The Sisyphus plays of Aeschylus

The *Sisyphus* Plays of Aeschylus

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Abstract: Two titles of Aeschylus' *Sisyphus* plays are preserved in ancient sources: *Drapetes* and *Petrocylistes*, but most fragments are attributed simply to *Sisyphus*, without a distinguishing epithet. Several scholars have taken *Sisyphus Drapetes* and *Sisyphus Petrocylistes* to be one and the same play. In the present discussion, a reconstruction of the plot of *Sisyphus Petrocylistes* is attempted, in the light of which all of the extant fragments can be assigned to one play, for which *Sisyphus Drapetes* may be an equally apt title. At the same time, the existence of another *Sisyphus* is postulated, which was probably early lost. Finally, the aim of the present article is to explain the confusion in our sources about the titles of the Aeschylus' *Sisyphus* plays.

Two titles are attested for Aeschylus' *Sisyphus* plays: *Drapetes* and *Petrocylistes*. The title *Sisyphus Drapetes* (hereafter, *SD*) is found only in the Catalogue of Aeschylus' plays, which has been preserved in the famous Laurentianus 32.9 from the Medici collection. Fr. 233 Radt is ascribed by the scholiast on Aristoph. *Pax* 73, and fr. 234 by Hesychius, to *Sisyphus Petrocylistes* (hereafter, *SP*). Additionally, an anonymous ancient commentator on Aristot. *Eth. Nic.* 3.2.1111a8 (*Comm. in Arist. Gr.* 145.23 Heylbut) tells us that Aeschylus was accused of revealing the mysteries of Demeter in *SP*. The other eight extant fragments are ascribed by our sources simply to *Sisyphus*, with no epithet. Two of them – the two-line fr. 225 (the longest of the fragments) and fr. 226 are preserved by Pollux (respectively, 10.77 and 10.20). Fr. 227 is found in Aelian (*Nat. an.* 12.5). Three fragments – 228, 229 and 230 – are preserved in *Etymologicum Gudianum* (227.39; 321.55 and 321.58 Sturz). Finally, the single-word fr. 231 and 232 come from the lexicographers – Hesychius (α 3536 Latte) and Erotian (α 103 and δ 3 Nachmanson).

Several scholars took *SD* and *SP* to be one and the same play[1]. They pointed out that in both plays the story of Sisyphus' escape from Hades was probably treated. Its presence in *SP* can be deduced from two fragments, assumed by Taplin and, independently, by Steffen to belong to one scene[2]: fr. 233 (featuring

* I would like to thank Małgorzata Borowska, Jan Kwapisz and Mikołaj Szymański for critically reading through earlier drafts of this article.

1 H.W. Smyth, *Aeschylus, II: Agamemnon, Libation-Bearers, Eumenides, Fragments* (Cambridge, Mass. 1926) 458; T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth. A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources* (Baltimore 1993) 174; W. Steffen, *De Graecorum fabulis satyricis* (Wrocław 1979) 23.

2 O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus: The Dramatic Use of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford 1977) 429; Steffen, loc. cit. (n. 1) 22.

a beetle of Aetna) and fr. 227 (in which someone or something is compared to an enormous field-mouse). Besides, Steffen highlighted the fact that only one play (*SD*) is listed in the Medicean Catalogue. According to him[3], the alternative epithets (*Runaway* and *Stone-Roller*) are due to the fact that both the motif of Sisyphus' escape and the motif of his punishment, i.e. rolling the stone up a hill, were prominent in the plot, which, as Steffen thought, was based upon what may have been found in Pherecydes' account of the myth (fr. 119 Fowler ap. *sch. in Hom. Il.* 6.15). But this raises questions: Why was one title not enough, as usual? And why was a one-word title not enough?

In the present discussion, I will propose a reconstruction of the plot of *SP*, which, as I hope to show, was identical with the play to which the compiler of the Medicean Catalogue refers as *SD*. I will suggest that all of the extant fragments can be ascribed to this play. Finally, I will attempt to shed light on the origin of the two alternative "subtitles".

The starting point of my discussion is fr. 233, one of the two assigned to *SP* by their sources:

> μεγάλοι λέγονται εἶναι κατὰ τὴν Αἴτνην κάνθαροι. μαρτυροῦσι δὲ οἱ ἐπιχώριοι. ... τρόπον δέ τινα καὶ Αἰσχύλος ἐπιχώριος· λέγει δὲ ἐν Σισύφῳ πετροκυλιστῇ· "Αἰτναῖός ἐστι κάνθαρος βίᾳ πονῶν". (*sch. in Aristoph. Pax* 73)

Beetles normally toil rolling a ball of dung[4]; since this image brings immediately to mind the punishment of Sisyphus, several scholars inferred from this fragment, and from the title of the play, that the action takes place in Hades[5]. Pearson, and also Taplin, suggested a plausible context for this fragment[6]. The motif of the Αἰτναῖος κάνθαρος, with its comic potential, was not rare in comedy (Epicharm. fr. 65 Kassel-Austin, Plato Com. fr. 36 Kassel-Austin, Aristoph. *Pax* 1–176). In satyr play, more specifically, its appearance may be located within the context of riddle-guessing scenes[7]. The (almost) complete scene featuring a beetle has been preserved among the fragments of Sophocles' *Ichneutae*[8]. It is tempting to locate within the same context of riddle-guessing the fragment of *SP* under

3 Steffen, loc. cit. (n. 1) 22–23.

4 The image must have been well known to Athenians, since Aristophanes builds an extended joke on it in *Pax* 1–176. Cf. also Plin. *NH* 11.98.

