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# **Earth, Nature and the Cult of the Tomb:**

## **The Posthumous Reception of Aeschylus *heros*<sup>\*</sup>**

Emmanuela Bakola

One of the themes which emerge in this volume is the close association of poets with the landscapes which posthumously house (or, are imagined to house) their bodies and tombs. In fictional funerary epigrams, travelling accounts and stories, especially from the post-classical period, images of nature and land elements are used to capture poets' perceptions by posterity, sometimes more so than man-made commemorative structures.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the most telling example, discussed by Graziosi in this volume, is that of Orpheus. From torrential streams to rivers flowing underground, to caves emanating oracular knowledge, to nightingale song, there is a remarkable variety of natural elements that are imagined as operating at the poet's various imaginary resting places and, even more importantly, echoing the perceived character of the Orphic oeuvre.<sup>2</sup> Although Orpheus might be considered an exceptional case, since his poetry had a reputation of breathing life into nature already since the classical period,<sup>3</sup> other sources suggest that he might not be so special in his posthumous connection to nature and the landscape. As Montiglio observes, the vituperative character of Hipponax' iambic poems is captured by the poetic rendition of his burial site as able to grow only stinging thorns and acerbic fruit.<sup>4</sup> In other funerary epigrams of the *Palatine Anthology*, the perceived 'sweetness' of Sophocles' lyrics is captured by the image of live bees making honey and adorning his tomb,<sup>5</sup> and Anacreon's association with Dionysiac inspiration is reflected on the image of vine that moistens the ground and nurtures the buried poet and his poems.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See especially Graziosi, Hanink, Montiglio and Platt in this volume.

<sup>2</sup> *AP* 7.9 = n. 2.1379-86 G-P, Paus. 9.30.6-12, Diog. Laert. 1.5, Phanocles fr. 1, Hygin. Astr. 2.7. See Graziosi in this volume, 0000.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Simon. fr. 567 PMG, Aesch. Ag. 1629-32, Eur. *IA* 1211-15, Eur. *Ba.* 560-4.

<sup>4</sup> *AP* 7.536 (Alcaeus of Messene 13 G-P). See Montiglio in this volume, 0000.

<sup>5</sup> *AP* 7.36 (Erycias). See Montiglio 0000.

<sup>6</sup> *AP* 7.24 ('Simonides' 3 G-P). See Montiglio 0000.

The material connection of poetic personalities, styles and oeuvres with elements of nature and the landscape through the poeticization of burials is intriguing, and one rightly wonders about its rationale and origins. Unfortunately, since we have only a small fraction of these poets' works and of the responses by later authors and audiences, we can say very little on the level of detail. Nevertheless, the recent advances in the study of poets' biographical traditions, especially as concerns the value of comedy as source,<sup>7</sup> give us reasonable confidence that as a general tendency, this kind of reception echoes elements from the poets' own oeuvres, their poetic personas or early responses to their work. In the present volume, for example, Montiglio has astutely proposed that the lush vegetation which is envisaged to adorn poets' tombs in the *Palatine Anthology* echoes their privileged poetic connection with Dionysus, which often originates in their oeuvres and is attested in other sources including Old comedy.<sup>8</sup>

Another route which may shed light on the poets' posthumous association with the landscape is the proliferation of poets' hero cults in the postclassical period. Tomb cults of poets and the narratives that surrounded them flourished especially from the Hellenistic period onwards.<sup>9</sup> In her discussion of Pausanias' account in this volume, Hanink observes that poets' burials are envisaged like a root system that nourishes the Greek landscape.<sup>10</sup> These observations may provide some explanation for the proliferation of portrayals of poets' tombs through nature imagery in the aforementioned postclassical sources. For, hero cults were saliently connected with the preservation and promotion of fertility, prosperity and well-being - or their opposites, if the apportioned honours failed to be observed.<sup>11</sup>

An example of how poetic oeuvre, poetic self-presentation and hero-cult may together contribute to a poet's posthumous connection with natural elements is provided by the Mnesiepes Inscription, an important source for the cult of the iambic poet Archilochus.<sup>12</sup> According to this inscription, after Archilochus' death in Paros, the fertility of land and people

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<sup>7</sup> Lefkowitz' thesis (1981, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. 2012) about the fictionality of ancient biographies as mere readings of the poets' works has been nuanced further, and the study of comedy has been instrumental to this. See, for example, Biles (2002); Bakola (2008); Rawles (forthcoming), Introduction and chs. 4 and 5. Whilst the biographical anecdotes are not necessarily 'historical' in a strict sense, many are not arbitrary and, provided the right methodology is used, they can offer valuable glimpses into early reception and literary criticism.

<sup>8</sup> For Dionysus and poetic inspiration, and comedy's use of the idea, see 0000 below. See also Montiglio 0000.

<sup>9</sup> See Kimmel-Clauzet (2013).

<sup>10</sup> See 0000 below.

<sup>11</sup> See below, 0000.

<sup>12</sup> On the cult of Archilochus on Paros and its date in the 6th century, see Clay (2004) 9-39, including 10-24 on the Mnesiepes inscription, which dates from the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC. Cf. Nagy (1989), 64-5. For a critique of Clay, see MacPhail in BMCR 2005.09.32.

were blighted. This was remedied only after the Parians instituted a hero cult for the poet, building the Asclepieion and worshipping him alongside other divinities including Dionysus. This tradition has rightly been connected to ‘Archilochus’ poetic appropriation of Dionysus and natural powers as his sources of inspiration, famously suggested by Archil. 120W:

ὡς Διωνύσου ἄνακτος καλὸν ἐξάρξαι μέλος  
οἶδα διθύραμβον οἴνω συγκεραυνωθείς φρένας  
I know how to initiate a fine song for Lord Dionysus,  
a dithyramb, after my mind is thunder-struck with wine.<sup>13</sup>

In this chapter, I turn to another poet who, as I will try to demonstrate, was also associated posthumously with the materiality of nature on more than one levels, namely Aeschylus. I will argue that fifth-century audiences were familiar with the idea that Aeschylus was worshipped as hero profoundly connected to the landscape that housed his remains. I will also suggest that this connection was underpinned by elements which ultimately derive from Aeschylus’ own works. Key to my argument about Aeschylus’ hero-cult will be one of the most interesting but least explored testimonies about the poet’s afterlife and reception in antiquity, namely the *Life of Aeschylus* §10-11. This testimony, whose value has often been questioned, suggests that after Aeschylus’ death, his tomb in Gela, Sicily, became site of formal cult, attracting regular pilgrimages by members of the tragic profession.

καὶ σφόδρα τῷ τε τυράνῳ Ἱέρωνι καὶ τοῖς Γελώοις τιμηθεὶς ἐπιζήσας τρίτον ἔτος  
γηραιὸς ἐτελεύτα ... ἀποθανόντα δὲ Γελῶοι πολυτελῶς ἐν τοῖς δημοσίοις μνήμασι  
θάψαντες ἐτίμησαν μεγαλοπρεπῶς, ἐπιγράψαντες οὕτω

Αἰσχύλον Εὐφορίωνος Ἀθηναῖον τόδε κεύθει  
μνήμα καταφθίμενον πυροφόροιο Γέλας  
ἀλκὴν δ’ εὐδόκιμον Μαραθῶνιον ἄλσος ἂν εἴποι  
καὶ βαθυχαιτήεις Μῆδος ἐπιστάμενος.

εἰς τὸ μνήμα δὲ φοιτῶντες ὅσοις ἐν τραγωιδίαις ἦν ὁ βίος ἐνήγιζόν τε καὶ τὰ δράματα  
ὑπεκρίνοντο.

Having been greatly honoured by the tyrant Hieron and the citizens of Gela, he lived a further two years and died an old man ... After his death, the citizens of Gela gave him a lavish public burial and honoured him magnificently by writing the following epitaph:

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<sup>13</sup> See Clay *ibid.* See also below, p. 0000.

This memorial holds Aeschylus the Athenian, son of Euphorion,  
who died in grain-bearing Gela.

