THE WORK OF TRAGIC PRODUCTIONS:
TOWARDS A NEW HISTORY OF DRAMA AS LABOUR CULTURE

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The study of the ancient world has often come under scrutiny for its questionable ‘relevance’ to modern society, but Greek tragedy has proven rather resilient. From tragedy’s perceived value in articulating an incomplete but idealised state of political and ethical being in Hegel to its role in thinking through the modern construction of politics and gender (often through a re-reading of Hegel), tragedy has loomed large in modern critical inquiry into definitions of the political and the formation of the subject. This is another way of saying that the richly textured tragic text has in some respects laid the foundation for subsequent theorising of the political subject.

Given the importance placed on such figures as Sophocles’ Oedipus and Antigone starting with Schelling and Hegel, it is perhaps not surprising that recent work in critical theory has tended to recast these particular tragic figures in its critique of Enlightenment thought. Nonetheless, there are problems with the adoption of these figures as paradigms through which tragedy becomes a tool to represent the ancient Greek polis and to work through modern political and ethical problems. The repeated returns to certain aspects of Oedipus or Antigone have contributed to a structured silence around the issue of class relations. Along with the increasingly dominant role of neoliberalism and the continuing importance of identity politics, much recent critical theory has contributed to the occlusion of class and labour from public discourse and academic research. In such a climate, it is no wonder that historical materialism rarely figures in academic works. I wonder whether another narrative is possible through the study of Greek tragedy.

In this essay I address the role of ordinary labourers (banauoi) and other ‘humble’ workers (shepherds, fishermen, etc.). With its focus on labour(ers) and on drama as a performance before historically constituted audiences, this essay aims to sketch out alternative subaltern histories. A key move here is one from drama as text (to be read by individuals) to drama as performance involving various groups in the community. Putting professional performers and other ordinary workers ‘back’ into the study of ancient drama not only can contribute to our understanding of drama—what appears to be mass entertainment—but also may suggest that the occluded role of class in the construction of modern subjectivity is the result of particular historical events that were not at all necessary or natural.

How are we to approach tragedy in terms of (possible) occluded histories of labour? There are two key and mutually informing parts to this project. The first part entails revisiting the archive of workers and demonstrating the possible articulations of subordinate or ‘minority’ culture that have been written out
of history. The second part entails thinking through the theoretical models used to assess minority discourse, the complex and contested relations between diverse social groups in the polis, and the practices, attitudes and institutions constructed to promote the polis; this is necessary in order to avoid merely recuperating an (apparently) underdeveloped minority discourse into the dominant culture. Such an interdisciplinary and critical focus can counteract more parochial and disciplinary perspectives that have helped to insulate the study of drama from issues of class and labour.

Interest in labourers intensified in fifth-century Athens. An ‘industrial district’ emerged in the southwest agora, a temple associated with Hephaestus was built in the northwest agora near a bronze foundry, and Attic vase-painting bucked iconographic tradition in depicting the ‘craftsman’ god as a young able man (i.e., not lame). The fifth-century Homeric epigram to the potters expresses craftsmen’s concerns for their products and profits. Craftsmen themselves are one likely source responsible for the new emphasis on labourers and for the insertion of legendary craftsmen into mythological traditions. A small but significant number of funerary and dedicatory reliefs, most of which commemorate metics, clearly depict the individual’s occupation, thus contrasting with the majority of reliefs emphasising ethical and civic values. One funerary relief (c. 400 BCE) represents the metic bronze-worker Sosinos. The inscription explains that Sosinos’ children erected the relief as a monument to his justice, moderation and virtue. The tools of his trade (e.g., bellows) are prominently shown, yet Sosinos is seated on a klismos (chair) with a cloak draped over his shoulders rather than wrapped around the waist as banausoi are often shown: the metic labourer Sosinos mimics the representation of ‘gentlemen’ citizens. Much like the shoemaker Simon who claimed his right to parrhesia and wrote ‘shoemaker’s dialogues’ on the basis of his discussions with Socrates (Diog. Laer. 2.122-23), Sosinos ‘moved on the boundaries between classes’ and thus blurred discrete social and political categories.

An ‘ideology of work’ may not have been a dominant way of thinking about labour, but positive attitudes to work are easily found. Praise of labourers, reproaches for the idle and those who merely talk, laws against idleness and mocking citizens for their occupation, and portraying gods as patrons of labourers and even as labouring figures, all attest to a certain consciousness of the value of labour and labourers. A rather large number of citizens (i.e., 10,000-15,000 landless thetes), not to mention most metics and some slaves, were engaged in (non-agricultural) manual work centred around the market. Socrates’ comment about the significant number of craftsmen and market-sellers in the Assembly (Xen. Mem. 3.7.6) suggests the perceived shift in the public role of citizen labourers.

Even if the ‘inclusion of the banausic classes...was the hallmark of the democracy’, there were nonetheless limitations placed on the political roles of poorer citizens who were not considered ‘equal’ to wealthy citizens in all aspects. Labour and labourers were flashpoints of ideological struggle. Work
was traditionally seen as worthwhile even if necessary. Yet a number of ancient sources from Classical Athens describe *banauoi* as effeminate, unpatriotic and unfit for citizenship, even if they were deemed necessary for the existence of the polis (Arist. *Pol.* 1291a1-4). It is not clear that this represents a widespread perspective or reflects a prejudice among the elite against certain kinds of labour, as has traditionally been argued. For some if not many Athenians, working for another person was probably their only option; additionally, the perceived *political* orientation of labourers was a key concern: urban labourers not rustic farmers were seen as the proponents of the radical democracy in Athens. In Plato’s *Republic* the lean sunburned labourers take one look at the corpulent and physically unfit wealthy oligarchs standing in the battle line next to them and begin to think revolutionary democratic thoughts (556c-e).

The complexity surrounding the place of labourers in Athens extended to the theatre. In the following section I briefly sketch out some of the ways in which certain tragic poets came to be associated with *banauoi* and professionalism. Labour and its specialisation appear as critical concepts for conceptualising different kinds of tragic performance. I then turn to the representation of labourers in tragedy and satyr drama; changes in the role and social evaluation of labour(ers) can be connected with changes in tragic performance. My diachronic survey is necessarily selective and aims only to flesh out some of the changes in the representation of labourers in tragic productions (i.e., tragedy and satyr play). In the final section I situate these observations in a broader theoretical discussion of labour, politics and drama.

