

Previously supported work

I received grants from the Research, Scholarship, and Creativity Fund in 2002 and 2006. Both have resulted in book publications by Cambridge University Press. The project funded by the 2006 RSC grant, *Greek Theatre in Context*, is due to be published in May (see frontispiece and acknowledgment of RSC grant).

Description of project

I am applying for a grant to fund the research for an extensive project that will result in a monograph. The topic under investigation is the role of empathy in Greek tragedy — or, to be more precise, its role in the tragedies created for performance in Athens at the height of its democracy in the fifth century BC. The scope of the project is two-fold. The first part is a study of the different ways in which empathy played a role in the *ancient* theatrical experience of Greek tragedy; the second is an examination of the ways in which empathy has been a part of *modern* productions of these tragedies. The subject is relevant not only to experts in the field of Greek tragedy but also to generalists, including students and even the wider public interested in the role that the arts has played in civic engagement (see project description below). It is essentially interdisciplinary in conception and, I hope, will be germane to those with interests in the history of theatre and in the intersection of art and culture as well as to theatre practitioners.

In the ideal city-state, drama would be carefully censored, Plato's Athenian argues in the *Republic*. For Aristotle, on the other hand, tragedy offers a valuable service to society: by inciting fear and pity, it achieves the *katharsis* of these emotions. All agree, however, that at Athens theatre mattered and that it had a profound effect on audience and actors alike. There is a wealth of ancient evidence for the emotional response to tragedy by both audience and actors that still needs to be examined as a collective whole. The comments of fifth and fourth-century authors as well as later evidence from scholia and testimonia all indicate that the strong emotional response that Aristotle described in his works (*Poetics*, *Rhetoric* and *Ethics*) was indeed representative of the Athenian theatre-going public. Anecdotes told about ancient actors also indicate the close connections they drew between the characters they played and their own lives.

This project considers factors that may have contributed to the strong personal response of ancient theatre-goers and actors. These include strategies within the plays that systematically break down categories of 'us' and 'them' and invite involvement by the viewer. Characters in the plays mirror the experience of the audience-member: using the language of viewing and spectacle, they respond emotionally to the misfortunes of others and articulate the effects on the community at large. This community is not necessarily defined by shared membership of a given *polis*, enabling the viewer to feel empathy that extends beyond the natural ties of family, tribe and *polis* in responding to the human condition. But the original context of performance also lent itself to empathy. Thus this study will also analyze the ways in which such elements as the spatial configuration of the theatre, the use of masks, and the conception of acting as a civic activity key to the education of young men contribute to the audience's sense of empathy with the characters in the plays.

The project also examines modern (post World War I) productions of ancient drama. It assesses the degree to which directors have emphasized the empathetic dimensions of Greek tragedy and examines the artistic strategies they have employed to do so. Greek tragedy has long enjoyed iconic status and has often been at the forefront of attempts to draw on its cultural capital for political ends. Regimes such as Mussolini's fascists and the juntas of Franco in Spain and Regime of the Colonels in Greece saw in Greek tragedy an opportunity to represent their political ideologies as rooted in 'timeless' classical ideals. The project will therefore examine the ways in which the empathetic dimensions latent in Greek tragedies are foregrounded, manipulated, or ignored in various productions across Europe. So, for example, I hope to examine how tragedies performed in Germany during the height of the Third Reich dealt with the issue of empathy, and compare these performances to those of post-war Germany, anxious to turn its back on ideologies of racial elitism and to foster in its citizens new habits of mind.

To this date, no one has done a comprehensive study of this topic. It is, I believe, one that I am well equipped to undertake: it requires not only expertise in Greek tragedy and its performance, but also the ability to study its modern reception in a number of European contexts (for which my cultural and linguistic training in languages such as Italian, Spanish, French and German have prepared me). The initial impetus for this project came from participating in the Service Learning for Social Justice group in 2005-06, as the result of which I redesigned a course on the Theatre of Greece and Rome to emphasize issues of social justice and gave a lecture at the national classics convention entitled *Teaching Classics for Social Justice*. I believe this project will also have pedagogical implications, both for my own teaching and that of others. It will highlight the pedagogical benefits of inviting students and theatre-goers to respond to the plays on an emotional level, suggest ways in which to retrieve the emotive content of Athenian tragedy in modern performance, and argue the continued role of the performance arts in developing in the citizen body the capacity for empathy.

Project design

I am seeking funding to support the gathering of materials for this book. I have already done some of the research for this project, especially for the first part (investigating the role of empathy in its *ancient* performative context). I have given an invited lecture at the University of Georgia (*Athenian Men Watching Trojan Women*) and am giving lectures on my preliminary findings at the University of Melbourne (*Feeling the Pain: Empathy in Athenian Tragedy*) and the University of Sydney (Empathy in the Athenian Theatre). However, the most important part of the research still needs to be done. It involves collecting materials from modern productions of Greek tragedy such as playbills, reviews, artistic statements, and production materials including photographs and (where available) film. These materials are located in various repositories; many of them are not available for lending, so have to be studied in situ. This stage of the project will probably have to be completed over two summers. The natural starting point is the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama at the University of Oxford, the only resource of its kind. It collects materials for modern productions of ancient drama, and its archives will direct me to other repositories of materials, mainly at key academic institutions such as National Theatre, Berlin, Munich, Istituto per Drama Antico, Siracusa etc. In this segment of the project, I plan to gather other materials located in the United Kingdom (e.g. at Kings' College London, Institute ... London, Warwick University, and National Theatre) and, if funds permit, to begin studying the German context.

Application for a Research, Scholarship, and Creativity Grant

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After gathering the materials and studying them, I intend to present my investigation in a series of lectures, dividing my subject-matter by country and historical context. This will, I hope, provide critical feedback that will enhance the work. I eventually plan to publish the revised whole as a monograph (Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, or University of California Press are the most natural matches for this topic).

Budget

Return airfare Minneapolis – London	\$1000
Travel to Oxford (return trainfare)	\$40
Lodging in Oxford and London (2 weeks)	\$600
Photocopying and other media reproduction expenses	\$200
<u>Subtotal:</u>	<u>\$1840</u>
Faculty stipend at rank of Assistant Professor	\$600
<u>TOTAL:</u>	<u>\$2440</u>

Eric K. Dugdale
(03/16/08)