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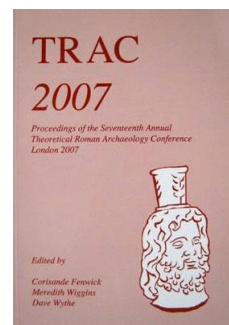
TRAC
2007

*Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual
Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference
London 2007*

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Typological Studies of Ancient Theatre Architecture: The Tree vs. the Rhizome Model

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This paper aims to draw attention to a comparatively recent paradigm shift in studies on ancient theatre architecture that has resulted in a transformation of the rather familiar theatre typology based on Greek-Roman binarism to one which stresses a multiplicity in the ancient performance building types that escapes a representation of the binary model; and explains this change by a parallel shift of emphasis from the idea of commonness to that of plurality in the conceptualisation of European cultural identity. Such contextualisation of the modern historiography on ancient theatre architecture in contemporary Europe, where we find the origins of archaeology as a discipline, would conform to the idea that 'archaeological interpretation is necessarily a subjective process which is influenced by the socio-political context in which it takes place' (Jones and Graves-Brown 1996: 19). I argue that the early scholarship on ancient theatre architecture, and its focus on Greek rather than Roman theatres, is inextricably bound to the emergence of the idea of Europe as an imagined community, and the attempt to find the unitary origin and early development of European cultural identity in ancient Greece. I observe that the German school of art history and archaeology played an important role in this developmental course, in a period of struggles between English, French, and German speaking powers in Europe when 'Romanisation' implied forced acculturation for the latter. I trace the implications of this for our understanding of Roman theatre architecture by portraying it as 'the other' for the Greek one (Hartog 1988), which implies its inferiority to the earlier achievements in Athens and elsewhere that have, thus, long been worthy of more attention. However, drawing on recent research which has transformed 'Romanisation' into an umbrella term that may refer to a variety of processes depending on the peculiarities of the affected societies, scholars have begun to challenge the idea of a unilinear development in theatre architecture from a unitary origin and early development in Athens, and to stress the variety of performance building types. The need to represent this recently-acknowledged variety has already started to transform the tree-like classificatory model based on Greek-Roman binarism into a rhizome, which I suggest is a better model capable of representing the multiple identities apparent not only in contemporary Europe but also in the ancient Mediterranean.

European cultural identity and ancient theatre studies

Fontana (1995: 1) argues that Europe should be understood as an imagined and symbolically defined community rather than a geographic entity. It is the absence of plain territorial boundaries that prevents Europe from serving as a characterising element for Europeans as the people who live or were born there. The European community would, therefore, appear to be bounded by conceptual ordering and the hegemony of particular cultural classifications (Shore 1996: 105) in the sense argued by Anderson (1983), Gellner (1997), J. M. Hall (1997; 1998), and Hobsbawm (2002). These authors identify a singular process of identity-construction that works the same way for local, regional, ethnic, national and 'supra-nationalist phenomena such as the construction of the European identity' (Hamilakis 1996: 976), presenting the community in question as a well-integrated, bounded and even fixed, homogeneous and continuous entity that occupies an exclusive spatial-temporal position and is precisely distinguishable from other analogous entities with its cultural particularity and unique collectiveness (Jones 1996: 65). This process would seem to involve oblivion as well as remembrance, as in the case of the nation-state wherein 'the members of the nation, and hence of the state, have simply forgotten their diversity of cultural origin.' (Gellner 1997: 45) Archaeology and history participate in this process by producing narratives that present group identity as something organic and rooted in the past, to establish the legitimacy of a common identity in the eyes of the group members and the international community (Shore 1996: 105). Such narratives are observed to be 'based on a common logic – an unbroken, linear, historical account, with a unitary origin, and frequently a "Golden Age"' (Jones and Graves-Brown 1996: 3).

Morris (1994a:7) has already argued that many classicists, in their construction of such narratives, 'assume a direct cultural progression from classical Greece to Rome and on to "the West".' This paper suggests that the theatrical heritage of the Greco-Roman world plays a particularly potent role in the construction of group identities from the local level to that of an imagined European community, due to its potential for bridging the chronological gap encountered between the Classical Rome and the modern era:

> 'The history of the Greek and Roman theatre, like the history of the whole Greek and Roman culture, is so rich and many-sided that each later period of European civilization has found some aspect of it to use as an inspiration or model for its own time. Even the periods which resented the ancient theatre and the religion which underlay its productions found something to explore and to use for their own goals. Thus the medieval period with its distrust of everything pagan and the romantic age of the early nineteenth century with its hatred for classicising and its nationalistic tendency, drew occasionally on ancient sources which are still living and productive today.' (Bieber 1961: 254)

The quotation is from *The History of the Greek and Roman Theatre* (1961) by Margaret Bieber (1879–1978), and is a classical example of an unbroken, linear, historical narrative of the progression of Western theatrical culture from a unitary origin and a 'Golden Age' in ancient Greece. The first page of the book presents the religion of Dionysus as the only one in Antiquity in whose rites dramatic plays could have originated, giving their circular shape to the Greek *orchestra*. This view has found its firmest support in Wilhelm Dörpfeld's (1853–1940) restitution of the earliest *orchestra*, on a terrace above the earliest temple in the Sanctuary of Dionysus in Athens as a circle measuring about 27 meters. According to Frederiksen (2000: 148), '[t]he idea that a circular orchestra was an obligatory element of the fully developed theatre originates

with Dörpfeld and the impact that this idea has had on later research may reasonably be called "the Dörpfeld orthodoxy".' Many of his suggestions were later challenged by various scholars including Fensterbusch (1912), Allen (1918; 1919; 1922; 1923; 1937; 1938; 1941), Flickinger (1936), Fiechter (1930–50), and Dinsmoor (1951). Nonetheless, the circular shape of the earliest *orchestra* was not questioned until much later, partly due to what Frederiksen (2000: 152) calls 'scholarly Athenocentricity'.