5 E.g. S. Radt, *TrGF*, III: *Aeschylus* (Göttingen 1985) 337; A.H. Sommerstein, *Aeschylus' Fragments* (Cambridge, Mass. 2008) 233–234.

6 A.C. Pearson, "AITNAIOI KANΘAPOI", *CR* 28 (1914) 223–224; cf. Taplin, loc. cit. (n. 2) 429.

7 For a riddle-guessing scene in satyr play, see, apart from the fragment of the *Ichneutae* discussed below, Aesch. *Dictyulci*, fr. 46a.8–15 Radt, in which someone, probably Silenus or the satyrs, tries to guess what has been caught in the fishing net.

8 Soph. *Ichneutae*, fr. 314.298–312 Radt. Here the satyrs attempt to guess the source of an unfamiliar sound; in Cyllene's riddle, this is a dead animal. The Aetnaean beetle is one of their guesses (the right answer is the tortoise; what the satyrs actually heard was the lyre, which is made of the tortoise's shell).

discussion – the Aetnaean beetle would be an incorrect but amusing solution of a "what is it" riddle[9].

If the riddle-guessing scene in *Ichneutae* provides a parallel for the scene of which fr. 233 was part, then another fragment can be placed in it (fr. 227, quoted by Aelian from *Sisyphus* with no distinctive epithet):

> ἔτι γὰρ καὶ τοὺς Αἰολέας καὶ τοὺς Τρῶας τὸν μῦν προσαγορεύειν σμίνθον, ὥσπερ οὖν καὶ Αἰσχύλος ἐν τῷ Σισύφῳ·
> "ἀλλ' ἀρουραῖός τίς ἐστι σμίνθος ὧδ' ὑπερφυής;" (Ael. *Nat. an.* 12.5)

The person speaking here takes someone or something for a mouse. The verb ἐστί occurs both here and in fr. 233[10]. It was Welcker's suggestion that the image of the field-mouse should be referred to Sisyphus emerging from the underworld[11].

Taplin, Steffen and Germar, among others, assume that both fragments belonged to the same scene[12]. I share this view – apart from what they notice, a common feature of these two fragments is the motif of an overgrown animal. These fragments enable us to see in *SP* a satyr play, with Hartung, Steffen, Taplin, Sutton, and others[13]. If both fragments 227 and 233 are guesses at the same riddle, it is doubtful that the play was set in Hades – Welcker rightly observes that the adjective ἀρουραῖος applied to the mouse hints at a bucolic setting[14]. According to Taplin, also fr. 233 does not necessarily imply the underground setting; Sisyphus may have rolled the stone up to the surface of Earth and out of Hades[15]. Certainly, such a concept would have great comic potential. Moreover, it is probable that the play owes the distinctive epithet *Petrocylistes* to a particular, remarkable scene. Aeschylus' *Vita* (7) attests that he was famous for his ability to surprise the spectator.

9 The Aetnean beetle is mentioned also in Soph. *Daedalus*, fr. 162 Radt (ἀλλ' οὐδὲ μὲν δὴ κάνθαρος τῶν Αἰτναίων | πάντων). *Daedalus* was suspected to be a satyr play e.g. by D.F. Sutton, "A Handlist of Satyr Plays", *HSCPh* 78 (1974) 132 and S. Radt, *TrGF*, IV: *Sophocles* (Göttingen 1999) 171–173, *inter alia* because of this fragment (Sutton noticed that the beetle never appears outside a comic context). This fragment could have been a part of a riddle-guessing scene similar to that in the *Ichneutae*; cf. Taplin, loc. cit. (n. 2) 429.

10 Fr. 233 is usually interpreted as an iambic trimeter, whereas fr. 227 is a trochaic tetrameter, and Taplin, loc. cit. (n. 2) 429 remarks that "the change of metre is compatible with a satyr play". But there is nothing to prevent us from taking fr. 233 as another trochaic tetrameter with the beginning missing, and with a caesura after ἐστι just as in fr. 227.

11 F.G. Welcker, *Die Aeschylische Trilogie Prometheus und die Kabirenweihe zu Lemnos nebst Winken über die Trilogie des Aeschylus überhaupt* (Darmstadt 1824) 558.

