music and Attic in Athenian Tragedy

This leads the discussion toward a very difficult topic: music. In short, tragedies used music as an integral part to the telling of their stories. More often than not, an *aulos* player “stood in the *orchestra*, also in tragic costume. The choral dancing was normally in formation, either rectangular or circular in basis, and it was usually rather solemn and decorous, a style sometimes called *emmeleia* from where we get ‘harmony’.”<sup>91</sup> The issue is that barely any scrap of evidence remains today that could inform scholars as to the intonations and cadence of ancient music patterns. According to Albert Weiner, however, a few things are sure about music and the Greek chorus: “their choral songs pertain as little to the subject of the piece as to that of any other tragedy. They are, therefore, sung as mere interludes.”<sup>92</sup> This issue of classifying and identifying the specific music that these choral members used comes up especially following Oceanus’ departure at line 398. Following this, the chorus engages in a number of sung strophes

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<sup>89</sup> Fineberg 1986: 97.

<sup>90</sup> Brockett 1961: 322.

<sup>91</sup> Taplin 1978: 9.

<sup>92</sup> Weiner 1980: 205.

and antistrophes or musical interludes that bemoan the protagonist's predicament.<sup>93</sup> These lead up to line 560 or Io's entrance onto the stage.

Some of the first successful attempts at recreating Greek music in antiquity came from the French Renaissance tradition which emphasized Ancient Greek literature. Later down the line, musicians from even the late 19<sup>th</sup> century meticulously studied the Greek structure in the hopes of shedding light on an otherwise vague topic. Musician Saint-Saens used what evidence he could get that, "encouraged him to delve into the particulars of ancient Greek music theory."<sup>94</sup> Though little remains of music from that time, Saint-Saens looked closely at the various attributes of this music in the hopes of creating a fresh score:

Saint-Saens tells us that he was inspired by Greek vases as well [...] Translating this into a musical style, he had the chorus sing in unison and scored the work for an approximately Greek-sounding ensemble consisting of four flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, harp, and strings. He ventured even further towards authenticity by employing actual Greek *tonoi* and tetrachords.<sup>95</sup>

This attempt at recreating Greek tones was a risky endeavor, and reviewers from the time called it a "tedious" and "monotonous"<sup>96</sup> experiment. However, this negative reception from music critics may actually help scholars in understanding ancient music and intonation.

If modern critics assessed this scholarly attempt as boring, tedious and even dissonant, it posits that there is a stark contrast between what we have known as harmonious music today and what was considered music in antiquity. We have some knowledge that Ancient Greek music was dissonant, broken and not necessarily beautiful to the ear.<sup>97</sup> For this production of *PB*, however, the answer remains less clear. For anapest and strophe's sake, a choral *aulos* player will occupy the center of the *orchestra* (1) (thankfully not taken up by the protagonist's rock of

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<sup>93</sup> Foley 2003: 23.

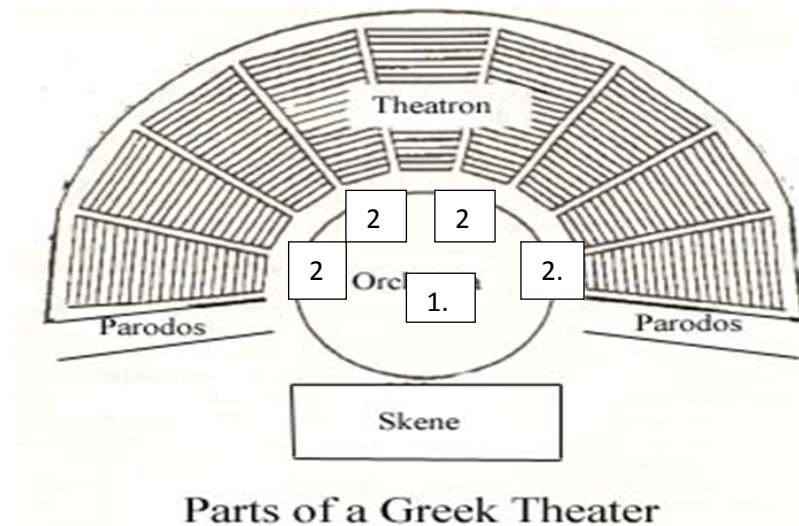
<sup>94</sup> Solomon 2010: 503.

<sup>95</sup> Solomon 2010: 504.

<sup>96</sup> Solomon 2010: 504.

<sup>97</sup> Solomon 2010: 509.

torture or a meddlesome altar to the gods) and the rest of the chorus will perform and sing in a semi-circle surrounding the outer, down-stage rim of the *orchestra*.



### Enter Oceanus – The Mechane is Utilized

Now, from lines 285-398 of the play, Oceanus makes an appearance and converses briefly with Prometheus. During this and other such times when a principal character makes an appearance, it is not unlikely for a chorus to sit on stage and listen since they are not speaking or interacting with these principal characters. It makes even more sense in this instance since these choral members are the daughters of Oceanus. They will remain at their space at the surrounding perimeter and will rise up altogether only at a moment when a large strophe or other soliloquy comes up. Other than these instances, an individual choral leader can relieve himself from the group and approach one of the principle characters (primarily Prometheus) if necessary.

Oceanus' entrance is tricky to tackle, especially when one considers the means by which he reaches the desolate crag so isolated from civilization:

□κω δολιχ□ς τέρμα κελεύθου  
διαμειψάμενος πρ□ς σέ, Προμηθε□,  
τ□ν πτερυγικ□ τόνδ□ ο□ων□ν  
γνώμ□ στομίων □τερ ε□θύνων: (Aes, *PB*, 286-289)



I have come to the end of a distant journey,  
Beyond the Earth's limits to see you, Prometheus.  
Without saddle or bridle, I lead  
My swift-winged bird by thought.

This is the same scenario that we faced in bringing the Oceanids on to the stage. It is inconceivable to bring a large, unbridled bird safely onto a stage so to signify a majestic entrance. Taplin, along with other scholars at this point suggests the use of a *mechane* or “crane” to lower Oceanus from the tops of the *skene* platform and on to the stage:

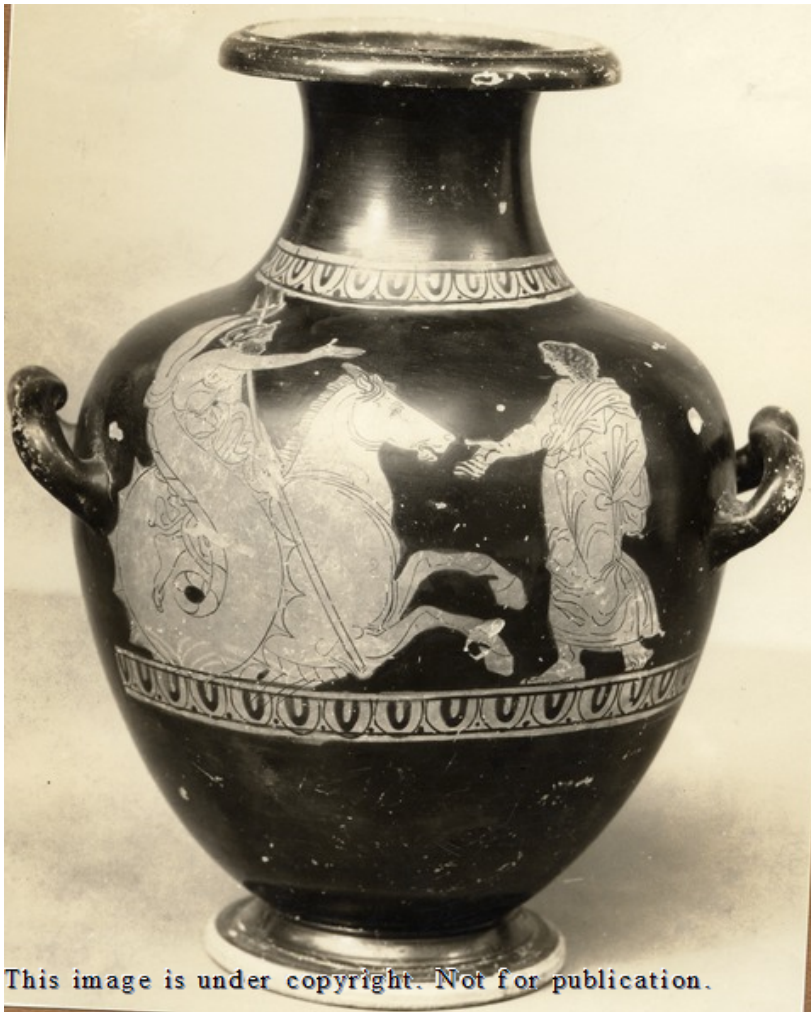
There is some doubt whether the *mechane* was available in the Aeschylean theatre [...] but it is virtually impossible for them to explain away Oceanus. [The words] strongly imply that the audience saw Oceanus fly through the air. This is likely to have been an early instance before the device became a theatrical cliché. It might be claimed simply that Oceanus has come a long way, and that, like his daughters, he needs supernatural transport.<sup>98</sup>

It is likely that this (aside from Prometheus' binding and his descent into Tartarus (see Ch. 4)) is one of Aeschylus' most complex acts of staging throughout *PB*. A wooden crane would lower the actor playing Oceanus from the *skene* following his introduction and down into the *orchestra* as he converses with Prometheus.

Much like his grand entrance, this god's attire and make-up requires a great deal of attention. Similar to other characters in the play, evidence from vase paintings guide us in dressing Oceanus properly:

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<sup>98</sup> Taplin 1977: 260-261.



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Figure 8 - 11677, New York (NY) Metropolitan Museum, 21.88.162.



This image is under copyright. Not for publication.

Figure 7 - 8833, New Haven (CT) Yale University, Stoddard Collection, 1913, 112.

These images display a grandiose figure on his horse with an elaborate, nautical tail coiling up his backside. While it may be difficult to create this tail, ornate, kingly robes may help to distinguish this character from the rest of those onstage. As with Hephaestus, his age and attribute will noticeably set him apart in the eyes of the audience. A signature trident or staff is found in most depictions of the god of the sea, and he is oftentimes adorned with horns at the top of his mask. These features contribute to the nautical, immortal aspects of the character yet humanize him enough.

The difficulty comes with assigning him a proper mask. Though his age distinctly places him in the category of *geron* or “old man,” his vigor and maturity also align him closely with *aner* or “mature man” status.<sup>99</sup> Comparing textual research with pictorial evidence, Oceanus could have a more youthful appearance yet retain the grayness and frayed characteristics when it comes to his hair and beard. Much like a worn-down politician in the United States, his countenance and attitude put forth an air of determination yet his hair, gray, flowing and tousled, show otherwise. Additionally, a prickled crown of sea leaves or other nautical flora sits atop his head. This establishes similarity in dress with his daughters though he himself (ironically) never speaks to them throughout the play.

Finally, it is necessary to determine the attitude and tension between Oceanus and Prometheus during their conversation. Primarily, this involves an analysis of Oceanus’ character and his attempts to convince Prometheus that he will make it all better:

Some, for example, have seen him as a lackey of Zeus, trying to undermine Prometheus’ proud resistance against despotism. To others, he appears as a kindly, but foolish and cowardly figure, who serves, at best, only incidental dramatic functions such as comic relief, an interruption Prometheus’ lengthy monologue, or a foil to set off Zeus’ tyrannical oppression and the passionate indignation of Prometheus.<sup>100</sup>

It can be very difficult, based on the two positions aforementioned, to determine Oceanus’ point for being on stage at all. However, Oceanus functions much like Bia in the opening chapter of the play. Though he may not be silent, his presence serves as necessary to further demonstrate the toil and sufferings that Prometheus endures. For one, the inclusion of Oceanus at all, “is attributed to Aeschylus’ skill and generosity toward his personae.”<sup>101</sup> Aeschylus does not waste entire sections on characters not important to the scene. As it is with modern playwrights, every word (or character) is important to Aeschylus and has a distinct purpose in the tragedy. For

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<sup>99</sup> Marshall 1999: 194.

<sup>100</sup> Konstan 1977: 63.

<sup>101</sup> Konstan 1977: 63.

Oceanus, he serves as a lone ally to Prometheus' cause. Every other character either laments about his/her own problems or criticizes Prometheus for his wrongdoing. Oceanus skips Prometheus' lengthy prologue of woes and attempts to correct a crime not committed.

Finally, the relationship between Oceanus and Prometheus in this section functions similarly to that of *didaskalos* (Oceanus) to *mathetes* (Prometheus).<sup>102</sup> Oceanus constantly warns Prometheus of his loose tongue and what Zeus may do if he hears of these complaints. Prometheus sulks in his woes until finally, the relationship changes abruptly: "the language underscores that the relationship between Ocean and Prometheus has become reversed, and that Ocean knows it: he is the pupil appealing to Prometheus as teacher."<sup>103</sup> Therefore, rather than having Oceanus leave, worried over the fate of Prometheus, Oceanus speaks with Prometheus about these struggles. These examples give clues for the actor portraying Oceanus onstage. He should maintain a personal sense of *gravitas* as he addresses Prometheus, knowing fully that they are old gods who retain a great deal of power. In the same vein, Oceanus is sensitive to Prometheus' troubles and receptive to someone he has known for a long time. Finally, his extreme worry can be diminished as Prometheus implores him to no longer look to him as a teacher. Prometheus, unfortunately, does not achieve the same dynamic makeover as Oceanus. Oceanus serves a more telling purpose to this tale in that what meets in the eye comes from textual evidence.

Oceanus departs via the small door aligning the *skene* backdrop. Rather than departing in the exact manner he arrived, Oceanus swiftly leaves on level ground to give his daughters full attention for their last strophes. The *mechane* "crane" must be pulled up for Hermes' arrival in

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<sup>102</sup> This is not a purely pedagogical relationship being established. Rather, this allusion to a teacher-student relationship reinforces the helplessness and "bounded" nature of the immature Prometheus to the wise, prudent and unchained Ocean. The example allows the actor playing Oceanus to establish authority in contrast to Prometheus' feebleness.

