THE LANGUAGE OF THE THEATRE IN THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN

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INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem

1. The History of the Problem

2. Illustrating the Problem

3. Solving the Problem

4. Methods used to Solve the Problem

B. Definitions

C. Thesis Outline

A. THE PROBLEM

The Revelation of John has posed many problems for scholars in the past and the present. The problems generally focus upon the uncertainty regarding the genre of Revelation.

A.1 THE HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

The genre of Revelation has been the subject of considerable debate in recent years. Initially it was regarded as texts without any specific genre. More recently scholars have begun to study the text with the view of identifying the specific genre in which it was written. The excellent publications of Semeia 14 and 36 focused specifically on apocalypses in general and their genre. Semeia 14 examined the form and content of apocalyptic texts. The form and content of apocalyptic texts became more recognisable and distinct.
The function of apocalyptic texts was studied in the Semeia 36 publication. Hellholm and Aune stressed that the function of apocalyptic writings was also crucial. They recognised the importance of form and content, but stressed a further important aspect of genre, namely function.

A.2 ILLUSTRATING THE PROBLEM

The problems regarding the genre of Revelation shall be illustrated by the writings of two contemporary scholars, namely David Aune and James Blevins. Let us begin by examining James Blevins.

A.2.1 THE PROBLEM OF THE GENRE OF REVELATION

Blevins argues that scholars find the peculiar literary genre of Revelation difficult to pin-point. The genre of Revelation remains elusive. Certain scholars assume that Revelation belongs to the literary genre of apocalypse. However dissimilarities between the Revelation and other

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5. J. L. Blevins, ibid., 393.
6. J. L. Blevins, ibid., 393.
7. J. L. Blevins, ibid., 393.
apocalyptic writings exist. Revelation also has similarities with Hebrew prophetic literature. Blevins argues that the genre of Revelation is a syncretistic one, "setting forth a prophetic message in the form of Greek tragic drama". According to Blevins, the prophetic message of Revelation is communicated through the genre of Greek drama. The suggestion given by Blevins is that the Revelation is prophetic literature written in the form of a Greek drama. This topic will be more closely examined in the chapters to follow.

A.2.2 PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The examination of the link between Revelation and Greek drama is traced to a number of authors namely John Bowman, Raymond Brewer, Frederic Palmer and E.A. McDowell. Bowman argues that the Revelation is divided as a Greek drama into seven acts with seven scenes. The significance of the Greek stage setting and the links with the Revelation were also emphasised by him. Brewer recognised the influence of Greek drama on the Revelation of John, especially the significance of the chorus in the Revelation. Palmer spent much time researching the divisions

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8J.L.Blevins, ibid, 393.
9J.L.Blevins, ibid, 393.
10J.L.Blevins, ibid, 393.
of the drama. McDowell likewise was involved in the divisions of the drama and was interested in a careful analysis of the features of Greek drama. Blevins argues that the full impact of the theme of Greek drama and the Revelation has yet to be fully researched.

A2.3 Why did the author choose Greek drama as a genre form?

Blevins then discusses why the author choose Greek tragedy as the form to communicate his prophetic message. The dramatic style and setting is able to capture and communicate what the author saw and heard. Greek drama was a familiar spectacle in Asia Minor, and the author uses Greek drama to communicate the Revelation with his audience. The seven cities are situated in Asia Minor which was in the heart of Hellenistic culture. The author uses a familiar Hellenistic medium to communicate with a Jewish audience steeped in Hellenistic culture.

Blevins argues that the people of the seven cities of Asia Minor whom John addresses, were familiar with Greek drama. Furthermore, the dramatic style and setting were able to capture and communicate the vision John had seen on the island of Patmos.

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26J. L. Blevins, ibid. 394.

27J. L. Blevins, ibid. 395.
A.2.4 THE SEVEN CITIES AND THEIR THEATRES

Blevins notes that six of the seven cities addressed in Revelation have theatres, according to excavations\(^{18}\). Ephesus had a theatre holding 25 000 people and was in the heart of the city. Pergamum likewise has a theatre seating approximately 20 000. The other cities also have significant theatres. The theatre (i.e., Greek drama) was a "real part of the culture" of the cities of Asia Minor\(^{19}\). The major Greek dramas were also well known to the general population. The dramatic form would thus be an appealing form to such an audience, who regularly attended the theatre. Maybe John's choice of Greek drama was a strategic choice, since his audience would be familiar with and open to the prophetic message which he had to give. Greek drama would have been a logical and effective choice, for an audience steeped in Greek drama.

A.2.4.1 A CLOSER EXAMINATION OF THE Ephesian Theatre

The Ephesian theatre then becomes the focus of Blevin's study\(^{20}\). He then examines three aspects of the theatre and how these relate to the Revelation of John:

\[^{18}\] J.L. Blevins, ibid. 395.

\[^{19}\] J.L. Blevins, ibid. 395.

\[^{20}\] J.L. Blevins, ibid. 399.
The Ephesian theatre was certainly in use in John’s day. This is confirmed by reconstructions to the stage buildings during the time of Nero. Paul also addressed an audience from the city in the theatre, and was evidently met with a rowdy response. Blevins notes that Greek tragedies were regularly performed in this theatre. Understanding the architecture and how the theatre was used, aids the reader in understanding the Revelation, since the Revelation was written against the background of the theatre. One of the most important aspects of the theatre was the skene or scene building which formed a backdrop from whence the actors acted.

The scene building was linked to the semicircular orchestra which were the chorus would sing and chant. The scene building had seven openings ("thuromata") which displayed scenes of the drama. A machine called the "eccyclema" revolved sets thus displaying various scenes of the drama. The seven openings would then display the sequence of scenes as they happened, according to Blevins.

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22 J.L. Blevins, ibid. 399ff.
23 J.L. Blevins, ibid. 399.
24 J.L. Blevins, ibid. 399ff.
A temple, house or palace was represented by the stage building ("skene") in Greek drama. The (heavenly) temple of Revelation forms the background for five of the seven acts, according to L. Blevins. The action of Revelation would take place using the stage building as a backdrop. Much about the stage building lends itself to the presentation of Revelation" according to him.

2.5 CLOSER EXAMINATION OF THE CHORUS OF REVELATION

The chorus consisted of 12 or 24 members in Greek drama. This number corresponds with the chorus of twenty-four elders who comment on the action of the Revelation (to the audience). The chorus use harps and lyres, the instruments of Greek drama. They chant and sing musical praises to God about the throne.

The chorus of living creatures was a common sight in Greek drama. The chorus of living creatures of Revelation was a familiar sight in Greek drama. Choruses of living creatures including birds, frogs and snakes (etc) were regularly to be seen. In this respect the chorus of Revelation was not a foreign sight to a Greek drama audience. Choruses of living creatures and elders was standard practice in Greek drama.

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\(^{25}\) J. L. Blevins, ibid, 399.

\(^{26}\) J. L. Blevins, ibid, 399.
The choral songs of Revelation have a strophe-antistrophe hymn form. This was the standard hymn form used in Greek tragedy and is used in the Revelation. According to Blevins, "a careful study of the hymns indicated that the chorus served the same role in Revelation as it did in Greek tragedy, to interpret the action on stage."

A similar role is fulfilled by the chorus in Revelation. The chorus respond to the seven messages of Christ to the churches with the saying, "hear what the Spirit says to the churches." The chorus chant the praises of God and interpret the scenes of heaven. The chorus represent the martyrs slain and bemoan the fall of Babylon. The chorus in Revelation thus functions in a similar manner to the chorus in Greek tragedy.

### A.2.6 THE STRUCTURE AND FORM OF THE REVELATION

The action of the Revelation is divided up into seven acts with seven scenes. The Greek drama begins with the parodos where the chorus chanting the return of Christ; the Greek drama concludes with the epilogue which follows the episodes of the drama.

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27 J.L. Blevins, ibid, 400.
28 J.L. Blevins, ibid, 400.
29 J.L. Blevins, ibid, 400.
30 J.L. Blevins, ibid, 400.
31 J.L. Blevins, ibid, 401.
32 J.L. Blevins, ibid, 401.
The episodes of the drama are divided by the choral interludes (stasimon). Blevins then focuses his article on the seven episodes or acts of the Revelation. He concludes by examining one of these acts in more detail.

**Act Two** begins with the door opening in heaven. The heavenly temple is easily represented by the skene or stage building which had a central door which was often opened as the action intensified. "This act is located on the orchestra level where the permanent throne and altar were located on the Ephesian stage", according to Blevins. The throne of God was a common sight in a Greek drama. The throne of God was surrounded by the throne of the elders which were placed around the parameters of the orchestra in a semicircular fashion. This was standard practice in Greek drama. The chorus of elders chanted the praises of God from their thrones which surrounded the central throne of God.

Blevins concludes that the author of Revelation uses the familiar medium of Greek drama to communicate a prophetic message with his audience. Greek tragedy is able to capture the scenes and events which John sees and communicate them in understandable form.

**A.2.7 THE PROBLEM OF FUNCTION**

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\(^{32}\)J.L. Blevins, ibid, 403.

\(^{34}\)J.L. Blevins, ibid, 403.

\(^{35}\)J.L. Blevins, ibid, 401-407.
David Aune focused on the literary function of apocalypses. Aune argues that "the problem of the genre of ancient texts must be approached in a manner sensitive to the ancient cultural systems which such literature reflects". In understanding the function of a given text and the genre to which it belongs, Aune analyses the genre focusing upon three major areas namely:

- orality and textuality
- the relationship between the whole and the part in literary texts
- the possible connections between literature and cult

### A.2.7.1 ORALITY AND TEXTUALITY

Aune argues that "orality played an explicit role in the composition of the Apocalypse of John, for the entire document was written expressly for public performance". He argues that Greek authors composed their literary works for the ear, in other words they were intended to be listened to by the audience. The constant emphasis in the Revelation of John upon listening and hearing certainly confirms this point. Oral performance constitutes a unique feature of the Apocalypse; Aune argues that "the feature of dramatic public performance, then, appears to be an innovative factor in the function of early Christian apocalypses".

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25 D.E.Aune, ibid, 76ff.

26 D.E.Aune, ibid, 78.

27 D.E.Aune, ibid, 77.

28 D.E.Aune, ibid, 78.
A.2.7.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PART AND THE WHOLE IN LITERARY TEXTS

Aune states that an apocalypse "can exist as an independent text or as a constituent part of a host genre, and must be recognised on its own terms in either setting" 41; Aune argues that "host" or "inclusive" genres were commonplace during John's time. (The role of a host genre is to provide a hospitable environment for the other form or forms that may be regularly incorporated in them42. The critical question is: "is the Revelation a host or inclusive genre or not?" Could the Revelation incorporate Greek drama within prophetic and apocalyptic themes?). The relationship between the whole and a part in literary texts is vital in understanding the function of a text.

A.2.7.3 LITERATURE AND CULT

Aune argues that it is beneficial (although often difficult) to "reconstruct the socio-religious setting of author and readers" 43. This reconstruction helps the reader to understand how the text functioned within its context. The setting of worship appears to be the appropriate social setting for the Revelation of John 44; David Barr likewise suggests a setting of worship for the Apocalypse 45; Laws argues that a social setting of worship is most likely, whilst arguing that the

41D.E.Aune, ibid, 80.
42D.E.Aune, ibid, 80.
43D.E.Aune, ibid, 80.
44D.E.Aune, ibid, 80.
songs of the chorus are reminiscent of the Hellenistic theatre. Aune states that "the Apocalypse of John" was "intended for public presentation, possibly within the setting of Christian worship".

Aune writes that the function of the text can be distinguished between the literary function and the social function. According to him, "apocalypses mediate new actualization of the original revelatory experience through literary devices, structures and imagery which function to "conceal" the message which the text purportedly "reveals"... "The skilful apocalyptic writer may portray the revelatory experience which he purportedly had with such literary skill (particularly enhanced through public performance) that the intended audience may indeed participate in the original experience" which is re-presented or re-enacted for them. The audience relives the message, whilst experiencing cognitive and behavioural changes resulting from the message. The Apocalypse is

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45D.E. Aune, ibid. 81.

46D.E. Aune, ibid. 89;

47D.E. Aune, ibid. 89.

This revealing/concealing nature of the Revelation often confuses people. The primary objective of John writing the Revelation was to reveal, rather than conceal. Let us not forget the simple fact that the Word of God (and therefore the Revelation) was written to be understood by it’s audience.
a literary replication of the original and unique revelatory experience of John (ie. John’s vision), which when performed in a public cultic setting, communicates the author’s message with divine authority.

A.3 SOLVING THE PROBLEM

The problem regarding the uncertainty of the literary genre of Revelation will be solved by-

i) Analysing the form and function of the Revelation

ii) Comparing the literary genre of Revelation with the genre of Greek tragedy. This will include examining Greek drama in general, with specific reference to late Greek drama. The primary source examined will be that of Ezekiel the Tragedian. Ezekiel’s work, the "Exodus of Moses"

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50 D.E. Aune, ibid, 91.

51 In other words is it apocalyptic, prophetic, dramatic, letter or what?

52 Examined in chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis.

53 Technically it is called tragedy.

54 Chapter 2 of this thesis.

55 Chapter 1 of this thesis.
sheds light on both the genres of apocalypse and Greek tragedy (drama). Comparison will also be made between Greek drama and the Revelation of John.

A.4 METHODS USED TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM

The two major methods used to solve the problem will be the historical-critical method and the literary method. Let us firstly examine the historical-critical method.

i) The Historical-analytical Method

The Revelation of John must be understood in its historical-cultural and socio-religious context. The cultural milieu in which the Revelation was written no doubt influenced the form and content and function of the writing. God's Word is communicated to an audience in a certain historical framework. Failure to recognise the close relationship between the Word of God and the historical framework in which it was written, will most certainly result in a distortion or misrepresentation of its message.

ii) The Literary Method

This method seeks to examine the Revelation as a form of literature in order to determine how it would be communicated and understood by the seven churches of Asia Minor. The communication situation of the audience and the overall impact of the message upon the audience is determined.

**Chapter 3 of this thesis.**
The literary analysis does not cast aside the results obtained from historical research, but rather wishes to integrate these findings into the overall understanding of the Revelation as a literary work. Schussler-Fiorenza sums up this integration as follows: "Scholarship on the Revelation is in the process of integrating the historical-critical and literary-critical paradigms into a new literary-historical paradigm of interpretation".

B. DEFINITIONS

A definition of essential terms is most important for accuracy of thought and scientific expression. Definitions also assist in succinctly and clearly delineating the boundaries of various genres often mentioned. A definition is a tool to assist the reader in his/her understanding of a literary form. It must be therefore be remembered that no definition is complete in itself and will not satisfy all critics. Let us now define certain major genre forms mentioned in this thesis.

i) Apocalypse

"Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves..."

another supernatural world": "it is intended to interpret present earthly circumstances in light of
the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and behaviour
of the audience by means of divine authority". 58.

ii) Drama

"Drama is the literary genre of works written and devised for the theatre where actors take the part
of personages, act out the action on the stage and speak the written dialogue". 59.

iii) Tragedy

Tragedy is narrative in dramatic form in an elaborated poetic manner. Episodes with choral
interludes characterise this genre form. "The chorus was a major structural element in Greek
tragedy, which performed a commentary function before and between acts". 60.

iv) Literary genre


60 I. Biermann and I. Grabe, ibid. 18.
A group of written texts marked by distinctive recurring characteristics which constitute a recognisable and coherent type of writing.

C. THESIS OUTLINE

An explanation of what I will be doing, how I will be doing it, and why I will be doing this research is given below. The purpose of this subsection is to enable the reader to have greater clarity regarding the overall objectives of the thesis.

Chapter 1: “Ezekiel the Tragedian”

The objective of chapter 1 is to examine the link between apocalypse and tragedy as genre forms. The work of Ezekiel the Tragedian belongs to the world of both tragedy and apocalypse. Ezekiel, the Hellenistic Jew, was clearly influenced by a Hellenistic genre form (namely Greek tragedy) in his work the “Exodus of Moses” (an inter-testamental work based on the Exodus of Moses as mentioned in the Old Testament). Ezekiel the Jew adapts his message towards his Hellenistic audience. The question one asks is “Could John, the Jew, likewise have adapted his message towards his Hellenistic audience? Could John have used Greek drama to communicate his prophetic-apocalyptic message to his Hellenistic audience?”.

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61 Biermann and J. Grabe, ibid, 1ff.
"The Exodus of Moses" has significant points of comparison with the Revelation of John. These include a **vision of a figure seated on a throne in heaven** (a typically apocalyptic scene), seven plagues of judgement, a battle involving huge armies, the Exodus account of the deliverance of Israel, and a **chorus** who sings choral songs. Ezekiel adapts and develops the Biblical narrative and expresses it in the genre of Greek drama.

**Chapter 2: "Tragedy and the Hellenistic World"**

The objective of chapter 2 is to examine the **evidence of tragedy** in Hellenistic times. This will include examining the influence of tragedy in the seven cities of Asia Minor to whom John writes, as well as the Jews and their association with the theatre. The popularity of tragedy will be researched. The use of tragedy in the Imperial cult will be also be examined. The question that needs to be asked is "Would John be influenced by Greek drama in his communicating with the seven churches of Asia Minor? And were his audience in the seven cities familiar with Greek drama?"

**Chapter 3: "The Elements of Greek Drama in the Revelation of John"**

The objective of chapter 3 is to examine research regarding the Revelation of John and Greek drama. The research shall be discussed in terms of certain features common to Greek drama (for example acts and scenes, the role of the chorus, the structure, the dramatic actors etc).

Furthermore, my intention is to show that a **number of reputable scholars** have noted significant similarities between the Revelation of John and Greek drama, with some even arguing that the
Revelation of John is written in the form of a Greek drama. The viewpoint that the Revelation is written in the genre of Greek tragedy is a respectable viewpoint and has a noteworthy following.

Chapter 4: "The Form of the Revelation"

The form of Revelation will be compared with the form of Greek drama in chapter 4. The purpose is to see whether noteworthy similarities of form exist between the Revelation and Greek drama.

Chapter 5: "The Function of the Revelation"

The cathartic\textsuperscript{62} function of Greek tragedy and the cathartic function of the Revelation will be examined. The question asked is: "does the Revelation have a cathartic function? and if so how does this cathartic function compare with Greek tragedy? Why would the revelation have a cathartic effect?"

Chapter 6: "The Throne Scene"

The "throne scene" of chapter 4 following is one of the most important scenes in the Revelation of John. "Throne scenes" are popular accounts in both prophetic and apocalyptic writings \textsuperscript{63}. In this chapter we shall examine the "throne scene" from the viewpoint of Greek drama, so as to see whether it would indeed be possible to communicate a throne scene effectively in Greek drama practice.

\textsuperscript{62}Catharsis means "healing" in laymens terms.

\textsuperscript{63}This is abundantly clear in the throne scenes of Isaiah and Ezekiel in the Old Testament, as well as an abundance of throne scenes in inter-testamental apocalyptic writings.
CHAPTER 1

EZEKIEL THE TRAGEDIAN

I had a vision of a great throne on the top of mount Sinai and it reached till the folds of heaven. A noble man was sitting on it, with a crown and a large sceptre in his left hand. He beckoned me to come with the right hand, so I approached and stood before the throne. He gave me the sceptre and instructed me to sit on the great throne. Then he gave me a royal crown and got up from his throne.