Bieber (1961: 109) explains how the 'Golden Age' of Pericles which produced Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides was also the period when a permanent stage building was planned for the requirements of their plays, but its construction had to wait until the relocation of the *orchestra* of the Theatre of Dionysus still in a circular form. Therefore, in Bieber's reading (1961: 71), the Theatre of Dionysus is the archetype of an architectural idea first stated in Athens and which later evolved into excellence in the Theatre of the Asklepieion at *Epidaurus* that represents a 'Golden Age' for theatre architecture. This interpretation has given way to 'the general idea that the theatre of Dionysos and the theatre of Epidauros played a leading role in the creation of the canon of the monumental theatre building' (Frederiksen 2000: 136), and served as models for other theatres in the Greek world. Bieber's narrative follows the development of Greek theatre architecture from this permanent form, in scenery and mechanical devices, and the concomitant evolution in the art of acting. All this made possible the replacement of Middle Comedy, at around the time of Alexander the Great, by the New Comedy that is best represented by the human types of Menander. This development is argued to have required a raised stage, which Bieber presents as a defining characteristic of the Hellenistic Theatre building, as in its earliest-dating well-preserved example at *Priene*.

Notably, the cornerstones in this evolutionary path were all excavated and published by the laureates of the German Archaeological Institute (*Deutsches Archäologisches Institut – DAI*), including Bieber herself, who was one of its first female members before she became the private tutor of G.H.J. Gombrich (1909–2001) after the Nazi occupation. Dörpfeld was the first to conduct large-scale excavations at the Theatre of Dionysus in the period 1886–95 on behalf of *DAI*, for whom he served as the architect (1882–85), deputy director (1885–87), and director (1887–90 or 1912) of their branch in Athens (Bieber 1953: 324; Junker 1998: 282; Marchand 1996: 97, 246; Papathanasopoulos 1993: 123–4). After developing the method of working with cultural stratigraphy as an alternative to style history at the *Olympia* excavations which he joined in 1877, Dörpfeld became Schliemann's scientific excavator at *Troia* in 1882 and later at *Tiryns*, before becoming the director of *Pergamon* excavations in the period 1878–86 and later excavating in Athens (Marchand 1996: 87, 114, 332). In 1896, Dörpfeld published the results of his excavations at the Theatre of Dionysus in a volume on the Greek Theatre co-edited by Emil Reisch (1898–1933). Bieber published her first important work on theatrical monuments in 1920, which was followed by two publications on the Theatre of *Priene* by Armin von Gerkan (1885–1969) in 1921 and Dörpfeld in 1924, at a period when von Gerkan was the second secretary at the Rome branch of *DAI* before he became the first secretary there and later in the Athens branch. The first edition of Bieber's *The History of the Greek and Roman Theatre* was made in 1939, and its second revised edition appeared in the same year as the celebrated monograph on the Theatre of the Asklepieion at *Epidauros* (1961) which was co-authored by von Gerkan and Wolfgang Müller-Wiener (1991–1923), the director of the Istanbul branch of *DAI*. Von Gerkan later published two more monographs on the stage building of the Theatre of *Priene*, in 1959–60 and 1963–64.

On the whole, the publications in German on ancient theatre architecture in the period between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries are so numerous that they deserve to be addressed

in a separate study. When taken together, these publications highlight the important part played by German speaking scholars in the development of ancient theatre studies, due in large part to the good political relations between the German Empire and the 'barbarian' Ottoman Empire, for which they were highly criticised by the British and the French. This struggle between the English, French, and German speaking powers of Europe offers us the socio-political context against which to interpret the focus on Greek rather than Roman theatre architecture in the majority of these early publications.

German influence over the development of ancient theatre studies

Hartog (1988), E. Hall (1989), and Fontana (1995: 1–19) argue that the concept 'Greek' was constructed in the Antiquity as the inverse of that of the 'barbarian', and that the diffusion of this idea was owed above all to the theatre. 'Nearly half of the Athenian tragedies of the fifth century B.C. that are extant portray barbarian personages: a chamber of horrors of the most diverse kinds – incest, crimes, human sacrifices – characterizes them and differentiates them from the Greeks.' (Fontana 1995: 4) According to Fontana (1995: 3), the image was taken up again in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century to define the Europeans in the mirror image of the 'Asiatic barbarian' through a study of classical Antiquity. Greek archaeologists have been, therefore, intimately involved with a two-century-old project of understanding Europeanness by working at its 'very cradle'. It is for this reason that historians of archaeology view Greek archaeology as one of the formative disciplines of the late nineteenth century, in that it provided 'a foundation myth for Euro-American civilisation' within an intellectual tradition of Hellenism that had its roots in eighteenth-century political struggles (Morris 1994a: 8–9; 1994b: 3).

As an immediate consequence of such a preoccupation with ancient Greece, the architectural history of Roman theatre buildings seems to have remained outside the purview of archaeologists and historians for a long time, with a few remarkable exceptions such as the research and publications (e.g. Mau 1906; Puchstein 1906) on the Great Theatre in *Pompeii* (Frézouls 1969: 139; Frézouls 1982: 343, 346; Courtois 1989: 11; Moretti 1993: 72). Flickinger's following criticism of the first edition of Bieber's *The History of the Greek and Roman Theater* (1939) is noteworthy in this regard:

> 'It seems as if the author did not realize at first that even for a book of nearly five hundred pages one has to pick up and chose, and then was constrained to hurry toward the end. In truth there is nowhere published an adequate account of the Roman theatre. The magnificent structures of the Empire lack the sentimental value of being contemporaneous with great Latin plays or even strongly associated in our memories with Greek drama. In consequence they are usually hurried through as an afterthought or a necessary evil in a few paragraphs or pages at the end of a longer treatment of something regarded as more important. Miss Bieber's book also gives this impression.' (Flickinger 1940: 70)

In the 'much enlarged and mostly completely rewritten' (Bieber 1961: viii) chapters on the Roman theatre in the second edition, Bieber made the varied forms of entertainment under the Late Empire a special feature of the work, demonstrating their spread to the provinces by the large number of theatre buildings studied in detailed photographs and plans (Martin 1961–62: 16).

