

ARCTOS

ACTA PHILOLOGICA FENNICA

VOL. XXVII

HELSINKI 1993 HELSINGFORS

INDEX

MAARIT KAIMIO	Henrik Zilliacus in memoriam	7
CHRISTER BRUUN	"Berichtigungsliste" to G. Forni's Posthumous New List of the Provenances of Roman Legionaries	11
MAARIT KAIMIO	The Protagonist in Greek Tragedy	19
IIRO KAJANTO	Analysis of a Verse <i>parentatio</i> : Johannes Ihre's Funeral Oration in Memory of Torsten Rudeen	35
WOLFGANG KUHOFF	Die Beziehungen des Römischen Reiches zum Volksstamm der Baquaten in Mauretanien	55
BENGT LÖFSTEDT	Weitere Notizen zu Justus Lipsius' Briefen	73
LEENA PIETILÄ-CASTRÉN	Incisioni e graffiti su ceramica a vernice nera di Ficana, settore 6b	79
OLLI SALOMIES	On the Interpretation of Epigraphical Filiations of the Type <i>L. f. f.</i>	95
JUHA SIHVOLA	Why Does Contemplation Not Fit Well into Aristotle's εὐδαιμονία?	103
HEIKKI SOLIN	Analecta epigraphica CL – CLIV	123
ASKO TIMONEN	Emperor's " <i>ars recusandi</i> " in Biographical Narrative	133
G. MICHAEL WOLOCH	Ammianus, Alpine Passes and Maps	149
	<i>De novis libris iudicia</i>	155
	<i>Index librorum in hoc volumine recensorum</i>	217
	<i>Libri nobis missi</i>	221

THE PROTAGONIST IN GREEK TRAGEDY*

MAARIT KAIMIO

About the year 533 B.C., Thespis was victorious in the first tragic contest at the Great Dionysia in Athens.¹ He not only wrote the drama and taught the chorus, but he also acted in all the roles of his plays. A good hundred years later, first prizes in special contests for actors were won by Nikostratos, famous for his messenger's speeches,² or by Kallippides, renowned and also criticized for his new style of acting,³ or by Theodoros, admired for his expressive voice.⁴ One could well say that these actors were experts in their profession. During these hundred years, the foundations of European theatrical art were laid – not only were the great classical tragedies created, but the art of the individual actor was formed as well. The relation between the playwright and the actor during this time and the changes in this interaction are full of problems, and because of the scarcity and arbitrary nature of our sources, they are not easy to solve, and the answers remain very hypothetical.

In this paper I shall discuss some problems around the so-called First Actor, πρωταγωνιστής. I use the word "protagonist" as a *terminus technicus*, meaning not the "hero" of the play, but the actor whose name was

* A version of this paper was read in February 1992 in the conference "Greek Drama ii" in the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, and in the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. Some of the arguments are presented in Swedish in my paper "Diktaren och skådespelaren i den klassiska grekiska tragedin" in the conference "Antikens teater och dess fortlevnad", Platon-Sällskapets symposium 7-10 juni 1991 i Åbo, published Åbo 1992, pp. 27-43.

¹ Marm.Par. ep. 43. See the prosopography in P. Ghiron-Bistagne, *Recherches sur les acteurs dans la Grèce antique*, Paris 1976, 330.

² No. 368 in O'Connor's *Prosopographia histrionum Graecorum*, J.B. O'Connor, *Chapters in the History of Actors and Acting in Ancient Greece*, Chicago 1908, cf. Ghiron-Bistagne 347, H.J. Mette, *Urkunden dramatischer Aufführungen in Griechenland*, Berlin/New York 1977, 207.

³ O'Connor no. 274, Ghiron-Bistagne 334, Mette 207.

⁴ O'Connor no. 230, Ghiron-Bistagne 329, Mette 206.

mentioned in the *didaskalia*.⁵ I shall look at the protagonist mainly from the point of view of the playwright and the audience. Did the playwright know who the actor was going to be who was to play the roles of the protagonist in his plays, and if he did, how did it affect the composition of his drama? Did the establishment of a special contest for actors bring some changes into the structure of drama? How did the audience know which of the actors was the protagonist? Which roles were played by the protagonist?

Outwardly, the decisive step in the development of the interrelation of the poet and the actor was the establishment of the contest for actors, probably in the Dionysia of the year 449 or 447 and in the Lenaia around 440-430.⁶ I shall first briefly discuss the situation before this time.