12 Taplin, loc. cit. (n. 2) 429, Steffen, loc. cit. (n. 2) 22; R. Germar, N. Pechstein, R. Krumeich, "*Sisyphos Drapetes* und *Sisyphos Petrokylistes*", in: R. Krumeich, N. Pechstein, B. Seidensticker (eds.), *Das griechische Satyrspiel* (Darmstadt 1999) 188.

13 J.A. Hartung, *Aeschylos' Fragmente* (Leipzig 1855) 136; Sutton, loc. cit. (n. 9) 126–127.

14 F.G. Welcker, *Nachtrag zu der Schrift über die Aeschylische Trilogie, nebst einer Abhandlung über das Satyrspiel* (Frankfurt a. M. 1826) 316.

15 Taplin, loc. cit. (n. 2) 429.

Yet I see another possibility. Both the concept of the stone-roller's escape and the idea that the play was set in Hades are based on perhaps too literal an interpretation of the Aetnaean beetle metaphor in fr. 233. In my opinion, the allusion to Sisyphus rolling the stone is so clear that we do not need to assume that this is the image which the speaker did actually see at the moment. The allusion could have in fact foreshadowed the final scene of the play. At the same time, the expression βίᾳ πονῶν may have described the effort with which Sisyphus was climbing out of the underworld without his stone. If the satyrs had spotted him then and, unaware of his identity, they had wondered aloud whether they saw a beetle, it would not have been difficult for the Athenian audience to figure out whom, actually, they were about to see.

If I am correct in my view that the two fragments discussed above belonged to one and the same riddle-guessing scene in which the satyrs were involved, we can infer from this that the appearance of Sisyphus surprised them. Most likely this was, then, their first meeting, perhaps to be placed at the beginning of the plot. I do not think that there is much to suggest that Sisyphus was rolling the stone in this scene – in my opinion, the function of the riddle was only to introduce the main character at the moment of his first appearance. I admit, however, that Sisyphus' stone rolling is unlikely to have been entirely absent from the play bearing the title *Sisyphus Petrocylistes*. As a matter of fact, we can make an informed guess about the position of such a scene within the plot. In Pherecydes' account, the stone-rolling episode was placed at the end of the story of Sisyphus – a punishment for his two attempts to avoid death. In *SP*, similarly, the image suggested by the title of the play may have been shown to the audience in the final scene. For instance, we might imagine that Sisyphus was seized and made to roll the stone to Hades, where his eternal torment would begin. The stone could have been previously brought onto the stage by the satyrs. This is certainly no less likely than Sisyphus' escape from Hades with the stone.

It may be inferred from the comparison with other satyr plays that Sisyphus was accompanied onstage by at least one other character, i.e. by his antagonist. It may be conjectured that he was after Sisyphus on behalf of Hades – he could have been either Hermes, or Thanatos, or perhaps Zagreus himself. The last possibility seems to me particularly attractive, since it would result in a successful resolution of the plot – in the final scene, the satyrs would come back to their master.

It is noteworthy, then, that Zagreus is mentioned explicitly in fr. 228:

τινὲς δὲ τὸν Ζαγρέα υἱὸν Ἅιδου φασίν, ὡς Αἰσχύλος ἐν Σισύφῳ·
"Ζαγρεῖ τε νῦν με καὶ πολυξένωι ⟨πατρὶ⟩
χαίρειν ..." (*Et. Gud.* s.v. Ζαγρεύς)

The students of the play agree in assuming that this was uttered by Sisyphus after he had left Hades. This assumption led Welcker, Sommerstein, and others to ascribe the fragment to *SD*.

Zagreus – a chthonic god, according to Nonnus *Dion.* 6.155–178 lacerated by the Titans and reborn as Dionysus – is a central figure in the Orphic myth and cult. The mysteries in his honour are mentioned in Eur. *Cret.*, fr. 472 Kannicht[16]. Fr. 228 was supplemented with the word πατρί by Hermann on the basis of the information which accompanies the text of the fragment in *Etymologicum Gudianum* (s.v. Ζαγρεύς) – that Zagreus was said to be Hades' son "by Aeschylus in *Sisyphus*". The mention of Zagreus in this fragment brings to mind the already mentioned anonymous comment on Arist. *Eth. Nic.*, according to which Aeschylus was accused of λέγειν μυστικά in *SP*[17]. What this implies is that fr. 228 comes from *SP*.

The students of *SP* have had little to say on how the satyrs could have been introduced to the plots of both *SD* and *SP*. This is, as far as I can see, for two reasons – first, our material for reconstruction is scarce, and secondly, it is inherent in the genre that the satyrs appear in mythical stories in which originally there was no room for them. The starting point of the plot of the satyr plays known to us is the separation of the satyrs from Dionysus (in *Theori* they run away in order to practice athletics, in *Ichneutae* they seek for Apollo's oxen)[18].

