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Figures of movement in Athenian tragedy of the 5th century BC

Vinicius Torres Machado[I]
João Pedro Ferreira dos Santos Ribeiro[I]
[I]Universidade Estadual Paulista – UNESP, São Paulo, Brazil

ABSTRACT – Figures of movement in Athenian tragedy of the 5th century BC – The purpose of this article is to place dance at the center of the historical analysis of Athenian tragedy of the 5th century BC. To do so, a trajectory is proposed that begins with the culture of performance, passes through the culture of festivals, the dance of the chorus and the teaching of the old drunken satyr, and then reviews the concepts of *opsis* and *psuchagôgia* in Aristotle's *Poetics*. Thus, the objective is to understand how the ritual-civic performance of the ancient Greek actors-singers-dancers, based on the creation of figures of movement, was also an act of evoking souls in the context of a public festivity.
Keywords: **History of theater. Greek tragedy. Performance. Dance.**

RÉSUMÉ – Figures du mouvement dans la tragédie athénienne du Ve siècle av. JC – Cet article vise à placer la danse au centre de l'analyse historique de la tragédie athénienne du Ve siècle av. JC . Pour cela, une trajectoire est proposée qui part de la culture de la performance, passe par la culture de fêtes, par la danse du chœur et par l'enseignement du vieux satyre ivre, jusqu'à arriver à la révision des concepts d'*opsis* et de *psuchagôgia*, présents dans la *Poétique* d'Aristote. De cette manière, c'est cherché à comprendre comment la performance civique-rituelle des acteurs-chanteurs-danseurs grecs antiques, à partir de la création de figures de mouvement, était aussi un acte d'évocation des âmes dans le cadre d'une fête publique.
Mots-clés: **Histoire du théâtre. Tragédie grecque. Performance. Danse.**

RESUMO – Figuras de movimento na tragédia ateniense do século V a.C. – Este artigo tem por objetivo colocar a dança no centro da análise histórica da tragédia ateniense do século V a.C. Para tanto, é proposta uma trajetória que parte da cultura da performance, passa pela cultura dos festivais, pela dança do coro e pelo ensinamento do velho sátiro bêbado, até chegar na revisão dos conceitos de *opsis* e *psuchagôgia*, presentes na *Poética* de Aristóteles. Desse modo, busca-se compreender como a performance cívico-ritual dos atores-cantores-dançarinos gregos antigos, a partir da criação de figuras de movimento, era também um ato de evocação das almas no contexto de uma festividade pública.
Palavras-chave: **História do teatro. Tragédia grega. Performance. Dança.**

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Greek tragedy of the 5th century BC is a theme that has been exhaustively explored by the historiography of theater. However, in name of a rigorous analysis of dramaturgical history its ritual-civic dimension, which places the spectacle of song and dance at the heart of public festivities, has been poorly valued by the tradition of the historiography of theater. The objective of this article is to shift the analytical perspective of the phenomenon of ancient Greek tragedy from literature to theater, based on an approximation with a research line from classical studies, developed particularly since the second half of the twentieth century. To do so, we will take a trajectory in an effort to approach the sensibilities that involve the figures of movement that compose this theatrical event, which P. E. Easterling (1997a) questions in *Form and Performance*:

> The story of Greek tragedy in the fifth century BC is an extraordinarily difficult one to tell. On the one side there are thirty-two well-known plays transmitted from antiquity through the medieval tradition, plays that have exerted a profound, even immeasurable, influence on Western culture, while on the other there are fragmentary scraps of evidence, often enough distorted by the preconceptions of later times, from which scholars try to reconstruct a whole history of an institution. How Dionysiac festivals were organized, what the earliest theatres, masks and costumes looked like, how the music sounded, what sort of performance-styles and dramatic conventions developed, how far the surviving plays are typical of the hundreds, or thousands, that must have been composed during the period, and what tragedy meant for the contemporary Athenian - and non-Athenian - audiences that watched it: these are the questions that need answers (Easterling, 1997a, p. 151).

Despite the intense mystery still surrounding tragic Greek theater of the fifth century BC, studies in this research line, to which Easterling and other authors presented in this article are affiliated, approximate us to an understanding of the appreciable impact of this theatricity. In this sense, the reconsideration of the iconographic value of ceramics found mainly in southern Italy has a fundamental role, given that they present some indications of the movements that occur in the theatrical space. In addition, archeological analyses of the structures of theaterical buildings, in turn, redimension our understanding about this theatrical space. As Eric Csapo

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(2007) indicates in *The man who built the theatres: Theatropolai, Theatronai, and Arkhitektones*, escavations in the 1960s of the sanctuary of Dionysus provide evidence that the foundations of the first *theatron*, literally the first place where are seen in stone the enormous circular proportions that permeate our imaginary, cannot be dated before the fourth century BC, when the reform of the Licurgo was conducted. The *theatron* of the fifth century BC was constructed over an earth floor in wood, a structure that gave the theatrical space straight shapes and held a much smaller number of people:

> The only material remains of the fifth-century seating area are some ten blocks which formed a platform for the fifth-century *prohedria*. The distinctive raised bands [...] at the ends of these blocks indicate that they are designed to abut one another to form a straight line. [...] When this evidence is combined with comparative evidence from other fifth- and early fourth-century theatres, all of which are trapezoidal or rectilinear, the case for a trapezoidal *theatron* for the fifth-century theatre of Dionysus seems conclusive. Thus, the fifth-century *theatron* had a much smaller seating (Csapo, 2007, p. 99).