Since the publication in English of Theodor Mommsen's *The Provinces of the Roman Empire* (1974) in 1886, the appearance of performance buildings in the context of the Roman West has often been taken as an indication of an evolution in the provincial society towards civilisation,

'with the adoption of the conqueror's culture by the conquered easily traced through the appearance of Roman artefacts, Roman styles, and Roman practices' (Alcock 1997: 1). Roman performance buildings were, therefore, seen as a manifestation of, and a tool for, consolidating Roman power over subject nations by imposing a common architectural vocabulary that was the same in every city of the empire, with no variation except in minor decorative details and some construction techniques (Ball 2000: 247; also Beacham 1999: 126, 128). It may be possible to make sense of the popularity of this dominance model of 'Romanisation' within the context of Victorian colonialism (Hingley 2000), following a period of French cultural domination as the self-proclaimed 'new Rome' (Morris 1994a: 16). The rise of Philhellenism with J. J. Winckelmann (1717–1768) and his successors, and their failure to acknowledge their dependence on a long tradition of scholarly erudition and the intermediary function of Rome, may be explained as part of German resistance to cultural domination in a period of rising nationalism (Morris 1994a: 16; Marchand 1996: 4; Winterer 2002: 50). The memory of Rome was charged with conquest and Germanic resistance – a threat presented by Rome's universal 'civilising' mission to German culture and liberties in the face of the mid-century Protestant cultural nationalist conviction that distinguished between the *Germania romana*, characterised by Latinate corporatism, universalism and Catholicism, and the *Germania libera* of the 'barbarians', representing the truly German values of individualism, national particularism and Protestantism (Marchand 1996: 154–9). This socio-political context set the course of ancient theatre studies with the help of style-historical thinking formulated in the works of modern art historians such as Alois Riegl (1858–1905) and Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945) (Morris 1994a: 17; Marchand 1996: 332).

Whitley (1987: 9–10) attributes the distinction between British-American and German archaeology to the latter's much closer relationship with art history, aesthetics, and philosophy—in particular with idealism. The author traces Hegelian influence in the nineteenth century tendency to perceive a work of art both as modifying its antecedents and as carrying intimations of its successors, principally in architecture and sculpture (Whitley 1987: 11). A generation before G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831), Winckelmann had already adopted Giorgio Vasari's (1514–1571) biological cycle into German art history as a means of modelling the origin, progress, change and downfall of art. The pinnacle of artistic beauty and perfection was, of course, attained by the Greeks (Fernie 1995: 74). Wölfflin developed an alternative sequence, characterized by a repetitive cycle of three phases (i.e. early, classic, and baroque) best exemplified in the *Quattrocento* (Early Renaissance, High Renaissance and the Baroque), and he stressed that his sequence had nothing to do with an improvement in quality and that it should not be confused with the biological metaphor (Fernie 1995: 129).

Wölfflin's most important contribution was his attempt to distinguish these phases on the basis of formal principles that structure contrasting optical modalities, as, for example, in his characterisation of High Renaissance art by 'linear' (draughtsmanly) definition, 'planimetric' suggestion of space, 'closed' forms, and unity through a 'harmony of parts', as opposed to the 'painterly' definition of line, emphasis of 'depth', use of 'open' forms, and achievement of unity through 'concentration on a single theme' in Baroque art (Whitley 1987: 13; Holly 1994: 347). In his *The Principles of Art History: The Problem the Development of Style in Later Art* (first published in German in 1915), Wölfflin argues that these formal attributes in polar opposition were constitutive, in themselves, of the nature of the art of these two periods (Minor 1995: 113–28; Fernie 1995: 127–51). Holly (1994: 350) underlines this argument as revealing Wölfflin's formalist stance, interpreting it as a reaction to the appropriation of culture by German politics during the World War I. Similarly, Donald Preziosi notes that:

'For many, *Principles* became a powerful and canonical statement of a certain 'formalism' in art history – an approach to art in which the genealogical development of formal changes (the physical face of the Hegelian or idealist coin) constituted an internally coherent system of differences, according to measured and in principle predictable variations in the underlying distinctive features of objects. In this respect, Wölfflin's *Principles* was an attempt to articulate visual change on the analogy of the models of linguistic evolution, which were thought in the late nineteenth century to take place according to an internal structural or systemic logic, rather than as a reflection of actual usage or social context.' (Preziosi 1998: 113)

It is possible to find the echo of Wölfflin's *Principles* in the studies on Roman theatre architecture dating from roughly 1895 to 1925–30 when the central concern seems to have been the discovery of the mutation by which the Roman type of theatre was born from the Hellenistic one, to integrate the long evolution of the Greek theatre from pre-Classical through the Hellenistic to the Roman period with Wölfflin's cycle of three phases (Frézouls 1969: 139–40; Frézouls 1982: 346–7; Courtois 1989: 11–2). Hence was produced the unbroken, linear, historical narrative of the evolution of ancient theatre architecture from a unitary origin and a 'Golden Age' in ancient Greece to its change and downfall in later Antiquity.