**Part I: An Emergent Critique of Tragedy as Professional Labour**

Professional theatre performers were celebrated in the theatre, won large cash prizes and gradually became the subject of public imagination (i.e., as ‘stars’) in the late fifth century. Partly in response to these developments, traditional-minded elite critics categorised them as ‘working class’ or as *banauoi*. This categorisation applies particularly to musicians associated with New Music with its technical and specialised techniques executed increasingly by foreigners working for a living. But certain trappings of professionalism also tainted professional actors; criticism typically involved reviling famous performers for their vulgarity and silliness. It marked the gradual shift from amateur, predominantly elite Athenian performers to foreign professionals of lower social status.

Comic portrayal of ‘tragic labour’ provides some insight into the contested reception of tragedy. Productions that openly exploited the technical skills of increasingly specialised performers were recognised for their departure from traditional performance standards. But in comedy’s critique, the style of such productions could be transferred to the poet in question. Indeed, Euripides is singled out most consistently in extant comic sources, but it is worth noting that other tragic poets were closely associated with New Musical production values and that a host of ‘minor’ tragic poets also actively adopted new styles of per-
performance (e.g., Ar. *Frogs* 71-107). In Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazusae* Agathon’s song is described in craftsman terms (49, 52-57, 67), and the poet is represented as effeminate (e.g., 97f.) in part because of criticism of his New Musical style (cf. Ar. fr. 178 K-A). For many in Athens ‘Euripides’ may simply have represented some of the major and contested developments in the theatre.

Aristophanes’ *Frogs* provides an early model of reception for Euripides by presenting the tragic poet as debasing the grandeur associated with more traditional forms of dramatic performance as represented by Aeschylus. The generation gap between these two tragic poets was a means to signal the changed historical conditions in the theatre, thus highlighting new performance and production styles. Although some aspects of Aristophanes’ mockery are doubtless lost on us today, it is worth pausing to reflect on the significance of representing Euripides before theatre audiences as the ‘mouth-labourer’ (826) who uses banausic tools typically handled by craftsmen to produce his plays (819, 881, 956f.).

Comic representation of Euripides and his mother in terms of certain kinds of labour was a way to engage in dramatic and cultural critique. In a number of passages Euripides’ mother is described as a market-seller (e.g., Ar. *Ach. 473-79, Th. 384-388, Frogs* 840). In particular his mother is connected with what is likely to be chervil, a plant in the parsley family that was eaten by the poor when they had little else to eat. Euripides is thus comically presented as the product of a ‘working-class’ labourer in the *agora* who sold food typically eaten by the poor and destitute; this idea is then spun out to make jokes about the kinds of wild behaviour found in a poet raised among wild herbs (Ar. *Th. 455f.*). Comedy also uses the spectre of lower class specialised labour in the market to critique the perceived downmarket characters and performance styles in Euripides. Representing Euripides as the son of a market-seller or as a banausic craftsman in comedy reflects the perception of the professionalisation of tragedy in Euripidean drama and its perceived working class associations. These biographic anecdotes embody public (and popular) attitudes towards poets and, in this case, the (kind of) theatre associated with Euripides.

Professionalism and the increased division of labour in the theatre were critiqued through charges of collaborating with others. Euripides allegedly collaborated with the famous New Musician Timotheus, Socrates, Mnesilochus, the Argive Timocrates and Cephisophon. Of this group Cephisophon has been described as Euripides’ associate, slave, and actor. In *Frogs* he is co-author of Euripidean monodies and political advisor; other sources claim that he lived with Euripides and slept with Euripides’ wife. Charges of collaboration with Cephisophon were perhaps motivated by the ‘envy’ of others (*TrGF* 5.1, T 1.81-82), but increasing specialisation in the theatre industry is one good reason for such collaboration. Whereas poets of the previous generation were allegedly masters of all aspects of performance (e.g., composer, choreographer, actor), certain younger poets demonstrated an increasing openness to developments in acting and musical styles that would have benefited from specialist collabora-
It is worth recalling that such specialisation in the theatre industry led some critics to view emerging theatre professionals as ‘working class’ and banausic. However, Cephisophon’s ambivalent status—associate, slave, actor—may preserve evidence for the role of banausic labour in the theatre filtered through elite eyes that categorised such labourers as slaves. Then again, maybe Cephisophon was simply a talented slave.

Popular poets in the latter half of the fifth century rarely escaped such biographic criticism. But responses did differ. Whereas there was some speculation that Sophocles’ father was a carpenter, a bronze-smith or a knife-maker, the opening section of the Vita refutes this charge and claims instead that Sophocles’ father was the owner of a factory of slave carpenters and bronze-smiths. The tradition that Sophocles organised a ‘thiasos’ (ritual association) in honour of the Muses (Istros, FGrH 334 F 36), if it did involve some aspects of (dramatic) performance, would likely have evoked a more traditional (i.e., gentlemen and amateur) association regardless of their actual professional status. It would have thus marked this group as ‘not professionals’ at a time when professional performers were emerging. Sophocles and Euripides were also both connected in some respects with the star actor Callippides. Whereas the actor appears uncannily suited to Euripidean performances, one anecdote preserved in the Vita (TrGF 4, T 1.14) claims that Sophocles choked to death on an unripe grape given to him by Callippides. This anecdote suggests a different kind of relationship between professional actor and tragic poet.