According to tradition, the poet in early Greek drama acted in his own plays. Thespis, for example, was the only actor in his dramas,⁷ as was Aeschylus and even Sophocles in the early days of his career.⁸ Tradition also says that Aeschylus introduced the second actor and Sophocles (although some say it was Aeschylus) the third.⁹ In a recent article Bernard Gredley has discussed the nature of this invention, suggesting a more evolutionary progress, where *personae mutae*, performers who had roles in the play but did not take speaking parts, could have been an intermediate

⁵ The words *πρωταγωνιστής*, *δευτεραγωνιστής*, *τριταγωνιστής* never appear in inscriptions, and apart from *τριταγωνιστής*, which is used several times by Demosthenes referring to the acting career of Aischines, they appear in fourth-century literature in the metaphorical sense of "leader" and "supporter". It is, however, probable that they were used to refer to theatre in the fifth century as soon as the practice of using more than one actor in a play was established. The word for an actor in general was *ὑποκριτής*. This word is used in the inscriptions of the winner of the actors' contest, as the verb *ὑποκρίνομαι* is used of the leading actor of a play. For the terminology, see A.W. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, 2nd edn, revised by John Gould and D.M. Lewis, Oxford 1968 (=DFA), 126-135, Ghiron-Bistagne 115-134.

⁶ For the Dionysia, we have inscriptional evidence for the year 447, when Herakleides won the contest for actors (IG ii/iii² 2318 frg. b2 = E.M. 13368 = Agora i 4927 = Mette i col. 6,3). This may be the first time the contest was held, as Herakleides appears as the first name in the list of the victorious tragic actors (IG ii/iii² 2325 = Mette v A 2 col. 1,2). It is possible that the contest was established somewhat earlier, the same Herakleides being victorious, and 449 has previously generally been held as the probable year on the basis of the calculation of lines made by G. Kaibel in A. Wilhelm, *Urkunden dramatischer Aufführungen in Athen*, Wien 1906, 171 (see K. Schneider, RE Suppl. 8 (1956) 223-4, O'Connor 46, Ghiron-Bistagne 20), but see Mette 3. For the Lenaia, see Mette p. xv, Schneider 225.

⁷ Plut. Solon 29,6.

⁸ Vita Soph. 4,5; Aristot. Rhet. 1403b23ff.

⁹ Vita Soph. 4; Aristot. Poet. 1449a15ff. Vita Aesch. 15 attributes the introduction of the third actor to Aeschylus, but mentions that Dikaiarchos of Messene attributed this to Sophocles.

stage.¹⁰

We can surmise that Aeschylus was the leading actor, for instance in the performance of his tragedy *Persians* in 472. He played the part of the widow Queen Atossa, and at the end of the play the defeated King Xerxes. The other actor took the parts of King Dareios and the Messenger. We can see that already at this stage the contribution of the second actor was very important. Both Dareios and the Messenger have demanding roles: they are long, contain fine epic narrative, and demand varied characterization: the Messenger is strongly involved emotionally in the defeat he describes, and Dareios is an impressive regent. The complementary actor in this early drama is equal in importance to the protagonist.

We know some of the artists used by Aeschylus in his performances by name: Telestes,¹¹ Kleandros,¹² Mynniskos¹³ and Euaion.¹⁴ It seems to

¹⁰ B. Gredley, *Greek Tragedy and the 'Discovery' of the Actor*, *Themes in Drama* vol. 6 (1984) 6, 9.

¹¹ Telestes is mentioned by Athenaeus (1,21f) as ὀρχηστοδιδάσκαλος (with the additional name variant Telesis) and as Αἰσχύλου ὀρχηστής in 1,22a. He is not included in O'Connor's prosopography, but Ghiron-Bistagne mentions him as a possible tragic actor in her list (358), although on p. 140 she prefers to interpret the passage as reference to the role of the chorus-leader. I shall return to the activity of Telestes on another occasion.

¹² This Kleandros (O'Connor no. 292), mentioned in *Vita Aesch.* 15, is not securely attested in inscriptions. It is too rash to read his name (as O'Connor in connection with no. 293 and Ghiron-Bistagne 337 suggest) in IG ii/iii² 2325 p 1 = *Mette v A 2 col. 1,10*, where only the final sigma and the number (1) of the victories won are visible. The actor Kleandros who was victorious at the Dionysia in 387 (O'Connor no.293, Kleandros ii in Ghiron-Bistagne 337 and *Mette* 207) was probably his son or grandson. Because Kleandros Senior played for Aeschylus in his early tragedies, it is possible that he was no longer active in the middle of the century, when the contest for the actors was established and with it the victor lists of actors began.

¹³ Mynniskos (O'Connor no. 351, Ghiron-Bistagne 344, *Mette* 207) is found as the victor at the Dionysia in 422, and since Aeschylus took him as his partner at a later period of his life (he died in 456), it is possible that this Mynniskos could be the same man at a very advanced age. Aristotle tells us that Mynniskos was an actor of the old school who criticized Kallippides for his new style in acting (*Poet.* 1461b). Kallippides won a victory at the Lenaia in 418, that is around the same time as Mynniskos' victory, but probably as a much younger man. Mynniskos appears as the third name in the victorious actors' list at the Dionysia (IG ii/iii² 2325 p 1 = *Mette v A 2 col. 1,4*), and this points to his having won his first victory at an early stage of the contest (probably earlier than his victory of 422). The restoration of the name of Mynniskos in IG ii/iii² r-w 1 = *Mette v D 2 col. 1,6* is uncertain. Only the letters]ος and the number of victories (3) are visible. Considering that he won at the Dionysia in 422, it is not impossible that he could have won thrice at the Lenaia in the twenties (the contest began ca. 430, and he would be the fifth victor mentioned in the list), but there is ground for the doubts expressed by O'Connor p. 118.