In addition to the archeological research, another fundamental path to the establishment of these new perspectives on fifth century Greek tragic theater came from the work of re-evaluating the tragic theatricality based on the indications for entrance, exit and movement of the actors found in the texts of the tragic poets. The pioneering work of Oliver Taplin (1977), *The stagecraft of Aeschylus: the dramatic use of exits and entrances in Greek tragedy,* stands out in this regard.

Taplin's analysis (1977), called our attention particularly to a scene in *Agamemnon*, the first play of Aeschylus's *Oresteia*. The scene takes place in Argos, in front of the palace. Cassandra, the prophetess of Troy, daughter of King Priam and Queen Hecuba, who had been defeated in the war against the Hellenes, is taken as a spoil of war. She dances on a purple cloth extended over the dirt floor and, sensing the smell of blood, sings of the entire tragedy to follow. Cassandra will see all of the deaths to be perpetrated in the house of Atreus, even her own, which is about to occur:

> *The fire, how it engulfs me!*
> *Apollo, ai ai me!"*
> *[...]*
> *"This door I greet now as the gate of Hades.*

P* Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença
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And I pray I shall receive a swift, clean blow,
so that, without convulsion,
with my blood outgushing easily in death,
I close these eyes

(Aeschylus, 2018, p. 82-84).

Cassandra's dance of the dead is enchanting. It reveals the centrality of movement, as indicated by the poet himself in the script of the dramatic text, in the spectacle of the fifth century Greek tragedy. It is worth noting that as G. M. Sifakis (2013) indicates in *The misunderstanding of opsis in Aristotle's Poetics*, these poets were known as *didaskaloi* (*tragōidodidaskaloi*, in the case of the tragic poets, or *kōmōidodidaskaloi*, in the case of the comic poets) in reference to the function that they performed as producers (or theatrical directors) of their own plays. The theatrical writing, as Taplin (1977) indicated, was not separate from the theatrical spectacle:

> The dramatists were practical men of theatre, they did not merely supply the script. In the early days they were actors themselves. All, so far as we know, composed the music of their lyrics, devised the accompanying choreography, and supervised the production in general. This would include the over-all direction of delivery, gesture, grouping, movement, etc., and also probably such technical matters as props, costumes, masks, and stage machinery. No doubt he had help and advice from others, but we have no reason to think that any of these tasks was put entirely in another's hands (Taplin, 1977, p. 13).

Yet other questions remain to be investigated. If it is more common to try to identify the tragic face of fables, how can the tragic face of dance be identified? How does dance integrate the spectacle of fifth century Greek tragedy? What was its power to sensitize those who shared the event?

To respond to these questions we propose thinking about the spectacle of fifth century Greek tragedy as a hybrid between poetry, music and dance. To do so, we can begin with the evidence that the penetrating sound of the *aulós,* a flute that was always played in a pair by a single musician, was a constant presence in all the genres of Dionysian presentations. In *The musicians among the actors*, Peter Wilson (2008) argued that:

> […] music never leaves ancient drama, which [...] remains within the broad Greek category of *mousike* (that integral unity of poetry, music

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> and dance whose many manifestations constituted one of the basic forms of socialisation in Greek society) (Wilson, 2002, p. 39).

In *The singing-actors of Antiquity*, Edith Hall (2008) proposes re-evaluating the profession of the actor of antiquity by reviving the history of the singer-actors, to reveal the inseparability between the arts of acting and singing in the pagan Greco-Roman world. Although Wilson's (2008) and Hall's (2008) analyses are fundamentally based on the musical character of the spectacle, we propose here to reinforce Wilson's proposal concerning the integral unity of poetry, music and dance and inspired by Hall, consider actors-singers-dancers as a group.

The work to be conducted here is arduous because it proposes shifting the millenary idea of Greek tragedy as an act of the word. This Renaissance conception, produced particularly from the exegesis of Aristotle's *Poetics* impregnates our senses. We must reposition the text in relation to drama that is sung and danced, inserted in a celebration that joins a total of 1,189 people in performance, of whom only 29 participated in the dialog; part of which was also qualitatively rhythmic and musical. We understand it is essential to conduct this task supported by recent historiography.

