

Fellows



Gonda van Steen
IFK_Senior Fellow

Duration of fellowship
01. October 2006 bis 31. January 2007

Gonda van Steen

PROJECT-TITLE

Looking at Drama: Aeschylus' "Persians" and the Greek war of independence (1821)

PROJECT-DESCRIPTION

Aeschylus' "Persians" as the charter myth of Greek revolutionary patriotism? To modern sensibilities, this may be an unlikely proposition. However, this agenda defined the modern Greek view of Aeschylus' tragedy through most of the Enlightenment period. The Greeks sought and found their heroic and "patriotic" forebears in the ancient Greeks, whom the play does not even bring on as stage characters: they placed naval and other military triumphs over the Ottoman-Turks on a par with the Greek victory over the Persians in the sea battle of Salamis in 480 BCE. The "Persians", Aeschylus' oldest extant and historical tragedy (472 BCE) became the link to and window on military and other, "national" glories of classical antiquity. At the start of its new lease on life in the nation-state of Greece, this tragedy was not the disquieting play that modern scholars have uncovered, but the exemplum of a didactic and soothing genre of (self-)assurance.

Aeschylus' "Persians" became metonymic for the Enlightenment's perception of ancient and modern Greek culture, for Greek historical theater's perspective on its future, but also for the Orientalist gaze through which the West perceived the East. Thus Aeschylus' play has been seminal to many different cultures of Enlightenment-inspired historical and didactic theater, which have not yet been explored in any close or coherent connection.

CV

Associate Professor in Classics and Modern Greek at the University of Arizona

Publications

U. a.: *Venom in Verse: Aristophanes in Modern Greece*, Princeton University Press 2000 (awarded with the John D. Criticos Prize from the London Hellenic Society); *Rolling out the Red Carpet: Power 'Play' in Modern Greek Versions of the Myth of Orestes from the 1960s and 1970s*, in: *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 9, 2002, p. 51–95 and p. 195–235; *Trying (on) Gender: Modern Greek Productions of Aristophanes' "Thesmophoriazusae"*, in: *American Journal of Philology*, 123, no. 3, 2002, p. 407–427; *From Scandal to Success Story: The "Birds" of Aristophanes Staged by Karolos Koun*, forthcoming in: E. Hall, A. Wrigley (eds.), *Aristophanes in Performance 421 BC–AD 2007: Peace, Birds, Frogs*, Oxford 2006; *Translating – or Not – for Political Propaganda: Aeschylus' Persians 402–405*, forthcoming in: F. Billiani (ed.), *Modes of Censorship in Translation: National Contexts and Diverse Media*, Manchester, UK 2006.