In these biographic narratives Euripides’ family is closely aligned with the destitute and the poor despite Philochorus’ more plausible assertion that he came from one of the very noble families (FGrH 328 F 218). By contrast, there is no such ambivalence in the biographic narratives surrounding Aeschylus. In the Vita (TrGF 3, T. 1.1, 1.4) Aeschylus hails from an aristocratic family and is consistently portrayed as a heroic patriot fighting bravely for his city. Sophocles’ family is carefully distinguished from banausoi, thus suggesting a concern to correct any hint of professionalism. In the case of Euripides charges of collaboration and banausic origins embody the changing conditions of labour inside and outside the theatre. In addition to the emergence of professional actors, we might note that at least by 386 BCE actors were sufficiently organised to produce an ‘old tragedy’, thus usurping traditional elite roles as sponsors (khoregoi). The idea of Euripides as (banausic) craftsman was made possible because of the historical conditions that gave rise to particular economic changes in the emerging theatre industry and in society at large, and because of the receptivity of Euripidean drama to various kinds of labour.

Part II: Labour and Labourers in the Theatre

1. Performance and Audiences

If tragedy, and particularly the kind of tragedy best or most famously represented by ‘Euripides’, could come to be associated with craftsmen and banausic
labour by the end of the fifth century, there is little evidence that this was the case with earlier tragic performances. Or at the very least in earlier drama the relationship between theatre and its material conditions of production was more mystified. There was less division of labour in the early theatre, and these historical conditions are suggested in Aristophanes’ representation of the older generation of tragic poets in *Frogs*: the poet Aeschylus composes plays while full of inspiration from the Muses (e.g., 814, 824) rather than honing his craft with carpenter’s tools. While poets first appear to have performed as actors, certain actors were later associated with specific poets; more independent (or cash-dependent) professional actors emerged later, eclipsing the importance of poets. Specialisation of labour was an important part of the history of dramatic performance.

Interest in representing social relations was manifest through performance and new dramatic roles. The performance of a debased and déclassé character by the star actor Callippides (Ar. fr. 490 K-A) apparently was acted with a kind of gestural realism of the poor that incensed critics: Callippides’ acting style differed markedly from that of traditional actors and was denigrated as vulgar by some ancient critics. Actors’ gestural realism was a popular technique that could ambiguously portray social class, and certain new kinds of roles emerged to capitalise on these acting techniques (e.g., ‘kings in rags’). While the remains of satyr drama suggest an abiding interest in the traditional conceptualisation of rural labour and in the ‘underdog’ labourer, there is some indication of an emerging interest in specialised craftsmen. Tragedy, however, became increasingly attentive to both banausoi and professionals working in the theatre.

An important part of these changes was the constitution of audiences. Fifth-century audiences reflected in part the demographic shifts in Athens. A larger number of metic and citizen craftsmen (e.g., working on the Acropolis) in the city found their way to the theatre. Scholars have long relegated to the fourth century distributions of public funds (*theorika*) for citizens to attend dramatic festivals, but it now seems more probable that starting in the middle of the fifth century such funding was intermittently available. Thus even some poorer citizens could pay for seating in the fifth-century *theatron*, where wooden bleachers (*ikria*) were erected on the sides of hills for paying spectators and those granted free seating by the state. However, directly up the hill from the wooden seats were ‘free’ spaces for non-paying and non-regulated spectators (cf. Cratinus fr. 372). These conditions enabled thousands of poorer non-citizens and citizens to attend the theatre; these groups constituted the majority of spectators at dramatic festivals throughout Attica. In Aristophanes’ *Peace*, Hermes and Trygaeus can thus casually locate in their audience the crest-maker, sword-maker, sickle-maker, mattock-maker and spear-maker along with the farmers (543-55). These specialised urban labourers, many of whom were impoverished because of market volatility (cf. 1197-1264), notably receive more rhetorical emphasis (at least) than farmers. It is worth stressing that to single out directly these specialised workers was deemed sufficiently (and stra-
technically?) important; significantly, such workers could be understood as metics, citizens or even slaves.\footnote{37}

Traditional and conservative accounts of the theatre typically presented it as a hotbed of degenerate, democratic hooligans, who destroyed elite culture and the city along with it. Performers and spectators alike were viewed as subverting traditional theatrical practices. This situation arose as the theatre became a contested site for cultural production. Plato’s ill-informed and louche ‘theatrocracy’ (\textit{Laws} 701a) and Aristotle’s ‘banausic’ spectators (\textit{Pol.} 1341b7-18, cf. 1342a18-21) were credited with debasing theatre culture. Similar remarks about Euripides and other poets were aired in Aristophanes’ \textit{Frogs} (e.g., 89-95, 841f., 1039-45). Performers’ professional and thus vulgar occupation (i.e., their technical mastery of popular music and performance styles for which they were remunerated) was viewed as a pragmatic response to the banausic audiences adjudicating at the festivals. Many of these same critics reviled the political role of (citizen) \textit{banausoi}: they were best eliminated from the citizenry (e.g., Xen. \textit{HG} 2.3.48; Arist. \textit{Pol.} 1328b33-29a2) and kept quiet in the theatre by the disciplining rod (Pl. \textit{Laws} 700c).

The narrative of the degeneration of tragic art (and the democratic polis) in these accounts has rightly been questioned in recent years.\footnote{38} In place of degeneration we should understand the role of the emerging theatre industry along with changing social and political conditions in the city. We can bracket the degeneration model of tragic art and recognise the prescriptive values embodied in this criticism (i.e., a judgment of artistic value), while critically evaluating the social composition of audiences that is here proposed as the cause of degeneration: these ancient assessments are evidence for the historical inquiry into audiences. We might summarise: technically proficient and increasingly non-Athenian professionals with working-class backgrounds became popular before audiences of professional workers (regardless of citizenship) associated with radical democratic politics in the late fifth century and in the early fourth century. One major difference between these audiences and those of the later fourth century was the gradual diminution of the ideological support for the ‘radical’ democracy among \textit{banausoi} and market-sellers and the general diffusion if not acceptance of elite values.\footnote{39} These changes contributed to the muted representation of workers in later fourth-century drama.