The Greek-Roman binarism in ancient theatre studies

Despite their many diverse concerns, influential late nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars such as Bethe (1896), Dörpfeld and Reisch (1896), von Gerkan (1921), Navarre (1925), Bulle (1928), and Libertini (1933) seem to have agreed on two fundamental ideas regarding Roman theatres: that of an absolute continuity from the Hellenistic type, as demonstrated by means of an essentially genetic investigation on the origins of Roman theatre building in Italy under the warrant of Vitruvius; and that of a lack of originality in its later development in Italy and the provinces (Frézouls 1982: 346–7; Frézouls 1969: 139–40; Courtois 1989: 11–2). Whilst the stage building and especially the *scaenae frons* were thought to show some elements of originality, these tropes persisted. Thus, despite the presence of diverse borrowings, an occidental and an oriental type were laboriously formulated with the argument that the former was born out of the Italian Hellenistic forms while the original Hellenistic characteristics victoriously re-emerged in the latter (Frézouls 1969: 139–40; Frézouls 1982: 346–7; Courtois 1989: 11–2). As the most emblematic effort in this vein, Bieber reports that:

'Dörpfeld tried to derive the Roman theatre directly from the Greek by insisting that the inner half of the circular orchestra, towards the spectators, was set deeper into the ground, while the outer half remained at the original Greek level, and that consequently the low Roman stage was at the same level where formerly in the Greek theatre the main scene of action also took place. The earlier Greek row of columns in the front wall supporting the platform of the proskenion, in Dörpfeld's opinion, became the scaenae frons behind the platform of the Roman pulpitum.' (Bieber 1961: 188)

Dörpfeld had found support for his thesis in the tradition that related that Pompey took the Early Hellenistic Theatre on the northern Aegean island of *Mytilene* as a model for the first permanent theatre in Rome, borrowing from it the rounded form of the auditorium with semicircular passageways and radial stairs (Bieber 1961: 181). Bieber (1961: 181) herself argued that, Pompey must have known similar auditoria not only from South Italy and Sicily

but also from the circus and temporary theatres in Rome, and that rather than the rounded form of its auditorium, the distinguishing characteristic of the first permanent theatre in Rome was the intimate connection of its stage building, *orchestra*, and auditorium 'with the help of side buildings (*versurae*) which took the place of the paraskenia of the Greek theatre.' Bieber's method in outlining the development of the Roman theatre building during the Republican period is already apparent in her delineation of a Western *proskenion* and an Eastern long and narrow variation, arguing that both had originated in Greek soil but under different influences: while the latter raised stage was a continuation from the Hellenistic tradition, the former low one was invented for representations of Italian Popular Comedy that influenced the Republican Roman plays. Adopting, in this way, the method already used by Vitruvius, she then compared the Roman material with the Hellenistic theatre building to highlight their remarkable difference (Table 1, from Bieber 1961: 189; highlights are mine).

Table 1. The main differences between the Hellenistic and the Roman theatre.

Hellenistic	Roman
The *orchestra* is a **full** circle.	The *orchestra* is a **half** circle.
Stage house and *orchestra* are **separated**.	Stage house and *orchestra* are brought into an architectural **whole**.
The stage is **high and shallow**.	The stage is **low and deep**.
The *proskenion* is decorated with columns and painted *pinakes*.	The *proscenium* has a closed front decorated with niches and sometimes small pilasters.
The background of the stage has wide openings (*thyromata*) with painted scenary.	The background is a sumptuous architectural *scaenae frons*.
The entrances to the *orchestra* are **open** *paradoi*.	The side entrances are **vaulted**.
The seats of honor for the priests are in the **lowest tier of seats**.	Boxes (*tribunale*) are **above the vaulted entrances** for the providers of the plays. Senators, members of the city council, and other distinguished spectators are seated in the *orchestra*.
The different **tribes** are separated in sections in the **same gallery**.	The different **classes** are seated in **different galleries**, separated by parapets (barriers).
Entrance for **all** spectators is through the *paradoi* and the *orchestra* leading to the radiating staircases.	Entrance for the public is through **different** outer vaulted and open passageways.
The *auditorium* is built against a hillside, and therefore has no outside façade. No colonnade on the top.	The *auditorium* occasionally is also laid on a hillside (Vitruvius, v,3,3), but mostly built on high subconstructions from level ground with a rich façade, a colonnaded gallery, and sometimes shrines on top.
The theatre is built in sanctuaries.	The theatre can be built anywhere in a healthy place (Vitruvius, v,3,1). It sometimes has a shrine above its *cavea*.
The Greek theatre is a **religious and democratic** building with equally good seats for everybody.	The Roman theatre is a **class** theatre. It has more seats for officials and less space for the performances. It has different seats for the different ranks of society.
The Greek performances are **literary events**.	The Roman performances are shows catering to the **taste of the public**.

The tree-like structure of the table, differentiating the Hellenistic theatre from the Roman on the basis of contrasting attributes, parallels Wölfflin's characterisation of High Renaissance art on the basis of formal principles that structure contrasting optical modalities with the Baroque. For example, the open Greek theatre, resting on a natural slope with its larger than semicircular *koilon* centring on the *orchestra*, is portrayed as blending visually and physically with nature, in contrast to the closed Roman theatre, whose semicircular *cavea* centring on the stage rises on level ground over manmade subconstruction. The difference in Bieber's table, however, is that, in addition to contrasting formal principles (such as full vs. half circle, separated vs. whole, high and shallow vs. low and deep, open vs. vaulted entrance etc.), she also draws a distinction between the two societies that produced the two types of theatre in such a way as to claim, like Winckelmann, for 'the autonomy and originality of the Greeks, from the Geometric age into the Hellenistic period' (Marchand 1996: 333) before the downfall brought by 'Romanisation'. The Hellenistic theatre is thus portrayed as a religious and democratic building with equally good seats for everybody, with different tribes separated in sections in the same gallery and priests in seats of honour in the lowest tier of seats, all using the same entrances before the start of literary performances. Its polar opposite is the Roman class theatre which presented shows aimed at the amusement of the public rather than its edification, wherein different galleries existed, separated by barriers, for the different ranks of Roman society, who used separate entrances. This logic structuring Bieber's table lends itself to a post-structuralist reading around the argument that in simple pairings such as light-dark, truth-falsehood, or cosmos-chaos, the first terms are privileged over the seconds (Minor 1995: 16) in such a way as to generate two binary opposite sets.

