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0521666155 - Tragedy in Athens: Performance Space and Theatrical Meaning

David Wiles

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This book examines the performance of Greek tragedy in the classical Athenian theatre. Whilst post-structuralist criticism of Greek tragedy has tended to focus on the literary text, the analysis of stagecraft has been markedly conservative in its methodology. David Wiles corrects that balance, examining the performance of tragedy as a spatial practice specific to Athenian culture, at once religious and political. The reader or practitioner of today must recognize that Athenian conceptions of space were quite unlike those of the modern world. After examining controversies and archaeological data regarding the fifth-century performance space, Wiles turns to the chorus and shows how dance mapped out the space for the purposes of any given play. Through an examination of contemporary material, including vases and temples, as well as the structure of extant theatres, he shows how the space of performance was organized in respect of axes embodying oppositions such as inside and outside, east and west, above and below. The Athenian audience was both outside the performance and embraced as part of it. We as readers are brought closer to understanding the dramatic action and staging of classical Athens.

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# TRAGEDY IN ATHENS



*Performance space and  
theatrical meaning*

DAVID WILES

*Reader in Drama*

*Royal Holloway College, University of London*



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I have been old-fashioned in my transliteration of Greek names. Here and in my translated play titles I have used the forms that seemed most familiar, at whatever cost to logic. My objective is to defamiliarize space, not language. I have assumed throughout that the Greek spectator was male.

## Abbreviations

<i>BCH</i>	<i>Bulletin de correspondance hellénique</i>
<i>BICS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies</i>
<i>COAD</i>	Eric Csapo and William J. Slater, <i>The Context of Ancient Drama</i> (Ann Arbor, 1995)
<i>DFA</i>	A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, <i>The Dramatic Festivals of Athens</i> , revised by John Gould and D. M. Lewis (Oxford, 1968)
<i>GR</i>	Walter Burkert, <i>Greek Religion</i> , tr. J. Raffan (Oxford, 1985)
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>GTA</i>	Oliver Taplin, <i>Greek Tragedy in Action</i> (London, 1978)
<i>HGRT</i>	Margarete Bieber, <i>The History of the Greek and Roman Theater</i> (Princeton, 1961)
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>LIMC</i>	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> (Zurich and Munich, 1981–)
<i>MTAG</i>	Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, <i>Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece</i> , tr. J. Lloyd (New York, 1990)
<i>NTDWD</i>	John J. Winkler and Froma I. Zeitlin (eds.), <i>Nothing To Do With Dionysos? Athenian drama in its social context</i> (Princeton, 1992)
<i>PIE</i>	Nicolaos C. Hourmouziades, <i>Production and Imagination in Euripides: form and function of the scenic space</i> (Athens, 1965)
<i>SA</i>	Oliver Taplin, <i>The Stagecraft of Aeschylus: the dramatic use of entrances and exits in Greek tragedy</i> (Oxford, 1977)
<i>TDA</i>	A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, <i>The Theatre of Dionysus in Athens</i> (Oxford, 1946)