THE EXODUS OF MOSES

1.1 DATE AND PLACE

Ezekiel the Tragedian was an author who wrote Greek tragedies in the period between the Old and New Testaments. He was a Jew who wrote Greek tragedies on Biblical subjects. He most likely lived in a major literary centre such as Alexandria as his work is described by Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius. His work is one of the few remaining examples of Hellenistic tragedy. His work is dated between the first and third century BC.

1.2 EZEKIEL'S WRITING

The Exodus of Moses is one of the writings of Ezekiel the Tragedian. It is largely based on the Exodus narrative of the Bible. It includes many of the characters (Moses, Sephora, God, Pharoah, the Egyptians) and themes of the Exodus (plagues, deliverance, sacrifice, the Passover, oppression and the judgement of God). It also includes a rather interesting account of a vision of a figure (possibly the Son of Man) seated on a great throne in heaven. Warfare and battle are also prominent features of
1.3 **THE AUDIENCE**

Ezekiel's audience appears most likely to have been Hellenistic Jews. However, some believe that he may have written a polemical work for a non-Jewish audience. Other scholars believe that Ezekiel may have written both for a Jewish and a non-Jewish audience. The reliance of the author upon the Passover and Exodus narrative suggests that the most likely audience would be a Jewish one. The possibility that non-Jews may have appreciated the dramatic account of the Exodus, presented in tragic form, cannot be excluded.

The cultural context in which The Exodus was written and presented is important. The content of the Exodus indicates two definite influences, namely a Hellenistic and a Judaistic. The Hellenistic influence can be seen in the uniqueness of the genre and the use of the strict norms of Greek tragic metrics. The Jewish influence can be seen throughout as the Exodus and Passover feast is prominent. However, what is of interest is how Ezekiel combines these two cultural trends into a dramatic form for use amongst a Jewish audience. He must have had certain communication objectives in choosing the genre of tragedy to convey his message. He may have wanted to express the Biblical message in a genre which his audience would be familiar with. The Exodus would certainly have offered a Jewish audience a drama from their own, rather than from a gentile tradition. The author carefully constructed his dramatic work with this specific audience in mind.

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1.4 PRODUCTION

The Exodus was probably intended for production in a theatre. The venue for the performance would most likely have been a major literary centre where people were au fait with the classics. The city would have to provide a suitable milieu for a Greek drama. The most likely venue for the performance of Ezekiel’s work appears to be that of Alexandria although this cannot be proved from the text nor from external sources.

1.5 FORM

The Exodus is written in the literary form of tragedy. This form has the peculiar ability of being able to encompass and host other genre forms including poetry, drama, historical narrative and choral singing. It is a rich literary form with each of these genre forms strengthening and completing the overall power of the tragedy.

The Exodus is an apocalyptic type account presented in tragic form. The vision of a great throne is a common feature in apocalyptic writings. Visual and auditory revelation characterize the Exodus. It has both dialogue between Moses and God and is written under the pseudonym of Ezekiel (a venerable OT prophet from the past). It has both spatial and temporal aspects. The prophetic time perspective is expressed regarding "the day when these things are fulfilled" and "what is, what has

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3 Lines 88 - 75.

4 Lines 68ff - 95ff.

5 Lines 90 - 132.

6 In lines 85 - 84 and lines 88 - 89.
been and what shall be”. Past history is disguised as future as the audience are drawn into the eschatological drama. Judgement and the swift destruction of oppressors are integrative themes. The forces of evil are in conflict with the forces of God. But God’s salvation, power and justice triumph over the forces of evil. The Exodus also includes descriptions of otherworldly regions including heaven⁷ and earthly settings (scenes). The Exodus is thus an excellent example of an apocalyptic account expressed in the genre of Greek tragedy.

1.6 THE STRUCTURE

The structure of the drama is difficult to ascertain, since we are not sure whether we have the full play or only a significant portion thereof. Most scholars divide it up into five acts which includes a prologue with a lengthy monologue by Moses. Multiple scene changes are a significant feature of the drama and these include the setting in Egypt, a throne in heaven, the battlefield, and a place with fruitful palm trees with twelve springs of water⁸. The drama climaxes with the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea.

1.7 THE INFLUENCE OF THE CLASSICAL DRAMATISTS

The dramatists of the Classical Greek age had an influence upon the writing of Ezekiel. The influence of Aeschylus is recognisable when one compares his historical tragedy, "the Persians", with that of the "Exodus" and its historical account of war and battle. The Euripidean influence has been agreed by most scholars. Lesky feels that the verse form of The Exodus reveals that Euripides is its model⁹.

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⁷ Lines 69 - 87.
⁸ Lines 250 - 251.
Charlesworth notes that the verse of the drama is written in iambic trimeters, and suggests the influence of Euripides\textsuperscript{10}. The vocabulary and style of the Exodus attests to a Euripidean influence\textsuperscript{11}. The influence of the Classical tragedy writers upon the Hellenistic tragedy writers is clearly evident in the work of Ezekiel the Tragedian\textsuperscript{12}.

### 1.8 COMPARING THE EXODUS WITH THE REVELATION

The content of the "Exodus" is important with reference to content and style of the Revelation of John. The following analysis will compare the two works looking for noteworthy parallels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE EXODUS OF MOSES</th>
<th>THE REVELATION OF JOHN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision (line 67)</td>
<td>Vision (Chapter 4:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of a (great) throne (67)</td>
<td>of a Throne (4:2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCENE : Mnt Sinai into heaven (69)</td>
<td>SCENE : Heaven (4:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSON : A noble man (70)</td>
<td>PERSON : Someone (4:2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably Son of Man</td>
<td>Probably Son of Man (1:13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSITION : Sitting on the throne (70)</td>
<td>POSITION: Sitting on the Throne (4:2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INVITATION: He beckoned me ... (72)</td>
<td>INVITATION: Come up here ... (4:1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


OFFER OF AUTHORITY:
He gave me the sceptre (73)
I will give you authority ...
and the use of my sceptre?
(2:26,27)

PERSONAL INVITATION:
To sit on the great throne (74)
To sit with me on my throne (3:21)

REWARD: Royal Crown (75)
REWARD: Crown (3:8)

TIME PERSPECTIVE: ...what is, what was, and what shall be (89)
TIME PERSPECTIVE: From Him who was and who is and who to come (1:4,8)

Plaques (132ff)
Plaques (Chapter 16)

INSTRUMENT: Rod
INSTRUMENT: Bowl

REASON: God's Wrath
REASON: God's Wrath

OBJECTIVE: Repentance
OBJECTIVE: Repentance

NUMBER: 7 as opposed to
NUMBER: 7 as opposed to

Exodus (10)
Exodus (10)

ORDER 1 Blood: River, Springs and Pools
ORDER 1 Sores: People

2 Frogs and Lice
2 Blood: Sea

3 Sores: People and Furnace
3 Blood: River & Springs

4 Flies: Torment
4 Scorched: Fire Sun
5 Pestilence
6 Hail and Fire
7 Darkness and Locusts

5 Darkness; Sores & Pain
6 Frogs
7 Hailstorm

Battle (195 - 240) Battle (Chapter 19 and 20)

Armies of God (Israelites) vs Armies of Evil Ruler

Armies of God (Israel) vs Armies of Evil Ruler

RESULT: Victory and Intervention of God
RESULT: Victory and Intervention of God

SIZE: One million men (203)
SIZE: Like the Sand on the Shore (20:8)

ARMY: Chariots, cavalry and soldiers (195)
ARMY: Soldiers, horses and riders (19:19)

IMPORTANT: Divine intervention of God
IMPORTANT: Divine intervention of God

LITERARY STYLE: Historical narrative
LITERARY STYLE: Historical narrative

The evidence from this comparison suggests that the sources of the Exodus of Ezekiel and the Revelation of John may be similar. The vision of the figure on the throne suggests a common feature in apocalyptic writings. The plagues, battle and Paschal imagery suggest that both authors were strongly influenced by the Exodus account of
the Old Testament\textsuperscript{13}. This does not mean that they knew each other.

CONCLUSION

The Exodus of Moses is valuable evidence of the use of tragedy in Hellenistic times. The Exodus is based on the Biblical Exodus paradigm and was most likely performed during the Passover Festival. The Exodus is an integration of the genres of apocalypse and tragedy. The Revelation of John has a precedent regarding the integration of apocalypse and tragedy. Ezekiel, a Jewish author, expresses the "Exodus of Moses" in a Hellenistic genre form, namely Greek tragedy. Ezekiel, the Jew was influenced in the way he wrote by his Hellenistic environment.

CHAPTER 2

TRAGEDY IN THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

In this chapter I will be examining tragedy in the Hellenistic world. I will focus upon the evidence for the existence of tragedy in Hellenistic times, its familiarity and popularity, the Imperial Cult and the theatre, John's audience and the genre of tragedy, the seven cities of Asia Minor and the theatre, and possible communication objectives in the use of tragedy as a genre of expression and communication. I will be examining archaeological and literary evidence which will shed further light on tragedy in Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman times. The purpose of this chapter then is to examine the existence and use of tragedy in Hellenistic times and understand the social matrix in which it was written and performed.

2.1 TRAGEDY - A LIVING CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

Tragedy was a living cultural experience in Hellenistic times and not something of the past.

2.2 AUTHORS STILL WROTE TRAGEDIES

The evidence of this living cultural experience can be traced to a number of authors. These include Ezekiel the Tragedian, Suetonius, Lucilius, Plutarch, Epictetos, Flavius Lysimachos, Seneca, Pliny the Younger, Asinius Pollio, Lucian and Pollux. Ezekiel, the Tragedian, and his work the Exodus of Moses, is a clear example of tragedy in Hellenistic times. Suetonius points clearly to the use of tragedy in Graeco-Roman times. He refers to Nero's involvement in tragedy as actor and singer. The poet Lucilius who lived at the time of Nero, expected a tragedian to be surrounded by a chorus. "Similarly Plutarch (died AD 127) and Epictetos (died AD 135) speak of a

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1 Suetonius, Nero 21.
tragic chorus in a way suggesting living practice”
2. Flavius Lysimachos is recorded as offering prize money to the tragic chorus in a musical and dramatic contest.

Seneca the Younger, the tutor and advisor of Nero, composed tragedies.

Other Roman writers of Greek tragedies in Graeco-Roman times include Pliny the Younger and Asinius Pollio. Lucian describes the vocal singing and dramatic action of tragedy in Graeco-Roman times very clearly in the following quotation:

"Performance other (than pantomime) that are concerned with sight and sound have a display of only one single action, for there is either flute or a lyre or vocal singing or dramatic action of tragedy or laughter of comedy”

Lucian describes tragedy in living terms. He emphasizes the distinctive nature of tragedy highlighting the musical and dramatic aspects. Whereas Lucian's description of tragedy is short and rather concise, Julius Pollux's description is lengthy and more detailed. Pollux gives a detailed description of the stage, the machinery and masks used in tragedy and comedy. He gives us a clearer understanding of late Greek tragedy in Hellenistic times. The evidence then for the existence of tragedy in Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman times leads us to the conclusion that it was a living genre used by both Greek and Roman writers.

3 G.M. Sifakis, Ibid., 122.
7 Pollux, Onomasticon IV. 121-123.
TRAGEDIES FROM THE CLASSICAL PERIOD WERE READ AND STUDIED

The theatre was popular in Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman times. Dramas were presented and these were well-attended. The cities of Asia Minor were familiar with Greek tragedy and were schooled in classical literature, in a similar way to that of modern students who are schooled in Shakespearean tragedies and comedies. Later tragedies were based on earlier tragedies, often borrowing and adapting their moral emphasis, stagecraft and style. The earlier tragedies were regularly revived and thousands of new tragedies were also written in succeeding generations.

During the Roman period the theatre remained important. Romans wrote tragedies and built theatres throughout the Mediterranean (including Italy, Greece, Asia Minor, Palestine and North Africa).

Playwrights in Rome began to compose dramas whose plots and characters were borrowed from the earlier Greek playwrights. Theatrical performances formed an integral part of the Roman Games. Many of these dramas were presented in honour of the emperor, and other deities, such as the Great Mother. Tragedies and other dramatic forms were thus an important part of the Imperial Cult. The colosseum and other Greek and Roman theatres were used for the theatrical performances of the Games.

THE ROLE OF THE ROMAN EMPERORS IN THE PROMOTION OF TRAGEDY

2.4.1 INTRODUCTION SHORT NOTES ABOUT THE THEATRE AND THE GAMES

The emperors used the theatre in the Imperial Cult. They promoted the Imperial Cult through the Games, which consisted of two major activities,
namely chariot races and theatrical performances. Tragedies and dramatic performances formed part of the theatrical performances of the Games. Admission to the theatrical performance of the cult was free, and the emperors skilfully used the theatres to promote the Imperial Cult and manifest their power.

The emperors were involved in the theatrical performances, giving rewards to the victors in the contests, and at times appearing in the dramas themselves.

The festivals were held in honour of the emperor with his statue (image) often dominating the celebration. The thrones (chairs) of the high priests of the Imperial Cult were also placed in the theatre and these priests orchestrated and led the worship of the emperor.

The evidence suggests that John may have written the Revelation in deliberate challenge to the Imperial Cult and its ritual of the cult. The evidence certainly suggests a close link between the theatre and the ritual of the cult. This will be substantiated and developed in the paragraphs which follow. Let us trace this link between the emperors and the use of theatre. We begin with the emperor Augustus.

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8 J.A. Shelton, "Roman Spectacles", 226.

9 J.A. Shelton, "Roman Spectacles", 221.


2.4.2 AUGUSTUS

Augustus celebrated the Secular Games of 17BC with Greek dramas and stage plays. The Secular Games of 17BC commemorated the 700th Anniversary of the founding of Rome, and consisted of sacrifices, thymelic Greek plays, Greek stage plays and hymns composed and sung in honour of the emperor and the goddess Roma. At these Games, the Imperator Caesar Augustus sacrificed lambs to the gods, which were followed at night with plays which were performed on stage. Sacrifices and Latin plays, hymns and Greek stage plays were also presented in the theatres of Pompey and the Circus Flaminius.

Suetonius notes that Augustus surpassed his predecessors in the frequency, variety and magnificence of his sponsored theatrical performances.

2.4.2.1 THE USE OF STAGE AND ACTORS

Suetonius also notes the use of stage and actors in the theatre of Augustus. Augustus also permitted himself to be worshipped (as a god) in the provinces in association with the goddess Roma. Annual festivals were held in the cities of Asia Minor and these were a demonstration of political loyalty.

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14 Inscription Mentioned Above Lines 151-163.

15 Suet., Augustus 43 and 44.

16 R. Mellor, From Augustus To Nero: The First Dynasty Of Imperial Rome (Michigan: Michigan State University, 1990), 193.
to Rome. These were held on the emperors birthday and other anniversaries. In a procession celebrating his birthday, an image of himself was carried and honours were given to the image (statue) (Dio Cassius, "The Deification of Augustus" 1990: 195). Augustus was the first of a long line of emperors to be honoured with a statue at Pergamum. These statues were carried to the theatre and placed there for the Imperial Festivals. The victor's crown of Nero was laid before the image of Augustus which stood on the orchestra of the theatre.

"At the festivals in the emperor's honour, where his statue might dominate the celebration, there would be games, sacrifices, processions and competitions in music and poetry, for which the emperor's greatness would be the theme."

2.4.2.2 THE WORSHIP OF THE EMPEROR OF THE USE OF THE THEATRE

The Imperial choir of Pergamum was used specifically for extolling the greatness of the emperor Augustus and later

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17 R. Meller, From Augustus To Nero: The First Dynasty Of Imperial Rome, 193.
emperors. The Pergamenes honoured Augustus on his birthday with a choir of forty singing hymns\textsuperscript{21}. Special functionaries of the imperial cult, called humnodoi, composed songs and choral hymns in honour of the emperor\textsuperscript{22}. Augustus received worship from the chorus of Pergamum. The most likely venue for such a festival of choral song was the theatre\textsuperscript{23}. The celebration of the mighty chorus in the Revelation who worship the Pantokrator (God Almighty) as opposed to the Autokrator (Caesar Augustus), would strike familiar chords in the cities of Asia Minor. The choral songs of the Revelation of John stand in sharp challenge to the worship of the emperor in the Imperial Cult.

\subsection*{2.4.3 TIBERIUS}

Tiberius also used the theatre in the festivals of the Imperial Cult. Evidence from a stone stele of Gytheion in Laconia, dated AD 15, refers very clearly to the use of the theatre and stage in the imperial festival\textsuperscript{24}. Tiberius celebrated the first day commemorating “the god Caesar, son of a god, Augustus the Saviour and Deliverer, and the second day for Imperator Tiberius Caesar Augustus”\textsuperscript{25}. Contestants and performers who appeared before the Assembly

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} E. Yamauchi, \textit{New Testament Cities in Western Asia Minor}, 42.
\item \textsuperscript{22} S. Laws, “Songs Of The Lamb”, 76.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid, 75 - 76.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Sacred Law For A Festival Of The Imperial Cult Ad 15 Recorded In R.K. Sherk, \textit{The Roman Empire: Augustus To Hadrian}, 57-59.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Inscription On Above Mentioned Stone Stele, 58 Lines 8-10.
\end{itemize}
were paid for their labours. The celebration of the Games included the sacrificing for the games and performances of Greek plays. The celebration of the thymelic games (Greek plays), included a procession from the temple of Asklepios and young men and citizens wearing garlands of bayleaves (crowns) dressed in white clothing. The priests of the god Augustus Caesar delivered "three painted images of the god Augustus and Julia Augusta and Tiberius Caesar Augustus (to the theatre) and for the theatre the platform for the chorus and four doors for stage performances and footstools for the orchestra." The first six lines of this stele are mutilated but also contain references to the imperial family, their images, a table in the theatre, sacrifices, and performances on behalf of the Roman rulers. The imperial cult was celebrated not just in sanctuaries but also in major civic centres such as the theatre:

"Theatres, which served a variety of important functions, sometimes contained permanent imperial decoration, whether imperial statues or friezes. There ritual was performed, as in the Hellenistic period. Thus at Gytheum images of Augustus, Livia and Tiberius were placed in the theatre for the imperial festival; in the middle of the theatre was set an incense burner on a table where officials sacrificed incense before

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26 Lines 12-14.
27 Lines 19-23.
The start of the competitions, which were, as often, held in the theatre.

The festivals of the Imperial Cult during the time of Tiberius were celebrated in the theatre and other major civic centres. Tiberius celebrated the Games with festivals which included sacrifices, performances, competitions, images, a chorus and doors for stage performances. The performances were sponsored by him and presented in his honour and that of his predecessor, Augustus.