The grove of Marathon could speak of his famous courage  
and the Mede with thick long hair who knows of it.

And whoever was professionally involved in tragedy, when they visited his memorial,  
would offer sacrifices and perform his plays.<sup>14</sup>

I will explore this testimony in the light of one of the earliest forms of Aeschylean reception, namely Aristophanes' *Frogs*, which, I argue, lends substantial value to it. My method will be a re-examination of the Aristophanic play's spatial semantics, especially concerning 'Aeschylus'' portrayal as a chthonic force and his 'resurrection' in the play's finale. I will argue that *Frogs* shows an awareness that the poet was associated with fertility in contemporaneous literary-critical discourses, and a perception of Aeschylean tragedy as preoccupied with ideas concerning earth and nature. I will then demonstrate that this posthumous association, which is found both in the *Frogs* and in the *Life of Aeschylus*, is especially connected with the land that was imagined as housing his burial. In the final part of this paper, I will explore possible connections between theatre and earth cults, and reflect on how Aeschylus' hero cult may fit into this scheme.

### **Aristophanes' *Frogs*: Athens' Cultural Sterility, 'Aeschylus', and his *anodos* from the Depths of the Earth**

*Frogs* is one of the most valuable sources for the ancient reception of Aeschylus' tragedy. Although excellent works have been published on the subject,<sup>15</sup> little attention has been paid to how the play's performative dimensions might augment our understanding of the Aristophanic 'Aeschylus'. *Frogs* starts with the description of death and sterility on earth: all the good poets have died and among those who have remained, no-one is sufficiently sexually potent to inseminate Lady Tragedy and produce noble theatrical offspring. The emphasis on sterility and

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<sup>14</sup> Radt, *TGrF* III, test. 1, 10-11. For recent analyses, see Wilson (2007) 356-71; Kowalzig (2008) 130; Poli-Palladini (2013), 285-96. See also below, n. 49.

<sup>15</sup> For the most recent treatments, see Griffith (2013), 100-49 and Hunter (2009), 1-52. A bibliographical list on the Aristophanic 'Aeschylus' of *Frogs* can be found in Scharffenberger (2007), 231.

the need for potency<sup>16</sup> is illustrated especially clearly in this key, and famous, speech by Dionysus:

ἐπιφυλλίδες ταῦτ' ἐστὶ καὶ στωμύλματα,  
χελιδόνων μουσεῖα, λωβηταὶ τέχνης,  
ἄ φροῦδα θᾶπτον, ἦν μόνον χορὸν λάβη,  
ἅπαξ προσουρήσαντα τῇ τραγωδία.  
γόνιμον δὲ ποιητὴν ἂν οὐχ εὖροις ἔτι  
ζητῶν ἂν, ὅστις ῥῆμα γενναῖον λάκοι.  
πῶς γόνιμον;

(*Frogs* 92-8)

Dionysus: Those are cast-offs and empty chatter, choirs of swallows, wreckers of their art, who maybe get a chorus and are soon forgotten, after they piss just once inside Lady Tragedy. But if you look for a 'potent' (γόνιμον) poet, one who could utter a lordly phrase, you won't find any left.

Heracles: What do you mean 'potent'<sup>17</sup>?

Dionysus, god of the theatre and of the life-giving forces of nature, wants to address this cultural sterility. He sets off on a journey to the Underworld aiming to restore potency to Athens, connecting it for now, mistakenly, with Euripides. Dionysus' *katabasis*, which alludes heavily to *katabasis*-narratives like those of Orpheus, Heracles, Theseus, and Dionysus himself,<sup>18</sup> concludes with the antidote for sterility and death: namely a resurrection, celebrated with a torchlit procession. The following verses, the very last of the play, are pronounced by Pluto and the chorus as Aeschylus is accompanied to the world above:

φαίνετε τοίνυν ὑμεῖς τούτῳ  
λαμπάδας ἱεράς, χᾶμα προπέμπετε  
τοῖσιν τούτου τοῦτον μέλεσιν  
καὶ μολπαῖσιν κελαδοῦντες.  
πρῶτα μὲν εὐοδίαν ἀγαθὴν ἀπιόντι ποιητῇ  
ἐς φάος ὀρνημένῳ δότε δαίμονες οἱ κατὰ γαίης,

<sup>16</sup> For an analysis of the meaning of *gonimos* ('potent') at *Ran.* 92-8, see Sfyroeras (2008), 307-9.

<sup>17</sup> Aristophanes' texts and translations follow Henderson

<sup>18</sup> For Dionysus' *katabasis* in the *Frogs* and its rich ritual and mythic background, see Bowie (1993), 228-38; Lada-Richards (1999), 53-5, 78-86; Griffith (2013), 174-7, 191-8. For heroic *katabaseis*, see most recently, Felton (2007), 94-6. For Dionysus' *katabaseis* and returns and their role in his myth and cult, Bowie (1993), 145-7; Detienne (1986).

τῆ δὲ πόλει μεγάλων ἀγαθῶν ἀγαθὰς ἐπινοίας.  
πάγχυ γὰρ ἐκ μεγάλων ἀχέων παυσαίμεθ' ἄν οὕτως  
ἀργαλέων τ' ἐν ὄπλοις ξυνόδων. Κλεοφῶν δὲ μαχέσθω  
κἄλλος ὁ βουλόμενος τούτων πατρίοις ἐν ἀρούραις. (Frogs 1524-33)

Pluto: Now display your sacred torches in this man's honour and escort him forth, hymning his praises with his own songs and melodies.

Chorus: First, you gods below earth, grant to the departing poet a fine journey as he ascends to the sunlight, and to the city grant fine ideas that will bring fine blessings. For that way we may have an end of great griefs and painful encounters in arms. Let Cleophon do the fighting, and any of those others who wants to fight in his native soil!

The theme of 'space above, space below' and the journey between the two is clearly central to the play. If we observe this central spatial scheme and the ideas it embodies, as well as the language and imagery of these passages (especially ascending into light, 1529; being accompanied by torches, 1524; bringing along blessings from below, 1530; putting an end to suffering and stopping wars, 1533), we cannot but agree with Lada-Richards, who in her book on the rite-of-passage structure of the *Frogs* argues that Aeschylus' return to Athens is constructed like an *anodos*, and, specifically, like the (archetypal) *anodos* of Persephone, which restores fertility and life to a blighted land.<sup>19</sup>

The concept of *anodos* is known to us mostly from the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and from the numerous *anodoi* of mystic rituals and vase-paintings. To the Greeks (whether the term *anodos* was used to describe such movements or not),<sup>20</sup> the very concept of an upwards movement would have also been known from manifold other narratives and cult.<sup>21</sup> In general, *anodoi* of chthonic powers are movements from the depths of the earth which symbolically capture the processes of generation, growth and restoration of life. Beyond Persephone/Kore, other divinities who are most often shown as enacting this movement include Pandora, Gaia and Semele; the pattern is extended, as far as we can see, from drama especially to personified

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<sup>19</sup> Lada-Richards (1999), 106-7.

<sup>20</sup> For the term, see Bérard (1974), 22-4. Regardless of the term used, the pattern is common and recognisable.