Although it does not seem to be possible to specifically decodify the movements that composed this performance based on the historic documents that have been preserved, as theater artists and researchers, we are interested in recognizing the sensibilities that the event proposed.

We now know that the phenomenon of ancient Greek tragedy, although it first arose in Attica, was not restricted to the city of Athens. Some studies, such as those presented in *Theatre outside Athens: drama in Greek Sicily and South* Italy, edited by Kathryn Bosher (2012), sought precisely to re-evaluate the centrality attributed to the experience of the Athenian theater festivals in relation to many other theatrical manifestations of ancient Greece. In this article, however, we will focus on the historic analysis of fifth century Athenian tragic theater. Any step larger than this would be quite pretentious, given that we intend to re-evaluate the prominence given to the word, over movement, as is common in the Western tradition.

P* Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença
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From a culture of performance to culture of festivals.

It is necessary for us to begin our trajectory with the understanding that fifth century Greek culture was essentially a culture of performance. As Simon Goldhill (1997) presented in *The audience of Athenian tragedy* this culture:

> […] valorized competitive public display across a vast range of social institutions and spheres of behavior. The gymnasium with its competitions in manliness, the symposium with its performances of songs and speeches, and the theatre become [...] the key signs of Greekness itself (Goldhill, 1997, p. 54).

Athens' authority at the heart of Hellenic civilization during the fifth century is understood as fundamental to the consolidation of this character, according to Goldhill (1997). The demand for participation that establishes democracy as the political regime for a pre-modern city is a demand for social performance. The politics of the tribunes and assemblies required that Athenian citizens take positions in public debates and in the resolution of collective conflicts.

We can affirm, however, that the performative character of classic Greek culture finds roots long prior to the consolidation of Athenian democracy. For example, in Minoan Crete, the Thalassocrat civilization that developed between the thirtieth and twenty-fifth century BC on the Aegean Sea long before the migrations to the Balkan peninsula that gave origin to ancient Greek civilization, there is evidence of the practice of games, exercises and competitions. These included acrobatic leaping, jumping over bulls, wrestling and boxing in the context of religious ceremonies. The very Olympic games were instituted, according to tradition, in 776 BC, in that which historiography recognizes as an archaic period. But for the ancient Greeks, their origins date back to mythic times, to the disputes between the Gods. The most important pan-Hellenic religious-athletic festival was the very manifestation of this performativity. In *Os jogos olímpicos na Grécia antiga*, Nicolaos Yalouris (2004) argues that:

> The cultivation of the sporting spirit in ancient Hellas is based on those same spiritual bases in which are rooted all the other cultural values of Hellenic civilization, among which the first and main one is the liberty of the individual in relation to any type of despotism. The religious beliefs of the

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> Hellenes did not deny them the freedom of action as human beings, and therefore, did not remove their human responsibility [...] Man himself was the visible image of divinity, because the Hellenic gods had all the characteristics of human beings in their ideal form [Our translation][1] (Yalouris, 2004, p. 2).

Therefore, it is based on this connotation of ancient Greek performance as concomitantly civic and ritual that – simultaneously to a culture of performance – we should think of a culture of festivals, as William Slater (2007) proposed in *Deconstructing festivals*. There were a wide variety of festivals, which did not always involve competitions and presentations, terms that were often understood synonymously, whether in their gymnastic or artistic dimensions. There were public and private festivals, local and pan-Hellenic festivals, ephemeral ones and long-lasting ones, which varied according to the calendar. The sole common denominator among all of them according to Slater was food, and in the final instance, sacrifice.

In *Às mesas do poder: dos banquetes gregos ao Eliseu*, Jean-Marc Albert (2011) argues that sacrifice, "occupies a determined place in the very definition of the city" (Albert, 2011, p. 23 translation ours) given that its partition, which followed rigorous rules, "was at the core of complex relations that men established among each other and revised with the gods" (Albert, 2011, p. 24). These were ritual-civic acts, inherent to all and any type of festival, about which Albert (2011) presented a description that provides a clear sensibility of the gestures that compose these festivals:

> The Greeks established sacrificial rites of which the best known and disseminated continued to be the bloody sacrifice of food, the *thusia*. This sacrifice consisted in beheading one or a few animals, always domestic, from a rooster, to sheep, goats, horses and even oxen, which were considered as the sacrificial victim of greatest prestige and most often reserved for grand occasions. Without reviewing the precise modalities of the procession, a stunning manifestation of the social and political hierarchies of the city, we can, however, mention the presence, in the procession, at the front, of the sacrificer, who must assure the animal's physical integrity, which a sole apparent blemish or defect would invalidate. Magistrates and archons precede the priest at the times of the festivals of a civil character and walked in front of the women, who carried the ingredients needed for the libations; the elites; and then the multitude. The consecration of the animal is accompanied by the ritual prayers and the sprinkling of water over the slightly inclined head of the an-

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> imal [...]. After spreading the animal skins, the *boutopos* conducts the beheading, causing a purposefully spectacular spurting of blood towards the earth and the sky, which is then collected in a vase placed on the altar. [Our translation][2] (Albert, 2011, p. 24).