2.4.4 **CALIGULA**

Caligula also sponsored the Games and was popular at the beginning of his reign for distributing gifts and food among the crowd at his many shows. He enjoyed cruel and sadistic forms of entertainment including watching people as they suffered and were tortured. "At the plays in the theatre, he showed discord between commons and knights, by scattering free tickets early to induce the rabble to take the seats reserved for the equestrian order". He also gave wild beast shows and shows involving physically disabled people. Caligula was assassinated, perhaps suitably, at the theatre. The emperors were clearly using the theatres to pioneer their own socio-political ends.

Josephus the historian gives us an interesting clue regarding the use of the

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32 J.A. Shelton, "Roman Spectacles", 235.
theatre of Caesaea during the time of the Flavian emperors. He places the onset of Herod Agrippa's fatal illness\textsuperscript{34} in the theatre of Caesarea where he was celebrating spectacles in honour of the emperor\textsuperscript{35}. Luke the historian notes that Herod was sitting on a throne when struck dead\textsuperscript{36}. The evidence of the historian\textsuperscript{37} suggests that Herod was sitting on a throne in the theatre. The dating of Herod Agrippa's death (44 AD) indicates that either Caligula or Claudius was the emperor being honoured. The worship of the Imperial Cult had evidently reached as far as Caesarea (Palestine) by the time of Herod Agrippa, and the Cult was celebrated in the theatre.

2.4.5 **CLAUDIUS**

Claudius exhibited his active interest in public amusements not only by sponsoring the Games, but also by rebuilding and improving their sites\textsuperscript{38}. He enlarged the theatre of Ephesus\textsuperscript{39}. Claudius specifically sponsored Dionysiac actors (called victors and performers)\textsuperscript{40}. Dionysus was regarded by some Greeks as the patron god of tragedy. Claudius may have integrated the worship of the Imperial Cult with the worship of Dionysus. He certainly shows favour to these actors and performers of Greek tragedy. The evidence

\textsuperscript{34} Acts 12: 21 - 23.

\textsuperscript{35} E. Ferguson, *Background of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 75.

\textsuperscript{36} Acts 12: 21.

\textsuperscript{37} Josephus, *Antiq.* XIX. viii. 2.

\textsuperscript{38} J.A. Sheil, "Roman Spectacles", 235 and E. Yamauchi, *New Testament Cities in Western Asia Minor*, 94.

\textsuperscript{39} E. Yamauchi, *New Testament Cities in Western Asia Minor*, 123.

\textsuperscript{40} Letter of Claudius about Dionysiac Actors in R.K. Sherk, *The Roman Empire: Augustus to Hadrian*, 96.
suggests that Claudius gave active support to these actors and performers. These actors may also have been used in the performances of the Imperial Games.

2.4.6 **NERO**

2.4.6.1 **NERO AND THE FESTIVALS**

Nero had a passion for performances and was a keen sponsor of the Games. He appeared in public at the theatres of Asia Minor and Rome as a tragic actor, singer, poet and lyre-player.\(^{41}\)

2.4.6.2 **NERO THE ACTOR**

Nero became so involved with tragedy that he even dressed like an actor. Nero wore actor's masks and sang tragedies. He also appeared as an actor playing the part of a god or hero. These include Apollo, Oedipus, Orestes and Hercules.\(^{42}\) He won prizes for oratory, verse and even a prize for lyre-playing, laying the latter prize (crown) at the feet of the image of Augustus.\(^{43}\) The statue (image) stood on the orchestra level of the theatre.\(^{44}\) Nero was giving honour to the statue of the emperor who had proceeded him. The emperors appeared to have believed that their power and divinity were transferred from one to the other. They often adopted the title(s) of their

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\(^{41}\) Suet., Nero 21.


\(^{43}\) Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, 190.

\(^{44}\) Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, 190.
predecessor and continued the Imperial Cult which had been developed by their predecessor.

Nero certainly was favoured in the theatre. "When he entered the theatre, circus or amphitheatre, he was greeted with shouts of approval and affection which reinforced the stability of his regime". He established in Rome Greek-style festivals involving competitions in music, drama, poetry and song. At the Greek Festival he devoted a series of plays to the eternity of the Empire. He also staged a drama called "the Fire" written by a Roman called Africanus. Throughout the Festival all kinds of gifts were scattered to the people including food, silver, gold, precious stones, pearls, slaves, animals and gifts for ships and mariners. However, the incursions into the arts at Rome did not satisfy him and he headed for Greece and Asia Minor. His main reason was to take part in the musical and rheumatic contests which were very popular. When he returned from Greece, he rode triumphantly in a chariot and wore "a purple robe and a Greek cloak adorned with stars of

45 A. Shelton, "Roman Spectacles", 236.
48 Suet., *Nero* 11.
49 Suet., *Nero* 22.
gold... and carried crowns with inscriptions telling where he had won them and against what competitors, and giving the titles of the songs or subjects of his plays". The Greek robe adorned with stars of gold appears contextually in the writing of Suetonius to be the dress of a tragic actor. "The standard tragic dress, for both male and female parts, was a colourful robe from the neck almost to the ground with long sleeves, which was covered with decorative patterns of the kind especially associated with oriental weaving - whorls, stars, circles, zigzags, even animal figures". Nero appears to have been wearing the robe of a tragic actor. He certainly won crowns for acting and lyre-playing. He won 1808 gold crowns from the delighted Greeks during the Greek festivals in 67 AD.

2.4.6.3

NERO’S TUTOR AND ADVISOR

The tragedies of Nero’s tutor and advisor, Seneca the Younger, were probably intended for the audience which the theatres attracted. Nero saw Seneca as a threat and forced him to commit suicide. Nero also had Paris, the celebrated tragic actor, called “the pearl of the stage”, put to death. Paris may

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50 Suet., Nero 25.
52 R. Meller, From Augustus To Nero, 353.
54 R.K. Sherk, The Roman Empire: Augustus To Hadrian, 212 and Dio Cassius. The Roman History 63.18.1 and Tacitus, Annals 13.21.3 and 13.27.3 and Suetonius, Nero 54.
have challenged the political tyrant as many tragic actors of his
time did.

2.4.6.4. **HIS BUILDING OF THEATRE**

Nero was actively involved in the theatre. He erected the two-
storey stage building of the Ephesian theatre and was enthusiasti-
castic about the stage. When the city of Rome was burning,
Nero went to his private stage and sang of the fall of Troy.
Suetonius notes that Nero "sang the whole of the "Fall of Troy"
in his regular stage costume". The Fall of Troy was a work
of Greek tragedy.

Tragedy appears to have been integrated into the Imperial Cult
during the reign of Nero.

2.4.7 **DOMITIAN**

2.4.7.1 **DOMITIAN SPONSORED THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES**

The emperor Domitian also had a close link with the theatre,
sponsoring theatrical performances of the Games. He founded
a festival which included public-speaking contests, competitions
in choral singing and lyre-playing, stage-plays, and competitions

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56 *Tacitus, Annals* 14.

in rhetoric and poetry. At the festival of the Seven Hills he gave a splendid banquet and scattered all kinds of gifts amongst the audience.

2.4.7.2 DOMITIAN THE ACTOR

Domitian appeared in the dress of a tragic actor. When he presided at the Festival in honour of Capitoline Jupiter, "he wore buskins, a purple robe in the Greek fashion, and a gold crown engraved with the images of Jupiter, Juno and Minerva". Domitian was dressed as a tragic actor. He also wore "the characteristic tragic footwear" of the tragic actor, the korthonos, which were calf-length boots, used to make the (leading) tragic actor look tall and impressive. Domitian seems most likely to have actually appeared himself in the tragic performance. He certainly banished and executed actors who did not find his favour. Domitian was also worshipped as "Lord and God" in the theatre or amphitheatre.

2.4.8 TRAJAN

The emperor Trajan also used the Games, and specifically theatrical performances, to win the support of the people. The Romans loved watching the

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58 Suet., *Domitian* 4.
59 Suet., *Domitian* 4.
60 Suet., *Domitian* 4.
63 Suet., *Dom. 13 and S. Laws*, "Songs Of The Lamb", 76.
theatrical performances and appreciated the skills of the actors. Fronto in his Elements of History\textsuperscript{64}, tells us that "because of his shrewd understanding of political science, the Emperor (Trajan) gave his attention even to actors and other performers on stage, or on the race track or on the arena, since he knew that the Roman people are held in control principally by two things, free grain and shows". Trajan, as had his predecessors, skilfully used the theatre as a political and social power in which to strengthen his regime.

2.4.9 **HADRIAN**

Hadrian used the theatre and the performances of the Games to strengthen his influence and reign. He gave competitions in music and poetry at a festival called the Hadrianea. Certain major imperial festivals were held in honour of the emperor alone. The names for them vary, but Sebasteia, Caesarea, Neronea, Hadrianea, Antoninea and Severia, are particularly well known\textsuperscript{65}. The festivals, involving music, poetry and drama, would often be held in the theatre. Hadrian himself was actively involved in the theatre and dramatic performances. The professional artists (actors) celebrated a mystic agony in honour of Dionysus and Hadrian in the theatre of Ancyra (near Thyatira)\textsuperscript{66}. "The initiates of Dionysus at Ephesus even set up a statue of Hadrian "Sharing the throne" with their god, Dionysus\textsuperscript{67}. In the larger Greek theatre of Laodicea, there is a block dedicated to Hadrian and the Emperor Aelius Caesar

\textsuperscript{64} Fronto, *Elements Of History*, 18.

\textsuperscript{65} S.R. Price, *Rituals And Power*, 104.


\textsuperscript{67} S.R. Price, *Rituals And Power*, 118.
The evidence points to the use of the theatre in the Imperial Cult during the reign of Hadrian. Furthermore it points to the close relationship between the emperor and the god Dionysus. This link between the emperor and Dionysus, can also be seen with Augustus, Claudius Domitian and Hadrian. The evidence suggests that certain festivals combined the worship of the emperor with the worship of other gods.

2.4.10 ANTONIUS PIUS

Antonius Pius was honoured by the Ephesians who celebrated his birthday with spectacles and the distribution of silver. This is revealed in an inscription to be found in the Ephesian theatre. Pius also talks of spending money on "shows and distributions and prizes for games" in such a way as to suggest common practice in his day. An inscription from the reign of Commodus celebrates the victory of a lyre player at a contest at Didyma. These contests were also held in the theatre of Miletus (near Ephesus) which could seat 15,000 people. The theatre of Hierapolis (near Laodicea) has sacrificial scenes portraying the imperial figures of Septimus Severus, Caracalla, and

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76 E. Yamauchi, *New Testament Cities in Western Asia Minor*, 123.
Geta. The stage also depicts episodes in the lives of Dionysus, Aternis and Apollo. The emperors continued to use the theatre to promote the Imperial Cult during the later imperial period. The evidence certainly proves that the tragedy was used by the Emperors in the Imperial Cult.

2.5 THE RELATIONSHIP OF JEWS WITH THE THEATRE

John the author of the Revelation, used a specific genre to communicate his message to the seven churches of Asia Minor. If he chose the genre of tragedy, what were the communication objectives motivating such a choice? John clearly wishes to communicate with an audience steeped in Hellenistic culture. A cardinal feature of the culture of the seven cities which he addresses was their love for the theatre and dramatic performances. Tragedy and the theatre were integrative features of the social tapestry of the seven cities. John may have chosen tragedy as a medium for communicating with an audience in Asia Minor.

2.5.1 PALESTINIAN JEWS AND THE THEATRE

Jesus Christ (also) lived in a cultural milieu in which Hellenism and Judaism were colliding. Jesus was not afraid of using an illustration from Hellenistic culture to expose the folly of the Pharisees. According to Matthew, Jesus calls the scribes and Pharisees "hypocrites". The term "hypocrite" was a commonly used term referring to stage actors and tragic actors. Jesus likens the Pharisees to stage actors who perform a religious drama, playing parts they

77 E. Yamauchi, New Testament Cities in Western Asia Minor, 152 - 153.

78 Matthew 6:18.

Jesus and his audience may have been aware of actors and the theatre through two likely sources, namely the theatres near Nazareth, (Jerusalem and Caesarea), or by travelling actors who moved from city to city performing various acts. Jesus certainly was not afraid of using the Hellenistic stage actor as an illustration for his predominantly Jewish audience.

2.5.2 THE JEWS OF ASIA MINOR AND THE THEATRE

An inscription reserving seats for the Jews in the fifth row of the theatre of Miletus (near Ephesus) indicates that the Jews of Miletus were certainly avid theatre goers. (The inscription in the fifth row reads "the place of the Jews, who are also Godfearing" (Yamauchi 1980 : 125). The Hellenistic Jews of Asia Minor were evidently familiar with the theatre.

2.5.3 THE THEATRE AND THE SEVEN CITIES OF ASIA MINOR

2.5.3.1 EPHESUS

The seven cities of Asia Minor mentioned in the Revelation of John were definitely familiar with the theatre. Ephesus had a theatre seating 25,000 and was used for Assembly gathering in the time of Paul. Dio Chrysostom who lived in the time of Nero and Domitian also attests to the assembly gathering in the theatre. The Ephesian theatre was enlarged by Emperor Cladius (for use in the Games), and Nero erected the two-storey stage building (the "skene"), to which a third storey was added.

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80. E. Ferguson, *Background to Early Christianity*, 75 and R.A. Batey, "Jesus and the Theatre", 565 - 571.


over 20,000 people each.

PLAN OF EPHESUS

THE UPPER ACROPOLIS OF PERGAMUM

Fig. 2
in the second century AD\textsuperscript{13}. The theatre was adorned with numerous statues (images), including those of the emperors. The Ephesians honoured the Emperor Antonius Pius by celebrating his birthday with spectacles and the distribution of gifts (silver). This is revealed by an inscription found in the Ephesian theatre\textsuperscript{84}. Festivals celebrating the emperors birthdays were often held in the theatre, a suitable venue for the great assembly of the people\textsuperscript{85}. The Ephesian theatre was used by the Emperors to promote the Games and specifically the theatrical performances of the Games.

The Ephesian theatre had a stage building ("Skene"), an orchestra, and seating for a large audience. It was located at the very heart of the city at the intersection of two major roads. Greek tragedies had been enacted on its stage for three to four hundred years. During the period of the Roman emperors, late Greek tragedy was still popular. Tragedy was well known amongst the general population and formed an important part of their cultural heritage. Tragedy was a well established and rather unique literary genre used in the theatre and also used by the Emperors to their advantage.

\textsuperscript{13} E. Yamauchi, \textit{New Testament Cities of Western Asia Minor}, 84.

\textsuperscript{84} E. Yamauchi, \textit{New Testament Cities of Western Asia Minor}, 86.

2.5.3.2 **PERGAMUM**

The Pergamum theatre was capable of holding between 17 and 20,000 people. The Pergamenes honoured the Emperor Augustus on his birthday with a choir of forty singing hymns in his honour[86]. The Imperial choir at Pergamum continued to celebrate Augustus' birthday in the early part of the second century AD[87]. Festivals were held in the emperor's honour. His statue would dominate the celebration. There would be games, sacrifices, processions, competitions in music and poetry, and stage plays, with the emperor being the focus of attention. The theatre was the setting for the contests in music and poetry, as well as the choral singing of the Imperial choir[88]. Colossal statues of emperors Trajan and Hadrian have been discovered in excavations of Pergamum. These may have been carried in the procession to the theatre and placed on the orchestra. The Pergamenes certainly were leaders in the worship of the emperors and bowed shamelessly before Satan's throne. They also prided themselves in their theatre which was one of the largest in Asia Minor.

2.5.3.3 **LAODICEA**

Laodicea had two theatres, a larger Greek theatre and a smaller

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The Theatre was an integrated experience of the heritage of the cities of Asia Minor.

PLAN OF LAODICEA

A. Gate of Ephesus
B. Gate of Hierapolis
C. Syrian Gate
D. Odeon
E. Gymnasium
F. Aqueduct
G. Nymphaeum
Known theaters of the Greek world.

The map on this page surveys the Greek theaters and their distribution across the ancient world. It highlights the influence of the theater on various cultures and how it spread throughout history.
Roman theatre. A block dedicated to the emperor Hadrian is to be found in the larger Greek theatre. Musical contests were held in Laodicea and the likely venue for these contests was the theatre. The larger Greek theatre could hold 15,000-20,000 people.

2.5.3.4 SMYRNA, SARDIS AND PHILADELPHIA

Smyrna had a theatre which could hold a large audience. Sardis had one which could hold over 20,000. The theatre at Sardis was certainly one of the largest theatres of Asia Minor. Philadelphia also had a theatre. The theatre is now covered by the town of Alashir. Philostratus tells us that Greek tragedies were regularly performed in these theatres.

CONCLUSION

The evidence for the existence of tragedy in Hellenistic times confirms that it was a living genre. The theatres were popular and dramas well attended. The audiences of the dramatic presentations were familiar with Greek tragedy. Tragedy remained a popular genre and many tragedies were written in Hellenistic and Roman times. The emperors skilfully used the theatres to win the support of the people. They sponsored theatrical performances and at times even appeared in the dramas themselves. John's audiences of Asia

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89 E. Yamauchi, New Testament Cities of Western Asia Minor, 143.
90 E. Yamauchi, New Testament Cities of Western Asia Minor, 68.
91 E. Yamauchi, New Testament Cities of Western Asia Minor, 77.
Minor were familiar with the theatre. The cities John addressed had theatres and tragedies were regularly performed in these theatres. Tragedy would certainly have been an effective genre for communicating with an audience in Asia Minor.
CHAPTER 3

THE ELEMENTS OF GREEK DRAMA

The chapter examines recent research on the Revelation of John as Greek drama. I will be focusing upon scholars who have noted certain dramatic features of the Book. I will examine specific distinctives of dramatic writings. These include actors, scenes and acts, the chorus, the theatre, the structure, the function, the dramatic nature of Revelation, and the Revelation as tragedy. The purpose is to draw together all the strands of research regarding the Revelation as Greek drama, thus enabling the reader to see more clearly the nature of the research and what has been said on the specific topics.

3.1 ACTORS

The first aspect examined will be the actors. Actors are integral to dramatic texts. A significant number of scholars have noted actors or dramatis personae in the text of Revelation. The dramatis personae are the group of actors dominating the scene changes in the Revelation of John. They include the living Christ of 1:9 - 3:22, the four living creatures of chapters 4 and 5, the Wildbeast and the Dragon and other "Persons, divine and other, who take part in the Action". The Dramatis Personae are important in understanding the action and movement of the text.

The Dramatis Personae are clearly evident in the excellent text-linguistic

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analysis of the Apocalypse by David Hellholm⁴. According to his analysis the
dramatis Personae include John (1:9), the Son of Man (1 : 10b-20), Christ-
John-Angels (2:1 - 3:22), the Dragon (12 : 1-18), the Beast (13 : 1-18), the
Lamb (14:1-5), and John-Christ and the Dragon (19 : 11-20 : 15) (1986 : 47-
52). The Dramatis Personae of the Revelation are important in understanding
the structure of the Revelation as well as the action of the text.

