

TRAGIC THEMES IN LARGE PAINTINGS. FROM THE WORK ON THE *NEW OVERBECK*

Johannes Overbeck's *Antike Schriftquellen zur Geschichte der bildenden Künste bei den Griechen* of 1868 has been – and still is – an essential work-tool not only for all disciplines of Altertumswissenschaften, but also for art history and many other areas of the cultural sciences. But time has taken its toll: After almost 150 years, the increase in the pertinent material and in our knowledge of Greek art and the considerable changes in the qualifications and needs of the different users call for a substantial philological and archaeological revision of the book to turn the collection of sources into a modern interdisciplinary research tool. A small group of philologists, archaeologists and epigraphers in Berlin¹ have undertaken this task and are presently working to update – or perhaps rather to replace – the *Old Overbeck*.

The most important steps of the revision are:

1. The addition of new or overlooked testimonia

Overbeck has 2400 testimonia (plus a supplementum of about 100). We will be able to add approximately 500 new literary testimonia. They come from new texts, yet unknown to Overbeck, as e. g. Herondas' *Mimiamb* IV (with the mention of the sons of Praxiteles and of Apelles) or the New Poseidippos which contains nine epigrams on masterpieces of sculpture, among them statues, about which we had no previous knowledge – like the Tydeus (or perhaps a group of the *Seven against Thebes*) by Myron (Nr. 69 AB), or the statue of the poet Philitas by Hecataeus (Nr. 63 AB) – and others, of which the existence had been doubted – like the self portrait of Theodorus (Nr. 67 AB).²

Other new texts may have been overlooked by Overbeck or they have been excluded deliberately. It is always amazing how complete the

¹ The group consists of: Klaus Hallof, Sascha Kansteiner, Lauri Lehmann, Sebastian Prignitz, Bernd Seidensticker and Klaus Stemmer.

² Zu den Ἀνδριαντοποιικὰ cf. K. Gutzwiller, "Posidippus on Statuary", in: G. Bastianini, A. Casanova (edd.), *Il papiro di Posidippo un anno dopo* (Firenze 2002) 41–60; I. Männlein-Robert, *Stimme, Schrift und Bild. Zum Verhältnis der Künste in der hellenistischen Dichtung* (Heidelberg 2007) 53–65; V. M. Strocka, "Poseidippus von Pella und die Anfänge der griechischen Kunstgeschichtsschreibung", *Klio* 89 (2007) 332–345.

collections of the 19th century are. Searches with all the technical help, we have at our disposal today, showed that Overbeck did not miss much, and among our findings there are some, which Overbeck may have known, but not included in his collection, because he felt that they were almost identical with others from which they are derived and did not add important information. We have – sometimes and especially in the case of the most important artists such as Phidias – added these or we have at least mentioned them in the commentary on the more important testimonia. The greatest increase, however, is in the inscriptions, of which there are only few in the *Old Overbeck*. We will be able to add approximately 1500 new inscriptions, and by doing this we will not only replace the *Overbeck*, but also Emanuel Loewy's standard work *Inschriften griechischer Bildhauer* of 1885. On the other hand we have not tried – although that would have been a major improvement – to add testimonia about *artifices minores*, such as gem-cutters, mosaicists, and others – and there will still be no architects.

The basic structure of the *Old Overbeck* is largely preserved, but due to the doubling of the material and to some rearrangement of the old material because of new research results, there will be new numbers, and we have tried to eliminate certain inconsistencies.