<sup>103</sup> Konstan 1977: 66.

the last scene in this play. The chorus of Oceanids lament the woes of Prometheus as a united, feminine entity until the unspeakable mortal crashes this immortal gathering: Io arrives.

### CHAPTER 3 – “Enter Io”

As the chorus concludes a second round of strophes and antistrophes, Io appears. This is the first instance in the play in which a mortal-like character interacts with Prometheus. I use the term “mortal-like” because Io still retains the effeminate nymph qualities that she once wholly possessed. However, she is slowly taking the form of a cow after she was cursed and sent out by Zeus’ wife, Hera, following an illicit affair. She is savagely tormented by a pestering gadfly that stings her incessantly, driving her to the ends of the earth. For this reason, she is one of the few Earth creatures to venture to these reaches of the land’s end. Upon arrival, Io questions Prometheus’ fate, and soon the chorus also questions Prometheus about Io’s torment and eventual punishment. Prometheus and Io deliver lengthy soliloquies detailing the trials and castigation that both have endured until Io departs, knowing the path she must take to rid herself and Prometheus of the sufferings enacted by Zeus.

#### *Enter Io in Agony*

Occupying more than 300 lines of the tragedy, Io’s scene is the longest in *PB*. Interestingly enough, the scene needs little action or stagecraft to be successful. Therefore, this episode requires that both Io and Prometheus deliver their lines with great emotion and passion. As the scene progresses, the following actions and movements will be addressed. First, one must look at Io’s unique entrance that is unlike any other of the tragedy’s principal characters. Second, Io, in a very unique position, will be adorned with a costume that has both beastly and human qualities. Finally, we will evaluate the physical and psychological torture with which Io wrestles and the demands this places upon the actor.

To begin, Io enters with her first cries of ἄ ἄ, ἄ ἄ, and eleleu! eleleu! at around line 560. This pattern of frantic speech and vocative exclamations serves a number of purposes. For one, the eccentric and varied meter of her monologues enhances her desperation in contrast to Prometheus and the chorus. The chorus and Prometheus speak throughout in their own respective metrical rhythms that do not usually change. Io, however, will start with one pattern and then changes it in an instant. Taplin remarks that, “Immediately on entry Io sings her ‘monody’: after some opening anapests (561) she sings an outburst of frenzy astrophic iambics [...]. The entering lyrics of Io were no doubt accompanied by appropriate choreography.”<sup>104</sup> Her frantic opening is not triumphant nor is it ordered or even expected. Io’s frenzied outbursts set her apart from the other characters as does her entrance.

One can see these opening soliloquies of differing structures more closely with an analysis of the text:

ἄ ἄ, ἄ ἄ,  
 χρίει τις ἄ με τὸν τάλαιναν ὀστρὸς,  
 ἐδῶλον ἄργου γηγενόσ, ἄλευ ἄ δ: φοβομαι  
 τὸν μυριαπὸν ἐσορῶσα βούταν.  
 ἄ δ πορεύεται δόλιον ἄμι ἄχων,  
 ἄν ὀδῶ καθανόντα γὰ ἄα κεύθει. (Aes, *PB*, 565-571)

Ah, Ah! Alas! Alas!  
 That certain gadfly once more pricks wretched me.  
 The gadfly, the phantom of the Earth-born Argos:  
 Hide it away from me, Earth!  
 Having been scared upon seeing the form of  
 Argos, the ten-thousand eyed herdsman.  
 He hounds me, starving, down with his eyes.  
 But his earth didn’t even hide him.

Her crazed approach to explaining her situation and troubles differs greatly from Prometheus’ response as he begins to tell her of her plight: Pro: λέξω τορῶς σοι πὸν ἄπερ χρῶζεις μαθεῖν,  
 / ὀκ ἄμπλέκων ἄνίγματ, ἄλλ ἄπλ λόγ, (Aes. *PB*, 609-610) Pro: “I will reveal to you

<sup>104</sup> Taplin 1977: 265-266.

without any riddles, all that you desire but simply, like to a friend.” Prometheus maintains a level head while Io writhes with pain and agony.

*Narrative dolos or “Deceit”*

Apart from the metrical mess of her speech that separates Io from the bevy, Io must spook an audience since her entrance abruptly ends the chorus’ strophe. It would be an exciting break in the narrative to engage the audience with the entrance of a principle character. This specific entrance is ideal for such a moment given its randomness and Io’s general disposition. In the narrative tradition of telling tragedy through physical action, according to Barbara Goward, the tradition of *dolos* or deceit and cunning used commonly to assist mystery and suspense.<sup>105</sup> The idea couples nicely with the tragic trick of “fear.” Goward explains more fully this use in tragic structure:

The fact that we know how the story ends does not make us any less focused as we watch it unfolding minute by minute in performance. Deceits are essential features of all tragic narratives, whether simple or complex in plot terms. Analysis of *doloi* in the plays enables us to see not only repeated patterns across all three playwrights, but also the characteristic experimental handprints of each individual in his relentless pursuit of new devices to entrap the audience.<sup>106</sup>

Io’s entrance aligns with an Aeschylean “deceit” comparable to Cassandra’s manic/depressive nature during Clytemnestra’s slaying of Agamemnon. By “deceit,” I mean a staging trick that deceives an audience’s trust and understanding of the course of action in *PB*. Though we are not depriving the audience of its trust, their trust in the staging is severely compromised. Her unyoked fury allows her to barge without a proper tragic entrance courtesy of *PB*’s protagonist.

Therefore, Io will enter in one of two places (depending on that performance). The most dramatically savvy entrance would allow Io to barge in through the aisle-way of the *theatron* amongst the spectators. Many scholars point to this as a probable entrance for Io because of its

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<sup>105</sup> Goward 1999: 40.

<sup>106</sup> Goward 1999: 41.



unconventional approach.<sup>107</sup> However, there are two technical setbacks for this approach as a result of the performance space. First, the *orchestra* sits at the ample epicenter for audibility in the Theatre Dionysia. Given Io’s lengthy opening speech, a good majority of what she says will be lost if she enters from an awkward, difficult-to-hear location. Second, there needs to be some sense of confusion and misunderstanding when Prometheus and Io are both trying to identify each other. Prometheus states, “πὺς δὲ οὐ κλύω τὺς οὐ στροδινήτου κόρης, τὺς ἰναχείας (Aes. *PB*, 589-90) / “How do I not hear this girl of Inachus, driven crazy by the gadfly?”<sup>108</sup> To which, Io responds, questioning who it is that has approached her “ἔπε μοι τὸ μογερὸν τίς ἐν; τίς ἴρα μὲν, ἢ τάλαιας, τὴν τάλαιναν ἴδῃ ἴτυμα προσθροεῖς; (Aes, *PB*, 594-95) / “Tell me, wretched one, who are you? Who is this wretched who calls me out by my true name?” Prometheus seems to make out exactly who it is in front of him while Io remains confused. Since Prometheus can still see the majority of the *theatron* from his position onstage, it would be illogical for Io to enter from this location.