The distinctiveness of Bieber's particular interpretation of the distinction made between the theatre buildings constructed by the Greeks and the Romans since the *De Architectura* of Vitruvius are revealed more clearly when we compare it with the interpretation of the renowned French scholar Pierre Gros (1994) in a seminal essay on the significance of the Vitruvian scheme for the Latin theatre in the normative system of *De Architectura*. Vitruvius (1960: 153) distinguishes between Latin and Greek theatres mainly by the 'difference, that theatres designed from squares are meant to be used by Greeks, while Roman theatres are designed from equilateral triangles.' In support of the idea that the two schemes serve as 'the other' for one another, Gros (1994: 63) reports S. Ferri's argument that these two schemes are equivalent in terms of mathematical logic, since they were born out of the two apparently different but essentially analogous methods used by the Sophists to resolve the quadrature of the circle. Gros (1994: 65) evaluates the Vitruvian choice for triangles or squares as reminiscent of these non-Euclidean solutions for the quadrature of the circle that reproduce, in an embryonic form, an image of the *signifer circulus*, the formula for celestial harmony developed on the basis of the zodiac circle. The significance of this evaluation is revealed through reference to the sculptural program of the Temple of Concordia Augusta in Rome wherein the pairings of Roman deities served to represent the harmonious world order that was being established by Augustus on the principle of opposition in trigons and quadrants on the sphere of the fixed, as mentioned by Geminos of Rhodes:

> 'Vesta rules Capricorn, Ceres, and Virgo, and Capricorn and Virgo are in the same trigon; Mars rules Scorpio, Mercury, and Cancer, and Scorpio and Cancer are members of another trigon; Juno rules Aquarius, Apollo, and Gemini, and Aquarius and Gemini are members of the third trigon. Significantly, Manilius points out that relations within a trigon were not always untroubled, but ultimately harmony prevailed and balance was maintained.' (Kellum 1990: 295)

Vitruvius' dedication of a whole book of his *De Architectura* to the Latin theatre indicates his awareness of the key role to be played by the theatrical edifice in the establishment of a difficult balance in a new world emerging under the Emperor Augustus. In this way, instead of attributing an axiomatic status to it like Bieber, Gros contextualises the Vitruvian enterprise as an intellectual product of the Augustan period whose correspondence to contemporary and later practice is open to scrutiny. In fact, the archaeological evidence for Roman period theatres suggests that the majority of theatres were not constructed following the Vitruvian method (e.g. Small 1983).

Thanks to the clarity and assertiveness Bieber's table provide in an area where so much of the evidence is either incomplete or contradictory, Ashby (1999: 140) notes that its thirteen points were raised to the status of articles of faith, and have remained as such until recently due to the almost scriptural authority of Bieber's book. This long-lasting popularity has had a negative impact on the appreciation of the architectural diversity of the extant remains. By its lack of any chronological or geographical references, the table presumes that these characteristics persisted unchanged through space and time. Hence, the Roman theatre as portrayed by Bieber implied a fixed type of relation between Rome and its provinces, echoing the one formulated by Mommsen.

Roman theatre studies after the emergence of 'Romanisation' as an umbrella term

The ongoing popularity of this paradigm is attested by the argument of the prominent Roman theatre historian Richard C. Beacham (1999: 126) that the Theatre of Marcellus became a widely imitated prototype after the establishment of the principate 'as the head of a new, more clearly defined social hierarchy that could be celebrated and in a concrete sense demonstrated in the very layout and seating of these theatres.'

> 'The new system of imperial government (facilitated by predominantly peaceful conditions) assisted the integration of the provinces and their population into the Roman state and Roman society, and crucially, led to their cultural development and urbanization. In the empire there were close to a thousand cities, and although many of these had relatively small populations of under fifteen thousand inhabitants, by the end of the first century A.D., frequently even the smallest towns had acquired a collection of monumental public buildings, including a theatre… With the spread of Roman authority that quickened urbanization and the wealth and culture generated by prosperity and security, provincial citizens now became enthusiastic supporters of the ethos and ideals of Roman government and customs. Within the new conditions governing status and position, one effective way for a provincial to distinguish himself and attract favour was through public patronage. Thus the theatres operated as both an engine and an object of propaganda (Beacham 1999: 126, 128)

This picture leaves out a group of Roman theatres known since the 1970s as 'mixed theatres' (*théâtres mixtes*) or 'theatre-amphitheatres' (*théâtres-amphithéâtres*) on the basis of their function, and more recently as Gallo-Roman theatres due to their confinement to the 'far less Romanized' areas of *Gallia*, *Germania*, and *Britainnia* that extend over modern England, France, Germany, Luxembourg, and Switzerland (Frézouls 1992: 13; Dodge 1999: 231; Rossetto and Sartorio 1994/95/96: vol. 1, 74). The only example so far encountered outside of a north-western context is that at *Lixus* in Morocco while the Hadrianic double theatre at Stobi also appears to have been

build 'to serve a double purpose, with an arena that could be converted when necessary by the addition of a temporary wooden stage.' (Dodge 1999: 231) Used for amphitheatre games as well as for theatrical performances, the *cavea*, *orchestra*, and *scaena* of these performance buildings are characteristically separate, as in the archetypal Greek theatre, although they appear to have a different layout. Semicircular only in a few cases, their *cavea* is almost always a circular segment larger than a semicircle, with two parallel extensions to the wings, and usually rests on a natural slope or an artificial embankment formed by irregular and sometimes buttressed containment walls, with tiers or steps cut into the slope or formed by timber planks anchored to the slope. Often repeating the shape of the *cavea*, the *orchestra* may be broader and longer than the one in the archetypal Roman theatre used to stage gladiatorial and animal fights. 'The very small stage building consists of a low stage – *proscaenium* – partially occupying the orchestra area and a similar rectangular construction – *postscaenium* – protruding beyond the rear wall.' (Rossetto and Sartorio 1994/95/96: vol. 1, 140)