Actors are certainly involved in the heavenly scene of Chapter 4 and the
chapters which follow according to Minear⁵, Botha⁶, Barclay⁷, Ulfgard⁸,
Hellholm⁹, Wilcock¹⁰ and Blevins¹¹. Botha observes that in Chapter 4
"actors have been introduced and the scene is set. From 8b onwards, the
actions of the actors are described"¹². Minear, in an excellent description of
the vision of Revelation 4, calls the interpreter to "adjust his eyes to the
heavenly stage and its cast of actors"¹³. He also observes that the "actors on

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⁴ D. Hellmon, “The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John”, Semeia 36 (Decatur: Scholar


⁸ H. Ulfgard, Feast and Future: Revelation 7:9 - 17 and the Feast of Tabernacles (Coniectanea Biblica No. 22,
1989), 21 - 23.


¹² J.E. Botha (ed), Reading Revelation, 40.

¹³ P.S. Minear, New Testament Apocalyptic, 68.
The Theatre showing a Masked Chorus/Actors as well as front row thrones and the central stage door. Images would often be placed on the Orchestra level. These images could be made to speak & perform wonders. (eg. fire from heaven) (Rev. 13:13)
the stage become singers in the choirs” (1981: 68). Ulfgard emphasizes the liturgical character of this heavenly scene and the "actors (who) kneel, pray, burn incense and sing hymns"\(^{14}\). The first liturgical scene of Chapters 4-5 is followed by the second liturgical scene of 7:9-17 where the 144,000 praise God and the Lamb, and are “joined in worship by the angels and other heavenly actors”\(^{15}\).

The invitation to "come and see" (4:1-8 and 6:1-8) is an invitation to come forward to the stage, according to William Barclay\(^{16}\). Brewer argues that this invitation may have come from a masked chorus or masked actors\(^{17}\). “The four living creatures, who are the cherubim who surround the throne, have the task of summoning the actors in the final act of the divine and cosmic drama to come forward to the stage”\(^{18}\). Certain commentators thus lay emphasis on Chapter 4 as a heavenly scene and the four living creatures as heavenly actors\(^{19}\). Whilst Brewer, Benson and Blevins are referring to actors in the technical sense of performers presenting characters to the audience, other scholars such as Hellholm, Minear and Ulfgard use the term actors in a non-technical sense.


\(^{15}\) H. Ulfgaard, *Feast and Future*, 23.


Actors are also noted in the more detailed work of James Blevins\textsuperscript{20}. According to his analysis, the dramatis personae include John (1:9ff), the Son of Man (1:12ff), the four living creatures (4:6ff), the Lamb (5:2ff), the Woman clothed with the Sun (12:1ff), the Dragon (12:3ff), the Beast (13:1ff), the Son of Man on the Clouds (14:14ff) and the Rider on the White Horse\textsuperscript{21}. According to Blevins the actors are involved in the plot and dramatic narrative. Certain scholars thus emphasize the role of actors (in the technical sense) in the Revelation of John.

3.2 **ACTS AND SCENES**

Actors appear in acts and scenes. A number of commentators have underscored the importance of acts and scenes in the Revelation of John. These include Benson\textsuperscript{22}, Aschcraft\textsuperscript{23}, Kepler\textsuperscript{24}, Leonertz\textsuperscript{25}, Sneen\textsuperscript{26}, Bowman\textsuperscript{27}, Spinks\textsuperscript{28}, Wilcock\textsuperscript{29}, Farrer\textsuperscript{30}, Palmer\textsuperscript{31}, Blevins\textsuperscript{32}, Scott\textsuperscript{33} and

\begin{itemize}
  \item J.L. Blevins, *Revelation as Drama*, 148ff.
  \item J.L. Blevins, *Revelation as Drama*, 148 - 191.
  \item D. Sneen, *Visions of Hope* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978), 114 - 117.
\end{itemize}
Milton. Commentators are consistent in their emphasis on the importance of the changes of scene evident throughout the Revelation. The exact number of acts and scenes in the Revelation is often debated.

3.2.1 **THE SCENES**

The scenes of the Revelation are dramatic in character. This has been noted by many scholars including Schüssler Fiorenza, Ulfgaard, Spinks, Ashcraft, Wilcock and Thompson. Scenes characterise dramatic texts and other literary forms. The various scenes of the Revelation are skilfully connected with the recurring formula "then I saw". This has also been observed by Farrer, Wilcock.

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38 M. Ashcraft, "Revelation", 253.
3.2.2. **THE INTERCALATIONS PREPARE THE SCENES**

The scenes are joined together by means of intercalations. Leonertz\textsuperscript{45} and Schüessler Fiorenza\textsuperscript{46} have observed that intercalations and interludes unite and join together the various dramatic scenes. Intercalations are used at the end of acts as new scenes are introduced (Scheme A-B-A), according to Leonertz\textsuperscript{47}. The idea of intercalations simply means that John introduces a Scene (A), quickly moves onto something new (B) often into the next act, and then returns to the description of the original scene (A). This method enables the transitions from one scene to the next to occur in a smooth fashion\textsuperscript{48}.

The scene shifts (intercalations) contribute to the dramatic movement and progression of the text. Multiple scene changes occur often in Revelation, as they do in Greek drama. The scene shifts help the audience move from one visionary venue to the next. They introduce the next action occurring in heaven and earth. The plot thickens as the scene shifts rapidly from one to the next until finally the new

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{44} E.S. Shaffer, "The Visionary Character: Revelation and the Lyrical Ballad", *The Revelation of St John the Divine* ed. Harald Bloom (New York: Chelsea, 1988), 100.
  \item \textsuperscript{45} R.J. Leonertz. *The Apocalypse of St John*, XIII - XIX.
  \item \textsuperscript{46} E. Schüessler Fiorenza, "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation", *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39 (1977): 360 - 361.
  \item \textsuperscript{47} R.J. Leonertz. *The Apocalypse of St John*, XIII - XIX.
  \item \textsuperscript{48} R.J. Leonertz. *The Apocalypse of St John*, XIII - XIX.
\end{itemize}
Jerusalem is revealed. The scenic movements are progressive, dramatic and climatic in nature.

Acts and scenes are part of the literary design of the author, according to Benson, Bowman, Blevins, Palmer, Pareus, Milton, McDowell and Ashcraft. Acts and scenes are a distinct feature of Greek tragedy and other dramatic works. A clear sequence of acts and scenes characterises the work, according to Benson. He states that "the Book is like the relating of a drama, a narrative of Acts and Scenes which have passed before the Seer, although on an almost unlimited stage...".

3.2.3 THE NUMBER OF ACTS AND SCENES

The structural calculation of the acts and scenes is the result of the

52 F. Palmer, The Drama of Revelation, 1ff.
56 M. Ashcraft, "Revelation", 253.
57 E.W. Benson, The Apocalypse, 3.
literary design of the author. McDowell sees the Revelation as a Greek drama with 3 acts and various scenes. Palmer sees it as a Greek drama with 5 acts and 3 scenes. Bowman and Blevins see it as a Greek drama with 7 acts and 7 scenes. Milton and Pareus see it as a Greek drama with acts and scenes.

3.3 THE CHORUS

The chorus in Revelation resembles the chorus in Greek tragedy. This has been noted by several scholars including Pareus, Milton, Benson, Brewer, Geyser, Schüssler Fiorenza, Laws, Hatfield, and Blevins.

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60 F. Palmer, *The Drama of Revelation*, 1ff and E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation", 353.
64 C.A. Patrides, *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, 34.
70 E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation", 353 - 360.
71 S. Laws, "Songs of the Lamb", 75ff.
and Guthrie\textsuperscript{2}. Brewer\textsuperscript{5} argues that the chorus can be best understood against the background of Greek drama and the Hellenistic theatre.

### 3.3.1 THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CHORUS

Careful study of the chorus indicates that the chorus served the same role in Revelation as the chorus in Greek tragedy\textsuperscript{6}. The function of the chorus in Revelation, as in Greek tragedy, included commenting and explaining the action, interpreting the plotted progression of the action, consulting wise advice, stimulating the emotional tension of the drama, taunting and lamenting the fallen city, and dividing the episodes (acts) by choral interludes.

#### 3.3.1.1 THE CHORAL INTERLUDES

Choral interludes have been noted by James Blevins\textsuperscript{7}. Benson\textsuperscript{8}, Schüessler Fiorenza\textsuperscript{9}, Milton\textsuperscript{10} and Pareus\textsuperscript{11}.

Milton and Pareus see the acts divided by means of choral interludes. Benson observes the division of the action into 7 parts by 7 choric songs\textsuperscript{12}. Schüessler

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\textsuperscript{2} D. Guthrie, \textit{The Relevance of John's Apocalypse} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 24.

\textsuperscript{5} R.R. Brewer, "Revelation 4:6 and Translation Thereof", 227 - 231.

\textsuperscript{6} J.L. Blevins, "The Genre of Revelation", 400.

\textsuperscript{7} J.L. Blevins, \textit{Revelation as Drama}, 20.

\textsuperscript{8} E.W. Benson, \textit{The Apocalypse}, 5.

\textsuperscript{9} E. Schüessler Fiorenza, "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation", 360.

\textsuperscript{10} J. Moffatt, \textit{The Book of Revelation}, Preface.

\textsuperscript{11} C.A. Patrides, \textit{The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature}, 34.

Fiorenza argues that the choral interludes explain and interpret the forward thrust of the narrative. The choral interludes in Revelation closely resemble the choral interludes of Greek tragedy.

3.3.1.2 THE INTERPRETIVE FUNCTION

The interpretive function of the chorus in Revelation resembles the interpretive function of the chorus in Greek tragedy. Delling and Guthrie note that the interpretive function of the hymns in Revelation correspond with the interpretive function of the choral hymns of Greek drama. According to Hatfield, the chorus in Revelation interpret the plotted progression of the action on stage. Blevins holds that the chorus interpret in music and song the action of the drama to the audience. The chorus in Revelation interpret the action as it moves progressively and climatically from one episode (act) to the next. In this manner, the chorus in Revelation closely resembles the chorus in Greek tragedy.

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83 E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation", 360.
84 G. Delling, "Zum Gottesdienstlichen Stülder Johannesapokalypse" Novum Testamentum 3 (1957): 107 - 137.
85 D. Guthrie, The Relevance of John's Apocalypse, 24.
86 D.E. Hatfield, The Function of the Seven Beatitudes in Revelation, 22ff.
87 J.L. Blevins, "The Genre of Revelation", 400.
THE COMMENTATORY AND EXPLANATORY FUNCTION

The commentatory and explanatory role of the chorus in Revelation resembles the role of the chorus in Greek tragedy. The chorus in Revelation closely resembles "the role of the chorus in drama, commenting and explaining the action" by means of choral song. Schüssler Fiorenza also remarks that the hymns and acclamations "function in a manner similar to the chorus in Greek tragedy which commented on and explained the actions of the principals in the drama". The choruses in Revelation, "function thus in the same way as the choruses in Greek drama preparing and commenting upon the dramatic movement of the plot". The explanatory role of the chorus is clearly illustrated in Chapter 7. In response to the question "who are they dressed in whites robes?", the chorus explains that "these are they who have come out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb" (Versus 17 - 18).

88 S. Laws, "Songs of the Lamb", 75.
89 E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Composition and structures of the Book of Revelation", 360.
90 E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation", 354.
3.3.1.4 THE CONSULTATIVE FUNCTION

The consultative function of the chorus of elders in Revelation closely resembles the consultative function of the chorus of elders in Greek tragedy. The chorus of elders wisely extol the judgements of God and the decisions of the Lamb. Geyser notes that "they resemble the chorus in Greek tragedy and stay on the scene to eulogize every verdict of God, up to the last: the condemnation of the great harlot ..."91. The chorus of elders celebrate the justice of God, and the praiseworthy attributes of the Lamb, in beautiful choric songs92. The chorus of elders are wise stewards with knowledge of the whole situation in which the saints are critically involved. They resemble the chorus of elders in Greek tragedy who give wise advice, admonish, warn and caution those who listen. In chapter 1193 for example, they announce that "the time has come for judging the dead and rewarding the prophets". The nations are advised to worship the Lord God Almighty since His judgement and reign is imminent94.

91 A. Geyser, "The Twelve Tribes of Revelation", 396.
92 E.W. Benson, The Apocalypse, 128.
93 Verse 18.
94 Rev 11:17.
3.3.1.5 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLOT

The development of the plot is enhanced by the choral songs. Brewer notes that "the chorus in Revelation, as in Greek drama, played a significant part in stimulating the emotional tension of the drama". The chorus is actively involved in stimulating the excitement and intrigue of the plot through choric song. They conduct and direct the drama towards its climax. The role of the chorus in stimulating the emotional tension of the plot in Revelation corresponds closely with the role of the chorus in Greek tragedy. The chorus in Revelation, like the chorus in Greek tragedy, heighten the emotional atmosphere and relate closely to the plot of the drama.

3.3.1.6 THE TAUNTING OF CHORUS

The taunting of the chorus in Revelation 18 closely resembles the taunting of the chorus in Greek tragedy. Collins argues that the function of the taunt song or dirge is to announce the judgement of the evil harlot city. According to Blevins, the chorus in Chapter 18 lament the fall of the city Babylon in a similar manner to the chorus who lament and chant over the fall of

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Troy in Greek tragedy. The role of the chorus in the taunt song (dirge) of Chapter eighteen resembles the role of the chorus in the dirges of Greek tragedy.

### 3.3.2 THE FORM AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE HYMNS

The form and construction of the hymns in Revelation closely resembles the form and construction of the hymns in Greek tragedy. The form of the hymns and songs include choral odes, choral interludes, the dirge, and victory songs. Blevins also notes that the chorus may have sung the parados, stasimon, and the exodos-

#### 3.3.2.1 THE CHORAL ODES

The choral odes of Revelation are short songs or hymns sung by the chorus within episodes (acts). The choral odes of Revelation include 4:11, 5:9 - 10, 5:12 - 13, 7:10 and possibly 12:10, 15:3 - 4 and 16:5 - 6. Benson

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101 The Processional Song.

102 The Choral Songs Between Episodes (or Acts).

argues that the choral odes focus primarily upon the justice and worth of God\textsuperscript{104}.

3.3.2.2 THE STASIMON

The stasimon are choral songs sung between episodes by the chorus. The stasimon are sung 3, 5 or 7 times according to the number of episodes of the drama. Blevins argues that the episode-stasimon pattern, which is repeated 3, 5 or 7 times according to the number of episodes of the drama. Blevins argues that the episode-stasimon pattern, which is repeated 3, 5 or 7 times, is expressed in the seven act (episode) form of the Revelation of John\textsuperscript{105}. Benson also argues that the choral songs (Stasimon) divide the action of the drama into 7 parts by means of 7 choric songs\textsuperscript{106}. Milton\textsuperscript{107}, Pareus-\textsuperscript{108} and Schüssler Fiorenza\textsuperscript{109} also observe that the form of the stasimon\textsuperscript{110} in Revelation closely resemble the form of the stasimon\textsuperscript{110} in Greek tragedy.

\textsuperscript{104} E.W. Benson, \textit{The Apocalypse}, 37 and 128.
\textsuperscript{105} J.L. Blevins, \textit{The Revelation as Drama}, 20.
\textsuperscript{107} J. Moffatt, \textit{The Book of Revelation}, Preface Quotes Milton Who Argues that the Revelation is Divided by means of Choral Interludes.
\textsuperscript{108} C.A. Patrides, \textit{The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature}, 134.
\textsuperscript{109} E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation", 360.
\textsuperscript{110} Choral Interludes.
3.3.2.3  THE DIRGE

The dirge is a song of lament sung by the chorus in Greek tragedy. The dirge has a rather unique construction and often appears in the form of lyric sung alternately by those on stage (the coryphaeus or chorus leader for example) and the chorus in the orchestra below\(^{111}\) (Janko 1987 : 99). Blevins argues that the dirge of Revelation 18 closely resembles the dirge of the city of Troy in Greek tragedy\(^{112}\). As in Greek tragedy, the chorus of Revelation chant the dirge over the proud and arrogant city of Chapter 18. Like Troy, the proud and arrogant city of Babylon, also falls and goes up in smoke\(^{113}\). Benson also stresses the uniqueness of the dirge form in the Revelation of John\(^{114}\). According to him, the dirge is unique and bears little resemblance to the other choric songs regarding singers, subject and setting\(^{115}\). He also notes that the dirge may have been sung by the coryphaeus, the leader of

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\(^{111}\) Aristotle, Poetics 1.3.5.

\(^{112}\) J.L. Blevins, "The Genre of Revelation", 400.

\(^{113}\) J.I. Blevins, "The Genre of Revelation", 400 and Euripides, The Trojan Woman.

\(^{114}\) E.W. Benson, The Apocalypse, 39.

\(^{115}\) E.W. Benson, The Apocalypse, 39.
the chorus in Greek tragedy, and by the other chorus members\textsuperscript{116}. The form and construction of the dirge of Babylon closely resembles the form and construction of the dirge in Greek tragedy.

3.3.2.4 THE PARODOS

The parodos was the processional song of the chorus occurring after the prologue at the beginning of the Greek drama. Blevins argues that in chapter 1 verse 7, John is describing the chorus (who) "makes its entrance through, prepares to sing, stationing itself around the throne of God on the lower orchestra level ..."\textsuperscript{117}. The chorus then sings "Look, he is coming with the clouds and every eye shall see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen"\textsuperscript{118}. The processional song is performed by the chorus as it enters the circular orchestra below the stage. Such songs included marching-metres which were chanted rather than sung\textsuperscript{119}. Blevins argues that the processional song of the chorus is chanted in 1 : 7 and this marks the beginning of the action of the Greek drama\textsuperscript{120}.

\textsuperscript{116} E.W. Benson, \textit{The Apocalypse}, 39.

\textsuperscript{117} J.L. Blevins, \textit{The Revelation as Drama}, 22.

\textsuperscript{118} J.L. Blevins, \textit{The Revelation as Drama}, 23.

\textsuperscript{119} Aristotle, \textit{Poetics} (trans. R. Janko), 98.
3.3.2.5 THE EXODOS

The exodos was the closing words sung or chanted by the chorus as it departed from the orchestra near the end of the drama\(^{121}\). Blevins argues that the chorus of Revelation, as in Greek tragedy, sang the exodus near the conclusion to the drama\(^{122}\). Like the chorus in Greek tragedy, they sing and chant their hymns to the sound of harp and lyre\(^{123}\).

3.3.3 THE CHORUS MEMBERS

3.3.3.1 THE ANIMAL CHORUS

The chorus consists of four living creatures and twenty-four elders who sing antiphonal songs. The four living creatures may have been a masked chorus, according to Brewer\(^{124}\). Animal choruses were a common feature in Greek drama\(^{125}\). The chorus would appear as creatures including flying eagles, birds, and other animals. The animal chorus glorify God and encourage others to worship as they chant praises to God\(^{126}\). A chorus of

\(^{121}\) Aristotle, Poetics (trans. R. Janko), 98.

\(^{122}\) J.L. Blevins, The Revelation as Drama, 20.

\(^{123}\) J.L. Blevins, "The Genre of Revelation", 399.


(living) creatures dressed as animals (Revelation 4) was a common sight in Greek tragedy.