Therefore, the more appropriate entrance will come from the *SL parados* close to the upstage corner of the *skene* where Prometheus is bound. Though not as shocking from the perspective of the audience, this entrance has not been used for any other character (save a few members of the chorus early on). Also, this entrance blocks Prometheus from seeing Io’s torment and action. It gives both individuals time to discern who it is they are addressing individually. Io will enter from the *SL parados* and cross the *orchestra* so that she may be SR of Prometheus and not blocking the *skene* door.

### *Dressing and Masking Io Properly*

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<sup>107</sup> Hart, Taplin and Hall 2003: 143-45.

<sup>108</sup> Grene 1991: 85.

Now, there comes the issue of dressing Io properly. As mentioned previously, Io is turning into a cow yet is anthropomorphized due to her human speech and ability to process thought. It will be a challenge to incorporate both human and animal characteristics to her costume and mask. However, for the finished product, her costume will set her apart due to her distinctive attributes. Similar to the other characters, one can look at vase paintings for clues as to the original depictions of these characters in antiquity. One should pay particular attention to adornments on the head and attributes utilized:



*Figure 10 - Black Figure Amphora: 540-530 BC Antikensammlungen*

Unfortunately, a large assortment of the images of Io depicts her solely as a cow. This is troublesome to a character onstage that needs to be played by a human being. Though there needs to be some indication of her bovine status, she is an upright human being that is able to move and talk freely. Therefore, this is one of the more complex characters to dress.



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*Figure 9 - Rome, Candelori Collection, Antikensammlungen 1482, Munich*

This gives a lot of discretion to whomever is directing the production. The easiest way to identify Io will be to emphasize attributes and distinctive features of her mask.<sup>109</sup> So, the proper identification tools will be essential in distinguishing Io and her unique character traits.

In all of the vase paintings, Io has horns. So, equipping a young woman's mask (*kore*) with horns and spots could be one easy indicator for Io. Io is not granted a *gune* or "mature woman's" mask because of her naivety and lustful relationship with Zeus.<sup>110</sup> Also, Io calls herself the "Cow-horned" maiden and entreats Prometheus to gaze upon her and her sufferings.<sup>111</sup> Going beyond this, Io could be dressed in all white to appear more closely like a cow than before. Her hands and feet will be devoid of the traditional *kothornoi* or even *arbule* to exacerbate the nakedness and pain that she has endured.<sup>112</sup> Finally, Io will have a bell. This attribute assists with the onomatopoeic "pangs" of the gadfly stings and separates her as animal instead of just a human. She may also have a tail, depending on the ornateness wanted by the production's *choreogos*.

#### *The Issue of the Gadfly: Physical or Psychological?*

Io has entered and interacted on the stage. We have clothed her properly and assigned a mask. There exists one last element of Io's movement on the stage: the gadfly or the οἰστρος. This pestering insect constantly stings Io and leaves her not only physically injured but also emotionally scarred. Also, this gadfly never leaves her alone and torments her every move. This constant pestering prevents her from doing the simplest of tasks, like eating. This is why she states that she is "famished." Io "is the very embodiment of primeval humanity: beastly in

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<sup>109</sup> Wyles 2011: 241.

<sup>110</sup> Marshall 1999: 191.

<sup>111</sup> White 2001: 122.

<sup>112</sup> Wyles 2011: 240.

appearance, crazed by pain and confusion, and seemingly powerless to shape her lot.”<sup>113</sup> It will be necessary for whomever is playing this wretched soul onstage to have exceedingly exaggerated gesticulations, a strong voice to support Io’s cries of lamentation and the ability to comport himself almost like a live animal. However, the question remains: what to do about the gadfly that stings repeatedly? The representation of an actual gadfly onstage would be next to impossible. Though we could attach something like a prop to a piece of string to place on her head, the impact of such a choice would not be as strong.

Because of these various limitations of stagecraft, the power and duty fall on the shoulders of the actor. The gadfly in question is not so much a physical presence but rather a mental disease. Unlike the physical bindings of Prometheus, Io’s bonds are more figurative, poetic and mentally disturbing. After all, as Prometheus points out, at least she can look forward to the respite of death on account of her mortality: “Io is less figuratively sick, but the exact nature of her illness is hard to pin down because of the ambiguity in the nature of the pursuing gadfly: is her illness wholly physical, or is it mental too?”<sup>114</sup> With evidence coming directly from the text, the actor should identify instances where Io is both at ease and in pain. The most obvious clues come from Io’s exclamations or demarcations of being “yoked.”<sup>115</sup> Overall, the actor must stay fully committed to Io’s pain and feign the physical torture without a physical gadfly overlooking him.

Even so, the pain and frustration portrayed by the actor onstage reflects a number of ailments even greater than those visible to the naked eye. J. M. Mossman identifies sexual repression as a factor in Io’s curse that shows itself in the tangible bites of the gadfly: “The sexual metaphor is combined with special appropriateness, with the metaphor of being yoked in

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<sup>113</sup> White 2001: 115.

<sup>114</sup> Mossman 1996: 64.

<sup>115</sup> Grene 1991: 85.

suffering, and the mention of the ever ambivalent gadfly (is it a real gadfly or not?)”<sup>116</sup> This interpretation aforementioned can prompt a more complete performance from the actor playing Io. Particularly as Io responds to Prometheus’ telling of her backstory and journey towards healing does he need to squirm, writhe about and toss with agony from the mountain of pain inflicted upon him. Despite the numerous pleas of the chorus and choral leaders to calm down, Io does not oblige.

Truthfully, Io’s exit is just about as random, sporadic and hectic as her entrance. After a number of soliloquies by Prometheus, instructing her to beget his savior, Io leaves without a warning. Again, the narrative technique of *dolos* both deceives and mystifies an audience that has just started to warm up to a character so close to redemption. Taplin remarks on the oddity of Io’s departure:

Something of the same effect of shock is achieved at the end of the act as at the beginning. Suddenly without warning at 877 Io cries out in anapests, and with a brief vivid account of her frenzy she is gone. There are no farewells, no dwelling on her coming wanderings which have been so lengthily treated in the preceding speeches. The exclusively verbal play within a play ends as abruptly and as theatrically as it began.<sup>117</sup>