¹⁴ Ghiron-Bistagne 324f., not listed by O'Connor. Ghiron-Bistagne tentatively restores Euaion's name in the lacuna of line 5 of the list of Lenaian tragic victors (IG ii/iii² 2325 r-w = *Mette v D 2 col. 1,5*), but although there seems to be space for the six letters of the

have been usual during the first half of the fifth century that certain actors regularly played for a certain poet. This was not, however, always so, as is shown by the career of Euaion, Aeschylus' son. We have no mention of him in the victory lists; Suda mentions him along with his brother Euphorion as τραγικοί, which can mean both tragic playwright and actor. But there is a series of vases from the middle of the fifth century, where his name is inscribed over a figure in a tragic scene. Thus we can surmise that he played the role of Aktaion in Aeschylus' *Toksotides*.¹⁵ We cannot know for sure whether this was during his father's lifetime or in a revival soon after his death, but in any case it is likely that he learnt his trade in his father's productions. We find him, however, at about the same time portrayed as Perseus in Sophocles' *Andromeda*¹⁶ and as Argiope, mother of Thamyras, in Sophocles' *Thamyras*,¹⁷ where the poet himself played the part of the blinded singer. As we know from the Vita that Sophocles appeared as an actor only in his early plays (his productions began in 468) and that he was portrayed, probably by Polygnotos, in his role of Thamyras in the Stoa Poikile,¹⁸ which was completed around 460, we can conclude that *Thamyras* was performed in that decade, when Aeschylus, too, was still alive and working.¹⁹

In the middle of the fifth century, several progressive steps were made in the art of drama. Firstly, three actors were now regularly used. Secondly, the poets themselves ceased to act. Thirdly, the special contest for protagonists was established at the Dionysia.²⁰ From the fact that the victorious protagonist could appear in the plays of the poet who did not win – this happened for instance at the Lenaia in the year 418²¹ – it becomes clear that the tragedies, or perhaps we should say the productions as a whole, and the individual performances of the actors really were estimated separately. We do not know whether the close relationship between the poet and the protagonist continued in this period so that the poet still knew that he could have his favourite actor as his protagonist. There is a tradition

name, would there be space for the number of victories?

¹⁵ A.D. Trendall - T.B.L. Webster, *Illustrations of Greek Drama*, London 1971, no. iii 1,28.

¹⁶ Trendall - Webster iii 2,1.

¹⁷ Trendall - Webster iii 2,9.

¹⁸ Vita Soph. 4, 5.

¹⁹ See Trendall - Webster 4.

²⁰ For the date, see n. 6.

²¹ IG ii/iii² 2319 col. 2 + Agora i 7515 = Mette iii D 1 col. 1, 13-19.

recorded in Hesychios, Suda and Photios that the poets were granted their protagonists by lot, and the victorious protagonist had the right to take part the following year without election. Thus, the state – that is, apparently the archon responsible for the festival – elected three protagonists from available candidates, and these three actors were then allocated by lot to the three poets.²² There are many difficulties inherent in this idea. The most common interpretation seems to be that the archon decided by lot which protagonist should fall to which poet. If it was so, the question remains whether the poets received one protagonist for all their dramas or whether the protagonists were allotted to one play by each author. The former possibility seems to be more likely; if every poet had the opportunity to use all three protagonists, there was not much point in casting lots.²³ But it is also possible that the lot merely decided the order in which the poets could choose their actor, in accordance with the method used in the choice of the poets and the flute-players for the dithyrambs, where the choregoi drew lots as to the order in which they could choose.²⁴

The time when this procedure was adopted is also uncertain. Many believe that it coincided with the establishment of the contest for actors itself,²⁵ but Niall Slater has recently argued that it would have been too sophisticated a method to have been in use from the beginning of the contest.²⁶ It would be interesting to know which was the system used in the second half of the fifth century, because if the poets could choose their protagonists, they could also accommodate the roles to the special abilities of the actors. The Life of Sophocles mentions that Istros said that he wrote his dramas to suit their (presumably the actors') characters.²⁷ Mary

²² See DFA 93f.; Hesych. s.v. νεμήσεις ὑποκριτῶν.

²³ This was the practice later; at the Dionysia it is attested in 341 (see below p. 00). The question is, however, whether this later phase has anything to do with the original practice of casting lots.