3.3.3.2 **THE CHORUS OF ELDERS**

The chorus of elders consisted of 24 members. Blevins- and Brewer note that the number (12 - 24) corresponds with the number used in later Greek drama. A chorus of elders was a common feature of Greek tragedy. The elders commentated sagely on the action of the actors in Greek tragedy, and fulfil a similar role in the Revelation of John.

3.3.3.3 **ANTIPHONAL SINGING**

Antiphonal singing took place between the chorus of living creatures and the chorus of elders. The choruses would chant measured antiphonal strains of praise. Laws contends that the choir answering choir is especially reminiscent of the Hellenistic theatre. The two choruses sing in beautiful harmony - the one singing the

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129 Oedipus at Colonus, King Oedipus, The Persians etc.


132 S. Laws, "Songs of the Lamb", 75f.
These instruments are mentioned in Revelation 18:22.

The Aulos (flute) and the Kithara (lyre or harp) are the instruments of Greek Drama.
ode and the other singing the antode. The huge heavenly chorus who worship the Lamb, the Ruler of God's creation, stand in sharp contrast to those of the emperor who sang and worshipped him from the orchestra of the theatres of Asia Minor. The chorus of the Lamb surpasses that of his earthly challenger in size and power of proclamation.

3.3.4 THE STROPHE-ANTISTROPHE FORM OF THE HYMNS

The classic strophe-antistrophe form of the hymns in Revelation, is a common form of hymns in Greek tragedy. Lohmeyer, Jorns and Blevins made a detailed study of the hymns noting the strophe-antistrophe form. Blevins notes that the balanced strophe-antistrophe form is similar in construction to the hymns of Greek tragedy. The form of the hymns in Revelation is congruous with that of Greek tragedy.

The use of the choruses by the author is one of the most compelling arguments for the influence of the Greek dramatic form on the

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134 S. Laws, "Songs of The Lamb", 75 - 77.
137 J.L. Blevins, "The Genre of Revelation", 400.
composition of the Revelation. The chorus of Revelation has a strong resemblance with the chorus of Greek tragedy.

3.4 **THE PHYSICAL APPEARANCE OF THE THEATRES**

A number of scholars argue that the Revelation is written against the background of an imaginary, but typical Greek theatre. They argue that John's message is written in the genre of Greek tragedy and its setting is that of the Greek theatre. The evidence listed by them consists of a combination of internal textual and external architectural evidence.

The internal evidence of possible clues regarding the theatrical setting include the temple, heaven, the tent (or tabernacle), the cave, the image or statue of the beast, the altar of sacrifice, the doors of the temple, the heavenly stage, thunder and lightning, the thrones, the lampstands and possible other clues regarding the scenic data of Revelation.

3.4.1 **THE TEMPLE**

The temple of God is mentioned throughout the Revelation. Heaven and the tent also play a prominent part especially in Chapters 4 following. The constant emphasis on the temple, heaven, the tent may be a reference to the stage building or "skene" of the Greek theatre. Blevins, Bowman and Brewer see a link between the temple in

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138 E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation", 353.


140 Or Tabernacle.
Revelation and the temple\textsuperscript{141} of the Greek theatre. Blevins argues that "the stage building, "skene", in many Greek tragedies represented the facade of the house, palace or temple\textsuperscript{142} and that it fulfils a similar function in the Revelation. Blevins argues that the temple mentioned in Revelation is able to fulfil a dual purpose of being the temple or stage building of the Greek theatre and the Temple of God as is commonly mentioned in Old Testament references\textsuperscript{143}. Bowman also argues that internal clues of scenic data are given in the text of Revelation\textsuperscript{144}, including the "skene" (7:15) or stage building and the "prothyron" (6:15) or cave.

Brewer also confirms that the architectural descriptions listed in the Revelation fit the Hellenistic theatre\textsuperscript{145}. The Greek word SKENE certainly appears in the text a number of times from Chapters 7 to 21\textsuperscript{146}. John may have had the Hellenistic stage setting in mind as he describes the events of the Revelation. Certain scholars\textsuperscript{147} argue that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{141} The "Skene".
  \item \textsuperscript{142} J.L. Blevins, "The Genre of Revelation", 399 also C.R. Beye, Ancient Greek Literature and Society. (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1987), 128.
  \item \textsuperscript{143} J.L. Blevins, The Revelation as Drama, 21.
  \item \textsuperscript{144} J. Bowman, "The Revelation of John: Its Dramatic Structure and Meaning", 448 and C.R. Beye, Ancient Greek Literature and Society, 128.
  \item \textsuperscript{145} R.R. Brewer, "Revelation 4:6 and Translations Thereof", 228 - 231.
  \item \textsuperscript{146} Rev 7:15; 12:12; 13:6; 21:3.
  \item \textsuperscript{147} J.L. Blevins, The Revelation As Drama, 21; J. Bowman, "The Revelation of John: Its Dramatic Structure and Meaning", 448; D.E. Hatfield, The Function of the Seven Beatitudes in Revelation, 21.
\end{itemize}
John may be making dual references to the Old Testament cult and the Hellenistic theatre when he refers to the altar, the temple and the throne of God.

3.4.2 THE ALTAR

The altar of incense/sacrifice stood in the centre of the orchestra. According to Bowman, John contemplates the stage and furnishings of the theatre with the altar of sacrifice standing on the orchestra level of the theatre. Brewer argues that "John's reference to the "Lamb, standing as though it had been slain" (5 : 6) may, indeed, have more than a coincidental relationship to the altar of the Greek theatre and the preliminary sacrifices. Blevins notes that Greek theatres, including the one at Ephesus, had a prominent altar which stood in the middle of the orchestra. The altar referred to in Chapter 6 : 9 following may be a reference to the altar as it would appear in the Hellenistic stage setting.

3.4.3 THE IMAGE

3.4.3.1 IMAGES USED IN THEATRE

The image of deities and emperors were also used in the rituals of the theatre. The images (statues) of gods were also part of the stage property of the theatres. Tap-
lin notes that "statues of deities were used as stage props now and then throughout Greek tragedy"\textsuperscript{152}.

Blevins argues that the image of the beast may refer to the huge statue of Domition before which people prostrated themselves in worship\textsuperscript{153}. Blevins argues that the image "was hollow on the inside so that the local priests could go in and make it talk and perform all kinds of wonders"\textsuperscript{154}. Price also suggests that the colossal cult statue of Domitian at Ephesus may have been in John's mind in Chapter 13\textsuperscript{155}. During the Imperial festival, these images (statues) of emperors were carried in processions to the theatre\textsuperscript{156}. The priests of the Imperial cult would go inside the huge statues and make them talk (Revelation 13 : 15)\textsuperscript{157}.

3.4.3.2 IMAGES AND STAGED CULTIC WONDERS

Sherrr records valuable evidence from antiquity for staged cultic wonders of the Imperial Cult including

\textsuperscript{152} O. Taplin, \textit{Greek Tragedy in Action}, 93.

\textsuperscript{153} J.L. Blevins, \textit{The Revelation as Drama}, 11 and 86.

\textsuperscript{154} J.L. Blevins, \textit{The Revelation as Drama}, 11.


\textsuperscript{157} J.L. Blevins, \textit{The Revelation as Drama}, 86; E. Yamauchi, \textit{New Testament Cities in Western Asia Minor}, 43.
images (eikwv) that move and speak\textsuperscript{158}. Images were certainly used in the theatrical performances of the Imperial Cult.

The evidence for staged cultic wonders in the Imperial cult is noted by a number of Roman writers:

* Dio Cassius\textsuperscript{159}
* Suetonius\textsuperscript{160}
* Plutarch\textsuperscript{161}
* Martial\textsuperscript{162}
* Hippolytus\textsuperscript{163}

3.4.3.3 **IMAGE OF THE BEAST**

The worship of the Beast (Rev 13:4-8) and the image of the Beast (Rev 13:13-17) against the background of the worship of the emperors in the Roman Imperial cult. Staged cultic wonders, which included statues/images that spoke and miraculous signs of fire, were features of the staged cultic wonders of the Imperial cult. The sen-

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\textsuperscript{159} Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 59.28.6.

\textsuperscript{160} Suetonius, *Gaius* 57.1.

\textsuperscript{161} Plutarch, *Moralia* 780F.

\textsuperscript{162} Martial, *Epigrams* 8.39; 9.3; 9.11; 9.91.

\textsuperscript{163} Hippolytus, *Refutation* 4.29.41.
possible suggestion is made that the image of the beast mentioned in Revelation 13 can best be understood against the background of the Imperial Cult, and the use of images in the theatrical performances of the Cult.

3.4.3.4 IMAGES USED IN LITURGY OF THE CULT

Images and statues were used in the liturgy of the Imperial cult. Images of the emperors were "carried in processions at imperial festivals". On one such festival occasion, "the procession passed to the theatre, where sacrifices of incense were made in front of the images of Augustus, Livia and Tiberius which had been placed there". The images of the emperors were "set up in the theatre for the imperial festival". Dio Cassius records that "orders were given for a golden image, a golden crown and a throne to be placed in the theatre at the festival of the Roman Games, in the midst of the magistrates who officiate at these.

Nero and Domitian also used colossal statues (of

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167 S.R. Price, Rituals and Power, 188.

themselves) "a hundred and twenty feet high". Domitian's marble statue discovered at Ephesus, is four times life-size. Colossal statues of Trajan and Hadrian have also been discovered. The images of the emperors were used in the liturgy of the cult and were evidently carried to the theatre during the Imperial Games.

### 3.4.3.5 IMAGES USED IN THE THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES OF THE CULT

Images of the emperors were used in the theatrical performances of the Imperial cult. "Theatres, which served a variety of important functions, sometimes contained permanent imperial decoration, whether imperial statues or friezes". The theatre of Ephesus was "embellished with numerous statues". Statues served as stage props in the theatre, and statues of deities were "used as props now and then throughout

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169 Suetonius, Nero 31.

170 E. Yamauchi, New Testament Cities in Western Asia Minor, 85.

171 E. Yamauchi, New Testament Cities in Western Asia Minor, 42.

172 Inscription in R.K. Sberk, The Roman Empire: Augustus To Hadrian, 59.


174 E. Yamauchi, New Testament Cities Western Asia Minor, 94.
Greek tragedy. The image of the Beast may serve as a stage property in a Greek drama.

"The evidence from antiquity for staged cultic wonders can be conveniently divided according to the two signs mentioned in Rev 13:13-15: (1) miraculous images (statues) that move and/or speak; and (2) lightning and amazing fire signs.

3.4.3.6 IMAGES THAT SPEAK

The evidence from antiquity confirms that statues that could speak were used in the cult and theatre. This evidence can be traced to the following Roman and Greek writers:

- Hippolytus
- Athenagoras
- Lucian
- Clementine

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175 O. Taplin, *Greek Tragedy in Action*, 93.


178 Athenagoras, *Supplication for Christians*.


180 Clementine, *Recognitions* 3.47.
The evidence of images which speak needs to be examined carefully. The evidence for the use of images which "speak" in the Imperial cult also needs to be examined. Let us begin by examining evidence of images speaking in the pagan cults of John's day. Hippolytus notes how an image is made to speak through manipulation\(^{181}\). Athenagoras witnesses to the existence of talking miraculous statues which gave oracles\(^{182}\). He argues that it was neither the statue or the person represented by the statue which spoke, but rather demons "taking possession of their (the multitudes) thoughts"\(^{183}\). Lucian speaks of images that "move about and speak"\(^{184}\).

3.4.3.7 IMAGES THAT SPEAK AND THE TECHNOLOGY OF THE THEATRE

Lucian's account of an image speaking, indicates how technology was effectively used to make an impression on worshippers\(^{185}\). Alexander made the "image speak

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\(^{181}\) Hippolytus, Refutation of Heresies, 4.41.

\(^{182}\) Supplication for Christians.

\(^{183}\) Athenagoras, Supplication for Christians; S.J. Sherrer, "Signs and Wonders", 603.

\(^{184}\) Lucian, The Syrian Goddess, 10.

\(^{185}\) Lucian, Alexander the False Prophet, 26.
and give oracles to the amazement of the people. Alexander "astonished the crowd" with his trickery; he got someone to speak from the outside of the image through a "tube" leading to the mouth of the image so that "the voice issued" from the image itself. Hippolytus also confirms how speech was given through tubes (windpipes), thus creating the mistaken impression that the image was actually speaking. Simon Magnus claimed that he had made statues move and come to life. I have flown through the air. I have made statues move; I have animated lifeless things" (ego statuas moveri feci et animavi exanima). Apollonius of Tyana, a friend of several Roman emperors, was a worker of signs and wonders in the Asian cities, and may be linked to the use of signs and wonders in the Imperial cult. Appolonius may have been responsible for manipulating images of the emperors, so as to bring about a response of awe and worship. John

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187 Lucian, Alexander the False Prophet, 26.
188 Hippolytus, Refutation of Heresies, 4.41.
189 Clementine, Recognitions, 3.47; Justin, Apology, 1.26; Irenaeus, Heresies, 1.23; Eusebius, H.E. ii.13.1-8;
evidently regarded the miracles performed by the Beast as fraudulent and deceptive. John's description of the image speaking corresponds with the evidence of images speaking in pagan cults (and in all probability the Imperial cult). John recognises the trickery involved in the performance of the miraculous signs and traces their origin to the satanic activity of the Beast. The technology of the theatre effectively enabled images to speak and perform cultic wonders.

3.4.3.8

Miraculous signs and wonders were performed by the second Beast. The signs and wonders performed by the Beast included fire (lightning) which came down from heaven in the sight of men (Rev 13:13). This sign performed by the Beast is interesting when one examines the historical context in which John writes. The question must be asked whether John may be describing a liturgical and theatrical sign which was actually used in the Imperial cult. What evidence is there then for the use of the fire sign in the theatre?

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152 "Plana" verse 14.
153 Deceit verse 14.
156 "Semeia" verse 13.
and/or the Imperial Cult?

Answering this question involves examining the description of fire or lightning by the following early Greek and Roman writers:

- Plutarch\textsuperscript{197}
- Hippolytus\textsuperscript{198}
- Dio Cassius\textsuperscript{199}
- Stephanus\textsuperscript{200}
- Heron of Alexandra\textsuperscript{201}
- Julius Pollux\textsuperscript{202}

\section*{FIRE AND LIGHTNING}

Fire and lightning were used by the Roman emperors in the Imperial cult. They used the fire/lightning sign to create an impression of awe and power. The lightning sign also emphasised their links with divinity since thunder and lightning were symbolic of authority and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{197} Plutarch, \textit{Moralia}, 780F.
\item \textsuperscript{198} Hippolytus, \textit{Refutation}, 4.36.
\item \textsuperscript{199} Dio Cassius, \textit{Roman History}, 59.28.6.
\item \textsuperscript{200} Stephanus, \textit{Thesaurus} (Keraunoskopion).
\item \textsuperscript{201} Heron of Alexandra, \textit{Druckwerke}, 30.1-6.
\item \textsuperscript{202} Julius Pollux, \textit{Onomasticon}, 4.130.
\end{itemize}
divinity. Plutarch, for example, criticises rulers who imitate God's thunders, lightnings, and sunbeams. Martial the court poet describes Domitian as the Thunderer on numerous occasions. The simulation of lightning by a Caesar is described by Dio Cassius. He describes how the emperor Gaius "produced a flash of light when lightning lit up the heavens." Gaius "had a machine (mechane) by which he gave answering peals when it thundered and sent return flashes when it lightened."

3.4.3.10

FIRE AND LIGHTNING MACHINES USED IN THE THEATRE

Julius Pollux speaks of machines (mechane) used in the theatre for producing flashes of lightning and peals of

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203 S.J. Scherrer, "Signs and Wonders", 605.
204 "Brontas".
205 "Keraunous".
206 "Aktinobolias".
207 Moralia 780F.
208 "Tonans".
210 Roman History, 49.28.6.
211 S.J. Scherrer, "Signs and Wonders", 609.
212 Dio Cassius, Roman History, 59.28.6.
He describes the existence of a lightning-making machine called the Keraunoskopeion. He describes it as a special-effects machine which was used in the theatre. The machine was used to simulate flashes of lightning. Stephanus defines the Keraunoskopeion as "a tall stage machine, having the appearance of a movable tower, from which flashes of light came forth". Heron of Alexandria also gives a detailed description of a theatre device which causes the audience to see a sudden flash of lightning.

The machine used by the emperor Gaius for making lightning is in all probability the same machine used in the Hellenistic theatre for producing flashes of lightning. The evidence suggests that the emperors used the machinery of the theatre in the Imperial cult. The lightning machine may have been used by the Beast (emperor) to produce a flash of lightning ("fire from...

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212 Pollux, Onomasticon 4.130.

214 Pollux, Onomasticon 4.130.

216 “Alta machina in scena, versatilis instar speculae, e qua fulminum jactus exhibebant”, Stephanus, Thesaurus: Keraunoskopeion.

217 “Keraunos” Druckwerke 30.1-6.

218 “Mechane”.

219 “Mechane”.

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heaven”). The lightning machine may then have been
used by the Beast to produce awe and respect in his
audience. John appears to be describing a lightning sign
that was actually part of the Imperial cult. The refer-
ences examined above indicate a definite link between
the cult and the theatre.

3.4.5 THE ORCHESTRA

The orchestra was the circular area with a central altar, from whence
the chorus sang in Greek drama. The chorus was located on the
orchestra level of the theatre and sang from there. Brewer argues
that the orchestra was the circular area of ground around the central
altar from which the chorus of Revelation prayed, chanted and sang
(Revelation 6:9 and 8:3ff). The chorus who sing and chant
around the altar resemble the chorus who sing and chant around the
altar in Greek drama.

3.4.6 THE STAGE

The stage of the Graeco-Roman theatre may have been the scenic
setting for the performance of the drama. Blevins argues that in
Chapters 4 and 5, the Lamb appears on the stage and is involved in the
action of the drama. Minear also sees the Lamb appearing on the

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221 J.L. Blevins, The Revelation as Drama, 21.
heavenly stage as the doors open and the throne is revealed. Pareus argues that John imagines the drama as it occurs on stage. Mede (1586 - 1638) sees the vision described as a drama performed for John and the other heavenly actors on a stage. Bowman argues that the stage setting and props of the Revelation are those common to the Greek theatre. Stauffer sees the plot of the Revelation as patterned after the stage and scenes of the theatrical performances (of the Games) celebrated in Ephesus. Brewer also sees the Hellenistic stage setting as significantly important in understanding the events which take place in Chapters 4 following. Blevins also argues that the stage setting of the Hellenistic theatre is crucial to the understanding of the events taking place in Chapter 4. The setting which John describes in Chapter 4 compares favourably with the stage setting of the Hellenistic theatre of Asia Minor.

3.4.7 THE STAGE DOORS

The door which opened in Chapter 4:1 may have the central stage

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doors of the temple or stage building. Blevins argues that the door of the Hellenistic stage building is opened in 4:1232. Taplin confirms that the "skene had a large double-leaved door" and that this was used in stage management and stage direction. What is opened, is the door of the stage building (or temple) used in the Greek theatre. Other scholars would simply argue that this door is the door of the temple commonly used in Old Testament worship. Blevins argues that it is a dual reference to the door of the temple used in Greek theatre and the door of the temple used in the Old Testament cult.

