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Macedonian *Choregoi*: Greek Tragedy in the 4th century B.C.

Most modern critical assessments of ancient tragedy are based on a polarisation that accounts for a localised, political, Athenian theatre of the 5th century BC and a melodramatic, transhistorical, international theatre in the 4th century BC. The emphasis on the *Athenian* and *democratic* aspects of ancient Greek tragedy reflects, of course, the weight and quality of evidence that allows us to assess the relationship between that particular *polis* and its theatre. Meanwhile in other Greek cities it is often difficult to piece together the initial evidence let alone establish the importance of theatre within different social, historical, and political contexts. As a result many critics doubt that the genre could have played such a meaningful role in these alternative locations. Jean-Pierre Vernant, for example, famously states that: "Greek tragedy.. is born, flourishes and degenerates in Athens, and all within the space of a hundred years". But there was more to "*tragedy's moment*" than has generally been acknowledged.

In my paper I would like to analyse a stage in the development of Greek theatre from an extraordinary Athenian phenomenon into an international art-form. I wish to examine the Macedonian theatrical experience as presented by its royal *choregoi*, patrons who were to make the genre truly international in the new century. To what ends did kings such as Archelaus, Philip II, Alexander the Great, and Demetrius Poliorcetes employ this supposedly Athenian cultural performance? My paper will seek to examine the reasons why Athenian playwrights and actors were such an important part of the court of successive Macedonian kings. How were the *Hellenic* dramatic contests at Aigai and Dion, or at Tyre, Susa, and Ecbatana for that matter, shaped by the realities of their new political and social contexts? What, if any, impact did the Macedonians have on the development of ancient Greek theatre?

My work has been particularly influenced by those scholars who seek to identify a vigorous process of representation in a variety of locations rather than a fixed ensemble of meanings and beliefs in just one. Theatre was so important a cultural product, and its spread throughout the Hellenic world so absolute, that by the end of the 4th century BC one could say that the Athenian democracy was not the only theatocracy (Plato *Laws* 710a-b) in ancient Greece. Can we establish 4th century BC Macedonia as another?