Fr. 228 enables us to make a conjecture about the construction of the plot in *SP*. I am inclined to suggest that the separation of the satyrs from Dionysus in *SP* was due to his stay in Hades (temporary or permanent; we should keep in mind the information from *Etymologicum Gudianum* that he was a son of Hades in Aeschylus' play). We might imagine that the satyrs went down to Hades to find him. The Greeks believed that the underworld can be entered only from certain places called *Charonia*[19]; the satyrs would have come to the nearest *Charonion*. But fear would have overcome them there – we could imagine a comic exchange between them, something like: "After you, please! – No, no, you first, I insist!". Another possibility is that they would have decided to wait for Dionysus' return near the *Charonion*[20]. At some point, they perceived a movement of something

16 On Zagreus, see e.g. J.E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (New York 1955) 478–496; Gantz, loc. cit. (n. 1) 118–119.

17 According to the commentator, Aeschylus revealed in *SP* and several other plays some mysterious secrets about Demeter. Zagreus, as a son of Persephone, is a grandson of Demeter.

18 See e.g. R. Seaford, *Euripides, Cyclops* (Oxford 1988) 33–35; N. Chourmouziades, *ΣΑΤΥΡΙΚΑ* (Athens 1974) 78–84.

19 E.g. Taenarum (Eur., *HF.* 23, Ps.-Apollod. 2.123 and Hyg., *Fab.* 79), the temple of Artemis Soteira at Troezen (Paus. 2.3.2), the Acherusian Chersonese (Xen. *An.* 6.2.2), Mount Laphystium in Boeotia (Paus. 9.34.5), Lake Alcyon (Paus. 2.37.5), Erineus near the Eleusinian Cephisus (Paus. 1.38.5), the spring of Cyane near Syracuse (Diod. Sic. 5.4.2).

20 Smyth, loc. cit. (n. 1) 457 assumes that the satyrs played in *SP* the role of Orphic initiates. However, we are told that Aeschylus revealed the mysteries and not that he profaned or even

struggling up to the light and they tried to make their guesses about what it was. After that Sisyphus appeared. Fr. 228, in which it is probably Sisyphus who bids his farewell to Zagreus, can be easily attributed to the scene of Sisyphus' escape from the underworld. This is likely to be an answer to the satyrs' question of whether the newcomer met in Hades their master Zagreus. It is telling that in fr. 228, Ζαγρεῖ occupies the initial position; this may be a repetition of the name contained in the question[21]. If the arrival of the satyrs to the *Charonion* had been the opening of the play, this would be to some extent paralleled by *Persae* and *Supplices*, which also begin with the *parodos*. Both fr. 227, from which it can be inferred that the setting is bucolic – a field or a meadow – and fr. 233 from the same scene, which appears to afford the audience a glimpse of the threshold of Hades, fit my assumption that the play was set before the *Charonion*. Moreover, it is in this place that the presence of both Sisyphus and the satyrs can be easily explained.

Two further fragments can be attributed to the same scene: 229 and 230. They are quoted one after another in *Etymologicum Gudianum* (s.v. κῖκυς):

> καὶ Αἰσχύλος ἐν Σισύφῳ·
> "... καὶ θανόντων, οἵσιν οὐκ ἔνεστ' ἰκμάς" (fr. 229),
> εἶτα·
> "σοὶ δ' οὐκ ἔνεστι κῖκυς οὐδ' αἱμόρρυτοι
> φλέβες". (fr. 230)

My supposition is that fr. 229 was originally part of a description of the underworld. This could have been put in Sisyphus' mouth as an answer to the satyrs' inquiries about Hades or perhaps comes from the scene in which the satyrs reached the *Charonion* and scared themselves with talk of what they would find down there. The person addressed in fr. 230 is probably Sisyphus. According to Pherecydes, Hades let Sisyphus return to the world of the living to arrange a proper burial. Once released, Sisyphus refused to go back to Hades. At this point, a brief digression is necessary on the ontological status of the dead. Already in the *Odyssey*, which is our main source for early Greek conceptions of the afterlife, there are several inconsistencies as far as the status of the dead is concerned. However, the general picture is that of insubstantial shades wandering in Hades, devoid of memory and the ability to speak unless they are given blood to drink. It was different with Elpenor, whose corpse remained unburied and therefore he was unable to enter to the kingdom of Hades. Without drinking blood, his soul was able to ask Odysseus to perform

parodied them, which would have been the case if the satyrs had been cast in the role of *mystai*, clearly with a humorous intention.

21 Obviously, it is not problematic that the metre switches here to iambic trimeters, since Sisyphus' appearance onstage marks the beginning of a new scene; cf. n. 10 above.

proper burial rites for him (*Od.* 11.51–83)[22]. Sisyphus' situation after he had died for the first time was similar. The Greeks had reasons to suspect that if Sisyphus was allowed to go back to the world above because his corpse was unburied, it was actually his soul that went back. I argue that Aeschylus may have used the uncertainty about the status of the dead to construct a comic scene in which Sisyphus' insubstantiality would be discovered. Fr. 230 should be, then, attributed to Silenus or the satyrs. It fits perfectly into the scene of Sisyphus' first appearance onstage.