3.4.8 THE THRONE

The throne is revealed when the door of heaven is opened in Chapter 4. In Greek theatre the throne would be revealed when the temple doors opened. The throne would be wheeled through the central doors onto the stage, or down a ramp onto the orchestra level below. Brewer argues that the chorus of living creatures sang in the midst of and around the throne. The constant emphasis in Revelation 4-5

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230 "Skene".

231 "Skene".


of circular adverbs such as "around the throne..." "encircling the throne...", and "round about the throne", may be a reference to the semicircular shape of the orchestra, and the choral singers who surround the throne of God. Blevins notes that in Greek drama, "a chorus of 12 or 24 stood around the throne and sang the music of the drama".

The throne of God was central to the drama. Ulfgard argues that the Lamb seated on the throne should be compared to artistic depictions of the Roman Emperor and the Graeco-Roman drama tradition. The practice of involving the throne of the God worshipped, into the drama itself, was common practice in Greek drama. Pollux observes that the throne of God worshipped in the drama presented would fill the central position. The thrones of the elders would surround this central throne (the theatres of Athens, Priene and Ephesus confirm this phenomenon). The throne of God is central throughout the drama and is mentioned in every chapter but one.

238 J.L. Blevins, Revelation as Drama, 15.
239 J.L. Blevins, Revelation as Drama, 15.
240 Hulfgaard, Feast and Future, 22.
241 Julius Pollux, Onomasticon 4.121-132; H. Ulfgaard, Feast and Future, 22; J.L. Blevins, Revelation as Drama, 15.
The thrones of the Elders at Priene as they appear in the Theatre

Fig. 8
Blevins argues that the throne of God is important in understanding the stage setting of Chapters 4-5ff. Bowman holds that the Lamb on the throne is central to the drama. Brewer also argues that the throne of God can be best understood in light of the Hellenistic theatre and architecture of the theatre.

3.4.9 THE THRONE OF THE ELDERS

The thrones of the twenty four elders surround the throne of God. Brewer notes that around "the perimeter of the orchestra of the theatre, carved stone seats, called "thrones" were reserved for priests and high dignitaries in attendance upon the dramatic performance." Dio Cassius confirms that the thrones of the elders or magistrates were placed around the throne of the emperor during the Imperial Games. Blevins graphically illustrates the thrones of the elders as they surround the central throne of God on the orchestra level of the theatre.

3.4.10 THUNDER AND LIGHTNING MACHINES

3.4.10.1 THUNDER AND LIGHTNING FROM THE THRONE OF GOD

Thunder and lightning comes from the throne of God.

243 J.L. Blevins, Revelation as Drama, 148.
244 J.W. Bowman, "Book of Revelation", 70.
247 Dio Cassius, Roman History 53.50.
248 J.L. Blevins, Revelation as Drama, 24.
Sherrer, in a detailed analysis notes that thunder and lightning was used in the Hellenistic theatre context. Julius Pollux and Dio Cassius confirm that machines were used in the theatre context to create thunder and lightning. The references to thunder coming from God's throne was common experience in Greek drama.

The theatre described by John was the imaginary, but typical, Hellenistic theatre of Asia Minor. John's description fulfils the architectural requirements of the Hellenistic theatre.

3.4.10.2 Thunder, Lightning and Earthquake Machines and John's Revelation

Thunder, lightning and earthquakes are recorded by John at significant moments in the action of the Revelation. The formula ("peals of thunder, lightning and an earthquake") is a significant expression and is mentioned

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250 Pollux, Onomasticon 4.130.
251 Dio Cassius, Roman History 59.28.6.
throughout the Revelation\textsuperscript{254}, and is used to introduce fresh episodes in the dramatic narrative. Thunder, lightning and earthquake machines were used in the Hellenistic theatre and the theatrical performances of the Roman Imperial cult.

3.4.10.3 THUNDER, LIGHTNING AND EARTHQUAKE MACHINES USED IN HELLENISTIC THEATRE

The evidence of the use of the thunder, lightning and earthquake machines in the Hellenistic theatre is best described by the ancient writer Julius Pollux\textsuperscript{255}. The machines described by Pollux were used specifically in the Hellenistic theatre and include the thunder machine\textsuperscript{256}, lightning machine\textsuperscript{257} and theatrical machinery used to simulate an earthquake\textsuperscript{258}. Vitruvius also describes the machine used in the Hellenistic theatre\textsuperscript{259} and describes how a god's appearance would be accommodated by a "sudden thunder". Julius Pollux\textsuperscript{260}, Vitruvius\textsuperscript{261} and Heron of Alexandria\textsuperscript{262} clearly

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{254} Rev 4:5, 8:5, 11:19, 16:17.
\textsuperscript{255} Julius Pollux, \textit{Onomasticon} 4.130.
\textsuperscript{256} "Bronteion".
\textsuperscript{257} "Keraunoskepeon".
\textsuperscript{258} \textit{Onomasticon} 4.130.
\textsuperscript{259} Vitruvius 5.6.
\textsuperscript{260} Pollux, \textit{Onomasticon} 4.130.
\textsuperscript{261} Vitruvius 5.6.
confirms that thunder, lightning and earthquake machines were special-effects equipment used in the Hellenistic theatre.  

3.4.10.4  
THUNDER, LIGHTNING AND EARTHQUAKE MACHINES USED IN THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES OF IMPERIAL CULT  
The evidence of the use of thunder, lightning and earthquake machines in the theatrical performances of the Roman Imperial cult is best described by Plutarch and Dio Cassius. Plutarch speaks of Roman rulers imitating God's power with "thunder, lightning and sunbeams". Dio Cassius records evidence that the Roman emperors used the thunder-making device in the Imperial cult. The emperor Caligula, for example used a device called the "mechane" (the mechane is used in the Hellenistic theatre) which "answered with peals of thunder". Thunder and lightning were symbolic of authority and divinity, and the emperor Domitian was even called the

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264 Plutarch, Moralia 780F.

265 Dio Cassius, Roman History 59.28.6.

266 Moralia 780F.

267 Dio Cassius, Roman History 59.28.6.
"Thunderer" by the court poet Martial. Hippolytus also confirms the use of a machine for producing peals of thunder. Thunder, lightning and earthquake machines were used in the theatrical performances of the Imperial cult. The evidence of the use of thunder, lightning and earthquake machines in the Hellenistic theatre confirms that John's references to the above may be understood against the background of their use in the Greek theatre context.

CONCLUSION

The use of choruses by the writer is a most compelling argument for the influence of Greek Drama on the Revelation of John.

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268 Martial, Epigrams 8.39, 9.3.11, 9.91.
269 Hippolytus, Refutation 4.32.
CHAPTER 4
THE FORM OF REVELATION

THE INTRODUCTION
In this chapter I will examine the form of Revelation. I will examine how the Revelation's form may have been influenced by Greek drama. I will specifically focus upon certain key aspects of the form of Revelation namely the prologue, episodes, the choral interludes and the epilogue. My purpose is to clarify links between the Revelation of John and Greek drama.

4.1 THE PROLOGUE

4.1.1 THE STRUCTURAL BALANCE AND UNITY
The Revelation of John begins with a prologue (1:1-8) and ends with an epilogue (22:6-21). "Both sections are closely related to each other in terms of style, vocabulary and subject matter". They are also both centred on the divine rather than the human situation. The prologue and the epilogue evidently frame the work, giving the work structural balance and unity.

4.1.2 A CHARACTERISTIC FEATURE OF A GREEK DRAMA
The prologue is a characteristic feature of a Greek drama. Certain scholars identify the prologue as an introduction to a Greek drama. Blevins sees the Greek drama beginning with the prologue, with John

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2 L. Thompson, The Book of Revelation, 56.
3 J.E. Botha (ed), Reading Revelation, 15; R.L. Jeske, Revelation for Today: Images of Hope, 121.
delivering the prologue⁵ and the chorus responding in song from the orchestra of the theatre⁶.

In the prologue to John's Greek drama, Bowman sees the accustomed announcement by the herald regarding the theme of the drama (the return and reign of the Lord Jesus Christ)⁷. Spinks likewise argues that the herald steps forward on the stage whilst announcing this theme of the drama which is to follow⁸.

The central theme of the drama, namely the rulership and return of the Lord God, Jesus Christ, is clearly spelled out in the prologue, according to Kepler⁹. (Bowman argues that the mechane would be used to announce the arrival of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Greek drama¹⁰. Wilcock observes that "after the Title and Greeting which form it's Prologue, the "curtain" rises, and the drama begins"¹¹.

4.1.3 CRITICISMS

The primary concern that I have with certain of the suggestions made

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⁵ Rev 1: 1 - 6.
⁶ J.W. Blevins, Revelation as Drama, 22 - 23.
above is that they are not substantiated with textual evidence. Indeed it is true that a divinity (for example Christ) could arrive via the mechane and be placed on the orchestra or stage. It is also true that this was a regularly used method of introducing a divinity into the action at the beginning of a Greek drama. The chorus likewise would sing/chant the arrival of the divinity in song. This is true indeed, but the question one asks is "what proof is there of this in the text itself?"

The evidence listed by the authors mentioned above, comes primary from the techniques and practice of Greek drama rather than evidence from the text itself.

4.2 **EPISODES**

4.2.1 **EPISODES AND THE STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK OF REVELATION**

Episodes (or acts) follow the prologue. They arguably form the structural framework of the Revelation. This is certainly the view of a number of scholars including Blevin (1980:1-10ff), Bowman (1962:64-65), Spinks (178:220ff), and Benson. They see the structure as carefully calculated by the author into partitioned sections with definite beginning points and ending points.

4.2.2 **EPISODES: A TECHNICAL TERM IN GREEK DRAMA**

An episode is a technical term used in Greek drama when referring to action which is divided by means of choral interludes. The Revelation

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certainly has action which is divided by means of choral interludes. (The author also uses techniques to divide the action in the Revelation. These include:

1) the regular reference to a door opening in heaven\textsuperscript{13} and (19:1) and

2) the visual or dramatic cue of thunder, lightning, earthquakes and hailstorms\textsuperscript{14}.

4.2.3 EPISODES: THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE STORY

The episodes are the building blocks of the story and lay out the story into separate dramatic scenes\textsuperscript{15}. Relating the episodes to the overall framework of the story is important in grasping the unity of the dramatic literature\textsuperscript{16}. The episodes of Revelation are carefully calculated and build upon one another. The Revelation has unity of form, despite its complicated structure\textsuperscript{17}.

4.3 THE CHORAL SONGS

4.3.1 DIVIDED AT POINTS OF CRISIS

The choral songs are important in understanding the structure of the Revelation. Benson argues that the choral interludes of Revelation, as

\textsuperscript{13} Rev 4: 1 and 19: 1.

\textsuperscript{14} Rev 4: 5, 8: 5, 11: 10 and 16: 18.


\textsuperscript{16} L. Ryken, How to Read the Bible as Literature, 45ff.

in Greek tragedy, divide the action at points of crisis\textsuperscript{18}.

4.3.2 \textbf{DIVIDED BY CHORAL INTERLUDES}

The choral interludes divide the action of the various episodes (acts), as they do in Greek tragedy. The story is thus divided into episodes by the choral interludes\textsuperscript{19}. Blevins notes that the role of the chorus in dividing the episodes of the Revelation corresponds closely with the role of the chorus in dividing the episodes in Greek tragedy\textsuperscript{20}.

4.3.3 \textbf{DIVIDED INTO RESPECTIVE EPISODES}

The function of the chorus in Revelation must carefully be distin-
guished between the function within episodes and the episodes-dividing function\textsuperscript{21}. The chorus in Revelation fulfils an episode-dividing function\textsuperscript{22} and a function within episodes.

The choral interludes divide the Revelation, emphasising the point attained, whilst commenting on what is past. The outline of the next action is also disclosed on two occasions\textsuperscript{23}. The choral interludes unite the episodes together. They interpret the action and mark off the respective episodes.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} E.W. Benson, \textit{The Apocalypse}, 37.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Rev 7: 10 - 17, 11: 15 - 18 and 19: 1 - 8.
\item \textsuperscript{20} J.L. Blevins, \textit{Revelation as Drama}, 19 - 20; E. Schussler Fiorenza, “Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation”, 360.
\item \textsuperscript{21} M. Heath, \textit{The Poetics of Greek Tragedy} (Stanford: Stanford University, 1987), 138.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Rev 7: 10 - 17, 11: 15 - 8 and 19: 1 - 8.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Rev 11: 15 - 18 and 19: 1 - 8.
\end{itemize}
THE EPILOGUE

The epilogue succeeds the episodes and concludes the Revelation. Certain scholars have noted similarities between the epilogue of Revelation and the epilogue of Greek drama. Let us examine certain of these similarities.

4.4.1 THE TECHNIQUE OF AUTHORISATION

The technique of John giving his authorisation and approval to the message of the drama, is "a technique which once again appears in Greek drama" according to Boman. Bowman argues that the author of the drama, John, gives his sanction of the dramatic message in the epilogue, and this sanction is confirmed by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blevins likewise confirms this practice by stating that "at the conclusion of the Greek tragic drama, one main character on the edge of the stage would give the final epilogue. John performs this task in 22:6-21." (Certain questions need to be asked in response to these suggestions:

1) the technique of authorisation is also used by the apostle Paul in his writings to substantiate their authenticity, and these letters are certainly not Greek dramas

2) Evidence substantiating the use of a main character at the edge

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25 J.W. Bowman, "Book of Revelation", 64.

26 J.W. Bowman, "Book of Revelation", 64.

27 J.L. Blevins, Revelation as Drama, 143.
of the stage to deliver the epilogue cannot be found in the text of Revelation).

4.4.2 THE TECHNIQUE OF SUMMARY, WARNING AND GREETING

John attests that he has actually heard and seen the things recorded in the Book (Rev 22:8). John concludes with a brief summary, warning and greeting to his audience. Although it is true that the technique of summary, warning and greeting is used in Greek drama, it must be remembered that many writings in the ancient world ended with summaries, greetings and warnings. This technique is not unique to Greek drama.

4.4.3 THE FOCUS ON THE RETURNING CHRIST

The epilogue may appear to be a mere appendage to the vision of John, but this is not the case. The epilogue (like the prologue) focuses upon the coming of Christ. The climatic coming of Christ is eagerly awaited and anticipated by John's audience. Christ promises in the epilogue to return soon (quickly). He promises to reward his faithful servants. He also gives a generous invitation to anyone who

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wishes to come and drink of the water of life\textsuperscript{33}.

4.4.4 **STRUCTURAL BALANCE AND UNITY**

The epilogue provides a structural balance as well as greater unity to the writing as a whole. The epilogue has verbal and content similarities with the prologue. The one balances the other, with both giving structural unity to the writing. The epilogue and prologue evidently frame the work\textsuperscript{34}.

**CONCLUSION**

The prologue and epilogue of the Revelation resemble the prologue and episode common to Greek drama. The episodes which follow the prologue are divided by means of choral interludes. The episode-dividing role of the chorus in Revelation closely resembles the episode-dividing role of the chorus in Greek drama.

\textsuperscript{33} Rev 22: 17, Messianic Promise also in Isaiah 55.

\textsuperscript{34} R.L. Jeske, Revelation for Today: Images of Hope, 121.
CHAPTER 5
THE FUNCTION OF THE REVELATION

INTRODUCTION

The function of the Revelation of John has been the focus of recent studies by Collins¹ and Hellholm². Scholars³ have begun to realize that the function of Revelation is as important as the form and content. Let us now examine the function of the Revelation of John, especially in light of the arguments proposed by Adela Collins⁴.

5.1 CRISIS AND CATHARSIS

Adela Collins focuses on the perceived crisis of the early Christians and specifically those to whom John writes in the Revelation. According to Collins, "the task of Revelation was to overcome the unbearable tension perceived by the author between what was and what ought to be"⁵. In other words the Revelation aims to assist the readers/hearers come to grips with the situation in which they find themselves (one of perceived crisis).

5.2 PERCEIVED CRISIS

The Book of Revelation was written in response to a major crisis. Collins argues that this crisis was primarily a perceived crisis. Recent scholarship on

⁵ A.Y. Collins, Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse, 141.
the Revelation challenges whether the believers were indeed facing mass persecution. Collins argues in response that "the crucial element is not so much whether one is actually oppressed as whether one feels oppressed". In other words the perception of oppression may have been as real to the believers as an extensive mass persecution (by Domitian etc).

The crisis the believers were facing included a social crisis, a spiritual crisis, an economic crisis and possibly even a political crisis. A social crisis arose because of controversies between believers in Christ and local Jews who ostracised them from their communities. Their social crisis was further intensified by the precarious public status of Christian groups and their charge of Christian exclusiveness (their avoidance of Roman political, social and religious life).

The spiritual crisis focused on their refusal to partake in emperor worship or the refusal to partake in trade guilds specifically honouring foreign gods (such as Artemis or Zeus etc.). The economic crisis was interlinked with the spiritual crisis. Failure to worship the emperor resulted in prohibition from trading in the market place. Failure to join a trade guild implied exclusion from the trade and hence financial difficulties. The political crisis revolved

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6 A.Y. Collins, Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse, 84.

around the power exerted by Rome in Asia Minor and the all conquered territories.

The crisis experienced by believers is addressed by the Revelation of John. Revelation is an apocalyptic text which can be understood as a response to a crisis. The Book is however not just a product of a situation of crisis, but rather at its root is "a particular religious view of reality" (1984:106); in other words, the Revelation expresses primarily the true view of reality for the believers. Collins, having dealt with the sociohistorical situation of crisis, then looks at the literary function of the Revelation and how this compares with Greek tragedy.

5.2 NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES AND THEIR EMOTIONAL EFFECT

The apocalypse creates an emotional effect by manipulating the emotions, attitudes, feelings and thoughts of the audience. By manipulate is meant the skilful handling of emotions, feelings and thoughts. Various techniques are used by the author to achieve this emotional effect; these include the effective use of symbols and the careful construction of the plot.


9 A.Y. Collins, Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse, 107 - 152ff; Tragedy regularly uses the motifs of tribulation, war, hardship and crisis and these motifs are developed by John in the Revelation.

10 A.Y. Collins, Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse, 144; The emotional effect on the audience of Greek Tragedy is also discussed in O. Taplin, "Emotion and Meaning in Greek Tragedy", Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy ed. E. Segal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) 1 - 12; W.B. Standford, Greek Tragedy and the Emotions (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983). Standford notes that "Tragedians worked on the emotions of their audience through the skillful use of oral and visual techniques", 49. Surely the author John Does the same: He also skillfully uses oral and visual techniques such as song, music, cries and silences.

The function of the Revelation is analogous to the function of Greek tragedy according to Adela Collins\(^{12}\). In both the Revelation and Greek tragedy, certain emotions are aroused and then a catharsis of these emotions is achieved. "Tragedy manipulates the emotions of fear and pity; Revelation, primarily fear and resentment"\(^{13}\).