2. Labourers in Tragedy

With a significant number, perhaps even a majority, of poor workers (citizens, metics and slaves) as spectators at dramatic festivals in the fifth century, craftsmen and various sorts of hirelings and wage-labourers have a perhaps unsurprising albeit minor presence in tragedy and satyr drama. It must be stressed, however, that the presence of workers in drama is often indicated through simile or by passing reference. It is not until the second half of the fifth century that we begin to see the adulteration of elite heroes through the spectre of labourers; in these cases tragic heroes are represented as workers. Through-
out the second half of the fifth century there is an intensification in the presence of ‘labour’ both at the level of character and in terms of professional performers’ influence on the shape of drama. At times these two phenomena come together to produce rather striking results. Tragedy at this historical moment thus appears to differ from its later forms.40

There are a small number of passing references to workers in Aeschylus. There is no mention of them in Suppliants or Persians and only brief mention of the workmanship on four shields in Seven against Thebes (387f., 465, 491f., 539-42). While the interpretation of the signs of the warriors’ shields is paramount in Seven against Thebes, only in the case of Hippomedon’s shield is reference made to the worker: ‘no cheap craftsman’ fashioned it (491f.).41 The Oresteia contains only a few references to various kinds of labour (e.g., A. 1-20; Ch. 231, 759f.); most strikingly in Eumenides the Athenians are described as the ‘road-making sons of Hephaestus’ (Eu. 13; cf. Ephor. FrGH 70 F 31b), thus hailing Athenians as a labouring collective under the aegis of a divinity. However, nearly all of the relatively few attested roles of workers in Aeschylus are subordinated to and circumscribed by the ruling elite in the plays.

The representation of workers shifts somewhat in the plays of Sophocles with an expanded number of occupations. In Ajax we hear of herdsmen, doctors and ‘industrious fishermen’ (232, 581, 880; cf. Ant. 337-52), but banausic skill (techne) is little valued and disavowed (1120f.). In Antigone Creon refers to those who allegedly conspired to contravene his edict to deny burial to Polyneices as wage-labourers (μισθαρνοῦντες, 302; cf. 322, 326).42 Workers were also recognised as a collective united by labour and ritual (S. fr. 844), but their spectre is evoked as a problem for Creon’s organisation of political life.43 Creon’s remark suggests the lower-class workers that Aristotle later co-joins with banausoi as the kinds of citizens constituting ‘radical’ democracy (Pol. 1296b29-30).44 There are a few scattered references in Oedipus Tyrannos to shepherds, one of whom is also described as a wage-labourer (1029f.), and to wood-cutters in Electra (98f.); but labourers are notably absent from Sophocles’ two datable plays from the end of the fifth century (cf. Ph. 35f., OC 506).

The figure of the labourer Heracles in Trachiniae, however, merits additional attention. The hero is compared to a farmer who works on a remote plot of land (32); he labours as a hireling for Eurystheus (35). Heracles’ service to Omphale (70) involves the sale of the hero (249f.), thus marking his labour as that of a slave. Most strikingly, as the Messenger explains to Deianeira, while Heracles writhed in agony the robe, dipped in the centaur’s unguent, clung closely to him as a craftsman’s chiton across his every joint (768f.). Earlier in the play the unguent reduced a piece of sheep’s wool to the sawdust produced by someone cutting wood (699f.). The effectiveness of Nissus’ unguent involves the idea of craftsmen and their work, thus assimilating Heracles in his moment of agony to a craftsman.45

Much scholarly attention has, however, been focused on the suffering Heracles comparing himself to a woman (1075). The experience of pain may pro-
vide a window on to the hero’s capacity for ‘experiencing femininity’ and perhaps serve as a way for the genre to open up the ‘masculine view of the universe’. But it is important to note that Heracles’ suffering is momentarily figured through a working labourer’s contortions: through the portrayal of the hero’s suffering a space is thus momentarily opened up for an emerging group of professional workers. As a mythological character, Heracles’ labours are often futile and fail to receive remuneration with the exception of those granting glory; Heracles can thus promote an aristocratic view of wage labour.

In Trachiniae, in the absence of a ‘medical expert’ (χειροτέχνη ἰατορίας, 1000ff.) to treat Heracles, the end of the hireling hero’s labours marks his death not prosperity (1171ff.). Such techniques involving the spectre of labour do not appear to be as common in earlier Aeschylean drama and become less frequent in Sophocles’ later plays.

With Euripides we see an increase in the number of references to workers and an intensification of their presence. Included are herdsmen (IT 254-65, Ba. 676ff.; cf. S. Tyro fr. 659, Shepherds fr. 502, 505), doctors (Tr. 1232-34, Ino fr. 403, Bellerephon fr. 286b; cf. S. Aj. 581, Tereus fr. 589), wood-cutters (Her. 241, Hel. 229-31; cf. S. El. 98), carpenters (Ion 1129, 1139ff.; Or. 1570; [Cretans] fr. 988), door-keepers (Tr. 194, Hel. 435, IT 1304, Ba. 170; cf. S. Peleus fr. 491), farmers (El. 1-431, Or. 920) and fishermen (Hel. 1615; cf. S. Aj. 880).

In a fragment from Sthenoeboa, the fisherman who discovers the eponymous heroine’s corpse explains that the ‘watery sea is what we plough, from this a living comes to our homes by means of tackle and traps’ (fr. 670); the ‘purple-fisher’s’ work is emphasized through the tools of the trade marking this labour as his livelihood. In Alcestis the skilled hand of the craftsman is praised (348); the striking love plot of Andromeda first captures the audience’s imagination through the spectre of a skilled labourer, the figurative maker of the object of Perseus’ desire (fr. 125).

At other times labour appears futile, as in the case of the preparations at the dockyard for Menelaus and Helen (Hel. 1533-57) or for Iphigenia and Orestes (IT 1347-53); but the anonymous ‘barbarian’ labour turns out to be the salvation of the elite Greek characters.

Gender plays an important part in the performance of ordinary work. Women wash and dry clothes (Hipp. 126-29; Hel. 180-84), sweep (e.g., Hysps. fr. 752f) and work as nurses (e.g., Hec. 194; cf. A. Ch. 759). While slaves typically worked as nurses, free ‘citizen’ women also did so (e.g., Dem. 57.43). Some enslaved aristocratic female characters imagine the labour (e.g., making bread, sweeping) they will soon endure (Hec. 362-64; Tr. 194, 494-97). When Electra performs such humble tasks (albeit not out of need: El. 57f.; cf. 1007), she is mistaken for a slave (107; cf. 55f., 74f.). Yet the Farmer in Electra, a peasant worker (75; cf. 207, 251, 911), is driven by economic self-interest.