All of the fragments which I have discussed so far can be ascribed to *SP* with considerable certainty. They have enabled us to draw the outline of the plot. Although I admit that it is not possible to reconstruct a context for the rest of the extant fragments with equal confidence, I will show, nevertheless, that for each of them we can easily find a suitable place in the reconstructed plot.

Fr. 225 has been preserved in Pollux 10.77; again, it is assigned simply to *Sisyphus*:

> ἔξεστι δὲ καὶ σκάφην ὀνομάσαι κατ' Αἰσχύλον που σκάφην εἰπόντα ἐν Σισύφῳ·
> "καὶ νίπτρα δὴ χρὴ θεοφόρων ποδῶν φέρειν.
> λεοντοβάμων ποῦ σκάφη χαλκήλατος;"

Welcker was the first to notice that there seems to be an echo of this passage in Hor. *Sat.* 2.3.20–21[23]:

> *... olim nam quaerere amabam*
> *Quo vafer ille pedes lavisset Sisyphus aere.*

The confrontation of these two passages led Sommerstein to argue that in the scene of which fr. 225 is a part the role of Sisyphus was to do the foot-washing, rather than to have his feet washed, and that the word *vafer* suggests that the washing was part of some cunning plan. This could have been, as Germar et al. suggested, a ruse to imprison Death, whose feet Sisyphus would have washed[24]. Sommerstein thought, therefore, that the fragment "can be assigned with fair confidence" to *SD*[25]. In my opinion, all this cannot be accepted, in view of what Horace actually says – he says that *Sisyphus lavat suos pedes*, for in Latin, if *lavare* is used with a part of the body and the body's owner remains unspecified, it is the washer's body that is meant[26]. If Horace had not been thinking of Sisyphus' feet, he would have had to say it explicitly; there is no hint either in Aeschylus

22 On the status of the dead in Homer, see J. Heath, "Blood for the Dead: Homeric Ghosts Speak Up", *Hermes* 133 (2005) 289–400; S.I. Johnston, *Restless Dead: Encounters between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (California 1999) 7–16; Ch. Sourvinou-Inwood, *"Reading" Greek Death: to the End of the Classical Period* (Oxford 1995) 10–107.

23 Welcker, loc. cit. (n. 11) 558.

24 Germar, Pechstein, and Krumeich, loc. cit. (n. 12) 188.

25 Sommerstein, loc. cit. (n. 5) 234–235 with n. 1.

26 See Varro, *Ling.* 9.107; Cic., *De orat.* 2.246.

or in Horace that these are someone else's feet[27]. With regard to *vafer*, the word might have been used no less appropriately simply in reference to the cleverness of Sisyphus' escape (Sommerstein allows this possibility). Of course, this can be no more than a conventional epithet of Sisyphus[28]. The speaker in fr. 225 is probably a servant, which implies that the voice is of Silenus or the satyrs, as it is their role to serve in satyr play. Naturally, we cannot say with absolute certainty that this fragment comes from the same play as those discussed above. What can be said, however, is that the tone of this passage – as Chourmouziades noticed – is comic[29], and if we assume that Sisyphus had the satyrs assist him in the foot-washing, this would fit the convention of satyr play.

It has been assumed that this scene suggests a domestic setting[30], as in the νίπτρα episode in the *Odyssey*. I think, however, that what this fragment supposedly suggests is not enough to allow any firm inference about the whole play. It should be observed that an elegant bronze basin placed, quite absurdly, outside the house may have been used to comic effect. Perhaps this is precisely what Horace alludes to when he suggests that there was something unusual about the basin in which Sisyphus' feet were washed. If my suggestion is correct, the next step could be to place tentatively fr. 230 after fr. 225 and in the same scene, as it can be easily imagined that it was during the foot-washing that the satyrs discovered the bodily insubstantiality of the newcomer.

Another fragment of *Sisyphus* which we find in Pollux 10.20 with no distinctive epithet is the following (fr. 226):

> παίζων δ' εἰ καὶ σταθμοῦχον ἐθέλοις αὐτὸν [sc. τὸν τοῦ παντὸς οἴκου δεσπότην] καλεῖν, ἐρεσχηλῶν τινὰ ἢ ἐκπειρώμενος, ὁ δὲ δεινὸς ὢν εἰς ὀνομάτων χρῆσιν λαμβάνοιτο τοῦ ῥήματος ὡς οὐκ ἂν εἴη δόκιμον, οὐδὲ σὺ μὲν ἂν αὐτὸ πάντῃ δόκιμον εἶναι νομίζοις, οὐ μέντοι οὐδὲ παντελῶς ἀδόκιμον· ὅτι δὲ ἔστιν εἰρημένον εἰ γνωρίζοις, φιλότιμος εἶναι δόξεις. εἴρηται τοίνυν ἐν Αἰσχύλου Σισύφῳ·
> "σὺ δ' ὁ σταθμοῦχος εὖ κατιλλώψας ἄθρει".