<sup>21</sup> For *anodoi* and their defining characteristics, especially in drama, see Olson (1998), xxxv-xxxvii and Lada-Richards (1999), 106-114. For *anodoi*, space and movement in iconography, see Bérard (1974), *passim*. More generally on the topic, see also Ferrari (2004), Sfameni Gasparro (2000), Simon (1989), Sutton (1975). For the numerous busts of Persephone and Demeter, see Hinz (1998); Bell (1981), 30.

abstractions like Peace, and resurrected heroines, like Alcestis.<sup>22</sup> As Bérard has shown in his book *Anodoi: Essai sur l' imagerie des passages chthoniens* (1974), the spatial movement is the most important element in this narrative pattern: as death and the ceasing of fertility is represented through a downwards motion, so its regeneration is represented through an upwards motion.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the clarity of the spatial pattern and the accompanying effect of the restoration of fertility and life in the *Frogs*, the term *anodos* and especially its association with the processes of the earth are not used in scholarship (outside Lada-Richards) to describe Aeschylus' resurrection. Nor has there been an exploration of what this would mean for the perception of Aeschylus in antiquity. It is possible that the reluctance to use this term is due to the fact that *anodoi* are more commonly understood in their relation to gender than to space. There is a tendency to assume that *anodoi* concern female deities or heroines, especially in drama.<sup>24</sup> As a result, the regeneration pattern of the *Frogs* is usually understood in terms of either an extended literary metaphor, or in connection with the rite of passage undergone by the initiand Dionysus and/or the initiand Aeschylus (at least, that is, by those who accept the existence of this pattern).<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, as I suggested earlier, it is the spatial movement that captures the essence of *anodoi*, not gender.<sup>26</sup> Chthonic movements were understood to be enacted by all the earth's powers, including *male* powers. In iconography and literary texts, we can see male characters enacting upwards movements from the depths of the earth and thereby capturing the processes of (re)generation and growth: most often Dionysus and Erichthonius, but also cult heroes.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> For the so-called *anodos*-dramas, see Foley (1992).

<sup>23</sup> See Bérard (1974), 21-30 for the structuralist methodology concerning movement. See also Lada-Richards (1999), 106-7.

<sup>24</sup> Most publications do not exclude the possibility of male *anodoi*. However, due to the facts that the archetypal *anodos* is that of Persephone, that this motion is regularly connected with the restoration of fertility and that the iconographical evidence concerns a disproportionate number of females, the pattern is often thought to concern female powers alone: see Bérard (1974), 25; Foley (1992), 314 n. 43; Simon (1989); Olson (1999), xxxvii; Ferrari (2004).

<sup>25</sup> Bowie (1993), 228-38; Lada-Richards (1999), *passim*; for a critique, see Griffith (2013), 190-1.

<sup>26</sup> *Anodoi* as ascents from the earth can also be represented through *horizontal* movements and journeys on a horizontal plane. See see Bérard (1974), 25-6, 28; for other examples in drama, see below, n. 000.

<sup>27</sup> For Dionysus' *anodoi* in iconography, see Bérard (1974), 44, pl. 3-5; see also Taplin (2014) on the 'Cleveland Dionysus' (Cleveland Museum of Art 1989.73). For Erichthonius (where the upwards movement captures Athenian autochthony through the process of birth and generation), see Bérard (1974), 34-8 and Shapiro (1998). Amphiaros' epiphany in Carcinus' homonymous play is presented like an *anodos*; see Aristotle *Poet.* 1455a and cf. Green (1990); *contra* Davidson (2003). Pausanias notes (1.15.3) that on the 'Battle of Marathon' painting in the *Poikile Stoa*, the hero Theseus was represented looking like he rose out of the earth ('Θησεύς ἀνιόντι ἐκ γῆς εἰκασμένος; cf. *Plu. Per.* 35). On the famous 'Basel Dancers' vase (Basel, Antikenmuseum BS 415; for its publication, see Schmidt (1967), 70-8), the *eidolon* of a male figure is shown rising from his tomb (note the bust convention, which shows

However, before turning to what Aeschylus' resurrection might mean if it is described as *anodos*, I need to reflect further upon the essence of this movement. In particular, I need to clarify the special *identity* of the powers that are portrayed as emerging from the depths of the earth. Not all characters, of course, can embody this movement. In the case of Aristophanes' 'Aeschylus', however, there is something that makes him particularly suited to enact such a movement, certainly more so than his – also dead – opponent 'Euripides': this is the fact that for fifth-century audiences, 'Aeschylus' was associated with the concept of fertility.

### **'Aeschylus', Nature, and Earth: the Poet as 'Power Below'**

It has long been shown that Old comedy, primarily *Frogs* but also other plays, depicted Aeschylean poetry not just as old, but also as Dionysiac and natural.<sup>28</sup> In *Frogs* particularly, Aeschylus' poetry is described in terms of a 'natural' force flowing forth with a raw, overwhelming power. Especially telling are lines 816-7, 852-3, 859, 886-7, 1005, and 1257-61 of *Frogs*, where the poet is imagined like a gushing stream of water, a storm of hail, a Βακχεῖος ἄναξ, 'a lord possessed and inspired by Bacchus', and as possessed by inspirational *mania*. Furthermore, Aeschylean inspiration resembles a mystic, religious process, hence the poet's evocation of Demeter's mysteries. Other sources, which also reflect an influence from comedy, present 'Aeschylus' as losing himself in trance and composing in a state of intoxication.<sup>29</sup> This nexus of ideas, including the flowing, the natural, the liquid, the intoxicated, the powerfully raw, was associated generally with the concept of the Dionysiac,<sup>30</sup> and was linked not just with 'Aeschylus' but also with 'Cratinus'. 'Cratinus' aligned his poetry not just with that of the great tragic poet, but also with that of 'Archilochus'. It was Archilochus, in fact, who, in the surviving sources, first likened the effect of intoxication that inspires the most beautiful dithyramb to a

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upwards movement, and the smaller size of the *eidolon*). The *eidolon* of an armed hero is also shown rising from his tomb on a fifth-century Attic *askos*-lid (Boston, 13.169). Although these figures have not been considered in relation to the *anodos*-pattern outlined here, the *anodos* of the cult-hero Darius in Aeschylus' *Persians* 681ff. (cf. Henrichs (1993), 166; Bakola (2014), 16-25) shows that *anodoi* can also take place from tombs whilst evoking the processes of generation and growth.

<sup>28</sup> See Lada-Richards (1999), 235-47, 277-8; Bakola (2008), 16-20 and (2010), 24-9 on Cratinus fr. 342; Griffith (2013), 18-19 and 123.

<sup>29</sup> Ath. I 22ab; cf. Ath. 10.428f-9a, Plu. fr. 130, Plu. *Quest. Conv.* 1.5.1, 622E and 7.10.2.715D, Lucian *Dem. enc.* 15, Eust. *Od.* 1598,58.

<sup>30</sup> For the association of Dionysus with 'liquid power' in general, as well as, more widely, with nature and its regeneration, see Daraki (1985), 34-58; Otto (1965), 152-70.

force of nature with strong Dionysiac associations, namely that of a thunderbolt (fr. 120W, above).<sup>31</sup> On the opposite side of the popular imagination, Euripidean poetry (and the poetry of the new poets more generally) was depicted as not coming from nature, but from learning, meticulous study and analysis of sources, technical innovation, experimentation and artistic virtuosity, something which in *Frogs*, in particular, is captured by the use of scientific instruments and tools.<sup>32</sup>

To put these observations in a wider context, the Aristophanic construction of the Aeschylean poetic style builds upon the ubiquitous polarity of Greek thought ‘nature-culture’, with Aeschylus and his poetry embodying the energies of nature and the earth,<sup>33</sup> and on the other hand, Euripides (and the other ‘new’, ‘degenerate’ poets) representing the result of overworked culture, science and technology. Although this is by no means the sum total of the polarity ‘Aeschylean’-‘Euripidean’, it is certainly no wonder that it is the first type of poetry, that of ‘Aeschylus’, and not that of ‘Euripides’, which is eventually brought back to life in order to answer the Athenian cultural problem of sterility and ‘death’.<sup>34</sup>

If the construction of ‘Aeschylus’ as ‘Dionysiac’ and as an embodiment of nature’s flowing and gushing energies is taken into account, we may have a way of understanding better the outcome of the play and the *anodos* language that describes the playwright’s resurrection. Due to his connection with the underworld and his ability to move from one world to another, Dionysus is probably the deity most closely associated with the spatial movement of *anodos*,

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<sup>31</sup> For the links between ‘Archilochus’, ‘Aeschylus’ and ‘Cratinus’, see Bakola (2010), 16-80 and *passim*. For the Dionysiac associations of the thunderbolt, see Mendelsohn (1992), 114ff.