This spectacular quality of the sacrifice must be emphasized for our purposes. To understand that this festivity was permeated by blood, the smell of blood – that same smell of blood sensed by Cassandra while she danced and about which she sang in allusion to all the deaths that would follow in the house of Atreus – is to understand a very specific sensibility of this festivity. The purposefully spectacular spurting of blood from the sacrifice, in the direction of the earth and sky, is an image that is fundamental to our consideration of fifth century tragic Greek performance, which for many and varied purposes is organized around the death of the animal, which is placed at the center of the public festivity, in homage to the divinities worshipped.

From the culture of the festivals to the dance of the chorus

In *'Deep plays': theatre as process in Greek civic life,* Paul Cartledge (1997) argues that, in the classic period, Athens celebrated more religious festivals than any other Greek city. Each one of these festivals had its specificity, but all were inserted in the practice of the cult to a god and shared the sacrificial character of the flesh. Cartledge affirmed:

> On one level, which we might be tempted to label secular, these festivals were an occasion for rest, relaxation and recuperation from the back- breaking round of manual labor that fell to the lot of the vast majority of the 200,000-250,000 inhabitants of Attica, male and female, citizen and non-citizen, slave and free, who in this radically pre-industrial society earned their living typically from farming Attica's not especially fertile terrain. But the festivals were also religious and political, or rather political because they were religious, since in ancient [...] Greece the religious and the political were fabrics of thought and behavior woven from the same threads. Thus they [...] served further as a device for defining Athenian civic identity, which meant exploring and confirming but also questioning what it was to be a citizen of a democracy, this brand-new form of popular self-government. The use of rituals - standardized, repeated events of symbolic character, symbolic statements about the social order - and especially the

P* Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença
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> ritual of collective animal-sacrifice helped to sustain and reinforce that internalized Athenian civic identity (Cartledge, 1997, p. 6).

It is from this perspective that we must consider the phenomena of the fifth century Athenian tragedy, that is of the "religious rituals in honor of one or other manifestation of that 'elusive but, compelling god' Dionysus " (Cartledge, 1997, p. 6). In T*he dramatic festivals of Athens*, *Sir* A. W. Pickard-Cambridge (1988) conducts a pioneer study of the main fifth century Athenian Dionysian festivals: the *Anthesteria*, the *Lenaea*, the Rural Dionysia and the City Dionysia or the Grand Dionysia. Due to the importance it is given by the historiographic tradition, which includes abundant studies about it, we will concentrate on the Grand Dionysia.

According to the presentation of Rush Rehm (1992) in *Greek tragic theatre: theatre production studies* (1992):

> The specific cult honored at the City Dionysia was that of Dionysus Eleuthereus, the god 'having to do with *Eleutherae'*, a town on the border between Boeotia and Attica that had a sanctuary to Dionysus. At some point Athens annexed *Eleutherae* - most likely after the overthrow of the Peisistratid tyranny in 510 and the democratic reforms of Cleisthenes in 508–07 - and the cult-image of Dionysus Eleuthereus was moved to its new home. Athenians reenacted the incorporation of the god's cult every year in a preliminary rite to the City Dionysia. On the day before the festival proper, the cult-statue was removed from the temple near the theatre of Dionysus and taken to a temple on the road to *Eleutherae*. That evening, after sacrifice and hymns, a torchlight procession carried the statue back to the temple, a symbolic re-creation of the god's arrival into Athens, as well as a reminder of the inclusion of the Boeotian town into Attica. As the name *Eleutherae* is extremely close to eleutheria, "freedom", Athenians probably felt that the new cult was particularly appropriate for celebrating their own political liberation and democratic reforms (Rehm, 1992, p. 14).

There are still many uncertainties about the chronology and formalities of the Grand Dionysia. According to Rehm (1992), however, there is evidence that the order the events followed was predominant until the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, in 431 BC. On the first day, an opening ceremony called a *proagon* was held, in which the poets that competed that year, accompanied by their actors and chorists, were presented to the city. On the second day was held the grand procession, called the *pompé*, which head in direction of the sanctuary to Dionysus, close to the theater, where

P* Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença
Brazilian Journal on Presence Studies
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the oxen were sacrificed in homage to the god. On the five last days, the competitions were held.

