Old Comedy and its Performative Rivals of the Fifth Century

By

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This dissertation analyzes Old Comedy’s generic interaction with its primary performative rivals of the fifth century, tragedy and satyr play. While previous scholarship on this subject is concerned almost exclusively with paratragedy, I examine issues such as Old Comedy’s engagement with satyr play and the frequently unacknowledged evidence for generic interaction in the comic iconography of Attic and South Italian vase-painting. Chapter One analyzes the earliest known intergeneric, comic experiment for which any considerable evidence survives, Cratinus’ fragmentary (and parasatyr) Dionysalexandros. Chapter Two departs briefly from textual evidence and examines the visual record for strategies of intergeneric engagement in the comic iconography of Attic and South Italian vase-painting. Chapter Three signals the beginning of the study’s play-based core and examines the best surviving evidence for cross-generic play in three productions of the Aristophanic corpus. This chapter’s study of Peace (421 BCE) is followed by chapters on Thesmophoriazusae (411 BCE) and Frogs (405 BCE), respectively. My approach, which considers both verbal and visual evidence for comic appropriation, allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the parody of tragedy and satyr play by comic playwrights, whose aggressive adaptation of performative rivals can be seen as central to an ongoing project of defining comedy as an essential polis institution in the latter half of the fifth century.
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Introduction

I. Outline and Departures

Although expressions like ‘intertextuality,’ ‘parody,’ and ‘paratragedy’ each signify distinctive and sophisticated literary phenomena, none of these terms alone adequately captures the diversity, performative dynamism, and aggressive competitive spirit of comic appropriation in fifth-century Old Comedy.¹ Self-conscious, unconstrained, and uncompromising, Old Comedy was the sole poetic form of Athenian drama’s heyday to confront its generic rivals on the single stage shared by all three genres at the festivals of Dionysus. To increase their chances of success, the comic poets borrowed, modified, criticized, and stole from the works of their sister-genres, tragedy and satyr play, with utter impunity. This dissertation comprehensively examines the unique phenomenon of comic appropriation, hitherto studied in only piecemeal fashion, in three phases. The first is a presentation of the extant textual and material evidence for the comic adaptations of tragedy and satyr play. I examine what has traditionally been regarded as its primary evidence, comic texts, as well as the not unsubstantial visual evidence preserved in contemporary vase-painting. This material introduces a second, interpretive phase, which formulates the various strategies of comic appropriation and their dramaturgical function in any given comic plot. Insight about these first two areas will allow proper consideration of the third and central concern of this project: fifth-century intergeneric discourse as a function of Old Comedy’s sophisticated process of self-definition.

While there have been previous studies of individual aspects of this topic, no single analysis confronts the linguistic, performative, institutional, and generic characteristics comprising fifth-century comic appropriation as a dramatized phenomenon. This project

¹ Linda Hutcheon’s general definition of parody as ‘repetition with critical distance’ (1985: 20) is the working definition for ‘comic appropriation’ in this project.
expands the parameters of the topic through departures from traditional scholarship in ways that are both significant and necessary, beginning with genre. The poor survival of much fifth-century drama has confined the study of Old Comedy’s intertextual engagement almost solely to examinations of Aristophanic paratragedy, that is, those cases where Old Comedy depends on its more noble and prestigious counterpart. Aristophanes’ unique obsession with tragedy has exerted such a powerful influence on scholarship of comic intertextuality that significant (albeit limited) evidence for comedy’s engagement with its other dramatic rival, satyr play, has languished in relative obscurity.² The already difficult task of studying ‘parasatyrism,’ the evidence for which is admittedly rarer than that of paratragedy, is made even harder by the loss of virtually the whole of satyr play itself. These facts make the survival of considerable evidence for one non-Aristophanic cross-generic production, Cratinus’ Dionysalexandros, especially fortuitous: not only does this comedy engage satyr play over the course of an entire plot, it also pre-dates the explosion of cross-generic play which seems to accompany the rise of Aristophanes.

The parasatyric Dionysalexandros thus affirms satyr play as a legitimate target of comic experimentation and offers a most appropriate (if unconventional) point of departure for the study of competitive cross-generic play in Old Comedy. In light of the two genres’ significant overlaps in form and content (as opposed to tragedy), it is perhaps not surprising that Old Comedy would look to assert its command over that territory which it most conspicuously shared with its less prestigious rival. Composed in the 430s BCE by Cratinus, the leading comic poet of the generation before Aristophanes, the Dionysalexandros introduces a number of comic

² For all practical purposes, Old Comedy’s engagement with satyr play is referred to as ‘parasatyrism.’ As interest in the subject has grown in the past few years, so have the number of treatments on Old Comedy’s engagement with satyr play. See Bakola (2005) and (2010) 81-117, Storey (2005), and Dobrov (2007).
strategies which will become familiar over the course of this dissertation, beginning with the point of departure for the entire burlesque, the substitution of the comic Dionysus for the Trojan Paris in the myth of the Judgment of the goddesses. Cratinus’ parasatyric program sets out to recast, or ‘comedify,’ some of the central, recognizable elements of satyr play – satyr chorus, aitiology, trickery, marriage, the happy ending – as a means of establishing ownership of that genre. A second strategy of appropriation is revealed by a surviving hypothesis to the play, which suggests that the surface level burlesque only partially concealed a topical subtext at a deeper level: comic Dionysus was actually a doublet for the Athenian statesman Pericles. Cratinus presented the buffoonish, yet consequential, escapades of the god as thinly concealed analogues of the Athenian leader’s political machinations and indiscretions. More than anything else, this politicization of satyr play – a genre distinguished by its primordial, pre-political setting and broad cultural valence – asserts Old Comedy’s prerogative over its less prestigious rival. Chapter One thus ‘sets the stage’ (so to speak) for my overall project by introducing an early, but extremely sophisticated, experiment in comic appropriation and its attendant strategies.

Chapter Two further widens the analytical scope of this study by introducing evidence of a different sort, which is of enormous value for the study of comic appropriation in the late fifth century: the comic iconography of Attic and South Italian vase-painting. The signature-scenes preserved on some of these vases (all datable to roughly 400-350 BCE) offer significant, non-textual evidence for strategies of comic appropriation at varying levels of sophistication. Such strategies parallel and confirm analogous comic strategies in the extant textual evidence. The ‘Würzburg Telephus’ and the ‘Berlin Heracles,’ for example, not only furnish rare evidence for the physical properties of comedy in performance – costumes, props, ugliness – but also reveal basic visual strategies for the communication of cross-generic play, such as the layered and strict
styles of juxtaposition. These commonplace strategies function by comparing and contrasting the different aesthetic norms of the bodies, costumes, and gestures in each competing genre of the fifth century. As paradigmatic illustrations, whose thematic significance recurs throughout the plays to which they are related, the ‘Würzburg Telephus’ and the ‘Berlin Heracles’ also possess a certain diachronic significance which transcends the static illustrations of their ceramic surfaces.

Other comic vases engage the cultural and literary competency of the viewer in more sophisticated ways by modifying signature details of key scenes in larger narratives of traditional myth. Using the token comic strategy of reversing expectations, many of the vases consulted in Chapter Two parody famous episodes from traditional narratives of the Trojan saga, such as Locrian Ajax’s rape of Cassandra or Neoptolemus’ murder of Priam. Other images deploy substitution and displacement as the means of parody, for example, or the reification and personification of abstract concepts, which have clear parallels in the texts of Old Comedy adduced throughout this study. These episodic comic strategies may reveal the presence of more sophisticated experiments in narrative which also parallel extant textual phenomena, such as the counterfactual experimentation of the Dionysalexandros. Certain rare vases even preserve direct evidence of Old Comedy’s face-to-face engagement with tragedy and satyr play in actual performance. The scenes of the ‘Getty Birds,’ ‘Choregoi’ Vase, and the ‘New York Goose Play’ seem to illustrate scenes from actual comedies which boldly foregrounded the genre’s parasitic confrontations with tragedy and satyr play in unique and hitherto unattested ways.

The priceless evidence of these vases in Chapter Two confirms Hutcheon’s observation, in the context of her broad study of adaptation, that ‘the performance mode teaches us that
language is not the only way to express meaning or to create stories. Extant studies of paratragedy have not reaped the benefits of this evidence, as is shown by Rau and Silk’s limited treatment of paratragedy as chiefly a linguistic phenomenon. While texts may remain the best form of direct evidence for comic appropriation, they can no longer be regarded as our lone source of information for the mechanics of cross-generic play. By themselves, they offer only a one-sided, if not incomplete, impression of Old Comedy’s aggressive adaptation of other poetic forms. As potential illustrations of dramatic production, red-figure pots provide undeniable evidence that the performative, visual dimension of paratragedy was central to its effect and success, as Chapter Two will explain. Although most of the evidence presented there shows credible links with dramatic performance, a theatrical pedigree is not strictly necessary for the iconography of any given vase to offer rare and valuable insights about comic strategies at the episodic, narrative, and institutional levels of fifth-century Old Comedy in performance. Such strategies corroborate, and in some cases even advance, our limited conception of intergeneric competition in the rather one-dimensional textual evidence. Theatre semiotics and performance theory can help one extract from red-figure pots the full benefits of the visual, physical, and performative dimensions which were essential to the theatrical medium of production.

With this basic grasp of the textual and visual evidence for comic appropriation in Chapters One and Two, the reader is better equipped to approach the best stock of surviving evidence, which is presented in the play-based core of this study. The first two chapters thus segue into the Aristophanic material, where the main (but by no means the sole) focus is Old Comedy’s appropriation of tragedy, the brand of cross-generic play for which the most evidence survives. Despite the odd exception like Cratinus’ Eumenides, which seems to have been a full-

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scale parody of Aeschylus’ entire production,\textsuperscript{5} the surviving evidence suggests that Aristophanes was the first comic poet whose work was especially distinguished for its consistent engagement with tragedy.\textsuperscript{6} Where the first two chapters expanded the traditional analytical parameters of comic parody with the introduction of additional content and evidence, the focus of the final three chapters is the overall application of these new dimensions, particularly those of the performative type, to the most complete store of extant textual evidence for intergeneric competition. Multiple levels of intergeneric appropriation are visible in each featured Aristophanic comedy, from linguistic register, to physical performance, to broader institutional contexts of engagement. Such institutions provide frames as small as the traditional marriage ceremony or sacrifice and as large as the full-on ritual contexts of the Thesmophoria and Eleusinian Mysteries. Each Aristophanic play also embeds its major paratragic and parasatyric vignettes in a broader cultural/literary frame of some kind, whether that be the Hesiodic tradition of panhellenic culture which informs \textit{Peace} or the all-female Thesmophoria whose rites were linked to the \textit{anodos} pattern of the myth of the fertility goddesses, Demeter and Persephone.

In \textit{Peace} (421 BCE), comic appropriation is central to the self-conscious metatheatricality of the heroic Trygaeus’ comic project, which resembles nothing so much as an intertextual odyssey. Trygaeus represents a unique kind of comic hero insofar as he effects his aims not through politics or rhetoric but through diverse poetic performances.\textsuperscript{7} My discussion treats each of \textit{Peace}’s three central phases of generic appropriation – Trygaeus’ flight to

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{5} Bakola (2010) 174-7. \\
\textsuperscript{6} Silk (2000) 31, Revermann (2006) 71, 101-6, Foley (2008) 20. While he may not have been the first comic poet to employ paratragedy (see Willi [2008] 166-7 on the Sicilian comic poet Epicharmos’ parody of Aeschylus, and Bakola [2010] 118-79 and Miles [2009] on paratragedy in Cratinus and Strattis, respectively), he seems to have been the first to make it his stylistic hallmark. Even other comic poets recognized that the exploitation of Euripidean tragedy was a signature theme of Aristophanes’ brand (Cf. Cratinus fr. 342 and even Aristophanes fr. 488, where the poet seems to be responding to this claim by others.). \\
\textsuperscript{7} Hall (2006) 336.}
Olympus, the raising of ‘Peace,’ and the extended sequence of ritual renewal and closure in the play’s second half. The opening parody of Euripides’ *Bellerophon*, the most detailed and sustained parody of the play, furnishes an instructive example of the compression, displacement, and inversion, which is especially representative of Aristophanic-style appropriation. It also initiates the unifying theme of *Peace*, the conversion of poetic narratives of failure into generic comic success. The substitution of the dung beetle – the primary means of the comic hero’s triumph – for Pegasus, who was famously the cause of the tragic hero’s downfall in the Euripidean model, exemplifies the Aristophanic strategy of investing tragic props and conceits with new, different, and positive meanings. *Tragedy* (see below), a subgenre which first appears in *Acharnians*, is the driving poetic principle of Trygaeus’ renewal of the social, political, and poetic spheres of Athens, and is later conceptually developed at length in *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Frogs*. The hero’s rescue of the goddess and subsequent renewal of the fundamental panhellenic institutions of civilized culture are framed by a parody of the traditional Hesiodic narrative of the creation of Pandora and its attendant consequences. The main difference of the Aristophanic narrative, of course, is that the rescue of the earth goddess Peace does not hasten decline, but reverses it. By restoring the fundamental institutions of civilized Greek life – agriculture, sacrifice, and marriage – Trygaeus returns Greece to a Golden Age. Moreover, *Peace*’s positive depictions of sacrifice and marriage are emblematic of Old Comedy’s exploitation of civic institutions to challenge tragedy’s cultural supremacy. *Peace* thus presents more than an introduction to the fundamentals of Aristophanic intertextuality: it offers a glimpse of Old Comedy’s superiority complex, which is manifest in its claim to influence day-to-day life in the polis where other genres cannot.
The sophisticated and notorious paratragic sequences of *Thesmophoriazusae* of 411 BCE are embedded within a full-blown comic experiment – set in the alternate world of the Thesmophoria – on the potentially pernicious effects of tragedy. The culprit is tragedy’s most notorious practitioner and Aristophanes’ favorite target, Euripides, whose depictions of femininity have provoked the women of Athens to conspire against him. The focus of this chapter will be the paratragic vignettes inspired by Euripides’ *Palamedes*, *Helen*, and *Andromeda*, as well as (and perhaps more importantly) the innovative poetic conceit which frames them, the comic biography. In an interesting literary development which attests to the rapid evolution of poetic concepts and the fertile exchange of ideas which defined the comic marketplace of the fifth century, Aristophanes’ play of 411 appears to redeploy a variation of the strategy which his older rival, Cratinus, had staged in his *Pytine* over ten years earlier. *Thesmophoriazusae* dramatizes the metatheatrical travails of an actual Athenian citizen and his sidekick through a comic plot derived from the trendy, unconventional plot-type – the escape-tragedy – which he had himself recently popularized with his tragedies *Iphigenia among the Taurians* and *Helen*. However, in the comic world of Aristophanes the barbarian lands of tragic productions are replaced by the uniquely topical all-female Thesmophoria festival, which Aristophanes presents as a radical and threatening gynecocracy operating within the boundaries of the polis. In terms of intergeneric discourse, Aristophanes’ playful, sophisticated mockery of his tragic counterpart, Euripides, using the very material of the tragedian’s plays, affirms Old Comedy’s unique poetic potency by highlighting its nearly unlimited capacity to recast the material of its rivals. An important connotation of the poetic project of *Thesmophoriazusae* is that Old Comedy can appropriate not only the material of the tragic genre, but also the tragedian himself, to meet its generic aims.
The final chapter of the dissertation treats the culmination of the extant Aristophanic cross-generic project and of Old Comedy’s ongoing effort to define itself against tragedy in particular, the *agon* between Aeschylus and Euripides in *Frogs* (405 BCE). The literary intertexts of the play are the most considerable of any in the extant Aristophanic corpus and the *agon*’s critical exegesis of tragedy anticipates much of the developed literary theory found in later thinkers like Plato, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Longinus.\(^8\) The popular cultural tradition of the *Certamen*, the so-called ‘Contest of Homer and Hesiod,’ frames a handful of innovative paratragic vignettes which inform Old Comedy’s contentious battle between the two leading poets of the bygone golden era of Greek tragedy. As is frequently the case in this analysis of comic appropriation, the evidence suggests that Aristophanes’ contest can also be seen as a reaction to an earlier literary contest staged by one of his primary comic rivals, Cratinus. The dynamic interplay between success and failure in comic appropriation reaches its zenith in *Frogs*, which repeatedly underscores the ‘badness’ of each tragedian throughout its cutting analysis of the idiosyncrasies of their respective styles. The play’s singular comic strategy, the most direct and lucid presentation of Old Comedy’s superiority complex, is enacted by exploiting a very particular ritual subtext, that of the Eleusinian Mysteries. As the internal audience of the poetry contest, the chorus of Eleusinian initiates raises the profile of the critical interrogation and resurrection of tragedy by invoking the authority of their sacred cult. But Aristophanes ultimately invokes the Mysteries in order to present them as something of a spiritual analogue to the public institution of Old Comedy, which, like the cult, is both elite in its critical perspective and democratic in its broad appeal. The most important parallel between the institutions of Eleusis and Old Comedy is, however, their shared promise of a blessed afterlife:

\(^8\) See especially Hunter (2009) 10-52 and Halliwell (Forthcoming).
just as the Mysteries promised renewal of the individual, so does Old Comedy enact the preservation and continuation of tragedy and, by extension, Athens herself.

II. Comic Parasitology
A. Levels

All material examined in this dissertation seeks comic success in performance by adapting material from beyond the comic genre, a genre which is inherently parasitic. Each of the following chapters forms a distinct episode in the late fifth-century ‘drama’ which is Old Comedy’s quest to aggrandize itself constantly at the expense of its performative rivals. The comic poets corrupted, reshaped, and outright stole material from tragedy and satyr play for a variety of reasons, the most fundamental of which is the renewal of comedy itself: by adopting the motifs, themes, and plots of their poetic rivals, the comic poets found a never-ending source of fresh material. The featured plays of this dissertation demonstrate, however, that this constant, parasitic drive to appropriate its rivals was also the means by which it asserted its case to poetic superiority and attempted to shape its own distinctive identity in the Athenian literary world. In the Dionysalexandros, Old Comedy essentially takes ownership of satyr play by comedifying its generic hallmarks and injecting comedy’s own distinctive topicality into its modest rival’s mythological, apolitical world. The conversion of tragedy and satyr play’s generic failure into comic success in Peace extols Old Comedy’s potential to make a positive impact, in social and political terms, on Athens and the rest of Greece. By performing their impotency in a comic context, for the amusement of a comic audience, the comic experiment of Thesmophoriazusae proves that it needs Euripidean poetics in order to undermine them. Old Comedy’s final case for poetic superiority in the extant record, Frogs, takes the question of
tragedy’s social and political value as its subject. In claiming for itself the supreme status of both adjudicator and deliverer of the tragic genre (i.e., Dionysus), Old Comedy affirms its sheer dependence on the existence and continuation of the vibrant and dynamic performance tradition of Athenian tragedy.

The depth and scope of such comic adaptation exists on a sliding scale: appropriation can be small-scale, large-scale, or somewhere in-between. Small-scale usually entails something like a momentary shift in linguistic expression, as when a character breaks into a completely foreign generic register which is inappropriate to the framing comic text. An example is *Knights* 1194, when the Sausage-Seller suddenly evokes tragedy in a moment of despair with a dramatic, emotional apostrophe during his *agon* with Paphlagon.\(^9\) If this paratragic bit is extended over several lines, and accentuated with a paralinguistic marker (e.g., pitch) or gesture, the result is something like the memorable parody of Euripidean lyric by the comic Aeschylus in *Frogs* (1329-63). The effect of this appropriation is incongruity, or collision (to use Silk’s term), between any one of several pairs of elements: comic expression and emotional tone/gesture, absurd gesture and serious expression, or emotional tone/gesture and absurd context, etc.

Macro-level appropriation borrows on a much larger scale and usually affects the structure of a play, as in the plots of *Dionysalexandros* and *Thesmophoriazusae*. Appropriation of this scope and style is the focus of Hutcheon’s study on parody, which is described as ‘an integrated structural modeling process of revising, replaying, inverting, and “trans-contextualizing” previous works of art.’ \(^{10}\) The satyr play frame of *Dionysalexandros* is signaled by the constant presence of its unique chorus, but also by its repeated evocation and performance of the genre’s motifs, themes, and structure. Although the biographical conceit of the

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\(^9\) This passage is discussed by Silk (1993) 480-1.

\(^{10}\) Hutcheon (1985) 11.
The Thesmophoriazusae is thoroughly comic, as was discussed above, its content is drawn from a subfield of Euripidean tragedy. The resulting overall feel of the production is that of a comedy distinctly and self-consciously engaged with tragedy.

A third type of comic appropriation is normally sustained for about the length of an episode, somewhere between micro-level and macro-level, and involves extended intertextual borrowings in linguistic and performative terms. The Thesmophoriazusae’s failed recognition-scene between ‘Menelaus’ and ‘Helen,’ performed by Euripides and Inlaw (855-919), incorporates the text and (as far as one can tell) the staging and proxemics of the Euripidean model. Yet such mid-level appropriations, in order to achieve a desired tone, may adopt aspects of a certain genre without actually evoking its specific formal structures.11 This strategic deployment of modes – conventions from other poetic forms (e.g., in language, action, thought) – at critical moments allows Old Comedy to manipulate the mood of a specific scene or episode so that it temporarily transcends the comic present. One such vivid and effective generic ‘modality’ colors the notoriously unconventional closure of Clouds and the violent destruction of the phrontisterion. By exploiting hints placed carefully throughout the play and by momentarily elevating the language, action, and overall tone of Strepsiades’ exchange with the Cloud chorus before the outbreak of violence, Aristophanes’ closure rises above the pure banality of comic slapstick. Because it ‘invokes patterns of rationalization which are commonly articulated or implied by tragedy in its presentation or analysis of human behavior,’ Strepsiades’ personal vendetta becomes an act of divine retribution against offenders of traditional religion.12 The tragic texture of the deception of the comic hero – victimized by himself, Socrates, and the clouds themselves – lends a certain generic tragic logic to the play’s culminating violent revenge.

11 I here follow the definition of ‘modality’ observed by Frow (2006) 65.
of this ‘tragic-comic’ figure. The comedy of Clouds’ closure is thereby qualified by a distinctly tragic mode, producing something like a ‘tragic-comedy.’

Chapter Three’s analysis of Peace examines a similar modality present in that play’s raising of the goddess Peace. The assimilation of the panhellene choreutai – struggling to free the goddess – to a disorganized satyr rabble in action and expression conveys a fundamental assumption of Peace’s comic dilemma with greater immediacy than dialogue or monologue ever could: more than anything else, it is divisive partisanship and incompetence by the Greek states that has prolonged the unnecessary suffering of the Peloponnesian War. This parasatyric modality, the identification of the chorus with satyrs, is also the conceptual basis for the second half of the play, where Greeks (like satyrs) return to their beloved former pursuits in a celebration of panhellenism. For satyrs, this former life was about wine, women, and song, but for the panhellenes, it is about agriculture, celebration (e.g., marriage), and sacrificial feasting.

The most accessible form of comic appropriation is a paratragic subcategory of the aforementioned mid-level sort, ‘trugedy.’ At moments of crisis, Aristophanic heroes sometimes invoke a tragic hero (often explicitly, but sometimes implicitly) as a potent springboard for their comic projects. The remarks of the two most prominent exponents of this paratragedy, Dicaeopolis (Cf. Ach. 499, 628, and 886) and Trygaeus, indicate that this subgenre is a socially responsible form of paratragedy which seeks ‘to inculcate moral lessons.’ By appropriating the identity of a tragic hero, the paratragic hero increases his own agency and raises the generic profile of his project: Dicaeopolis exploits the political currency of tragic discourse to justify his political agency in Acharnians while Trygaeus exploits the quasi-divine

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13 The term ‘Trugedy’ is borrowed from Taplin (1983) and refers to ‘τρυγῳδία,’ a pun which appears (from its usage in ten citations collected by Taplin) to designate a serious form of comedy concerned with justice in social and political terms.

status of tragic heroism to reshape the cosmic order for the benefit of all Greeks. Brief comparison of trugedy with tragedy’s style of allusion can illuminate the mechanics and function of trugedy as cross-generic play. The following remarks take as an example the first Aristophanic hero of paratragedy, Dicaeopolis in Acharnians.

Where tragic allusion tends to be subtle and thematically focused, allusion in Old Comedy is explicitly acknowledged, verbally and visually marked, and dramaturgically motivated. Dicaeopolis announces his plan to play the role of Euripides’ Telephus only moments before he literally becomes him by means of an on-stage transformation. The comic hero sets about his task by the most obvious route imaginable, a direct appeal to the man who created and immortalized Telephus on the Athenian stage (438 BCE), Euripides. After acquiring the ‘rags’ (Ach. 432) and felt cap (445) which were key to Telephus’ notoriously reduced status, Dicaeopolis asks for a walking stick (448), a basket burned by a lamp (453), a cup with a broken lip (459), a pot (463), and lettuce leaves (469) to complete the beggar-king’s costume. Only after appropriating the physical properties of Telephus’ role does Dicaeopolis acquire his superior rhesis (446). This is a textbook illustration of why comic heroes revel in the materiality of costumes and props: they not only reflect status in generic, social, and philosophical terms, but also confer it. The ascension to paratragic (or trugedic) status increases Dicaeopolis’ comic agency and affirms the generically transformative power of Euripidean drama, if wielded correctly, in the political context of Athens. Through the vehicle of Telephus’ tragic persona, Dicaeopolis himself becomes recognizable while his arguments become intelligible to the internal audience of Acharnians.

15 See Davies (1998) for the most recent treatment (with further bibliography) of the most famous ‘parody,’ or allusion, in extant Greek tragedy, the recognition scene in Euripides’ Electra.

Dicaeopolis’ prudent choice of Mysian Telephus, a hero who employed his considerable rhetorical ability in a similar dilemma, allows him to harness the discursive authority of that hero’s just and righteous cause. By identifying his decision to act for the sake of his own (essentially selfish) interests with the popular conception of Telephus’ defense of himself and his people, who were compelled to act for self-preservation, Dicaeopolis secures a favorable outcome for his speech. Just as Telephus’ hybrid status (half Greek and half barbarian) facilitated his success, Dicaeopolis’ generic hybridity allows him to apply the political and cultural capital of noble tragedy in the political realm of the comic genre.

After his success, however, Dicaeopolis ultimately abandons this tragic persona for the second half of *Acharnians*, whose plot takes an unexpected turn into the hero’s display of self-absorbed hedonism. This fact reinforces a second axiom of trugedic heroism, namely that it is not subject to the ‘narrative inevitability’ of its tragic models, which frequently happens with tragic heroes who evoke ‘parallel narratives’ from the metatext of Greek myth. In tragedy, the experiences of one character are sometimes prefigured by the experiences of another from myth or literature. This reinforces the narrative inevitability of the alluding figure’s fate. Instead of locking a character into a certain pattern of behavior or fate, trugedic allusion allows fate itself to be revised or overcome. Comic heroes not only depart from the narrative trajectory of their models, they revise and even contradict them. The most extreme version of this is Trygaeus’ imitation of Euripides’ *Bellerophon* in *Peace*: Bellerophon’s hubristic ascension to Olympus is transformed from an atheistic challenge – for which the hero is ultimately punished in tragedy –

18 Telephus’ Greek ethnicity (probably) won him access to the Achaean assembly, where he could apply his innate Greek cleverness.
19 Burian (1997) 193-5. Another form of intertextuality includes the much-discussed intertextual references to Aeschylean dramaturgy by Euripides. Rather than see them as polemical parodies, it is more reasonable to understand such references to Aeschylean tragedy as self-conscious acknowledgements of available narrative options and an ‘assertive response to the burden of tragic precedents’ (Burian [1997] 196).
to a bold and heroic attempt to transcend the limits of mortality and effect a positive outcome for Greece.

As a form of comic appropriation, trugedy generally serves the dramaturgical interests of the plot by acting as a springboard for the comic project before fading into the background after success has been achieved. Tragic allusion, by contrast, tends to emphasize or deepen the existing themes of the foreground text. The impromptu or occasional use of these tragic intertexts by Aristophanic heroes is doubtless connected to the notional anonymity which they enjoy as ‘citizens in disguise.’ Just as the physical ugliness of the comic costume allows heroes to depart from established norms of civic behavior, so does the trugedic persona furnish a means of transcending the laws of the polis and the natural world according to the comic imagination.

B. Recognition

Formal categorization accounts for roughly half of this study’s theoretical perspective on comic appropriation. The other half concerns the pragmatics of performance, that is, the reception of appropriation (or lack thereof) by its audience and the poetic (dramaturgical/literary) significance of the adaptation to the framing text. Since my previous remarks previewed the poetic and dramaturgical significance of appropriation in each featured text of this study, it now remains to address what is perhaps the most significant unknown in all forms of parody, the audience, whose participation is essential for the success of adaptation. The inherent danger of paratragic or parasytryic allusion, as of intertextual play of any kind, is that its intended audience will fail to decode allusive markers, remain ignorant of the intertext, and ultimately interpret it as

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21 The term ‘pragmatic’ is adopted from Hutcheon (1985) 22.
any other (non-allusive) text. This fundamental law of appropriation and adaptation emphasizes the extent to which performance audiences are more than just passive recipients but are really ‘active co-creators’ of meaning who are assumed to possess the requisite linguistic, generic, and ideological competence to ‘decode’ the adaptation which is presented to them.\(^{22}\)

Where written texts are concerned, audience competence (i.e., reader competence) can thus be a significant barrier to the success of any literary parody or allusion. Performance genres like Greek tragedy and comedy enjoy a distinct advantage over the allusive parodies and appropriations of the one-dimensional text for two primary reasons. Drama’s multiple communicative channels, which create meaning by both verbal and visual means, make its performance more accessible to a greater percentage of an audience: spectators with little or no literary background, for example, can still expect to follow (and enjoy) a tragic plot by decoding spoken language and physical signals such as gesture and movement, or paralinguistic signals like pitch and tone. The second advantage Greek drama enjoys over other literary media is that its fifth-century audience possessed an unusually strong sense of genre: through habituation, Greeks learned that tragedy, satyr play, and Old Comedy were strictly demarcated from one another by clear distinctions in language, appearance, content, and style. These factors create a context of performance in which a large part of any given audience is capable of recognizing and appreciating cross-generic play at some level: most spectators have the know-how to differentiate dramatic genres by a diversity of verbal and visual signals, to at least some degree.\(^{23}\)

The high-competence audience members of *Acharnians* in 425, for example, would doubtless have recognized not just Euripides’ *Telephus* as the model of Dicaeopolis’ famous speech, but perhaps even some echoes of the Euripidean beggar-king’s original speech in

\(^{22}\) Hutcheon (1985) 93.

\(^{23}\) Revermann (2006a).
Dicaeopolis’ comic rendition. The most poetically competent members, in other words, would grasp the defamiliarizing effect of paratragedy and the dramaturgical alterations of comedification, e.g., the compression, inversion, and substitution of literary models. Such spectators would almost certainly have been current with the styles, rivalries, and even some points of literary dispute which were currently raging in Athenian performance culture. However, for adaptations to be successful in their own right, Hutcheon explains, they must succeed ‘for both knowing and unknowing audiences.’ Because Old Comedy was mass entertainment, it could not have commanded audiences wholly made up of spectators of the highest poetic competence. Although it can be assumed that most members of an audience of Old Comedy saw their share of tragedy and comedy, it is simply unrealistic to imagine that every single spectator could recognize cross-generic play in performance, let alone the nuances of sophisticated comedification. Slightly less competent spectators would probably have relied a great deal more on the visual markers of Dicaeopolis’ performance, the celebrated tragic costume elements, gestures, tones, movements, pitch, etc., to recognize the generic intrusion of a separate text into the comic foreground. Such collision of registers in both visual and verbal terms is one of the chief differences between adaptation in Old Comedy and in other genres. Whether the appropriation is of epic by tragedy, of lyric by tragedy, or of tragedy by tragedy, in each case the overall consistency in (elevated) poetic register shared by these poetic forms allows for a rather seamless or imperceptible shift between texts. By contrast, Dicaeopolis’ sudden shift from the low linguistic register of comedy to the heroic diction, lofty expression, and distinctive meter of Euripides’ *Telephus* is substantial enough for the sensitive Greek ear to pick it up immediately in performance.

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III. Old Comedy as Competitive Poetic Organism

Scholars are only now beginning to understand the various frames of competition and rivalry which powered the highly agonistic context of the fifth-century dramatic festivals. Performances of Old Comedy pitted choregos against choregos, chorus against chorus, and poet against poet, in addition to hero against oppressors.\(^{25}\) However, Western culture’s idealized view of the fifth-century origins of Greek drama has largely caused it to overlook the fact that tragedy, satyr play, and Old Comedy were essentially forms of mass entertainment. Success and audience approval were therefore the driving forces of poetic production and innovation. Public prestige and professional survival were the primary factors which dictated the process of poetic composition and the development of ideas. Poets chose from pools of theatrical options which were themselves subject to change over time due to the pressures of selection and competition. The appropriation of tragedy and satyr play by comedy is (of course) symptomatic of this pressure to innovate, as is Old Comedy’s inherent and reflexively competitive attitude towards all other poetic forms. This ‘biological’ explanation for Old Comedy’s competitive drive must be given priority over more traditional motivations often ascribed (for example) to Aristophanic paratragedy, that it represents a defensive reaction to tragedy’s gradual encroachment upon comic territory. Zeitlin, for example, argues that the paratragic performances of *Thesmophoriazusae* must be seen as retaliation for Euripidean transgressions against social (and aesthetic) norms in his plays of 412 BCE, *Helen* and *Andromeda*.\(^{26}\) While it may be true that


\(^{26}\) Zeitlin (1996) 398; see also Taefe (1993) 98 and Bowie (1993) 219-20 (speaking in the context of the paratragedy of *Th*.). Gibert (1999-2000) 89-90 is closer to the mark when he explains that it is a mistake to see Aristophanes as a defender of generic territory. He goes on to argue that it is more accurate to describe Aristophanic paratragedy as part of a competition over territory that was new to both genres.
comedy sometimes confronts tragedy at particular moments to assert its exclusive rights over certain literary material, as I will discuss below, Zeitlin’s explanation does not acknowledge the underlying socio-cultural factors which compelled comic poets to assume such a competitive stance towards other dramatists. Still less convincing are attempts to ascribe similar reactions to Aristophanic comedy from the opposite direction, i.e., from tragedy. Helene Foley, for example, has argued that intergeneric competition was not one-sided and that Aristophanes’ influence can actually be seen at work in tragedy, in Euripides’ special use of comic self-consciousness and distancing.27

True to the spirit of Old Comedy, this study regards the genre as a personified entity with its own unique set of organic characteristics, tendencies, drives, and positions on public matters, both aesthetic and political. Each chapter will furnish evidence for the genre’s overall genetic profile, its drive to engage other genres and appropriate them, its competitive gene. The practical benefits of parody, which gave comic poets the opportunity to expand the intellectual and thematic range of their material, should never be underestimated as a primary motivation for appropriating other genres.28 Yet parody is an intrinsically competitive poetic exercise,29 and this fact obliges one to recognize comic appropriation as Old Comedy’s primary means of constructing its own public identity, against those of tragedy and satyr play, as an essential institution of Athenian life.