Despite ‘losing’ Electra to Pylades (1249; cf. 43-46, 49, 247), the Farmer’s stated concerns about poverty are directly addressed by the gods (1287; cf. 38). This peasant may in fact get what he wants: money not dynastic connections.

Interest in labour intensified in Euripidean tragedy, but female workers are of-
ten categorised as menial labourers or slaves despite a number of funerary monuments from the late fifth century commemorating free and slave ‘working women’ as professionals. Male characters are treated somewhat differently.

Ion provides an instructive case. He is the child of the Athenian princess Creusa and Apollo, but having been orphaned he now serves as the steward of the temple of Apollo at Delphi (Ion 54). His work as a sacred slave is emphasised: Ion makes the entrance pure, moistens the ground with water, chases birds away, sweeps the altar and pours water into sacred vessels (102, 115, 149, 435f.). His labour is also described as that of a hireling (124); it is noble (129), distinguished (131) and auspicious (134f.). His religiosity and devotion to the god have struck some as indicative of a ‘free’ man rather than a slave, thus providing a pleasing portrayal of classical humanity. But the more prosaic experiences of temple slaves are to be contrasted with Ion’s exuberance: the lack of correspondence with the experiences of ‘real’ slaves presents another (potentially irresolvable) aspect of this character.

The ambivalence surrounding Ion’s labour extends to the way in which the actor performed the role. His aria exhibits many of the hallmarks of New Music. This temple-worker, a sacred slave with an unknown (and impeccable) aristocratic lineage, sings a kind of music denigrated as working class and banausic by some critics yet wildly popular with theatre audiences. The actor was presumably able if not encouraged to ‘perform’ this song in such a way as to highlight his technical skills and physical strength. The late Hellenistic treatise, On Style, traditionally attributed to Demetrius of Phalerum, noted that as Ion attempted to shoo away the birds defecating on the temple (cf. Ion 154-82), ‘much movement is required of the actor by running for the bow and arrows and looking up in the air while the character converses with the swan, and doing all the other posturing demanded of the actor’ (195). Although the description of the actor’s performance comes from a later period, highly mimetic gestures and dance moves were well suited to Ion’s New Musical aria. Actors’ gestural realism in performance of humble workers was a flashpoint of ideological struggle in fifth-century Athens (cf. Arist. Po. 1461b26-62a14).

The social and performative aspects can be connected with Ion’s dramatic character. While Ion is ultimately informed about his true parentage (Creusa and Apollo), knowledge of his lineage is kept secret from the Athenians and Xuthus (Ion 1601-03). Thus the concerns raised by Ion earlier in the play remain unresolved. Ion worries about the censure for being a nobody involved in public affairs, the hostility of those with social standing, and the lack of par-rhesia (i.e., the privilege of free or frank speech), which is denied to children of non-Athenian mothers (669-75). Ion is most readily discussing political life in Athens, but his speech also recasts the criticisms levelled at the emerging class of performers in the theatre, as they gradually displaced traditional aristocratic theatre families. Given the construction of this role highlighting the element of labour (albeit with ambivalence) and the politicisation of new performance techniques (e.g., gestural movements, New Musical singing), Ion’s troubles are
Euripides’ Telephus presents a potentially more radical scenario. The Greek son of Auge and Heracles, Telephus became the king of Mysia and closely identified with its inhabitants. Indeed, it is through his defence of Mysia from the invading Greeks that Telephus sustained an injury from Achilles; he then came to Argos to be healed but disguised himself as a beggar in order to gain access to Agamemnon’s palace. Thus scheming how to cure his wounded leg without being discovered as a ‘Mysian’ and recent enemy of the Greeks, he reportedly worked as a door-keeper at Agamemnon’s palace (TrGF 5.2 Telephus T iiiia). Euripides’ Telephus was performed in 438 BCE but clearly captured the public imagination: Aristophanes could mock this popular figure along with other ragged and popular Euripidean heroes years later (Ach. 407-34, Clouds 920-24, Th. 466-519, Frogs 842). These déclassé male characters were increasingly common in Euripides (e.g., Oineus, Philoctetes), as were similarly déclassé female characters (e.g., Electra, Ino), so much so that they became synonymous with the poet.

Telephus’ labour and social status were marked through performance. The role of Telephus, an aristocratic leader (both Greek and Mysian) disguised as a beggar and (perhaps) an ordinary gate-keeper, afforded actors an opportunity to strut their stuff in portraying both different classes and different ethnic affiliations. The star actor Callippides is singled out for the performance of such a mendicant role. A fragment from Aristophanes’ Women Taking over the Stage-Buildings refers to someone sitting like Callippides ‘on the ground among the floor-sweepings’ (fr. 490 K-A). While the precise role in question is unknown, the comic fragment along with other evidence for Callippides’ performances of the poor in tragedy suggests that a staging of a ‘Telephus’ or some other such déclassé heroic figure by one of the most famous professional stars contributed to the popularity of this role among theatre audiences.

It is through his disguise as a beggar and then his work as a gate-keeper that Telephus gains entrance to the palace and argues with the (elite) Greek leaders about his right to speak (fr. 703, cf. 712a). While Telephus ultimately assists the Greeks with their second and successful attack on Troy (frr. 727b, 727c), he also launches a defense of subaltern political rights from the subject position of a barbarian beggar and menial labourer. This was a role that highlighted certain acting skills (e.g., gestural realism, disguise) and articulated at the level of character the historical struggles surrounding the emergence of popular professionals in the theatre and professional labourers in society. The overlap between the representation of ordinary labour on stage and the work performed by actors, many of whom were professional performers, appears most developed in Euripidean tragedy.
3. Satyr Labour

We can observe a general intensification of the presence of workers in tragedy from the early to the later part of the fifth century. But the same cannot be said for satyr drama, where satyrs appear as labourers from an early date. Attic vase-painting also picked up on the theme of satyrs performing ordinary human labour. They are often shown working as craftsmen, stable-hands, vintagers or metal-workers; satyrs often wear piloi (woolen or felt caps) associated with banausoi. From herdsmen to cooks and sculptors, dramatic satyrs performed nearly every job or techne (cf. S. Oineus, fr. 1130).