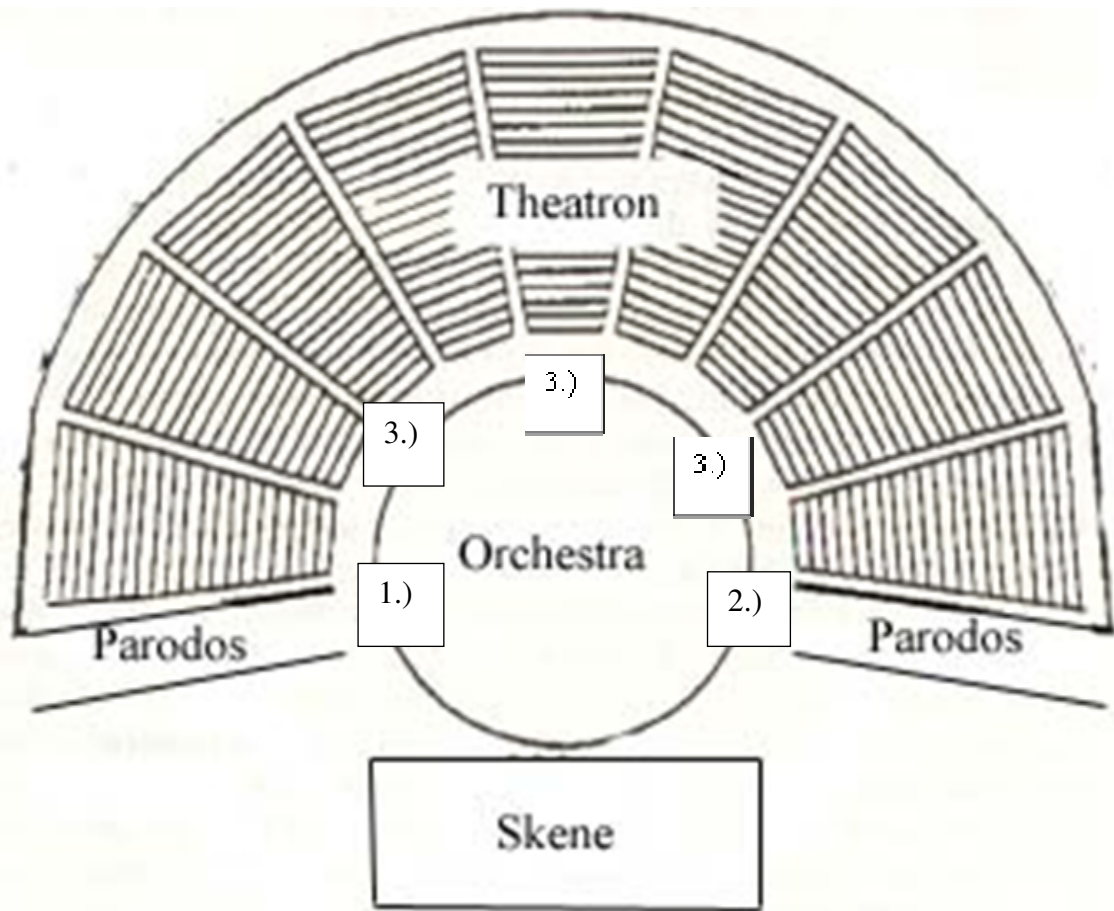
There is something almost wondrously unique and unorthodox about Io’s departure at this moment. The audience has caught its only glimpse of humanity to be seen in *PB*. From this glimpse, spectators truly witness the pain and turmoil of those beneath the cruel tyranny of Zeus. Zeus is the overarching tyrant causing havoc, and Prometheus is the immortal ally who would sacrifice even his holy gifts on account of his “man-loving ways.” The Io episode in *PB* will forever remain a difficult task for any actor who decides to step up to the plate and grasp it. Simultaneously, it is a long and unique passage that has yet to be understood wholly by scholars and directors.

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<sup>116</sup> Mossman 1996: 63.

<sup>117</sup> Taplin 1977: 267.

As Io speaks her final lines, she exits. Io will exit SR, leaving in the opposite direction of Prometheus' permanent position onstage (2). Her entrance is dictated by (1.). The chorus downstage of the action, lining the perimeter of the *orchestra* facing the *theatron* (3), huddles together as they dance, question Prometheus and await for their doomed destruction. This band of players can only speak for so long before Zeus extends his treachery once more. At last, Hermes appears around line 945 and warns Prometheus of his descent into Tartarus that is yet to come.



Parts of a Greek Theater

## CHAPTER 4 – “Hermes’ Arrival and the Descent into Hell”

At this particular moment, Io exits in a fury and almost unexpectedly. The chorus interacts once more with Prometheus in detailing both his and Io’s toils that Prometheus just described in depth. Prometheus signals in the arrival of another character, Hermes, when he states:

ὄλλε εἴσορ γὰρ τόνδε τὸν Διὸς τρόχιν,  
τὸν τοῦ τυράννου τοῦ νέου διάκονον:  
πάντως τι καινὸν  
ἴγγελλε κήλυθεν. (Aes, *PB*, 940-943)

Look, here is the lackey of Zeus,  
This lackey messenger to him,  
This new ruler/king. Of course he comes  
Speedily for us with news.

Surprisingly, this is one of the few entrances clearly dictated by the text – another example of why the tangible elements of stagecraft are so keen to telling the story. The stagecraft, in this instance, enhances Aeschylus’ text already present. Kratos, Bia and Hephaestus enter without the traditional immortal prologue, Oceanus ventures down from the *mechane* unexpectedly and Io bursts in like a raving lunatic and shocks the audience with *dolos*. Now is the moment for Hermes, the messenger of Zeus and the gods overall, to address Prometheus’ complaints and warn him of his doom lest he refrains from mocking Zeus’ will.

Since Hermes enters by means of a textual introduction, it will be more difficult to assess his place of entrance onstage and his cue. Additionally, his point of entering is limited to how Prometheus says, “Look, here is Zeus’ footman.” It would be acceptable for him to enter by means of the *skene* door, since it functions as a passageway between the mortal and immortal realms. Hermes is an immortal character, after all. However, since Prometheus is stationed awkwardly to the upstage-left of the door, it does not make sense for him to identify his coming



on so readily. Hermes could also enter via *mechane* as did Oceanus. Still, the delay between Hermes' descent down and Prometheus seeing Hermes is awkward and does not fit the meaning of his entering lines. Therefore, Hermes will most logically enter from the SR *parados*, giving Prometheus ample time to identify the messenger god and point out his arrival. Though immortal, Hermes could easily have come from such an entrance since Prometheus is bound to an "untrodden cleft."

### *The Proper Costume and Mask for Hermes*

Dressing Hermes may be one of the easiest of all the characters. There exist many interpretations and depictions of him from antiquity with common characteristics shared across the board. To begin, Hermes is often shown with a trademark caduceus – a winged staff with two snakes wrapped around it. Much like Io's horns or Hephaestus' double-headed hammer, this attribute will help spectators distinguish Hermes immediately. Ancient vase paintings, as with the other characters, can help us in decorating this messenger god properly:



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*Figure 12 - 5970, Athens, Agora Museum - P4952*



*Figure 11 - Hermes w/ Maia - Red-figure, belly amphora c. 500 B.C.*





Figure 13 - 171, Munich, Antikensammlungen, Munich, 2439

Similar in many of these depictions (aside from his staff) is a cap placed on top of his head. In figure 12, the cap is rather loose and hanging off of the head. In figures 13 and 14, however, the caps are much larger and fit the head well. Unless it completely interferes with his mask's hair, a rounded cap (created to potentially look like a battle helmet) will be placed upon the head of the actor playing Hermes. Following our mask description, Hermes will wear the *aner* or "mature man" mask.<sup>118</sup> The vases depict one with a full beard and hair. His beard is often portrayed as pointy, potentially showing wisdom. It fits accordingly that he is dark of hair and skin though he still is young in comparison to Zeus or Prometheus. As for his costume, he can wear traditional *kothornoi* along with flowing robes, because he commonly wears them in his vase paintings. After all, he must be swift and unrestricted in movement.