This explanation best accounts for Old Comedy’s particular penchant for engaging tragedy, the genre of the highest prestige in the fifth century, which is best conceived as aspirational in its aims. From its earliest appearance in Acharnians of 425 BCE, Aristophanic

27 Foley (2008) 28-33 cites, as (somewhat counter-intuitive) evidence of this reaction to comedy by tragedy, Euripides’ continued use of ragged heroes in the period following the parody of Acharnians.
29 Hutcheon (1985) 97.
paratragedy is preoccupied with making a case for Old Comedy’s poetic potency, for showing what it can do, sometimes by highlighting its own virtues, sometimes by underscoring the limitations or shortcomings of tragedy. The Telephus parody of *Acharnians*, for instance, celebrates Old Comedy’s capacity for effectively applying tragedy’s political capital which tragedy itself cannot spend. Dicaeopolis converts tragic discourse into something concrete which can then positively affect the city. Despite its Athenocentrism, paratragedy’s politically detached and historically removed mythological setting ultimately precludes it from ever applying its knowledge directly for the benefit of the polis in the same way that comedy can.

One way that Aristophanes frequently showcases Old Comedy’s boundless generic freedom is through the ‘re-mediation’ of tragic material, that is, the translation of material from one sign system (words) to another (acts/images). This is accomplished, for example, when comedy personifies tragedy’s abstract poetic conceits (e.g., Echo in *Thesmophoriazusae* [see Chapter Four]) or performs things which can only be narrated in tragedy due to its particular strictures of decorum. Examples of this are numerous in the extant corpus, but pride of place should be given to the actual flight of Bellerophon (in Euripides’ *Bellerophon*), which is performed by Trygæus in *Peace* (Chapter Three), and Omphale’s attempt to send word to her father from the Greek camp at Troy by tossing oars with messages into the sea (in Euripides’ *Palamedes*), which is performed by Inlaw in *Thesmophoriazusae* (Chapter Four).

Chapter Four, on *Thesmophoriazusae*, will show that Old Comedy can actually create all of its material from Euripidean tragedy, which is recast and integrated into the comic plot to serve a different generic aim, producing laughter. This particular conversion of tragic fiction into a pseudo-biographical treatment of Euripides’ personal trials and tribulations exemplifies a

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30 Hall (1997) 100ff.
form of adaptation described by Hutcheon as the ‘ontological shift,’ which describes the conversion of material from one mode to another (i.e., from the historical to the fictive).\(^{32}\) As will be frequently demonstrated in the following chapters, Old Comedy is constantly converting the failures of other genres into its own success, especially in *Peace*, where the failures of the Euripidean Bellerophon and the satyrs are directly invoked as vehicles for realizing the success of the hero and the panhellenic chorus, respectively. The play’s second half similarly renews the polis through the successful performance of the cultural institutions of sacrifice and marriage, which once again symbolize social and political cohesion in contrast to their culturally dominant depictions in tragedy as perverted and destructive.

Finally, Old Comedy makes a claim to being the only genre capable of critiquing, and preserving, its prestigious rival. Chapter Four’s analysis of *Thesmophoriazusae*, which is in many ways Old Comedy’s most sophisticated extant engagement with tragedy, is a comic dramatization of the social and political consequences of Euripidean style. The thorough exegesis and cross-examination of tragedy which appears six years later in the *agon* of *Frogs* (405 BCE), the subject of Chapter Five, signals a significant evolution by comedy in its attitude toward itself in this respect. The genre’s original claim to equal status with tragedy in *Acharnians* evolves into an indirect, yet sweeping claim to outright superiority: in the figure of the comic Dionysus, Old Comedy projects itself not only as the ultimate aesthetic adjudicator of tragedy’s value but also as its savior. The resurrection of Aeschylus is tantamount to declaring that only comedy can sustain and resurrect its tragic counterpart for the salvation of the city.

The limitations of the evidence make it much harder to grasp Old Comedy’s overall impression of its other rival, satyr play, but it may have differed substantially from its view of

tragedy. It is perhaps possible to find some hints of Old Comedy’s attitude from the rather generic treatment satyr play receives in Dionysalexandros and Peace, where it is (for the most part) a vehicle for the expression of political topics. The political concerns of contemporary Athens figure in comedy and tragedy (albeit much less often in the latter), but do not, as a rule, have any part in satyr play, as far as the evidence allows one to judge. Does Old Comedy’s specific appropriation of satyr play as a means of expressing its political subtexts implicitly reveal any hints about comedy’s attitude? Could satyr play’s apolitical character have somehow been perceived as proof of its irrelevance by a comic genre which traditionally promoted itself as the steward of the public good? As a genre of trivial, inconsequential burlesque which could make no obvious contribution to the social, political, or aesthetic health of the polis, is it possible that satyr play was even deemed beneath the special contempt of Old Comedy? Because satyr plays and tragedies were composed by the same poets, it would not be inconceivable that Old Comedy viewed the fourth play of the tetralogy as a throwaway production, a trivial dalliance in comedy by amateurs who did not (or could not) truly commit themselves to the comic art.

The extant evidence of paratragedy furnishes a glimpse of what would appear to be a corollary of Old Comedy’s endless search for status through engagement with tragedy, its attempt to influence the trajectory of literary forms. The latter half of the fifth century is often described as a period of negotiation and exploration for the three dramatic genres, whose poetic profiles were relatively fluid and responsive to each other’s movements. This is perhaps most aptly expressed in Mastronarde’s description of genre in the period as something akin to a ‘slowly moving target,’ or work in progress, a view which informs the author’s understanding of Euripidean style.33 Instead of subscribing to the traditional view that the poet Euripides

abandoned the poetic ideal and thus hastened the demise of tragedy, Mastronarde regards Euripides as an artist who best exploited the diverse range of stylistic possibilities afforded to poets working in a vibrant and fertile Greek poetic tradition. Nevertheless, the broad, diverse scope of variety available to fifth-century poets would seem to have prevented any one genre from being able to assert exclusive ownership over every poetic unit of form and content which it had previously deployed. It is reasonable to expect that the most marginal poetic units – which neither tragedy nor comedy (for one reason or another) had been able to appropriate fully as their own and which, as a result, would persist on the border between genres – would be the loci of greatest intergeneric dispute. The gist of my meaning is perhaps illustrated by Conte’s observation that genre determines not only the place of certain written works within a literary system but also of those works which can still be written, a place of expectation.34

The comic poets are particularly attuned to the inherent vulnerability (and potential) of such marginal (and even mainstream) units to comic appropriation, and even how they might furnish the means for Old Comedy to direct and influence tragedy’s own development over time. At the moment when a motif or theme becomes identified with the comic – door-knocking (to use a notorious example) – it ceases to be a viable option for tragic performance. By vigorously contesting the gaps between itself and tragedy (in particular) through appropriation, Old Comedy can shrink the range of tragedy’s poetic possibilities in form and content. Therefore, the inability of other fifth-century genres to retaliate and assert their own prerogative over poetic material allows Old Comedy to exert with impunity some (albeit indirect) measure of control over the development of drama as a whole.

34 Conte (1992) 111.
In sum, the evolution of paratragedy, at least, reveals Old Comedy’s growing superiority complex: it not only puts tragedy to real, practical use, it also claims to be the public mechanism which ensures its appreciation and survival. Aristophanic paratragedy in particular gradually makes a case for Old Comedy’s fundamental value to the polis. It has been said that tragedy inflects myth through a complex of narrative forms that can address contemporary cultural issues. I hope to show, in a similar fashion, that Old Comedy could be said to inflect tragedy and satyr play through its own unique generic or intellectual nexus in order to address its own particular concerns and interests.

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Chapter 1: Parasitic Parasatyrism in Cratinus’ *Dionysalexandros*

Introduction

The publication of a papyrus in 1904 revealed what is, to this day, arguably the most important evidence for non-Aristophanic comedy of the fifth century: a hypothesis (*P.Oxy* 663) preserving the plot synopsis of the *Dionysalexandros* (c. 430 BCE), by Cratinus, who was regarded by ancient sources as the most innovative poet of Old Comedy before Aristophanes.36 *P.Oxy* 663’s rough snapshot of a nearly complete mythological burlesque aroused immediate and intense interest because of its potential to improve our knowledge about a comic subgenre of which little is known. Scholars were especially interested to learn how the *Dionysalexandros*’ style of burlesque may have differed from that of Middle Comedy, which allegedly privileged domestic plots. A partial answer to this question is thought to be preserved in the final lines of *P.Oxy* 663, which cryptically alludes to Cratinus’ alleged satire of the Athenian statesman Pericles by ‘innuendo’ (δι᾿ ἐμφάσεως).

Early scholarship on *Dionysalexandros* was chiefly concerned with the scope of this satiric subtext, that is, whether it informed merely a scene, an entire episode, or even the play as a whole. The last few decades, however, have seen the discussion take a different turn, into the realm of the play’s generic status, which was thrown into serious question by the enigmatic mention of ‘satyrs’ in the second column of the hypothesis. While the papyrus for the most part describes a straightforward burlesque of the Judgment of Paris, the mysterious mention of such an essential element from an altogether separate dramatic form raised the possibility that the *Dionysalexandros* somehow appropriated salient features from one of its rival genres. Bakola’s largely convincing case for a satyr chorus has all but proven that *Dionysalexandros* represents

36 All comic fragments cited are from Kassel and Austin.
the earliest known example of Old Comedy’s direct and sustained engagement of its other, less-celebrated dramatic rival of the fifth century, satyr play. Although it persuasively maps the cross-generic play of the *Dionysalexandros*, Bakola’s analysis by and large refrains from describing precisely what constituted such activity, in literary, performative, and dramaturgical terms, aside from the co-existence of certain thematic and visual markers from each genre in performance. Yet if the only other comparable type of cross-generic play in Old Comedy tells us anything, it is that co-existence is not part of Old Comedy’s *modus operandi*. Again and again, Aristophanic paratragedy shows us that comedy does not share the stage with its rivals on equal terms: Old Comedy must appropriate other texts as its own, by inverting and perverting, distorting and importing, and testing and besting.

This chapter explores and defines, as far as the evidence permits, what precisely constitutes Old Comedy’s strategy of appropriating satyr play in *Dionysalexandros* in order to establish a basis for cross-generic play upon which succeeding chapters can build. Although certainly more elusive than direct engagement with tragedy, Old Comedy’s parody of satyr play is far from non-existent, as both the current chapter and Chapter Three (on Aristophanes’ *Peace*) will amply demonstrate. *Dionysalexandros’* agenda of competitive appropriation seems to have (at least sometimes) operated simultaneously at multiple levels – the mythological, the political, and the generic. How seamlessly this was managed in performance is one of the

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37 Bakola (2005) and (2010) 82-8. My debt to Bakola’s research will be particularly apparent throughout the current chapter as well as parts of Chapter Five’s analysis of *Frogs*.
38 Bakola (2010) 116: ‘As far as we can tell it [i.e., *Dionysalexandros*] retains the entire set of characteristics which we would expect in a comedy of the time, amplified by almost the entire set of characteristics which we would look for in a satyr play.’ To be fair, though, Bakola does acknowledge the generic fusion of comedy and satyr play on the ‘Getty Birds’ (2010:104-5) and the combination of mythical and political subtexts in *Dionysalexandros* and Phrynichus’ *Satyroi* (2010: 103-4).
39 Dobrov (2007) 258 describes the sum of satyr play in Old Comedy as little more than a single allusion in Aristophanes (i.e., the hauling scene of *Peace*), a few bare titles, and a very specific case of themed invective against Pericles. Cf. the convincing case for comedy’s interaction with satyr play in Storey (2005).
pressing questions which has attended discussion of the *Dionysalexandros* ever since the discovery of *P.Oxy* 663. My discussion of the where, how, and why of Cratinus’ ‘comedification’ of satyr play is concentrated upon those clues which are most visible from the available evidence, the motifs and themes of the burlesqued satyr-play myth. Three or four discernible loci of adaptation present themselves as the ‘fingerprints’ of comic appropriation, as it were, where multiple discourses seem to be activated in specific scenes.

The first such locus is the substitution of Dionysus for Alexandros/Paris in the Judgment, substitution in various forms being a common strategy of Old Comedy and other types of comic narrative. I wish to argue that the choice of Dionysus as satyr play protagonist very likely represents a calculated gesture of cross-generic play, since the god seems to have been a marginal character in satyr play while being, by contrast, a fixture of Old Comedy. What is more, Dionysus’ dramaturgical role as the substituted appears to play upon a very commonplace theme of Dionysus narratives in the literary tradition: the denial of his divinity by aggressive mortal foes. *Dionysalexandros* inverts the regular pattern of traditional Dionysus myths, in which the god’s identity is aggressively questioned by hostile non-believers before he reveals himself and mercilessly punishes his enemies. Cratinus, by contrast, appears to have thematized the concealment of Dionysus’ identity and his persistent failure throughout the play. *Dionysalexandros*, like all the other plays surveyed in this dissertation, makes the balance of success and failure a recurrent theme of its comic appropriation. Cratinus’ play, however, represents a unique exception insofar as it celebrates the unmitigated failures of its protagonist. As a representative of the Athenian statesman Pericles in the political subtext of the play, Dionysus’ exploits would have been cast in the quasi-allegorical terms of topical satire. Cratinus deploys the timeless frame of satyr play, its primordial world, and its chorus to universalize
Pericles’ (alleged) transgressions in fifth-century Athens. This injection of comic topicality into the removed, pre-political setting of satyr play constitutes a subtle yet sophisticated gesture of competitive appropriation at the generic level: by placing contemporary polis-politics at the heart of satyr play, Cratinus compromises one of the genre’s most distinct and enduring features.

The events of the latter half of Dionysalexandros seem to have been unified by comic failure, which ensues upon the substitution of Dionysus for Alexandros. The first point of comic appropriation in this half appears to be Dionysus’ failed attempt to escape the real Alexandros’ detection by disguising himself as a ram: the transformation appears to have been solely a material one, typical for comedy, rather than the divine metamorphoses of epic, tragedy, and satyr play. The next locus of interaction, and possibly the coup de grace of Cratinus’ comic agenda, is the perversion of the generic gamos, which was a standard topos of satyr play: instead of a virtuous hero carrying off a chaste maiden, satyr play’s generic reward for the hero’s perseverance through trial, Dionysalexandros caps its happy ending with an ironic celebration of the most notorious and destructive coupling of antiquity, the union of Paris and Helen, which clearly informs the tone of the closure of Dionysalexandros. Comedy’s typical closure of the hero and chorus departing together in triumph and celebration is ironically refashioned in Cratinus’ scheme, where Dionysus departs into bondage with the satyrs. The god’s failure is balanced by the success and heroism of the Trojan Alexandros, one of the most traditionally anti-heroic figures in Greek culture. The compromised nature of these quintessential motifs of satyr play, and their activation of the multiple subtexts of the comedy, give us a decent (yet admittedly limited) glimpse of what must have been Cratinus’ overall strategy of comic engagement in the Dionysalexandros.
Since it is most apparent from the available evidence, the burlesque and its implicit statements about Old Comedy’s competitive appropriation of satyr play are given priority in this analysis. However, this is not to deny the crucial significance of the Dionysalexandros’ latent political subtext, the satire of Pericles. On the contrary, this subtext provides the occasion for the second level of my analysis, which considers how the traditional audience-response to satyr play naturally accommodates a political subtext of the sort which the author of the hypothesis affirmed for the Dionysalexandros. According to Mark Griffith, satyr play induced a psychological split in its spectators, who (consciously or unconsciously) found themselves identifying simultaneously with both the constantly aroused, irresponsible, carefree satyrs as well as the resolute, competent, civically virtuous heroic characters who provided the leadership necessary to overcome the plot’s threatening elements. This explains why audience-identification would have likely tilted more toward the similarly dependent community of satyrs: like them, the spectators of the theater, the demos, tended to depend upon their own aristocratic elites for necessary leadership and deliverance from evils. In other words, the genre-specific dynamic between leaders and led which was innate to satyr play would have naturally encouraged Cratinus’ (presumably) broad identification of Dionysus and his satyr community with Pericles and the demos, the identification which would be fundamental to the satirical subtext of the Dionysalexandros. Satyr play’s unique variation on the dynamic of leader and subjects would thus readily accommodate a comprehensive and sustained political subtext such as that alleged by the moderate proponents of the Periclean satire of Dionysalexandros.

I. Poet and Text

Contrast Bakola (2010) 206-8, who reduces the importance traditionally ascribed to the Periclean subtext of the play.
Before proceeding to the *Dionysalexandros* and its exercises in comic appropriation, such a self-conscious and metatheatrical poet as Cratinus demands some familiarity with what little biographical information about him survives. Few things are certain about the life and career of Cratinus, canonized in antiquity as one of the three greatest poets of Old Comedy.\(^4\) The only reliable dates we have for his career are 425, 424, and 423 BCE, the performance dates of his Ξειμαζόμενοι, Σάτυροι, and Πυτίνη, respectively. His first victory in the dramatic festivals is dated to approximately 456. The overall picture which emerges from the evidence suggests a poet, active roughly from the second-quarter of the fifth century until the late 420s, who reached his peak probably sometime in the 440s. Of the twenty-nine productions attributed to him in antiquity, about five hundred fragments of varying length are all that remain. Much of what we assume about Cratinus the man is actually owed to the text of Aristophanes. The latter jeered at his older rival as an incontinent drunkard, who frittered away his poetic powers, in *Knights* (line 532) of 424 BCE, which was performed when Cratinus was allegedly at an advanced age. *Peace* 700 (421 BCE) again ripped Cratinus for his alcoholism, and the scholiast at that same line of the play alleges that the poet’s death fell in the previous year. Aristophanes’ famous dismissal of Cratinus in *Knights* actually initiated one of the most sustained and sophisticated poetic rivalries of antiquity: allegedly incensed at Aristophanes’ slap at his poetic talents, Cratinus composed for performance in the Dionysia of the following year (423 BCE) his *Pytine* (*Πυτίνη*), in which he presented himself in the lead role as the same alcoholic poet of failing poetic powers. Cratinus was immortalized by the success of this play, which won first prize and defeated what is arguably Aristophanes’ most famous comedy, *Clouds*, thanks to its innovative biographical

\(^4\) See Bakola (2010) 2 n. 3 for ancient references.
treatment of Cratinus himself. As will be seen in Chapter Four, a variation of this same poetic conceit, the comic biography, is employed by Aristophanes in his *Thesmophoriazusae* of 411.

Critical assessments of Cratinus’ style against those of Aristophanes and Eupolis are mostly preserved in the prose treatises of later authors, whose overall accuracy seems to be largely borne out by the evidence of the fragments. According to Rosen, two facts must be taken away from such testimonia: antiquity viewed Cratinus as a literary follower of the seventh-century iambic poet, Archilochus, and his poetic tradition of invective (Test. 17); and Cratinus was the first poet of Old Comedy to cultivate a distinct literary style and a self-conscious attitude toward the genre. That his particular iambic style was defined by invective is recognized even by Aristophanes, who viewed his work as representative of the generic comic practice of κωμῳδεῖν ὄνομαστί, ridicule or mockery by naming. An unfortunate side effect of this style, as alleged by Aristophanes, was its bombast and uncontrolled, unrefined character (*Knights* 526-8). But it is hardly surprising, in light of the highly competitive context of the dramatic festivals, that Aristophanes would fail to render Cratinus full praise for the comic innovation which came at his own expense in 423.

Before the fortuitous discovery of the hypothesis in 1904 (*P.Oxy* 663), the sum total of the surviving evidence for *Dionysalexandros* was only about thirteen fragments. These revealed so little about the play that one early editor, Meineke, thought that the ‘Alexandros’ of the title referred to Alexander the Great and thus mistook its author for Cratinus the Younger, a poet of the later, now largely unknown, period of Middle Comedy. As I mentioned above, Grenfell and Hunt’s 1904 discovery and publication of the hypothesis furnished a sweeping view of much

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45 Meineke (1839) 1.56-7.
of its plot, which evidently travestied Paris’ Judgment of the goddesses, an early, critical event in the Trojan cycle.46

The beginning lines in the upper portion of the left-hand column of the papyrus are lost, but its readable part begins with what must have been the play’s parabasis, around what is (presumably) line 5. Hermes is mentioned in relation to a ‘judgment’ before departing, followed by a reference to an unknown ‘these’ (οὐτοί) – almost certainly the chorus – who address the spectators about the ‘generation of sons’ (8). After the parabasis, Dionysus (apparently the play’s protagonist) then appears to the mockery and jeers of the same ‘οὐτοί’ (10-12). Then the Judgment takes place (14-19), with Dionysus as adjudicator instead of Alexandros: Hera bribes him with ‘unshakeable royal power,’ Athena promises ‘courage in war,’ and Aphrodite offers to make Dionysus-Alexandros the ‘best-looking and most sexually attractive.’ Thereupon the hero presumably sails to Sparta and takes Helen back with him (20-3). Soon after, the Achaeans come to sack the land while the real Alexandros (probably in anger) sought out the imposter who was responsible for the invasion (23-6). Hiding Helen in a basket, Dionysus (somehow) tries to disguise himself as a ram (26-30) before Alexandros appears and discovers all. After ordering his companions to take the fugitives down to the ships and turn them over to the marauding Achaeans (30-4), Paris feels pity for Helen and decides to keep her as his wife (37-39). As Dionysus is sent to the Greeks, the ‘satyrs’ accompany and encourage him, stating that they will not abandon him (41-4). At that point, the text of the hypothesis ends mysteriously with the statement that Pericles was persuasively parodied through innuendo (δι᾿ ἐμφάσεως) for drawing the Athenians into the war (44-8).

46 Grenfell and Hunt (1904).
II. Substitution and Subtext

With the essential details of Cratinus’ biography established and the primary piece of evidence now outlined, the analysis of the comic appropriation of the *Dionysalexandros* can now proceed. The edifice of cross-generic play in *Dionysalexandros* rests chiefly on the identification of its satyr chorus, which is the most explicit and fundamental evidence for the play’s unprecedented parasatyrism.\(^{47}\) Three of the earliest published discussions of *P.Oxy* 663 each concluded from the comment at line 42 that the chorus of *Dionysalexandros* was in fact comprised of satyrs.\(^{48}\) Schmid, conversely, believed that the satyr chorus was only subsidiary to a main chorus of shepherds, consisting of Paris’ comrades.\(^{49}\) Thanks to the persuasive case made by Bakola, a single chorus of satyrs seems all but certain now.\(^{50}\) While the present inquiry cannot trace her argument in full, an overview of its fundamental points shows clearly enough that the events of the hypothesis indeed make best sense with a single satyr chorus. The phrasing of 42-3, where the satyrs (*οἱ σάτυροι*) are explicitly mentioned, resembles that of a choral *exodos*. This identifies the ‘*οὗτοι*’ (6) mentioned earlier in the hypothesis as a likely reference to the same individuals.\(^{51}\) The technical diction of the next segment of text (9-13), which observes the same ‘*οὗτοι*’ as its subject, helps identify that section of events as the play’s *parabasis*.

Before anything else, it is perhaps worth ruminating on the power and effect of seeing the shameless, irresponsible, constantly aroused, half-human, half-animal satyrs share the stage with the grotesque, phallossed characters of their comic sister genre. This visual strategy, which has been termed ‘strict juxtaposition,’ would have immediately alerted the audience to the play’s


\(^{50}\) Bakola (2005) and (2010) 82-88.

distinctive conceptual thrust of generic hybridity and constantly reinforced this throughout the events of the play.\textsuperscript{52} From the perspective of the audience, the experience must have been roughly comparable to that of the play which inspired the arresting illustration of the famous ‘Choregoi’ Vase (See Figure 9, Chapter Two): that play apparently featured a hero pulled straight from tragedy, Aegisthus, visually juxtaposed with the generic ugliness of comic choreutai. Not only does the illustration furnish rare evidence for a moment when tragedy and comedy shared the very same comic stage. The ‘Choregoi’ also straightforwardly preserves, in the figure of Aegisthus, the natural physical beauty of the tragic genre unmarred by the typical hallmarks of comic appropriation, such as incongruency, ugliness, etc. It is anyone’s guess, however, whether Dionysalexandros followed the same practice and straightforwardly depicted the satyrs as they appeared in their native mythological context.

A possible alternative strategy of comic presentation of the satyrs is preserved on a separate vase, the so-called ‘Cleveland Dionysus,’ which could give us a sense of what a comedified satyr would look like: to the right side of a giant depiction of Dionysus stands a Papposilenos holding an enlarged scyphos, complete with body hair, but with the distinctive comic modifications of ugliness and a dangling phallos. Aside from any links it may have to an actual comic production, the image offers a glimpse of one particular strategy out of a range of visual possibilities of comic appropriation in satyr play. In this case, the alteration is one of form and degree – the smaller, erect phallos, which is typical of satyr play, is grotesquely enlarged to comic proportions and non-ithyphallic; the unattractive, bestial appearance of Papposilenos becomes full-blown comic ugliness. Yet the other visual characteristics of the satyrs’ father seem to remain unaltered, probably in order to facilitate easy identification. It can be assumed

\textsuperscript{52} See Revermann (2006) 102 for visual juxtaposition.
that Cratinus did the same with his *choreutai*. Because increased ugliness has generic affiliations with Old Comedy, uglified satyrs would technically constitute the performance of a layered style of juxtaposition. Since both strict and layered styles of juxtaposition were the primary visual means of communicating cross-generic play in performance, they appear regularly in this dissertation, most especially in Chapter Two’s discussion of comic iconography.

A. Burlesque Subtext

Strict and visual juxtapositions show just how effortlessly cross-generic play could be perpetually communicated in a comedy like *Dionysalexandros*. The earliest moment in which such generic play is discernible in the events of Cratinus’ burlesque seems to be the substitution of Dionysus for Alexandros. The insertion of Dionysus, particularly as the figure popularly associated with the comic stage, may itself have been a gesture of intergeneric competition. The most definitive aspect of the traditional fourth play of the tragic tetralogy is, of course, its emblematic *choreutai*, who are defined as much through contrast with the heroic protagonists, of a completely different existential level, as by their own bestial, incompetent, and lecherous behavior. The current section on the burlesque subtext of the play focuses chiefly on comic Dionysus and the cultural/generic context of his substitution. Typically semi-divine by birth, the protagonists of satyr play step directly out of the world of epic and tragedy, and talk, think, and act according to the constraints of those genres throughout the play. Their dramatic role in the satyr-play world involves taking decisive action (e.g., against a threatening ogre), banishing danger, and reestablishing order and prosperity before returning to the former status and authority which they enjoyed before the events of the play. With little aid or cooperation from

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the satyrs, the hero defeats the generic villain and successfully releases the helpless chorus from the toil and bondage to which it is typically subject, with the result that it can resume traditional service to its master Dionysus.

The events detailed in the hypothesis practically invite all analysis of *Dionysalexandros* to begin with the play’s ‘hero,’ the unheroic, comic Dionysus, whose links with both Old Comedy and satyr play make him a natural focal point for the creative interaction of both genres on the comic stage. The significance of Dionysus in Cratinus’ play is his specific generic pedigree as comic hero. The title of the play suggests that *Dionysalexandros* is a comedy about impersonation and disguise, but the substitution of Dionysus for another character plays on more than just Dionysus’ own status as patron of drama and god of many forms. Nor does the god’s radical, sustained, and consequential impersonation of Alexandros simply reflect the familiar trickery and fraud of satyr play, as Bakola describes it. The premise of the play, the ruse of substitution, privileges one particular aspect of the traditional persona of Dionysus above all else, his reputation as an imposter in myth. Dionysus ‘out of his element’ is a generic variant on the traditional persona of the god known from earlier art and literature. A brief review of the evidence shows that myths about Dionysus’ origins treated, in particular, his frequent struggles with enemies who questioned and denied his divinity, or worse, outright resisted his cult and persecuted its adherents.

Once considered a later addition to the Olympian family, Dionysus was revealed to be a much older divinity than was previously thought after the discovery of his name on three Linear B tablets from the thirteenth century BCE. The traditional character of Dionysus as ‘the new god’ of the pantheon is frequently reflected in early myths which narrate challenges to the

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legitimacy of his status and cult by violently aggressive non-believers. As early as Homer, we learn of Dionysus’ struggle against the Thracian king Lycourgos (Il. 6.130-40), whom Zeus struck blind and doomed for his vigorous persecution of the god and his maenads. This also became the subject of a later Aeschylean trilogy known as the *Lykourgeia.* Although less directly, the same ‘non-believer’ theme is hinted at in the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus* (500 BCE?): pirates mistake the god for a royal youth and abduct him before the captain of the ship realizes their costly error. The most famous example of this theme, however, is Dionysus’ return to, and persecution in, his native city of Thebes in Euripides’ *Bacchae* (405 BCE), performed over twenty years after the probable performance date of the *Dionysalexandros.* Dionysus seems to have enjoyed a much bigger role in the plays of Old Comedy, where he was statistically the most popular god of mythological burlesque, with major roles confirmed in at least sixteen plays. Among extant plays, he is the protagonist of only *Frogs,* although preserved titles of Old Comedy suggest that he was regularly cast as ‘Anti-Hero’ by the genre. This role stemmed from and exploited a few key stereotypes: Dionysus as luxury-loving and uncourageous; the incompetent Dionysus who is ‘out of his element;’ Dionysus in disguise; Dionysus exposed with his identity subject to scrutiny; and Dionysus suffering physical indignities.

Although the god’s considerable comic résumé and occasional appearance in tragedy should throw his conspicuous absence from nearly all extant evidence for satyr play into sharper relief, many scholars seem all too ready to assume the contrary, that Dionysus was a fairly

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59 Bowie (2000) 320. We possess significant fragments of Eupolis’ *Taxiarchoi,* where Dionysus was taught the arts of war by the Athenian general, Phormio (See Storey [2003] 246-60, esp. 251-7).
61 The characteristics are outlined by Storey (2003) 122-3.
Despite the fact that its chorus always consisted of a Dionysiac thiasos of satyrs, satyr drama seems largely to have kept the character of Dionysus, in the flesh, at the margins of its plots. This is actually unsurprising given the genre’s marked preference for non-Dionysiac myths. Dionysus’ one attested speaking role in a satyr play of any prominence, Aeschylus’ *Theoroi* or *Isthmiastae*, shows him complaining about the mockery and ingratitude of the satyrs:

σπείρεις δὲ μῦδον τῇ νυός [  
καὶ ὑγιματιζεσι εἰς ἔμ’ ἐκτη [  
ἄις οὐδὲν εἰμι τὴν σιδηρίτην [  
γύμνης δ’ ἄναλχης οὐδεσμί [  
καὶ νῦν τάδ’ ἄλλα καὶ π’ [  
ἐξχίστα πάωτων τω[  
πλύνεις τ’ ἔμ’ αὐτόν [  

(fr. 78a.65-71)

‘and you spread this story...and let loose a spate of words against me...saying that I am not good (at work) in iron, but am a cowardly, womanish creature and not...And now you accuse me of these other things...the most detestable of all...And you abuse me and...’ (Transl. Bakola)

An allusion earlier in the same passage (fr. 78a.23-35) to a ubiquitous motif of satyr play – the estrangement of the satyrs from their service on behalf of Dionysus – seems to be the basis upon which many take for granted the god’s regular appearance in the genre. The extant fragmentary evidence, however, implies that Dionysus’ stage presence was (at best) largely peripheral or symbolic, and (at worst) possibly even limited to the chorus’ evocations of him during its nostalgic reflections on its past and future services. Visual confirmation of this idea might even be found on the famous volute krater known as the ‘Pronomos Vase,’ which features Dionysus, Silenus, Heracles, and the chorus of a satyr play in a post-performance moment. Although

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64 In Sophocles’ *Dionysiscus*, the young Dionysus was allegedly cured of madness.
surrounded by the cast, the god seems set apart, neither wearing a mask nor standing with the rest, but reclining in the center of the visual field above Pronomos himself, the auletēs of the production as well as the commissioner of the vase. After recognizing the difficulty of placing Dionysus (and Ariadne) in a satyr-play plot with Heracles, Robin Osborne concludes that the vase-painter has chosen to represent all those figures referenced in the particular performance to which the painting is alluding, and not just those who appeared on-stage. Osborne’s interpretation of Dionysus’ connection to this satyr play referenced in the ‘Pronomos Vase’ is thus consistent with my interpretation of the nature of Dionysus’ specific relationship to satyr play as a genre. Although frequently referenced, there is little evidence that Dionysus actually appeared regularly as a character in satyr play.

In its dramatic conception, the Judgment of the goddesses provided the ideal context to exploit and probe the anti-heroic status of Dionysus for maximum comic effect in the Dionysalexandros. The Judgment is first attested directly in the Epic Cycle narrative of the Cypria. Homer’s reluctance to acknowledge the story directly, despite its critical importance in the origins of the Trojan War, was almost certainly due to its relatively unconventional (some might even say undignified) epic subject matter (i.e., compared to the Homeric material).