<sup>32</sup> See especially the *Frogs* prelude to the agon (*Ran.* 814-29; analysed below) and *Ran.* 796-803; in general, on ‘Euripides’ association with technical ability, craft and technology as opposed to ‘Aeschylus’ connection with nature, natural inspiration and Dionysus, see Bakola (2008), 8-20. The imagery of tools is used in *Thesmophoriazousae* 53-7 (for Agathon) and in *Clouds* 184-214 (for the ‘new’, sophistic learning, which was popularly associated with ‘Euripides’). This contrast has its origins in the long-standing polarity ‘poetry as divine inspiration’ and ‘poetry as artefact’, attested at least as early as Alcaeus fr. 204.6, Alcman 39 PMG, and Solon fr. 1.2, and especially Pindar *O.* 2. 86-8.

<sup>33</sup> For the overlap of these two terms, see Bakola (2014), 25-33. At the heart of my use of the term ‘earth’ is the idea of generation and growth. ‘Nature’ does not capture the totality of what I mean by ‘earth’, and ‘earth’ is certainly not restricted to ‘land’ alone. ‘Earth’ includes all natural spaces (earthly and heavenly alike), especially the generative depths of the land and the sea, as well as natural phenomena, like weather phenomena, and celestial bodies, like the sun and stars. The depths of the earth include, of course, the underworld, from where all growth emanates. A modern term would be ‘environment’, but it does not capture the metaphysical dimension not the significance of spatial depths as well as ‘earth’ does. For these concepts in the ancient imagination, see Cosgrove (2001), 5-8.

<sup>34</sup> I have argued in Bakola (2008), 67-70 that the selection of Aeschylus at the end of the *Frogs* agon concerns primarily the poetic self-representation of ‘Aristophanes’ as Dionysiac poet (but this is beyond the scope of this paper).

both in narrative accounts and in iconography.<sup>35</sup> However, this is not to suggest that ‘Aeschylus’ is portrayed as an alter-ego of Dionysus (although the association certainly helps). The Dionysiac is arguably part of a much richer nexus of representation. As I will argue, ‘Aeschylus’ is represented as a chthonic power in both a more wide-ranging and a more specific way.

One key indication is given by the way Dionysus addresses ‘Aeschylus’ just before he produces his judgment. He tells him:

... ἄλλ’ ἐνθένδ’ ἀνίει τὰγαθὰ

You send up your blessings from here

(*Frogs* 1462)

As the use of the verb ἀνίει suggests,<sup>36</sup> ‘Aeschylus’ is addressed as a power capable of administering blessings from the place where he lies dead. The same chthonic energy of bringing good things up is evoked, as we saw, at the very end of the play, but in a different manifestation: there, the entire upwards movement of ‘Aeschylus’ is thought to bring blessings to the *polis*.

However, there is more to the portrayal of ‘Aeschylus’ as a ‘power below’. Rich evidence is provided by the choral ode that closes the journey part of the *Frogs* and that opens the *agōn* by introducing the two poets. Once again, we need to take note of the fact that this choral ode, as introduction to the *agōn*, is a key section in the play that is intended to condition how we perceive the two poets:

ἦ που δεινὸν ἐριβρεμέτας χόλον ἔνδοθεν ἔξει,  
ήνικ’ ἂν ὀξύλαλον παρίδη θήγοντος ὀδόντα  
ἀντιτέχνου· τότε δὴ μανίας ὑπὸ δεινῆς  
ὄμματα στροβήσεται.  
ἔσται δ’ ἵπολόφων τε λόγων κορυθαίολα νείκη  
σχινδαλάμων τε παραζόνια σμιλεύματά τ’ ἔργων,  
φωτὸς ἀμυνομένου φρενοτέκτονος ἀνδρὸς  
ρήμαθ’ ἵποβάμονα.  
φρίζας δ’ αὐτοκόμου λοφιᾶς λασιάχενα χαίταν,  
δεινὸν ἐπισκύνιον ζυνάγων βρυχώμενος ἥσει  
ρήματα γομποπαγῆ πινακηδὸν ἀποσπῶν

<sup>35</sup> See above, n. 27. Structuralist studies of Dionysus are particularly thorough on this, especially Bérard (1974), 44; Segal (1982), 48-50; and Daraki (1985), 118-157.

<sup>36</sup> For the uses of ἀνίημι as ‘send forth’ from the depths of the earth, see LSJ s.v. I. See especially Ar. *Heroes* fr. 504; A. *Pers.* 650; S. *OT* 270, 1405; A. *Th.* 413; h. *Cer.* 333.

γηγενεῖ φουσήματι.

ἔνθεν δὴ στοματοουργὸς ἐπῶν βασανίστρια λίσφη  
γλῶσσ' ἀνελισσομένη φθονεροῦς κινουῖσα χαλινούς  
ρήματα δαιομένη καταλεπτολογήσει  
πλευμόνων πολὺν πόνον.

(*Frogs* 814-29)

*Surely fearful wrath will fill the heart of the mighty thunderer when he sees the sharp talking tusk of his rival in art being whetted; then with fearful fury will his eyes whirl about.*

We'll have helmet-glinting struggles of tall-crested words, we'll have linchpin-shavings and chisel-parings of artworks as a man fends off a thought-building hero's galloping utterances.

*Bristling the shaggy-necked shock of his hirsute ridge of mane, his formidable brow frowning, with a roar he will hurl utterances bolted together, tearing off timbers with his earth-born blast.*

Then the smooth tongue unfurling, mouth-working tester of words, slipping the reins of envy will sort out those utterances and parse clean away *much labour of lungs*.

If read collectively, the majority of the images that concern 'Aeschylus' represent the poet as a terrifying thundering monster blasting destructive winds which emanate from the depths of the earth. As his uncontrollable fury swells from below, it turns into a stormy force and showers boulders that shatter the opponent's creations (*Frogs* 814-17; 822-25).<sup>37</sup> Although this portrayal of Aeschylus encompasses elements from several mythological descriptions of divine powers and monsters,<sup>38</sup> as well as epic images of battles, in its basis undoubtedly lies the mythical imagery of Typhoeus, Typhon or Typhos, the primitive force of winds, smoke and blasts and the last representative of the Earth in Hesiod's narrative concerning the chthonic challenge to Zeus' order.<sup>39</sup> In fact, only twenty lines after the ode, the association of 'Aeschylus' with Typhos is made explicit when Dionysus calls for a sacrifice of a black victim, a common sacrifice to a chthonic power,<sup>40</sup> in order to appease him:

ἄρν' ἄρνα μέλανα παῖδες ἐξενέγκατε·

<sup>37</sup> For the association of 'Euripides' with 'culture', and especially technology and tools (i.e. technical poetry), as throughout the *agon*, see above, n. 32.

<sup>38</sup> See Dover (1993), 291-5; Scharffenberger (2007), *passim*.

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of Typhoeus in these terms, see Clay (2003), 125-8. For the figure of Typhoeus, see Gantz (1993), vol. 1, 48-51.

<sup>40</sup> Scullion (1994), 111 and *ibid* for more bibliography; cf. Dover (1993), 298. Although the distinction between Olympian and chthonic sacrifice is now acknowledged to be a lot more complex than initially thought, it is still a valid one; see, for example, the essays in Hägg and Alroth (2005) and Ekroth (2007). Black victims have a strong tendency to be associated with powers that fall in the chthonian rather than the Olympian category, and the sacrifice alluded to in *Frogs* fits well with Typhos' earth-born origins.

Τυφῶς γὰρ ἐκβαίνειν παρασκευάζεται. (*Frogs* 847-8)

A lamb, boys, bring out a black lamb!

Typhos is preparing to emerge!

Why is the imagery of the Typhos, the mythical source of devastating storm winds, chosen for the characterisation of ‘Aeschylus’? There are certainly many factors at play here, and several possibilities present themselves. Is the poet meant to be understood as chaotic, furious and fiery, a ‘nasty old man’ or a loud-thundering demagogue?<sup>41</sup> The imagery of winds in the ode is certainly prominent, and one might add to the possible interpretations the almost pervasive and near-daimonic role of winds in Aeschylean tragedy, especially in the *Oresteia* and the *Seven*.<sup>42</sup> However, although these may play an important part, there is surely more to the interpretation of ‘Aeschylus’ as Typhos.