²⁴ See DFA 75f.; cf. F. Jouan, *Réflexions sur le rôle du protagoniste tragique*, in *Théâtre et spectacles dans l'antiquité. Travaux du centre de recherche sur le Proche-Orient et la Grèce antiques* 7, Leiden 1983, 75.

²⁵ According to Niall W. Slater, the source of the notion that allotment was introduced at the same time as contests for actors seems to be A.E. Haigh, *The Attic Theatre*, 2nd ed. Oxford 1898, 80 (Niall W. Slater, *The Idea of the Actor*, in *Nothing to Do with Dionysus? Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, ed. by J.J. Winkler and F.I. Zeitlin, Princeton 1990, 389 n. 11). In DFA 93 also a later date is held possible. H.J. Mette, on the other hand, reconstructs the Didaskalia-list (Mette iii A 1) so that as early as in the year of *Persians* (472) every drama has its own protagonist, according to the model firmly attested for the first time in the year 341.

²⁶ Slater (see n. 25) 391.

²⁷ Vita Soph. 6: καὶ πρὸς τὰς φύσεις αὐτῶν γράψαι τὰ δράματα. A.S. Owen (*The Date*

Lefkowitz finds this impossible on the basis of the practice of drawing lots discussed above, and thinks that the source of this remark is the frequent occurrences in comedy where tragic poets are represented in the costume of their actors.²⁸ But as Niall Slater has pointed out, the distribution of the protagonists by lot would not presumably have made such adaptation impossible. The poets could hardly have finished their plays by the time the allotment was made in the beginning of the Athenian year, that is, eight months before the performance. The poet could at least make many changes in his manuscript after he knew for sure who would play the protagonist.²⁹

We do know from the inscription,³⁰ however, that at the Dionysia of 341 each of the three protagonists played in one tragedy of each of the three poets. This system was surely adopted in order to prevent any of the poets from gaining undue advantage from the skills of a star actor. It is a sign of a great appreciation of the actors' talent and is therefore unlikely to have been in use at a very early period. We know also that at the Lenaia of the year 363 every poet still had his own protagonist, the same actor in both of his dramas.³¹ It is possible that the system was changed earlier at the Dionysia than at the Lenaia, but it is not probable that the change occurred much earlier. I should suggest that the system was probably not changed earlier than the three hundred and fifties.

The precedence of the protagonist over his two associates in the group of three actors seems from our present-day perspective almost immoderate. Only the protagonist is proclaimed as the winner in the victory lists. The names of the other two are never mentioned in the inscriptions. Yet the second actor had even in the earliest extant dramas large and important roles, as we have seen.³² The glory of the victorious protagonist surely reflected upon his fellow actors, and he may have shared his money with them. Of course, every actor would wish one day to become the protagonist,

of the *Electra* of Sophocles, in *Greek Poetry and Life*, Oxford 1936, 148ff.) made some suggestions concerning how this could be seen in Sophocles' dramas, for instance that he wrote large lyric parts for the protagonist of *Ajax* and *Antigone* because of the actor's good singing capabilities, but omitted them from *Trachiniai* and *King Oedipus*, because he then had another protagonist. This is possible, but there may be other reasons for writing fewer lyrics for the actors in the two last-mentioned plays.

²⁸ Mary R. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets*, London 1981, 79.

²⁹ Slater 388f.

³⁰ IG ii/iii² 2320 = Mette iii A 2 col. 2, 1ff.

³¹ IG ii/iii² 2319 = Mette iii D 1 col. 6, 11ff.

³² B. Gredley (see n. 10) suggests that the earlier use of mute role players along with the performance of the actor-poet could be seen as a factor explaining the recognition and respect accorded later to the first actor at the expense of his fellow performers (9).

and if they were talented enough, this was evidently quite possible. Naturally, the novice actors had to start – perhaps after having assisted first as mute performers – by playing the roles of the third actor, but when in a certain festival someone made a very good showing as the second actor, it can be assumed that it was quite possible that the next archon would remember him and choose him to perform as the protagonist next time.

Let us think about the contest for the protagonists from the point of view of the audience for a moment and ask a simple question: how did they know who was the protagonist, the actor whose performance should interest them more than that of the others? They could not see an actor's face because of the mask, and the costume could disguise the differences in height and build. Nor did they have a programme giving the different roles the protagonist would be playing. Yet it is very unlikely that they did not know who he was, or that the author-producer would not take care in one way or another to let them know.³³ Although the contests were judged by a jury, and the opinions of the public were not asked, we can be sure they were given, though, in the form of applause and hissing and endless speculations over the possible winner during the intervals.