2. Revision of the texts, translation and commentary

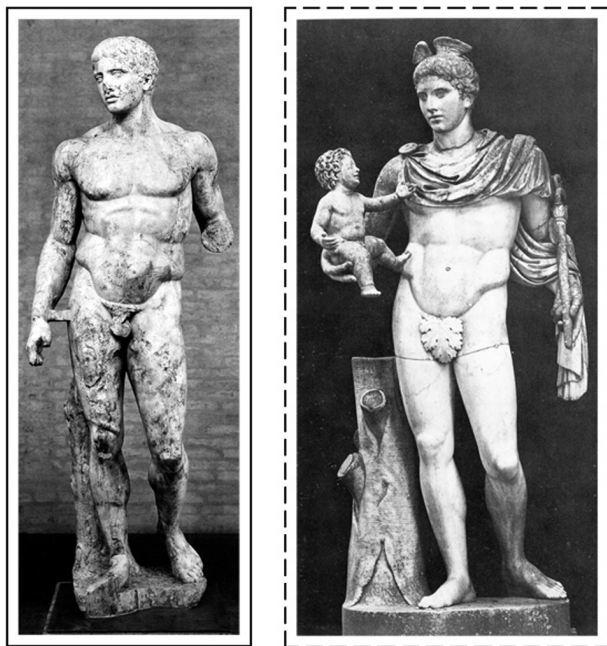
For most of the texts from which the testimonia are taken we now have better critical editions than *Overbeck*, and in some cases the differences are of importance for the meaning of the text. More important, however, than giving the user a more reliable text is to help him understand it. The *New Overbeck* therefore will add translations, which in the 19th century were not needed. Many of the more remote texts – e. g. scholia, inscriptions, and Byzantine texts – have never been translated, and the available translations are sometimes wrong or at least imprecise. This is partly due to the fact that the translators rarely had sufficient archaeological expertise and partly to the fact that the technical and aesthetic terminology of the texts is rather vague. We use existing translations, but in almost all cases they have to be corrected or modified.

Translations, however, are not enough to make the texts accessible to all prospective users of the *New Overbeck*. Of equal – if not greater importance – are short philological and archaeological commentaries: Each testimonium will get a short introductory passage – just a few lines – about the author and the work, from which the source is taken, and about its context. In the case of inscriptions the introduction tells the reader where and when it was found and where it is placed. Text and translation are then followed by short philological resp. epigraphical commentaries, which give the necessary information about the date, textual problems and

historical facts of the testimonium, and by an archaeological commentary (on the monument)³ and at the end of the testimonia for the major artists there will be a short resumé summarizing what we know about the artist and his oeuvre.

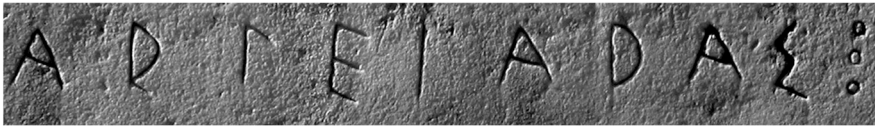
3. Pictures

Last but not least, the *New Overbeck* will have pictures. To avoid the danger of illustrating the literary texts with false or fanciful attributions of preserved works of art and thus stabilizing wrong identifications in the mind of the user, it was decided to present pictures only in those cases, where the connection between a literary testimonium and a preserved work of art is either certain or most likely and to inform the user about the difference between *certain* and *probable* not only in the commentary, but already through the image. Thus we will use two different forms of presentation: Certain attributions will be framed by an unbroken line; probable attributions will get a broken frame.

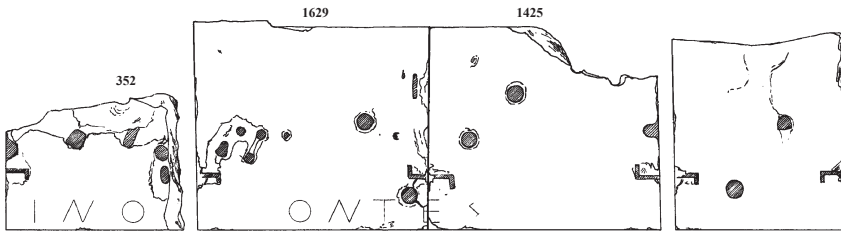


³ Of central importance is the critical evaluation of the often quite fanciful identification and attribution of preserved statues or copies (or fragments of statues or copies) to a particular artist.

In the case of the inscriptions we will present a ‘signature’ of each artist, where available



and – more importantly – we will show the top side of the base of a monument, whenever it supplies information about the object or objects, which stood upon it, and about their form and height:



The 4.500 testimonia will be framed by an introduction and by glossary, indices, and concordances.⁴

II

The work on the sources has stimulated a number of questions, one of which shall be outlined briefly in the following:

In view of the importance of the theatre for the vase painters of the 5th and especially of the 4th centuries,⁵ one would expect that the painters of large pictures – such as panel paintings or wall paintings – were also inspired by performances of tragedy and comedy, or by the texts of the plays. If one looks at the testimonia, however, this appears not to have been the case.