On each of the days, however, many other rituals took place in addition to the theatrical presentations. Rehm indicates, for example, that before the spectacles, for the purpose of purification, a suckling pig was killed, and its cadaver was carried throughout the theatrical space. Angelos Chaniotis (2007), in *Theatre Rituals* describes how the announcement of the entrance of illustrious citizens in the theater, in and of itself, configured an event. To offer visuality to the performative quality of these activities, although this escapes our strict object of analysis, we present a scene described in second century documents found in Priene, a Ionian city on the coast of Asia Minor:

> Kallineikos who had the function (or perhaps the nick-name?) 'the one who is carried' (*phoreimenos*), was carried on a phallus fifty-five times around the orchestra of the theatre [...]. The expression *ep' agathoi* ('for a good outcome') in this text is not just a formula, but a reference to the fact that Kallineikos' acrobatic performance had taken place for the well-being of the community; it was an offering to the god (Chaniotis, 2007, p. 52).

Returning to the chronology of the Grand Dionysia: on the third day a competition of the dithyrambs was held, in which each one of the ten tribes of Attica was presented with two choruses of fifty people each, one composed of *efebos*, another by citizens. On the fourth, fifth and sixth days, the competition of the tragedies was held, in which three poets, each one on one day, presented a tetralogy composed of three tragedies and a satiric drama, called a *tragikē didaskalia*, each one with up to three actors and a chorus composed of fifteen citizens. The seventh day was dedicated to a competition of comedies, in which five poets each presented a play, each one with four actors and a chorus composed of twenty-four citizens.

We should note, therefore, the existence of competitions of dithyrambs and comedies, parallel to the competition of tragedies at the Grand Dionysia of the fifth century. Since there is little documentation about the performance of the dithyrambs, they are commonly understood as opening spectacles, which preceded the presentations of the tragedy, which were more important. We should understand them, however, as the expression of the civic character of the festival itself, given that they give rise to the

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flow of a thousand people singing and dancing through the theatrical space. This multitude, divided into choruses of fifty people, in a certain way merged with the audience, which had often participated in the performance in previous years and saw their locality represented in the festival by their neighbors.

If on one hand, the civic character that the dithyramb manifest is quantitatively evident, by analogy, we must still comprehend its ritual character by recalling that death permeated the festival. In the context of the Great Dionysia, the dithyramb is fundamentally a hymn for Dionysus, in thanks for the spring harvest that was beginning. To think of the broad spectrum of the forms of singing in ancient Greece and of the dances that were conciliated with them, we note that it ranges from the immortal existence chanted in hymns to mortal existence chanted in dirges. While a hymn is inserted in a rite within a cycle of the season, in which the chorus said it was the right moment of the year to thank their favorite God with a type of dance; a dirge was sung at the time of the death of an individual, to reveal that which distinguishes us from the gods. However, William Mullen (1983), in *Choreia: Pindar and dance,* argues that:

> The hymn and the dirge, then, require occasions so opposed to each other that it is hard at first to imagine any common terms in the consciousness of the dancers who performed them. [...] One must resist the temptation to hypostatize the genres by predicating unbridgeable discontinuities between one and the next. The theme most suitable to the dirges would seem in fact not to have been the bitterness of mortality but rather the rewards of the just, and these rewards themselves point to resemblances between life in the fields or islands of the blessed and life on Olympus [...]. And, at the other extreme, the hymns to the gods seem to have deemed it just as important to recount those moments at which the god made some unique irruption into cosmic history as to affirm the enduring tranquility of his blessings. The god differs from the athlete in having no death to face in the future, but he resembles him in being defined in terms of his conditions of birth and his moments of victory (Mullen, 1983, p. 216).

We will proceed based on the sensibility of this song and this dance that is a hymn, but that has characteristics of a dirge. In the Grand Dionysia, the community is joined in a movement in the middle of the *orchestra*, which was literally the place where they danced, chanting a hymn that was not completely disassociated from the sensibility of death. It is not a fable

P* Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença
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that is at the heart of the event. And this is fundamental in the structure of the festivity in which the tragedy will take place.

From the dance of the chorus to the old drunk satyr

In *Form and performance*, Easterling (1997a) affirmed that:

> In the broader context of the festival the factor uniting all the Dionysiac competitions was the group of singers and dancers: fifty for the dithyramb, twenty-four for comedy, and [...] fifteen, for tragedy and satyr play. Nor was this just a Dionysiac phenomenon: long before tragedy was invented at Athens in the latter part of the sixth century BC, the Greeks in general had been familiar with groups of worshippers who expressed their devotion to particular deities and celebrated festal occasions through richly varied patterns of formal song and dance. It is no accident that the Muses themselves were imagined as a divine chorus singing and dancing in honour of their father Zeus to the accompaniment of Apollo's lyre; this was the paradigm image for performance in the Greek polis (Easterling, 1997a, p. 156).

In summation, we conclude that each year, in the Grand Dionysia alone, 1,160 people participated in the tragic, comic and dithyrambic choirs. These choirs, which trained throughout the year, alluded to phalanges of hoplites or to formations of rowers, in their derivation for maritime conflict. The Hellenic community as a whole stood out in the united group that led to war and to the maneuvers that its armies executed both on land and at sea.