It is probable that information about the performers of the roles was given to the public in the *proagon* held in the Periclean odeum, which was built about 444, that is, about the same time as the contests for actors began.³⁴ We know that the authors of the tragedies to be performed appeared in the *proagon* on a platform with their choruses and their actors, who did not use their costumes or masks, and announced their subjects. But not everyone who attended the theatrical performances would have been there – although a great hall, the odeum was much smaller than the theatre itself. And because such information was given in the *proagon*, it is unlikely that it would have been given again at the beginning of the performances. The subjects of the plays were probably known and referred to by the public

³³ A contrary opinion is expressed by Ghiron-Bistagne 160: "Nous sommes donc persuadées que les applaudissements ou les sifflets n'allaient pas à tel ou tel acteur, mais à ce qu'ils représentaient." It is very likely that there were such reactions of the public to the roles - there are anecdotes about such occurrences - but I would not underrate the public's ability and wish to recognize the protagonist in spite of the dramatic illusion. So also Jouan 74, who cites as evidence Plut. Vita Lys. 23, where Plutarch mentions that the public sometimes did not attend to speeches by kings in tragedies, because the kings were not played by the protagonist.

³⁴ On the *proagon*, see DFA 67f. A.M. van Erp Taalman Kip discusses the sources concerned with the *proagon* in an appendix to *Reader and Spectator: Problems in the Interpretation of Greek Tragedy*, Amsterdam 1990, 123-129, coming to the conclusion that the sources give us very little to go on.

by some kind of titles – I find it very unlikely that the Athenian people could have rehearsed the plays for several months without giving them some kind of generally used titles, whether these originated from the author or not.³⁵ But we do not know whether the titles we have are original, nor do they automatically provide a clue to the role of the protagonist. They generally have the form of the name of one of the principal characters of the play, such as *Medea* or *Ajax*, or of the characterization of the chorus, such as *Hiketides* or *Trachiniai*. But even if the name mentioned in the title was the role played by the protagonist, it would tell nothing of his other possible roles. Whatever the original form and function of the title was, it was not meant to give information about the roles of the protagonist.

The public must have made out in the performance itself who the protagonist was. One thing that possibly helped here could have been his voice. Although it was considered an advantage for the actor to be able to adapt his voice to the role he was playing – Aristotle praises Theodoros for such adaptability³⁶ – this does not mean that the voice would be so changed as to be unrecognizable. Only the tone and rhythm of speaking might be altered. Zoja Pavlovskis has suggested that the poets deliberately used the effect of the voice of the same actor, which was recognized as such by the public, and thus subtly underlined certain relationships between the characters in question. Thus, in Aeschylus' *Persians* Atossa and Xerxes, the anxious mother and the unhappy son, would have the same voice, as would the spouses Deianeira and Herakles in Sophocles' *Trachiniai*.³⁷

There were certainly other methods available to the poet with which to direct the attention of the public to the protagonist. One obvious way was the prologues of the plays, where usually one character's problems or pains are very much emphasized, whether he himself is the speaker or not. Ajax, for instance, is the undoubted focal point in the dialogue between Athene and Odysseus opening Sophocles' play; this feeling is sharpened by his short

³⁵ The use of the titles of Greek drama has not been thoroughly examined. General observations are found in A.E. Haigh, *The Attic Theatre*, 3rd ed. Oxford 1907, 395ff., A.C. Pearson, *The Fragments of Sophocles* i, Cambridge 1917, xviiiiff., S. Radt, *Sophokles in seinen Fragmenten*, *Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* xxix: Sophocle, *Vandoeuvres-Genève* 1982, 186ff., 217f. Recently the question whether the titles or subtitles derive from the author, the public (audience or booktrade) or the Alexandrian scholars has been briefly discussed by O. Taplin, *JHS* 95 (1975) 184ff., M.L. West, *JHS* 99 (1979) 131, A.L. Brown, *CQ* n.s. 34 (1984) 268f.; see also J.R. Green, *GRBS* 32 (1991) 25 with n. 34.

³⁶ Aristot. *Rhet.* 1404b22.

³⁷ Z. Pavlovskis, *The Voice of the Actor in Greek Tragedy*, *Cl.W.* 71 (1977) 113-123, esp. 114, 118.