In Aeschylus’ Net-Haulers Dictys calls out to various farmers, vine-diggers, and shepherds to lend a hand (frs. 46a, 46c), thus signalling the entrance of the chorus of satyr labourers. In Sophocles’ Searchers Apollo calls upon the nearby fishermen, shepherds and other (satyr) labourers to help find his lost cattle (fr. 314.39-41). The satyrs then willingly take on the job (or techne: fr. 314.223) of ‘searching’ for the cattle with Apollo’s promise of payment (fr. 314.44) and freedom (fr. 314.162-64). A fragment from Aeschylus’ Chamber-Makers instructs someone (a craftsman?) to complete a particular kind of moulding (cyma reversa) with triangular patterns on a coffered ceiling (fr. 78), thus elaborating the theme of craftsmanship manifest in the play’s title. Satyrs were often associated with Hephaestus and thus can be found working in the god’s workshop (S. Pandora or The Hammerers; Cedalion).

Forced labour is a common theme in satyr drama. The sole extant satyr play, Euripides’ Cyclops, portrays Silenus and the (chorus of) satyrs as herdsmen (frs. 24, 28, 41-62), forced by Polyphemus to perform various menial tasks (29, 206-09). With his plan to blind Polyphemus with the olive stake, Odysseus is likened to a ‘ship-joiner twirling the auger with his thongs’ (460f.); the typically unhelpful satyrs are ordered by Odysseus to obey the ‘master-builders’ (ἀρχιτέκτονες, 477) in their plan to wound the Cyclops. As they sing of Odysseus’ own violent actions against Polyphemus, however, the satyrs mimetically acted out the hero’s actions, simulating his work with the olive trunk (656-62).

The conscripted labour of heroes was also topical. Heracles’ labours were a popular theme in satyr drama to judge from the fragmentary plays and a number of vase-paintings. The satyrs in Sophocles’ Satyrs at Taenarum, which dealt with Heracles’ journey to Hades, were reportedly called ‘helots’, thus connecting satyr labour with the chattel slaves of Messenia and Laconia. Euripides’ Syleus refers to the selling of Heracles as a slave and mentions his woodworking skills (fr. 688). Syleus was a rogue who forced passers-by to work in his vineyard, and a similar story was told of Lityseres, a Phrygian king, in a Hellenistic satyr play by Sositheos; this king compelled strangers to harvest and is himself described as working nimbly in the fields (fr. 2). Preparations for Heracles’ labours opened up a space for additional workers. Sophocles’ Heracles dealt with the hero’s voyage to the underworld and probably included a feast prepared by a cook (fr. 225) for the typically hungry, eponymous hero.
Satyr drama’s rustic settings and satyrs’ affinity for the countryside provide one explanation for the inclusion of labour themes. The structure of much choral song in satyr drama is similar to that of rustic working songs. In this sense satyr drama differs from tragedy’s typically more explicit focus on political community and the institutions of the polis. With its focus on the pre- or anti-political experiences of satyrs, satyr drama supplements tragedy’s more political and even urban frame with the perspective of the indentured satyr ‘underdog’. Mystifying the reality of labour in this fashion was perhaps an additional factor in the final performance of tragic productions at the more international showcase of the City Dionysia. The inclusion of traditional labour themes doubtless assumed new meanings with the rising social and political roles of workers, but there are some signs of increased attention to the representation of satyrs as skilled craftsmen in the late fifth century.

**Conclusion: Labour, Politics and Tragedy**

Tragic productions were not centred on labour or workers, but these themes were an important part of the audiences’ experiences at dramatic festivals. The representation of labour (and labourers) cut across male/female and satyr/human binaries, yet connections with class relations were complex. Tragic heroes generally did not engage in labour, which was often portrayed as something done by ordinary or servile characters. Later fifth-century Euripidean drama, however, provides some striking examples of labouring tragic heroes. This social representation was necessarily connected with politics, given that tragic productions embodied certain socialising ends.

In Christa Wolf’s formulation, ‘the Classical Greek dramatist helped create, by aesthetic means, the political-ethical attitude of the free, adult, male, citizen of the polis’. Subsequent formulations have placed more emphasis on democracy as the key ideological and institutional frame of drama. One problem here is that the notion of forming subjects as democratic citizens occludes other (non-citizen) groups; it also downplays class difference among citizens. Among critics who see in tragedy more interest in the polis regardless of its political regime, there is concern with subject formation in terms of the polis community; other critics emphasise tragedy’s engagement with ethical values and emotions. Another approach focuses on the prevalence of support for elite leadership in tragedy, thus bringing out the genre’s aristocratic spin through its negotiation of democratic politics and elite leadership. The ideologies embodied through performance and festival were much richer. Nevertheless, despite the different political and/or ideological frameworks attributed to tragedy, forming subjects (democratic, elite or ethical) within the social hierarchy represented on stage is nonetheless essential.

The socialising ends of tragedy were part of the ongoing process of subject formation necessary for constructing and maintaining the polis. In democratic Athens the ideological management of the population was paramount, and the ‘socially symbolic acts’ performed by tragedy aimed at a certain reconciliation...
(political, ideological, etc.) among spectators.\textsuperscript{77} The unifying aims of the polis were embodied in the idea of the ‘noble demos’, an idealised view of the citizen population that eschewed professional occupation and hailed Athenian citizens as those who shared certain values modelled on aristocratic traditions.\textsuperscript{28} The ideal of the noble demos was supported by many citizens in Athens, including wage-labourers to judge from funerary reliefs and other such monuments with their limited interest in representing occupational identity.