The chorus is, therefore, the definitive expression of the ritual-civic dimension of the fifth century Athenian tragic spectacle. The immediate sensual appeal of its performance is the driving force of the event that we will examine. We cannot understand it based only on the lines in which it appears in the text. Its participation should not be understood as a mere commentary on the action of the individuals around which the script is organized. It is the fundamental element of the action and contributes radically to it. Its dance has such important relations with the drama that at times its lines call attention precisely to its movements, as in the line of Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannus*, in which the chorus asks why it must dance. But the chorus did not only refer to itself but to a group of dancers who incorporate the characters of the drama. In *A Show for* Dionysius, Easterling (1997b) affirmed that the chorus also expressed the performative dimen-

P* Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença
Brazilian Journal on Presence Studies
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sion. The chorus acquires a more complex identity to the degree that its dance assumes a ritual-civic aspect that functions as a link between the festive reality of the Grand Dionysia and the universe of the tragedies. The chorus is simultaneously part of a script and the expression of the festivity.

The chorus was thus a fundamental expression of the community, which in addition to opening the festivity in presentations of dithyrambs, also closed it with a satyr play on each day of presentation of the *tragikē didaskalia*. It is important to recognize that the group of three tragedies, whether they are thematically connected or not, were always followed by this short play in which the chorus represented sensual, violent creatures, part human part animal. More recent studies revive the idea that the satyr play was a humorous spectacle produced to relieve tensions raised by the tragedy. In reality, it was the expression of the Dionysian force that permeated the entire day of the *tragikē didaskalia*. Dionysus assumed the function of a passing god and the chorus gained principal strength with its frenetic dance, known as the *sikinnis*.

According to Easterling (1997b), the satyr play was the most obvious Dionysian element of the festival. The satyr chorus was composed of the same citizens who were in the tragic chorus of the *tragikē didaskalia,* in which it was inserted, but the dance and the singing of one and the other were quite contrasting. Fifteen men, at the end of the day for which they had prepared with complete dedication for the entire year, having even been released from their military obligations, danced and sang for Dionysus in that which was the culmination of the day of the Grand Dionysia. The dedication of these men is indicated by the fact that the winning chorus was awarded the opportunity to participate in a banquette with Dionysus himself in his sanctuary, as Csapo (2010) indicates in *Actors and icons of the ancient theatre*:

> Though dramatic choruses [...] won no prize, like a tripod, destined to serve as a dedication, they did [...] win animals for sacrifice to Dionysus. These animals were sacrificed by the *choregos* and the chorus in the sanctuary of Dionysus adjacent the theater immediately after the victory at a celebration technically designated by the term *epinikia*. Victory was thus imagined as conferring the right to enter the sanctuary of Dionysus to sacrifice and feast with the god (Csapo, 2010, p. 16).

P* Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença
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The presence of the god was potentially dangerous, and his sexuality could be both violent and generative, and his madness could be both cathartic as well as a driver of communal participation in the mythic world. Easterling (1997b) argued that this wild aspect was an essential element of the Dionysiac festival. The performance of the satyr chorus revealed precisely this nature, given that it represented the Dionysiac *thiasos*, that is, the set of creatures that composed the band of worshippers of the god:

> It is an interesting feature of the Dionysiac *thiasos* that the main players, the satyrs and maenads (or nymphs), are not found in the 'real world' in the form that they take in art and drama: the animal ears and tails of the satyrs, and the maenads' characteristic habits, like wearing snakes in their hair, taking part in the sparagmos and eating raw flesh, set them apart from ordinary human worshippers, making them ideally suited to mimetic performance and able to carry metaphorical meaning with ease. One way in which they do this is through the blurring of 'normal' social boundaries: for example, the way the satyrs and maenads share the dance is not representative of historical patterns (Easterling, 1997b, p. 49).

The connection that is established within the *tragikē didaskalia* between the satyr drama and the violence, the suffering, the guilt, punishment, mortality, and human limitations, represented in the tragedy is essential to our analysis. To understand them, Easterling (1997b) suggested that we consider the wisdom of Silenus, the oldest leader of the satyrs:

> According to the story (which goes back at least to the archaic period [...]), the rich king Midas caused Silenus to be captured (by being made drunk), and the drunken satyr in response to the question "What is best?" answered "Not to be born at all", adding that the second-best, if one has the misfortune to be born, is to go back where one came from as quickly as possible (Easterling, 1997b, p. 52).

This story combines two different characteristics of Dionysus, which are fundamental to understanding the spectacle of the satyr drama within the context of the *tragikē didaskalia*. The satyr performs Dionysus, the leader of the *thiasos*, a ritual dancer, but his message, however, is not about performance, much less about celebration, but about death. Silenus spoke of death as an element that permeates all tragedy. For Silenus, it is better not to celebrate, and the most radical way to escape mortality is to have never been born. The old drunk satyr sought rebirth that abolishes death, but at

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Brazilian Journal on Presence Studies
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the same time, knows that death in itself must be experienced. Death never failed to be one of the main characteristics for understanding tragedy within the ancient Greek tradition. It is not accidental that the god being honored, for whom the festivals, including presentations of tragedies are realized, had strong connections with the world of the dead.