27 The interpretation of the genitive θεοφόρων referring to the feet in fr. 225 is problematic. According to *LSJ* (Smyth and Sommerstein share this view), this is θεοφόρος, an adjective with active meaning ("bearing a god"). However, the active θεοφόρος would be a *hapax*, while the passive θεόφορος occurs elsewhere in Aeschylus (*Ag.* 1150), where its sense is "inspired by a god". The passive meaning – the sense would be "guided by gods" – is acceptable also in our fragment. The motif of νίπτρα obviously brings to mind the famous foot-washing episode in book 19 of the *Odyssey*. The situation of Sisyphus returning from Hades, a wanderer of whom the satyrs take care, is not unlike that of Odysseus. In the Homeric epics, wanderers have special status, as it is believed that they are sent by Zeus (*Od.* 14.56–58), or even that they can turn out to be disguised gods (*Od.* 7.199–206, 17.483–487). Either of these notions, that wanderers are god-sent and that at times gods wander in disguise, can be reasonably detected behind the expression θεοφόρων ποδῶν, and either is in accordance with my assumptions that it is Sisyphus who has his feet washed in this scene and that the scene comes from *SP*.

28 Cf. e.g. the presentation of Sisyphus in Theogn. 1.701–717.

29 Chourmouziades, loc. cit. (n. 18) 62.

30 Germar, Pechstein, and Krumeich, loc. cit. (n. 12) 188, Sommerstein, loc. cit. (n. 5) 235.

Not much can be made out of this, but even if the meaning of σταθμοῦχος is, as Pollux thought, οἴκου δεσπότης, and not simply "master", again, this should not be taken as an indication of the household setting. If the play was set, as I argue, before the *Charonion*, Ἅιδου δόμοι may have been intended. This would imply that the passage was addressed to Hades or Zagreus.

Finally, nothing certain can be said about the three one-word fragments which our sources assign to *Sisyphus*. It is noteworthy, though, that one of them (fr. 234 θώψεις) is attributed by Hesychius specifically to *SP* – the play of which, I believe, all of the extant *Sisyphus* fragments were part.

Since *SP* contained, as we have seen, the scene of Sisyphus' escape, *Runaway* (i.e. *Drapetes*) is, in fact, an equally apt title for it. As Germar et al. rightly pointed out, available evidence makes it clear that epithets were added to titles only when there was a need to distinguish between two plays by the same poet and bearing the same title[31]. One implication of this observation is that *Drapetes* is not an appropriate epithet for another play to distinguish it from *SP*, in which Sisyphus' escape was shown. Moreover, it may be telling that we can find no single source that would mention both *SP* and *SD* – while the Catalogue mentions only *SD*, other extant sources preserve only the epithet *Petrocylistes*. In this light, it seems to me less likely that the Medicean Catalogue had originally listed two *Sisyphus* plays but *SP* was dropped from it at some point simply due to scribal omission. We have now good reasons to repeat the conclusion reached by Steffen and several other scholars: *SD* and *SP* are alternative titles for the same play.

Yet this is not where the present discussion can end, since one more implication of the observation made by Germar et al. on the epithets in titles requires our closer attention. If the function of such epithets was always to distinguish between different plays, we have to assume that Aeschylus wrote, in spite of everything that has been said so far, two *Sisyphus* plays. One of them, of which no trace has survived, was probably lost early. First, we do not possess either a fragment or a title which would clearly point to the existence of a plot different from that sketched above, in which Sisyphus' escape from Hades was depicted. Secondly, most of those fragments are assigned simply to *Sisyphus*, as if the need to distinguish the play bearing this title from another *Sisyphus* was no longer felt by those who quoted them. Finally, it is absent from the Medicean Catalogue, which cannot be late if its compiler was able to list as many as seventy-three titles of Aeschylus' plays (of course, this argument is valid only if I am right in my supposition that this absence is not simply due to scribal omission). Because of all this, I am inclined to suggest that the other, shadowy

31 Germar, Pechstein, and Krumeich, loc. cit. (n. 12), 182 n. 1. On the titles accompanied by distinguishing epithets and on titles in general, see G. Hippenstiel, *De Graecorum tragicorum principum fabularum nominibus* (Marburg 1887) esp. 17–31; A.H. Sommerstein, "The Titles of Greek Dramas", in: idem, *The Tangled Ways of Zeus and Other Studies In and Around Greek Tragedy* (Oxford 2010) 11–29.