Gramsci’s elaboration of the concept of hegemony is useful here, for the subject to be formed in recent approaches to tragedy is one who consents to hegemony operating through various institutions (e.g., the theatre) to make particular paradigms self-evident.\textsuperscript{79} At the same time Gramsci also discussed ‘subaltern social groups’, whose history is ‘necessarily fragmented and episodic’ and whose tendency to unification is ‘continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups’.\textsuperscript{80} These counter-hegemonic forces need not, however, be seen as aiming to take over the state or construct their own, as Gramsci suggests, or as occluded because of their inassimilability to hegemonic narratives.\textsuperscript{81} They may also be seen as ‘the sign of another mode of narrative...of another principle of organisation, rather than one yet to be unified’.\textsuperscript{82} Such groups may thus preserve discrete but damaged traditions despite and through their entanglement with the formation and management of the polis. Whereas the ideal of the noble demos may have been hegemonic, non-citizens were excluded and some people (including citizens) resisted.

It may be difficult to write the history of ‘working class’ culture in Athens. But the idea that ‘there was no such separate culture’ is symptomatic of the disavowal of non-normative subjectivities.\textsuperscript{83} The apparent lack of an alternative value system has led some scholars to argue that democratic Athens was ‘ultimately undermined from the inside by aristocratic values and representations’ and that ‘democracy never acquired a language of its own’; the dominant and traditional values of the elite were thus ‘without rival’.\textsuperscript{84} A popular alternative is to flip this dynamic on its head: the elite speaker in the Assembly or in the courts ‘had to conform to his audience’s ideology or face the consequences: losing votes or being ignored’; in this vision of Attic society ‘the masses controlled the upper classes through ideological means’.\textsuperscript{85} Following Gramsci we might be more attentive to the ways in which different groups were entangled and the effects of the dominant culture on subaltern history. Athens did extend citizenship and certain political privileges to males on the basis of birth but preserved unequal property relations among other inequalities.\textsuperscript{86} The social and the political were uneasily brought together.

Traditional thinking about tragic poetry may have emerged in response to this uneasy combination. According to Aristotle, poetry’s abstraction from actual events and contingencies is a prerequisite for its universality (\textit{Po.} 1451a36-b32). The poet is supposed to tell the sort of thing that might happen according to necessity or probability. Leaving behind or suppressing the contingencies of occupation and class creates a certain kind of universal appeal for poetry.\textsuperscript{87} Un-
like the obsessive focus on politics in more recent studies, Aristotle thus avoids an analysis of tragedy in terms of the polis.88 But this abstraction may nonetheless have done ‘political’ work by occluding the very contingencies that gave rise to emergent opposition to the ethical embodiment of the state in the form of the noble demos. The commonly touted elite prejudice against manual workers, as found for example in Aristotle, was formed to a great extent through the perceived political values of labourers: they favoured radical democracy and coveted the goods of others. The desire to exclude banausoi from citizenship provides a politicised version of Aristotle’s prescribed poetic abstraction for tragedy.

Workers in tragedy and satyr drama can be approached in terms of a broader social and political struggle. The dominant representation of the polis as the noble demos had little room for those working in menial occupations. Yet we can perhaps ascertain the shape of an emergent opposition through the agency of professional performers and those increasingly professionalised workers in the audience. Workers may not have always or even often been the dominant subjects in Athens or in tragic productions, but their continuing presence and increasing consciousness appear to have interrupted traditional forms of cultural production.89 The ‘dangerous classes’ consisted not merely of those who ‘moved on the boundaries between classes’, as Rancière suggests, but the recalcitrant who resisted the unifying aims of polis. Despite the damage suffered through their entanglement with the dominant culture, such problematic tragic figures as Telephus might offer a radically different foundation for the formation of the political subject through minority discourse.

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NOTES


4. Theoretical orientation to this approach: Deleuze and Guattari (1986); Lloyd (1994); Lloyd and JanMohamed (1990).


8. Funerary reliefs: Bäbler (1998); Bergemann (1997); Scholl (1996). I note that reliefs made of wood or other perishable (and cheaper) materials have been lost.

9. IG II#464; Clairmont (1993), i.258-60 (#202); Himmelmann (1994), 29. Another relief from c. 420 BCE depicts the cobbler Xanthippos with his family and tools of the trade: Clairmont (1993), i.404 (#630). See further Comella (2002); Himmelmann (1994).
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10. Rancière (2011), 181; see also Rancière (1989). Despite Rancière’s focus on 19th century France, his discussions are useful for rethinking the evidence from ancient Athens. See further Vlassopoulos (2007).


13. Wood (1994), 60; see further Wood (2008). Social and economic inequalities: Raaflaub (1996); Roselli (2007), 90-102. The ‘set of common attitudes and social values’ worked out in public spaces of the democratic polis (pace Ober [1996], 91) were also shaped by glaring social inequalities otherwise relegated by Ober to the private sphere.


15. Elite criticism of banausoi: Xen. HG 2.3.48, Oec. 4.2-3; Pl. Lg. 741e2-6; Arist. Pol. 1277b1-3.


21. Cf. Ar. fr. 694 K-A (preserved in Satyrus Life of Euripides): ‘as the things he makes them say [i.e., his characters], thus the man’.

22. Sophocles is notably absent from this discussion (cf. Frogs 76, 786-94, 1515-19).

23. E.g., And. fr. 4; Σ Ar. Ach. 469. See Gallant (1991), 115-17, on the dietary habits of peasants.


25. This material is not, however, evidence of the poet’s own affinity for the ‘people’ (pace Dodds [1960], 129).

26. TrGF 5.1, T 52-54. The association between the New Musician Timotheus and Euripides (e.g., Satyrus Life of Euripides fr. 39, col. XXII; cf. Pto. Mor. 795d) suggests collaboration across performance genres.


29. E.g., Pratinas TrGF 1 fr. 3.14: θῇραίον (Hartung’s emendation); Arist. Pol. 1341b. See Raafalbaub (1983), 528-34, for elite views of poor workers as slaves.


32. TGF 2138 201-203; see Csapo (2010), 106f.

33. E.g., Plu. Sol. 29.6; Sophocles’ Vita, TrGF 4, T 1.4; Arist. Rh. 1403b31-35; see further Csapo and Slater (1995), 221-38.

34. E.g., the skeuoipoioi (Ar. Knights 232, Arist. Po. 1450b16-20); choral-trainer (D. 21.58-61; see Csapo [2010], 90-95). See further Roselli (forthcoming b).