### **The Gigantic Body in the Sicilian Earth: ‘Aeschylus’ and Sicily**

There are two important elements which call for consideration: first, the poet/raw force of nature has been roused to incontrollable *wrath*. It is this wrath that is meant to be appeased through the propitiatory sacrifice of a black victim suggested by Dionysus (*Frogs* 847-8). Wrath is a major dramatic motif in the characterisation of the Aristophanic ‘Aeschylus’, as many scholars have remarked.<sup>43</sup> The intertextual background of the ‘Aeschylean’ wrath has so far only been considered in relation to the angry Achilles of *Myrmidons* and its literary model, the *Iliad*. However, in the ode just mentioned, wrath has a more elemental character. The wrath described here seethes from below: it is earth-born (*Frogs* 825) and threatens to strike with a havoc of elemental phenomena (*Frogs* 814-17; 823-5). Arguably, a parallel even more appropriate to these elements than the epic and tragic Achilles is the description of Typhoeus in *Theogony* 824-46. There, Hesiod represents Typhoeus’ chthonic wrath with imagery including fire, thunders, bellowing sounds, bulls and typhoons. Elements of this description are arguably echoed by the Aristophanic references to the angry poet in the aforementioned *Frogs* ode and at 804 and 850-59.

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<sup>41</sup> For these interpretations, see Dover (1993), 18 and Sharffenberger (2007) *passim*.

<sup>42</sup> Scott (1966); Peradotto (1964), 382-8; Thalmann (1978), 32-8.

<sup>43</sup> *Frogs* 843-4, 844-5, 851-5. Cf. Tarkow (1982); Dover (1993) 18; Sharffenberger (2007).

The second important element, closely related to the wrath seething from below, is that, in fifth-century sources (and possibly even as early as Hesiod),<sup>44</sup> Typhos' elemental force is imagined as lurking within the specific locality of *the island of Sicily*. From Pindar's odes to the pseudo-Aeschylean *Prometheus*-trilogy, the threatening force lurking under the ground of Sicily and powering the terrifying explosions of Mount Etna is imagined in terms of a gigantic male body lying under the island: the body of the chthonic Typhos. In *Pythian* 1.18-24, for example, Pindar says that

Σικελία τ' αὐτοῦ πιέζει στέρνα λαχνάεντα· κίων δ' οὐρανία συνέχει,  
 νιφόεσσ' Αἴτνα, πάνετεσ χιόνος ὀξεΐας τιθήνα·  
 τᾶς ἐρεύγονται μὲν ἀπλάτου πυρὸς ἀγνόταται  
 ἐκ μυχῶν παγαί· ποταμοὶ δ' ἀμέραισιν μὲν προχέοντι ῥόον καπνοῦ  
 αἴθων'· ἀλλ' ἐν ὄρφναισιν πέτρασ  
 φοίνισσα κυλινδομένα φλόξ ἐς βαθεΐαν φέρει πόντου πλάκα σὺν πατάγῳ.

Sicily weighs upon his [i.e. Typhos'] shaggy chest, and a skyward column constrains him, snowy Etna, nurse of biting snow all year round, from whose depths belch forth holiest springs of unapproachable fire; during the days rivers of lava pour forth a blazing stream of smoke, but in times of darkness a rolling red flame carries rocks into the deep expanse of the sea with a crash.<sup>45</sup>

In *Prometheus Bound* 363-72, the equally striking description of Typhos under Sicily is especially illuminating: the poet's imagination merges earth-born blasts of wind, and issues of smoke, fire and boulders in the figure of this power.<sup>46</sup> Once again, Typhos is imagined like an enormous male body lying under the Sicilian earth and powering its volcano:

καὶ νῦν ἀχρεῖον καὶ παράορον δέμασ  
 κεῖται στενωποῦ πλησίον θαλασσίῳ  
 ἱπούμενος ῥίζαισιν Αἰτναίαισ ὑπο.

....

<sup>44</sup> See *Theog.* 859-61: φλόξ δὲ κεραυνωθέντος ἀπέσσυτο τοῖο ἄνακτος / οὔρεος ἐν βήσσησιν αἰδνῆσ παιπαλοέσσησ, / πληγέντος. 'A flame shot forth from that thunderbolted lord in the mountain's dark, rugged dales (or: on Etna's rugged dales: cf. Tzetzes in *Lyc.* 688, who at 860 cites the variant Αἴτνης), as he was struck'. However, see West (1966), *ad loc.*

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Pindar *Ol.* 4.6-7.

<sup>46</sup> For the Typhos in *Prometheus Bound* as reception of the Hesiodic Typhos, see Solmsen (1949), 132; Griffith (1978), 119. For a description of Typhos and his association with Etna, see also Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1. 39 and 1.44.

τοιόνδε Τυφῶς ἐξαναζέσει χόλον

θερμοῖς ἀπλάτου βέλεσι πυρπνῶου ζάλης...

And now he lies, a sprawled, inert body, near the narrows of the sea, crushed under the roots of Mount Etna.... such is the rage in which Typhos will boil over, raining hot darts of fiery breath that no one can touch ...

If we accept that Aristophanes imagines ‘Aeschylus’ to be like Typhos, how can we reconcile the character’s chthonic wrath and threatening forces in relation to his Aristophanic portrayal as a force of fertility, blessing and well-being, which we entertained earlier? Are these aspects not essentially in contradiction?

Far from contradictory, the whole picture can be understood as remarkably consistent. Aeschylus’ construction as a force of the earth capable of restoring fertility and life to a blighted polis, and as a power lying in the depths of the Sicilian soil, roused to anger and capable of destruction can be read as two complementary sides of the same entity *if ‘Aeschylus’ is understood to be a chthonic power*. In Greek religion and cult, chthonic powers were generally perceived to have both productive and destructive energies. They were understood to be responsible for all growth and life that comes from below, but also, if they were roused to anger, for sterility, disease and death.<sup>47</sup>

As argued earlier, the association of Aeschylean inspiration in popular perception with natural powers and flowing energies could be an important factor in this portrayal. However, Aeschylus is attested to have had an even more specific link to chthonic powers known for such abilities – at least in one strand of ancient reception – namely, cult-heroes.<sup>48</sup> This link is provided

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<sup>47</sup> For the powers associated with the earth, and their connection with growth and death alike, see Parker (2005), ch. 18, esp. 423-4, who discusses visual sources, too (cf. Parker (2011), 82). Cf. Henrichs (1991), 162-9, 192-3, 195-201 and *passim*; Burkert (1985), 200-1, 206-8, who emphasise their ambivalent nature: as guardians and watchers of the use of the earth, chthonic powers can be either punitive or rewarding.