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65 Osborne (2010) 154; cf. Csapo (2010) 103-10, who argues that Dionysus reclining is nothing more than a formal motif of choregic victory monuments, after which the ‘Pronomos Vase’ is more or less modeled.
66 Cypria Arg. 6-8 B. Archaeological evidence, an ivory comb (Athens National Museum, 15368), shows that the story of the Judgment is at least as old as the late seventh century (c. 620 BCE). See Burgess (2001) 183.
67 Richardson (1993) 276-278 discusses the clearest reference to the Judgment in Homer (Il. 24.23-30) and focuses chiefly on the problem of its insertion so late in the poem, something which has puzzled both ancient and modern critics. Although he acknowledges the value of Reinhardt’s argument (1938: 1997) that the poem presupposes the story at a number of points, he concludes that no satisfactory explanation for its mention so late in the poem has been found, but that the remark should be accepted as original for its typically abbreviated style ‘…where a poet seems unwilling to be too explicit about the details.’ The ‘μαχλοσύνη’ of Paris (24.30), given by Aphrodite, is described as the cause of the war, but nowhere else used of men (but cf. Cratinus fr. 259, on which see p. 51). Griffin (1977) catalogues many such elements of the larger cycle tradition which seem to have been purposely avoided by Homeric poetry, whose narratives observe a stricter conception of the subject matter which is appropriate for epic. The Iliad in particular tends to avoid (not without exceptions) supernatural or fantastic elements, unheroic behavior, etc.
scene was a popular one in the black and red-figure vase-painting of the sixth and fifth centuries and its trend of development supplies important visual evidence about contemporary attitudes to Paris and the Judgment in context: beginning in the late Archaic age, pots show an increasingly ‘countrified’ shepherd Paris, whose rusticity and isolation on Mt. Ida communicate certain specific character traits and motifs. Hedreen argues that this stress on the occupational aspects of shepherding represents the iconographic narrative’s attempt to convey the amorousness long associated with this line of work: this visual trend anticipates and explains Paris’ eventual choice of Aphrodite’s bribe, sex with Helen, over the bribes of the other two goddesses in the literary tradition. While it is essentially impossible to determine how the comic Dionysus found himself in Paris’ world at the beginning of the Dionysalexandros, although different theories have been advanced, the rusticity and coarseness of the shepherd’s existence would have been ideal for exploiting the character of Dionysus as ‘out of his element:’ laborious, austere, and unglamorous, the life of the shepherd was the antithesis of the soft, un-athletic, and effeminate lifestyle popularly associated with this comic hero. The comic suitability of this setting can perhaps be glimpsed in Dionysalexandros fr. 43, which could belong to any one of several dramatic contexts: an unknown speaker mentions stepping in ‘cow patties and sheep shit.’ Emphasis on the quotidian and bathetic would have effectively denigrated the divine status of the

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70 For a theory that Dionysus was randomly enlisted by a Hermes desperate for a substitute judge after Paris turned up missing, see Storey (2005) 111-12. For the argument that Dionysus just happened to be on Mt. Ida while seeking out the satyrs who had abandoned his service, see Bakola (2005) 52.

protagonist in keeping with the traditions of mythological burlesque, where divinities, especially Dionysus, are unflatteringly recontextualized in debased surroundings.

Cratinus’ recontextualization of Dionysus doubtless exploited the liminal status of his traditional profile, which is observable in his incongruities of appearance and behavior in those Aristophanic plays which feature him (Th. 136-45, Ran. 42ff.). His traditional depiction in both art and literature frequently underscores his ambivalent status in gender, ethnic, and cultural terms. An unidentified speaker in fr. 40 appears to make reference to this aspect of the god’s persona in a description of his traditional attire:

(A.) στολήν δὲ δὴ τίν’ εἶχεν; τοῦτό μοι φαέσον.
(B.) Ψύψουν, κροκωτόν, ποικίλον, καρχήσιον...

(A.) ‘Tell me, how was he dressed?’
(B.) ‘Wand, saffron gown, robe, cup...’

The hypothesis mentions the mocking and jeering of the satyr chorus at the appearance of Dionysus after the parabasis (10-12). This could have been provoked by an unconvincing, and almost certainly incongruous, costume of the shepherd Dionysus, who emerges after the completion of the parabasis according to Bakola’s reconstruction. Fr. 39, featuring someone contemplating the shepherd’s existence, is probably also connected to this vignette. Although incongruity is a traditional feature of Dionysus’ persona, the fragmentary evidence again confirms the central place of visual juxtaposition in comic strategies of cross-generic play.

Although the Judgment and its famous bribes (13-19) furnished the context for the substitution of Dionysus, it is possible that this exact scene was not performed onstage. Of the original bribes of the fifth-century account, ‘kingship over all’ (βασιλεία πάντων) from Hera,

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73 Lada-Richards (1999) 17-44.
74 Bakola (2010) 87 hesitates to assume that Dionysus was disguised in this scene.
‘victory in war’ (πολέμου νίκη) from Athena, and ‘union with Helen’ (γάμος Ἑλένης) from Aphrodite, only the latter two seem to have been adjusted for Cratinus’ burlesque.\textsuperscript{75} ‘Tyranny’ from Hera (τυραννὸς ἀκίνητος), as Bakola points out, is nearly synonymous with ‘kingship over all.’\textsuperscript{76} The bribes of comic Athena and Aphrodite, ‘courage in war’ (εὐψυχία κατὰ πολέμον) and ‘to be the most beautiful and desired’ (κάλλιστος τε καὶ ἐπέραστος), obviously play upon the notorious cowardice and vanity of Dionysus’ comic profile in mythological burlesque. This recognition that the Judgment underscores central characteristics of the comic Dionysus is obviously important for understanding the scene in terms of intergeneric discourse. Bakola has attractively proposed that Athena and Hera did not appear on-stage, but were represented by their bribes as female personifications.\textsuperscript{77} Besides the way it accounts for the staging restrictions, which forbid more than three speaking parts at any one time, this theory is completely consistent with Old Comedy’s tendency to personify and feminize desirable commodities. However, since satyr play also featured personifications, especially in the sole satyr-play adaptation of the Judgment of Paris which is known (see next paragraph), it is difficult (at this point) to see such a scene as a particular gesture of comedification.

The humor of the scene is the utter redundancy of the bribes, material desires which should be meaningless for divinities yet are completely at home in the comic world of mortal wish-fulfillment: in that world, divinities are as vulnerable and corruptible as mortals, whom the folktale pedigree of the Judgment aimed originally to instruct through its moral tale of ‘the choice.’ Reinhardt regarded the Judgment as the closest thing to a parable in all classical literature, comparing it to Christ’s temptation in the desert and Heracles’ choice at the crossroads.

\textsuperscript{75} Gantz (1993) 570-571 believes that while Aphrodite’s bribe makes vague appearances in the \textit{Iliad} and the \textit{Cypria}, Athena and Hera’s bribes may have represented a post-\textit{Cypria} development absent in earlier accounts.
\textsuperscript{76} Bakola (2010) 189.
The Judgment differed from most such tales, of course, because Paris’ poor choice ultimately brought about the destruction of himself, his city, and his family. The didactic content of the episode is also in keeping with satyr play’s own traditional, moral fabric, as Sophocles himself evidently recognized when he made the Judgment the subject of his lost satyr play entitled Krisis. In this play, Aphrodite and Athena were depicted as symbolic representations of pleasure (ἡδωνή) and virtue or discipline (ἀρετή), respectively. The moral failure of the traditional tale upon which the Judgment is based is not just deployed for laughs in the burlesque, but is cleverly exploited in Cratinus’ Periclean subtext, which will be discussed below.

In sum, the substitution of Dionysus for Alexandros is the earliest discernible locus of comic appropriation in the Dionysalexandros. Dionysus should be identified with the well-known, buffoonish persona from Old Comedy rather than the apparently less-prominent figure of satyr play, of which we know very little. It would be dangerous to assume what seems to be implied in Aeschylus’ fr. 78, from Theoroi or Isthmiastae (page 39), that the Dionysus in Old Comedy and satyr play was the same figure. Indeed, the style of comic impersonation in the literary and cultural context of the Judgment appears tailored to the generic caricature of Dionysus ‘out of his element,’ which is itself a variation of traditional, serious presentations of the god. This evidence for Old Comedy’s particular affinity for this character, in contrast to what seems to be satyr play’s general avoidance of him, raises the distinct possibility that Cratinus’ choice of this anti-hero as his protagonist was a calculated gesture of comic appropriation: Dionysus, who normally enjoys a spiritual connection to the chorus of satyr play, is promoted by comedy to the foreground of a parasatyric production where he is the stock hero.

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79 Stinton (1965) 8. Scheuer and Bielfeldt (1999) 358-362 discuss all we can know about the play.
This inclusion of comic Dionysus in the satyr-play burlesque also usefully distinguishes the function of substitution in Old Comedy and satyr play. Rather than offer a different perspective on events, as does the substituted chorus of satyr play, substituted figures in Old Comedy alter their traditional course in significant and consequential ways.

**B. Genre**

Cratinus’ insertion of Dionysus into the satyr play frame of the Judgment can also be read at a broader discursive level, as a competitive gesture of intergeneric appropriation. By casting a distinctively comic version of a figure who was related to satyr play Cratinus asserts Old Comedy’s status as the superior comic genre of the fifth century. This seems especially likely because the strategy of this particular competitive engagement, substitution, is an innate part of satyr drama, which routinely inserts a satyr chorus into a foreign mythological setting where it ‘has no business.’\(^{80}\) Plots frequently situate satyrs in traditional myths and aitiologies of significant cultural value to make them play roles normally reserved for humans and/or gods.\(^{81}\) Unlike the mythological burlesques of Old Comedy, for example, the thrust of satyr drama’s style of revision involves a change of perspective on such singular events – usually a cultural breakthrough of some kind, the birth of a hero, etc. – rather than a change in actual facts, details, or outcomes of the mythological-historical record: the Sphinx is still defeated, Apollo still recaptures his stolen cattle, Perseus and Danae are rescued, Prometheus successfully steals fire, just to name a few examples.\(^{82}\) The novelty of satyr play’s burlesque is its presentation of such cultural and religious milestones from the perspective of the satyrs themselves, who function as a

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timeless, ever-present internal audience of the various stages of Greek culture’s historical advancement. As guaranteed survivors of their perennial adventures, the satyrs offer the audience an alien perspective on the key moments of cultural evolution in which they themselves are barred from participating.

By contrast, the very point of inserting comic characters into entirely alien settings is to achieve the comic effect of a stark incongruity of character and context and the (frequently chaotic) social, political, and cosmic consequences which ensue from that. Comic substitution (and its effects) can thus often be the very motor of comic narratives, as can be seen from the evidence of the hypothesis to the *Dionysalexandros*. The heart of the play dramatized the consequences of Dionysus’ impersonation of Paris within the familiar and culturally significant narrative of the origins of the Trojan War, a major branch of Greek history. While it is unclear whether Alexandros’ final surrender of Dionysus to the Greeks at the end of the *Dionysalexandros* actually averted the campaign against Troy, it is certain that the protagonist was held responsible and sentenced to be punished for it.

At this juncture, the generic implications of *Dionysalexandros*’ alleged political satire – as a second critical gesture of intergeneric rivalry – become most apparent. The political subtext of the play removes one of the distinctive features of the satyr play genre, its apolitical context, by contaminating or comedifying it with the concerns of Old Comedy in an act of aggressive appropriation of literary territory. Comedy takes possession of satyr play’s content and makes it its own by fusing a topical comic agenda with the burlesque surface structure.

C. Politics
Until relatively recently, debate about the manner and extent of the Periclean satire mentioned in the closing lines of the hypothesis (44ff.) has by and large dominated scholarship on the Dionysalexandros and divided students of the play into two camps. Early commentators like Körte and Norwood were skeptical of the Periclean subtext and viewed the title alone as sufficient evidence for seeing the topicality as subordinate to the travesty of myth. Later scholars, on the whole, seem more inclined to accept the satire as a prominent subtext, which was frequently activated or sustained more or less throughout the burlesque. The most extreme articulation of this view was by Schwarze, whose exhaustive, ingenious, and sometimes unbelievable conjectures detect the political subtext at every phase of the hypothesis. The following remarks offer a condensed treatment of Rosen’s useful summary of Schwarze’s points: (a) Dionysus’ initial connivance for the right to judge the goddesses corresponds to Pericles’ assumption of judicial powers at Athens; (b) the bribes which the goddesses offer to win Dionysus’ favor represent popular beliefs about his character; (c) Dionysus’ eventual choice of Aphrodite’s gift (κάλλιστόν τε και ἐπέφευσαν αὑτὸν ὑπάρχειν: 17-19) corresponds to Pericles’ pursuit of pleasure at the expense of Athens’ interests; (d) this choice also links the abducted Helen with Aspasia; (e) Achaean ravaging of the Troad after Helen’s abduction represents Spartan incursions into Attica beginning in spring; (f) Dionysus’ cowardly fear of Paris reflects Pericles’ own fear of the demos; (g) the Spartan demand for Pericles’ banishment at the start of the war is represented by Paris’ final surrender of Dionysus to the Achaeans; the satyr chorus which promises not to abandon Dionysus are to be identified with Pericles’ political entourage.

It is now possible to identify a third group of scholarship, which views the Periclean subtext as just one of several discourses operative in the *Dionysalexandros*, although its adherents generally avoid venturing unwarranted specifics about its nature and scope.\textsuperscript{85} I favor this last position, primarily because it recognizes the existence of the political subtext while acknowledging the impossibility of knowing its true extent without further evidence. I am also in more or less agreement with Bakola, however, that the satire must be considered subordinate to the primary burlesque subtext.\textsuperscript{86} However, she and other proponents of the mythological primacy of the *Dionysalexandros* seem to overlook, or at least downplay, how effortlessly certain communicative channels of dramatic performance could ensure audience identification of the Periclean subtext. A figure of such widespread public exposure as Pericles could have been evoked in performance by an actor in any number of ways, including gesture, pitch, and costume.\textsuperscript{87} Aside from their similar cowardly, lecherous, and effeminate comic profiles, Dionysus and Pericles have a natural affinity insofar as they both suffered ridicule for misrepresenting themselves and their policies. Most important, however, is that satyr play is by nature well-suited as a vehicle for conveying and parodying the particular political dynamic which proponents of the satire have long located in *Dionysalexandros*: Pericles the demagogue, represented by Dionysus, leading around the *demos*, represented by a stupid satyr chorus.

There is considerable evidence for the frequent abuse to which Pericles was subjected by the fifth-century comic poets, much of which is supplied in the later biography of the statesman by Plutarch (c. 70-120 AD). Pericles was not only ridiculed for his policies but also his person:

\textsuperscript{86} Bakola (2010) 191.
\textsuperscript{87} See Revermann (1997), for a theory that Dionysus was identified as Pericles through the use of a special mask with Periclean features.
his physical deformity, a misshaped head, was viciously and repeatedly mocked by Cratinus, Telecleides, Eupolis, and almost certainly many other comic poets.\footnote{This is also the reason, Plutarch explains, for the most common visual representation of Pericles wearing a helmet (Per. 3)} This physical deformity was combined with a derisive association of Pericles’ speaking style and sexual proclivities with those of Zeus: while some gave him the surname ‘Olympian’ for his role in the Athenian building projects, the comic poets made this association on the basis of his ‘thundering’ style in public harangues (Per. 8) and his prodigious sexual appetites. Cratinus’ \textit{Nemesis} (c. 431), like the \textit{Dionysalexandros}, charged Pericles with precipitating the Peloponnesian War using an allegory of the origins of the Trojan War based on the mythological account of Zeus’ seduction of the goddess Nemesis – ‘righteous indignation’ personified – in the \textit{Cypria}.\footnote{\textit{LIMC} iv (1994) 4-9 s.v. \textit{Nemesis} (I. Krauskopf). For Nemesis as the feeling of indignation provoked when another oversteps the boundaries of aristocratic behavior in Homer, see Gruber (1963) 65-72.} In that play, Zeus, probably at the advice of Aphrodite (Cf. fr. 114), transformed himself into a goose in order to pursue the fleeing goddess.\footnote{\textit{Cypria} fr. 10 B, from a discussion of Philodemus, alleges that they were both geese.} Their inevitable union produced an egg, from which sprang Helen, the cause of the Trojan War. Of greatest interest here is fr. 118 from that play:

\begin{quote}
\textit{μόλ’ Ζευ, ξένιε καὶ καραιέ…}
\end{quote}

‘Hail Zeus, god of strangers and craniums…’

This joke exploits the literal meanings of two well-known epithets of Zeus, ‘ξένιος’ (god of the ‘guest-friend’ or ‘stranger’) and ‘καραιέ’ (a Boeotian and Thessalian cult title): ‘καραιέ,’ of course, refers to Pericles’ deformity.\footnote{Cf. Gomme (1956) 185, Schwarze (1971) 35. ‘ξένιος’ also might refer either to Pericles’ notorious attempt to secure citizenship for his illegitimate son by Aspasia or to his well-known patronage of and friendship with certain high-profile metics such as Protagoras, Anaxagoras, and of course, Aspasia herself.} Little is known of Cratinus’ comedy entitled \textit{Thrattai}, but it also, according to fr. 73.1-2 – ‘ὡ σχινοξέφαλος Ζεὺς’ (‘…Squill-headed Zeus…’) – referenced the deformity. Cratinus’ \textit{Plutoi} (c. 430/29) and \textit{Cheirones} collapsed the mythological and
political planes by allegorizing the public career of Pericles with the Succession Myth and its narrative of decline. Each play featured the arrival in Athens of mythological beings seeking to indict Pericles and his partisans for corruption. *Plutoi* featured a chorus of more or less unidentifiable ‘wealth gods,’\(^9\) who in fr. 171 announce their return from the Underworld with Cronus after their banishment by Zeus.\(^3\) They recollect a former Golden Age of natural abundance (fr. 176) before the tyrannical takeover of Zeus (Pericles) and his Olympians (his followers), and announce that the ‘Olympians’ will be tried for enriching themselves during Pericles’ consolidation of political power.\(^4\)

The chorus of *Cheirones* consisted of mythological doubles of the legendary pedagogue who visit Athens in order to set about renewing the city. Like *Plutoi*, the play drew an ideological contrast between an ideal Golden Age and a Periclean Athens in decline. An important difference from *Plutoi* is the nature of that decline: *Cheirones* appears to talk of a moral and cultural degeneration rather than an economic one. Athenian education, music, and morality, the special interests of Cheiron, were probably rehabilitated by the end of the play.\(^5\)

Fr. 258 describes Pericles’ birth from *Strife* and Cronus:

> Στάσει δὲ καὶ προσβυγενῆς Κρόνος ἀλλήλοις μιγέντε μέγισον τίκτητον τύραννον, ὃν δὲ κεφαληγερέταν θεοὶ καλέουσιν.

‘Strife and aged Cronus, laying together bore the great tyrant, whom the gods call ‘head-gatherer.’’

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92 Bakola (2010) 49 identifies them as the divinities thriving during Cronus’ reign in Hesiod’s *Works and Days* (121-126); for doubts about this identification, see Revermann (2006) 307.
93 Cf. *Works and Days* 121-126.
94 Ruffell (2000) 476-80; for the Golden Age described, see *Works and Days* 117-18.
95 Schwarze (1971) 60 argues that this was the return of the ‘good old days’ of Solon.
Fr. 259 describes the mono- genesis of Pericles’ consort Aspasia from ‘bitchery’ (μαχλοσίνη).  

By assimilating the mythological imagery of the Golden Age of Hesiod to the previous era of aristocratic influence at Athens, Cratinus again fashions Pericles as a tyrannical and lecherous Zeus who initiates a period of natural and economic depression and civic hardship. Even after his death, Pericles was ridiculed as the ‘Olympian’ for his provocation of war with Sparta in Aristophanes’ Acharnians (425 BCE), in which the hero Dicaeopolis blames Pericles for initiating the war in order to indulge the wishes of Aspasia (Ach. 509-56). Eupolis’ Demes (c. 412) introduced Pericles as one of four dead Athenian leaders (along with Solon, Miltiades, and Aristides) who were brought back to life to resurrect the flagging fortunes of Athens. Fr. 110 features Pericles questioning the play’s hero, Pyronides, about the health of his ‘bastard’ son.

Although the traditional comparison of Pericles to Zeus in the latter half of the fifth century shows Cratinus’ choice of Dionysus as the double of Pericles to be an uncommon one, the identification is less surprising if one considers certain overlaps in their public personas. While myth, epic, and tragedy showed a persecuted Dionysus whose legitimacy was constantly questioned, Old Comedy presented a Pericles whose true character and motives were carefully concealed. Comic discourse thus presented both figures as imposters whose public personae were inconsistent with their true natures.

James McGlew sums up best the spirit of Cratinus’ identification of Pericles with Dionysus when he remarks that the Judgment of Paris becomes a ‘comic Judgment of

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96 The term, whose meaning is clearer here than in a disputed passage of Homer (II. 24.30), is generally attributed to women.
98 See also Pax 605ff. for a similar charge. The poets also accuse Pericles of affairs with multiple women (See the reference to ‘the Olympian’s’ interest in a certain Corinthian woman named Chrysilla in Telecleides fr. 18).
The political subtext shifts the focus of the famous Judgment, traditionally considered one of the root causes of the Trojan War, from Paris’ choices and their consequences to an indictment of Pericles’ motives. Drawing upon Thucydidean and Plutarchian accounts, McGlew persuasively argues that the Judgment has the very specific aim of exposing the fraudulence of Pericles’ carefully constructed public persona, to which he owed his influence and success as leader of the demos: the Athenian statesman presented himself as a man of self-control, discipline, and a willingness to subordinate his personal interests and pleasures to the greater good of Athens. The Funeral Oration (Thuc. 2.34-46) and Plutarch’s biography furnish the primary historical evidence for Pericles’ cultivation of this public persona, which Cratinus’ Judgment exposes for its (alleged) hypocrisy. Therefore, McGlew maintains, it makes sense that Dionysus-Pericles declines the bribes of Hera and Athena (which offer advancement in public life) in favor of Aphrodite’s gift of private pleasure.

One need not accept the specifics of McGlew’s theory – Plutarch is sometimes unreliable – to see that the alleged hypocrisy of Pericles was the consistent target in caricatures of him by comic poets. The parodies of Aristophanes’ Acharnians and Peace corroborate the Cratinean perception that Pericles’ public policies were driven by his very particular private motives. A fragment from Hermippus’ Fates (fr. 47), which was produced at roughly the same time as Dionysalexandros, identifies Pericles and Dionysus partly on the grounds of such hypocrisy: accused of foregoing responsibility to fight in favor of fiery rhetoric, Pericles is compared to Dionysus as a leader of a thiasos of satyrs.

\[ \beta\alpha\sigma\iota\lambda\epsilon\upsilon \sigma\alpha\tau\iota\theta\omega\nu\, \tau\iota \, \pi\omicron\tau\iota\, \omega\upsilon \, \delta\theta\epsilon\lambda\iota\varsigma \]

102 Storey (2006) 118 sees the Paris/Pericles identification as a better fit for his theory that Dionysalexandros allegorizes not the Peloponnesian War, but the Samian War, which was undertaken to gratify Aspasia (See Plutarch, Per. 24). Olson (2007) 87 is uncertain.
δόρυ βαστάζειν, ἀλλὰ λόγους μὲν
περὶ τοῦ πολέμου δεινὸς παρέχει,...

‘King of Satyrs, why are you unwilling
to hold a spear but offer only clever speeches
about the war?’

This oft-quoted piece of contemporary evidence affirms the link between Pericles and Dionysus
for their shared cowardice and similar identity problems.\(^{103}\)

I earlier surveyed Schwarze’s extreme interpretation of the plot of *Dionysalexandros* as
an allegory of Pericles’ public career. While these conjectures can be useful in the exposure of
narrative patterns, such links between foreground and background very often remain pure
speculation without the support of more compelling evidence at a deeper structural level. In the
case of *Dionysalexandros*, this deeper level is furnished by the innate satyr/hero dynamic of satyr
play’s generic template, the foreground to which the political subtext serves as background. In
his study of the audience-reception of satyr play, Mark Griffith uncovers a unique socio-political
dynamic to the genre which would definitely accommodate the underlying assumption of the
political satire, that Dionysus is to Pericles as satyr chorus is to the Athenian *demos*. The
hypothesis seems to encourage this identification at the end of its synopsis of the
*Dionysalexandros*, when the satyrs vow never to abandon Dionysus as he is sent away to
punishment in disgrace. For, despite his controversial character, the *demos* repeatedly elected
Pericles as *strategos*.

Using a specific set of relevant criteria, Mark Griffith has concluded that the unique
dynamics of heroes and satyrs was such in satyr play that Athenian audiences would have
(consciously or unconsciously) identified to a considerable degree with the satyr chorus: like the

\(^{103}\) Olson (2007) 87 notes that this fr. 47 may be an intertextual reference to the *Dionysalexandros*.
audience of the theater, the satyrs themselves are engaged spectators, constantly watching and commenting on events taking place before them onstage; as far as they possess any identity, it is as a collective and never as individuals; finally, like their counterparts in the seats of the theater, the satyrs are guaranteed to survive the threat of the play and enjoy all benefits of others’ heroic actions. Aside from the functional resemblance, through which the external audience would cultivate a degree of social solidarity and *homonoia* with the internal audience, the Athenian spectators, as nominally representative of the *demos*, would recognize an even more fundamental, socio-political affinity with the satyrs: spectators and satyrs are similarly dependent communities, which look to an elite class of assertive, resourceful aristocrats to lead and preserve them through hardship and trial.\(^{104}\)

Although unlikely to yield fresh details about the political subtext of the *Dionysalexandros* beyond those basic associations between chorus and audience which have already been noted – e.g., the satyrs’ derision of Dionysus after the play’s parabasis (11-12) and their concluding vow of loyalty (41-4) – Griffith’s theory would seem to confirm that the pragmatics of the power dynamic which is innate to satyr play would accommodate this deeper level of political satire. If any new insight on *Dionysalexandros* can be acquired from Griffith’s discovery of satyr play’s innate ‘set of variations on the theme of dynasts and masses,’\(^{105}\) it is that the genre could naturally and effectively accommodate Cratinus’ topical agenda.

The first half of this chapter has argued that the substitution of Dionysus for Alexandros in the Judgment scene of the *Dionysalexandros* has meaning at three different levels of the play, beginning with the mythological burlesque of the notorious Judgment of the goddesses. As substitute for Alexandros, comic Dionysus apparently drove the plot through a series of events


\(^{105}\) Griffith (2002) 204.
articulating the central theme of failure, which will be further elaborated in the second half of this chapter. At the metatheatrical level of intergeneric competition, the substitution introduces a markedly comic persona of a familiar satyr play character. In addition, the substitution introduces an element of consequence into the pre-political, primordial world of satyr-play myth: Dionysus’ actions set in motion a larger narrative of causality which involves agents and time-frames beyond the immediate scope of the plot, which is the outermost boundary of the standard satyr play. The third level of Periclean satire, the political subtext, further develops the consequentiality of this comic appropriation of satyr-play myth by giving the events of the burlesque a topical dimension which negates, even contaminates, the genre’s natural apolitical setting. This politicized subtext exists parallel to the surface events of the burlesque and represents an unmistakable, competitive gesture in a metatheatrical sense. Even according to a minimalist interpretation of the Periclean subtext, the protagonist of the Dionysalexandros represents the most sophisticated comic characterization attested in evidence for Old Comedy: as a hybrid of two individuals (i.e., Dionysus and Alexandros) which impersonates a third (i.e., Pericles), the character of Dionysalexandros-Pericles collapses two semantic worlds at a metatheatrical level – comedy and contemporary Athens – while simultaneously assuming the role of a traditional third party (from epic) at a dramaturgical level.

III. Failure

Now that the interpretive framework of parasatyrism in the Dionysalexandros has been established, the second half of this chapter will examine three outstanding vignettes where cross-generic play appears visible from the hypothesis. While each is a unique and discrete episode of the plot, these focal points of comic appropriation are linked by the unifying theme of Dionysus’
failure. The first focal point is the confrontation between Alexandros and Dionysus after the Greek invasion of the Trojan countryside (Hyp. 25, 29): presumably incensed that an imposter has brought war on Troy in his name, Alexandros seeks out the culprit, who hides Helen in a basket before concealing himself as a ram in fear. The physical transformation of divinities is not infrequent in epic, tragedy, or satyr play. However, unlike the shape-shifting divinities of those genres, Dionysus’ particular disguise appears to have been of a markedly material kind, such as those featured in analogous comic scenes of deception and disguise. Once Alexandros has discovered Dionysus, he decides to turn him and Helen over to the Greeks and this leads to a second focal point of cross-generic play, the comic wedding. When Helen balks at Alexandros’ order that she be surrendered to the Greeks, he decides to keep her as his wife. The scene is a token instance of the gamos-ending of satyr play, which frequently concluded with the marriage of a hero and a chaste maiden, one of a number of traditional, cultural institutions affirmed in that genre’s happy endings. Cratinus inverts this motif by presenting this most notorious and accursed union of Greek culture as a paradigm of lawful and legitimate marriage. This comedification parodies the aristocratic institutions celebrated in satyr play. The gamos of Paris and Helen leads to a third and final locus of appropriation, the closure of the Dionysalexandros. Satyr play’s happy ending, with its matrimonial centerpiece, was the moment of greatest triumph for the hero who had conquered the villain, protected civilized values, and saved himself and the satyrs. The ‘happy ending’ of the Dionysalexandros, however, actually perverts the values extolled in the happy endings of satyr play: the ‘marriage’ is assumed to be the carnal, adulterous union of Alexandros and Helen; the amorous and vapid Alexandros, the traditional foil for heroism and masculinity in the epic tradition, preposterously enjoys the status of hero; and Dionysus and the satyrs are consigned to slavery, not liberation. The repeated failures of
Dionysus, a divinity notorious for exacting harsh vengeance against those who deny his power, present him as a paradigm of comic failure, which is consistent with his depiction in the larger context of this dissertation and its regular examination of the balance between success and failure in comic heroism as a key part of intergeneric discourse.

A. Disguise and Epiphany

The hypothesis records that Dionysus’ return from Sparta with Helen as his prize was followed by the Greek attack of the country and, even worse, by Alexandros’ search for his impersonator (25, 29). Dionysus accordingly hides Helen in a basket and turns himself into a ram for concealment (31-33), just the sort of slapstick humor and ‘trickery and fraud’ which made satyr drama amusing and fun. Play with the dress and appearance of Dionysus is generally fundamental to the god’s treatment in drama. Yet it is possible to say much more about the cross-generic dynamics of this particular moment of the play with costume and appearance, even though precisely what this consisted of is not easy to discern. It is clear that some sort of costume change takes place. Did the actor playing Dionysus change his appearance offstage before emerging, in a special leotard and mask, as a ram? Or did he (more likely) assume the sort of flimsy, layered, and transparent disguise which (textual and visual evidence suggests) comic heroes frequently donned? Disguise and (particularly) its failure are, as Taplin explains, obsessions of Old Comedy. As later chapters on South Italian vase-paintings and Aristophanic comedy will show, failure was in fact frequently the aim of disguise: the visual spectacle of an incongruous or transparent disguise and its eventual discovery was a basic comic ruse and an

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easy way to provoke laughs, especially when said disguise, although obvious to a theater audience, nonetheless succeeded in duping the play’s internal one. This privileging of comic timing seems particularly relevant to the disguised Dionysus, whose costumes were both effective and ineffective at different times in comedy, as *Frogs* will show (Chapter Five).\(^{109}\)

An illustration of a comic transformation on an Apulian bell-krater (c. 370 BCE) might give us a sense of the performance practices of comedy’s supernatural metamorphosis,\(^{110}\) which has hitherto been assumed for Dionysus’ disguise. The survival of this vase is all the more astonishing in light of its illustration’s very pertinence to the events of *Dionysalexandros*.\(^{111}\) The human/ram hybrid figure at center with the head of a ram but the body of a person depicts an actual hybrid being, rather than the more common conflation of costume elements on the person of the figure in question. The particular phrasing of *P.Oxy* 663, however, stresses a certain materiality, even artificiality, about the costume: ‘...[Dionysus] having changed (μετασκευάσας) himself into a ram, awaits what comes’ (31-33). As Compton-Engle has explained, comic characters who speak of putting disguises on themselves or others frequently employ the term ‘(ἐν)σκευάζω’\(^{112}\) to overtly signal the materiality of the action. If this is correct, the hypothesis may indicate that Dionysus’ method of concealment was more like a slipshod change, shoddy alteration, or incongruous layering of costume elements along the lines of what is featured in the Würzburg Telephus or the St. Agata Antigone, to be examined in Chapter Two. Further support for this view of the evidence of the *Dionysalexandros* is fr. 45, which is normally associated with this particular vignette of disguise:

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\(^{110}\) Revermann (2006) 300 first made the association between the relevant scene from Cratinus’ play and this illustration.

\(^{111}\) J. Paul Getty 96.AE.112.

ὁ δ’ ἡλιθίος ὃσπερ πρὸβατον θῆθη βῆ λέγων βαδίζει

‘The idiot carries on saying ‘baa baa’ like a sheep.’

Regardless of the identity of the speaker, whom scholars assume was either the chorus or an irritated Alexandros, the focalizer recognizes someone failing pretty spectacularly in an impersonation of a sheep, with the result that the human form remains visible beneath the disguise. Taplin’s shrewd reflection on comedy’s love of reveling in the failure of its own theatricality – in the putting on and the taking off – seems to ring true in the words of *P.Oxy* 663 (line 32).

Disguise and transformation in *Dionysalexandros* take place at the moment of direct interaction between divinities and mortals, of which Old Comedy is so fond, especially when such meetings show divinities and mortals as peers. But scenes of disguising and shape-changing divinities are otherwise ubiquitous in the Greek literary and mythological tradition, which observes particular conventions in its presentation of this *topos*. While most male divinities typically undergo transformation out of erotic passion and in pursuit of sex, when undertaken by immortal females it is usually in flight from unwanted sexual advances, a luxury which their mortal counterparts in tragedy can only wish for. The wish to become a bird or at least to fly like one in order to escape a present reality is often expressed by tragedy’s oppressed females, who contrast their present and future affliction with paradigmatic others before them.