   Some thirty examples of this type have been located near rural religious centres (*conciliabula*) visited by the local population of central and northern France. The sanctuary at their focal point is usually accompanied by a forum, a theatre, and a bath connected to a spring (Rossetto and Sartorio 1994/95/96: vol. 1, 74). These form a separate category in Bouley's (1992: 79) classification of theatre buildings in the province of *Gallia*, arguing that theatres display diverse architectural characteristics depending on their location in *colonia*, in metropoleis or the chief settlements of *civitates*, small market towns or villages, and close to frontier sanctuaries or rural markets. Interpreting the latter type as a Celto-Roman syncretism, possibly in political centres that inherited the tradition of Celtic assemblies located outside the *oppida* and the *urbes* in the little urbanised rural Celtic areas of *Gallia*, Frézouls (1969: 151; 1982: 430–3) underlines the possibility of finding similar phenomena in other parts of the Empire characterised by a similar population profile, in view of the frequency and regularity of theatre-temple association in Celtic lands. Strengthening this argument is Dodge's (1999: 231) interpretation of the Gallo-Roman theatres 'as a continuation of the classical connection between theatre and religious ceremony as seen in the Greek sanctuaries at Delphi and Epidaurus, while also perpetuating the idea of a rural Celtic shrine.' As their construction was financed and supervised by the landlords, 'the tribunal replaced the scaenae frons of the urban theatre, almost certainly coupled to the fact that the emperor's statue was placed there to preside over the ceremony. Whatever national traits these sanctuaries displayed, they were certainly not centres of resistance.' (Whittaker 1997: 159)

   This latter provides an example of how the hybridism implied by their mutual names has been understood very differently in the cases of the Gallo-Roman and Greco-Roman types of theatres. As different from the so-called Gallo-Roman theatre that refers to a building type that is confined to the Roman provinces of *Gallia* and which is, therefore, a geographical type, the so-called Greco-Roman theatres of the Roman province of *Asia* are instead characterised by a type of hybridism that is often explained within the 'Romanisation and resistance' paradigm, with 'Romanisation' used in the sense of forceful acculturation. These buildings are described as typically featuring a rectilinear five-door *scaenae frons* with no niches (Isler: 1994/95/96: 120) and, instead of the common semicircular *cavea* of the Roman theatre on flat land over *substructures*, they take the form of a horseshoe on the natural slope of a hill and, like the archetypal Greek theatre, are detached from the stage building in such a way as to unify visually and physically with nature. This is typically interpreted as a survival of the local Hellenistic theatre-building tradition well into the Roman period and is likely the reason why the 'Graeco-Roman Theatres' are among the categories listed by Bieber to display the variety in the 'Roman' theatre buildings

in Italy and the provinces during the Empire, together with the 'Purely Roman Theatres' and the 'Odea' in the fourteenth chapter of *The History of the Greek and Roman Theatre* (1961). While seemingly blurring the dividing line between Bieber's Hellenistic and Roman theatres, the Greco-Roman hybridism does, in fact, strengthen the two binary classificatory categories by describing deviations from them on the basis of the same contrasting attributes.

The same observation is also valid for the Eastern/Oriental vs. Western/Occidental type of Roman stage buildings that are still distinguished on the basis of formal contrasts. While the former is characterised by a two-dimensional treatment of the *scaenae frons* as a rectilinear surface articulated about its three main and two minor monumental entrances with columnar *aediculae* and continuous orders, as at *Aspendos*, in the latter the treatment is three-dimensional, with an elaborate alternation of projections and recessions that throws emphasis on the decorative screen itself, as at Orange (Dodge 1999: 221). Dodge (1999: 221) cites J.B. Ward-Perkins (1981: 261) for the idea that 'the presence of so-called western stage buildings may reflect areas that did not have a long and essentially Greek theatrical tradition and that had to draw directly on the traditions of Rome and Italy.' (Dodge 1999: 221) However, unlike Greco-Roman theatres which are largely confined to the Roman province of *Asia*, the geographical distribution of the two types of *scaenae frons* does not always support the presumed binary opposition between the 'Roman West' and the 'Greek East' (Frézouls 1982: 396–409). As an example, 'the vast majority of the Roman stage buildings in Syria (e.g. that at Bostra) are of the western type' (Dodge 1999: 221), and the Eastern type is encountered in such western corners of the Roman Empire as *Acinipo*, at the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula towards the Gibraltar pass (del Amo 1982: 230).

These are observations that have been made possible by the growing amount of research and publication on the extant theatre remains around the Mediterranean basin, which appear to be gradually removing the grid imposed by Bieber's *tabula*. While Bieber had traced the development of ancient theatre architecture from the excavated, investigated and published remains of some 76 theatres, the census of ancient theatres that has appeared under the editing of Paola Ciancio Rossetto and Giuseppina Pisani Sartorio (1994/95/96) some three decades later has a total of 901 entries that consist of 790 theatres, 167 of which are 'Greek', 311 'Roman', 89 'Gallo-Roman', 16 'Greco-Roman'; 48 are 'odea', 14 are 'theatres' or 'odea', 14 are 'theatre *caveas*', 8 are 'semi-amphitheatres' with a *scaena*, and 123 are unclassified entries due to their being known only from inscriptions or other written documents (Rossetto and Sartorio 1994/95/96: vol. 1 64, 66). Instead of our age-old distinction between 'the Same and the Other' (Foucault 1994: xv), this taxonomy may at first resemble that 'certain Chinese encyclopaedia' of animals famously quoted by Michel Foucault (1926–84) from Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986) in the preface of his *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1994). For, just as the animals '(i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush' (Foucault 1994: xvi), our '(a) Hellenistic, (b) Roman, (c) Greco-Roman' theatres could juxtapose only in the non-place of language in 'the table upon which, since the beginning of time, language had intersected space.' (Foucault 1994: xvii) Perhaps if we manage to do away, as Borges does, with the 'site' provided to us by the nineteenth-century German idealism, we would begin to perceive that, below the level of formal principles that structure contrasting optical modalities, all these extant remains are in themselves capable of being ordered 'on the same ground that is once more stirring under our feet.' (Foucault 1994: xxiv)