<sup>48</sup> As chthonic powers, beyond their energy of blessing (manifested in epiphanies or things ‘sent up from below’), cult-heroes have a destructive facet, which is an eternally present possibility in case the hero does not receive the customary cult, and which can manifest in wrathful phenomena of nature, sterility, disease or death. For the two complementary facets of heroic powers, see Snodgrass (1982); Burkert (1985), 206-8; Kearns (1989), 7 and *passim*; Henrichs (1991), 192-3; Johnston (1999), 29, 153-5; Parker (2005), 447-51; Currie (2005), 46, 118-19. Nagy’s decades of research on hero-cult show that, through their death, heroes partook in the cosmic/natural order (*dike*) and served it by rewarding the just with flourishing fertility, health and wealth and punishing the unjust with illness, starvation and destruction: (1979), 189-96; (1990), 177; (2013), 345-52 and *passim*. See also Rohde (1925), 127-38. Among the ancient sources, the following may be mentioned: Ar. fr. 322; S. *OC* 389-415, 457-64; E. *Heracl.* 1026-44; *Alc.* 995-1005; Hdt. 1.67-8, 1.167; Paus. 1.34.4, 8.23.7, 8.9.3, 9.18.5, 9.30.9-11, 9.38.3-5; Plu. *Cim.* 19. Ekroth (2002) questions the special nature of the heroic sacrificial ritual, showing its overlaps with divine cult, but does not disconnect hero cults from the earth, and issues of fertility, health and protection of life. On hero cults, see further: Rohde (1894); Farnell (1921); Visser (1982); Seaford (1994), 114-20; Antonaccio (1995).

by the *Life of Aeschylus* §10-11 testimony that I mentioned at the beginning of this paper. According to this testimony, soon after his death the poet was offered *enagismata* at his tomb, which suggests that he had a hero cult. The wording of the last sentence, in particular, suggests that after Aeschylus' death, his tomb in Gela, Sicily, became a site of formal cult, attracting regular pilgrimages by members of the tragic profession.<sup>49</sup>

ἀποθανόντα δὲ Γελῶοι πολυτελῶς ἐν τοῖς δημοσίοις μνήμασι θάψαντες ἐτίμησαν μεγαλοπρεπῶς... εἰς τὸ μνήμα δὲ φοιτῶντες ὅσοις ἐν τραγωιδίαις ἦν ὁ βίος ἐνήγιζόν τε καὶ τὰ δράματα ὑπεκρίνοντο.

After his death, the citizens of Gela gave him a public burial and honoured him magnificently... and whoever was professionally involved in tragedy, when they visited his memorial, would offer sacrifices and perform his plays.

The historical validity of this testimony has met with strikingly different reactions from scholars, ranging from outright rejection to wholesome acceptance to silence.<sup>50</sup> However, the connection with Typhos that is suggested here through the evidence of *Frogs* opens up an alternative and more productive route to examine the validity of this testimony. The imagery of the gigantic body lying in the soil of Sicily, which Aristophanes evokes through the image of Typhos, accords perfectly with the ancient imagination of heroes as bodies of larger-than-life proportions lying in the soil of the locality which is connected with their worship.<sup>51</sup> Thus, by imagining 'Aeschylus' through the evocation of Typhon as a larger-than-life body that operates

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. Wilson (2007) 356-71; Kowalzig (2008) 130; Poli-Palladini (2013) 285-96. For ἐναγίζεῖν and hero-cult, see Parker (2005) and Ekroth (2002) 74-128. Φοιτᾶω, 'to visit regularly/repeatedly', suggests the existence of a regularly organised (annual?) festival, as Kowalzig *ibid.* rightly suggests.

<sup>50</sup> An outright skeptical view has been expressed by many scholars who work on biographical traditions in antiquity and have endorsed Lefkowitz' thesis about the provenance of poetic biographies (1981, second edn 2012): e.g. Kimmel-Clauzet (2013); Kivilo (2010), 222-3; Pelliccia (2009); Burnett (1983) 18-19. Contra Currie (2005), 129-30; Clay (2004). Hendrickson (2013) and Pelling (2002), 143-170 adopt a nuanced position on the value of ancient biographies. Many studies of Aeschylus' biography and early reception do not discuss the *Life* account at all: e.g. Hanink and Uhlig (2016); Sommerstein (2010<sup>2</sup>); Herington (1967). Cf. Sommerstein (2008), xvii-xviii; Rosenmeyer (1982), 376; Guardì (1990); Griffith (1978); Culasso Gastaldi (1979). On the other side of the spectrum, some scholars have accepted the testimony about Aeschylus' cult as essentially reliable: Clay (2004), 3, 81, 95; Wilson (2007); Kowalzig (2008); Poli-Palladini (2013), 285-96. Corroborating evidence in this case should probably include the huge popularity of myths from Aeschylean dramas on tragedy-related vase-painting in Sicily especially. This suggests that Aeschylus was prized in 5th-4th c. Sicily in a way that he was not in Athens. See Kossatz-Deissman (1979); Taplin (2007); Nervegna (2014) 172-6. (I thank Eric Csapo for this last observation.)

<sup>51</sup> The locus classicus for the imagination of cult heroes as of larger than life size is Herodotus 1.68.3, which talks about Orestes' enormous remains. Cf. Hdt. 2.91.3 and 4.82. Phlegon of Tralles (*FGrHist* 257 F 36 11-19) collects data on gigantic bones. See also Ekroth (2007), 110.

from the depths of the Sicilian earth in both benevolent and destructive ways, I believe that Aristophanes engages creatively with the fact that the poet had a hero-cult in Sicily.

The hypothesis that Aristophanes' evokes Aeschylus' hero cult in *Frogs* also accords with the fact that cult-heroes were imagined as essentially, and powerfully, active in their place of burial. Narratives from across antiquity report cult heroes causing illnesses or disasters, blessing the land with abundant vegetation, emanating knowledge – oracular or otherwise – or mysteriously blocking an enemy's attack.<sup>52</sup> Aeschylus' representation by Aristophanes as the force that powers a volcano acquires special significance in this respect, also because it ties in with Aeschylus' poetic association with fertility: for, as was well understood already in antiquity, the consistency of the volcanic soil and the temperatures of the earth's depths are not only the source of potential destruction, but also of proverbial fertility.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, the volcanic power of Typhos contains brilliant potential to capture the double function of 'Aeschylus' as cult-hero.

Furthermore, Aeschylus had well-known associations with the volcano Etna, due to the commissioned composition and production of *Aetnaeae* in Syracuse in the 470s; these would have undoubtedly added strength to the connection between the poet and this awesome force of nature and would have constituted part of the poet's construction as a chthonic power. In fact, the *Aetnaeae* provides a particularly exciting link between Aeschylus and the volcano Etna. Scholars associate the play with a specific eruption in the 470s: this event was used by Hieron in order to evacuate Catania and refound it as Aetna, and the new foundation was then celebrated with Aeschylus' production of *Aetnaeae*. The play, moreover, engaged with imagery and cult connected with an associated volcanic phenomenon. This was the cult of the Palici, native Sicilian cult-heroes who were worshipped at the site of boiling craters or volcanic thermal springs, and imagined, as fr. 6 of Aeschylus' fragmentary play suggests, to perform exactly the motion of emerging from below:

τί δῆτ' ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ὄνομα θήσονται βροτοί;  
σεμνοῦς Παλικούς Ζεὺς ἐφίεται καλεῖν.  
ἦ καὶ Παλικῶν εὐλόγως μενεῖ φάτις;

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<sup>52</sup> For a survey and analysis of various sources, see Visser (1982); cf. Nagy (1979) 189-96; Nagy (1990) 177; Aitken (2012).

<sup>53</sup> For an ancient source in relation to Etna, see Strabo 6.2.3 'although the ash is an affliction at the time, it benefits the country in later times, for it renders it fertile and suited to the vine ...; further, the roots produced by the fields that have been covered with ash-dust make the sheep so fat ...'. For a modern analysis of volcanic soil properties, see Shoji, Nanzyo and Dahlgren (1994), esp. ch. 8.

πάλιν γὰρ ἴκουσ' ἐκ σκότου τοδ' εἰς φάος.

A. So what name will mortals give them? B. Zeus ordains that they be called the holy Palici. A. And will the name of Palici be appropriate and permanent? B. Yes, for they have come back from the darkness to this realm of light.<sup>54</sup>

This is not to suggest, of course, that Aeschylus' hero-cult in Gela (which I will proceed to explore below) was historically connected with the volcano by the Sicilians; rather, it suggests that, with help from Aeschylus' association with Etna through the commissioned production of *Aetnaeae*, the Aristophanic imagination visualized the tragedian as a chthonic power of both blessing and destruction (as heroes were understood to be)<sup>55</sup> that could be represented by Etna's volcanic power.