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114 Rose (1956) 63 describes shape-changing as part of the pre-literary traditions of many peoples.
115 Buxton (2009) 158 lists some of the conquests by major divinities such as Zeus (Europa, Danae, Antioppe, Callisto, Alcmene), Poseidon (Theophane, Tyro), and Aphrodite (Anchises).
who have undergone actual metamorphoses.\footnote{116}{Forbes Irving (1990) 17. Cf. Cassandra contrasted with the nightingale (Ag. 1140ff.), Antigone with Niobe (Ant. 823ff.), the sisters of Phaethon (fr. 781.272-79), Helen and Callisto (Hel. 380), Creusa (Ion 796-9) and the chorus (Ion 1238-43) with birds; cf. also Or. 982-3, 1375-9.} Alienated divinities sometimes transform as part of a voluntary exile: in reaction to the loss of Persephone, the goddess Demeter wanders in sorrow to Eleusis in disguise as an old woman.\footnote{117}{H.H. Dem. 98ff.}

Encounters between disguised divinities and mortals first appear in Homer’s Troy and its battlefields, where gods and goddesses frequently assume human form – of a specific hero, maid, or a nameless individual – to convey a message, to perform a special task, to participate in battle, or for any number of other reasons. The pattern of gods wandering in disguise in order to test the piety and hospitality of mortals, as described to the suitors by the concealed Odysseus as early as Homer (Od. 17.485-7), is pre-literary. In such narratives, those who observed the rules of guest-friendship are rewarded, while those who denied them are punished.\footnote{118}{Foley (1994) 40 n. 90-97; Richardson (1974) 177 n. 93 explains that such myths account for the origins of many family cults. Conversely, a divinity who hides in fear of a hostile mortal, as Dionysus does in the face of an angry Alexandros in Dionysalexandros, is virtually unparalleled in extant archaic and classical literature, including comedy.\footnote{119}{An important exception is Dionysus’ flight from Lycurgus described at II. 6.130-140.}} Literary tradition treats such encounters between disguised deities and mortals as extremely dangerous for the latter, since failure to recognize a divinity can be deadly, as the myths of disguised gods visiting mortals attest. For a Homeric hero, the ability to recognize a god fighting for the enemy and the subsequent avoidance of a confrontation with said divinity is key to survival, as Murnaghan explains.\footnote{120}{Murnaghan (1987) 70.} For example, Patroclus, in ignorance of Apollo’s presence on the battlefield (Il. 16.789), is struck down by Hector with the god’s help.
A corollary of divine concealment is the latent destructive power of the divinity who has not been properly recognized. This connection between concealment and destruction is associated with many Olympians, but perhaps most with Dionysus, whose transformations of form frequently attend the overwhelming displays of power by which he vanquishes his enemies who contest his identity.\textsuperscript{121} Cratinus’ comedification of the transformation \textit{topos}, from a supernatural to a material phenomenon, signals a deeper conceptual conversion of divine power into comic weakness and abject humiliation: in comedy, Dionysus changes his form not to reveal himself, but to conceal himself. Insofar as his transformation reflects a degraded status, the comic Dionysus could even be said to have an affinity with the transformed mortals of tragedy. On rare occasions when such mortals do experience metamorphosis, it can represent humiliation (e.g., Io in \textit{Prometheus Bound}), the concretization of suffering (\textit{Tereus}), or severe, but justified, punishment (e.g., Pentheus, Cadmus, and Harmonia in \textit{Bacchae}). The transformation of each victim is precipitated either by a threatened or achieved transgression against the boundary between divine and mortal status. Comic Dionysus’ transgression, of course, was his violation of \textit{xenia} in the abduction of Helen, the ramifications of which he was comically ignorant of, despite his divinity. Murnaghan associates this mortal ignorance of divine powers at work with the tragic idea of \textit{hamartia}, as defined especially as a kind of ignorance of the true nature of the situation in which one is operating.\textsuperscript{122}

The comic reduction of Dionysus’ status in the disguise scene effects a corresponding elevation of the status of Alexandros, whose recognition and punishment of the perpetrator of the crime against \textit{xenia} may ironically associate him with the comedified version of the satyr play

\textsuperscript{122} Murnaghan (1987) 71 sees this gap in understanding between mortals and gods reflected in the comparable ignorance of the suitors of the \textit{Odyssey}, unaware of their coming destruction at the hands of the disguised Odysseus.
hero. Alexandros’ recognition of Dionysus inverts the very cosmic boundary between divine and human status which is imposed in the literary tradition to check impious and outrageous behavior by mortals. Instead, Cratinus shows that it is the mortal who (ostensibly) checks and avenges the hubristic behavior of the divine. Dionysus thus finds himself, a god, fall victim to the laws of the universe meant to preserve the gods’ superiority over mortals. A mortal seeks to punish a divinity who disguises himself in fear of that punishment, instead of a divinity in disguise punishing a mortal for transgression. This scene of Dionysalexandros seems to have reduced the epic/tragic pattern of disguised divinities as protectors of the cosmic and moral order to a vignette of comic slapstick in which mortal and god switch roles and the boundary between spheres of existence is comically inverted.

B. Comic Marriage

After Dionysus’ exposure, Alexandros commands some unknown others to surrender him and Helen to the marauding Greeks. When Helen objects (ὀκνούσης), Alexandros pities her and decides ‘to keep her as his wife’ (ὡς γυναιξ’ ἐξων ἑπικατέχει). This ‘marriage’ motif very likely constitutes another generic overlap between Old Comedy and satyr play in the Dionysalexandros. Satyr play’s frequent dealings with the amorous encounters between gods or heroes and mortal women often concluded with some sort of γάμος between the two.123 Like so much else in the genre, however, the institution of γάμος is narrowly defined as a socially and generically approved union of a hero and a desirable, virginal, ideal female. This paradigm

offers one of the clearest reflections of the cultural agenda of satyr play, whose stories by and large affirm the noble values, ideals, and institutions of the traditional aristocracy. The union of the hero and maiden after the resolution of the central conflict presents marriage and sexual union as the just reward of traditional heroism: the (always) chaste maiden is a prize reserved for the toiling hero, instead of for the childish, hedonistic, unreliable, and plebeian satyrs, who seek only the carnal aspects of marriage. The social status of the satyrs, characterized by perpetual inaction and dependency, disqualifies them from enjoying such a marriage, the rights to which fall to the noble, restrained, and civically virtuous hero. The hero acknowledges his civic obligations, one of which is to produce legitimate offspring, who will eventually found the important dynasties of Greek culture, according to generic norms.\textsuperscript{124}

The hypothesis of \textit{Dionysalexandros} seems to indicate that the real Alexandros, after dispensing with Dionysus, enjoys the marital benefits normally afforded to the victorious hero of satyr play. Despite its clear departure from literary and mythological norms, this scene has attracted remarkably little comment from scholars of the play. For the moment, I leave aside the implications of this unorthodox marriage for our understanding of the characters of Dionysus and Paris in order to instead focus upon Cratinus’ implicit exaltation of Paris and Helen’s affair as representative of the wholesome, socially approved, boundary-reinforcing unions celebrated in satyr play. The apparent idealization of the most notorious affair of Greek culture should raise the suspicions of any reader who is familiar with the Greek literary tradition.

Of the many elopements in Greek myth and literature, it is difficult to imagine a more notorious pairing than that of Helen and Paris. The former’s central role in the death and destruction of the Trojan War, the greatest event in Greek history, made her the most reviled

\textsuperscript{124} Griffith (2002) 203.
woman in Greek thought. While Homer avoids directly assigning blame to her, nearly every reference to Helen in tragedy identifies her as a lust-crazed, malignant source of evil and anything but the paradigmatic chaste, helpless maiden of satyr play.\textsuperscript{125} As the quintessential, manipulative adulteress, Helen is the antithesis of culturally approved femininity, and the Greeks identified her very birth with the beginning of evils (ἀρχὴ κακίν). The hypothesis may even be alluding to this traditional character when it records that she ‘objected’ (ὄχνούσης: 37) to being surrendered, with Dionysus, to the Greeks.\textsuperscript{126}

Tradition is even more critical of Alexandros, whom the \textit{Iliad} depicts not only as anti-heroic, but the very antithesis of its dominant heroic values. Paris, unlike Helen, is held responsible for the war to the extent that he is hated even by the Trojans (Cf. \textit{Il.} 3.454ff.), his own countrymen. When he first appears in \textit{Iliad} 3, his boasting and cowardice make him something of an epic precursor to the \textit{miles gloriōsus}. While Greeks and Trojans die on the battlefield because of his hubris, Paris himself remains in bed with Helen, the only hero of the entire poem who engages in sexual intercourse (3.446ff.), and during the day, at that. The patronage of Aphrodite places Alexandros in the unusual ethical framework of the lover, which is diametrically opposed to that of the poem’s dominant value-system, the warrior.\textsuperscript{127} In Homer, the ignoble Paris, the ‘childless seducer of foreign women,’ is a frequent foil for his heroic brother, the family man and Trojan champion, Hector.\textsuperscript{128}

In light of Homer’s unfavorable treatments of Alexandros and Helen, it is only natural that he would present their union in unmistakably negative terms. He accomplishes this by

\textsuperscript{125} Wright (2005) 117, 120.
\textsuperscript{126} This is Bakola’s translation. Whether ‘ὀχνείω’ conveys ‘fear’ or ‘cowardice’ (\textit{LSJ}), the notion of guilt seems to be implied.
\textsuperscript{127} Nickel (1997) 45ff.
\textsuperscript{128} Griffin (1980) 26.
(among other things) contrasting it with the legitimate marriage of Hector and Andromache, as the wrong and right way for a husband and wife to conduct themselves (Cf. Il. 6.492ff.). The unflattering portrait of the two early in Iliad 6 as a squabbling and unhappy couple is a negative prelude to the touching farewell of Hector and Andromache at the end of the same book. Griffin shrewdly recognized that the existence of Astyanax, the infant son of Hector and Andromache, reflects the moral value judgment assumed by this contrast: the child underscores the authentic bond between Hector and Andromache. Because Paris and Helen have only a sordid affair, their relationship is sterile, barren, and incapable of producing life.

Tradition thus presented the union of Paris and Helen as antithetical to the pure, guiltless, and noble marriage of satyr play, which promotes fertility, aristocratic values, and social cohesion. While the structural placement of the ‘marriage’ motif at the end of the Dionysalexandros is consistent with the plot of satyr play, which concludes on a high note with such marriages as those of Poseidon and Amymone (Amymone), Dictys and Danae (Dictyulcoï), and even Menelaus and Helen (Helenes Gamos), its moral inferiority has a greater affinity with the ‘marriages’ of Old Comedy.

It would be an understatement to say that satyr play and Old Comedy have different conceptions of marriage. Marriage in Old Comedy is a rich but hitherto unexplored topic. In Aristophanes, marital union is generally understood as a carnal and sexual relationship, rather than one of permanence and stability. It frequently (but not exclusively) appears when the triumphant hero departs toward the sexual gratification which his victory has assured. Only rarely does the genre depict marriage as a relationship of any legitimacy or permanence,

129 Griffin (1977) 43.
131 Griffin (1977) 43.
132 See Ach.1198ff., Eccl.1151-4; for an example of sexual fulfillment eluding the hero, see Wasps 1364ff.
although carnality is still foregrounded in those cases also. In the Aristophanic corpus, *Peace* concludes with Trygaeus’ almost satyr play-style marriage to Harvest, to the performance of the hymeneal. Peisetaurus’ victorious acquisition of ‘Basileia,’ who symbolizes his appropriation of the cosmic supremacy formerly held by the Olympians, also takes place within a marriage frame. Much of Cratinus’ innovative *Pytine* is framed as a domestic dispute between the hero, who is also the poet, and his wife, ‘Comedy,’ the embodiment of the genre.  Pherecrates apparently also allegorized poetic production as marriage in his *Cheiron*, where at least one fragment features ‘Music’ herself complaining of her sexual mistreatment by certain Athenian artists of the ‘New Music’ (fr. 155). ‘Comic marriage’ is thus more often than not depicted as something ugly, bodily, and impermanent. But in those rare cases when institutional marriage in a stricter sense does appear in comedy, and is characterized by stability and quasi-legitimacy, it always allegorizes the fulfillment of the hero’s project.

Despite the limitations of the fragmentary evidence, the comic thrust of the satyric marriage of the *Dionysalexandros* is apparent in Cratinus’ brazen attempt to cast the most notorious couple of Greek myth in a generically positive light, so that their adulterous union, in every way antithetical to the values of civilized marriage, constitutes an ironic affirmation of it. Cratinus’ distortion and comedification of this highly recognizable feature of satyr play is an unmistakable expression of intergeneric discourse both indicative of Old Comedy’s aggressive style of appropriation and expressive of its compulsive superiority complex.

C. Closure and Heroism

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133 For such female personifications in Old Comedy, see Hall (2000) and (2006), as well as the discussion of Chapter Two.
The plot synopsis of the *Dionysalexandros* concludes with Dionysus, accompanied by the satyrs, being handed over to the Greeks, presumably for punishment (40-44). My final remarks consider (what appears to be) the lasting generic import of the few details of this brief scene, to underscore both Dionysus’ failure and the corresponding elevation of the heroic status of Alexandros. The failure of Dionysus is a key inversion because he, maligned as an imposter in the serious mythological tradition, will eventually win out over his enemies. Cratinus may also be reacting to Dionysus’ legendary power over women in that same mythological tradition. The comedy mocks Dionysus here as a failed suitor, a treatment which strikingly contrasts with his reputation for exerting powerful influence over not only his love interests (e.g., Ariadne), but also over the primal urges of the fairer sex.

*Dionysalexandros* provides an early and significant comic paradigm of failure which departs from the norm of comic heroism almost always closing out the play with success. A full understanding of this particular closure, however, ultimately depends upon a key piece of information which the hypothesis does not provide: did the closure of Cratinus’ play imply that the Trojan War still proceeded because of Alexandros’ final decision to keep Helen or was the conflict averted by the surrender of Dionysus to the Greeks? It goes without saying that each outcome would have equal probability in a play of Old Comedy. Since full closures which tie up all loose ends and avoid the open-endedness of tragedy are the generic norm in both satyr play and Old Comedy, it seems very likely that *Dionysalexandros* concluded with a boldly comic revision of the historical record. The ending of the play may have shown that the Trojan War was avoided by the tactful appeasement of the Greeks with the punishment of the culprit.
Dionysus, despite the fact that the original dilemma, Helen’s rape, remains unrectified.\textsuperscript{134} In its penchant for alternate worlds, comedy would not let such a detail stand in the way of a highly original (and humorous) historical revision.\textsuperscript{135} On the other hand, the continued threat of Greek invasion would be more congruent with the implicit criticisms of the Periclean satire, which blamed Pericles for bringing war on his people like the comic Dionysus and the Trojan Alexandros (of the traditional myth).

However, it is possible that the averted-war ending could still accommodate the anti-Periclean political subtext: the fact that the Greeks have already begun their campaign against Troy when Alexandros attempts to locate the imposter preserves the fundamental detail that the Greeks invaded Troy because Helen was stolen. Cratinus displays the depth of his originality by applying comic logic to arguably the most well-known of Greek myths: the Trojan War is averted, not by rectifying the original problem and returning Helen to her husband, but by making the comic buffoon a scapegoat. This outcome is consistent with the spirit of comic logic underlying Aristotle’s description of the style of comic endings, ‘where those who are deadliest enemies in the plot, such as Orestes and Aegisthus, exit at the end as new friends, and no one dies at anyone’s hands...’\textsuperscript{136} What more radical and extreme an ending could be envisaged than a truce between the Greeks and Trojans, where Dionysus, who has no connection to the saga, is the greatest loser? The simple fact of the hypothesis’ reticence on the possible consequences of

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\textsuperscript{134} Full closure in satyr play normally consisted of a happy ending punctuated by the hero’s victory over the villain and sometimes the acquisition of a maiden. While the happy ending is also common in Old Comedy, the more frequent result is a non open-ended closure in which the hero achieves at least some level of success.

\textsuperscript{135} Other creative revisions of myth were likely featured in Cratinus’ \textit{Plouti} and \textit{Cheirones}, which appeared to have identified Pericles as a tyrannical divinity whose authoritarianism led to a decay of contemporary Athens, which was very similar to that of the ‘Ages of Man’ myth in Hesiod.

\textsuperscript{136} Ar., \textit{Poet.} 1453a36-9. Aristotle’s thinking is extremely relevant to much of the material in this dissertation and thus reappears multiple times in the ensuing chapters.
Alexandros’ decision to keep Helen increases the likelihood that there were none to speak of in the performance of the complete play.

A natural consequence of Dionysus’ degradation by the end of the Dionysalexandros is the ascendance of Alexandros as a parasatyric hero, for he fulfills two important criteria of satyr play’s heroism, victory over maiden and villain. Dionysus, by extension, is the (qualified) villain. The god’s poor performance throughout the play, as imposter, lecher, and coward, would have effectively highlighted the heroic qualities of assertion and courage in the wronged Alexandros, who, like his satyr play counterpart, sought to punish the villain’s offense against traditional values: Dionysus, of course, has sinned against xenia, the most fundamental aristocratic value. Alexandros’ heroic assertiveness is thrown into sharp relief by Dionysus’ cowardly disguise. Like his treatment of the ‘marriage’ motif, Cratinus’ elevation of the notoriously unheroic Alexandros to the status of satyr-play hero represents another subtle gesture of comic appropriation.

While Alexandros’ anti-heroic status was previously discussed, one final aspect of the Trojan prince deserves particular emphasis. Paris’ primary narrative function in the Iliad is as a foil to the heroism of others, in particular to that of his brother, Hector. Cratinus’ Alexandros is likewise a foil, but from the opposite perspective, to underscore the even greater cowardice and ineptitude of another, Dionysus. Despite what seems to be Cratinus’ favorable (or at least more balanced) depiction of Alexandros in his comedy, the character’s negative associations in the Homeric tradition still have the effect of making Dionysus appear all the more unheroic.

137 Meltzer (1990) 274 noticed that Paris duels Menelaus in the third book, while Achilles duels Hector in the third last book; in each case, the conclusion of the war is thought to depend on the result of each duel, while the wives of both Trojans witness the final outcome; both Trojans, at first, also run away from the fight. The key difference between the brothers is that Hector eventually fights and dies while Alexandros, who is unworthy of divine favor, fights and magically escapes.
This characterization is relevant to the political subtext of *Dionysalexandros*, which implies that just as Dionysus was handed over to the Greeks to be punished for his transgressions, so will Pericles for his own iniquity.

**Conclusion**

*Dionysalexandros* provides ample testimony of the highly original thinking which earned Cratinus his reputation for innovative poetry in antiquity. As the sole evidence for mythological burlesque in the fifth century and, even more importantly, for Old Comedy’s sustained intertextual engagement with its lesser-known rival, satyr play, *Dionysalexandros* is a pivotal text in the evolution of the comic genre. The primary aim of this chapter was to formulate an account of comic appropriation in *Dionysalexandros* as a springboard for the following chapters on intergeneric engagement elsewhere in the surviving evidence of Old Comedy. The fragmentary evidence for *Dionysalexandros* suggests that Cratinus’ ‘comedifying’ process entails evoking multiple generic hallmarks of satyr play – the chorus, the distinction between old and new services, captivity and bondage, trickery and fraud, the amorous adventures of a god and mortal woman, disguises and transformations – in order to modify or recast them according to generic comic norms. *Dionysalexandros* does more than stress the natural affinities of Old Comedy and satyr play, it attests to the innate impulse of Old Comedy (and not just Aristophanes) to adopt and comedify both of its primary poetic competitors.

The visual effect of the satyrs – either in pure generic form or with comedic modifications like ugliness and the phallos – alongside figures of Old Comedy would have afforded Cratinus an easy means of announcing and reinforcing the basic thrust of the cross-generic project of *Dionysalexandros* constantly and effortlessly. The notorious Judgment of the
goddesses, originally preserved in the Epic Cycle, provides the context for Cratinus to employ one of the most common ruses of the comic repertoire, substitution. Although impossible to prove, Cratinus’ insertion of a comic Dionysus into satyr play may have also been a master stroke of generic rivalry, since Dionysus in the flesh may have had a less-prominent role in satyr play but was frequent enough in Old Comedy. Beyond the burlesque surface level of the play, Dionysus is, of course, also the peg on which hangs the play’s famous political subtext, alluded to at the close of the hypothesis. The Judgment of the goddesses functions as a mythological vehicle of Periclean satire and becomes the Judgment of Pericles, which adds a further conceptual level to the burlesque surface events. Although the frequency of its activation is impossible to know, this political subtext, which identified Dionysus as a double of Pericles, was at least periodically invoked to indict the Athenian politician for his similar lechery, cowardice, and hypocrisy.

The remains of the hypothesis suggest failure as a possible unifying theme of Dionysus’ misadventures following his successful impersonation of Pericles. This is most evident from the second identifiable locus of comic appropriation, a literary motif with a rich pre-fifth-century pedigree – disguise, transformation, and metamorphosis. Instead of a supernatural shifting of shape, which was frequent enough in satyr play, Dionysus’ inept attempt to escape the real Alexandros through (what was almost certainly) material ‘transformation’ into a ram offered a textbook instance of the ‘failed disguise’ of Old Comedy. The complete impotence of the god reduces him to the humiliating posture of a mortal victim of tragedy and inverts the traditional cosmic arrangement which such encounters between mortal and divine inevitably reinforced. The crowning irony of the comic Dionysus’ particular failure to conceal himself is the god’s
traditional use of disguise, in myth, as a harbinger of overwhelming, ferocious displays of force against his enemies.

According to the hypothesis, the comic appropriation of the Dionysalexandros appears to have continued with a comic reinvention of the adulterous union of Alexandros and Helen as a paradigm of the legitimate marriages celebrated in satyr play. This burlesque wedding of Paris and Helen, the antithesis of Greek matrimonial values, must have also been read on the political level of the play as (somehow) a direct criticism of the womanizing Pericles. Cratinus subverts the civilized ideal of the gamos-ending by substituting a sordid, adulterous, and sterile affair for the culturally approved, dynastic unions of heroes and maidens which frequently concluded satyr plays. As the satyr play gamos is the reward for the hero’s (presumed) defeat of the villain who threatens civilized, aristocratic institutions, its enjoyment has the effect of raising the status of Alexandros while degrading that of Dionysus. The play’s initial reversal of the comic substitution of Dionysus for Alexandros is ultimately reversed at its close.

Although some interpretations of the evidence require more conjecture than others, one point is clear from the evidence of Dionysalexandros: there was anything but a ‘firewall’ between Old Comedy and satyr play. Dobrov is generally correct to say that the idea of ‘the city’ was the boundary between Old Comedy and satyr play, which is temporally and geographically removed from contemporary Athens. But boundaries are only going to be violated in Old Comedy. Dionysalexandros confirms as much: one dimension of its performance, the Periclean satire, constantly violates this boundary. The topical subtext contaminates satyr play’s distinctively apolitical world in an aggressive movement of intergeneric competition which is Old Comedy’s earliest (extant) sustained attempt to make

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138 The expression belongs to Dobrov (2007) 251, who asserts the inviolability of the boundary between satyr play and Old Comedy.
another genre’s territory its own. The substitution of a comic Dionysus, whose persona distinctly belonged to Old Comedy, may be another self-conscious appropriative gesture on the part of Cratinus. Generic rivalry is also visible on the surface of the burlesque, whose primary events – disguise, marriage, heroism – are filtered through a comic lens. As the earliest statement of competitive intergeneric discourse in the fifth century, *Dionysalexandros* demonstrates how Old Comedy, like an envious child, blatantly and ostentatiously strove to exercise its generic prerogative and herald its own potential and virtues as mass entertainment.

It has become something of a commonplace for scholars to acknowledge the tentative nature of their conclusions when dealing with fragmentary evidence. Even though a sufficient amount of the *Dionysalexandros* survives to merit some confidence in the conclusions here reached, it still must be acknowledged that some aspects of these conclusions can likewise only be tentative until more evidence appears. The innovative parasatyrism of *Dionysalexandros* shows how Old Comedy could do more than create alternative worlds within the confines of its own genre, it could invade those of its rivals in order to expand the horizon of its dramatic possibilities. As the first extant specimen of sustained cross-generic play in Old Comedy, *Dionysalexandros* suggests that pre-Aristophanic appropriation was motif and theme-based and, generally speaking, an engagement of genre as opposed to an engagement of genre as expressed by a particular poet, as in Aristophanic paratragedy. *Dionysalexandros* gives us a reliable glimpse of primary comic strategies which will be explored throughout this project, including substitution and disguise (and material juxtaposition), as well as some of the fundamental themes of comic appropriation, such as failure and comic marriage. Perhaps most importantly, Cratinus’ play and its multiple conceptual levels attests to the poetic sophistication which comic appropriation can achieve in performance. There is enough evidence to believe that
Dionysalexandros was both mythological burlesque and a political satire. Much of the uncertainty felt by traditional scholarship on this point concerns not whether the political subtext of the play was activated in performance, but the extent to which it was integrated into the parasatyrism as a whole. While it is impossible to know how frequently Dionysus-Pericles-Alexandros communicated on multiple discursive levels, it seems beyond doubt that he did so at least some of the time.
**Chapter 2: Visualizing the Comic - Rudeness, Revision, and Rivalry in Attic and South Italian Red-Figure Vase-paintings**

**Introduction**

Some of the best evidence for the social, cultural, and intellectual realities of the classical era is not actually preserved in written texts of the period, but rather in the timeless images of Athens’ most popular export, red-figure pottery. For over one-hundred years, Athens monopolized the pottery market of the Greek world and beyond by producing pots illustrated with everything from the heroic labors of the mythological past to the everyday life of the fifth-century polis. Yet one of the most quintessentially Athenian institutions of all, drama, almost never appears. Very few pots preserve images with any clear or open theatrical association, even fewer show traces of the performance of Old Comedy. A small group of about fourteen comic vases from Athens, datable to the period 420-390 BCE, constitutes a unique deviation from the aesthetically beautiful, idealized figures which were the proper subject matter of Athenian vase-painters. This group of rare vases seems all the more significant in light of an earlier collection of twenty or so pots (560-480 BCE), which feature exotically dressed komasts (with pipers) who are thought to be somehow connected to the origins of comedy.\(^{139}\) It is generally unknown why dramatic topics were occluded from vase-paintings, but some good theories have been advanced. Robin Osborne holds that the particularity of the dramatic performance militated against the art-form’s desire to remain ‘imaginatively fluid.’\(^{140}\) Oliver Taplin sees drama as too political of a subject for painters who preferred the everyday and the religious.\(^{141}\) Csapo and Slater think the evidence is right before our eyes: since they ignored the overt markers of dramatic subjects in

\(^{139}\) Csapo and Miller (2007) 8-18.  
\(^{141}\) Taplin (1997) 89.
order to preserve the illusion of the stage, painters present only a mythological scene rather than the performance of one.\footnote{Csapo and Slater (1995) 53.}

Thanks mainly to the efforts of a persistent few, it is now generally accepted that South Italian painters of the fourth century observed a much broader definition of what subjects were appropriate for representation, among which were scenes directly inspired by dramatic performance.\footnote{Green (1991); Csapo (1986), (2010) Chapters 1 and 2; Taplin (1993) 6-11, (1997), (2007).} The greatest credit for this shift in thinking goes to T.B.L. Webster, who in 1948 first argued for the probability that many such paintings reflect actual performances of drama, even Attic comedies, against the then-dominant view, first articulated by Körte, that Old Comedy’s topicality prevented its re-performance beyond Attica.\footnote{Webster (1948) 19; Körte (1893) 62, followed by Pickard-Cambridge (1927) 268.} Now we know that over a hundred vases from an estimated total of 20,000, which were catalogued, attributed, and dated by Trendall, explicitly signal theatrical associations through an established language of generic visual markers. Kossatz-Deissmann’s initial publication of the famous ‘Würzburg Telephus’ three decades later provoked what would become the seminal responses of Taplin and Csapo.\footnote{Kossatz-Deissmann (1980), Taplin (1987), Csapo (1986).} Publishing simultaneously, these two scholars convincingly argued that this so-called ‘phlyax’ vase actually reflected an extant Aristophanic production, the \textit{Thesmophoriazusae}. Here was the first clear evidence for the survival of Athenian-style Old Comedy beyond fifth-century Attica.

This chapter has two aims. The first is to survey those comic vase-paintings from the fifth and fourth century which furnish rare evidence for Old Comedy’s performative interaction with rival genres of the stage. Theater-inspired iconography not only affirms the comic strategies of cross-generic play in extant evidence of Old Comedy, it also supplements our knowledge of those strategies which are either imperfectly preserved or missing altogether from
such evidence. In addition to vases which are indisputably theater-inspired, this overview will also include vases described as paraiconographic, a term for images parodying some established and (perhaps more importantly) recognizable narrative of serious vase-painting. Even those vases which cannot be proven to reflect actual performances of comedy nonetheless reveal strategies of comic appropriation which complement the surviving textual evidence. My overall aim in the investigation of comic iconography is to demonstrate that such visual evidence reflects, confirms, and explains the strategies by which Old Comedy engaged its performative rivals on the fifth-century stage.

This chapter will show that both comic media, performance and painting, possess a similar brand of poetics and thus signal parody, or ‘imitation with a difference,’ in analogous ways – through ugliness, disproportion, comic inversion, etc. Such comic strategies are apparent at both the micro-level, through materialism, physicality, and reversal and substitution, and at the macro-level, through the defeat of expectations, counterfactual discourse, and direct generic cross-fertilization. It is worth noting that each of these strategies of comic iconography has already been encountered in the fragmentary evidence of Cratinus’ Dionysalexandros. A central assumption of this chapter, which will be demonstrated throughout, is that the ‘comic mechanics’ of the iconographic medium are organic, interrelated, and analogous to the comic strategies of intergeneric engagement on-stage. For example, the basic visual expression of Old Comic intertextuality – Comic Business in its most sophisticated form – ultimately depends upon comic costume and the genre’s basic interest in visual materialism and reification. Materialism and reification are, of course, effortlessly displayed on the ceramic surfaces of Attic and South Italian vases.

146 E.g., Dionysus’ disguise (materialism), Periclean satire (counterfactual experimentation), juxtaposition of the comic convention and satyr chorus (generic cross-fertilization), etc.
Insofar as it privileges the thinking which drives comic intertextuality and its performative mechanics, my approach to iconographic material is not vastly different from the central principle of Webster’s own early attempt to link South Italian material to Old Comedy. Webster argued that comic iconography and Old Comedy share what others have shown to be a salient principle of comic intertextuality, the principle of reversal, in which traditional mythical and literary narratives are humorously overturned contrary to expectations.147 This concept of reversal is that which is articulated by Aristotle in his famous reflection on comic endings, where those ‘...who are deadliest enemies in the plot, such as Orestes and Aegisthus, exit at the end as new friends, and no one dies at anyone’s hands.’148 Therefore, vases need not necessarily possess any demonstrable link to actual comic performance in order to be relevant to the current chapter’s aim of mapping comic strategies because the visual medium of illustration operates according to the same (or similar) poetics as those of the stage. Like its theatrical counterpart, paratragedy, the paraiconography of non-theatrical vases can improve our understanding of the mechanics of comic intertextuality by disclosing the evidence of its analogous interactions, in visual terms, with literary, iconographic, and cultural traditions. Important confirmation of the potential value of such iconographic evidence to a superior understanding of fifth-century drama is the growing frequency with which it is classed with fragmentary textual evidence even by philologically trained scholars.149 Indeed, a scene-specific vase-painting, as a visual ‘fragment’

147 Webster (1948) 23.
148 Poetics 1453a36-9.
149 The expression ‘philologically trained’ is not intended to imply anything pejorative. Kassel-Austin (vol. 8) most interestingly cites the ‘New York Goose Play’ vase, by the Tarporley painter, as textual evidence for its preservation of the (inscribed) speech of the characters depicted (Adespota fr. 57). In his recent Loeb edition, Greek Epic Fragments From the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC, Martin West includes Pausanius’ description (frr. 15-27 [frr. 10-18 B] =10.25.5-27.2) of Polygnotus’ extensive murals in the Cnidian lesche at Delphi, which were allegedly based on the Cyclic Epic Little Iliad, as a legitimate fragment of the latter epic.
of a play, enjoys a relationship to its whole (the performance) which is analogous to that of a literary fragment and its complete text.\textsuperscript{150}

As I mentioned above, the humor of all vases examined in the current chapter lays bare various conceptual strategies which are analogous to those deployed during intergeneric engagement in the texts of Old Comedy. As the most significant iconographic evidence for play-based comic intertextuality, the Würzburg Telephus will be considered in the first section, along with the ‘Berlin Heracles.’ Their visual emphasis on costume, disguise, and layered-style paratragedy – all significant, recurrent themes of their respective narrative frames – confirms their paradigmatic status in the plays to which they belong. Narrative reversal organizes the mythological burlesques of the group considered in the second section, each of which exhibits this idea in varying degrees of complexity: whether through the reversal of gender-based power dynamics (‘Ajax and Cassandra’), or the simple exchange of dramatic roles (‘Oedipus, Creon, and the Sphinx,’ ‘St. Agata Antigone’), or the anti-climactic revision of myth (‘Priam and Neoptolemus’), the mythological burlesque of each vase engages extensively with a traditional iconographic and/or literary narrative in sophisticated ways. The third and final section focuses on iconographic evidence for the proper topic of this entire project, cross-generic fertilization expressed in direct and immediate confrontations between Old Comedy and tragedy and satyr play. Three vases provide visual evidence for Old Comedy’s face-to-face engagement with its primary generic rivals, with greater or lesser clarity.\textsuperscript{151} These vases confirm not only visual strategies of intergeneric communication, through strict vs. visual juxtaposition, but also (esp. in the case of the ‘Choregoi’ Vase) that paratragedy and parasatyrism were frequently contextualized in polis institutions. The frequent use of institutions as frames or interfaces for

\textsuperscript{150} Most (1997) VI-VIII.  
cross-generic play in Aristophanic comedy in particular will be a central topic of concern in the play-based chapters to follow.