Sisyphus disappeared as early as the time before Callimachus, whose *Pinakes*, a great catalogue of Greek literature, are likely to have been used as a reference book by the compiler of the Medicean Catalogue (unless the Catalogue is simply a copy of the *Pinakes* entry on Aeschylus)[32]. For obvious reasons, nothing certain can be said about what that early lost play may have contained, though it can be noted that if the capture of Death by Sisyphus had been treated, both *Drapetes* and *Petrocylistes* would have been inappropriate tags for this play, but appropriate distinctive epithets for another one, i.e. the play the plot of which I have tried to reconstruct above.

Of course, one distinctive epithet is normally enough when such an addition to the title is necessary. Why would there be two compound titles for the same play? This can be explained, I suggest, if we take note of the fact that the Catalogue, in which the only attestation of the title *SD* is found, does not belong, as a source, to the same category as the sources in which the title *SP* is attested. In view of its probable origin, the Medicean Catalogue deserves to be tagged as an "official" source. Its history is likely to go as far back as the earliest, official records of performances in Athens. This earliest Athenian list of plays was presumably the main source for Aristotle's *Didascaliae*, in which he listed, in chronological order, the results of dramatic competitions at Athens[33]. It is commonly assumed by scholars that the titles appearing in *Didascaliae* were those officially registered at the first performance[34]. Sources in which formulae used by Aristotle in *Didascaliae* are probably reflected and which enable us to see what these formulae were like are tragic hypotheses attributed to Aristophanes of Byzantium – they give titles of the plays which formed a tetralogy with the play of which the hypothesis treats[35] – and, in a few cases, ancient scholia. We

32 It should be noted that the form of the Catalogue – the list of alphabetically arranged titles is preceded by *Vita* – brings to mind the structure of *Pinakes*, on which see R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford 1968) 127–133 and R. Blum, *Kallimachos. The Alexandrian Library and the Origins of Bibliography*, tr. H.H. Wellisch (Madison, Wis. 1991) 150–160. Moreover, the Catalogue seems to preserve traces of sophisticated philological disputes, detectable in the presence of scholarly jargon (*Aetnaeae* γνήσιοι and νόθοι are listed, and *Circe* is classified as σατυρική). I hope to treat the question of the Catalogue's dependence upon *Pinakes* more fully elsewhere.

33 On Aristotle's use of the documents of the archons, see G. Jachmann, *De Aristotelis Didascaliis* (Göttingen 1909).

34 From the hypothesis, probably by Aristophanes of Byzantium, to Sophocles' *Ajax*, which lists titles under which this play was known, we learn that the title employed by Aristotle in *Didascaliae* was simply *Ajax*: ... ὅθεν καὶ τῇ ἐπιγραφῇ πρόσκειται Μαστιγοφόρος, ἢ πρὸς ἀντιδιαστολὴν τοῦ Λοκροῦ. Δικαίαρχος δὲ Αἴαντος Θάνατον ἐπιγράφει. ἐν δὲ ταῖς διδασκαλίαις ψιλῶς Αἴας ἀναγέγραπται. It can be inferred from this that Aristotle had not used the epithets which plays probably received later from the audience or readers.

35 According to Choeroboscus (ap. *Etym. genuin.* B = *Etym. magn.* s.v. Πίναξ), Aristophanes used as a source Callimachus' catalogues, on which see the following n.; what Choeroboscus refers to as πίνακες, ἐν οἷς αἱ ἀναγραφαὶ ἦσαν τῶν δραμάτων may be *Pinax ton didaskalon* – Πίναξ καὶ ἀναγραφὴ τῶν κατὰ χρόνους καὶ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς γενομένων διδασκάλων according to *Suda*; see Blum, loc. cit. (n. 32) 26, 73 n. 78 and 137 – but the plural may suggest that *Pinakes* are also implied.

are allowed to draw a conclusion from this evidence that already in the festival records there were titles with distinguishing epithets – in the Aristophanean hypothesis to Euripides' *Alcestis*, we read that Ἀλκμέων ὁ διὰ Ψωφῖδος formed part of a tetralogy staged in 438 BC, and the scholion on Aristophanes (*Ran.* 67) tells us that Ἰφιγένεια ἡ ἐν Αὐλίδι was staged, together with *Alcmaeon* (here the epithet is missing) and *Bacchae,* by Euripides the Younger after Euripides' death. There is no doubt that *Didascaliae* became, in turn, an important tool used by Callimachus in his great cataloguing entreprises[36]. This is, I think, the tradition behind the Catalogue and this is from where the title *SD* may have got into it. My suggestion is, consequently, that *SD* was the first title under which the play was originally performed in Athens, or at least the title under which it was officially registered in the archives of the archons.