One has to keep in mind, though, that our knowledge of Greek painting is very fragmentary – we know only a small part of the oeuvre of the known painters, and Overbeck did not include paintings where the literary source did not identify the artist.⁶ Furthermore, we have almost no information

⁴ There will be 5 volumes (instead of one) which will be published together in 2012 (by Walter de Gruyter); and, of course, *DNO* will be available as E-Book.

⁵ J. R. Green, *Theatre in Ancient Greek Society* (London 1994); O. Taplin, *Comic Angels* (Oxford 1993); id., *Pots and Plays. Interaction between Tragedy and Greek Vase-painting of the Fourth Century B. C.* (Los Angeles 2007).

⁶ One could only fill this gap, if one were to go through the complete body of the preserved Greek and Latin literature.

about pictures that were produced for rooms in private homes – for example the *andron*. If we are told where a certain painting was presented, it is in representative public buildings – like the *Stoa Poikile* on the Athenian agora or the *pinakotheke* on the acropolis. The testimonium that Alcibiades locked Agatharchus up in his house for four months and forced him to decorate it with paintings,⁷ is the exception that proves the rule. With the private home, however, we may miss exactly the realm, for which paintings with tragic themes could have been produced. And last but not least: even in the cases, in which an author explicitly states the title or theme of the picture (*The sacrifice of Iphigeneia* e. g.) and/or describes it in detail, we cannot check, whether the painter has been inspired by a preserved or a lost tragedy or rather by the treatment of the story in epic poetry or popular story telling, because the paintings are not preserved.

But even if one keeps all these limitations in mind, it is remarkable that in the hundreds of testimonia there is almost no explicit and unambiguous relation between painting and theatre in general and painting and tragedy in particular.

For the first generation of painters about whom we possess some information – i. e. for Polygnotus and his brother Aristophon, for Micon and Panainus, the brother of Phidias – our sources attest paintings in official buildings.

Stoa Poikile:⁸

<i>Ilioupersis</i>	Polygnotus
<i>Amazonomachia</i>	Micon
<i>Battle of Marathon</i>	Micon
<i>Battle of Oinone</i>	Panainus (?)

Anakeion:⁹

<i>Dioscuri and Leucippids</i>	Polygnotus
<i>Argonauts</i>	Micon

Theseion:¹⁰

<i>Amazonomachia</i>	Micon
<i>Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs</i>	Micon
<i>Theseus and Minos</i>	Micon

It is only in the *Stoa Poikile* that we find paintings of historical battles: Marathon by Micon and Oinoe probably by Panainus. All the others

⁷ Andoc. *Contra Alc.* 17; Demosth. 21. 147; Plut. *Alc.* 16.

⁸ Paus. 1. 15. 1–3.

⁹ Paus. 1. 18. 1.

¹⁰ Paus. 1. 17. 2–4.

are mythical paintings, which appear to have been inspired by the epic tradition: Homer and the Trojan cycle, the Argonauts and Theseus. Of course, many of the stories or scenes that are mentioned or described in the literary sources have been treated by contemporary tragedy, but there is no evidence – or even a good reason to believe – that the painters were influenced by a performance in the theatre. Look for instance at the topics of the seven mythological paintings which, according to Pausanias (1. 22. 6), were presented in the *pinakothekē* on the acropolis:

Ἔστι δὲ ἐν ἀριστερᾷ τῶν προπυλαίων οἴκημα ἔχον γραφάς· ὁπόσαις δὲ μὴ καθέστηκεν ὁ χρόνος αἴτιος ἀφανέσιν εἶναι, Διομήδης ἦν <καὶ Ὀδυσσεύς>, (1) ὁ μὲν ἐν Λήμνῳ τὸ Φιλοκτήτου τόξον, (2) ὁ δὲ τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν ἀφαιρούμενος ἐξ Ἰλίου. ἐνταῦθα [ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς] (3) Ὀρέστης ἐστὶν Αἰγίσθον φονεύων καὶ Πυλάδης τοὺς παῖδας τοὺς Ναυπλίου βοηθοὺς ἐλθόντας Αἰγίσθῳ· (4) τοῦ δὲ Ἀχιλλέως τάφου πλησίον μέλλουσά ἐστι σφάζεσθαι Πολυξένη. Ὀμήρῳ δὲ εὖ μὲν παρείθη τόδε <τὸ> ὥμῳ οὕτως ἔργον· εὖ δέ μοι φαίνεται ποιῆσαι Σκύρον ὑπὸ Ἀχιλλέως ἀλοῦσαν, οὐδὲν ὁμοίως καὶ ὅσοι λέγουσιν (5) ὁμοῦ ταῖς παρθέναις Ἀχιλλέα ἔχειν ἐν Σκύρῳ δίαίταν, ἃ δὲ καὶ Πολύγνωτος ἔγραψεν. ἔγραψε δὲ καὶ (6) πρὸς τῷ ποταμῷ ταῖς ὁμοῦ Νausικᾷ πλυνούσαις ἐφιστάμενον Ὀδυσσέα κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ καθὰ δὴ καὶ Ὅμηρος ἐποίησε. γραφαὶ δὲ εἰσι καὶ ἄλλαι καὶ Ἀλκιβιάδης, ἵππων δὲ οἱ νίκης τῆς ἐν Νεμέᾳ ἐστὶ σημεῖα ἐν τῇ γραφῇ. Καὶ (7) Περσεύς ἐστὶν ἐς Σέριφον κομιζόμενος, Πολυδέκτη φέρων τὴν κεφαλὴν τὴν Μεδούσης.

Diomedes and the Palladion (1); *Odysseus and the bow of Philoctetes* (2); *Orestes and Pylades killing Aegisthus and the sons of Nauplius* (3); *The sacrifice of Polyxena on the grave of Achilles* (4); *Achilles on Scyros* (5); *Odysseus and Nausicaa at the river* (6); *Perseus returning to Seriphus with the head of the Medusa* (7). Tragic or satyric treatments are testified for almost all of these topics.

Only for number 5 and 6 Pausanias provides the name of the painter: Polygnotus, among whose paintings also is a *Salmoneus*:

Oeuvre of Polygnotus:

1. <i>Ilioupersis</i>	Lesche of the Cnidians
2. <i>Nekyia</i>	Lesche of the Cnidians
3. <i>Ilioupersis (Greeks after the capture of Troy)</i>	Stoa Poikile
4. <i>Dioscuri and Leucippids</i>	Anakeion
5. <i>Odysseus after the killing of the suitors</i>	Temple of Athena Areia (Plataeae)
6. <i>Achilles on Scyros</i>	Pinakothekē
7. <i>Sacrifice of Polyxena</i> (?)	Pinakothekē

8. <i>Odysseus and Nausicaa</i>	Pinakotheke
9. <i>Frescoes (of unknown subject)</i>	Thespieae
10. <i>Ascendens cum clupei (Capaneus?)</i>	?
11. <i>Salmones</i>	?
12. <i>Polygnotus' hare (part of a picture)</i>	Anakeion?
13. <i>Polygnotus' donkey (part of a picture)</i>	?

Three of Polygnotus' topics (numbers 6, 8 and 11) have been treated by Sophoclean satyr plays, but nobody will believe that Polygnotus had a special penchant for satyr play. There is, however a testimonium (just one), which could indicate that Polygnotus followed a tragedian: In his description of the *Nekyia* in the Lesche of the Cnidians in Delphi Pausanias (10. 31. 3 f.) seems to imply that Polygnotus in his depiction of the death of Meleagrus did not follow Homer's,¹¹ but Phrynichus' version,¹² in which Meleagrus dies, when his mother Althaea throws the wooden log, on which his destiny hinges, into the fire:

ἐς δὲ τοῦ Μελεάγρου τὴν τελευτὴν Ὀμήρῳ μὲν ἐστὶν εἰρημένα ὥς Ἐρινὺς καταρῶν ἀκούσαι τῶν Ἀλθαίας καὶ ἀποθάνοι κατὰ ταύτην ὁ Μελεάγρος τὴν αἰτίαν· αἱ δὲ Ἥοιαι τε καλούμεναι καὶ ἡ Μινυὰς ὁμολογήκασιν ἀλλήλαις· Ἀπόλλωνα γὰρ δὴ αἰτῶνται φασὶν αἱ ποιήσεις ἀμύνει Κούρησιν ἐπὶ τοὺς Αἰτωλοὺς καὶ ἀποθανεῖν Μελεάγρον ὑπὸ Ἀπόλλωνος. (31. 4) τὸν δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ δαλῶ λόγον, ὥς δοθεῖη μὲν ὑπὸ Μοιρῶν τῇ Ἀλθαίᾳ, Μελεάγρῳ δὲ οὐ πρότερον [δὲ] ἔδει τὴν τελευτὴν [τὴν] συμβῆναι πρὶν ἢ ὑπὸ πυρὸς ἀφανισθῆναι τὸν δαλὸν καὶ ὥς ὑπὸ τοῦ θυμοῦ καταπρήσειεν αὐτὸν ἡ Ἀλθαία, τοῦτον τὸν λόγον Φρύνιχος ὁ Πολυφράδμονος πρῶτος ἐν δράματι ἔδειξε Πλευρωνίαις.

This is only a small detail in a very large picture and, of course, Pausanias' interpretation, but perhaps an indication that the painters (at least the ones that lived and worked in Athens and will have visited the Dionysia) may in some cases have been inspired by a play, and there is an equally rare parallel from sculpture: Pausanias reports that Argos dedicated a group of Polyneices and the commanders who died fighting with him at the walls of Thebes, and adds there were more commanders than seven, but Argos – i. e. the artist, whom Pausanias does not name – followed Aeschylus, who had reduced the number to seven.¹³

Another interesting case is the painting of *Philoctetes* attested for Polygnotus's brother Aristophon. It is Plutarchus who in *De audiendis poetis* and in the *Quaestiones convivales* – in a context, where he talks

¹¹ Homer, *Iliad* 9. 566–572.

¹² Phrynichus *TGrF* I. 3 F 6 (Pleuronaii).

¹³ Paus. 2. 20. 5.

about the paradox of tragic pleasure – praises the two artists, who by their art transformed the pain, with which we watch a sick respectively a dying person, into admiration and pleasure:

καὶ νοσώδη μὲν ἄνθρωπον καὶ ὑπουργὸν ὡς ἀτερπὲς θέαμα φεύγομεν,
τὸν δ' Ἀριστοφῶντος Φιλοκτῆτην καὶ τὴν Σιλανίωνος Ἰοκάστην ὁμοί-
ους φθίνουσι καὶ ἀποθνήσκουσι πεποιημένους ὁρῶντες χαίρομεν.¹⁴

Aristophon's *Philoctetes* and the *dying Iocaste* of the fourth century sculptor Silanion, certainly are tragic themes, but the question whether the two artists were inspired by Aeschylus' *Philoctetes* resp. one of the three Oedipus plays by the three great tragedians, cannot be answered with any certainty. There were, by the way, other famous portraits of *Philoctetes* by Parrhasius¹⁵ and possibly by Aristides¹⁶ (both painters of the fourth century), and – very likely – a statue by the famous fifth century sculptor Pythagoras.¹⁷

Another likely candidate for tragic themes would be Agatharchus of Samos, who according to Vitruvius was the first to paint a *skenographia* for a production of Aeschylus and wrote about it.

namque primum Agatharchus Athenis, Aeschylo docente tragoediam,
scenam fecit et de ea commentarium reliquit.¹⁸

But unfortunately we do not have any information about the topics of the painter, who praised himself, as Plutarchus reports, for working with great ease: *ταχὺ καὶ ῥαδίως*.¹⁹

The great painters of the next generation – Parrhasius and Zeuxis – are not known to have painted large multi-figured pictures.

Zeuxis

Zeus and the Olympic Gods, Eros, Marsyas, Pan, Centaurs, Boreas and Triton, Heracleiscus and Alcmene, Helena, Penelope, Menelaus, athlete, old woman.