I. Costume and Disguise

It seems most appropriate to begin this discussion with what is arguably the most famous South Italian vase. The ‘Würzburg Telephus,’ a bell-krater (c. 380 BCE) illustrated by the Schiller painter and published in 1980, preserves the most convincing evidence of a scene-specific illustration of fifth-century Attic comedy. Its existence undermines a pair of traditional assumptions about the performance of Old Comedy beyond Athens. The first assumption is that performance-based iconography on South Italian vases was not influenced by Attic drama directly, but indirectly through either the so-called ‘phlyax’ plays – a vague performance genre native to Italy whose existence, though alleged since antiquity, is now questioned – or an unidentifiable genre which was similar to Old Comedy. The second assumption, as noted in the opening remarks above, was that Old Comedy’s topicality would have naturally limited its appeal as a marketable export beyond Athens to other parts of the Greek world, which would have had little interest in the re-performance of material whose cultural and political context was unknown or (at best) vague. Both claims were considerably weakened (if not killed off) by the simultaneous publications of Eric Csapo and Oliver Taplin, who convincingly argued that the image of the Würzburg Telephus is in fact scene-specific and inspired by an actual performance of an extant Aristophanic play, Thesmophoriazusae. The iconographic details themselves bear out the claims of these two scholars (Figure 1). The left

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152 RVAp 65 (4a).
153 See Taplin (1993) 48-54 for the development of the term ‘phlyax.’
side of the image features a woman holding a large drinking vessel and moving to the right toward a second figure. The woman is barefoot, wears an ugly mask, a long robe, and a headdress which hangs from the back. Staring straight ahead from the center-right position stands a figure with stubble on his face, although he is otherwise feminine in appearance: he wears a woman’s belted chiton to his knees, a female headband, and has no beard. With left leg kneeling on an altar, he holds in his right hand a raised sword and in his left hand a wineskin with two appendages, which are curiously fitted out with slippers. A mirror appears suspended in the top portion of image between the two figures.

The first published analysis of the vase recognized its dependence on the famous parody of Euripides’ *Telephus* in Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazusae* (See Figure 2 for an example of the serious iconography of the Telephus story) and that the man at the altar was none other than Inlaw, a comic hero of that play, at the critical point of his ‘sacrifice’ of the ‘baby’ of one of his female antagonists, the worshipper named ‘Mika’ (380, 689). Despite her acknowledgment of its dramatic provenance, Kossatz-Deissmann nonetheless continued to maintain that the painter was not influenced by the Aristophanic play directly, but by an intervening phlyax production loosely based upon the comedy.\(^{155}\) Her justification was that the Aristophanic text offered no parallel to the headband of the beardless figure, which (for her) was proof enough of the indirectness of the Aristophanic influence. Csapo, however, later identified the headband as the *κεφαλὴ περίζτυκτος* provided by the effete Agathon in an earlier scene (257ff.), and added this to other significant points of agreement between *Thesmophoriazusae* and the image. Other parallels between image and text include the suppliant’s refuge at the altar, the threats against the wineskin with its Persian shoes, the woman with the drinking vessel, and the combination of the mirror and

\(^{155}\) Kossatz-Deissmann (1980) 290.
splotches of stubble on Inlaw’s face – pointed visual references to the earlier toiletry scene (385) where Inlaw was traumatically dressed and shaved.156

While the excellent cases made by Csapo and Taplin for the identification of the Würzburg Telephus have been more or less accepted, some scholars are reluctant to see direct Aristophanic influence because of certain discrepancies between image and text.157 Far from being evidence for additional literary and iconographic influences, such minor discrepancies confirm both the limits of the physical medium and the selective style of treatment which is characteristic of (and inevitable in) scene-specific vase-painting. Artists can and do selectively emphasize and/or omit details of their ‘models’ in the interests of economy and visual coherence: painter risks confusing viewer by crowding the visual field with an excess of objects and figures or by attempting to remain completely faithful to a three-dimensional performance within the limits of a two-dimensional frame. Such selectivity of the painter, who attempts to tell the story ‘his way,’ has been usefully discussed with reference to two other scene-specific South Italian vase-paintings, the ‘Cleveland Medea’ and the ‘Berlin Heracles.’158

Oliver Taplin has devised a useful guideline for ultimately determining the provenance of the Würzburg Telephus and other potential performance-related vases like it. The degree of corresponsion between the details of the narrative of a painting and the details of a particular play upon which it may draw must be assessed by the viewer in each specific case.159 At the

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157 Austin and Olson (2004) lxxvii point to such discrepancies as the absence of Inlaw’s shoes and phallos and the brush set around the altar by the women – all part of the Aristophanic narrative – to argue that the image is something other than a simple depiction of a South Italian performance. Also dubious, they argue, is the physical condition of Inlaw’s face, which (they allege) could not have been so badly shaven if he succeeded in passing himself off as a woman at the festival.
158 Cleveland Medea: Revermann (2005) 8 and (2010) 69-78; Berlin Heracles: Csapo (2010) 56: ‘...the Berlin Heracles demonstrates that vase-painters are generally less interested in accurately documenting every detail of a performance than in producing an attractive, clear and recognizable image.’
same time, final adjudication of the theatrical origins (or absence thereof) of a given vase-
painting cannot simply be a question of tallies, but must also take into account the artist’s
placement of emphasis. Where such correspondences between image and text exist, and whether
knowledge of the underlying dramatic production enriches the viewing experience, are the most
important questions to consider. The details of a vase like the Würzburg Telephus are particular
enough that one can assume that it was painted with the aid of firsthand knowledge of a
*Thesmophoriazusae* performance *at some point* in the image-production process. This
knowledge of the comic production need not have belonged to the painter himself, but could
have been conveyed by a second party, perhaps an individual commissioning the vase. Here one
begins to run up against questions of the practical purposes of theater-inspired vases. Was the
Würzburg Telephus meant to memorialize the favorite scene of a customer who commissioned
the vase? Or was Inlaw’s sacrifice of the wineskin simply chosen by a painter because it was the
most recognizable episode of the play and would therefore have the greatest chance of attracting
a buyer? Or was the painter’s choice influenced by the comic scene’s parody of popular, serious
iconography of the Telephus episode generally? Definitive answers to any one of these
questions are extremely hard to come by, perhaps even impossible. Yet, it is by confronting this
particular question of practical purpose of the vase that one begins to understand how the ‘visual
poetics’ of comic iconography ultimately overlap with the comic poetics of the stage.\(^{160}\)

The conflation of costume elements on the person of Inlaw on the Würzburg Telephus
and on the body of the pseudo-Heraclean Dionysus on the ‘Berlin Heracles’ (Figure 3) – to be
examined later – is evidence of the particular style of visual paratragedy called ‘layered
juxtaposition,’ which was discussed in the context of Chapter One’s treatment of the comic

\(^{160}\) The expression belongs to Lissarrague (2010) 54.
Dionysus’ failed disguise in Cratinus’ Dionysalexandros. The comic performances of these two vases furnish a clear image of the visual strategy which almost certainly accompanied and reinforced the gestural and linguistic side of intergeneric competition in the actual performances of Old Comedy.\(^\text{161}\) Layered juxtaposition affirms cross-generic play visually by combining costume elements from different genres on the person of a single actor. The paratragic sequences of Acharnians, Thesmophoriazusae, and Peace each feature sustained paratragic vignettes which almost certainly involved this visual dimension in performance. A particularly striking example of layered juxtaposition of a paratragic type is found on the ‘St. Agata Antigone’ (Figure 4) which I shall discuss in greater detail in the following section. The comic costume (tights and phallos) of the old man is plainly visible underneath the transparent, superimposed elements of the tragic costume of an ‘Antigone’ – a saffron dress. The urn he holds is a key to identifying the (unidentifiable) tragic model of this parody. An altogether different style of paratragic juxtaposition is preserved on the ‘Choregoi’ Vase (Figure 9), also to be discussed later: rather than combining elements of the tragic and comic on the same person, ‘strict juxtaposition’ places identifiable, yet separately delineated, tragic (‘Aegisthus’) and comic (The ‘Choregoi,’ ‘Pyrrhias’) persons in close proximity to one another.\(^\text{162}\)

As the discussion of the disguise scene in Dionysalexandros made clear, Old Comedy loved costume for the vast comic possibilities it afforded, the metatheatricality of the putting on and taking off of disguise, as well as its failure.\(^\text{163}\) Any supplementary or superfluous costume or disguise assumed by a comic character can successfully entertain by being sufficiently transparent or ‘unconvincing’ to keep the audience continually aware of the true identity of the

\(^{162}\) Revermann (2006) 102, 155.
\(^{163}\) Taplin (1986) 170.
character (Cf. Figure 4). ‘To that end,’ Stone remarks, ‘many disguises involve deliberate incongruity.’\textsuperscript{164} In \textit{Acharnians}, Dicaeopolis (parodying Telephus) famously states that he must become a beggar ‘to be who I am, but not appear to be’ (...\varepsilon\iota\nu\iota\imath\iota\alpha\iota\iota\iota\mu\varepsilon\iota\nu\iota\sigma\pi\varepsilon\iota\varepsilon\iota\mu\iota, \varphi\alpha\iota\nu\varepsilon\sigma\omicron\zeta\alpha\iota\delta\varepsilon\mu\iota\,...: 441). The mixed gender of Inlaw’s disguise in \textit{Thesmophoriazusae} appears to have had similar aims: the incongruities of his various male and female parts, now visually affirmed by the evidence of the Würzburg Telephus, would have been obvious to the external audience yet simultaneously (according to comic logic) imperceptible to the internal audience of festival women (see Chapter Four).

All this is not to suggest that comic drama was the sole influence upon such comic iconography. A mythological scene might be readily recognizable to the general public because it was part of an evolving serious iconographic tradition, for example. The serious iconographic tradition of Telephus on the altar, an immensely popular theme of Greek vase-painting, has definitely influenced the Würzburg Telephus, and probably even the original inspiration of the vase, the Aristophanic performance. Aristophanes does indeed seem to have exploited the visual poetics of the serious iconographic tradition in the posture and gesture of Inlaw (Figure 2).\textsuperscript{165} As evidence of this, one can point to the ‘synoptic’ character of the Würzburg Telephus, which reacts to traditional motifs of the Telephus iconography. The synoptic character of the image refers to the combination of three distinct moments in time from the original production within its single frame.\textsuperscript{166} Instead of depicting three different scenes, the Schiller painter uses three different actions and/or attributes to identify a sequence of events: the floating mirror symbolizes the earlier scene of Inlaw’s dressing by Agathon; Inlaw’s threat to sacrifice the wineskin is the

\textsuperscript{165} Taplin (1993) 37 counts over twenty surviving versions of Telephus in vase-painting; Revermann (2006a) 116 conjectures that recognition of the model may have been limited to only the most competent spectators.  
\textsuperscript{166} My use of the term ‘synoptic’ is adopted from Snodgrass (1998) 57.
central event of the present moment; the actual ‘sacrifice’ is followed by the approach of the woman (with the bowl) attempting to catch the wine. These features actually replace elements of the serious tradition of Telephus at the altar (Cf. Figure 2): baby Orestes is obviously replaced with the wineskin; Inlaw in drag, signaled by the mirror, replaces Telephus as beggar; finally, the figure of Clytemnestra, who in the serious iconography is seen frequently running in terror from the altar, is replaced by the ‘alcoholic female’ running toward it because of her passion for drink.\(^{167}\)

The Schiller painter’s appropriation of motifs from the serious iconographic tradition underscores two particularly prominent, text-specific themes of the *Thesmophoriazusae*, gender conflation and female alcoholism. Yet these substitutions of the image operate at a deeper level of intergeneric discourse between Old Comedy and the tragic original. In the tragic model of both text and image (i.e., the Euripidean play), the threatened sacrifice of Orestes, the scion of the House of Atreus, is averted thanks to the oratorical skill of Telephus. Since he was likely the first of Euripides’ disabled, ragged heroes, Telephus probably enjoyed a special status as the epitome of the clever, glib, and subversive Euripidean hero.\(^{168}\) In several of his comedies, Aristophanes shows a special interest in the ‘\(\lambda \alpha \lambda \varepsilon \iota \nu\)’ which lies at heart of Euripidean heroism.\(^{169}\) This term certainly describes the particular heroism of Telephus more than that of any other Euripidean hero. The Schiller painter may be acknowledging the particular significance of such clever speech in the Euripidean Telephus’ aversion of further conflict and of the commission of a perverted sacrifice in the tragic original. Following the text of the *Thesmophoriazusae*, the Schiller painter replaces \(\lambda \alpha \lambda \varepsilon \iota \nu\), with which the original hero dissolves the central conflict, with

its counterpart of the comic world, the appeasement of female alcoholism. This theme is visibly underscored by the enlarged *skyphos*, or drinking cup, and the substitution of the wineskin for the child. The comic failure of Inlaw, the paradoxical result of his successful sacrifice of the wineskin, replaces the success of Euripidean Telephus. Inlaw’s failed impersonation of a female worshipper is evident to any viewer of the Würzburg Telephus, but his inability to get ‘the facts right’ and avert the sacrifice, like Euripides’ Telephus, signals failure in a dramaturgical sense, a failure which will be repeated many times in *Thesmophoriazusae*. The paradigmatic significance of the comic mechanics of the Würzburg Telephus will thus only be apparent to a viewer familiar with the details of the Euripidean play and the *Thesmophoriazusae*. The painter’s pointed departures from the Telephus myth in serious iconography show how the established visual narrative of a mythological scene can be used to communicate and underscore specific aspects of its textual expression in poetry.

The second vase which has almost certain links to an Aristophanic production is the so-called ‘Berlin Heracles,’ for which only photographic evidence now survives on account of its disappearance during World War Two. Dated to roughly 375-50 BCE by Trendall,¹⁷⁰ this Apulian bell-krater (Figure 3) was first identified as a scene from Aristophanes’ *Frogs* in an article published by Panofka in 1849, about two years after he acquired it from a dealer in Naples. Of all the images reviewed in this chapter, the Berlin Heracles is undoubtedly the poorest in terms of its artistry. From left to right, the image reveals a Doric column, apparently representative of a building or a porch, approached by a stage-naked figure wearing the usual tights, stomach and rear padding, and mask of a comic actor. Traces of a phallos have since faded. The character’s ugly mask reveals the token features of Heracles: a thick beard, bushy

¹⁷⁰ *PhV* 22.
hair, and the whitish traces of what might have been the head of the lion skin, if Richard Green’s suspicions (as cited by Csapo) are accurate. The right hand of ‘Heracles’ swings a club towards the door, while his left hand grasps an animal skin by one of its legs. Just to the right and below this hand stands an altar, and behind this trots a donkey mounted by a second actor. On the shoulder of this figure sits a large bundle apparently attached to a stick, a small section of which is still barely visible behind the chin of the rider.

The numerous theatrical elements of the Berlin Heracles have been concisely detailed by Csapo. ‘Heracles’ and his companion show wrist and ankle seams suggestive of comic tights. A further seam running up the donkey’s right foreleg may reveal a ‘pantomime ass.’ Panofka, as already noted, recognized that the overall detail of the picture was consistent with an early moment in Aristophanes’ Frogs of 405 BCE, when the hero Dionysus calls at the house of his divine brother, Heracles, for advice about his own upcoming journey to the Underworld (35ff.). The aggressive knocking in the image corresponds to the ‘centaur-style’ (κενταύρικῶς: 38-9) hammering castigated by Heracles in the text. The figure astride the donkey but carrying a bundle can be identified with the slave, Xanthias. The image is thus a rather economic portrayal of the comic banter and metatheatrical play (marked by jokes about hackneyed ‘laboring slave’ scenes in contemporary comedy) concentrated in the first fifty lines of Frogs.

Yet again, the occlusion of certain details present in the literary text has led some scholars to question the identification of the Berlin Heracles with Frogs. The costume of ‘Heracles’ features none of the strictly Dionysian elements of the costume worn by Dionysus-

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disguised-as-Heracles in the play: boots, transparent gown (krokotos), and thyrsus paired with the lion-skin and club (45-7). Csapo reasonably accounts for such omissions with the practical concerns of the individual painter: fearing that boots and an effeminate gown would obscure the Heraclean identity and confuse the viewer, the painter may have wished to rely simply on the Heraclean attributes, slave, donkey, and baggage as aids for the viewer’s identification of the scene.  

As I mentioned earlier, Old Comedy primarily uses costume and disguise as a means to communicate ideas like failure and cross-generic fertilization in visual terms, as the South Italian evidence confirms. In addition to visual failure, layered juxtaposition also communicates hybridity, which has broad dramaturgical and conceptual significance in much cross-generic play, since it frequently increases the comic hero’s agency and thus facilitates the successful comic project. As was explained in the Introduction, the comic heroes of Acharnians and Peace attest to the potential value of generic hybridity to the accomplishment of the hero’s aims. From its earliest extant moments, Aristophanic comedy is deeply interested in costume and disguise as a visual expression of status, which often fuses or conflates personas, styles, discourses, genders, and, most importantly, genres. One should recall that twenty years before Dionysus’ pseudo-Heraclean adventure in Frogs, Dicaeopolis assumed the identity of Euripidean Telephus and successfully fused the genres of tragedy and comedy to create ‘trugedy’ (Cf. Ach. 499, Introduction).

Much of the authentic significance of the Berlin Heracles thus lay in its similar strategy of conflation of elements, some of which are not actually present in the iconography. Though it was unlikely paratragic in import, the scene clearly alludes to the transparent and hopelessly.

flawed hybrid costume donned by Dionysus in the opening scene and exemplifies some of the broad polarities which are consistently conflated in textual evidence for Old Comic hybridity: bravery and cowardice, divinity and mortality, and social superiority and inferiority, some of the very same polarities operating in the disguise scene of Dionysalexandros. Dionysus’ Heraclean disguise plays chiefly upon the polarity of bravery and cowardice, understood more broadly as that of masculinity and effeminacy: the articles of Heraclean bellicosity and manliness – the club and lion-skin – are paired with the effeminate saffron robe and boots of the traditionally androgynous Dionysus, associated with festivity and easy-living. The opening dialogue of Frogs invokes Heracles’ very specific role in the heroic tradition as the man who went to the Underworld and returned with Cerberus, the guard dog of Hades. Dionysus’ disguise as Heracles presumably attempts to appropriate the latter’s heroism to ensure a successful outcome for his own imminent journey to the Underworld. This comic logic might be thought of as the ‘assimilation principle’ in reverse, where a comic figure tries to transform his profile by adopting the stage properties of another.

Cratinus’ Dionysalexandros, performed two or three decades before Frogs, famously conflated multiple identities on the person of the hero, comic Dionysus, as discussed in Chapter One. The play not only substituted a comically challenged Dionysus for a heroic Paris in a burlesque of the Judgment of the Goddesses, but also seems to have satirized the contemporary Athenian politician Pericles by evoking him at certain points through the lecherous and cowardly figure of its hero. Unlike the physical conflation of the Dionysian and Heraclean in Frogs, the hybridization of Dionysalexandros was probably expressed foremost in performative terms, and

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177 Evidence for satire of Pericles: Hypothesis 45-8.
beyond the actual person of the protagonist: the proximity of Cratinus’ satyr chorus communicated the status of Dionysus as a conflation of his comic and satyr play identities, a simultaneous representative of both genres. The overall point is that the hybrid status of comic layering tries to express in concrete terms the salient polarities of the comic world – mortal/divine, low-class/high-class, slave/free, cowardice/heroism, comedy/tragedy – by material means.

By virtue of their paradigmatic status, the illustrated moments of the Würzburg Telephus and the Berlin Heracles also have a certain diachronic significance. The climactic moment chosen by the Schiller painter punctuates the failure of Inlaw’s paratragic scheme and prefigures his repeated failure throughout the Thesmophoriazusae in later paratragic contexts. To the informed viewer, part of the enjoyment of this static but dramaturgically pregnant moment is the knowledge that this blunder is the first of many humorous and failed attempts to escape. The failure of Dionysus’ unconvincing disguise in Frogs is similarly revisited multiple times and first signaled by his own brother’s ridicule in the scene (42ff.), which immediately follows the illustration on the Berlin Heracles. Just as Inlaw’s failure is reenacted again and again in Thesmophoriazusae, the initial exposure of Dionysus’ layered appearance prefigures, in programmatic fashion, his repeated failures of courage over the course of Frogs: frightened by the alleged creatures of the Underworld, the god soils his costume (285-308); confronted with the threats of Hades’ gatekeeper, he switches identity with Xanthias (494-97), who labels himself ‘Herakleoxanthias’ (499); when whipped by the same gatekeeper, the god’s pain threshold can only manage to match that of his mortal slave (641ff.).

‘Herakleoxanthias’ is emblematic of this hybridity, this generic conflation of personas in Old Comedy, and finds parallels in the surviving titles and fragments of plays such as
Aristophanes’ *Aeolosikon*, Polyzelus’ *Demotyndareus*, and Strattis’ *Anthoporestes* and *Lemnomeda*: these plays could have involved either the basic idea of disguise, such as that of *Frogs*, or a more sophisticated conflation of identity expressive of genre, as Wright points out.\(^{178}\)

Even though gender conflation is foregrounded in the feminine disguise of Inlaw in the *Thesmophoriazusae* (simple disguise), the paratragic pattern of his experience is still modeled on that of Euripides’ *Telephus* (genre). Euripidean Telephus, the subject of two Aristophanic paratragic sequences involving visual layering, himself represented a conflation of statuses, since he was simultaneously quasi-divine and mortal, Greek and barbarian, and upper and lower class.\(^{179}\)

The Würzburg Telephus and the Berlin Heracles therefore attest to a fundamental comic strategy of intergeneric engagement in visual terms, the juxtaposition and conflation of costume elements, as well as Old Comedy’s fixation on materiality and overall failure of comic costume. The iconography’s conflation of such elements, as well as the concepts those elements represent and assume, expresses a visual poetics which is broadly consistent with the analogous strategies of the comic stage. This is not to deny that vase-painters sometimes have their own take on the dramatic events of their illustrations, and even the larger works in which they are set. But when they do apply their own stamp on a scene, it by and large remains within the pool of dominant literary themes of that production at least as far as the majority of vases in this chapter are concerned. For example, the Schiller painter’s illustration emphasizes, in particular, the gender conflation and female drunkenness of the scene, two central comic motifs of

178 Wright (2007) 419 n. 37.
179 One cannot fail to mention the gender conflation of Euripides himself in that same comedy. Just prior to his grand entrance as Perseus, a character from his own *Andromeda*, the comic Euripides appears, possibly on the theologeion, as the nymph Echo from the same play. A layered combination of the nymph’s tragic costume with his regular comic dress has to be assumed in this scene and could have even been combined with the attire of Perseus, whose imminent arrival is explicitly foreshadowed by Inlaw himself just slightly earlier (1010ff.). For more on this, see Chapter Four.
Thesmophoriazusae, instead of other possible motifs and themes. Vase-painters could thus be said to prioritize rather than to interpret when adapting their images from the performances of the stage. The thematization of hybridity in both Thesmophoriazusae and Frogs also offers some insight into the motivations of vase-painters choosing particular scenes for illustration. Both vases examined in this first section are memorable not simply on the merits of their humor but more importantly because that humor articulates a central and recurrent topos in the plays to which their scenes belong. Cross-dressing Inlaw’s sacrifice of the wineskin and Dionysus-as-Heracles’ door-knocking likely suggested themselves to both artists and patrons because they nicely captured the spirit of the plays invoked. Far from being static snapshots of single comic scenes, the glimpses of comedy captured on these two vases invoke dominant and recurrent themes of the productions which frame them.

II. Narrative and Discourse

The Würzburg Telephus, Berlin Heracles, and St. Agata Antigone each advance our understanding of comic costume’s potential to express the genre’s recurrent interests and obsessions in the direct, visual terms of performance. The vases in the next group, by contrast, engage the viewer by appealing to broader narrative structures, the enjoyment of which is dependent (at least in part) on recognition of their radical departures from, or revisions of, the traditional narratives in which they are framed. Although their theatrical origins are less apparent than those vases of the previous section, their iconography sufficiently justifies seeing comic performances behind their vignettes. Even if such vases are non-theatrical, their comic mechanics are so analogous to those of the comic stage, and the popular visual narratives to which they react have such broad literary capital, that they nonetheless remain instructive for our
purposes. This is especially true since each vase preserves a comic narrative strategy commonly encountered in textual instances of cross-generic play.

One of the cleverest scenes of extant South Italian vase-painting has not survived on a complete vase, but on a mere sherd. The famous Paestan painter Assteas illustrated and signed a kalyx-krater which featured a parody of the Rape of Cassandra, daughter of Priam (Figure 5). A grotesquely ugly, bearded male in comic mask and armor grips a Palladion, a cult statue of Athena, while a second, female figure, whose body is mostly missing, shoves her knee into his back and yanks his hair from behind. Above the woman is inscribed ‘-ΣΣΑΝΔΡΗ.’ To the right stands an ugly old woman, a priestess, as inscribed above her is the word ‘ΙΙΡΦΑ.’ She holds some kind of super-sized object in her left hand and raises her right in a gesture of shock and surprise. The inscriptions help us identify the scene as a parody of one of the most notorious moments of the Trojan saga, the rape of Cassandra by Locrian Ajax, son of Oileus. Ajax’s great crime was one of the most famous episodes in the epic cycle tradition’s narrative of the sack of Troy, the Iliupersis, which is traditionally ascribed to Arktinos of Miletus.

The reversal of gender, or power, is plainly the operative comic principle in Assteas’ painting: Ajax, the traditional rapist, exchanges roles with the traditional victim, Cassandra, who now ascends to a position of power. Yet the significance of this reversal involves more than just a simple switch of traditional roles and cannot be fully appreciated without unpacking the literary and iconographic traditions which it assumes. Although the scene was not featured in either the Iliad or the Odyssey, the association of Ajax with sacrilege and extreme hubris is as early as Homer (Cf. Od. 4.499-511). Ajax’s rape of Cassandra and its disastrous consequences were the primary subject of at least one tragedy, the Locrian Ajax of Sophocles, and were probably at least

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180 PhV 86.  
181 IP Arg. 15-16 B.
described in a few others. Locrian Ajax staged the events immediately following the desecration of Athena’s shrine: an epiphany of Athena, the trial of Ajax by the Greeks – to determine whether he merited punishment by stoning – and the defendant’s (ironic) flight to Athena’s image in search of refuge.

In terms of iconographic evidence, scenes from the ‘Ilioupersis’ make up a large percentage of all Troy-related images preserved in archaic black and red-figure, and illustrations of the Rape of Cassandra make up a considerable fraction of that. Two important trends dominate the evolution of the scene’s iconography through the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. The first is the idea of sacrilege, which painters normally expressed by Cassandra’s extension of a hand toward her attacker in a gesture of supplication. The second is the increasing emphasis placed on Cassandra’s sexuality through the revelation of her nude, voluptuous figure, which communicated the evil intentions of Ajax. Changes in the sizes of the three main figures reflect shifting thematic emphases over time: while early representations showed the Palladion in the ‘promachos’ pose, making it appear as if the goddess was actually confronting Ajax and protecting Cassandra, later illustrations emphasize the isolation of the victim through the greater lifelessness and detachment of the statue of Athena, which often appears to avert its gaze from Cassandra.

In literary terms, a connection between the norms of gender roles in tragedy and Ajax’s reduced position in Assteas’ parody are immediately apparent. The parody expresses a literal variation on the generic tragic topos of the ‘feminization’ of the hero through the disastrous

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182 Lacaenae, Teucer, and Antenoridæ, all by Sophocles, seem to have been concerned with the rape in greater or lesser degrees.
183 Radt (1977) 102-123; for a concise summary of the available evidence, see Sutton (1984) 7-9; for the serious iconographic tradition, see Connelly (1993) 89. The largest of about eighteen fragments (P.Oxy 3151) confirms that Ajax, Athena, Talthybius, and Helicaon, the son of Antenor, were featured characters.
184 Connelly (1993) 121; a concise summary of the development of this theme can be found in Beazley (1963) 64-5 and Hedreen (2001) 22-32.
effects of female agency. Many a male tragic hero has had to assume feminine vices, limitations, abject female helplessness, or complete undoing by grief and suffering because of the intended or unintended effects of female action.\textsuperscript{185} Such actions, however, very rarely involve actual direct, physical assault by women.\textsuperscript{186} Cassandra’s use of brawn against the helpless Ajax, by contrast, seems more appropriate to the plays of Old Comedy. Early interpreters of the vase imagined that Cassandra was inflicting physical violence on Ajax, but Taplin recognized that the comic reversal is more complete (and humorous) if the violence is of a sexual nature.\textsuperscript{187} The winking Palladion seems to signal surprise, and even perhaps interest, in the proceedings, in clear contrast to its increasing detachment in the serious iconography of the late fifth century. Female lechery, as we have already seen in the context of \textit{Thesmophoriazusae}, was a prominent theme of Aristophanic comedy.

The thematic reversal of the Rape of Ajax may react to tragic tradition. Ajax’s grasping of the Palladion, the statue of Athena, exploits the irony of a victimized brute seeking salvation from the very goddess whom he offends in the traditional account and who ultimately seals his demise on the journey home. Ajax’s supplication at the altar of Athena after the fact was traditional in the \textit{Iliupersis}, but the motif expressed here may reflect a stage tradition, possibly even that of Sophocles’ \textit{Locrian Ajax}, in which the rapist sought refuge at the very same altar defiled by his outrage.\textsuperscript{188} By making Ajax a suppliant during his own rape, Assteas seamlessly conflates two temporally discrete episodes of the heroic tradition in one moment.

\textsuperscript{186} The chief exception is, of course, Clytemnestra in Aeschylus’ \textit{Agamemnon}.
\textsuperscript{187} Taplin (1993) 81 n. 9; Walsh (2009) 84 wonders whether the priestess’ object, an oversized key, hints at this rape by implying that the prop will be used to further humiliate the unlikely suppliant.
\textsuperscript{188} \textit{IP} Arg. 16 B.
Assteas’ assertive, aggressive, and sex-crazed Cassandra may also react to a more recognizable profile in tragedy, which consistently represented the daughter of Priam as a symbol of the plight and victimization of young women during wartime. Connolly notes that her most memorable appearances in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* (458) and two plays of Euripides’ Trojan trilogy of 415, *Alexandros* and *Trojan Women*, would have made her very familiar to theater audiences by the end of the fifth century. Her special status as priestess of Apollo is emphasized in each production, although most uniquely in *Trojan Women*. Richard Hamilton argues that by the time of her appearance at line 309, she has become doubly separated from her role as priestess, first by the rape of Ajax and second by her perverse acceptance of ‘marriage’ with Agamemnon. Cassandra’s loss of virginal purity means (in effect) her loss of alliance with Apollo and her reduction to the status of just another suffering mortal in Priam’s household. In the *agon* of that play, the austere Cassandra is presented as something of a foil to the adulterous Helen on the subject of marriage: the two women share not just beauty, but also the experience of being abducted and taken across the sea by the enemies of their respective royal houses. While Cassandra resists marriage (with Ajax), Helen constantly acquiesces: Cassandra is wife to no man, Helen is wife to every man. In fact, two scholars describe this Euripidean confrontation of Cassandra, Hecuba, and Helen after the destruction of Troy as analogous to the confrontation between Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite which began the sequence of events that culminated in the Trojan War, the Judgment of Paris: now Cassandra and Helen are representative of Athena (the Virgin) and Aphrodite (the Whore), respectively.

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189 Connely (1993) 121.
191 It is worth comparing to these scenes Cassandra’s symbolic ‘undressing’ of herself in Aeschylus’ *Ag.* and Euripides’ *Tro*, which also erases her status as priestess.
The comic mechanics of Cassandra’s rape of Ajax make fairly clear that the image was the sort of thing which Attic comedy ‘went in for.’ Yet the arguments for and against the scene-specificity of this parody still deserve consideration. Taplin is reluctant to see the image as paratragic mainly because of the high unlikelihood that anything like the rape of Cassandra could have ever been performed in a tragedy. He argues that the scene’s rich iconographic history, which existed well before tragedy was fully developed, would have furnished sufficient inspiration for an artist of the originality of Assteas. Yet the facial features of both Cassandra and Ajax clearly resemble those of comic masks – Trendall matched all three with known types – although this still might be insufficient to settle the case in favor of paratragedy. Walsh makes three persuasive points in favor of scene-specificity: the priestess’ enlarged key seems like a comic prop, and its aggrandizement a central, if exceptional, strategy of comic business; secondly, the Dionysiac scene on the vase’s opposite side is a typical sign of a pot’s connection to drama; finally, iconographic parallels exist for the performance of rape (or threatened rape) on the comic stage. A final point which is worth noting emerges from this last argument. The episode’s ritual setting aligns it with some other similarly contextualized comic vase-paintings we have seen. It is plausible that the Rape of Ajax reacts to both iconographic and stage tradition. The Würzburg Telephus demonstrated that iconographic and dramatic influences can each be integrated into the same scene-specific vase-painting.

No small part of the enjoyment of a parody like Assteas’ is the revision of mythological tradition which it makes inevitable: a competent viewer would recognize that the comic

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194 See Revermann (2006) 244-6 for ‘outszie’ props in comedy.
195 Walsh (2009) 84 and n. 42.
196 Walsh (2009) 85-6 adduces a famous Sicilian red-figure calyx krater (340-330 BCE) with an illustration of Heracles’ attempted rape of Auge in Leontini (Museo Archeologico): not only does its stage clearly indicate a theatrical context, the scene appears to be set in a sanctuary, a common setting for comic scenes.
197 Walsh (2009) 72-104.
modification of an event of such notorious consequences – consequences which formed the subject of a separate branch of the cyclic tradition – would boldly undercut traditional knowledge which was taken for granted by Greeks. Because they provoked the anger of Athena, who sent the storm which scattered and/or destroyed much of the army on departure from Troy, Ajax’s crimes had disastrous consequences. According to the Epic Cycle, Ajax himself was killed and his body washed up on Myconos. The anger of Athena brought about a series of significant, subsequent events including the death of Phrontis, Menelaus’ detainment in Egypt, and the tradition of the *Odyssey* itself. All these narratives begin from the storm caused by Athena’s anger. In the prologue of Euripides’ *Trojan Women*, the goddess, joined by Poseidon, vows the imminent destruction of much of the Greek fleet (77-97). An informed viewer of Cassandra’s rape of Ajax would therefore recognize not only the basic reversal of the traditional power dynamic and the defeat of expectations, but also the fact that the victimization of Ajax revises one of the most notorious, enduring events of the Trojan War and all events which ensued from that. The Rape of Ajax in this way is unique visual evidence for a certain generic tendency in Old Comedy to revise or modify traditional mythical-historical narratives, an even bolder example of which is preserved on another South Italian vase-painting which parodies Priam’s death at the hands of Neoptolemus in the sack of Troy.