SP was, according to my conception, a more commonly used informal title (its three attestations are in "unofficial" sources), which the play may have received from the audience, or perhaps in the book trade. We have seen that the title *SP* probably alludes to the particular scene; there seems to be a separate category of such "subtitles", in which we might place *Mastigophoros*, attested for Sophocles' *Ajax*, as well as *Kalyptomenos* and *Stephanias/Stephanephoros*, the distinctive epithets for Euripides' *Hippolytus* plays[37]. It is noteworthy that in the case of all of these three epithets, we do have evidence to suggest that they were not part of the original titles. The author of the hypothesis to *Ajax* (probably Aristophanes of Byzantium) says explicitly that *Mastigophoros* is a later addition to the title as there is no "subtitle" in *Didascaliae*. With regards to the hypothesis to *Hippolytus*, it is evident from it that its author (again, probably Aristophanes) was unable to make out from his sources, i.e. most likely *Didascaliae*, what was the relative chronology of the two *Hippolytus*

Nonetheless, we can safely assume that *Didascaliae* were Aristophanes' direct source, since this title is found in the hypotheses to Sophocles' *Ajax* and Euripides' *Andromache,* and also in the hypothesis to *Rhesus,* which may be, however, not Aristophanean.

36 Blum, loc. cit. (n. 32) 140–141 shows convincingly that Callimachus based his *Pinax ton didaskalon* solely on Aristotle's work. *Pinax ton didaskalon* – not to be confused with *Pinakes*, for which however this work may have provided source material – was a list of dramatists arranged chronologically by date of first performance. Under every dramatist's name, his plays produced in Athens were grouped in tetralogies and listed in order by prize in the competition, with further chronological subdivision.

37 According to O. Taplin, "The Title of *Prometheus Desmotes*", *JHS* 95 (1975) 185, the epithets ending in *-phoros* were "apparently taken from whatever the character was carrying on first entry". Taplin thinks that plays received such compound titles from the Alexandrian scholars, but M.L. West, "The Prometheus Trilogy", *JHS* 99 (1979) 131, is perhaps right to argue that the epithets alluding to particular scenic images are more likely to have been conceived when the plays were still performed.

tragedies[38]. This implies that both plays had originally no distinctive epithets and were registered without them in the official record. The compound titles, more instructive and also more catchy, were apparently later improvements.

The case of our *Sisyphus* is somewhat different, of course, if it did originally have a compound title (i.e. *SD*). Perhaps an analogous case is that of Sophocles' *Odysseus* plays. For one of them, we have apparently two subtitles: *Traumatias* and *Acanthoplex* (the other *Odysseus* is *Mainomenos*). *Acanthoplex* may have been – as *Petrocylistes* – an informal epithet coming from the audience, since it is attested in "unofficial" sources (Dionysius Thrax, Stephanus of Byzantium, Hesychius, and the scholiast on Homer, Ioannes Alexandrinus)[39]. *Traumatias* is found exclusively in Aristotle's *Poetics* (1453b)[40]. It is tempting to see here a manifestation of Aristotle's pedantry, which would have led him to employ in the *Poetics* the official title recorded in his *Didascaliae*[41]. It should be observed that the epithets *Traumatias* and *Drapetes* can be described as less specific than *Acanthoplex* and *Petrocylistes*, even if all the four title allude to the notable scenic images[42]. My conclusion is that the titles *SP* and *SD* belong to two separate categories, but one and the same play is to be seen behind them.

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38 Eur. *Hyp. Hipp.*: ἔστι δὲ οὗτος Ἱππόλυτος δεύτερος ⟨ὁ⟩ καὶ στεφανίας προσαγορευόμενος. ἐμφαίνεται δὲ ὕστερος γεγραμμένος· τὸ γὰρ ἁπρεπὲς καὶ κατηγορίας ἄξιον ἐν τούτῳ διώρθωται τῷ δράματι. On the hypothesis to *Hippolytus*, see W.S. Barrett, *Euripides' Hippolytus* (Oxford 1964) 29; J.C. Gibert, "Euripides' Hippolytus Plays: Which Came First?", *CQ* 47 (1997) 86–91.

39 Fr. 453–454; 456–458; 460–461 Radt.

40 The title *Odysseus Traumatias* is quoted by Aristotle without the author's name, but there is little doubt that this is about Sophocles' play; see the discussion in C. Collard, "On the Tragedian Chaeremon", *JHS* 90 (1970) 27 n. 35, Radt (n. 9) 375.

41 This may be supported by the fact that Euripides' *Iphigenia Aulidensis* is referred to in Aristotle's *Poetics* (1454a) with the compound title, similarly as in the scholion on Aristoph. *Ran.*, 67, while *Iphigenia Taurica* is always simply Ἰφιγένεια (1454a; 1454b; 1455a). Analogously, Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* is referred to as Οἰδίπους (1452a twice; 1454b; 1455a; 1462b), without an epithet, which we can identify as a later addition thanks to the hypothesis.

42 Another alternative title for Sophocles' *Odysseus* may have been *Niptra* – this would be another informal title alluding to the remarkable scene. For the plays known under three and even four titles, see Ath. *Epit.*, 1.4e and n. 34 above.