35. See Csapo (2010), 117-39, on Calippides and acting styles; see also Green (2002).

36. See Roselli (2011) for discussion of the complex issues surrounding theatre spaces, funding and audience composition.

37. See Rössler (1981), 199-204, on the status ambivalence with terms for labourers. Ziomecki (1975), 125-35, discusses the assimilation of free craftsmen and slaves in Attic vase-painting.

38. See e.g., Csapo (2004 and 2010); Hall (2006); Le Guen (1995); Wilson (2002).

39. For discussion of these ideological shifts see Roselli (2011), 105-12.

40. There is little evidence for workers in fourth-century tragedy. Rhesus, most probably our sole extant fourth-century example (Feickert [2005]; Liapis [2009 and 2012]), contains only negative references to workers. Ethical rather than social issues became prominent in some popular

41. Cf. A. fr. 307 for a simile with a blacksmith hammering on metal. A. Chamber-makers fr. 78 refers to a specific kind of moulding to be crafted; the status of this play (tragedy or satyr play) is not clear: KPS 209.

42. Polynices’ tomb is not given extended description (e.g., 249-52, 1203f.; cf. Tr. 1193-99) but its placement and construction are carefully depicted throughout the course of the play: see Roselli (2006), 152-54.

43. In [A.] Pr. labour and divine labourers (7-8, 45; cf. 47, 714f.) are central to the drama of resistance to all-powerful Zeus.

44. Cf. the critique of fifth-century radical democratic ‘demagogues’ as banausoi: Ar. Knights 128-45.


47. Csapo (2005), 301-15.

48. Charon is represented as a wage-labourer (Alc. 254, 361, 439-41), as he is on Attic white-ground lekythoi; see Miller (2010), 318.


50. Although he makes claims to distinguished Mycenaean blood (35-38), such (fictive) genealogies were capable of being claimed by ordinary people. See Carter (2010), 54f.; cf. Crop (1988), 102. See Thomas (1989) on family genealogies and Burke (2005) on the economic self-interest of thetes.

51. The New Musical and thus more ‘professional’ choral songs in E. El. further point to the play’s interests in and dependence upon professional labour.

52. Kosmopolous (2002) discusses these monuments, but the idea that these workers were categorically ‘held in very low esteem’ (282) is untenable; see RaafLabb (1983), 531f. See Brock (1994), Lewis (2002) for women’s labour in Athens. The domestic economy of tragedy merits further attention.

53. E.g., Schmid and Stählin (1940), 543f. See Bömer (1981), 286-91, for discussion.


55. Translation from Csapo and Slater (1995), 266.

56. See Brock (2010), 99; Zacharia (2003), 99. Loraux (1993), 200, stresses the ambiguity remaining with institutions concerning birth and parentage.

57. For text, translation, and discussion of the play: Collard et al. (1995), 17-52.

44. In contrast, S. Ph. presents a ‘king in rags’ underwritten by the play’s aristocratic spin (see e.g., Rose (1992), 266-330; cf. the shipwrecked Menelaos in E. Hel. 416-24.

59. See Csapo (2010), 119f., for Callippides’ portrayal of the ‘hero as a suppliant or beggar’.

60. The Euripidean Ino, enslaved and working as a nurse, also marks her claim to parrhesia: Ino fr. 413; cf. Plu. Mor. 506c. The emphasis on banausic political rights in Euripides differs from the treatment of the disguised Odysseus in Homer, the traditional model for such characters.

61. See KPS 41-73; Padgett (2000); Pipili (2000), 166f. There are connections between chattel slaves and satyrs in the Athenian imagination (e.g., Griffith [2002], 225f; Griffith [2005]), but the idea of satyrs as workers was also persistent.

62. See Lissarrague (1993), 212-14, on the ‘subordinate status’ of satyrs and their various occupations.

63. Cf. Pratinas TrGF 1, fr. 3.14 (with Hartung’s emendation): the autoi are described as wage-earners.

64. Cf. A. Sacred Delegation fr. 78a.7, 67 for Dionysus’ claimed ignorance of metalworking.

65. Cf. Achaiai Hephaestus fr. 16h; see further KPS 516-23.


67. Cf. S. Nauplius fr. 432 and Thamyris or Muses fr. 238 for skilled craftsmen in satyr drama.

68. Cf. Eustathius Il. 297.35-37; KPS 262.

69. Euripides’ Harvester may have dealt with the same story: KPS 476.

70. Voelke (2001), 177; see also Griffith (2005), 168f.

71. See Rossi (1972) and Voelke (2001) for satyr drama as transcending political, social and geographic (e.g., rural vs urban) oppositions.

72. A late fifth-century choric dedication in Ikarion may preserve evidence for satyr drama at the Rural Dionysia; see Green (1982), Social function(s) of satyr drama: Griffith (2002 and 2005); Hall (2006); Voelke (2001), 381-412; see also KPS 34-39.

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73. Wolf (1984), 226; see Pirro (2011), 157-70, for the reception of Greek tragedy in Wolf’s writings. The essays in Carter (2011) attempt to rethink tragedy’s connection with politics.
74. E.g., Goldhill (1990 and 2000); Wilson (2009).
76. E.g., Griffith (1995 and 2011); see further Rose (1992) and Wohl (1998).
77. ‘Socially symbolic acts’: see Jameson (1981).
82. Lloyd (1993), 127.
83. Todd (1990), 159, 169; see also Raaflaub (1996), 158.
86. Naturalisation was also possible for those deemed physically or financially useful to the polis; see Osborne (1981-1983).
87. In Friedrich Schiller’s influential essay ‘On the stage as a moral institution’ from 1784, the theatre offers a model for the formation of subjects explicitly in the service of the state. According to Schiller (1895), 340, theatre formed subjects as ethical citizens: ‘Where the influence of civil law ends, that of the stage begins’. The contingencies of regionalism or class were overcome and left behind through the audience’s identification with the representative figure of the male citizen. See Lloyd and Thomas (1998), 53-58.
89. See S. Hall (1996), 140, on the historical presence of ‘popular masses’.

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