Before continuing on to that vase, however, the comic mechanics of a few scenes from a separate mythological cycle are comparable to those of Cassandra’s rape of Ajax. In some ways the most audacious mythological burlesque on a South Italian vase, an Apulian oinochoe from

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198 *Nost. Arg.* 12-13 B. In Homer’s account (*Od.* 499-511), Ajax himself managed to escape the onslaught with the help of Poseidon, who washed him up onto the cliffs of Gyrae. After boasting of his escape from divine wrath, an enraged Poseidon struck the rock with his trident, hurling the blasphemer into the sea.

199 Hedreen (2001) 31 sees this emphasis on the anger of Athena in the iconographic tradition of Ajax’s rape of Cassandra.
the second quarter of the fourth century features a parody of the Oedipus myth which substitutes
Creon for Oedipus as the interlocutor of the Sphinx (Figure 6).\textsuperscript{200} On the far right, perched atop
a mound of boulders is a hermaphroditic sphinx, who is identified by an inscription, smirking
down at an uglified figure sitting below labeled ‘Creon.’ Creon is wrapped in a cloak from the
waste down, holds what looks to be a shepherd’s staff against his body, and turns to the left to
gesture at a third person approaching from that direction. The inscribed name of the third figure
has been largely lost, although ‘-ΔΙ-’ (clearly for ‘Oidipus’) remains preserved. He is wrapped
in a cloak and carrying a walking stick. While all three possess ugly faces, their overall degree
of ugliness, which is somewhat restrained, sets them apart from the comic figures of other vases.
The Sphinx – adorned with necklace, earrings, bracelets, and a crown – has sagging breasts and
vagina, a slight pot belly, and a phallic-shaped tail. Although ugly and bearded, Creon wears no
fat-suit and his exposed torso more or less conforms to Greek ideals of the male form. Oedipus,
who is only partly uglified, enters from the left and gestures impatiently at Creon. Although
none of his proportions are distorted, his feet are grotesquely swollen.

Trendall’s assignment of mask types to each of the figures indicates that he was confident
of the scene’s dramatic provenance, but later critics, with a few exceptions, have generally
disagreed.\textsuperscript{201} The figures do not actually appear to be wearing masks, and Walsh, for one, notes
that the expressive nature of their faces transcends the details of the known masks of South
Italian vase-painters. On the other hand, the Oedipus myth was so frequently featured in Greek
tragedy that any one of dozens of tragic productions of this easily recognizable story could
conceivably serve as the model for such a parody.

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\textsuperscript{200} PhV 62 (115).
\textsuperscript{201} Skeptical is Taplin (1993) 80-1; leaning towards performance is Walsh (2009) 208.
\end{flushright}
The ultimate inspiration of the image cannot diminish its value as an exercise of comic imagination reacting to a well-defined tradition of serious vase-paintings of Oedipus and the Sphinx. Whatever the circumstances (which are impossible to reconstruct) of this comic substitution of Creon for his future brother-in-law, Oedipus, the simple displacement of the future king of Thebes from one of the defining moments of his (wretched) life is another bold exercise in counterfactual humor in comic vase-painting. Cursed by Apollo before he was born, before he was even conceived – if one considers that Laius defied Apollo’s warnings not to create an heir (Aeschylus’ Sept. 745-50)\textsuperscript{202} – the parody represents a somewhat petulant attempt to sidestep fate through a simple switch of individuals, a comic substitution. Oedipus’ killing of his father Laius created in Thebes the political conditions in which the rewards of kingship and marriage to Jocasta were promised to anyone who could overcome the Sphinx. Since Oedipus’ eventual defeat of the monster completes the Apolline prophecy, his displacement from his confrontation, which is suggested at the very least by the comic substitution, seems a comically straightforward attempt to derail Fate in mid-stride. Walsh suspects Creon and Oedipus to be haggling over the ensuing reward or Creon to be expressing doubts about Oedipus’ suitability for the task of solving the riddle.\textsuperscript{203} Here it is tempting to recall the confrontation between Dionysus and Alexandros in \textit{Dionysalexandros} after the damage has been done and Dionysus has caused the war. The ascendance of Creon may also play on the incest which will become inevitable after Oedipus’ success against the Sphinx: a victory by Creon over the Sphinx, in contrast, would just displace the incestuous alliance from mother and son to brother and sister. Comic success, in this case, becomes the revolting prospect of sleeping with one’s sister. There may also be something significant about the Sphinx’s unusually regal appearance. Crown, jewels, and gender

\textsuperscript{202} Sommerstein (1996a) 122.
\textsuperscript{203} Walsh (2009) 208.
suggest a queenly bearing. Is the image, or the comedy from which it was adopted, somehow conflating the role of the Sphinx with that of queen Jocasta? Its amused expression and the bizarre fusion of female and male genitalia on its body seems emblematic of the perversity and natural transgression which characterizes so much of the Oedipus myth. Is the Sphinx a symbol of incest and an example of comic reification, one of the defining strategies of comic appropriation in Aristophanic comedy? Parallel examples of physical embodiment are the Echo scene of *Thesmophoriazusae* (Chapter Four) and the appearance of Euripides’ Muse in *Frogs* (Chapter Five). Unfortunately, it is unlikely that any of these questions about the hermaphroditic sphinx will ever have answers unless additional textual or iconographic evidence turns up.

The parody of a later episode from the same Theban cycle adorns an Apulian bell-krater found at S. Agata dei Goti (c. 370 BCE). First published in 1828, the ‘St. Agata Antigone’ of the Rainone Painter clearly draws upon an actual comic performance, whose unknown status makes the image one of the most intriguing narrative puzzles discovered on a South Italian vase (Figure 4). Panofka first recognized it as a parody of the story of Antigone, daughter of Oedipus, when she defied her uncle Creon’s prohibition of the burial of her slain brother Polynices after the Seven attempted to sack Thebes.204 I quote Trendall and Webster’s description of the image:

‘...In the centre is an actor wearing the mask of a white-haired, balding old man, dressed as a woman in a peplos with a long overall, beneath which, however, his phallos is clearly visible, and holding in one hand a female mask with short, parted hair, while clutching a hydria to his bosom in the other. He is in the grip of the watchman, who wears a fur cap and carries two spears, and who has brought him before Kreon, who wears a similar white-haired mask, with a Phrygian cap, and carries a staff or sceptre in his right hand. Kreon has a look of surprise, clearly at the unexpected sight of the old man when he had expected to see Antigone. The hydria would contain either the ashes of Polynices for burial or perhaps earth to sprinkle on his corpse; the vase-

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204 Panofka (1849) 216-21.
painter wishes to convey to us that in the farce Antigone was impersonated by an old man...

Overt markers of the comic genre – grotesque mask, padding, phallos – confirm the theatricality of the illustration. Trendall and Webster thought that the plot of the play which inspired this illustration featured the old man as a clandestine substitute for the heroic Antigone. More convincing is the reconstruction of Taplin, who compares the roles of Creon and the unknown old man to that of Euripides and Inlaw in Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazusae*. In that play, the tragedian persuaded his reluctant relative to assume a disguise in order to complete a perilous comic mission, the infiltration of the all-female Thesmophoria. Like Inlaw, the old man of the St. Agata Antigone was presumably pressured by Creon to undertake the part of Antigone, for reasons which remain unknown, and bury the body of Polynices. The inversion of age and youth is common enough in Old Comedy. Here the comic substitution of comic cowardice for tragic heroism explains why the attendant appears to be dragging the old man away rather than presenting him to Creon under arrest: instead of showing the old man in defiance of Creon like the tragic heroine, the painter shows him physically compelled against his will.

The St. Agata Antigone furnishes what is probably the finest extant evidence for layered-style paratragedy: the tragic female *peplos* is superimposed over the old man’s existing comic garb, whose presence is confirmed by the barely concealed phallos. If Taplin’s interpretation is correct, the comedy which inspires the St. Agata Antigone would offer arguably the most radical revision of an established myth of those vases thus far encountered and, furthermore, would

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205 Trendall and Webster (1971) 141-2.
207 Taplin (1993) 83-8. Cf. Walsh (2009) 222, whose interpretation is more in line with the tentative remarks of Trendall and Webster: the old man, sympathetic to Antigone’s wishes, agreed to act as a decoy and distract the king and his guards while the real Antigone safely completed her mission. This reconstruction privileges the tragic angle of the myth but underestimates comedy’s tendency to invert its models outright or, at the very least, to avoid completing the story on tragedy’s terms.
prove that such revisions were within Old Comedy’s conceptual reach. The vase also attests to Old Comedy’s willingness to confront even the darkest tragic subject matter. Rather than dwell on the actual death and burial of Polynices and the grim success of Antigone, the comedy created an unlikely partnership between what were tragically opposed viewpoints in the model: Creon and the transgressor of his edict collude to undertake the unpleasant business of getting rid of a body. It seems likely that this play was another excellent illustration of Aristotle’s intriguing reflection on the endings typical of comedy:

Second-best is the structure held the best by some people: the kind with a double structure like the *Odyssey* and with opposite outcomes for good and bad characters. It is thought to be best because of the weakness of audiences: the poets follow, and pander to the taste of, the spectators. Yet this is not the pleasure to expect from tragedy, but is more appropriate to comedy, where those who are deadliest enemies in the plot, such as Orestes and Aegisthus, exit at the end as new friends, and no one dies at anyone’s hands.208 (Trans. Halliwell)

Aristotle’s thinking is also reflected in the final and (in narrative terms) arguably most sophisticated vase of this section. On the left side of this Apulian bell-krater from the first quarter of the fourth century sits a bearded old man on an altar wearing a caricatured version of an oriental headdress, or Phrygian cap (Figure 7).209 He speaks with left hand raised to the right toward a much younger man approaching from that direction, who is dressed in a *chiton* and

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208 *Poetics* 1453a30-39.
pilos and holding aloft in his right hand a sword, apparently poised to strike the old man with a fatal blow. The Phrygian cap and regal bearing of the old man, coupled with the hostile pose of the younger, encourage us to identify the figures as Priam and Neoptolemus, respectively, when the latter killed the king of Troy during the Greeks’ sack of the city. The climactic murder of Priam on the altar of Zeus Herkeios, the religious focal point of Priam’s palace, was narrated in the lost Epic Cycle poems the Iliupersis and the Little Iliad, and was one of the most notorious moments of the Trojan saga: ²¹⁰

καὶ Νεοπτόλημος μὲν ἀποκτεῖνει Πρίαμον ἐπὶ τόν τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ ἔρημου βωμὸν καταφυγόντα·

And Neoptolemus kills Priam, who has fled to the altar of Zeus of the Courtyard. ²¹¹ (Trans. West)

The comic theatricality of this parody is even more apparent than that of the Rape of Ajax: Priam and Neoptolemus both wear grotesque masks, pads, body tights, and phalloi. As Walsh points out, the action appears frozen at some point of dialogue between the two men: the artist exploits the comic potential of Neoptolemus’ pause and careful consideration of whatever Priam is saying – Bieber (probably correctly) suspects a parody of a tragic oration. ²¹² If Aristotle’s knowledge (as expressed in the quote above) of the comedy typical of this period can be trusted, such confrontations between mortal enemies were the ‘bread-and-butter’ of mythological burlesque, a characteristic style most commonly associated with Middle Comedy but also dramatized during the fifth century.

²¹¹ IP Arg. 13-14 B; cf. MI (Little Iliad) fr. 27.25 West, in which Pausanius (10.27.25) narrates a version of Priam’s death which differs from that of the Little Iliad: in the former, Priam was not killed at the altar of Zeus but dragged away and killed at the doors of his house.
Although burlesques such as this one’s revision of Priam’s death were familiar to audiences of Old Comedy, this fact alone does not assure the paratragic status of Berlin 3045. Taplin, for one, is skeptical of it for the same reason that he was in the case of Cassandra and Ajax: it is difficult to imagine how the death of Priam could have been staged in tragedy. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the scene as it stands merely assumes one of supplication, not of sacrilegious murder. The frequency of fifth-century tragic suppliant-scenes – most of which presuppose the use of an altar – outweights the merits of Taplin’s skepticism in this particular case. Also important to bear in mind is the prominence on other comic vases of the perverted sacrifice *topos*, an obsession of tragedy and oftentimes a key ingredient of Old Comedy’s generic reaction to it in parody. Besides parallel visual evidence for the altar provided by the Würzburg Telephus, altars and their religious settings appear to figure prominently in the paratragic scenes of Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* (317ff.), *Thesmophoriazusae* (688ff.) and *Frogs* (1378ff.).

Few themes of the epic tradition were more favored in vase-painting than those associated with the ‘Iliupersis’ narrative. The most popular of its vignettes in the sixth and fifth centuries was undoubtedly Priam’s death, the climactic expression of the unifying theme of the episodes of the Cyclic *Iliupersis* – the dissolution and destruction of the family. As Anderson states, ‘...the Fall of Troy is in essence the fall of its ruling family...’ Since Priam

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213 Rehm (1988) 264 notes that over a third of surviving Greek tragedies require an altar (or a tomb) as an essential stage property for scenes of supplication and refuge. He lists *Supplices* (Aesch.), *Eumenides, Oedipus Tyrannus, Heracles, Andromache, Heraclidae, Supplices* (Eur.), and *Ion*. Euripides’ fragmentary *Telephus*, the subject of two Aristophanic parodies, can be added to that total, which is not exhaustive.

214 Wiencke (1954) is the most thorough treatment of the evidence of the scene and its evolution; see also Hedreen (2001) 64-80. For the South Italian evidence, see Moret (1975) 45-50.

was the figurehead of the Trojan house, his death symbolized the death of Troy itself. In purely narrative terms, the humor of this vase is arguably the most sophisticated of those which have so far been encountered for its counterfactual import. One of the most enduring moments of the Trojan War, the killing of Priam, whose person symbolizes Troy and whose death punctuates the death of Troy, is averted. It is difficult to imagine that the average fourth-century Greek would not have acknowledged the outcome of this confrontation with as much certainty as he would Helen’s abduction to Troy by Paris. This is presumably why the vase-painter chose this particular moment: he almost certainly wanted to capture a moment in the framing play which embodied the audacity of its burlesque treatment of myth.

Counterfactual narratives in ancient texts have been a subject of rapidly growing interest in the field of Greek literature, particularly that of the fifth century, when the contradictory nature of many myths was first subjected to comprehensive scrutiny. In his article on the subject, Matthew Wright cites the definition of ‘counterfactual’ in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as ‘...pertaining to, or expressing, what has not in fact happened but might, could, or would happen in different conditions.’ Wright has drawn particular attention to such counterfactual experiments by the poets of Old Comedy during its heyday in the latter half of the fifth century. Because it sits somewhere between myth and history, Wright explains, the Trojan

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216 Anderson (1997) 194 explains that in the vast majority of illustrations of this theme, constant are the motifs of Neoptolemus’ approach of the old king, usually seated upon the altar of Zeus, and the sustained moment of tension between the two enemies. But Neoptolemus almost always advances from the left, unlike in Berlin 3045. The killing of Astyanax was also integrated into Priam’s death at an early state, and this juxtaposition of grandson and grandfather drove home the theme of genocide at the heart of the *Iliupersis*.

217 The birth of Helen thus formed the plot of at least two comedies, the first being Cratinus’ *Nemesis* (c. 430 BCE). The second seems to have inspired the depiction of her ‘birth from the egg’ on an Apulian bell-krater (Bari 3899, c. 350 BCE; see Taplin [1993] 82-3) and provides important evidence for an interest in the counterfactual treatment of episodes from the Trojan Cycle in South Italian iconography.

218 For studies of counterfactual exercises in modern history, see Demandt (1984) and Ferguson (1999).
War achieved paradigmatic status as a way of conceptualizing interstate conflict. The comic poets showed particular interest in using the dubious origins and causes of that great war to reflect upon what they perceived as the trivial causes of wars in which contemporary Athens was engaged. With such historical frames, Cratinus, Aristophanes, Eupolis, Hermippus, and likely many other comic poets were able to inject their mythological burlesque with a dose of Old Comic topicality. Such plays are fragmentary, but we know enough about Cratinus’ *Dionysalexandros* – the basis of much of Wright’s discussion and the subject of the previous chapter – to see that it creatively recast the Judgment of Paris as, in part, a comic aitiology of the origins of the Peloponnesian War.

Such counterfactual experimentation animates the parody of the Priam and Neoptolemus vase and, to a lesser degree, the Rape of Ajax and Oedipus with Creon and the Sphinx. Since the limitations of the visual medium do not allow the scope for comic iconography to accommodate Old Comedy’s reflection upon origins and causes in all of its discursive sophistication, vase-painters must express counterfactual statements through critical moments in signature-scenes, which must be fairly recognizable and also (arguably) of a certain *synecdochic* status for the broader narratives to which they belong. Literary narratives, such as those of tragedy, use key moments of the Trojan War in the same synecdochic way to imagine counterfactual scenarios. The enjoyment of the (almost certainly) averted killing of Priam on Berlin 3045 partly depends on the recognition of the implications of its counterfactuality. As I mentioned earlier, the Epic Cycle tradition represented the killing of Priam on the altar of Zeus *Herkeios* as symbolic of the...

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220 Lear and Cantarella (2009) 26 explain that synecdochic elements are present in every type of vase-painting, detached from their original scene-type or subject.
fall of the city. At several points in the *Iliad*, but chiefly in books twenty-two and twenty-four, Homer builds toward this critical moment in the broader Epic Cycle narrative by alluding with *pathos* to the terrible, inevitable fate awaiting the old king. The death of Priam, as it were, signals the culmination of an entire branch of the Trojan saga. The illustration of Berlin 3045 thus parodies a historically pregnant moment drawn from one of the most pivotal (and poignant) episodes of Greek myth and literature. Its comic suspension of sacrilegious murder, however, depicts not the climax and confirmation of the terrible outcome of the Trojan cycle, but its comic deferral. Also important to bear in mind is the possibility that the comedy upon which this illustration was based featured the rape of Ajax, which is illustrated on the Assteas sherd. While the confrontation of Priam and Neoptolemus appears to capture the spirit of Aristotle’s comment about comedy’s depiction of enemies as friends a bit better, both Trojan cycle vases examined reflect the overall extremity which is at the heart of the comic reversal in the burlesque which concerns Aristotle. Like the reversals, substitutions, displacements, and personifications of the other vases, the counterfactuality of Priam and Neoptolemus offers a visual analogue of one of the most innovative strategies of cross-generic play in Old Comedy.

### III. Cross-Generic Play

The actor’s mask on the St. Agata Antigone represents the most brazenly metatheatrical detail of the vases thus far encountered until those of the third and final group of this chapter. The ‘Getty Birds,’ the ‘Choregoi,’ and the ‘New York Goose Play’ occupy a special generic class of their own, in both iconographic and dramatic terms. Their scene-specific iconography

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221 Anderson (1997) 37.
222 Anderson (1997) 44-5; such allusions to Priam’s death in the later books of the *Iliad*, which Anderson calls ‘undercurrents of violence,’ highlight its significance for the entire Cycle.
provides unique and unparalleled visual examples of innovative, highly metatheatrical performances of direct, generic interaction on the comic stage.

The first vase of this final group is an Attic calyx-krater datable to the end of the fifth century and regarded by Taplin as the best candidate for a contemporary Attic painting of Old Comedy. The so-called ‘Getty Birds,’ a topic of considerable debate for the past two decades, shows two fully costumed ithyphallic birdmen with large spurs, combs, and small hooked beaks, who appear to be facing off against one another around a lone aulet (Figure 8). To my knowledge, no one disputes the performance context of the scene, which is clear from the aulos-player, the dance-like movements of the birdmen, and the shared dress, which is typical of choreutai. Rather, disagreement surrounds the nature of the play which inspired it. Green, noting the obvious associations of the birdmen with the sole extant Aristophanic production to feature birds consistently, argued that they must be members of the chorus of Aristophanes’ Birds (414 BCE). His case, however, was considerably weakened by Taplin, who noted that roosters (ἀλεκτρυνόνες), the species of the birdmen illustrated on the vase, are not among those wild species explicitly identified as making up the Aristophanic play’s chorus (229-54). In addition, the chorus’ twenty-four members are also individuated (297-304), a fact which precludes two birds of the same species. Taplin, by contrast, argued that the Getty Birds represent the Greater and Lesser Arguments of Clouds, in support of which he cited a scholiast (Σ\(^{VE}\) 889) claiming that the two Logoi of that play’s central agon were represented onstage as fighting cocks in cages.

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224 Csapo (2010) 10 discusses a pelike (discovered in 2008) which features a second painting of the same performance: on one side, a single birdman, clearly belonging to same chorus as that of the Getty Birds, with another piper on the reverse.
After further reflection, Taplin revised his theory and conceded Green’s point that ‘two similar figures with a piper should prima facie be a chorus.’ He also acknowledged the limits of his primary piece of evidence, a scholiast, who leaves unspecified whether the arguments were actually costumed as cocks or just acted in a similarly combative fashion.\textsuperscript{227} He took a new tack by focusing on the birdmen’s ithyphallicism, which is infrequent enough in the South Italian evidence to merit special attention.\textsuperscript{228} This detail, coupled with the ‘satyr shorts’ (or ‘perizomata’ shorts) noticed by Green, may reveal the birdmen to be products of some type of comic theriomorphosis in which, in this case, satyrs were transformed into birds.\textsuperscript{229}

While no known play dramatizes anything as specific as a ‘satyriosis,’ Taplin is right to point out that such a transformation would nevertheless be broadly consistent with the cross-generic play between comedy and satyr play attested elsewhere in Old Comedy and perhaps best known from Aristophanes’ \textit{Birds}, but perhaps also from Cratinus’ \textit{Dionysalexandros} (Cf. Chapter One).\textsuperscript{230} This transformation also need not entail any supernatural event of metamorphosis, since many comic characters, Dicaeopolis for example, achieve hybrid status by simply blending costume elements from different genres. Although no hard evidence for hybrid satyrs exists, it is probable that the satyr chorus of Cratinus’ \textit{Dionysalexandros} was of a comedified type, as Chapter One discussed. For an idea of what this might look like, one should recall the image of the Apulian bell-krater already examined, the ‘Cleveland Dionysus,’ which

\textsuperscript{227}Taplin (1993) 103.
\textsuperscript{228}Taplin (1993) 103; cf. Figure 13.10 (in Taplin [1993]) on which is illustrated an old woman turning away from an old man rising from a stool with his erect or semi-erect (?) phallos.
\textsuperscript{229}Taplin (1993) 103; Revermann (2006) 217-19 suggests that the dots on the costume might be of Persian origin, which could identify the figures as ‘Persian Birds’ (farmyard cocks). Explanations for other similarly puzzling details (e.g., the strangely retracted foreskin of the left-hand bird) would no doubt increase the likelihood of successfully matching the vase to a known play.
preserves a comically modified version of satyr play’s ‘Pappasilenos’ character with the standard phallos, grotesque mask, and fat-pads of the comic genre.

The famous Apulian bell-krater originally from the Fleischman collection called the ‘Choregoi’ Vase (400-380 BCE) is in a class of its own, even among this group of exceptional theater-related vase-paintings, for its vivid depiction of an unparalleled moment in both art and literature: representatives of both comedy and tragedy appear to share the stage during an actual comic performance (Figure 9). On a stage, with a small set of steps at the middle and a set of open doors at the left, three similarly dressed comic figures wearing tights, padding, masks, and phallos are approached from the left by a fourth figure. A name is inscribed for each individual, including the fourth figure, who is labeled ‘Aigisthos’ and wears elaborate clothing, boots, a pilos, and an attractive face. His beauty differentiates him from his ugly counterparts, the leftmost of which turns to greet him with raised hand. While that figure’s white hair sets him apart from the other two comic figures, his mask-features and name (‘Choregos’), as Taplin shrewdly noticed, may identify him as the older twin of the similarly named and costumed rightmost comic actor. Between these two figures stands a third comic actor, named ‘Pyrrhias,’ gesturing as if declaiming, atop a small raised platform.

Trendall rightly surmised that the key to this iconographic puzzle is the figure of Aegisthus, whose perfectly beautiful, tragic appearance and confused expression – amusingly captured in his ‘head-scratching’ – suggests that he has wandered into ‘an unfamiliar world.’ The open door behind him seems to confirm this. The best interpretation of the vase, yet again, is by Taplin, who (following Trendall) reads the shared name of the two similar comic actors as indicative of the identical function of semi-chorus leader. Their difference in age may reflect a

\[231\] Trendall and Cambitoglou (1991) 8.
posture of antagonism characteristic of other semi-choruses in comedy, such as in the extant Lysistrata (old men vs. old women) and possibly in Eupolis’ now fragmentary Marikas (rich men vs. poor men). While choruses of Old Comedy are commonly divided along the lines of class, gender, etc., a chorus at war over concerns relating to the institution at the heart of Athenian drama itself, the choregia, would be unparalleled in its metatheatricality. In fifth-century Athens, the choregia was a public service imposed on wealthy Athenian citizens, who were required to invest some of their time and money to recruit, train and outfit an entire dithyrambic, tragic, or comedic chorus for the benefit of the polis. The choregos was thus the ancient, civically mandated counterpart of the modern patron or sponsor.

This very civic liturgy is central to Taplin’s interpretation of the Choregoi. He speculates that the two ‘Choregos’ figures represent semi-choruses of similar choregoi: one half for tragedy, led by the older choregos and possibly represented by Aegisthus, and one half for comedy, led by the younger choregos and represented by the slave Pyrrhias. According to this interpretation, Aegisthus would represent tragedy lost in a comic world rather than a comic character playing the part of a tragic figure in a comedy. The beauty and dress of his genre is preserved and remains untouched by the ugliness, obesity, and overall general grossness by which comedy marked out its territory and appropriations. The style of visual paratragedy of this image is thus ‘strict juxtaposition,’ where the visual markers of each genre are presented and preserved

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232 For Marikas, see Storey (2003) 203.
233 Taplin (1993) 57; cf. Gilula (1995) for an alternative interpretation which is critical of Taplin’s assumption that the two ‘Choregoi’ are representative of a chorus.
234 Wilson (2000) is the most fundamental, detailed study of this institution; for his specific comments on the ‘Choregoi’ Vase in particular, see 259-62.
235 Taplin (1993) 56; on the existence of the choregia in South Italy, which lies beyond the scope of this essay, see Wilson (2000) and (2007), and Bosher (Forthcoming).
236 Taplin (1986) 62.
independent of one another, without contamination.\(^\text{237}\) The effect is one of vivid and immediate visual contrast. In this case, the ugliness and grossness of comedy is contrasted with the attractive face, body, and demeanor of a representative tragic figure. Not a single instance of such visual paratragedy can be confirmed in Aristophanic comedy, where the norm was rather the ‘layered’ style of juxtaposition already confirmed on other vases.\(^\text{238}\)

No other vase so starkly communicates performed intergeneric conflict than the Choregoi. If Taplin is correct, and the embodied representative of tragedy is allowed to exist untouched by comic appropriation, it seems that at least one of the items on the agenda of the play of the Choregoi Vase was the probing and analyzing of its dramatic rival with a level of objectivity hitherto unimagined. The preservation of Aegisthus’ beauty, the tragic-aesthetic, represents an unattested form of comic engagement between these dramatic rivals. The system of choregic liturgy, which was so central to Attic drama, thus becomes the context for the genre’s scrutiny of its rival.\(^\text{239}\) It is hardly surprising that an ingenious comic poet would have eventually recognized the originality of parodying the very institutional basis of drama itself, the producers who funded the public performances, which would seem like a natural progression from parodying the actual material of poetry and the poets, the actual producers of tragedy and comedy. Many extant Aristophanic productions similarly engage with fundamental Athenian institutions, including the strategia (Acharnians), the legislature (Knights), the system of education (Clouds), the judiciary (Wasps), and religion (Thesmophoriazusae and Frogs). It thus seems inevitable that sooner or later even the most exclusive institutions of Athenian public life

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\(^{238}\) ibid. Other vases which may depict something like the ‘strict juxtaposition’ of the Choregoi include the ‘New York Goose Play’ (below) and the ‘Cheiron vase’ (see Taplin [1993] fig. 12.6). The former features a mysterious, beautiful figure labeled ‘Τραγῳδος’ in the upper left-hand corner observing the buffoonery of comic figures in the foreground. The latter vase shows a similar observer, a youthful and attractive boy, watching the comic action at the bottom right side of the image.

would be subject to comic treatment as well. In the broader scheme of intergeneric competition, the Choregoi Vase provides valuable evidence for an innovative strategy of the engagement of a poetic rival. Instead of appropriating the material of tragedy – a line, situation, episode, or subplot – the production of the Choregoi dramatized comedy’s confrontation of tragedy at the interstices of the theatrical world of the play and the world of the audience. Analogous examples of comedy’s intergeneric engagement within an institutional frame include the sacrifice and marriage of Peace, the Thesmophoria festival of Thesmophoriazusae, and the Eleusinian cult of Frogs, all plays which use recognizable cultural frames to communicate the poetic and institutional virtues of comedy at the expense of tragedy, in particular. Yet none of these institutions are by definition fundamental to Athenian drama itself, unlike the choregia, the economic apparatus upon which the entire festival – one of the most distinctive and celebrated features of Athenian life – depended.

Also noteworthy is the inverted mythological perspective of the Choregoi Vase, again, if Taplin is correct. It was typical of the mythological burlesque of Old Comedy to insert individuals into separate, self-contained mythological contexts. The Choregoi Vase seems to present the reverse of this: a mythological figure, himself an embodiment of his removed mythological context, is inserted into the contemporary world of the audience of the play. The hyper-competitive context of fifth- or fourth-century polis politics furnishes the frame of the burlesque into which the (helpless?) mythological (or tragic) figure Aegisthus is cast.

The idea of the choregos as comic figure is also noteworthy. In certain respects, the figure of the choregos himself can perhaps be viewed as the sort of multidimensional hybrid character in which Old Comedy shows particular interest. The representative of the choregia was just one of the many civic functions, or public roles, assumed by elite citizens of the polis.
Many affluent citizens famously used it to acquire goodwill and drum up popularity, which could then essentially be converted into political capital. By spending this political capital, a citizen could embark on a successful political career and/or advance a particular agenda. In this respect, the *choregia* would seem to be a natural theme for a chorus of Old Comedy, obsessed as it was with hybrid status: in the play which inspired the vase, the choregoi could have been depicted as figures standing at the interstices of several spheres of public life – tragedy and comedy, the mythological past and contemporary Athens, and art and politics. The painter of this pot has managed to capture the boldest poetic moment of the play which inspired this image, the moment when tragedy and comedy came face-to-face at the very economic and political roots of Athenian drama.

My analysis of the final and most intriguing vase in this chapter is also the most speculative. Although exceedingly rare, the personification of genre found on the Choregoi Vase may not be completely without parallel in the South Italian evidence. The so-called ‘New York Goose Play,’ considered by Taplin to be one of the most interesting, if not the most interesting, of the South Italian comic vases, preserves what may amount to a similar personification of genre. This kalyx-krater from about 400 BCE which is housed in the Metropolitan Museum, stands at about 30.6 cm and was illustrated by the Tarporley painter (Figure 10).240 Unique not only for its dramatic provenance, the New York Goose Play is also the only vase-painting with an accompanying transcription of dramatic dialogue. Each of the three figures in the foreground of the image emit spoken words (Attic speech transcribed in Doric dialect) from their mouths in

a manner which has been compared to that of a comic strip. The stage, the open doors, and the floating comic mask at the top of the picture all but guarantee the scene’s theatricality.

On the far left stands a younger ugly man, who is beardless, stage-naked, and extending a rod outward in a ‘threatening’ manner, as described by Taplin. He looks toward the center of the vase at a second, older man standing with bizarre posture, on his tip-toes and with hands clasped together above his head. To the far right is a third figure: a clothed, ugly old woman stands on the left edge of a raised stage and gestures towards the old man in the middle. At her feet on the stage sits a collection of objects: a basket containing a live kid, a cloak hanging over the side of the stage, and a dead goose. The words of the old woman – ‘I shall hand...over’ (ΕΓΩ ΠΑΡΕΞΩ) – seem the best clue to making some sense of the event(s) depicted. Her statement and accompanying gesture toward the strange old man invite one to identify the pose and weapon of the younger man on the far left as an expression of authority. Judging the gibberish he speaks (NOPAPETTEBAO) to represent some form of foreign speech, Taplin shrewdly identified him as non-Greek, probably one of the Scythian bowmen used to police Athens in the fifth century, much like the one who appears in Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazusae*. This identification implicates the old man in some form of wrongdoing, whose nature is largely unclear. His own words run something like ‘...he/she has bound my hands...’ (ΚΑΣΕΔΗ΢ΑΝΩΤΩΕΙΠΕ).

On the surface of things, the old man’s predicament seems to parallel broadly that one faced by Inlaw in the *Thesmophoriazusae*, where the comic hero is incapacitated and under threat from civic authority. Taplin likens the scene to an analogous one in *Wasps* (138ff.).