5.4 EMOTIONS OF TERROR AND PITY

The emotional effect of the narrative techniques is due to the skilful handling of emotions, feelings and attitudes by the author. The emotions of terror and pity are aroused by the representation of terrible and pitiable events in the Revelation. These events include the following:

- the terror aroused by the wrath of the Lamb (Chapter 6-8)
- the terror aroused by the ruthlessness of the Beast (13ff)
- the terror aroused by the judgement of the Harlot (17-18)
- the terror aroused by the lake of fire (20-21)
- the pity aroused by the woman pursued by the Dragon (12)
- the pity aroused by saints martyred by the Beast (13)

The emotions of terror and pity are specifically aroused by the author of Revelation. The catharsis of these painful emotions is achieved in Chapter 21 of the Revelation where the Lord God heals the pain of the believers and takes away the source of the their tears. The Revelation provides a catharsis of emotions and ends on a pleasurable positive note.


5.4 ARISTOTLE'S DEFINITION OF CATHARIS AND TRAGEDY

Aristotle sees the goal of tragedy as the catharsis of the emotions. The analysis he makes of Greek tragedy is one of the most detailed and concise studies of tragedy. We shall now focus on the cathartic function of Greek tragedy as defined by him:

A catharsis of human emotions ... is accomplished in tragedy. If it is properly constructed, tragedy reduces the soul's emotions of pity and terror my means of compassion and dread which are aroused by the representation of pitiable and terrible events. By "reduces", I mean that tragedy aims to make the spectator have a due proportion of the emotion of terror, by arousing the motion through the representation of tragedy, which like epic, has its end the catharsis of these emotions, which gives rise to the pleasure proper to tragedy (Poetics II).

5.5 THE GOAL OF TRAGEDY: THE CATHARSIS OF EMOTIONS

Aristotle sees the goal of tragedy as the catharsis of emotions. Tragedy is identified then by it's cathartic function. Tragedy achieves it's function by arousing the emotions of fear (phobos) and pity. These emotions are intensified until a catharsis (healing) of these emotions occurs.

Tragedy operates on the painful emotions of pity and fear. These painful emotions are aroused through the representation of pitiable and terrible events.
Tragedy then provides a catharsis or "purification" or "healing". The catharsis of these painful emotions gives rise to the pleasure of tragedy.

**REPRESENTATION OF TERRIBLE AND PITIABLE EVENTS**

- AROUSAL OF PAINFUL EMOTIONS (FEAR AND PITY)
- CATHARSIS OF PAINFUL EMOTIONS
- PLEASURE OF TRAGEDY

The pleasure of tragedy is the cathartic experience which it achieves for its audience. The catharsis of emotions is the goal of tragedy and results in the pleasure common to tragedy. The cathartic experience of his audience is therefore most important to the producer of a tragedy.

**CONCLUSION**

The cathartic function of the Revelation is analogous to the cathartic function of Greek tragedy. In both cases, painful emotions of fear and pity are aroused, and then a catharsis of these emotions is achieved.
CHAPTER 6

THE THRONE SCENE

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I intend examining the "throne scene" introduced in Revelation chapter 4
following, from the viewpoint of Greek theatre practice. I acknowledge that the Revelation is
significantly influenced by the biblical tradition of the Old Testament. The significance of the
influence of the throne scenes of Isaiah and Ezekiel, for example, most certainly had a most
significant influence on the throne scene as described by John in the Revelation. I
wholeheartedly accept the influence of the Old Testament on the Revelation of John. Indeed
it is impossible to understand the Revelation without having a sound understanding of the Old
Testament, and the influence of the Old Testament on the thinking and experience of the
author John.

In this chapter I wish to analyse the influence (or possible influence) of Greek drama upon the
throne scene of Revelation. I wish to analyse specifically chapters 4 following so as to see the
possible influence of the Greek theatre practice upon the throne scene of the Revelation.

6.1 THE INVITATION TO "COME UP HERE"

The invitation to John to "Come up Here" (and behold what is about to happen) is given on
regular occasions in the Revelation of John. John receives the invitation to "Come up Here"
The invitation to "Come up Here" would be given to any person who is required to go up to a higher place. Such an expression is commonly used in every day language. But this expression has greater significance when one examines the expression ("come up here") in the context of Greek theatre practice.

Walton, writing a book on "Greek Theatre Practice", notes the

"Several phrases found in theatrical contexts that suggest the use of terms such as GO UP and COME DOWN, from the skene (stage building) and on the skene. These allusions need not be interpreted as anything more than THEATRICAL JARGON akin to modern upstage and downstage terms".

When one examines the Greek drama called the "Exodus of Moses", one encounters the same invitation to "Come up Here" and "Come down Here". This indicates that the expression was regularly used theatrical jargon in Greek drama. What is of significance is that the same expression, namely "Come up Here", is used regularly in the Revelation of John.

It seems entirely possible that John could be using the technical jargon used in Greek theatre practice. Certain commentators make some interesting comments on this point: William Barclay argues that the invitation to John to "Come up Here" may have been an invitation to

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"come forward to the stage". Blevins argues in a similar manner. Certainly Walton and Ferguson confirm that the terms "Come up Here" were terms frequently used in Greek theatre practice for the invitation to come up to the stage and behold the action of the drama.

The question which needs to be decided on is: Was the invitation to "Come up Here" given to John indeed an invitation to come up to the stage or not? The evidence from Greek theatre practice most certainly reveals that this expression was a commonly used expression in Greek theatre practice.

6.2 A LOUD VOICE LIKE A TRUMPET

The voice which invites John to "Come up Here" was a "LOUD VOICE LIKE A TRUMPET" (Revelation 4:1). Similarly the voice of Christ which John hears in the opening chapter of Revelation is a "LOUD VOICE LIKE A TRUMPET". This "LOUD VOICE LIKE A TRUMPET" holds very significant insights when one examines Greek drama. The "LOUD VOICE LIKE A TRUMPET" is most significant when one examines the use of the mask in Greek theatre practice.

Talfourd, for example, writing a chapter entitled "Greek Drama" (Talfourd's book is not on

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3J. L. Blevins, Revelation as Drama (Nashville: Broadman, 1984), 49 and 155.
4J. M. Walton, Greek Theatre Practice, 94.
5J. Ferguson, A Companion to Greek Tragedy (Austin: University of Texas, 1987), 14.
6Revelation 1:10.
the Revelation of John but on Greek dramatic practice), notes that masks or

"Vizards were so contrived as to answer the purpose of a SPEAKING TRUMPET,

and to make the actor's VOICE SONOROUS AND LOUD".7

The "loud voice like a trumpet" was a technical term referring to the use of the mask in the Greek theatrical context. This is confirmed by Baldock who states that

"The most striking feature of the masks was their huge

TRUMPET-SHAPED MOUTHS"... "It used to be thought that the

TRUMPET-MOUTHS increased the volume of the VOICE".....

"It was commonly stated that the mouth of the mask acted as

a megaphone to project the actor's voice throughout the vast auditorium" 8.

The significance of the expression a "LOUD VOICE LIKE A TRUMPET" used in the Revelation (1:10 and 4:1 following) is important. Is it not obvious that John may be referring to the technical use of the mask in a Greek theatre setting? The technical jargon used by John seems to indicate that this is indeed the case. The LOUD VOICE LIKE A TRUMPET may then be a technical term used by John to describe the use of a mask in a Greek dramatic context. By using a mask, the actor was not limited in roles, since one actor could play several roles.

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7 T.N. Talfourd, C.J. Blomfield and R. Whitecombe et al, History of Greek Literature (London: Griffin and Company, 1851), 128; Vizard is an old English word for mask.

6.3 THE OPEN DOOR

John sees a "door open in heaven". The throne scene is revealed once the door is opened. But the question to be asked is: Were thrones used in Greek drama? And if so how were these thrones revealed to the audience?

An analysis of Greek theatre practice reveals that thrones were indeed used in the theatre. The throne would be revealed when the central stage doors were opened. The opening of the central stage doors in Greek drama was significant since it enabled something new to be revealed to the audience, and usually something important. This practice is confirmed by two important scholars of Greek theatre practice, namely Stanley and Swaddling.

Bieber notes that "the doors opened as the setting was wheeled out"; Bieber refers here to the use of a stage machine called the ekkuklema: the ekkuklema was used for revealing the throne to the audience. The opening of the door reveals the throne of God and the heavenly scene. As I have indicated above, this was a common and accepted practice in Greek drama: a throne would be revealed when the stage doors were opened (Ezekiel the Tragedian probably used the "ekkuklema" to reveal the "throne in heaven" to his Greek drama audience).

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6.4 THE REVEALED INTERIOR

The opening of the door in heaven enabled the interior of heaven and the throne of God to be revealed. But was it possible to reveal interior scenes in Greek drama? Yes, the evidence suggests that it was indeed possible to reveal interior scenes.

The ancient commentators on Greek drama speak often of a machine called the "ekkuklema" which was used to bring a supposedly INTERIOR SCENE out of OPEN DOORS and more fully into the view of the Greek drama audience. For all practical purposes there was no way of displaying an indoor scene in Greek drama, so the "ekkuklema" was effective "in that it brought the interior outside, thus revealing what was within" 13. The "ekkuklema" was used in Greek drama to reveal the interior of a temple, a palace or "a throne in heaven" 14.

The ekkuklema was an important machine used in the ancient Greek theatre.

"Its purpose was to REVEAL an event inside the building. It consisted of either a rectangular platform which could be wheeled out through the doors of the stage-building or a rotatable circular platform, pivoted in the centre, with a screen across the diameter to fit the corresponding gap in the stage wall" 15.

Barnett notes that "the ekkuklema" was "large enough to hold more than a dozen men";

14The "ekkuklema" would be used to reveal "the throne in heaven" in Ezekiel the Tragedian's Greek drama called The Exodus of Moses.
15J. Swaddling, The Greek Theatre, 15. See the Figure regarding the Possible Forms of the Ekkuklema.
Throne scenes would be revealed to the audience by means of the eccylema.

Platform on which there stood a Throne (Qomashon 1:13a). Julius Pollux, writing on Greek drama notes that the eccylema was a possible form of the eccylema.

![Diagram of throne scene reveal](image)

**Scenario and mechanical devices**
When it is pushed out from the doorway, with actors grouped upon it, the audience have to imagine that they, with the chorus, have entered the house or temple, and are confronted within by these figures.\(^{16}\)

Bieber mentions the use of the "ekkulema" in Greek theatre practice, stating:

"a **THRON**E on which a person sat....was pushed or wheeled out on a podium and then represented the interior of a palace."\(^{17}\)

Julius Pollux, the ancient commentator/historian of the Hellenistic theatre, likewise mentions the "ekkulema" which was a machine used for wheeling a **THRON**E through open stage doors. Pollux mentions that the

"the ekkulema is a high platform on beams on which there is a **THRON**E"\(^{18}\).

Pollux describes the "ekkulema" as a platform upon which a **THRON**E is set, and the word "ekkulema" is obviously derived from the Greek verb "ekkuleμεν" meaning "to roll out"; it was clearly a machine used for rolling a throne on a platform through the central stage doors. If the Revelation of John were written in Greek drama form, the "ekkulema" could be most effectively used to reveal the throne of God in heaven as the doors open in heaven.

Walton, a highly regarded scholar of Greek theatre practice, notes with the "ekkulema"


\(^{17}\) M. Bieber *History of the Greek and Roman Theatre*, 76.

\(^{18}\) J. Pollux *Onomasticon* IV. 128
The thrones of the Elders/Priests (Revelation 4:4)
The Elders enthroned worship The Lord God Almighty.

Front row stalls for the Priests

In every theatre and amphitheatre of Greek and Roman erection the first row of seats was reserved for the especial use of certain dignitaries. These were, in Greek theatres, priests amongst whom the priest of Dionysus was foremost having a special stall for his own particular use; the magistrates, distinguished foreigners, and citizens worthy of special honour. This photograph illustrates four stalls in the theatre of Dionysus at Athens specially reserved for the use of magistrates and inscribed accordingly.
a platform would be set in position behind the central stage doors, to be propelled forward either manually or by means of some kind of wench when the doors were opened" ...the ekkuklema was used for revealing slaughtered sheep and lambs (The Lamb who was Slain?) and "in each case the ekkuklema is suggested to stage an interior scene that would be considerably obscured for most of the audience unless it was wheeled out" 19.

Other Greek dramatists who made use of the "ekkuklema" for revealing interior scenes include Euripides 20, Sophocles21 and Aristophanes 22. (In Sophocles drama, when Ajax is revealed, "there are all the signs of an ekkuklema scene here, including the introductory signal: "See I open the doors." 22. The introductory signal used by John to introduce the throne scene in the Revelation is similar to that used by Sophocles in this Greek drama. The two literary works differ radically in content however.)

6.5 THE USE OF THE THRONE IN GREEK THEATRE PRACTICE

The throne of God is revealed to John when the door is opened in heaven. We return here to the question asked earlier, namely: Were thrones used in Greek theatre practice?

1J.M. Walton Greek Theatre Practice, 96-97.
2 Euripides Hippolytus.
3 Sophocles Ajax, 344.
4 Aristophanes Archarians, 395ff.
The throng of the Elders are the most visible at promiment in the Theatre.

The Theatre of Athens was the model of most of the Theatres of Asia Minor.
We have already discovered that thrones were indeed used in Greek drama practice. Julius Pollux certainly confirms that the throne was indeed used in the Hellenistic theatre. Pollux mentions the machine called the "ekkuklema which is a high platform on beams on which there is a THRONE." A throne scene was certainly a practice of the Hellenistic theatre. Surely then it would be entirely possible for John to communicate dramatically such a scene to his Hellenistic drama audience. (Ezekiel the Tragedian certainly had the means to convey his "throne in heaven" to his drama audience). (What is important to note here is that throne scenes were not only common in apocalyptic and prophetic writings, but throne scenes were also common in Greek drama).

6.6 THE THRONES OF THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS

The thrones of the twenty-four elders surround the throne of God in the Revelation of John. But did thrones of elders appear in the scenery or architecture of the Hellenistic theatre? Yes, the overwhelming evidence from a number of theatres in Turkey and Greece certainly confirms that the thrones of the elders surrounded the orchestra of the theatre (The elders fulfill a crucial role in judging/evaluating the drama as well as worshipping the enthroned God; please note that ancient Greek drama was religious drama, and the ancient dramatist fulfilled a religious function; modern western drama, in contrast, is often of a more "secular"

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24 Pollux Onomasticon 4.128.

25 Revelation 4:1ff.

26 Asia Minor (the seven churches were situated in Asia Minor).
nature. The role of the tragedian/ Greek drama writer was a the role of religious teacher 27).

The theatres of Asia Minor (the seven churches John addresses were in Asia Minor) also confirm the use of thrones in the theatre.

6.6.1 THE USE OF THE THRONES IN THE GREEK THEATRE

A central throne would often be surrounded by a number of other thrones situated around the perimeter of the orchestra. The theatre of Priene (near Ephesus) has a number of THRONES on the orchestra level of the theatre 28. These thrones were positioned in a semi-circle & surrounded the central throne commonly used in the theatre. The theatres of Asia Minor were semi-circular in shape with a circular orchestra. The thrones of the elders would surround the orchestra:

"Around the perimeter of the orchestra, usually in the front row of auditorium seats, was a semi-circular row of carved stone seats, or "thrones", reserved for priests or high dignitaries in attendance upon the dramatic performance" 29.

Brewer argues that "the twenty-four thrones with the elders seated upon them have their counterparts in the carved stone seats for dignitaries in the front row of the auditorium" (or

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The Thrones of the Elders surrounding the marbled Orchestra

The Orchestra of the Theatre of Dionysos at Athens
Blevins also argues along similar lines as one can clearly see from his diagrams depicting the orchestra of the theatre, with the thrones of the elders surrounding the throne of God.

Dio Chrysostom rebukes "the politicians of Tarsus for their love of front-row seats, gold crowns and purple robes." Bannister Fletcher, the architectural historian, also likewise notes the thrones which surround the orchestra of the theatre of Athens; the Athenian theatre was regarded as the model theatre of the ancient Greek world and most of the theatres of the Greek world follow a similar design. Fletcher writes of the theatre

"on the front row were sixty-seven marble thrones for city dignitaries, of individual design, added about the first century BC."

6.6.2 THE THRONES AND THE THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES

Thrones were also used in the theatrical performances (also the theatrical performances of the Imperial Games). The emperors loved to curry the favour of the masses, and often used the theatre to influence them. In the theatrical performances of the Games, the thrones/chairs of the high priests or magistrates would be placed around the throne of the emperor in the theatre.

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30 R. R. Brewer, ibid, 230.
31 J. L. Blevins Revelation as Drama, 24.
32 In all probability the front row seats of the theatre.
Surrounding the Orchestra were the Thrones of the Elders.

The Theatre of Ancient Greece and Rome
An inscription confirms that at the Games of Augustus, when

"the chairs/thrones of the priests are placed in the theatres, the curule chairs of Germanicus Caesar shall be placed among them with oak crowns in memory of his priesthood"...

"and that from the temple described above, the chairs/thrones will be placed in the theaters and, when they are to be removed, they will be replaced in the temple". 

Thrones were thus definitely used in the theatrical performances of the Imperial Cult; these thrones surrounded the throne of the Emperor who was worshipped by the priests.

6.6.3 THE THRONES USED IN THE THEATRES WERE RESERVED FOR ELDERS & DIGNITARIES

Thrones were evidently used in the theatres of Asia Minor and were reserved for the high priests (elders) and high dignitaries of the community. The elders of the community would sit in the seats and worship the enthroned God. They would also evaluate the excellence and skill of the drama as it was performed before them on the orchestra and stage.

The placement of the twenty-four thrones around the central throne of God (in the Revelation of John) can easily be understood when one understands the architecture and use of thrones in the Greek theatre setting. The description of the twenty-four thrones is understandable in light

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Fig. 15

and the thrones (stone chairs) on the orchestra.

The Theatre of Amphiparthenon seating over 3,000 with skene (temple)
of findings regarding the use of thrones in the theatre and the architecture of the theatre. John may be using the familiar imagery of the theatre as he describes the twenty-four thrones which surround the central throne of God.

6.7 THE CHORUS OF ELDERS AND CREATURES

The chorus of elders sing and worship with the chorus of creatures in the Revelation of John. As has already been discussed, the chorus was a familiar sight in Greek drama. The chorus sing antiphonal praise before the throne of God. Choruses of elders and creatures was a familiar sight in Greek drama.

6.7.1 THE CHORUS OF ELDERS

The chorus of elders are actively involved in worshipping the Lamb upon the throne. Aune notes that the "imagery of the twenty-four elders clothed in white with crowns on their heads would suggest, above all, the appropriate ritual apparel for worship to a Greek audience." 36. The chorus of elders occupy their thrones, and fall in worship before him who sits on the throne 37. The elders also lay their crowns before His throne in worship of Him. The chorus of elders also offer wise advice to their audience to worship the Lamb upon the Throne, lest He judge them in his wrath.