appearance on the stage during the prologue, still in the grips of madness, as well as by the choral parodos, where the first words of the chorus contain an anxious address to Ajax. Similar reasons could be pointed out to clear up the much debated question of which role was played by the protagonist in Sophocles' *Antigone*, Antigone or Kreon.³⁸ We have the testimony of Demosthenes that Aischines played Kreon as the tritagonist of his group, and I think we can hardly dismiss this testimony,³⁹ since in Demosthenes' audience there may have been many who would have been present at the performance spoken of. Although this was, of course, not the original performance of *Antigone* but a revival, the context with its reference to the famous actors Theodoros and Aristodemos as opposed to the tritagonist makes this conclusion most probable. However, several scholars have emphasized the importance, size and tragic pathos of the role of Kreon and wanted to see this as the role played by the protagonist. But in the opening of the play, it is Antigone's decision and her ensuing dilemma which is the central thing discussed by the sisters; Kreon's proclamation is the outward cause of the discussion, but its consequences fall on Antigone – nobody at this stage could fathom they would in any way touch Kreon himself. Similarly, Kreon's opening speech, making known the purpose of his proclamation to the chorus, sharpens the audience's desire to follow what will happen to Antigone. The poet clearly makes the audience expect Antigone to be the main role played by the protagonist. The same orientation towards the protagonist may be seen in most of the prologues of Euripides, for instance in *Hekabe*, where the speaker of the prologue is Polydoros' ghost. He tells the audience that he has come because of his mother (30ff.), anticipates his mother's grief when the fates of himself and his sister are revealed to her, and ends his prologue by announcing Hekabe's entrance. After that, Hekabe herself describes her unhappy situation and remains on stage as the sufferer and, later, the plotter, through the whole drama. No problem there as to which role was played by the protagonist.

Again, the public could know who was the protagonist and who was not by some of the conventions of assigning roles to actors. Thus, according to Demosthenes, there was a convention that tyrants were played by the

³⁸ See e.g. the discussion by W.M. Calder iii in GRBS 9 (1968) 389-407, idem, *Arethusa* 4 (1971) 49-52 (with a reply by A.D. Fitton Brown 52-54), J.C. Hogan, *Arethusa* 5 (1972) 93-100.

³⁹ Dem. De falsa leg. 246-7. In DFA 141 n. 2 it is surmised that Demosthenes is lying.

tritagonist.⁴⁰ Similarly, the short parts of servants, shepherds etc. were naturally expected to be played by other actors than the protagonist. The distribution of the parts between the three actors is seldom quite clear in all particulars, but generally one can at least say which leading roles must have fallen to the same actor.⁴¹ In later times when the old tragedies were presented as revivals, it was possible for the protagonist to choose which parts he would take. It seems best to interpret in this way Aristotle's statement that Theodoros, who was active in the fourth century, never allowed anyone else to go on the stage before him,⁴² that is, he always took the role that opened the tragedy. But we must suppose that when the great tragedians composed their plays, they were clear which actor could take which part – that was necessary because of the changes of dress and mask required – and very probably also which parts they would wish to be acted by the protagonist. In some cases this is self-evident, as for instance in *King Oedipus* and *Medea*, and elsewhere we may be led by the emphasis the poet gives in the prologue, as I have suggested in the case of *Antigone*. But this does not help to recognize the possible second roles of the protagonist.

There is one type of role which could, however, be linked with the protagonist, especially during the last quarter of the fifth century, namely the anonymous *angeloi* in their long messenger speeches. It was apparently not so at first. In those plays of Aeschylus where there is a messenger's role it must have been played by the second actor: in *Persians*, where the leading actor – presumably the poet himself – played Atossa and Xerxes, the messenger was played by the actor later taking the part of Dareios, and in *Seven against Thebes*, the messenger giving the seven reports is the supporting actor to the leading role of Eteokles. In *Agamemnon*, too, the role of the messenger could not be connected with the leading role of Klytaimnestra. But these messengers are not yet of the type seen in most tragedies of Euripides, where the messenger's report comes at a rather late stage of the action, telling of the disasters – or sometimes of the glorious battle or the happy escape – met by the leading characters.

In Sophoclean tragedies, we see several types of messengers. In *Trachiniai* and *King Oedipus*, the *angeloi* are definitely not played by the protagonist, as they are encountered by the protagonist. They come in rather

⁴⁰ Dem. De falsa leg. 247; cf. Plut. Mor. 816F.

⁴¹ A survey of the possible distribution of parts in the surviving tragedies is found in DFA 138-149. See also Jouan 70ff., J. Gould, CHCL 275.

⁴² Aristot. Pol. 1336b28.

early in the play, and they are involved in a scene where also a third party, giving contradictory information, is present. Thus, in *Trachiniai*, the *angelos* and Likhas create excitement around the person of the mute Iole, brought to the presence of Deianeira, and similarly in *King Oedipus* the Corinthian messenger and the old shepherd are brought together in the presence of Oedipus. But in *Antigone*, possibly from the year 442, and in the posthumous *Oedipus in Colonus* we have a messenger scene of the later, Euripidean type. In *Antigone*, we cannot be sure which part was played by the protagonist after Antigone left for the last time. Teiresias, the Messenger or Eurydike have all been proposed. I find the Messenger most appropriate, especially if Haimon, too, was played by the same actor, since in his tale (1192ff.), the Messenger gives a magnificent picture of the death of these two characters, and the voice of the interpreter of their roles could have been especially poignant here. In *Oedipus in Colonus*, the corresponding messenger's report (1579ff.) cannot be acted by anyone other than the protagonist, since the two other actors enter immediately after his last words as Antigone and Ismene (1670). It is also very appropriate: Oedipus has been on stage and dominated every scene since the beginning of the play, and now, after his miraculously powerful exit, the Messenger tells the tale of his last moments, quoting his own words three times. Thus, Oedipus and his voice still dominate the stage, although represented by the Messenger.