Furthermore, if the function of cult-heroes is considered in spatial terms, the representation of Aeschylus' ascending into the light in the finale of *Frogs* makes even better sense. It is arguable that a hero's epiphany might be imagined in terms of a 'motion from below', in other words, an *anodos*-motion. If 'Aeschylus' is imagined as 'lying' in the Sicilian earth, the successful effect of hero-cult may be imagined as an upwards movement, an epiphany or a resurrection, with results in promotion of fertility and protection of life. This is what 'Aeschylus' is expected to do in the finale of the *Frogs*. The final choral utterance, whereby it is hoped that the poet's *anodos* will bring blessings, end wars, protect the value of life and, above all, grant (artistic) fertility to Athens, is telling of the re-invigorating effect that the emergence of the poet-hero in his native land is imagined to bring:

πρῶτα μὲν εὐοδίαν ἀγαθὴν ἀπιόντι ποιητῇ  
ἐς φάος ὀρνυμένῳ δότε δαίμονες οἱ κατὰ γαίης,  
τῇ δὲ πόλει μεγάλων ἀγαθῶν ἀγαθὰς ἐπινοίας.  
πάγχυ γὰρ ἐκ μεγάλων ἀχέων παυσαίμεθ' ἂν οὕτως  
ἀργαλέων τ' ἐν ὅπλοις ξυνόδων. Κλεοφῶν δὲ μαχέσθω

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<sup>54</sup> For Aeschylus' *Aetnaeae*, see most recently Poli-Palladini (2001), who reviews earlier scholarship; for the role of the Palici in the play, see *ibid.*, 292-5, 302-6 and 319-21; for the earth-cult of Palici generally, see Croon (1952).

<sup>55</sup> See above, n. 48. Some scholarship emphasises the socio-political function of hero cults, whether in regards to the élite, the individual, or the community (Brellich (1958); Bérard (1982); Seaford (1994), 110-14; 180-8; Currie (2005). This, however, should not obscure an essential facet of hero cults, namely that they were also believed to promote well-being, prosperity, fertility and health in repayment for the tribute they received, especially in the form of the fertility of plants, humans and animals and the preservation of life by offering healing and protection during war. Heroes could also be angered and send up harmful gifts.

κάλλος ὁ βουλόμενος τούτων πατρίοις ἐν ἀρούραις. (Frogs 1528-33)

First, you gods below earth, grant to the departing poet a fine journey as he ascends to the sunlight, and to the city grant fine ideas that will bring fine blessings. For that way, we may have an end of great griefs and painful encounters in arms. Let Cleophon do the fighting, and any of those others who wants to fight on his native soil!<sup>56</sup>

We should not miss the Aristophanic twist, however: in the *Frogs*, the hero ‘Aeschylus’ is not shown to rise in the locale of his burial, the ‘grain-bearing Gela’ of Sicily (as his posthumous epigram cited by the *Life*, l. 2, puts it). He rises in Athens, his native land. This is the land whose fertility he is expected to restore. This observation has further implications regarding the poet’s posthumous reception, and connects it with some significant, but often overlooked, dimensions of dramatic festivals both in Sicily and in Athens: their connections with earth and fertility cults.

### **The Competition for ‘Aeschylus’ Blessings. Theatre and Earth cults.**

By representing the poet as a cult-hero enacting an *anodos*-epiphany in the land of Athens, the *Frogs* re-appropriates ‘Aeschylus’ and makes him into the property of the Athenians. Undoubtedly, this Aristophanic twist reflects Athenian competitiveness towards the Sicilians who had claimed him through his burial and cult. This provides significant supporting evidence to the validity of the *Life* testimony, which we can now appreciate in a more secure light. For if, as *Frogs* suggests, Aeschylus was posthumously perceived by Athenian audiences as cult-hero, it is significantly more likely that he actually was. Corroborating evidence for the historical validity of the *Life* testimony is also provided by recent research on the cults of other dramatic poets, especially Sophocles and Euripides. Indeed, in recent years, the evidence which has been accumulating about the tragedians’ hero-cults suggests that all three canonical tragic poets enjoyed a hero cult by the end of the fifth century.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Lada-Richards’ book (1999), 327-9 closes with the insight that Aeschylus’ address at *Ran.* 1526-33 foreshadows his heroization, but does not relate this to any historical account. Cf. Poli-Palladini (2013), 308-16, who finds many elements suggestive of Aeschylus’ heroisation in the *Frogs*, but does not consider the ode that likens ‘Aeschylus’ to the Typhos.

<sup>57</sup> For Sophocles’ hero-cult in Athens as *Dexion* in relation to the cult of Asclepius, see below, p. 0000 and n. 73. For Euripides’ hero-cult in Salamis, see *SEG* 47, 282; Gell. 15.20.5. See also Lolos (2013), (2003), (2000).

Competitiveness may also be traced in the representation of the poet in the *Frogs* finale specifically as a force of blessing. In contrast to ‘Aeschylus’ earlier construction as a wrathful ‘power below’ threatening to strike from the depths of the Sicilian earth (*Frogs* 814-29), the final image that *Frogs* leaves about the poet is that of a benevolent power. The very last words of the play, ‘πατρίοις ἐν ἀρούραις’ ‘on his native soil,’ show that the resurrection of Aeschylean poetry is perceived as potentially beneficial not just narrowly on the level of politics, but also on the level of the general wellbeing of land and people. Thus, although the land of Sicily did become a second homeland for the poet in the last years of his life and housed his remains, ultimately – Aristophanes seems to suggest – it would be the land of Athens that would benefit from his status as hero.

This turns me to the final part of this paper: how should we read the emerging conclusion that the honours apportioned to a poet like Aeschylus would extend beyond artistic benefits into seemingly unrelated areas, such as fertility and well-being of land and people?

From a modern perspective, the connection between performance of poetry and chthonic cults seems remote, especially as we are used to thinking of theatrical festivals and the patronage of Dionysus in connection to civic cult.<sup>58</sup> However, an unprejudiced examination of the evidence suggests links which cannot be easily ignored. It has long been observed that in Sicily the spaces that hosted theatrical performances were almost uniformly connected with chthonic cults. The cult of Demeter and Persephone, but also those of other deities with a chthonic character, like the Nymphs, Pan and the dead, figure prominently in the island’s theatrical sites. The most striking example is the ancient theatre of Syracuse where the cults of Demeter and Persephone are richly attested from the second quarter of the fifth century, as is the cult of the Nymphs;<sup>59</sup> the same phenomenon is also attested in Akragas, Heloros, Monte Iato, Morgantina and Akrai (albeit our earliest evidence for these theatres is not as early as for Syracuse).<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, as we are often reminded, the patron gods and recipients of drama in Sicily are primarily Demeter and Kore. Hinz, Kowalzig, and other scholars have plausibly argued for a strong connection between the spread of the theatre, the promotion of the cults of the two goddesses, the heavily promoted

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<sup>58</sup> Responding to a school of thought which seemed to claim that tragedy has nothing to do with Dionysus (e.g. Taplin (1978), 162) the scholars contributing to the celebrated ‘*Nothing to do with Dionysus?*’ volume argued for a variety of civic functions in connection with the god. The scholarship on the topic has not abated since.

<sup>59</sup> Hinz (1998), 100-2; Todisco (2002), 29, 184-86; Wilson (2007), 354; Kowalzig (2008) 131-2.

<sup>60</sup> Hinz (1998) 55-69; Todisco (2002), 29, 168, 169, 172, 175, 178, 181; Wilson (2007), 354; Kowalzig (2008) 131-2; MacLachlan (2012); Csapo and Wilson (2015) 331, 339, 383. Wilson (2007) n. 15 notes that ‘to these we may add the *Thesmophorion* by the recently excavated theatre in Cyrene.’