6.7.2 THE CHORUS OF CREATURES

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37 Revelation 4:10.
The chorus of creatures are likewise involved in worshipping the Lamb upon the throne. Brewer suggests that the chorus of living creatures may be adequately portrayed as a masked chorus in a Greek drama setting, without undermining the holiness of God:

"the four living creatures are a masked chorus to whose ode the twenty-four elders sing the antiphonal antode."\(^{38}\)

Blevins likewise argues that the chorus of creatures is reminiscent of the Hellenistic theatre. Blevins states that the chorus could represent various animals including birds, snakes, wasps and frogs. He also states that the chorus

"could have donned face masks to represent various beasts or animals presented in the Revelation."\(^{39}\)

Brockett, in his chapter on Greek drama, discusses the role of the chorus of creatures/animals in the drama; he notes that "masks and costumes created the appropriate likeness for the nonhuman choruses."\(^{40}\) Choruses of creatures and animals were a familiar sight in Greek drama.

Choruses could fulfill various roles due to the effective use of the mask: these roles could include birds, eagles, lions, frogs, locusts etc. The use of masks and costumes was most


\(^{39}\)J.L. Blevins *Revelation as Drama*, 19.

effective since greater diversity could be brought into the drama. Masked choruses were used regularly in Greek drama, and these masks enabled the actor to play the role of an eagle, lion etc. The mask could also give the actor a "face like a man" ie. a face that resembled the face of a human (Revelation 4). The chorus of creatures in Revelation would be a familiar sight to viewers of Greek theatre practice/drama.

Laws concludes, after analysing the role of the choruses of elders and creatures in Revelation, that the chorus answering chorus is "strongly evocative of the Hellenistic theatre, of the role of the chorus in drama, commenting and explaining the action...." 42.

6.8 THE SCROLL OF THE LAMB

The opening of the scroll 43 of the Lamb is most significant in the Revelation of John44. As the seven seals are broken, and the scroll is opened, various scenes of action occur. The breaking of the seven seals of the scroll in Revelation has an interesting similarity with the breaking of the seals of the scroll by Theseus in Greek drama. Taplin writes that "attention is drawn to the folded waxed tablets, probably no larger than a pocket-book. Theseus breaks the seal and

41 Revelation 4.
43 "Biblion" or book or even booklet.
44 Revelation 5:2ff.
reads, while the chorus compensates in emotional lyric..." 45.

6.8.1 "I WEPT AND I WEPT"

In the Revelation, John is described as having "wept and wept" since no one was found worthy to break the seals and open the scroll (thus revealing its contents) 46. I often asked the question: why was John's weeping not just simply described as "I wept"...why is John's weeping described in such lengthy terms as "I wept and I wept"?

The reason for John's lengthy description of his weeping may lie in the dynamics of Greek drama. Walcot reminds us that "we must remember the undoubted fact that facial expressions such as weeping, which are certainly not visible on stage, are frequently described in the plays..." 47

"In the Greek theatre it was not the actor playing the role of a tearful character who conveyed to the audience an impression that he was crying; it was another character on the stage or the chorus, who, by remarking that so-and-so was in tears, informed the spectators of the fact. The size of the theatre and the consequent distance from acting area to the furthermost seats, and the semi-circular shape of the theatre with its relatively poor sight-lines restricted the power of the audience to see with precision"; for example

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45 O. Taplin Greek Tragedy in Action (London: Methuen, 1985), 95.

46 Revelation 5:4.

47 P. Walcot Greek Drama in its Theatrical and Social Context (Wales: University of Wales Press, 1976), 45.
"When in the Antigone, Sophocles' Ismene enters the stage in tears, the chorus must tell us that the woman is crying (verse 527)" (otherwise the audience wouldn't know that she was crying).

John may need to give a lengthy and detailed description that he is crying so as to make his audience aware of this fact, since in a Greek theatre context the audience would not be able to see his tears on the distant stage (that is assuming the Revelation were written in the form of a Greek drama).

6.9 THE VISUAL AND AURAL ELEMENTS OF REVELATION

John's Revelation was a visual (sight) and aural (sound) experience for it's audience. The Revelation makes effective use of sights and sounds to communicate it's message. These sights include Christ the Lord God who comes with the clouds (Rev 1:8ff), angels & creatures which fly in midair (Rev 8:13 ff), thunder and lightning and rumblings (Rev 8:5ff), loud trumpet blasts (Rev 8:6ff), locusts which rise up amidst the smoke from the Abyss, people described as weeping and weeping (Rev 5:4ff), and brightly coloured horses and riders (Rev 6:1ff). These sights and sounds are most interesting when one compares the Revelation with the sights and sounds of Greek drama.

The aural and visual aspects of Greek drama include the noises from arms and armour, horses

48P. Walcot Greek Drama in its Theatrical and Social Context, 45.

49Revelation 5:4.
and chariots, shouting warriors and angels, stones thrown from the heavens, the cries of frightened woman and children, hissing snakes, trumpet-blasts, cries of pain, harmonious choral song and music, and dramatic silences. We see an abundance of these in the Revelation.

6.9.1 NOISE

"Music's ugly sister, noise, can be highly emotive" and is used most effectively by John in the Revelation. Taplin notes that dramatic noise can have several forms, and these can be either human or non-human; it can be either described or produced in the theatre (such is the case with thunder, lightning and earthquakes in the Revelation). Noise is especially potent as a source of fear, one of the emotions which the tragedian (the presenter or writer of the Greek drama) wished to exploit and manipulate.

6.9.2 SILENCE

The opposite of noise is of course silence. The use of sound effects, noises and silence were important tools used to convey dramatic intensity and climactic development of the plot in Greek drama. Silence, when used sparingly, was a basic tool for conveying a crisis and suspense in Greek drama. John uses silence very dramatically and effectively as the seventh...

51 O. Taplin, ibid, 55.
52 O. Taplin Greek Tragedy in Action, 102.
and last seal is broken by the Lamb in the Revelation 53.

The dramatic silence is an interval which leads into the next episode or act of the Revelation, according to Caird 54 and Blevins 55.

"The pause with the seventh seal is like the changes of scenes in a drama and indicates that we move from what was written on the seals (the outside of the scroll) to what was written within (the scroll's contents)" 56

The silence introduces a new sequence of scenes 57 and serves as a
"dramatic pause which makes even more impressive the judgement about to fall on the earth. Although a thirty-minute period is a relatively short period, it would form an impressive break in such a rapidly moving drama." 58

The silence is a pause in the action of the Revelation, and "the stillness serves to heighten the suspense of the ...."

53Revelation 8:1ff.


55J.L.Blevins Revelation as Drama, 60.


58F.Rienecker A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Regency, 1980), 830.
"divine drama which is to follow..." 59.

John effectively uses the dramatic silence of Revelation to intensify the crisis in the Revelation, as well as to intensify the suspense as we move from one scene of action to another, with each scene building climactically upon the last.

6.9.3 THUNDER, LIGHTNING AND AN EARTHQUAKE

Thunder, lightning and earthquakes were most certainly physical phenomenon which occurred in Asia Minor in John's day. The question to be asked is: "Were thunder, lightning and earthquakes ever used in Greek drama?". The answer is a most definite: Yes.

There is abundant evidence of machines used to create the effects of thunder, lightning and earthquakes in Greek theatre practice. Even diagrams of certain of these machines exist today. The principal guide in this respect is the historian of the Greek theatre, namely Julius Pollux who notes a number of machines used in the theatre including the "Bronteion" (the thunder machine), and the "Keraunoskopeion" (the lightning machine). According to Pollux,

"The thunder machine is a bag of pebbles backstage being rolled into copper pots" 61.


60or simulations thereof

61Pollux, Onomasticon 4.128.
Walton notes that the "Bronteion was a thunder machine with pebbles poured into urns".\textsuperscript{62}

Swaddling, regarding the sound-effects of the Greek theatre, notes that

"The Greeks, not surprisingly, were very resourceful when it came to creating sound effects. There were, for example, numerous ways to represent \textit{THUNDER}, which could be amplified by the excellent acoustics: pebbles were poured out of a jar into a large bronze vessel, bags were filled with stones and flung onto a metal surface, or lead balls were dropped on a sheet of tightly stretched leather." \textsuperscript{63}

Pollux, mentions the "Keraunoskopeion", or \textit{LIGHTNING MACHINE} amidst other machines used in the theatre.\textsuperscript{64}

Swaddling notes the use of the lightning machine:

"There was an amusing way of providing lighting: a plank, with a flash of lightning painted on a dark background, was shot out of a box into a receptacle below." \textsuperscript{65}

Walton notes that the "keraunoskopeion" was

"a \textit{lightning machine} that may have worked in a number of unlikely ways, one of which involved catapulting a plank with a flash on it very fast into a trough"\textsuperscript{66}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{62}J.M. Walton \textit{Greek Theatre Practice}, 95.
\item \textsuperscript{63}J. Swaddling \textit{The Greek Theatre}, (London: British Museum, 1977), 15.
\item \textsuperscript{64}Pollux, \textit{Onomasticon} 4.128-131.
\item \textsuperscript{65}J. Swaddling \textit{The Greek Theatre}, 15.
\item \textsuperscript{66}J.M. Walton \textit{Greek Theatre Practice}, 95.
\end{itemize}
John mentions the **THUNDER, LIGHTNING AND EARTHQUAKES** at very significant places in the Revelation. The dramatic formula/effect is used at significant points of transition:

- at the end of episode 2 (Revelation 4:1 - 7:17),
- at the end of episode 3 (Revelation 8:1 - 11:19),
- at the end of episode 4 (Revelation 12:1 - 13:18),
- at the end of episode 5 (Revelation 14:1 - 16:20),
- at the end of episode 6 (Revelation 17:1 - 18:24)

John uses the choral interludes to work hand-in-hand with the dramatic transitions as could be created by the use of various theatre machines.

### 6.9.4 SEEING AND HEARING

John makes effective usage of audial and visual techniques to intensify the action in the Revelation. The Revelation was clearly both a visual and an audial experience both for John, who saw the Revelation, and for the audience with whom he communicates.

The voice which commanded John ("in a loud voice like a trumpet"), told him to write what he saw (literally "what you are **SEEING**"). A detailed study of the visual nature of the Revelation reveals that "visual" words, such as, "then I saw..." and "I saw..." are used throughout the Revelation:

1: 6, 1:19

3: 9, 3:19

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67 An episode is an the equivalent of the modern word act.
The Revelation was also an aural (SOUND) experience for the audience. There are repeated references made to “hearing what the Spirit says”, "he who hears", "listening" , "voices" and "sounds" including:

1:10, 15;
2:7, 11, 28;
3:6, 13, 22;
4:1; 5:11; 5:12;
6:1, 6:3, 6:5; 7:10;
8:13; 9:13; 12:10; 13:9;
14:2; 14:6; 14:9; 14:13;
15:3; 16:1; 16:7; 17:1;
18:2; 18:4; 18:16; 18:23;
19:1; 19:5; 19:17 21:5

John clearly abundantly exploits audial and visual techniques in the Revelation. Let us now

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68and sound effects
examine the use of certain (possible) visual techniques in the Revelation.

6.9.5 THE ABYSS

Julius Pollux makes interesting mention of a machine called the "Charonioi Klimakes" (the Charon's steps) and the "Anapiesmata" (the trapdoors), which were machines used in the theatre. The Charon's Ladder was used for revealing ghosts, demons and locusts, which would come up from the Abyss (Hell) to be beheld by the audience.

Maisch comments that

"The Ghosts of the dead rose up by the "Charon's Ladder"; perhaps the subterranean passage from the stage-buildings to the orchestra that has recently been brought to light, eg. in Eretria and Secyon, served for this purpose. There were also machines for making thunder and lightning, and many others".

Walton notes that

"Charon's steps" was used "for ghosts to ascend from Hell into

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69 These machines and others are extensively discussed by Pollux Onomasticon 4.128-131.

70 Ugly demonic-like creatures and Beasts would be able to rise up from the Abyss in full view of the audience.

71 R. Maisch The Manual of Greek Antiquities (London: Temple Primers, 1903), 105; John incidently travelled through Eretria on his journeys.
Locusts/demons & ugly creatures could appear from the tunnel (abyss) in full view on the Orchestra (Rev. 9)

PLAN OF THE THEATRE AT ERETRIA

Note should be taken of the old passageway leading to "Charon's steps" in the centre of the orchestra.

CROSS-SECTION OF THE THEATRE AT ERETRIA

Comparison with Fig. 9 shows clearly the arrangement of the underground passage.
Swaddling observes that

"A useful means of producing a ghostly apparition was an underground passage leading to a trapdoor, enabling the figure to materialize suddenly before the audience: ".....

"It may be referred to on a vase painting depicting Euripides' "Oineus", where a black Fury or demon is rising up beside the altar."

"There must have been various other props and devices used by the ancient dramatist. in Aristophanes' "Frogs", for example, the orchestra is supposed to be a lake full of frogs (the chorus)" .

Swaddling makes interesting observations here: he notes the appearance of demon like creatures which rise up from the Abyss in Greek drama. In a similar manner John describes demon like creatures (resembling locusts) which rise up from the Abyss . Smoke machines were likewise used in Greek drama for the sake of effect; smoke would rise up from the Abyss or trapdoor opening, and produce a fearful effect upon the audience.

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72J.M.Walton Greek Theatre Practice, 95.

73J.Swaddling The Greek Theatre, 15.

The chorus masked as Frogs appear in Aristophanes Greek drama called "Frogs"; surely the Frogs which appear in the Plagues of Revelation 16 would not be a strange sight were the Revelation written as a Greek drama.

74Revelation 9:2-3.

75The machines mentioned by Julius Pollux in Onomasticon 4.128ff include: The "Mechane" or "Geranos" which was a crane for the introduction of birds & angels;
6.9.6 FLYING IN MIDAIR

An eagle appears "FLYING IN MIDAIR" and birds appear "flying in midair" in Revelation of John. Likewise an angel appears flying in midair in the Revelation.

The question to be asked is: Is there any significance in John’s description of eagles/ birds/ angels which appear "flying in midair"? Did birds/ eagles ever appear "flying in midair" in Greek drama?

Yes, interestingly enough there is evidence that creatures did indeed fly in midair in Greek drama. The creatures which appear "flying in midair" in Greek drama are eagles, birds and angels. Pollux, the historian and commentator of the Hellenistic theatre, observes how the "Mechane shows gods and heroes (flying) IN MIDAIR".

Birds which appear FLYING IN MIDAIR in the Greek drama, also appear in the Revelation of John. The conclusion one comes to is that the terminology John uses is identical/ similar

The "Anapiesma" which was a kind of trapdoor for lifting up a river (a river flows from the throne of God in the Revelation 22);
The "Stropheion" which was used for showing saints or heroes translated to heaven, or those who have died in war:
The "Ekkuklema" which was a platform on wheels on which there stands a throne;
The "Bronteion" which was a thunder machine with pebbles which were poured into an urn;
The "Keraunoskopeion" which was the lightning machine.

Revelation 8:13.
Revelation 19:17.
Revelation 14:6.
Julius Pollux Onomasticon 4.128.
John mentions birds feasting on their prey in Revelation 19.

A chorus of birds as it would appear in Greek drama.

A chorus of birds.
Flying in midair

The Greeks had inventive stage machinery used for Angels Flying in midair. Angels & Birds etc. were suspended in midair and were often flown over the Orchestra in full view of the Audience

(Julius Pollux, Onomasticon IV.121-128)

(Angels flying in midair appear in John's Revelation 14:6)

descend from the 'heavens' with the help of a winch . . .

Fig.18
to that used by the historian who describes the action and events occurring in Greek drama.

6.9.7 THE SEVEN HORSES AND RIDERS

Seven "Horses with Riders" appear in Revelation chapter 6; as each seal of the Scroll is broken, so a "Horse with Rider" appears.

The scene John describes is clearly one of warfare and judgement. But the question we need to ask is: Would "Horses with Riders" ever appear in Greek drama? At first observation, the answer would appear to be an obvious no, but closer examination of commentators of Greek drama and analysis of vase painting of choruses, show that choruses of horses with riders did indeed appear in Greek drama.

Barnett, writing on "THE GREEK DRAMA", writes of the traditional choruses of horsemen, horses and birds.

The vase painting of depicting the "Chorus of Horse-Riders" likewise reveal that this was a common feature of Greek drama. The Horses with Riders in the Revelation of John could be convincingly portrayed in the Greek theatre context.

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80 Revelation 6:3 following.

81 L.D. Barnett The Greek Drama (London: JM Dent, 1901), 58. See also Sophocles Antigone line 1025.

as they may have appeared in Revelation 6

Choirs of horse-riders
6.9.8 THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

The opening of the seventh seal of the Scroll introduces the Seven Trumpet blasts in the Revelation. Trumpet blasts were loud blasts often used in warfare in the ancient Hebrew, Greek and Roman world, but is there any evidence of the use of trumpet blasts in Greek drama? Yes, interestingly enough there is:

Trumpets were also used to introduce scenes in Greek drama. The seven trumpet blasts are used in a similar manner to introduce scenes of war in Revelation. In Greek drama the Trumpeter would stand on the edge of the Skene (Stage-building) and blast his trumpet: the blasting of the trumpet would be followed by scenes of action which would often take place on the orchestra level below. Could these Trumpeters in Revelation be introducing fresh scenes of action in a rapidly moving drama? The evidence suggests they may indeed have introduced fresh scenes of action.

CONCLUSION

The influence of Greek dramatic forms on the Revelation reveals interesting findings. The Revelation appears to be influenced by Greek drama. Indeed some even argue, as I do, that the Revelation communicates its prophetic-apocalyptic message through the medium of Greek drama, in a similar way to which the motion-picture "JESUS" communicated the message of the Gospel of Luke through the modern day form of motion-picture.

83 Revelation 8:6 - 9:1 ff.

84 Aeschylus Persians 394 etc.
The Trumpeter

The trumpet was used to introduce scenes in Greek drama. The Revelation 8 - 9 has a clear sequence of scenes which are initiated by the sounding of the seven trumpets.

Fig. 20
FINAL CONCLUSION

The influence of Greek drama (tragedy) on the Revelation of John has been noted by a number of scholars over the years. Some argue that the Revelation is written against the background of an imaginary Greek theatre and that the Revelation itself is a Greek drama, with a clear sequence of acts and scenes, the acts being divided by means of choral interludes.

The structure of the Revelation shows significant similarities with Greek drama (tragedy). The use of choruses by the author is a most compelling argument for the influence of Greek drama on the Revelation of John. Another compelling argument is the dramatic nature of the text, with its climactic development of the plot through the progression of the acts and scenes.

The cathartic effect of the Revelation upon its audience is analogous to the cathartic effect of Greek tragedy (drama). The author of Revelation has as a goal the catharsis (healing) of the believers turbulent emotions. The believers were going through great tribulations. Through the narrative of Revelation, the audience experience healing amidst their great suffering.

The primary goal of the Revelation is to communicate the vision of the Lord Jesus Christ. The author wishes to communicate his heavenly vision accurately with his audience and appears to choose Greek drama to dramatically describe what he saw and heared in his heavenly vision. Greek drama was familiar to the seven cities and would have had the capacity to dramatically enact what he had seen and heared in his vision. The author may have chosen Greek drama to more effectively communicate his prophetic - apocalyptic message of Jesus Christ with his audience of believers.
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