Parrhasius

Hermes, Prometheus, Hercules, Theseus, Meleagrus, Hercules and Perseus, two mythological paintings, Odysseus Mainomenos, Hoplon Krisis, Philoctetes, Demos, Archigallus, priest, Philiscus, Dionysus and Arete, Nauarchus, hoplites, nurse, pueri duo.

¹⁴ Plut. *Mor.* 18 c (*De aud. poet.* 3); *Mor.* 674 a (*Quaest. conv.* 5. 1. 2).

¹⁵ *AP* 16. 111.

¹⁶ Plin. *NH* 35. 100 (<Aristides> pinxit et aegrum sine fine laudatum = Philoctetes?).

¹⁷ Plin. *NH* 34. 59 (*AP* 16. 112); *LIMC* VII 1, s. v. Philoctetes Nr. 54.

¹⁸ Vitruvius 7 praef. 10; E. Keuls, *Plato and Greek Painting* (New York 1978) 63 f.; T. Carl, *Bild und Betrachter* (Rahden 2006) 39 ff.

¹⁹ Plut. *Per.* 13.

Their oeuvre, as far as we know it, shows single persons or small groups of two or three, rather than stories. Next to gods and the great heroes of myth we find new subjects: allegorical figures, portraits of contemporaries: an unknown poet, a priest, athletes and minor figures such as a nurse, an old woman or two boys.

Despite the growing popularity of the dramatic performances there is no indication of any influence of tragedy on these two most distinguished painters of the time of Sophocles and Euripides; and the testimonia of the Suda and the late *Vita of Euripides* that the tragedian originally was a painter and that pictures of his were shown in Megara,²⁰ would – even if they were true (which is anything but certain) – add nothing to the small number of tragic themes, since we are not told what the subjects of the pictures in Megara (or of other pictures by him) were.

The third famous painter of the last decades of the fifth century, Timanthes of Cythnus, is much more interesting for our question than Parrhasius and Zeuxis. Besides a painting of a hero, which Pliny describes as Timanthes' attempt to produce the perfect male figure,²¹ all his attested paintings appear to present tragic or satyric themes: *Sacrifice of Iphigeneia*, *Ajax and Odysseus (Hoplön Krisis)*, *Stoning of Palamedes*, *Cyclops cum satyris*.

Particularly famous was his *Sacrifice of Iphigeneia*. Cicero, Valerius Maximus, Pliny, and Quintilian all praise Timanthes for his ability to differentiate nuances of grief: Cicero e. g. declared that the renowned painter portrayed Calchas sad, Odysseus sadder, Menelaus mournful and – finally – Agamemnon, the father of the victim – with veiled head, because “the deepest grief cannot be brought out by the brush”.²² Veiling of the head as a sign of deep grief is not new; we find it already in Homer (*Il.* 24. 162 f.; *Od.* 8. 85); but in the context of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, it is possible that Timanthes took the motif from the messenger speech of Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis*.²³ Of his other paintings – the *Hoplön Krisis* and the *Stoning of Palamedes* – we hear nothing that would indicate that he was inspired by a drama. In principle that is quite possible, and it is certainly the case with his Cyclops with satyrs. It is not imperative that the painting was

²⁰ Suda ε 3695 Adler (*TGrF* 5. 1, p. 53) Εὐριπίδης, Μνησάρχου [...] γέγονε δὲ τὰ πρῶτα ζωγράφος. – *Vita IA* 4 (*TGrF* 5. 1, p. 46): φασὶ δ' αὐτὸν καὶ ζωγράφον γενέσθαι καὶ δείκνυσθαι αὐτοῦ πινάκια ἐν Μεγάροις.

²¹ Plin. *NH* 35. 74.

²² *Orator* 74: si denique pictor ille (sc. Timanthes) vidit, cum immolanda Iphigenia tristis Calchas esset, tristior Ulixes, maereret Menelaus, obvolvendum caput Agamemnonis esse, quoniam summum illum luctum penicillo non posset imitari; si denique histrio quid deceat quaerit: quid faciendum oratori putemus? Cf. Plin. *NH* 35. 73; Quint. 2. 13. 12 f.; Val. Max. 8. 11. 6.

²³ Eur. *IA* 1349 f.

motivated by Euripides' *Cyclops*, but the connection of Polyphemus with satyrs is of course unthinkable without the theatre.