#### *Bitter Feud between Hermes and Prometheus*

Hermes enters and walks up to Prometheus' rock. All the while, the chorus quite literally takes a back seat to the conversation. Instead of moving to their usual perimeter surrounding the *orchestra*, the chorus will instead clump closer to the center. I will explain this reasoning at the

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<sup>135</sup> Marshall 1999: 192.

end of this chapter. Hermes first addresses Prometheus with scornful, condescending words that not only undermine Prometheus' authority as a god but also threaten him with Zeus' tyranny:

σὺ τὸν σοφιστὴν, τὸν πικρὸς ὑπέρικρον,  
τὸν ὑξαμαρτόντ' ἐξ θεοῦς ὑφημέροις  
πορόντα τιμάς, τὸν πυρὸς κλέπτῃν λέγω:  
πατρὸς ὑνωγέ σὺ ὀστίνας κομπεῖς γάμους  
ἀδῶν, πρὸς ὑν ὑκεῖνος ὑκίπτει κράτους.  
καὶ ταῦτα μέντοι μηδ' ὑν ἀνικτηρίως,  
ἄλλ' ἀθῶ καστα φράζει: μηδέ μοι διπλῶς  
ὑδούς, Προμηθεῖ, προσβάλλεις: ὑρὸς δ' ὑτι  
Ζεῦς τοῦς τοιούτοις ὀχῶ μαλθακίζεται. (Aes, *PB*, 944-952)

You subtle-spirit, you bitterly  
Overbitter, you that sinned  
Against the immortals, giving honor to  
The creatures of a day, you thief of fire:  
The Father has commanded you to say what marriage  
of his is this you brag about  
that shall drive him from power – and declare it  
in clear terms and no riddles. You, Prometheus,  
do not cause me a double journey; these  
will prove to you that Zeus is not softhearted.<sup>119</sup>

We hear from Hermes' words not only his personal disgust for Prometheus – “you bitterly overbitter” – but also a threat from Zeus, the progenitor of Prometheus' torturous bonds.

Prometheus replies in a similarly condescending fashion, calling Hermes “pompous,” “young” and clearly a “lackey of the Gods.”<sup>120</sup>

This immediate disgust and war of words comes as a surprise considering Prometheus' earlier words. Prometheus tells the chorus at their first meeting that he hopes to unite in kinship and friendship with the thunder god after Prometheus mollifies Zeus' anger. In a similar fashion, Prometheus states that he and his mother were some of the first individuals to support Zeus' side in the battle for the throne between Kronos and his son. This alternative understanding of

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<sup>119</sup> Grene 1991: 101. Due to the difficulty of this passage, I use Grene's translation for its clarity and specific vocabulary.

<sup>120</sup> Grene 1991: 101-102. See #

Prometheus' relationship with Zeus follows a long strain of theological studies surrounding Zeus' purpose and reasoning in the plays of Aeschylus:

Thus Aeschylus' two views of Zeus are a poetic recognition of opposed forces in the world itself. Aeschylus is telling us symbolically that the wild, savage forces of nature can be made to give way to the power of civilization and that man, Prometheus' war, the proud bearer of Prometheus' gifts, will be the agent for effecting that change [...] this emphasis on Zeus is found in all the plays of Aeschylus.<sup>121</sup>

Though Zeus is held as king of kings, god of gods and commander of the universe, his impact on the many characters around him is seen in both a positive and negative light. This reinforces the bickering nature of Hermes and Prometheus' exchange and allows for each actor to shout and argue as much as they want in these final moments of the tragedy. Hermes should be pompous and aloof as Prometheus describes him while Prometheus can retain a sense of authority and ego as Hermes describes him. While chorus members attempt to interject, warning Prometheus of the consequences of his actions, Prometheus ignores them. This battle of wits ultimately leads up to one of the most exciting and controversial pieces of stagecraft in Athenian history, Prometheus' descent into hell.<sup>122</sup> The Oceanid chorus accompanies Prometheus to Tartarus.<sup>123</sup>

*The Difficulties of Hell – How do Prometheus and the Chorus get there?*

Overall, it is difficult to ascertain what would exactly happen as Prometheus and the chorus "descend" into hell. It is widely assumed that he along with the chorus is swallowed down, yet the text does not indicate that outright. However, Prometheus continues to pester and taunt Hermes to the point where his words could bring about a cataclysmic conclusion:

πρὸς ταῦτ' ἄπ' ἄμο' ἰπτέσθω μὲν  
πρὸς ἄμφίκης βόστρυχος, ἀθροῖ δ'

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<sup>121</sup> Grube 1970: 45-46.

<sup>122</sup> Climactic and controversial all in the same moment, Prometheus' descent in hell is difficult to encapsulate fully for a number of reasons. Though this section could be tried and debated back and forth, my following means of sending Prometheus to hell is based on three scholars' interpretations plus the logistical setbacks of showcasing such a dynamic moment onstage.

<sup>123</sup> "Tartarus" and "Hell" mean the same thing. Tartarus has a stronger mythological connotation and is described as such by Prometheus in *PB*.

ἄρεθιζέσθω βροντὰ σφακέλ' τ'  
 ἄγρίων ἄνέμων: χθόνα δ' ἄκ' πυθμένων  
 ἀταρσὶ ἄζυγαις πνεύμα κ'ραδαῖνοι,  
 κ'μα δ' ἄπόντου τραχεῖ' ἄοθί'  
 συγχώσειεν τ'ν ὄρανίων  
 1050 ἄστρων διόδους: εἰς τε κελαιν'ν  
 Τάρταρον ἄρδην ἄίψει δέμας  
 τοῦμ'ν ἄνάγκης στερραρσὶ δίναις:  
 πάντως ἄμέ γ' ὄ θανάτῳσει. (Aes, *PB*, 1043-1053)

May the curl of lightening be hurled down  
 Onto my skull and may the sky be mixed up  
 With crashing thunder and the blustering winds.  
 May the hurricane cause the earth to quake from  
 Its foundation, and may the sea's coursing waves  
 Confuse the moving courses  
 Of the celestial stars.  
 And may he push me up and hurl be down  
 Into obscure Tartarus with the vicious storms of constraint/necessity.  
 Whatever he does, he cannot kill me.