Similarly, in most plays of Euripides, the Messenger telling of the final moments or exploits of the character played by the protagonist could be played by the protagonist himself. This is of course technically convenient, as the leading character by now is usually either dead, gone or otherwise not present (or there would be no tale to tell). But as in Sophocles' *Oedipus in Colonus*, the Messenger's voice often echoes the voice of the character he is telling about. Thus in *Heraklidai*, the Messenger glorifies the warlike prowess of the rejuvenated Iolaos (843ff.), and, more oddly, the same actor returns apparently once more as the defeated enemy Eurystheus (983ff.). In *Hippolytos*, after Hippolytos has departed, cursed by his father, the Messenger tells Theseus of his fatal journey (1153ff.), and then the same actor returns once more as Hippolytos, to die in his father's arms (1347ff.). In both dramas, the Messenger could be played by the third actor, but would it not be natural that these showpieces of fine epic narrative would have been intended as the crowning effect of the protagonist? Similarly, I would argue that in most of Euripides' extant dramas the Messenger (or sometimes the Second Messenger) could have been played by the protagonist. There

are further examples. In *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, the final scene (1284ff.) requires three actors: the Messenger tells his tale of the sisters' escape to Thoas, and although Athene (1435ff.) could in theory be played by the actor of the Messenger, if he left immediately after his speech (1419) and changed costume during the fifteen lines in between, this is hardly probable when there is no need for such hurried manoeuvres. Of the three roles, it is certainly the Messenger which is most worthy of the protagonist. In *Bakchai*, there is no unanimity among scholars as to which combination was played by the protagonist, Dionysos and Teiresias or Pentheus and Agaue. I am inclined to favour the former view because of the absolute supremacy of the god and his priest over Pentheus. I do not think that Agaue's rather short lyrics at the end necessarily point to the protagonist. Dionysos has lyrics, too, although not so many lines, but he has in addition a scene written in trochaic tetrameters, a rhythm in recitations of which we hear the famous actor Nikostratos excelled.⁴³ Neither does Plutarch's story of the actor Jason of Trallos,⁴⁴ who in a party sang Agaue's part (1168ff.) brandishing Crassus' head, tell anything of the distribution of the parts in the classical period. The long speech of the Second Messenger in this play, relating Pentheus' death (1043ff.), could be given to the actor of either combination, although perhaps more likely to the actor of Dionysos and Teiresias, since there is only a short choral strophe of twelve lines before the entrance of Agaue. If so, the three roles of the protagonist – Dionysos, Teiresias and the Messenger – would all in their different ways express the power of the god. In fact, the only certain exception to this pattern in Euripides is found in *Medea*, where the Messenger tells of the death of King Kreon and his daughter to Medea herself and thus must be the second or third actor.

Well in accord with this pattern recognizable in Euripides' plays is the ancient tradition of the famous actor Nikostratos, who excelled in Messengers' roles so that it became proverbial to "tell everything like Nikostratos".⁴⁵ The earliest known mention of this actor is probably as the victor at the Lenaia ca. 425; in the year 399 he probably won at the Dionysia, and some time before 392 appeared in Aeolid, according to Polyainos.⁴⁶ Thus, he could well have been one of the Messengers of the

⁴³ Xen. Symp. 6,3.

⁴⁴ Plut. Crass. 33.

⁴⁵ Paroem. Gr. i 395: ἐγὼ ποιήσω πάντα κατὰ Νικόστρατον.

⁴⁶ IG ii/iii² 2325 = Mette v D 2 col. 1,8; 2318 = Mette i col. 10,6; Polyaeon. 6,10.

Euripidean type from the last quarter of the fifth century.⁴⁷

We can see that the precedence secured by one actor on account of the contest may well have been one factor in forming the structure of the ends of the tragedies, emphasizing the importance of the Messenger's speech. Are there other implications that the contest of actors would have influenced the poets' composition of their dramas? Did they give more room and weight to the protagonist's part? Unfortunately, we have very few dramas from the crucial period around the middle of the century, and no examples of dramas by the same poet before and after 449. We have Aeschylus' *Oresteia* from 458, about ten years before the contests for actors began; in this trilogy, there are many impressive roles, for instance both Agamemnon and Klytaimnestra in the first part, and it is not clear which of the roles fell upon the same actor, whether, for instance, Klytaimnestra was played by the same actor (or the poet himself) in all dramas, or whether one actor combined Klytaimnestra in the first part with Orestes in the second and third. Impressive roles and good acting were naturally important to the poet who wished for victory in the tragedy contests, but it was not important at this time by whom the roles were acted.