The evocation of the souls

Aristotles *Poetics*, although written in the fourth century BC, about a century after the aureate period of the Grand Dionysia, is certainly one of the principal remaining historic documents about the phenomenon of ancient Greek tragedy. However, we should consider that its exegesis in the context of the Renaissance, which was based on a series of misunderstandings, exaggerations and corrections, established the bases for the centrality of text in the historic analysis of theater. Recent studies, however, have reconsidered translations and interpretations about some concepts presented by the philosopher in the *Poetics*, so that based on them, we can approximate the sensibility of dance in the fifth century tragic Athenian spectacle. In this final section we concentrate on the revisions proposed to two of these concepts: *opsis* and *psuchagôgia*.

The *Poetics* must be understood as a work in which Aristotele fundamentally addresses the elaboration of the text by the tragic poet, as he himself explains from the beginning. In *The misunderstanding of opsis in Aristotle's Poetics*, however, Sifakis (2013) calls attention to the fact that Aristotle appears to value the event in which the tragedy is inserted in other works that have not been preserved:

> For we have to remember that the theoretician we are talking about was the original annalist of Athenian theatre, and author of Productions and Dionysiac Victories (as well as On Tragedies) on which all work about the history of drama was based in antiquity. Moreover, we have to ask: should or could Aristotle classify tragedy, not with epic as a species of poetry, but with 'spectator sports' or 'spectator politics' (Sifakis, 2013, p. 48).

To consider that there were works in which Aristotle proposed to analyze the tragedy as spectacle, as opposed to affirming that he had unconditionally rejected the theatrical elements, appears to us to be primordial to our task. In fact, as Sifakis (2013) indicates, Aristotle affirms, in chapter 6

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Brazilian Journal on Presence Studies
E-ISSN 2237-2660

of the *Poetics*, that "the potential of tragedy exists without performance and actors" (Sifakis, 2013, p. 48). But to declare that the potential of tragedy can exist without performance is very different from alleging that tragedy truly exists without performance.

In *Aristotle, Poetics 17, 1455a29-34: people in real life, poets, or spectators in the grip of passion*, Sifakis (2009) indicates that in a passage from Chapter 17 of the *Poetics,* which presents countless translation difficulties that impede formation of a consensus about its real meaning, Aristotle may have presented a conciliation between tragedy and its performance. In this passage the philosopher offers practical counsel to the tragic poets in relation to the visualization of the theater when they are composing a play.

Sifakis (2009) proposes that we understand this passage in the following manner "and also by working out at the same time as many [incidents] as possible with the [appropriate] figures [of movement]" (Sifakis, 2009, p. 489). He affirms that the translation of the term *schêmata* for figures, combined with the idea of *movement*, is justified because it concerns the form of the gestures and postures, which must be stylized and choreographed.

In the *Choreia: Pindar and dance,* Mullen (1983), based on the work *Deipnosophistae*, by Athenaeus, indicates that the tragic poets engaged not only in the creation of these figures of movement when they wrote their plays, but also taught them to their choruses:

> Athenaeus takes pleasure in amassing instances of the orchestic accomplishments of the early tragedians [...]. Aeschylus, he says, 'devised many dance figures himself and assigned them to the dancers in his choruses [...] using no dance teachers but making up the dance figures himself for the choruses, and in general taking upon himself the entire management of the tragedy.' And he quotes Plato the comic poet who makes Aeschylus say, 'I personally have invented the dance figures for my choruses'. 'The early poets', Athenaeus adds, 'Thespis, Pratinas, Kratinos, Phrynichos, were called dancers because they not only realized (*anapherein*) their dramas through the dancing of the chorus but also, apart from their own poems, trained people who wished to learn to dance (Mullen, 1983, p. 20).

Moreover, according to Mullen (1983):

> Athenaeus mentions that 'Sophocles, besides being handsome in his youth, became proficient in dancing and music while he was still a boy studying with Lampros. After the battle of Salamis he danced around the trophy

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Brazilian Journal on Presence Studies
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> while accompanying himself with his lyre, and he was naked and anointed with oil. [...]' In Sophocles the unity of poet, dancer, and musician reaches its acme among dramatists, the moment of perfection just before the flower withers. We should perhaps also add the words 'critic, scholar, and philosopher' to the list, for in the Suda he is said to have written a prose work *Peri tou chorou* (On the Chorus) (Mullen, 1983, p. 21).