In the past three decades, 'Romanisation' studies seem to have taken that turn by transforming the concept into an umbrella term that now refers to a variety of processes including acculturation,

accommodation, and resistance, depending on the peculiarities of the affected local societies (Keay 2001: 122). Thus, we can understand each provincial territory as having 'its own physical environment, its own indigenous culture, and its own history of relations with Rome, all of which affected and modified the Romanization process.' (Curchin 2004: 2, 8) This new conception of 'Romanisation' has already started to affect histories of ancient theatre architecture although it has not yet been fully worked through. One example is the three-volume *Teatri Greci e Romani – Alle Origini del Linguaggio Rappresentato* (Rossetto and Sartorio 1994/95/96) that consists of a catalogue of all archaeologically and historically documented ancient Greek and Roman performance buildings classified according to the modern state in which they are located. The presentation of the catalogue in Frank Sear's *Roman Theatres – An Architectural Study* (2006: 117–424) goes one step further, by presenting data on individual examples in the order of provinces. Nevertheless, in the introductory chapters of the compilation, Sear (2006: 24–25) maintains a distinction between the theatres of the western Roman provinces, those of (the eastern) *Asia Minor* and Greece, and those of the provinces of *Arabia*, *Palestina*, and *Syria*, as well as of Crete and some southern cities of *Lycia* and *Cilicia*, the former of which would appear to correspond to what Sear (2006: 53) calls 'the purely Roman type of theatre' that 'developed in Sicily and southern and central Italy during the second and first centuries B.C.' (Sear 2006: 96). In his chapter on 'The Cavea and Orchestra' (Sear 2006: 68–82), the distinction between the semicircular western type and the larger-than-semicircular eastern type becomes evident, as does the Gallo-Roman type of theatre, the latter in terms of the applied construction technique. The east-west binarism is maintained also in the chapter on 'The Scene Building' (Sear 2006: 83–95), and that on 'Provincial Theatres' (Sear 2006: 96–115) in which the 'Gallo-Roman type' (in the quotations of Sear) is discussed in more detail. These attest to the survival of the paradigm set by Bieber's *The History of the Greek and Roman Theatre* (1961) despite challenges posed to its tree-like classificatory structure.

Alternative origins and paths of evolution in Greek theatre studies

Other challenges to Bieber's unbroken, linear, historical account of the evolution of ancient theatre architecture have been directed against the idea of a unitary origin and a 'Golden Age' in the Sanctuary of Dionysus in Athens. The first radical alternative to what Frederiksen (2000: 148) refers to as 'the Dörpfeld orthodoxy' came in 1947 from Carlo Anti (1947) who suggested a trapezoidal shape for the early *orchestra*, which he elaborated by extending his conclusions for the Theatre of Syracuse in Sicily to other examples. However, his many interesting theories were immediately rejected and even ridiculed, as reported by Elizabeth R. Gebhard (1973: xvi), which has cast a pall over any thought of a rectilinear orchestra. Following Anti's line of argument, Gebhard based her alternative theory, developed during her excavations of the Theatre in the Sanctuary of *Isthmia*, on the observation that:

> 'In other theatres outside of Athens, which are of early date or simple plan, there is no trace of an orchestra circle, and the seats were clearly arranged in straight rows. Notwithstanding that all extant caveas belong to the time of stone construction, the straight examples undoubtedly reflect an earlier type of seating in wood, which by its nature would have been laid out in straight segments […]. The orchestra in turn would have been the level open area at the foot of the seats, bounded by the front of the skene at the other side, and so essentially quadrilateral in shape.' (Gebhard 1973: 15)

Gebhard suggests a beginning in timber, which would have defined the form of the *orchestra* as well as that of the *cavea* as it attained permanence in stone and later evolved from a trapezoidal to a circular shape. The theory later found support in the *proedria* of the Theatre of Dionysus, which seem to be the oldest dating permanent remains from the early *cavea*. Pöhlman (1981) picked up from this point and, re-examining the *proedria* published earlier by Maass (1972), concluded 'that they must have been in a straight line and that the form of the orchestra must have been like those at Thorikos and Trachones.' (Green 1989: 20) About a decade later J.R. Green (1991) admitted, on the basis of evidence of representations on Classical period Athenian vases, the existence in Athens of a monument of the type known from *Thorikos* and *Thrachones*, with rectilinear rows of seats and a stage building measuring about 25m in length. This would have resulted in the reduction of the distance between the actors and the spectators and allowed for rather subtler scenic changes than those starting from the fourth century B.C. onwards. Inge Nielsen (2002: 118), while writing on *Cultic Theatres and Ritual Drama*, also cites the *proedria* evidence and the *Thorikos* example to suggest a rectangular early *orchestra* and timber seating rows at the Sanctuary of Dionysus. Last but not least:

> 'At a lecture in Athens in March 1990, O. Alexandri reported on her excavation of the theatre at Euonymos, the deme site near Glyfada. The theatre, as preserved, dates to the third quarter of the fourth century B.C. and has an almost rectangular orchestra, a skene in the Doric order, and two statues of Dionysos (also of the third quarter of the fourth century but archaistic in style). This really does seem to settle the fact that the earliest datable theatre with a circular orchestra is that at Epidaurus.' (Green 1995: 50)

Starting from the 1990s, therefore, the Classical Greek *orchestra* has been thought by many scholars to have been polygonal in shape instead of circular, contrary to long-held opinion (Moretti 1992: 6). Nevertheless, the debate concerning the form of the early Greek *orchestra* has continued well into the 1990s, as attested in the works of Ashby (1988; 1999) and Rehm (1988) who argue for, and of Hammond (1988) and Scullions (1994) who argue against a rectilinear shape for the earliest *orchestra* in the Theatre of Dionysus. In the meanwhile, Roux (1990) has insisted on an explanation based on the importance of dithyrambic choruses that turn in circles for the two singularities of the Greek theatre: the centring of its *koilon* on the *orchestra* instead of being turned entirely towards the *skene*, and the circular form of its *orchestra* despite his acknowledgement of the fact that both tragic and comic choruses were 'tetragones', i.e. arranged in a rectangle.