All of these defiant taunts describe the eminent fate of Prometheus. During this speech, the chorus interjects intermittently, picking up their pace and hitting each vocal mark with staccato as opposed to legato marks.<sup>124</sup> Instead of installing some unlikely form of stagecraft (which even by modern standards is impossible to bring to fruition), some experts suggest that the language was enough to convince people of an oncoming disaster. After all, Prometheus uses very strong vocabulary in this soliloquy that could (based on vocal performance alone) feign impending doom. Additionally, the climactic build of this section leads to a very intense conclusion. S. Ireland states that the multiple qualities rest on the inherent plot and not so much on the dramatic features of its conclusion: “*Prometheus* ended with the disappearance, whether in fact or merely on the imagination of the audience [...] (it) ends with an emphatic visual statement of a climax reached though not its overarching message.”<sup>125</sup> He argues for a more aural representation of the

<sup>124</sup> “Staccato” is an Italian musical term demarcating quick, rapid notes as opposed to fluid and connected “legato” passages. This is another instance of modern and antiquated terms colliding for the same production.

<sup>125</sup> Ireland 1973: 167-168.

final words that end the play in a satisfactory manner. Taplin agrees with Ireland's ideas, but focuses more on the limitations of Aeschylean theatrical environment for his evidence: "Even if it (proper technical stagecraft) was available it is very doubtful whether it can have been large enough to carry Prometheus and his rock and the chorus. It would be scarcely any more practicable that Prometheus, his rock and the chorus somehow 'sank' out of sight."<sup>126</sup> There are many limitations as to the practicality and probability of Prometheus and the chorus physically dropping into a proverbial hell. The technical prowess needed would more than likely have not been available for the time. Taplin also reminds us that, "I have contended throughout that the traditional view of Aeschylus as a showman of huge mechanical stage effects is mistaken."<sup>127</sup> It is necessary to remember that Taplin also does not believe that *PB* was written by Aeschylus in the first place. Despite the tricky nature of this final scene in *PB*, there is hope for a compromise between use of some stagecraft and some heightened diction to achieve this feat.

Webster implies that, "In the *Prometheus Vincetus* the combination of rock and *ekkyklema* would make it possible for Prometheus to be withdrawn behind the curtain door at the end of the play, and possible the chorus would follow him out that way."<sup>128</sup> This could very well be achieved. Prometheus needs to be freed at the end of the play, after all, for, "if he was freed in the *Prometheus Unbound*, the actor must have been visible through the whole of both plays and cannot, as has been suggested, have played the part from behind a dummy."<sup>129</sup> What would have to happen is that the other characters would serve as distractions during their long monologues. During this time, Prometheus could begin the process of loosening himself from his bonds. Since

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<sup>126</sup> Taplin 1977: 273-274.

<sup>127</sup> Taplin 1977: 275.

<sup>128</sup> Webster 1970: 18.

<sup>129</sup> Webster 1970: 19.

his hands have only been tightened somewhat strictly and his legs given plenty of room to stretch,<sup>130</sup> he should have free reign to loosen himself quickly enough from his bonds.

I recognize that this strategy relies a lot on the nuance and subtlety of the actor. Yet, the director and *choreogos* are bound to have some trust placed in an actor who speaks almost non-stop for close to an hour. The actor will have had his bonds loosened by the time Hermes comes onstage to scrutinize Prometheus. Once that happens, Prometheus will be freed (enough) to release himself at the right moment. This moment will occur following his last line at 1093. During his final soliloquy, the chorus will dance in a circular fury around Prometheus' rock SL of the *skene* door. As Prometheus concludes his speech, the entire chorus will scream and their decoy dance will allow Prometheus to dramatically "fall" from his rock and escape surreptitiously through the door. This action requires verbal screams, shouts of rage and lamentations primarily from the part of the chorus to distract spectators from seeing Prometheus' exit. Also, backstage voices from offstage actors can add volume to the mass.

In doing so, Prometheus escapes on a journey to "hell." The chorus follows suit and exits the *skene* door in the same fashion. Instead of purposefully avoiding some act of movement and stagecraft for this moment, the production fuses the two scholarly perspectives to achieve a harmonious hybrid. Spectators are granted *some* form of elaborate or impressive stagecraft to achieve this final feat while Aeschylus' words are given the fervor and punch they deserve to conclude a beautiful and dramatic conclusion to his tragedy. *Prometheus Bound* and all its players take a final bow.

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<sup>130</sup> Refer to the original binding process in Ch. 2 for questions regarding the ability for Prometheus to loosen himself more easily. He cannot be bound too tightly at the risk of causing true physical discomfort to the actor playing Prometheus onstage.

## CONCLUSION – “From Antiquity to Modernity”

The difficulties of staging a production of *PB* have been analyzed and addressed accordingly. We have analyzed the various and intricate parts that make up a Greek tragedy. However, it is difficult to discern exactly what can be learned from a tragedy that cannot possibly be duplicated under the same circumstances. The advances of modern theatre have hindered any hopes of physically recreating tragedy as it would have been originally presented. The luxuries of artificial lighting, vocal amplification and the cadences of modern music and vocal intonations prevent directors from accurately recreating and restaging Greek tragedy as a means to appreciate how far live theatre has come. However, the momentum of theatre development is comparable to the narrative of *PB*: linear and progressive.

The performance and spectacle aspects of theatre evolve and become what modern audiences are accustomed to seeing today. The physical specifics may not be readily available or easy to picture for today’s directors. Yet, Helene Foley points out that, “Set in an imaginary past that offers few specifics in the way of setting or physical description, it is also amenable to both changes of venue and to multi-racial casting.”<sup>131</sup> Physical and emotional aspects of Greek tragedy have influenced the modern setting. Greek tragedy has impacted the modern theatre in many ways. In particular, there is the development of character, its response to a highly political environment and an opportunity for spectators to cathartically relieve themselves. All of these aspects have in some way shaped the theatre today.

For this conclusion, I will show how Attic theatre has influenced different aspects and facets of modern theatre. Certain scholars and lovers of theatre have also recognized the influence of antiquity on modernity. In doing so, I will demonstrate the influence of Attic tragedy – in some cases with specific reference to *PB* – and how connoisseurs of theatre can

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<sup>131</sup> Foley 1999: 3.

appreciate and reflect on the building blocks to the modern performance space: Attic tragedy. I will first cite scholars John Davidson and O.G. Brockett to establish context for tragedy's importance. Finally, I will cite Foley's international explorations on tragedy's impact as well as a review of a Canadian production of *PB* to show the lasting effect. Davidson reflects on expert N. G. L. Hammond's argument for a staged production of *Prometheus Vincetus* as he prefers to address the title.<sup>132</sup> In 1972 (again in 1988), Hammond reverted back to the original Aeschylean text for clues as to the difficulties in staging *PB*. He pinpoints issues with regards to the permanent position of Prometheus' rock, the entrance of the Oceanid chorus and final descent of the principle characters into Tartarus – issues already discussed in this thesis. However, Davidson's main conclusion is not just another speculative account of tragic reconstruction. He says that:

My reconstruction [...] does no violence to the text, and it demands no dramaturgical compromises or absurdities. At the same time, it has interesting implications for other plays, the wide-ranging nature of which fortunately includes fruitful consideration right here.<sup>133</sup>

Davidson's personal staging precedes a number of attempts made by scholars to tackle the difficulties within *PB*, but this is not his central trajectory. Davidson identifies the importance of continued evaluation not just of *PB* but also of other Attic tragedies so as to continue exploration of this theatre today.