These proposals, although they were taken from the analysis of a document dated from the third century CE, are valid in the sense that they indicate images that help us to understand that the work of the tragic poet was not completely dissociated from the dance that was part of the drama. These images are in line with Sifakis's (2009) suggestion that Aristotle had convoked the poets to visualize figures of movement as they composed their works.

Based on this idea of figures of movement we can reconsider one of the most controversial points in the reading of the *Poetics*: the concept of *opsis*, this is a visual dimension of the drama. In *The misunderstanding of opsis in Aristotle's Poetics*, Sifakis (2013) affirms that the *opsis* can designate the "spectacle' or the appearance of the actors" (Sifakis, 2013, p. 46); based on this second definition, he offers us a possibility to recognize the term in its relationship with the form of the gestures and postures.

Also in relation to *opsis*, we can consider that, close to the end of chapter 6 of the *Poetics*, Aristotele identifies a capacity for enchantment by this visual dimension of theater (which includes the figures of movement) based on the concept of *psuchagôgia*. As Halliwell (2011) indicates in *Between ecstasy and truth: interpretations of Greek poetics from Homer to Longinus* (2011), Aristotele applies the adjective *psuchagôgicon* "to the possible impact of visual presentation (opsis) in the tragic theatre" (Halliwell, 2011, p. 226).

This application gives us a clue about the capacity for enchantment of the figures of movement. Halliwell (2011) affirms that *psuchagôgia* is part of "an older Greek tradition which turned the practices of witchcraft, magic, and the like into metaphors for the psychically transformative power of music, poetry, and rhetoric". (Halliwell, 2011, p. 225). Thus, by using an adjective related to *psuchagôgia* to refer to *opsis*, Aristotle sought the intensity of a word that, although in the fifth and fourth centuries BC had the metaphorical meaning of controlling the mind of the audience, still maintained

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Brazilian Journal on Presence Studies
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the power of the conjuring of the dead by necromancy, as in Homeric times.

To reevaluate *ops*is considering the idea of figures of movement and *psuchagôgia* in their potential for enchantment helps to understand the centrality of dance in fifth century tragic Athenian theater. This is what we tried to do in this article, in such a way that allows us to conclude that the ritual-civic performance of the actors-singers-dangers in homage to Dionysus, in the context of the Grand Dionysia, had the power to evoke the souls of those who in some way participated in the event.

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The dirt floor; the festival; the gesture that with a sharp tool slaughters the animal; the arrival of Dionysus in the city; the multitude in scene; the dance of the chorus; the dance of Cassandra.

Cassandra dances on the purple cloth.

Notes

[1] In the original in Portuguese: "[...] os gregos estabeleceram ritos sacrificiais dos quais o mais conhecido e disseminado continua sendo o sacrifício sangrento do tipo alimentar, a *thusia*. Esse sacrifício consiste na degolação de um ou de vários animais, sempre domésticos, desde o galo, passando pelos carneiros, cabras, cavalos até o boi, considerado como a vítima sacrificial de maior prestígio e reservada mais frequentemente para grandes ocasiões. Sem retomar as modalidades precisas da procissão, manifestação deslumbrante das hierarquias sociais e políticas da cidade, podemos, no entanto, mencionar a presença, na procissão, à frente do cortejo, do sacrificador, que deve assegurar a integridade física do animal, que uma única mancha ou defeito aparente invalida. Magistrados e arcontes precedem o padre por ocasião das festas de caráter cívico e andam à frente das mulheres, que carregam os ingredientes necessários para as libações, as elites e por fim a multidão. A consagração do animal é acompanhada de preces rituais e de aspersão de água sobre a cabeça levemente inclinada do animal [...]. Depois de dispersar os pelos do animal, o *boutopos* procede à degolação, provocando um esguicho de sangue, propositalmente espetacular em direção à terra e ao céu, recolhido num vaso colocado sobre o altar"

P* Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença
Brazilian Journal on Presence Studies
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[2] In the original in Portuguese: "O cultivo do espírito esportivo na Hélade antiga se fundamenta naquelas mesmas bases espirituais em que estão arraigados todos os outros valores culturais da civilização helênica, entre os quais o primeiro e o principal é a liberdade do indivíduo frente a qualquer tipo de despotismo. A crença religiosa dos helenos não os privou da liberdade de ação como seres humanos e, portanto, não os eximiu da responsabilidade humana. [...] O próprio homem era a imagem visível da divindade, pois os deuses helenos possuíam todas as características dos seres humanos em sua forma ideal"

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Vinicius Torres Machado, has a PhD in dramatic arts from the Universidade de São Paulo and is a professor at the Universidade Estadual Paulista
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9840-8789
E-mail: vinicius.t.machado@unesp.br

João Pedro Ferreira dos Santos Ribeiro is an actor, with a bachelor's degree in theater from the Escola Superior de Artes Célia Helena, and is a master's student in the Arts at the Universidade Estadual Paulista.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6894-7450
E-mail: jp.fsribeiro@gmail.com

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