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where a similar old woman, the breadseller ‘Myrtia,’ threatens the rampaging Philocleon with legal action after the destruction of her bread loaves. There have also been a number of attempts to explain the man’s posture. If he is bound, as he explicitly declares, the absence of binding materials such as ropes is puzzling. It has been suggested that ropes around his hands have since faded. Beazley argued that he must be under the power of a spell by the old crone, since καταδέω/κατάδεσις was a common expression for just this.\textsuperscript{243} Csapo intriguingly suggests that the absence of ropes is actually part of the joke: the old man has positioned his body to imitate someone who is tied, without actually being so.\textsuperscript{244}

The difficulties of interpretating this vase were somewhat alleviated by Trendall’s connection of the New York Goose Play to a second, completely separate vase from about 370 and attributed to the McDaniel painter.\textsuperscript{245} This Apulian bell-krater shows the same two men, but disposed differently and now standing onstage (Figure 11): on the left is the younger man, the barbarian, balancing his stick upright from the stage with a single finger. On the right is the same old man, this time pouring what appears to be oil from a flask onto his hand. At first glance, the ‘Boston Goose Play’ offers even fewer hints about its performance than its New York counterpart. Taplin sensibly suggests that the oil may signal the approach of a wrestling match between the two.\textsuperscript{246} Aside from a herm positioned to the left and covered by a cloak, the only other obvious difference between New York and Boston is the goose, which is now alive, although the New York vase showed it to be dead. The death of the goose seems very likely to

\textsuperscript{243} Beazley (1952) 193.
\textsuperscript{244} Csapo (2010) 46.
\textsuperscript{245} RVAp 99 (257).
\textsuperscript{246} Taplin (1993) 32.
have been the cause of the dispute between the old woman and the old man in the New York Goose Play.247

But these details are really secondary to a fourth figure (in importance) who appears in the background of the vase. Standing apart in the upper left-hand corner is a nearly naked (although not stage-naked), young male wearing neither mask nor comic costume. A cloak hanging from his left shoulder partially covers that side of his body while from his chest juts the word ‘Tragoidos’ (Figure 12). No theory has convincingly explained the boy’s identity and/or his relationship to the events taking place before him. Messerschmidt identified him as part of the current performance, the fourth actor waiting offstage to assume the floating mask before his entrance.248 Beazley countered that this explanation still failed to account for the inscribed name, which he understood quite literally in an occupational sense: ‘Tragoidos’ must be a tragic actor at the same festival who watches comedy before or after his own tragic performance on that same day.249 Csapo similarly argues that the boy could be either a tragic actor or a choreut, although not, in any case, a performer.250 Both views accept, then, that ‘Tragoidos’ is somehow representative of a type of metatheatricality which is unparalleled in extant Apulian vase-painting.251

Although impossible to prove, Marshall’s theory does the most justice to the available evidence and the proclivities of the comic genre. He denies all three of the previous possibilities because of the age of ‘Tragoidos,’ and attractively suggests instead that the figure stands apart

247 Taplin (1993) 32 credits the recognition of this detail, which is crucial to determining the causal relationship between the images of the two vases, to Eric Csapo.
248 Messerschmidt (1932).
249 Beazley (1952) 195.
251 Although the Bari pipers and the Choregoi Vase preserve signature-scenes of unique metatheatricality – the former conjoins the world of the play with that of the audience and the latter juxtaposes figures symbolic of tragedy and comedy onstage at the same time – to my knowledge there exists no parallel for such offstage spectatorship of the fictional comic world by a representative of its rival genre.
from the action as a personification of ‘Tragedy.’ His placement in the upper left-hand corner, away from the events of the foreground, reveals something about the scene which is not obvious from its events: the boy conveys to the viewer the modality of the episode in the foreground, which one must assume was paratragic in light of the boy’s name. If the boy did not actually appear in the play, and is an addition of the painter, the New York Goose Play may furnish a significant example of a vase whose painter offers his own explicit interpretation of a dramatic scene.

While Marshall accounts for the details of the vase as well as any, he does not develop the implications of the youthful appearance of ‘Tragoidos’ – who is devoid of the hallmarks of comic ugliness – which could only strengthen his case. The key to Tragoidos’ visual character might be found in the aesthetics of an altogether separate genre of vase-painting, pederastic iconography. Tragoidos’ boyish features – age, height, prepubescent body, cropped haircut (‘bowl-cut’), and perhaps most important, small genitalia – clearly set him apart from the phallosed comic ugliness of the other three figures. Beyond this clear contrast between the boy’s beauty and the ugliness of the other figures, the physical features of Tragoidos resemble those of the eromenos, the younger boy who is the target of the erotic advances and affections of an older male in pederastic imagery. The sidelock is particularly distinctive of the eromenos’ haircut and the modest draping of the cloak over part of the body visually expresses the quality of aidos which eromenoi were expected to display. If this is correct, and such markers identify Tragoidos as the passive partner in this traditionally aristocratic social institution of Greek culture, then the Tarporley painter could be conceptualizing generic interaction, that is, the

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relationship between tragedy and comedy, in terms of sexual reciprocity, in a new and original way.

This interpretation is especially plausible given Old Comedy’s frequent conception of intergeneric relationships, whether between poet and his craft or different genres in competition, in gendered, sexual terms. Edith Hall has documented the frequency with which Aristophanes and some of his rivals introduced into their comedies personifications of social, political, or religious abstractions. Examples include *Opora* and *Theoria* (‘Harvest’ and ‘Festival’) in Peace, *Diallage* (‘Reconciliation’) in Lysistrata, and *Penia* (‘Poverty’) in Wealth.254 Personifications of poetry and poetic genre in particular are admittedly not as common in Old Comedy, but still frequent enough in the extant evidence. The Muse of Euripides in Frogs (1305-7) represents an aesthetic judgment of Euripidean-style tragedy, as my discussion of Chapter Five will show. In his Pytine of 423, Aristophanes’ older contemporary Cratinus famously depicted himself as an alcoholic, washed-up poet embroiled in an ongoing dispute with his wife, ‘Comedy,’ over their failing marriage, the result of his ‘infidelity’ with alcoholism.255 Cratinus may have even personified actual theatrical productions in his play entitled *Didaskaliai*. His comic contemporary Pherecrates allegedly dealt with the subject of poets and poetry in his metapoetic Cheiron, which introduced ‘Mousike,’ the female personification of Music, as the victim of physical and sexual abuse at the hands of Athens’ trendy yet unscrupulous dithyrambic poets.256 One particularly tantalizing fragment from this play survives in the Pseudo-Plutarchian monograph entitled On Music (30.141c) and preserves *Mousike* herself claiming to have been sexually victimized by various dithyrambic poets of Athens (fr. 155). Since comedy is

fundamentally heterosexual, as Dover notes, the metaphor of poetic composition is framed as a male-female relationship or marriage.\textsuperscript{257} Aristophanes and his rivals evidently reserved sexual relationships of varying degrees of permanence and legitimacy for discursive treatments of poetics because of their metaphorical depth: poets and performers, as agents of poetry, are represented as male, while their spheres of activity, the passive artforms, are always female.\textsuperscript{258} The conception of ‘Tragedy’ (τραγῳδία) as a woman is also consistent with the serious iconographic evidence: in the few fifth-century Attic vases in which ‘Tragedy’ appears, she is usually a maenad in the company of a thiasos of Dionysus.\textsuperscript{259}

There is much evidence, then, for this gendered conception of poets and their poetry in Old Comedy. At its root, however, the gendered metaphor reflects a relationship of power: poets and other artists are subject to praise or blame for their treatment of an institution whose quality and sanctity must be protected from external corruption. The metaphor assumes not just cultural assumptions of gender and agency, but an imbalance of power between the two parties involved, an inequality which, with some qualifications, was inherent in both heterosexual and pederastic relationships. In this lies the potential originality of the New York Goose Play’s treatment of this theme, if that is in fact the import of the personified Tragoidos. Nothing would prevent a comic poet from representing poetic activity or a specific genre as a vulnerable, perhaps impressionable, youth subject to mistreatment or aggressive courtship by unscrupulous older men. Is it possible that Tragoidos of the New York Goose Play somehow represented the loftier genre facing the threat of, or actually suffering, a sexual ravishing by comedy of the sort that Mousike complained of in Pherecrates’ Cheiron?

\textsuperscript{257} Dover (1989) 148.
\textsuperscript{258} Hall (2006) 177.
\textsuperscript{259} \textit{LIMC} s.v. ‘Tragodia’ (A. Kossatz-Deissmann): 48-50.
It is tempting to imagine the dramatic possibilities of the New York Goose Play in light of this interpretation of the evidence. Was the old man the admirer/ravisher of Tragoidos? Did he fall afoul of the law through his attempted courtship? Could this explain the presence of the two kids and the goose in the image, as geese were traditionally one of several possible courting-gifts offered to the *eromenos* by the *erastes*? Speculations about such details could continue endlessly and to little benefit. Whatever his true significance in the episode which inspired the New York Goose Play, Tragoidos, at the very least, expresses something about the generic interaction between comedy and tragedy in a highly original fashion. Even as a personification, Tragoidos could have very easily been a full-fledged agent in the plot of the play. After all, there is just one small step from ‘Tragoidos’ to ‘Trygaeus,’ the name of the hero of *Peace*, the subject of the next chapter. As Hall has pointed out, Trygaeus means ‘son of Trugoidos’ or ‘son of the practitioner of ‘Trugedy’’ and is himself emblematic of cross-generic play. With all of the ingenuity at their disposal, comic poets would eventually hit upon the fact that the tragic genre could be represented by a different type of passivity, that of an attractive adolescent, and this may explain the enigmatic image of this most extraordinary vase.

**Conclusion**

As a rare source of insight into the definitive generic practices of Old Comedy in performance, the evidence of red-figure vase-painting of Attica and South Italy is unrivaled in its potential to diminish the enormous gulf between us and the public performances of fifth-century Athens. Although each vase examined in this chapter offers at least some grounds for assuming its scene-specificity, as an illustration at least partly inspired by a comic performance, none need possess any demonstrable dramatic pedigree in order to offer rare and valuable evidence for

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260 Dover (1989) 92 points out that a goose is represented as one such gift at *Birds* 707.
strategies of Old Comedy’s intergeneric engagement at the episodic, narrative, and institutional levels.

The signature-scenes of the Würzburg Telephus, the Berlin Heracles, and the St. Agata Antigone preserve not only invaluable evidence for irrecoverable aspects of comic performance at the episodic level, such as costumes, props, gesture, and proxemics, but also the paratragic layering which furnished a visual correlative to the predominantly linguistic manifestations of paratragedy found in such Aristophanic productions as *Acharnians*, *Peace*, and *Thesmophoriazusae*. The comic iconography also attests to the significance of hybridity for the dramaturgical purposes of cross-generic play, which, at root, reflects the genre’s fundamental impulse towards intergeneric competition. As thematic paradigms, these crowd-pleasing instances of extreme visual incongruity also possess a diachronic significance which transcends the static illustrations of their ceramic surfaces. Because Dionysus’ failed costume is a recurring joke in *Frogs*, for example, the Berlin Heracles has programmatic value for the viewer who is cognizant of the layered costume in the door-knocking scene as an integral, sustained component of the play’s style humor. In these particular vases, as well as in the others surveyed in this chapter, the visual poetics of the ceramic surface correspond to those of the comic stage. The Würzburg Telephus, in particular, also furnishes insight about the way that the serious iconography of a scene might influence a painter’s representation of stage parody.

The mythological burlesques of the second set of vases engage the viewer in a more sophisticated fashion thanks to their larger narrative frames. Although their dramatic origins are slightly less certain, the narrative strategies of these illustrations, which are easily reconstructed because of the popular literary and iconographic evidence for their traditional narratives, are analogous to the existing evidence for Old Comedy. These vases reflect the common strategies
of reversal, displacement, substitution, and reification in ways analogous to the textual evidence for intergeneric engagement. In their parody, even contradiction, of famous episodes of the *Iliupersis*, the vase-painters of the Cassandra and Priam scenes exploit cultural associations between the fates of these figures and contemporary thinking about epic causality. Full appreciation of the vases thus requires a viewer sophisticated enough to recognize that their static depictions partake in the sort of counterfactual experimentation which had textual parallels in the plays of Old Comedy, most notably Cratinus’ *Dionysalexandros*. The absence of precise textual models for these images has the benefit of forcing one to think more open-endedly when coming to grips with the cultural values underlying the iconographic parodies. In the end, their images offer free-standing parodies of recognizable, broadly popular iconographic narratives whose comic mechanics are roughly consistent with those of the cross-generic play of the stage.

The last group of vases provides the most direct visual evidence for the core subject of this project, competitive generic interaction between Old Comedy and its rivals, tragedy and satyr play. Due to the accidents of survival, each scene-specific vase offers a wholly unique and particular example of this quintessentially comic mode in productions which are (and will likely remain) otherwise completely unknown to us. If Taplin’s theory of its depiction of the theriomorphism of the satyrs is correct, the Getty Birds potentially offers a very rare, direct visual depiction of Old Comedy’s generic engagement with its lesser-known dramatic rival. The Getty Birds’ parasatyrism thus furnishes a valuable, visual complement to the textual evidence for similar parasatyrism operative in Cratinus’ *Dionysalexandros* and a few minor Aristophanic vignettes. Our sole glimpse of the strictly juxtaposed style of visual paratragedy is preserved on the Choregoi Vase, whose dramatic source apparently allowed personified tragedy (at least visually) to appear on-stage unmolested by Old Comedy, and thus uncompromised by its
appropriation, within the context of the dramatic festival’s most essential institution, the *choregia*. This play’s evident focus on the *choregia* as a subject for treatment represents a highly original yet natural evolution in the satirical program of Old Comedy, which frequently engages its poetic rivals in the context of civic institutions. The New York Goose Play may also show a similar comic drive toward the parody of an institution, but a social institution of a traditionally aristocratic kind. The unidentifiable play which inspired the Tarporley painter may have used the institution of pederasty as a metaphor for intergeneric competition of some kind which remains obscure. If Tragoidos is, after all, a personification of tragedy in the role of the *eromenos*, he would constitute a highly original treatment of the ‘comic marriage’ trope in comic discourse on poetry.

The iconography of Attic and South Italian comic vases offers more than just snapshots of moments from Old Comedy and a visual record of particular performative events. As paradigmatic, diachronic, and sophisticated treatments of texts, these pots reflect their own narratives, which can supplement and illuminate the performance, on-stage and in text, of the most self-conscious genre of the fifth century.
Chapter 3: Poetic Failure and Comic Success in Aristophanes’ Peace

Introduction

With the close of Chapter Two, this project turns to consider a different body of evidence, Aristophanic comedy and paratragedy, which forms the play-based core of this dissertation. Peace, Thesmophoriazusae, and Frogs represent most of the largest surviving record of comic appropriation as intergeneric rivalry in the fifth century. As explained in the Introduction, Aristophanic paratragedy is formally diverse, dramaturgically motivated, and inherently parasitic. While it can be as brief as a line or as lengthy as an entire plot, most Aristophanic paratragedy has a common target, Euripidean tragedy. Peace of 421 BCE is the first Aristophanic play to make poetry its primary concern and is, more than any other extant play, rooted in its historical context – the period of negotiations leading up to the Peace of Nicias and the first significant break from hostilities between Athens and Sparta since the beginning of the Peloponnesian War.261 Like the heroes of the other two Aristophanic ‘peace’ plays with which Peace is often classed – Acharnians of 425 and Lysistrata of 411 – the citizen hero Trygaeus responds to a crisis in Greece with drastic action: after a Bellerophonian flight to Olympus to demand divine accountability for the war, the hero successfully frees the imprisoned goddess ‘Peace’ and thereby brings an end to all hostilities.

Peace is one of the rare fifth-century dramatic productions to suffer two different fates in reception history. Despite our inability to recover the stage logistics of major scenes like the Bellerophon parody and the hauling of Peace, and the comedy’s rather sparing on-stage action, Peace’s nearly unparalleled intertextual virtuosity and overall thematic richness has been a

delight for directors.\textsuperscript{262} The play’s physical and visual treats, as well as its timeless relevance and concerns, have never failed to attract the attention of modern theater. No other Aristophanic comedy, for example, was staged more in France during the twentieth-century.\textsuperscript{263} Acclaimed by both audiences and critics, Peter Hacks’ 1962 performance of the play appears to have been so successful that it even initiated a rich period of stage adaptations of classical literature in the German Democratic Republic.\textsuperscript{264} Yet \textit{Peace}, which finished a mediocre second place in the City Dionysia, has failed to inspire the same enthusiasm in literary scholars, who have largely dismissed it as lackluster in both conception and execution.\textsuperscript{265} For all of its dynamic stagecraft, the limited scope of the play offers little of the variety which readers of Aristophanes grow to expect. However, recent studies on the play’s marked and persistent metatheatricality and intertextual engagement have set \textit{Peace} on the radar of classical scholarship. The two most pronounced examples of intertextual engagement, the parody of Bellerophon and the rescue of Peace, are quintessential examples of Old Comedy’s competitive appropriation of rival dramatic genres as well as literary landmarks in the genre’s late fifth-century project of defining itself as a vital polis institution.\textsuperscript{266}

\textit{Peace} is distinguished not only by the frequency, diversity, and dramaturgical function of its comic appropriation, but by its specific identification as ‘trugedy,’ a socially responsible subgenre of comedy which aims ‘to inculcate moral lessons,’ frequently through paratragedy.\textsuperscript{267} The play’s appropriately named hero, ‘Trygaeus,’ is thus distinguished for his project’s repeated application of comically adapted poetry, of which the two most pronounced examples are the

\textsuperscript{262} Lowe (2006) 61; for modern staging of Aristophanic plays, see individual contributions in Hall and Wrigley (2007).
\textsuperscript{264} Seidensticker (2007) 194-5.
\textsuperscript{267} The term belongs to Taplin (1983).
Bellerophon paratragedy and the parasatyric rescue of Peace.\textsuperscript{268} The first half of this chapter concentrates on these two scenes and what cultural values and generic expectations they exploit. By employing some of the comic strategies already encountered in Chapters One and Two – hybridity, substitution, inversion – Aristophanes transforms the catastrophic, tragic failure of Bellerophon into Trygaeus’ comic success, the first example of the play’s overarching theme of turning poetic failure into comic agency. While my analysis of the Bellerophon parody examines the comic hero, Trygaeus, it focuses especially on his ‘Pegasus,’ the dung-beetle, which in identity and function reflects the overwhelmingly popular cultural and ideological thrust of Aristophanic appropriation. The next vignette of the play, the rescue of the goddess Peace from her cave, is more generic in its adaptation and topical in its emphasis. Aristophanes’ investment of the rescue efforts with a very specific satyr play tone, or modality, marks the first time in his extant corpus where his comedy turns to engage its lesser-known performative rival, satyr play. Unlike his older rival in comedy, Cratinus, who also appropriated satyr play in his Dionysalexandros (Chapter One), Aristophanic parasatyrism is confined to a single episode for a very specific purpose. The panhellenic chorus’ parasatyric behavior – its satyr-like indiscipline, disorder, and incompetence – communicates a central theme of Peace, the frustrations of panhellenism during the previous and current negotiations for peace in 421. With satyr play as a vehicle, Aristophanes is able to convey the divisive politics which stifled the peace process with a certain performative immediacy. This particular modality prefigures the play’s focus on the celebration of panhellenism in its second half, wherein the fundamental cultural institutions of Greece are revived and celebrated upon Trygaeus’ return to Athens.

\textsuperscript{268} For the etymology of the hero’s name, see Hall (2006) 328-333.
Much like the first half, the second half of *Peace* continues its agenda of intergeneric engagement and the conversion of failure to success, only in an indirect fashion, through the cultural institutions of the polis. The celebratory frame of the initiation of the postwar era keeps the focus squarely on Old Comedy, whose representative hero gradually rehabilitates the traditional, aristocratic institutions of the polis and the hallmarks of Greek civilization – agriculture, sacrifice, and marriage.\(^{269}\) The symbolic renewal of each through public performance continues the first half’s preoccupation with panhellenism, but now in celebration of it. The place of agricultural labor in Aristophanes’ utopian vision constitutes an innovation on contemporary comic conceptions of the subject which were characterized above all – if the surviving fragments give any accurate sense – by the motif of automatism and life without work of any kind. Aristophanes’ departure from current comic fashions underscores his play’s commitment to defining postwar Greece with a certain historical realism and a marked panhellenic thrust. This subtle affirmation of labor implies that peace will be no fantasy, but a *reality*, which all Greeks will confirm by enjoying one of the most recognizable activities which makes them Greeks, farming.

As reversals of Greek tragedy’s perverted sacrifices and marriages, which symbolize the violent breakdown of society and culture in comedy’s primary rival, Trygaeus’ successful performance of ritual represents non-parodic, competitive gestures of generic rivalry with fifth-century tragedy. For once, Old Comedy does not parody, but rather rectifies tragedy’s own parodies by the proper public performance of traditional rituals. Trygaeus’ sacrifice to Peace and marriage to ‘Harvest’ challenge tragedy’s dominant cultural influence over the performance of

\(^{269}\) The most famous treatments of these institutions as the pillars of Greek civilization are in the Hesiodic poems. Cf. *Works and Days* 42-48 (agriculture); *Theogony* 535-616, *Works and Days* 45-105 (marriage); *Works and Days* 47-58 (sacrifice).
these rituals by reinvesting them with the positive connotations of civic cohesion, thereby celebrating Old Comedy as a fundamental polis institution of equal status with tragedy. The overall cross-generic thrust of Peace is thus characterized by a diversity of targets, strategies, and dramaturgical applications of comic appropriation.

I. Tragic Openings

Comic prologues have considerably more work to do than their tragic counterparts, which have the benefit of beginning from stories more or less familiar to the audience.270 Forced to construct an entire world from scratch, comic poets must quickly contextualize their new, unfamiliar material with a highly original opening which both entices and informs an audience. A refreshing exception to this rule is the prologue of Peace: although thoroughly comic in so many of its details – an opening ‘warm up’ with slaves engaged in some unknown activity, scatology (22-3), coarse jokes (11-12, 24-25), busyness, props271 – the prologue effectively disseminates the who, what, and why of its story with the help of a recognizable tragic technique, the ‘sickness’ motif commonly found in Euripidean tragedy. Slave B steps forward (50) to provide an account (τὸν λόγον) of what has been happening: the master is mad (μαίνεται) in a ‘new way’ (καινὸν τρόπον), gapes at the sky, and demands justification from Zeus for the protracted war in Greece (58-9). An offstage cry introduces Trygaeus, the vine-grower, whose madness drove him to seek Olympus with only a ladder on the previous day. The distinctly tragic elements of this early dialogue, specifically the repetition of the master’s words (ὦ Ζεῦ, τί ποτε βουλέως ποιεῖν; 58 and πῶς ἂν ποτ’ ἀφικοίμην...: 68), as well as the master’s sudden paratragic outburst (ὦ Ζεῦ, τί δραστεῖς ποδ’ ἦμων τὸν λεῶν; 62), draw together parts of

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Euripides’ *Bellerophon*, other unidentifiable tragic models, and Aristophanes’ own generic pastiche.\(^{272}\) Trygaeus’ madness clearly parallels the violent, inner turmoil of *Medea* and *Hippolytus*, specifically, the madness (54, 65) of *Medea* (*Med*. 96-7) and *Phaedra* (*Hipp*. 205, 269), each of whom are said to suffer, like Trygaeus, from a ‘disease’ (νόσος and its cognates).\(^{273}\)

Trygaeus’ verbal paratragedy was almost certainly supplemented by paralinguistic features (e.g., pitch) and grand, emphatic gestures on the part of the slaves to communicate the tragic mode of the prologue.

The tragic subtext shortly evolves from the generic to the specific with a virtuoso parody of a famous Euripidean production, the lost *Bellerophon* (455-25 BCE). The slave tells of his master’s pseudo-tragic exile and return from Aetna with one of its fabled giant beetles in tow and quotes his master’s words to his new pet, the beetle:

‘ὦ Πηγάσιόν μοι,’ φησί, ‘γενναίον πτερόν, ὅπως πετήσει μ’ εὐθὺ τοῦ Διὸς λαβών.’

‘My little Pegasus, my thoroughbred wings, you must pick me up and fly me straight to Zeus.’

*Peace* 76-7

Suddenly, Trygaeus is raised aloft on the back of a dung beetle to the astonishment of onlookers.

One of the most famous send-ups of Aristophanic comedy, the aural and visual parody of *Bellerophon* exemplifies the performative dynamism of paratragic humor, which appropriates the material of its rivals on its own aesthetic and social terms. But in order to understand Aristophanes’ effective conversion of tragic failure to comic success, one must have a look at the evidence for its model.


\(^{273}\) Olson (1998) *ad loc.*; cf. *Bellerophon* fr. 292; Rau (1967) 91 adds the further tragic parallel of *Ajax* and its hero’s similar cry from offstage. Harvey (1971) 364 finds more parallels with the two Euripidean heroines in Trygaeus’ interrogation of heaven motif, the invocation of Zeus, and the use of the rare verb δρασίω (62).
Evidence for the Bellerophon saga before the fifth century is limited, the earliest being Glaucos’ speech to Diomedes in Homer (Il. 6.152-206), which recounts Bellerophon’s rejection of the advances of Anteia – the wife of his host Proitos – and her false accusation of rape against the hero.\(^{274}\) Ignorant of his wife’s deception and bent on revenge, Proitos sends his guest Bellerophon to the house of his father-in-law Iobates in Lycia with an accompanying message to kill its bearer. Rather than kill his own guest and violate xenia, Iobates instead dispatches Bellerophon to kill the monstrous Chimaera, a death sentence in its own right for a regular mortal. After killing the Chimaera, Bellerophon is ordered to undertake further challenges at the behest of Iobates who, after seeing the hero’s repeated triumphs, becomes sufficiently convinced of Bellerophon’s worth to offer him a share of his kingdom and the hand of his daughter. Despite these successes, the Homeric account abruptly ends with Bellerophon’s final isolation and misery, and mentions neither the causes of his death nor the role of Pegasus, the hero’s winged steed, in his ultimate downfall. Hesiod’s *Theogony* (319-25) only speaks of Bellerophon’s defeat of the Chimaera with the help of Pegasus,\(^{275}\) while Pindar relates separately the events covered by Homer (Ol. 13.63-92) and the arrogance which led the hero to attempt to reach heaven (Isth. 7.44ff.), as well as his subsequent fall and the tragic collapse of his fortunes.

Despite its fragmentary state, the surviving evidence of Euripides’ *Bellerophon*, the model for Trygaeus’ paratragic flight and the most well-known of three attested productions on the hero’s saga in the fifth century, is good enough to permit a basic reconstruction of the events of the play, which allow for some conjectures to be made about the strategies of Aristophanic appropriation in *Peace*. Unfortunately, very little survives of Euripides’ other play on the topic, *Stheneboia*, and the reputed third play on this mythological subject, Sophocles’ *Iobates*, is

\(^{274}\) See Gantz (1993) 313-16.  
\(^{275}\) In Hesiod’s *Catalogue of Women*, Bellerophon is the son of Poseidon, who awards him Pegasus as a gift.
completely lost.\textsuperscript{276} \textit{Stheneboia} (performance date unknown) assumed and possibly even dramatized some of the events of Bellerophon’s life which are related by Glaucus in \textit{Iliad} 6 but substituted the name ‘Stheneboia’ for Homer’s ‘Anteia.’\textsuperscript{277} The play apparently treated Bellerophon’s revenge against Proitos’ treacherous wife: after his triumphs, the hero prevailed upon her – who was still plotting against him – to depart on Pegasus under the pretense of marriage. Once airborne the hero threw her down to her death. All that remains of Euripides’ \textit{Bellerophon} are thirty fragments and two tattered hypotheses, which yield only the most basic sense of the play’s key events.\textsuperscript{278} Nevertheless, the details of the Aristophanic parodies themselves allow us to reconstruct partially some of the strategies of comic appropriation which it employed, specifically comic incongruity and substitution.

The heart of Aristophanes’ Bellerophon paratragedy is roughly divisible into three parts – Trygaeus’ ascension and mid-air exchange with his slaves (82-113), his departing dialogue with his daughters (114-48), and his in-flight speech (149-179). The tragic pastiche is arranged mainly in alternating anapests and iambic trimeters and was almost certainly supplemented with paralinguistic signs. From its very beginning, the role of Trygaeus involved enormous challenges of speech and gesture. The actor was forced to deliver his lines, in shifting meters, all the while gesticulating in tragic style and balancing on a beetle swinging aloft on the \textit{mechane}.\textsuperscript{279} Trygaeus likely wore the poor man’s tunic (ἐξωμίς), worn robe (ἱμάτιον), and rough shoes (ἐμβάδες) – characteristic of Aristophanic heroes – under ornate articles of tragic costume, possibly identifiable with the actual garb of Euripides’ hero. This textbook layered

\textsuperscript{276} Gantz (1993) 314 suspects that its topic was the Lycian king’s doubts about whether or not he should slay the hero.
\textsuperscript{277} Collard (1995) 79-83 summarizes the evidence.
\textsuperscript{278} Collard (1995) 101; the play is referred to at Ach. 426-9.
\textsuperscript{279} Hall (2006) 224, Hourmouziades (1965) 150; for the alternative view that Trygaeus alights on the roof at the switch to iambic trimeter (102) instead of remaining on the crane, see Olson (1998) \textit{ad loc}.
juxtaposition, which has been corroborated by the theater-related iconography of Attic and South Italian vase-painting,\textsuperscript{280} would facilitate basic recognition of the ‘tragic intrusion’ of another text into the comic frame for less competent audience members.\textsuperscript{281}

Trygaeus’ insanity does not reflect generic tragic madness but specifically alludes to the notoriously deteriorating mental state of the Euripidean Bellerophon, who was reduced to bitterness, cynicism, and disillusionment, according to the mythological tradition. Ancient sources for the myth agree that Bellerophon was eventually driven to seek heaven, although the ultimate cause varies with the source – bitterness resulting from the death of his children;\textsuperscript{282} melancholy because his triumphs have been forgotten;\textsuperscript{283} arrogance.\textsuperscript{284} Eventually brought to a state of desperation by his sufferings, Bellerophon ultimately denied the existence of the gods in the famous climax of Euripides’ play:

\begin{quote}
φησίν τις εἶναι δήτ' ἐν οὐφανώι θεοὺς:
οὐκ εἰσίν, οὐκ εἶσ᾿, εἰ τις ἀνθρώπων ζέλει
μὴ τῷ παλαιῷ μώρος ὀν χρήσθαι λόγωι.
\end{quote}

‘Does someone say there are indeed gods in heaven? There are not, there are not, if a man is willing not to rely foolishly on the antiquated reasoning.’ (fr. 286. 1-3)

While many characters in Euripides’ plays venture direct criticism of the traditional gods, no other Euripidean hero denies their very existence outright, and with such vehemence, as Bellerophon appears to do in fr. 286.\textsuperscript{285}

Trygaeus is also mad (χολή: 66), disgusted with the gods (62-3,107-8), and isolated (Cf. Bellerophon fr. 285). Unlike Bellerophon, however, Trygaeus will succeed because of his

\textsuperscript{281} On such intrusion as a signal of cross-generic play, see Revermann (2006) 103-4 and (2006a) 116.
\textsuperscript{282} ΣΤ II. 6.202α: ὃς, ὡς οἱ γεώτεροι φασί, μελαγχολήσας ἀλλ' ὀδυνώμενος ἔπι τῇ τῶν παίδων ἀπωλείᾳ ἐμόναξεν.
\textsuperscript{283} Aristotle, Problems 953a21ff.
\textsuperscript{284} Pinder, Isthm 7.44.
\textsuperscript{285} Riedweg (1990) 46-7.
madness. Instead of denying their existence, Trygaeus actually seeks an audience with the gods, to interrogate Zeus and possibly even indict him on charges of Medism (107-8). Trygaeus’ successful ascension to the house of Zeus and subsequent confrontation with Hermes (180ff.) comically collapses the boundary between mortals and gods, so that they exist on the same level, just as in similar confrontations elsewhere in Old Comedy (Cf. the fragmentary Hypothesis to Cratinus’ Dionysalexandros [POxy 663.25-6] and Aristophanes’ Birds 1494ff., 1265ff.).

As a successful Bellerophon, Trygaeus is undoubtedly key to Aristophanes’ paratragedy. The hero, however, may not actually be the vignette’s primary focal point and most significant innovation, which is more likely the substitution of the dung beetle for Pegasus. According to comic logic, a suitable replacement is therefore not just an animal of lower status, but one of the most vile existence imaginable, whose defining biological feature is the consumption of dung. As the substitute for the most heroic animal of Greek myth, the beetle is more than a grotesque, irreverent conflation of high and low or even ‘an easy means of transport’: it is a pragmatic, popular, and generic hybrid, which is understandable in both generic and cultural terms and an embodiment of the most salient qualities of Old Comedy itself.

The beetle’s significance as a locus of Peace’s balance of tragic failure and comic success is suggested just after Trygaeus has taken flight, in a scene which adapts a dramatic exchange between the Euripidean Bellerophon and one or more speakers either condemning him for past actions or anticipating the disastrous consequences of his intended flight. This tragic scene aimed to arouse pathos as well as effectively draw out and fully elaborate the culpable recklessness of the hero’s actions in clear, unmistakeable terms. In place of this scene

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288 Hourmouziades (1965) 152, Rau (1967) 93, Riedweg (1990) 49 n. 51, Collard (1995) 100-1, identifies frs. 287, 291-2, 294, 301-2 as part of this scene; the chorus seems to side with the (unknown) speaker in frs. 303-4.
Aristophanes inserts (114-48) the two daughters of Trygaeus, who suddenly appear to plead with their father in paratragic stichomythia. However, the girls show more interest in the aesthetic and practical aspects of their father’s flight than in its moral rightness and danger: in place of the beetle (127-8, 131-2), they suggest he take a more tragically appropriate substitute (136-7). Implicit in their subsequent mockery of Euripides’ penchant for crippled heroes (146-8) is the generic assumption at the heart of Aristophanic parody in Peace, that failure ultimately belongs to Old Comedy’s rivals, while the comic genre itself is associated with success. Aristophanes’ comic revision of this scene humorously redefines the moral conundrum of the Euripidean original to express a central preoccupation of Peace and its larger role in comedy’s competitive rivalry with other genres.

As Trygaeus himself says, his choice of the beetle was inspired by its own heroic literary biography in the Aesopic tradition, to which he alludes in response to his daughters’ recommendation that he make his appeal to the gods with something more tragic, like Pegasus. Trygaeus is referring to the fable of the eagle and the beetle (ἦλθεν κατ’ ἔχθραν αἰετοῦ πάλαι ποτέ...ὡ’ ἐκκυλίδων κάνττιμωρούμενος: 133-4), which is of particular relevance here not only for its ruminations on the beetle’s inferior status in Greece, but also because of its significance in the biographical tradition of Aesop himself, who was similarly reputed to have been a social outcast according to tradition: as an old man, Aesop was famously accused by the Delphians of stealing a bowl from Apollo’s temple. In response to this charge, he recited the story of an eagle who wronged a dung beetle, either by eating its young (ΣRV 130) or consuming a hare that was

289 Rau (1967) 92, Riedweg (1990) 49 n. 51, Parker (1997) 262, Olson (1998) ad loc. The multiple tragic sources, frequently shifting meters (Dactylic tetrameters [114-17], hexameters [118-23], iambic trimeters [124-54], anapaestic dimeters [154-72]) and elevated diction (δὼσιν: 115; πᾶλος, ναοθλίωσμαι: 126) increase the likelihood that this parody is modeled on a similar event in the original.