Sophocles' extant plays probably all fall within the period after 449, although the dating of most of his plays is very insecure; many scholars put *Ajax* first, some place it in the fifties, most in the forties. Sophocles was victorious in the contest of the year 447, where Herakleides obtained the actors' prize, but whether they worked together on this or other occasions we have no way of knowing. In any case, in *Ajax* the protagonist has a fine double role as both Ajax and Teukros. Although Ajax is the focal character of the play even after his death, these two roles have much in common: they are brothers and their solidarity is much emphasized in the text. Teukros' entrance and part in the play is prepared for with many references to Ajax's wish that he alone should find his body and take care of his little son, and Teukros in his function as defender of Ajax's body dominates the scene in the second part of the play as Ajax himself did in the first part. Indeed, it may be that the *diptychon* structure seen in this drama and, notably, in *Trachiniai*, sometimes criticized as disturbing the unity of the play, sometimes regarded as a sign of an early composition by Sophocles, is in fact a consequence of the growing importance placed by the poet on the part of the protagonist because of the newly established contest.

⁴⁷ Cf. Plut. Lys. 23,4, where he refers to some roles of messenger or servant played by the protagonist.

The creation of an impressive double role for the protagonist is seen at its boldest in Sophocles' *Trachiniai*, where the gentle Deianeira with her passive femininity and the harsh Herakles with his masculine activeness are played by the same actor, who thus has about half of all the trimeter lines of the play. As different as these roles are, they complement each other, and the entrance of Herakles is made more exciting and meaningful by the expectations created by the foregoing scenes with Deianeira. François Jouan suggests that this combination of unusually different roles was inspired by a particularly talented actor, whose abilities Sophocles wanted to show off in his drama; thus, this play must have been written before 449.⁴⁸ Apparently, Jouan thought that later the contest with the allotment of the actors to the poets would have made the composition of such tailor-made roles impossible. I have suggested above that it might not be impossible even in those conditions. I would further like to point out, contrary to Jouan, that the brilliant double role more probably reflects the influence of the contest, providing the actor with a truly magnificent opportunity to win, whether or not a particular person was in Sophocles' mind. Thus, the play probably should be dated after 449.⁴⁹

The tendency to parade the abilities of the actor by the successive performance of different roles seems alien to us, but Bernard Gredley has recently argued that the audiences in archaic and classical Greece were indeed used to this very practice from the first. In epic descriptions of the bard's performance, he often recited several persons' speeches in succession, and the later rhapsodes did the same; Thespis' innovation would have been that he impersonated the characters appearing in his story and thus became the first actor, acting several different roles.⁵⁰ Gredley further points out that the type of play where one dominant figure is on the stage throughout the play, like *King Oedipus*, though not remarkable in our eyes, was in fact innovative in classical theatre. He sees this development as a consequence of the introduction of the third actor, which makes the construction of this kind of sequence of scenes possible.⁵¹ This is certainly true; but I would think that this kind of construction rose not only from the fact that it was possible, but also from the poet's wish and purpose to create a particularly

⁴⁸ Jouan 78f.

⁴⁹ For the problem of the date of *Trachiniai*, see the surveys by A. Lesky, *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen*, 3rd ed. Göttingen 1972, 191ff., T.F. Hoey, *Phoenix* 33 (1979) 210ff., P.E. Easterling, *Sophocles: Trachiniae*, Cambridge 1982, 23.

⁵⁰ Gredley 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 11.

impressive role for the protagonist of the play, in view of the contest for actors. The earliest extant drama of this type is Euripides' *Medea*, from 431; later examples are Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, the role of Hekabe in Euripides' *Hekabe* and *Trojan Women*, and the late Sophoclean plays *Philoktetes* and *Oedipus in Colonus*. We may compare the Euripidean dramas discussed above, where the protagonist does not have the role of any other named character in addition to his central role, but may have played the part of the Messenger, as for instance in *Hippolytos*, *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, *Ion*, *Helen*, and *Orestes*. It seems, however, that in his latest period Euripides had a growing interest in complex family dramas with very many different roles, where such concentration on one role by one actor was neither possible nor desirable, as in *Phoenician Women* and *Iphigeneia in Aulis*.

To conclude, it may be possible to see in the structure of the Greek tragedies presented during the second half of the fifth century features which may be consequences of the establishment of the contest for protagonists. It is only natural that the tendency to emphasize a certain actor's part in the production would create different kinds of roles: in some cases, large and sometimes contrasting double roles; in others, central figures dominating the whole drama with their presence, or one central role combined with an impressive messenger's speech. Of course, the structure of the drama and the kinds of roles were by no means dictated by the need to give prominence to the protagonist, but depended on many other factors, for instance the story and the meaning and form the dramatist wished to give to the story. However, it is very probable that the relation of the poet and the protagonist, whether known or unknown to each other at the time of the composition of the drama, was one of the formative factors behind the development of drama during the fifth century.