Sicilian ideology of being the ‘bread-basket’ of the Mediterranean, and the agricultural policies of the Deinomenid tyrants (and of subsequent states later on).<sup>61</sup>

These observations do not only apply to a Sicilian context. Sources for the performance of poetry in mainland Greece show considerable evidence for the connection between performance and chthonic/fertility cults, or cults which promote the well-being and prosperity of land and people. It has of course long gone out of fashion to talk about the fertility functions, or even origins, of the festivals which hosted dramatic performances in Attica, namely the Great Dionysia, the Lenaia and the Dionysia in the demes of Attica.<sup>62</sup> The burgeoning research into the civic functions, finances and overall organisation of the theatrical festivals has contributed enormously to the appreciation of their civic and secular dimensions, but has also suppressed other elements. However, the perception of these festivals by audiences that is attested in ancient sources – for example in comedies like *Acharnians* and *Peace*<sup>63</sup> – suggests that we might be missing a significant part of the picture. The very connection of the agricultural calendar with the theatrical festival calendar is a fact that we cannot deny, and probably one that we have not explored to the same depth as we have explored the connection with civic business.<sup>64</sup> The recent interest in the deme theatres of Attica has, paradoxically, made more palpable the connection – in terms of physical proximity, but also convergence of occasion – between performance spaces and fertility cults. The theatres in Eleusis and Thorikos, which hosted vibrant performance festivals in the fifth century BC, were adjacent and prominently connected to chthonic cult-sites: the former, with its likely location on the south side of the Eleusis acropolis,<sup>65</sup> was spatially connected with the most famous site of the cult of Demeter and Persephone in the Greek world; and the latter with the cult of the dead over the necropolis which is immediately adjacent to it and which remained in active use while performances were held there. Perhaps even more striking, one might say, is the fact that the silver mines, where the Thoricians extracted the silver

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<sup>61</sup> Kowalzig (2008); Hinz (1998), 19-28.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. especially James (1961); Pickard-Cambridge (1968), 42-3. For the Rural Dionysia, the argument has recently been revived by Habash (1995) and Jones (2004), ch. 4.

<sup>63</sup> Both plays connect the dramatic festivals with the regeneration of life. For *Acharnians*, the agrarian ideals as core concerns of the Rural Dionysia and the connection of the phallic procession to the theatre, see Jones (2004), 125-7; 142-7 and Habash (1995). The connection of the dramatic festivals with well-being, fertility and prosperity is suggested by *Peace* 520-729, esp. 528-38. Overall, it is significant that the Trygaios, a character who embodies the theatre (cf. Hall 2006) accomplishes the *anodos* of the chthonic divinity Peace, which brings along fertility, well-being, wealth *and* the revival of the Dionysia.

<sup>64</sup> One of the least known treatments is James (1961).

<sup>65</sup> See Wilson (forthcoming a).

from their earth, were immediately next to the theatre.<sup>66</sup> In the deme Ikarion, the theatre and festival were also attached to a prominent hero cult: the cult of Icarius, who was venerated for his reception of wine from the god, and worshipped for the cultivation of wine. The connection is suggested by the collocation of funds for the cult of Icarius on a stele with a decree dealing with the running of the local Dionysia, and dates at around 450 BC.<sup>67</sup>

Even the Great Dionysia cannot escape from fertility associations. Recently, Eric Csapo made a strong case for the connection of the *pompē* in the Great Dionysia with comic theatre.<sup>68</sup> The *pompē* has always been understood as a procession which celebrates Dionysus as one of the great life-bringing forces and which teems with symbols of fertility (although Csapo refrains from talking about the procession in these terms). The overlaps that Csapo points out between the outlook of the *pompē* with that of comedy are significant. However, perhaps the most revealing parallel for what has been observed here is the connection of the cult of Asclepius with the Athenian theatre, both in terms of space and in terms of occasion.<sup>69</sup> These suggest an understood connection between drama and other concerns which we, with our modern preconceptions, are not used to associating with drama, such as health and well-being. Mitchell-Boyask's book (2008) on the relationship between the cult of Asclepius and Athenian drama is one welcome recent development on the subject.

How may this contextualisation of earth cults and theatre help us envisage Aeschylus' own hero-cult? If we trust the *Life* testimony, we are entitled to imagining the organisation of a formal cult for the poet by the community of the Geloans; the account of the *Life* attests travelling, pilgrimage and *theoria* by Aeschylus' worshippers, and suggests the organisation of a dramatic festival in the poet's honour. As in all hero-cults, for the individuals and the community enacting their worship in this manner, the anticipated effects would have certainly extended beyond the ideology of the state. Effects as basic as protection, well-being and prosperity are always part of cult-hero worship, and the *Life* description of pilgrimage in honour of Aeschylus seems to inscribe the poet with the status of a patron of the tragic trade.<sup>70</sup>

There is another element which aligns Aeschylus with such concepts, intriguingly deriving from the way these were received already in the fifth century. More specifically, further

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<sup>66</sup> See Wilson (forthcoming b).

<sup>67</sup> See Wilson (2015) and (forthcoming c).

<sup>68</sup> Csapo (2013).

<sup>69</sup> Mitchell-Boyask (2008), ch. 7.

<sup>70</sup> For cult-heroes as patrons of professionals, see Farnell (1921), 71-2, 87-90, 153, 219, 268; Kearns (1989), 36-43.

evidence from Old comedy and, in particular, from Cratinus' *Plutoi* ('Wealth-Gods'), suggests a fifth-century understanding of Aeschylus' preoccupation with the deep space of the earth, with chthonic powers and the imagination of those powers as generating blessings and potential destruction. Cratinus' comedy also suggests Aeschylus' understanding of chthonic powers, including the Erinyes and the Hesiodic *daimones plutodotai*, as guardians of the earth's resources and of the natural order. These observations can be corroborated through a study of space and natural imagery in Aeschylus.<sup>71</sup> Would the interest of the Aeschylean plays in the question of the human relationship with the earth and its resources, in combination with the prominence of deep spaces (the sea, caves, the earth's fertile and terrifying depths, the underworld), suggest a link between his works and his posthumous status as 'power below'? In the context of this volume, this case looks stronger than ever.

The case becomes even more compelling if we consider our evidence for Aeschylus' hero-cult alongside the evidence for cults of other poets. Beyond the tradition of Archilochus<sup>72</sup> and those of the poets that Montiglio and Hanink examine in this volume, the heroization of Sophocles as *Dexion* and its connection with his introduction of the cult of Asclepius might have deep links with the themes of disease and sterility reflected in his plays.<sup>73</sup> In fact, it has been argued that *Dexion*, the poet Sophocles in his heroic cult-status, was worshipped near the Asclepieion of Athens, and crucially, just over the theatre of Dionysus.<sup>74</sup>

Would Aeschylus' preoccupation with the awesome powers of the earth contribute to making him into a 'power below' in the minds of his audiences, both Sicilian and Athenian? The exact chronological relationship between the cult of Aeschylus in Sicily, the performance of his plays, his portrayal in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, and his association with Typhon and the volcano Etna may remain open for further input and discussion; what seems to me beyond doubt is the

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<sup>71</sup> See Bakola (2013), (2014) and (2016). These publications argue that Aeschylean tragedy reflects deeply on the space that hosts and sustains humanity and on how humanity relates back to this space. Certain concepts and images which are key and appear repeatedly, such as the concept of 'wealth' – wealth both generated by human activity but also natural wealth, including agricultural growth – and human life are conceptualised collectively as the earth's resources. Space in Aeschylus, in other words, is largely a generative space. What humans do with these resources, how they use and abuse them and how these uses and abuses affect the relationship between themselves and natural space are issues that capture the poet's reflections on the relationship between humans and cosmos, and lie at the very heart of Aeschylean tragedy.

<sup>72</sup> See above, p. 0000.

<sup>73</sup> On Sophocles as hero in the fifth century, see Clay (2004), 78-79 and for the sources, 151-2. See also Currie (2005), 5, 182. Contra Lefkowitz (1981), 84 ~ (2012) 84-6; Connolly (1998).

<sup>74</sup> Walter (1953); Beschi (1967/8). Furthermore, it is worth noting that only are the sanctuaries of Asclepius and Dionysus contiguous, but so are their festivals, the Asclepieia and the City Dionysia: see Parke (1977) 64; Mitchell-Boyask (2008), ch. 7.

alignment between some key preoccupations of Aeschylean drama, his presentation in fifth-century literary critical discourses, his construction as cult-hero in his second homeland Gela, and subsequently, his presentation in fifth-century comedy.