In view of the enormous proliferation of dramatic performances throughout the Greek world and the growing number of vase paintings inspired by the theatre, it is astonishing that for the great painters of the fourth century even less tragic themes are attested than for their predecessors. Among the paintings of Apelles and Protogenes, the two most famous painters of the second half of the 4th century there is not a single example:

Apelles

Aphrodite Anadyomene, Aphrodite, Charis, Tyche, Artemis, Hercules, Heros, Bronte, Astrape et Ceraunobolia, Calumnia, Alexander (several times), Alexander's hetairoi, Antigonus Monophtalmos, Pancaspe, self-portrait, Megabyzus, Sacrificial procession, exspirantes, horse, fawn.

Protogenes

Ialysus, Satyr, Cydippe and Tlepolemus, Paralus and Hammonias (the Athenian state ships), athlet, Alexander, Pan, Philiscus (tragedian), Thesmothet.

As a glance at the lists of their oeuvre shows, the importance of myth as a subject for painting diminishes considerably. Its place is taken by contemporary heroes such as Alexander and his generals. Tragic themes do not disappear altogether. They are attested for Theon,²⁴ Athenion,²⁵ Antiphilus²⁶ and others – and for the new temple of Dionysus Eleuthereus at the southslope of the acropolis. Pausanias (1. 20. 3) reports that besides *Ariadne on Naxos*, a story, which appears to never have become the subject of a tragedy, and the *Return of Hephaestus to Mount Olympus*, which was a theme of early satyr play, there were paintings of the tragic punishments of *Pentheus* and *Lycurgus*:

τοῦ Διονύσου δὲ ἐστὶ πρὸς τῷ θεάτρῳ τὸ ἀρχαιότατον ἱερὸν [...] γραφαὶ δὲ αὐτόθι (1) Διόνυσός ἐστιν ἀνάγων Ἥφαιστον ἐς οὐρανὸν λέγεται δὲ καὶ τάδε ὑπὸ Ἑλλήνων, ὡς Ἥρα ρίψαι γενόμενον Ἥφαιστον, ὃ δὲ οἱ μνησικακῶν πέμψαι δῶρον χρυσοῦν θρόνον ἄφανεῖς δεσμοὺς ἔχοντα, καὶ τὴν μὲν ἐπεὶ τε ἐκαθέζετο δεδέσθαι, θεῶν δὲ τῶν μὲν ἄλλων οὐδενὶ τὸν Ἥφαιστον ἐθέλγειν πείθεσθαι, Διόνυσος δὲ – μάλιστα γὰρ ἐς τοῦτον πιστὰ ἦν Ἥφαιστῳ – μεθύσας αὐτὸν ἐς οὐρανὸν ἤγαγε· ταῦτά τε δὴ γεγραμμένα εἰσὶ καὶ (2) Πενθεὺς καὶ (3) Λυκοῦργος ὧν ἐς Διόνυσον ὕβρισαν διδόντες δίκας, (4) Ἀριάδνη δὲ καθεύδουσα καὶ Θησεὺς ἀναγόμενος καὶ Διόνυσος ἦκων ἐς τῆς Ἀριάδνης τὴν ἀρπαγὴν.

²⁴ Theon: Plin. *NH* 35. 144 (Orestes' matricide, Cassandra, Orestes *mainomenos*).

²⁵ Athenion: Plin. *NH* 35. 134 (Achilles on Scyros).

²⁶ Antiphilus: Plin. *NH* 35. 114 (Hippolytus).

I will conclude my search for tragic themes in large paintings with a late painter, who was particularly renowned for his tragic themes: Timomachus of Byzantium, who probably lived in the second century BC.²⁷ Besides paintings (resp. a painting) of *Orestes* and *Iphigeneia in Tauris*,²⁸ Pliny and others²⁹ attest pictures of *Ajax* and *Medea*, which won great public fame, because Caesar bought it for the enormous prize of 80 talents and displayed it in the temple of Venus Genetrix.³⁰

In both cases – for his *Ajax* as well as for his *Medea* – Timomachus had chosen a so-called ‘fruchtbaren Augenblick’ or ‘pregnant moment’ of the Sophoclean and respectively Euripidean tragedies: In the case of the *Ajax*, the scene in which the hero, having slaughtered the cattle belonging to the victorious army, is sitting in his tent, exhausted and brooding, and considers suicide;³¹ and in the case of the *Medea* the famous monologue in which Medea brings herself to kill her children.³² No less than nine epigrams describe – in ever new formulations – the antagonism between her motherly love and the desire for revenge, between wrath and pity, wild glances and tears.³³ They praise Timomachus for having chosen – as in his painting of *Ajax* – not the tragic deed, but the moment of decision and thus having avoided to stain his hand and brush with blood.