Brockett adds to these ideas, stating that a closer "adherence" to the practices and stylizations of 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens theatre will better highlight the emotional qualities and value from a Greek tragedy. Brockett argues for, "as close an adherence as possible to fifth-century production methods. This method will make it possible for Greek tragedy to realize its full potential for lifting contemporary audiences out of their materialistic outlook into a more

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<sup>132</sup> Davidson 1994: 33.

<sup>133</sup> Davidson 1994: 38-39.



spiritual one.”<sup>134</sup> Brockett continues this idea, speaking on the limitations and misconceptions of modern artistic directors about the confines of Greek tragedy. He believes that this does not mean retracting textual sections. Pieces of equipment can fuse ancient and modern theatre customs to create a cohesive and accurate production. All the while, spectators can more fully enjoy and appreciate a production that both requires more effort to produce<sup>135</sup> and results in a more immersive experience.

These statements remarking on the limitations and importance of Attic tragedy have established a context for how theatre in antiquity resonates in today’s day and age. Now we shall finish the discussion with a look at adaptation of Greek tragedy today and how *PB*’s intricate stagecraft has morphed overtime. Foley cleverly blends the varying degrees of stagecraft utilized around the world with the fact that Greek tragedy has left a mark on Broadway and West End theatre:

The use of mask, dance, music, ritual and poetry in Eastern and other world theatre traditions not only overlaps with that of Greek tragedy, but offers an opportunity to bring to life those aspects of ancient drama that are alien to the tradition of Western nineteenth-century realism. *Thus, although world theater has generally had a pervasive influence on contemporary avant-garde theater in the West, it develops a special resonance in the case of Greek tragedy.*<sup>136</sup>

Foley’s evidence progresses to say that modern theatrical productions are looking increasingly more to the original Greek text for inspiration and adaptation. Greek tragedy, more than others, resonates the most strongly with regards to modern theatrical productions. Oftentimes, contemporary actresses favor Greek tragedy because of its complex and well-developed female characters. Japanese directors are reinterpreting tragedies like *Clytemnestra* and *Medea* in both Japanese and English. In addition, the Asian Kabuki theatre blends traditional folklore and myth

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<sup>134</sup> Brockett 1961: 318.

<sup>135</sup> Brockett 1961: 322.

<sup>136</sup> Foley 1999: 2-3.

of Asian culture with the traditional folklore and myth of Ancient Greece. Other African traditions fusing gospel and spiritual music have redefined the universal messages of humanity, loss and desperation that have excited and entranced theatregoers for centuries.<sup>137</sup>

Outside of these general observations regarding Greek tragedy on an international scale, Foley highlights that *PB* is one of the most often translated and performed Greek tragedy in China – perhaps due to the heroic resistance of its divine hero to a tyrannical regime.<sup>138</sup> This fact goes against Aristotelean and normative classical distaste for *PB* as a Greek tragedy. As I have mentioned previously, cultures outside of the classical mindset have come to appreciate *PB* without the confines of the *Poetics*. This appreciation usually comes from countries, like China, who find the humanity appealing, though the play is often ignored by classicists.

Still, a complete recreation of *PB* could highlight the importance and need of Greek tragedy the most. According to the *Didaskalia, The Journal for Ancient Performance*, there was a large assortment of Greek tragedies presented in succession at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario.<sup>139</sup> Kevin Whetter, a fellow colleague and aficionado of theatre, meticulously reviewed the Classics Drama Group's presentation of *PB*. He paid particular attention (luckily to our benefit) to the adaptations and stagecraft reconstructions used by the troupe in order to achieve the magnanimous effects inherent in the poetry. Whetter even references the mythology of Prometheus in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the performance. Whetter mentions the use of dim lighting and candles to achieve an eerie ambiance when he says, "Hence the third great effect of the candles is that they serve as a physical reminder of Prometheus' gift to mankind. That we wait almost to the point of feeling

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<sup>137</sup> Foley 1999: 8-9.

<sup>138</sup> Foley 1999: 4.

<sup>139</sup> Whetter 1996: 1.

uncomfortable about the relative lack of light helps the audience truly to appreciate that gift.”<sup>140</sup> By referencing the original mythology surrounding Prometheus and meshing those facts with a modern twist, Whetter provides readers with a more lucid picture of how the production succeeded.

The rest of the review refers to the frenzied panic of the other actors around the immobile Prometheus, character descriptions and the use of a much smaller chorus. It is amazing to witness a colleague so engaged with material that is well over 2000 years prior who likewise finds this Aeschylean tragedy on par with those more acclaimed and produced throughout history. He does this in comparing this production of *PB* with the troupe’s production of Euripides’ *Medea*: “Last year’s production of *Medea* ended on a note of high drama with the powerful confrontation between Jason and Medea. This year’s Prometheus finished with a similarly effective confrontation, a defiant Prometheus against the lackey of Zeus.”<sup>141</sup> Whetter goes on to say that this recreation perfectly mirrors the political situation in the Canadian Supreme Court. The depictions of lackeys, tyrants and dictators resembled the tumultuous overturning of political officials and served as a nice reminder of those willing to stand in opposition to governmental oppressions.

This statement and the various other recreations of tragedy with reference to their inventive use of stagecraft and modern adaptation hit at the heart of this thesis. Though the text may not change, the context and performance space does. Aeschylus’ *PB* and its inherent messages have not changed since its inception over 2000 years prior. Though scholars may debate its authorship and authenticity, the focus on the technical and stagecraft elements of a tragedy serve to showcase many interesting points. An original production, as we have put forth

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<sup>140</sup> Whetter 1996: 2.

<sup>141</sup> Whetter 1996: 3.

in this thesis, would have used minimal stagecraft in comparison to today's standards. That stagecraft and those idiosyncrasies of performance captured the feel of Greek performance and culture. Yet, as time progressed, different cultures utilized different strategies in order to tell the same story. The Kabuki tradition molded *PB* from an inherently Athenian perspective into Asian culture and the African tradition infused gospel and spiritual music

If we can understand anything, it is that stagecraft is as integral and essential to a text as are the words and meter. As Taplin puts it, "if we are to pay due respect to the dramatist's own original realization of his work, then we cannot neglect the actualities of his theatre, its layout, its facilities and its physical entities."<sup>142</sup> Though it may vary and change from production to production, stagecraft remains a crucial part to giving Prometheus and the other principle characters their voice and establishing the context in which the play is produced. Theatre from both an ancient and modern perspective both informs and entertains. Not to discredit Aristotle's viewpoints, but tragedy exists as a fluid entity that cannot be restricted by just the words on the scroll. We need stagecraft in order to visualize and breathe new light into humanity's oldest method for entertainment, live performance. *PB* stands as a tragedy unlike any other. Its uniqueness, untraditional linear narrative and didactic dialogue have endured for ages. Like the other Attic tragedies, it requires something else to make it a complete package: stagecraft.

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<sup>142</sup> Taplin 1978: 7.

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