A challenge to what Frederiksen (2000: 152) names as 'scholarly Athenocentricity' in the portrayal of the development of Greek theatre architecture came with the debate on the origin of the *proskenion* type of high and narrow stage. In fact, Bieber had already spelled out the possibility that the *proskenion*, as an architectural component, may have been introduced into Athens after having evolved elsewhere, and was integrated there into the stage building of the Theatre of Dionysus as 'a compromise which met the needs of the lyrical choruses and the old classical tragedies with a rich background building, as well as the needs of New Comedy with the raised stage.' (Bieber 1961: 115) She suggested the East as the point of origin: 'Alexandria, Antioch, or one of the other residences of the Didactic' (Bieber 1961: 116). From these cities, new Hellenistic ideas would have come to *Delos*, *Priene*, *Assos*, *Ephesus* and elsewhere in Asia Minor to attain perfection in the form of a long and narrow type of *proskenion* designated by Bieber (1961: 117–18) as the 'Eastern type', before it reached the Greek mainland during the third and second centuries B.C.. Bulle had earlier presumed that the Hellenistic *proskenion* theatre

originated in Alexandria (Bieber 1961: 112). In the late 1990s, the East, and more specifically Alexandria, has been promoted once more as the place of origin, this time of the Roman type of theatre building, challenging its traditional derivation from the Greek-Hellenistic type and early developments in Sicily and *Magna Graecia*. University of Sydney excavations in the Theatre at *Paphos*, the Ptolemaic capital in the west of the island of Cyprus, have recently revealed remains from the earlier Hellenistic phase of the building which display close links with the architecture of Alexandria, strengthening the possibility that it reflects the style of the lost Theatre of Alexandria. The importance of such a possibility comes from the fact that the Theatre of *Paphos* in its Hellenistic stage has several features commonly attributed to the Roman type of theatre building, such as an almost semicircular (or D-shaped) *cavea* of 181.5º that is divided into six *cunei* by seven stairways and a stage front located almost on the diameter line of the *orchestra* except a 3.9m displacement towards the south. In these, we may perhaps see the evolution, in Alexandria, of a type distinct from the Greek type of theatre (*Nea Paphos*).

> 'However, there are a number of D-shaped theatres from the Hellenistic world, particularly in Sicily and the Greek west; an example is Hieron's theatre at Syracuse, constructed in the second half of the third century B.C. … The theatre at Metapontum in southern Italy, dated to the end of the fourth century B.C., may represent the earliest example of a Greek theatre with a semicircular orchestra. In Asia Minor, the Hellenistic theatre at Miletus seems to have had a semicircular orchestra.' (Dodge 1999: 214)

Publications along these lines of argument devoted to the theme of origins in studies on Greek and Roman drama and theatre architecture are numerous enough to deserve to be addressed in a separate study. However, what is important to note here is the possible connection of this preoccupation with origins to the role attributed to archaeology and history in the process of identity construction at local, national, and supranational scales.

As a conclusion

As in all arguments of origins (e.g. Eco 1997), these different theories should be taken to reflect the diversity of worldviews shaping the handling of the archaeological data in hand, which render it highly unlikely that a definitive conclusion will be reached some day. The gradual abandonment, in recent publications, of certain axiomatic aspects of the traditional version of the historical evolution of ancient theatre architecture, as represented in Bieber's *The History of the Greek and Roman Theatre* (1961), may perhaps be taken as the beginnings of a paradigm change. Although that paradigm has yet to produce its own version of the evolution of ancient theatre architecture, these different theories form a basis for a critical evaluation of the traditional unbroken, linear, historical account, with a 'unitary origin' and a 'Golden Age' in the ancient Athens.

One common characteristic of these alternative approaches is their search for a place and time specific correlation between ancient theatre buildings and their geo-historical context, resulting in a classificatory model that is represented best by a rhizome. This model means moving away from the unilinear development model for ancient theatre architecture, characteristic of historical accounts such as Bieber's (1961), and provides a means to take in all the extant examples to trace their different lines and rates of development and transformation in time and space. The possibilities of a rhizomic classifactory model are illustrated by Nielsen's (2000; 2002) argument that the development of seating arrangements in cultic sites would have followed a synchronic but different line from that of theatre buildings in urban centres. Accommodation of these and

other alternative interpretations in the same structure would better represent the cultural diversity attested in the past, and which are also apparent in the new and united Europe that provides a new and, compared with the nation-state, rather disorganised and complex economic and political space and framework for identities (Keating 2000: 30). Notably, the alternatives to the established history of ancient theatre architecture have been produced in a period when the European community is going through a profound cultural transformation after the establishment of the European Union, which itself poses a challenge to the very idea of the nation-state as an autonomous entity. Although the New Europe continues to be dominated by the states that are represented in the Council where final decisions are taken, it offers possibilities for non-state actors to operate with a certain degree of autonomy from states and encourages the growth of multiple identities among both citizens including minorities and political leaders (Keating 2000: 30). The comparatively recent methodological turn in studies on ancient theatre architecture seems to be inspired, and find appreciation in, this new political space, with its higher potential for defending and extending a plurality of cultural identities within Europe.

> 'We're tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, radicles. They've made us suffer too much. All of arborescent culture is founded on them, from biology to linguistics. Nothing is beautiful or loving or political aside from underground stems and aerial roots, adventitious growths and rhizomes.' (Deleuze and Guattari 1993: 15)

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Acknowledgements

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