The literary testimonia suggest that Timomachus’ painting of *Medea* belonged to the most important artworks of antiquity, and this is confirmed by the rich history of its reception and transformation not only in Pompeian wall painting from Pompeii and Herculaneum,³⁴ but also in Roman imperial sculpture. The *Medea* statue, which Callistratus praises enthusiastically, may be fictitious,³⁵ but we happen to have several provincial statues and statuettes of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD.³⁶

²⁷ The date of Timomachus is uncertain. Pliny (*NH* 35. 36) takes him as contemporary with Caesar, but it is much more likely that he lived already in the first half of the third century, as Lippold suggests (G. Lippold, “Timomachos [5]”, *RE* 6 [1936] 1292–1294; cf. also E. Simon, “Die Typen der Medeadarstellung in der antiken Kunst”, *Gymnasium* 61 [1954] 203–227) or in the second century BC.

²⁸ Plin. *NH* 35. 136; it is possible that the picture showed the famous Euripidean anagnorisis, but the syntax of Pliny’s statement suggests that he talks about two separate paintings.

²⁹ e.g. Cic. *Verr.* 4. 135; Ov. *Trist.* 2. 521–532; Philostr. *Vita Apoll.* 2. 22.

³⁰ Plin. *NH* 35. 136 (7. 126; 35. 26).

³¹ Soph. *Aj.* 306–326.

³² Eur. *Medea* 1019–1080.

³³ *AP* 16. 135–140, 143; *Epigr. Bob.* 53 f.

³⁴ *LIMC* VI 1 (M. Schmidt), Nr. 8–14; Nr. 12 f. show theatre scenes (*Medea* with onkos-mask).

³⁵ Callistratus, Nr. 13.

³⁶ *LIMC* VI 1, Nr. 19–22; cf. also the gems (Nr. 15–18) and reliefs (Nr. 23 f.).

Timomachus' *Medea* and *Ajax* (and perhaps his picture of *Iphigeneia* and *Orestes*, which, as Pliny states,³⁷ was equally famous), are the only cases, where there can be virtually no doubt about their being inspired by the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides. There was a theatre at Cyzicus, where Timomachus lived, and the painter may have been inspired by performances, but it is, of course, equally possible that he took his tragic themes from reading.

So it is the latest of the great Greek painters – Timomachus – who is the first and only one, of whom we can be certain, that he painted central scenes of famous tragedies, and it is probably no coincidence that he lived and worked in a time, for which the first large paintings with comedy-scenes are attested. It is possible that Timomachus had predecessors. For, as we have seen, there are many titles of paintings that point to tragic stories, characters or scenes.³⁸ But we will probably never know for certain, whether earlier painters, such as Timanthes at the end of the 5th century, were inspired by a performance or reading of a particular play. Here the *New Overbeck*, helpful as the five volumes hopefully will be, does not allow an answer.

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В статье подведены итоги работы над обновленным и расширенным изданием знаменитого труда Й. Овербека (завершение этого коллективного проекта ожидается в 2012 г.). Опираясь на литературные свидетельства, автор демонстрирует примечательное явление – чрезвычайную редкость отражения сюжетов трагедии в античной монументальной живописи.

³⁷ Plin. *NH* 35. 136.

³⁸ It is interesting that Aeschylus in the *Oresteia* twice refers to painting: 1. Iphigeneia standing out like a central figure in a painting (*Ag.* 241); 2. the Erinyes do not look like the Harpyes Pythia has seen in paintings (*Eum.* 50 f.). But the reference is not to paintings of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia or of the Erinyes and it is not clear whether Aeschylus has large paintings in mind or vase paintings.