290 Aristophanes’ reference to the very same fable in his Wasps (1401) of the previous year proves that he felt it was popular enough that it would be recognized by his audience.
its suppliant (Aesop. *Fab.* 3 Perry). The beetle responded by systematically breaking the eggs of the eagle, which eventually fled to Zeus and was allowed to nest in his lap. Accounts differ as to what happened next: either the beetle dropped a ball of dung on Zeus (Aesop. *Fab.* 3 Perry) or buzzed around his head (ΣRV 130). The end result was that the eagle’s eggs fell and were shattered after the god leapt up from his seat in disgust. The fable’s moral is that divine affiliations do the wicked no good, even when their enemy is a creature of the lowest social status.²⁹¹

The Aesopic beetle, like Trygaeus and the comic genre generally, is the quintessential underdog who has justice on its side and aspires to a higher status. Just as the beetle confronted the eagle on Olympus, so does the humble farmer Trygaeus confront the gods responsible for Greece’s continuous war. As an agent for the powerless against the powerful, the low social status of the beetle is inversely proportional to its popular renown in the traditionally pedestrian genre of fable. The comic substitution thus exploits the cultural currency of the beetle’s literary biography and the proven track record of its success: as the only literary creature to reach heaven (129-30), the Aesopic beetle has succeeded where his loftier counterpart of the tragic genre, Pegasus, has failed.

The cultural currency of the fable, a genre which champions the weak over the strong, is further emphasized by the beetle’s affiliation with iambos, another genre which made claims to popular wisdom through its practice of open, direct speech for the benefit of the community. In a momentary metatheatrical exchange in the audience (as imagined by Trygaeus’ slaves) during the prologue (44-9), an Ionian explains to a ‘clever’ (δοκησίσωφος) spectator sitting beside him the beetle’s significance to the iambic tradition of invective and (by extension) to one of the most

democratic features of Old Comedy, public mockery by naming (ὀνομαστὶ κωμῳδεῖν). Drawing upon his knowledge of the invective of his native iambic tradition, the Ionian speculates that the scatology of the prologue is directed against the deceased Cleon who, like the beetle himself, is currently eating dung in Hades. The comic profile of the beetle thus evokes the popular causes and class sympathies of two traditionally early, non-performative, low-brow genres, fable and iambos.

The class implications of the beetle’s identity run even deeper, however. The insect’s profile aims to appeal to the popular ideology of the demos by exploiting broader cultural attitudes about equids, a subject which has been explored by Mark Griffith. Griffith has argued that horses, donkeys, and mules were, in the Greek imagination, subject to the same cultural prejudices which were applied to certain social groups in ancient society. Like their aristocratic owners, horses were only bred for battle, racing, elite transportation, and display, but never for the menial tasks of labor and basic transportation commonly reserved for lower-class equids like donkeys and mules. Aristophanes imputes certain pseudo-equine characteristics to the beetle: the slave complains of being saddled with the duties of a groom (ἵπποκομεῖν: 74), according to which he must treat the beetle as a pony (πωλίον: 75, 126), when it is really more like a ‘pack ass’ (κάνναξ: 85). Trygaeus regards the beetle as his ‘Pegasus’ (76, 154), as if it possesses a certain heroic grandeur (ἵπποκάνναξες: 181), despite its ‘grazing’ on dung (βουκολήσεται: 153). His recommendations that the beast begin its flight slowly (ήρέμα: 82) and

293 Griffith (2006).
not too insolently (σοβαρως: 83) deploys the specialized vocabulary of horse-training and maintenance, as Xenophon’s treatise on the subject shows (Eq. 7.10; 10.17).295

The beetle’s absurd pretensions to ‘horsiness’ actually have the effect of identifying it with a different, culturally inferior equid, the donkey, who occupied the opposite pole of the ideological spectrum from the horse and was largely perceived as a graceless, incorrigible beast suited to little more than hard labor. For the archaic and classical Greeks, hippotrophia – the breeding, training, and riding of horses – was the most distinctive marker of ‘wealth, brilliance, and style.’ This art aimed to teach horses strict discipline through training, to maintain their superior health with high quality feed, and to cultivate their appearance with an array of accessories.296 While the breeding and training of horses was the domain of the aristocracy and emblematic of its wealth and style, to ‘less aristocratically-minded’ Athenian citizens such as Trygaeus, hippotrophia represented excess, waste, and even, according to Aristotle, ‘antidemocratic tendencies.’297

In addition to the slave’s explicit identification of the beetle as a κάνθων (‘pack ass’: 85), the ancient etymology of κάνθαρος (‘beetle’) derived it from a term for ‘ass,’ κάνθων,298 according to one tradition of ancient scholarship. The beetle’s appalling diet takes to comic extremes the different equine feeding practices associated with each pole of this Greek cultural binary. Horses enjoyed better feed, water, and rest than donkeys, who subsisted on lower quality fare like thistles, straw, and weeds.299 Whereas the noble Pegasus nearly threw his rider out of fear – behavior for which horses were notorious – the voracious beetle’s indiscipline and greed is

295 ἰςιχως ἰςιχως, ἴςιμα, κάνθων. | μή μοι σοβαρως χωρει ξίαν | εὐθεις απ’ αμή ὁρχης ὑμη πίσυνος...

‘Whoa, whoa, easy boy! | Don’t get too wild and | sure of yourself right from the start…’

297 Aristotle, Pol. 4.1289b34-40, 6.1321a5-14.
298 Σε Peace 82 says the term κάνθαρος derives from κάνθων; this is followed by Davies and Kathirithamby (1986) 84, Olson (1998) ad loc.
what leads him nearly to throw his own rider in mid-flight (157-8) after smelling food on the ground. This is typical of the donkey, who had a reputation for stupidity, laziness, greed, and excessive curiosity.\(^{300}\) The absurd fastidiousness of the beetle’s refusal to eat anything except the most finely rounded dung cake is reminiscent of the donkey’s tendency in literature to aspire for higher things than it deserves.\(^{301}\)

The precise equid with which the beetle seems to be associated underscores a bigger fact about Greek cultural and ideological assumptions about equids, which informed Greek ideas about class and society. This ideological texture of the comic substitution of the beetle reveals a level of cultural depth in Aristophanic paratragedy, which evidently (in this case) engaged both the literary and social prejudices of its audience. This is particularly significant in light of the absence of any similar ideological thrust in the substitution performed in the parasatyric \textit{Dionysalexandros}, where the switch of Alexandros for Dionysus is conceived in (what appear to be) purely generic terms. Since traditional prejudices on equids in turn informed Greek views of human nature, the processes of breeding and education, and class and gender differentiation,\(^{302}\) the social identity of the beetle reflects the status of his rider as well as that of Old Comedy. Like all male comic heroes, Trygaeus is a common Athenian and thus especially representative of the \textit{demos}.

The class-prejudice of this equid binary is also discernable in literature. While horses are ubiquitous in traditionally loftier genres of poetry like epic and tragedy, donkeys are almost non-existent. Unsurprisingly, donkeys are far more frequent in lower genres like comedy,\(^{303}\) and this

\(^{301}\) Griffith (2006) 224-226 discusses some of the Aesopic fables (91, 319 Perry) where the donkey claims a higher social status than it merits.
\(^{303}\) Griffith (2006) 226 cites the famous prologue of \textit{Frogs} (27ff.) and its sequence of (presumably) traditional ‘ass’ jokes.
fact underscores an important aspect of the beetle, *Peace’s* donkey, and what he represents. A hybrid blend of high and low, the beetle is a physical embodiment of Aristophanic paratragedy: its appeal to the lowest type of humor is balanced by its noble generic aspirations, which for the beetle is its role as a second Pegasus, the ἵπποκάνταρος (181). The beetle also reflects the practical spirit at the heart of comic appropriation, which by definition adapts other genres to advance its agenda. The parasitic nature of comic appropriation, which recycles and assimilates to itself the material of its rivals, might even be reflected in the beetle’s special dietary habit of consuming waste. The beetle is thus the primary locus for appropriation as the vehicle for the conversion of tragic failure into comic success, a *topos* which has been encountered repeatedly already in Chapters One and Two. Unlike Pegasus, whose actions cause the undoing of Bellerophon, the beetle actually reaches Olympus and is appropriately immortalized for his achievement (ὑφ’ ἄματ’ ἱλίῳν Ζηνός ἀντηχαίρησε: 722). Chapters Four and Five will take up and explore further this particular topic of tragic failure and comic success in *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Frogs*.

One final significant element of the Bellerophon paratragedy which informs the status of hero and beetle is the special effect of the μηχανή. Scholarship sees its deployment in the Bellerophon parody, as well as elsewhere in Aristophanes, as a pointed joke at the expense of a contemporary tragic convention which has been typically perceived as slow, clumsy, and artificial by modern standards. The crane was apparently quite commonly used in the epiphanies of fourth-century tragedy, although the date of its introduction in the fifth century is unknown.304 While explicitly acknowledged by comedy in the fifth century, it is only described by later prose writers like Pollux (IV 128). Although not limited to divine arrivals and departures, this seems

304 Mastronarde (1990) 372 offers a concise summary of the various positions.
to be its chief function in the fifth-century, where it is associated with Euripidean drama in particular. There is disagreement about the extent of the crane’s use at that time, but most believe the device sought to capture the power and the gravity of a supernatural appearance with the element of surprise. In addition to its use in the Bellerophon parody of *Peace*, the crane is employed three other times in extant Aristophanes, where each time it exploits particular tragic associations. The earliest, and possibly most famous, example is Socrates’ appearance (217) in *Clouds* (423 BCE), while its latest appearance, in the famous parody of the Euripidean *Andromeda*, will be analyzed in Chapter Four’s discussion of the *Thesmophoriazusae*.

As in Socrates’ entrance in *Clouds*, the crane in the Bellerophon parody has far-reaching implications for our interpretation of the hero of *Peace*. While Trygaeus’ ascension features the two most common signals of the crane’s use in tragedy – the element of surprise (he takes flight offstage and outside of the audience’s view) and opening anapests (82-101, possibly drawn from *Bellerophon*; cf. frr. 307-8) – the intentions and the spatial implications of the hero’s journey via the crane could not be more different. Mastronarde has persuasively argued that tragedy’s generic concern with the separation of the divine and mortal worlds is normally expressed either by the failure of gods and mortals to appear alongside one another or by their occupation of distinctly different spaces when sharing the stage. This visual separation reinforcing fundamental social, ethical, and psychological differences between mortal and divine is especially reflected in the nature of divine entrances and exits. Because the *mechane* performed

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305 Hourmouziades (1965) 147-69 first argued that the use of the crane is signaled in the text by explicit references to ‘flying’ normally made by the chorus, and accompanying sung or recited anapests.

306 Mastronarde (1990) 266 argues for a degree of frequency which others, such as Hourmouziades or Taplin, are not prepared to acknowledge.

307 Hourmouziades (1965) 146, 155; Mastronarde (1990) 262 adds that entrances from the *skene* roof effected the same surprise.

308 Cf. Plato, *Ap*. 19c2-4, where during his trial in 399 Socrates alludes to this moment in *Clouds* nearly twenty-five years earlier.
an exceptional divine manner of movement and locomotion associated only with gods and goddesses, its on-stage use marks out special characters of enhanced agency. Trygaeus’ flight harnesses this divine agency, not to challenge the existence of the gods but to seek a practical comic solution to problems on earth. The successful bridging of the human and divine worlds via comic travel is accomplished by means of the same theatrical crane which visually assigns and enforces the barrier between divinities and humans in tragedy. Trygaeus transforms the crane from a fundamental symbol of the vertical, spatial hierarchy observed by tragedy – tragedy which punishes the cosmic transgression of Bellerophon – to a symbol of the trugedic hero’s success and Aristophanic comedy’s conflation of the worlds of gods and men, and also tragedy and comedy. As I mentioned at the start of the section, the paratragic prologue of Peace is exceptional because it deploys a recognizable point of departure for the comic project. Aristophanes brilliantly recasts the famously doomed flight of Bellerophon into the hero’s positive first step towards the resolution of the comic dilemma, and then stages the resulting comic hybrid with the quasi-divine element of surprise typical of epiphanies in tragedy. By employing the convention of the tragic epiphany at the outset of the play, and appropriating its divine authority to change the course of events in tragedy, Aristophanes cleverly endows the hero and his comic project with the mandate of a tragic divinity from its very beginning.

II. The Rescue of the Goddess

Trygaeus’ successful flight to the house of Zeus transitions from the tragic subtext to cross-generic play of a different kind in the pivotal rescue of Peace. Before proceeding to this next phase of the play, a brief word about the hero and what he represents is essential for

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309 For the second form of entrances and exits, where the skene roof provided the necessary elevation of gods over humans at stage level to mark effectively the divine/mortal distinction, see Mastronarde (1990) 273.
contextualizing *Peace*’s peculiar cross-generic agenda. Trygaeus’ distinctive name underscores the self-consciously poetic nature of his comic project, which sets him apart as the most literary of Aristophanic heroes. Hall explains that ‘Trygaeus’ means not ‘practitioner of trugedy,’ but the ‘son of Trugoidos’ or ‘son of the practitioner of trugedy.’\(^{310}\) Because trugedy – defined by Taplin as a form of comedy concerned with justice – is frequently named in the context of cross-generic play, it seems likely that this subgenre is distinctively cross-generic in focus. The name ‘Trygaeus’ thus associates the hero with the practice of this special, cross-generic poetic form.\(^{311}\)

This theme of Trygaeus’ project is initiated with the opening Bellerophon paratragedy and continued in the subsequent hauling of Peace, which has long been recognized as a variation on the traditional mythological pattern of the ἄνοδος, in which a goddess or mortal woman with fertility associations returns or is raised from an exile in the Underworld or death-like place. The most famous version is doubtless that of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, which narrates the catastrophic effects of Hades’ abduction of Persephone, daughter of Demeter, on fertility and agriculture.\(^{312}\) But the pattern even structures late Euripidean tragedies like *Iphigenia among the Taurians* and *Helen*, and frequently found a place in satyr play,\(^{313}\) which is not surprising in light of its special interest in the discovery of culturally significant things and their consequent aitilologies. The fragmentary textual evidence of satyr play suggests that satyrs frequently stumbled upon, unearthed, stole, or otherwise acquired divinities or artifacts of significant value in the Greek world.

*Peace*’s thematization of the similarly transformative effects of the withdrawal and return of the goddess Peace appropriates the sixth-century *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*’s aitiological

\(^{310}\) Hall (2006) 328-333.
\(^{311}\) Hall (2006) 333.
thrust to express the topical concerns of the fifth-century political context. While a definite literary model for the scene is impossible to establish, although some have attempted to do so, its primary debt to satyr play is manifest: Aristophanes deploys the genre’s themes, motifs, and dramaturgical qualities in order to imbue the hauling with a generic tone which is no less deliberate than the paratragic mood of Trygaeus’ flight to Olympus. While scholars have shown an increasing awareness of the satyr play pedigree of Peace’s hauling scene, no treatment has yet recognized the full extent of Aristophanes’ borrowing and its overall thematic import for the play as a whole. The current section will survey the various parasatyric motifs and themes which inform the episode up through the moment when the full effect of its dramaturgical thrust is realized in the successful rescue of the goddess.

The clear text-based evidence for parasatyrism in the hauling of Peace is also corroborated by the contemporary iconographic record, which frequently displays satyrs present in the ἄνοδος scenes of various fertility goddesses. One vase (c. 450-440 BCE) currently housed in the Metropolitan Museum depicts Persephone emerging from a chasm in the ground and led by Hermes, as a priest of the Mysteries stands by with torches in hand. A pelike from Rhodes shows the emergence of Aphrodite (also a fertility goddess) with Hermes, and what appears to be a satyr at the far left of the visual field. An Oxford crater published in 1901 (440 BCE)

314 Lord (1994) 181-89. Other borrowings from the myth of the hymn are clear: Peace’s cave is associated with Hades (313-15); the return of the goddess, like that of Persephone, is called an escape ‘to the light’ (44, 307); and Hermes, divine guide to and from the Underworld, facilitates the recovery of each goddess.
315 While Bakola (2005) and (2010) 108-9 correctly identify the considerable overlap between parallel scenes in Peace and Aeschylus’ Diktyoulköi, her contention that the hauling visually and thematically re-enacts the signature-scene from Aeschylus is unlikely given satyr play’s tendency to recycle the same limited number of topoi in its plots. See also Hall (2006) 328-33.
317 Metropolitan Museum 28.57.23 (Béardin 50); Olson (1998) xxxvi.
318 12.454 (Béardin 63); Olson (1998) xxxvii.
features an ἄνοδος of Pandora which was possibly inspired by a specific dramatic production.\footnote{Oxford 525 (Ashmolean) (Bérard 71); Gardner (1901), Robert (1914) 17-38.}

Figure 16 shows Epimetheus, the less-astute brother of Prometheus, grasping a heavy mallet in one hand and welcoming the goddess with the other, while Hermes (on the left) confers with Zeus. Despite (what appeared to be) this vase’s clear reference to Pandora’s creation in Hesiod (\textit{Works and Days} 70-89), Robert tried to connect the vase to Sophocles’ satyr play \textit{Pandora or Sphyrokopoi} because of the detail of Epimetheus’ mallet. The two small fragments of that play which have survived, however, suggest that its dramatization of Pandora’s creation did not involve her emergence from the earth but followed the account of her creation out of clay.\footnote{Sophocles, fr. 482; Olson (1998) xxxvii.} A second krater found in Spina (445 BCE) may have a better claim to dramatic origins:\footnote{Ferrara T. 579 (Bérard 30a-c); Heynen and Krumeich (1999) 376} an unnamed female figure resembling the Oxford Pandora is surrounded by several cavorting satyrs and a theatrical piper, who suggests by his presence the context of a dramatic production (Figures 13-15).\footnote{One final vase (Bérard 55), worth noting for its relevance to the ἄνοδος scene of \textit{Peace}, shows satyrs around a cave within which stands a woman. Hermes, as usual, stands off to the side.}

Satyr play’s predominantly fragmentary evidence shows that the genre had a special interest in discoveries, especially of culturally significant things, and their consequent aitiaologies: satyrs frequently stumbled upon, unearthed, stole, or otherwise acquired divinities or artifacts of significant value in the Greek world. The association of satyrs with ἄνοδος has gained increasing relevance for \textit{Peace} as scholars become gradually persuaded of the satyr play pedigree of its hauling scene.\footnote{Robert (1914) 37, Sutton (1975) 354, Dobrov (2001) 101-3 and (2007) 261ff., Hall (2006) 340-1.} A close reading of the entire scene, beginning with Trygaeus’ arrival in Olympus, reveals the appropriation of satyr play to be much more extensive than what
has been allowed by Hall, for instance, who notes three motifs, the call for aid, the panhellenic chorus’ compulsive dancing, and the communal effort of the hauling.

The text, however, shows that Aristophanes begins borrowing from satyr play much earlier than has been assumed, and eases his audience into the satyr play modality of this scene gradually, by introducing motifs and themes which visually evoke its world. The very beginning of the sequence is marked by the ogre (236), ‘Polemos,’ a comedic personification of satyr play’s token villain.324 ‘War’ likely wore a mask with a fierce expression, a helmet, breastplate, greaves, and a pack filled with the various foods described in his kitchen scene (236-88).325 The central prop of this highly topical episode, the mortar in which the Greek cities are to be mashed into paste, was likely blown up into ridiculous dimensions in keeping with comedy’s tendency to aggrandize significant props. On the heels of Polemos’ departure comes the earliest, most overt allusion to satyr play, Trygaeus’ opening call for aid to liberate Peace and the panhellenic chorus’ entrance:

άλλ’, ὦ γεωργοὶ κάμπτοροι καὶ τέκτονες
cαι δημιουργοὶ καὶ μέτοικοι καὶ ξένοι
και νησιώται, θεῶ ἵτ’ ὦ, ὥ πάντες λεῖρ,’
ὡς ταχιστ’ ἀμαῖς λαβόντες καὶ μοχλοὺς καὶ σχοινία...

‘You farmers and merchants and carpenters and craftsmen and immigrants and foreigners and islanders, come here, all you people, as quick as you can, bringing shovels and crowbars and ropes…’

(Peace 296-99)

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325 Olson (1998) ad loc; Stone (1981) 364 suspects that Polemos was heavily padded and wore an ἐξωμίς without a cloak to emphasize his size and strength.
A striking parallel of this motif can be found in a fragment from Aeschylus’ *Dictyulkoi*, which dramatized the rescue of Perseus and Danae from the chest at sea. The play seems to have opened with Dictys calling for aid in fishing out the famous chest (fr. 46a.1-16).\(^{326}\)

\[
\textit{πάντες γεωργοὶ δεῦτε κάμπτεσκάφοι}
\]
\[
\textit{ἐ ποιμῆν τε ἐὶ τίς ἔστε ἦχωριος}
\]
\[
\textit{τοι καὶ μαθιευτῶν ἔδνος}
\]

‘...come here, all you farmers and vine-diggers, [and] any [goatherd or oxherd] or shepherd there is in these parts, and you tribe of charcoal-burners...’ (fr 46a.18-20)

At this point in the comedy, a scattered, disorganized, and satyr-like choral entrance could visually evoke a cast of satyrs with complete ease – individuals running this way and that, contorting their bodies, gesturing madly, and running into one another like ‘Keystone Kops.’ The Ferrara krater may give us a good idea of what this looked like in performance (Figures 13-15).

The chorus’ compulsive dancing (or ‘auto-orchestrism’) following its entrance (322-36) is yet another satyr play hallmark, one which Aristophanes draws out for comic effect. Such compulsive behavior evokes satyrs’ notorious inability to control movement and speech in the face of repeated entreaties, such as those expressed by Cyllene in Sophocles’ *Ichneutai* (fr. 314.229-30) and by Odysseus in Euripides’ *Cyclops* (476). The precise phrasing of the chorus’ dance steps (τὸ σχέλος ῥήσαντες ἣδη λήγομεν τὸ ἁξίον: 302) is remarkably similar to Athenaeus’ description (14.617F) of a generic satyr play dance, the *skelos riptein*, which Lawler calls the ‘high kick.’\(^{327}\)

Frequently depicted in art, the movement involved bringing one leg upward sharply to the side, bending the knee, and pointing the foot downward before repeating the same


\(^{327}\) Lawler (1964) 117; or alternatively called the ποδῶν ῥήση by Seidensticker (2003) 112.
movement with the other knee.\textsuperscript{328} This exact movement appears to be the one being practiced by the single costumed satyr standing behind Pronomos on the vase bearing his name.\textsuperscript{329}

Once gathered around, the \textit{choreutai} repeatedly express enthusiasm to escape the current hardships of war and to return to the favorable conditions of life which they previously enjoyed in peacetime, as detailed by Trygaeus (337-45). These distinctions between the approaching bliss of peacetime and the farmers’ wholly unpleasant day-to-day existence as soldiers and jurymen (312, 336, 346-56) echo the longing of satyrs for the pleasures of their past service to Dionysus while suffering the strains of some new activity forced upon them by the ogre-villain (e.g., their herding duties in Euripides’ \textit{Cyclops}).\textsuperscript{330} Although subtle, this motif is actually central to the panhellenic program of the second half of \textit{Peace}, as I will explain shortly.

These motifs are preliminary to the scene’s focal point, the actual hauling, whose singular theatrical qualities, with its division of labor and props – rocks, ropes, statue of the goddess – mark a significant moment in extant Aristophanic stagecraft. The actual rescue of Peace only starts up after Hermes agrees to participate (425) in the role of foreman and orders the chorus to take up the ‘ropes’ (458) and to begin pulling. The nautical provenance of his commands, which deploy terms commonly used for hauling a ship ashore to be beached,\textsuperscript{331} suggests a very specific arrangement of the chorus in groups and pulling outward from the \textit{skene} (i.e., the cave) with their backs to the audience.\textsuperscript{332} The ropes were likely attached to the front of the \textit{ekkuklema} (Cf. 426-8), upon which sat the statue of Peace during her emergence. Although we do not know what the

\textsuperscript{328} Lawler (1964) 117-18, Seidensticker (2003) 112 and (2010) on dance in satyr play, generally.
\textsuperscript{329} See Griffith (2010) 59 on this particular satyr.
\textsuperscript{330} See Seaford (1984) 35 and Bakola (2005) 54; e.g., Sophocles’ \textit{Ichneutai} (fr. 314.39-49), possibly his \textit{Oineus} (fr. 1130); Aeschylus’ \textit{Dictyulkoi} (fr.46a.18-20), \textit{Theoroi} (fr.78c.72-4).
\textsuperscript{331} Sommerstein (1985) \textit{ad loc}.
\textsuperscript{332} Pulling in two or more groups: Dover (1972) 138; pulling in four groups of six: Olson (1998) \textit{ad loc}. Dover (1972) 135, Sommerstein (1985) xvi, and Olson (1998) xlv-xlivii see the \textit{skene} door as the entrance to the goddess’ cave. Other possibilities for the goddess’ prison have been suggested, including a pit covered with rocks, a crawl space beneath the stage, and an imagined cave composed of rocks only, underneath which lay the goddess.
statue was actually made of,\textsuperscript{333} we know that Aristophanes did, in fact, represent Peace with some kind of effigy thanks to a scholiast who records that it was ridiculed by comic rivals Eupolis and Plato Comicus.\textsuperscript{334}

The first (unsuccessful) attempt to free the goddess is distributed over two parallel segments of text (458-83, 484-507) containing brief, but metrically irregular short exhortative exchanges (e.g., εἶα μάλα...ο, εἶα) placed at the beginning and midpoint of responding strophic stanzas (459-72, 486-99). Frequent anapests, often heavily spondaic, underscore the physical exertion of the pulling.\textsuperscript{335} The scene’s focus on the comic chorus is very much in keeping with satyr play, which keyed its audience less to the actual events taking place than to the effect which those events produced on the minds of the satyrs themselves.\textsuperscript{336} The peculiar satyr-like disunity and ineffectual struggles of the chorus would have raised audience expectations of the generic failure which typically attends any collective action by impulsive and incompetent satyrs. Satyr play affirmed the unique uselessness of its choruses by showing their constant dependency on heroic figures, as is seen in the chorus’ frequent expressions of deference (Cf. Eur., Cyc. 477) toward these heroes in some of the surviving evidence. Marvels, food, wine, and sex, as well as the satyrs’ own cowardice, are all common distractions which disrupt any concerted satyr-action.\textsuperscript{337} The panhellenes show a similar satyr-like dependency in their words to Trygaeus (πφός τάδ’ ἰμῖν, εἴ τι χρή δηαν, φράζε καρχιτεκτόνει: 305).

This fundamental satyr disunity of the first hauling effort underscores a central topical theme of Peace, the past and current failures of the Greek states to work together for the

\textsuperscript{333} Olson (1998) xliv suspects that the statue may have been as basic as a hunk of wood dressed in a mask and rich robes.
\textsuperscript{334} Σ Pl. Apol. 19c; Revermann (2006) 153.
\textsuperscript{336} Seidensticker (2003) 118.
\textsuperscript{337} Seidensticker (2003) 118.
common good of peace. By singling out the individual efforts of chorus members representing distinct cities for praise or blame, Trygaeus and Hermes describe the selfish policies and conduct (which, according to comic logic, were ultimately to blame for continuation of the war) in a way that identifies the individual states with the impulsive, base drives of the contemptible satyrs. The Boeotians are threatened for their reluctance (466), the Argives for the deceitful playing of each side (475-6, 493), the Megarians for their laziness (481-2, 500), the Athenians for their litigiousness (505). The performative immediacy of this disunity and the frustrations of panhellenism – performed right before the audience’s eyes – will be a foil for the celebration of panhellenism’s virtues in the second half of the play.

After the first effort of the chorus fails, the farmers alone are exhorted by Trygaeus and Hermes to make a second effort which is ultimately successful (512-19). The rhythmic shift from anapests to nearly pure iambic tetrameter catalectics audibly distinguishes the initial unsuccessful effort to free Peace from the second, more auspicious one. The various distinctive elements of the satyr play modality come together at the critical moment right before the liberation of the goddess, when the eventual cooperation among the farmers results in a successful rescue which overturns the audience’s generically conditioned expectations of failure. This success (511) privileges the social and cultural cohesion of the farmer identity over the satyr-like incompetence which is characteristic of the Greek states’ attempts at diplomacy. The goddess’ emergence was thus enacted as a satyresque, comic aitiology. While Peace is obviously nothing like the fire, sport, wine, or other sorts of things normally discovered by the satyrs, peacetime was popularly associated with civilized leisure and could thus be seen as a *sine qua non* of all culture. The numerous benefits furnished by Peace are described in detail:

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harvest, entertainment, pipes, the Dionysia, tragedies, songs of Sophocles, thrushes, Euripidean poetry (530-2) – all things of the good life.

While the parasatyric modality adds a layer of literary depth to the hauling by playing with certain generic expectations, it also privileges the play’s panhellenic thrust, which is central to the acquisition of peace in greater Greece, and a unifying theme of the play. The effect of Peace’s parasatyric hauling resembles that of an analogous, paratragic modality in the concluding scene of Clouds. Just as that play’s paratragedy actually rationalized the uncharacteristically violent behavior of its comic hero in the notorious closing sequence, so does the parasatyrisms of the hauling scene provide, through a marked performative immediacy, a unifying thread between the chorus’ rescue of Peace and the seemingly random episodes of cultural and political renewal in Peace’s second half. By assimilating a chorus (initially) representative of different Greek cities to that of satyrs in speech and gesture, the comedy visually enacts the frustrations which define diplomacy and international relations among Greek states during wartime in the fifth century. Although expectations raised by the satyr play modality are overturned at the moment of success – recognized by many to be the scene’s most significant part – the basic identification of satyrs and panhellenes is nonetheless sustained and fundamental. Just like the satyrs who return to their beloved former pursuits under Dionysus at the end of the play, the panhellenic choreutai will go back to the institutions which define their collective Greekness once peace is realized: farming, sacrifice, and celebration (i.e., marriage).

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340 Dunbar (1995) and 613-14 and Scharffenberger (1995) 172-3 detect a similar parasatyric modality at work in Birds, when Iris is threatened with rape by Peisetairus (1253-6), with whom she disputes about dedicating sacrifices to the Olympians. Peisetairus’ threat echoes an analogous mythological episode in which Iris nearly suffered rape at the hands of the satyrs, whose sacrifice to Dionysus she attempted to disrupt at the behest of Hera. About fifteen black and red-figure images preserve this episode. Scharffenberger points out that the modality of Birds underscores Peisetairus’ beast-like aggressiveness as an expression of his new hybrid status. See also Bakola (2010) 107-8.

The parasatyrism of the hauling scene is thus a key conceptual vehicle in the criticism and celebration of panhellenism in *Peace*.

### III. Comic Renewal

The second half of *Peace* shifts the play’s focus away from performative rivals and onto Old Comedy itself as a driving force for the renewal of the polis and greater Greece. A rich array of stock comic motifs and themes color the preparations for and celebration of the approaching end of the Peloponnesian War.\(^{342}\) A new era of panhellenism is revived by the renewal of three traditional Greek institutions: agriculture, sacrifice, and marriage. Like satyrs released back into the service of Dionysus, the liberation of Peace allows the farmers of the panhellenic chorus to return to a former quasi-utopian world of food, general abundance, and (most importantly) rustic labor which they enjoyed before the outbreak of war. This celebration of the rehabilitation of agriculture and return to the fields and farms represents a departure from the dominant comic discourse on utopia among Aristophanes’ fifth-century predecessors and contemporaries. Extant fragmentary evidence suggests that a defining feature of many comic utopias in the last quarter of the fifth century was automatism, which eliminated the need for labor.\(^{343}\)

Agriculture, however, is only the first of these institutions to be renewed in this era of peace. In fact, Trygaeus’ public performance of two other fundamental ritual institutions reveals that intergeneric competition has not ceased, only taken a different form as indirect, non-parodic engagement. The sacrifice to establish Peace’s cult and Trygaeus’ marriage to Harvest close out the play by rehabilitating two panhellenic institutions through their proper performance on-stage.

\(^{342}\) Hall (2006) 343.

\(^{343}\) Baldry (1953) 50ff., Ruffell (2000) 474-86.
In restoring the original ritual functions of each institution, that is, the promotion of civic health and the affirmation of communal solidarity, Old Comedy offers competing versions of sacrifice and marriage which challenge Greek tragedy’s popular cultural legacy of the dramatic performance of ritual. Old Comedy’s positive visions of each ritual rectify the tragic stereotype of the perverted sacrifice and wedding – failure in ritual, that is – as metaphors for uncontrolled, familial violence, which destabilizes the polis and causes the ruin of the household. The rituals of Peace’s second half, as institutions representative of a common Greekness, thus appeal to the broader panhellenic sentiment which defines the play’s vision of the utopian.

A. Agriculture in the World of Peace

Much scholarship locates Old Comedy’s hazy origins in the festive and ritual practices of the rural Greek world. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to ascribe particular significance to any given play or passage showing explicit interest in the activities and lifestyles of the Attic countryside. Among extant Aristophanic productions, Peace shows the greatest preoccupation with the countryside and its way of life, followed closely by Acharnians, with which Peace has many explicit similarities: each play’s hero is a citizen farmer whose grandiose and fantastic comic project ends the war before a long, protracted celebration of country life in the second half. But these similarities also underscore Peace’s noticeable departure from Acharnians in that crucial second half of the play: the altruistic Trygaeus extends the benefits of his victory to the whole Greek world, while the hedonist Dicaeopolis generally pursues his own interests. Likewise, where wine is one of the chief images of Acharnians, food is central to the imagery of

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346 Noted by Hall (2006) ibid.
Peace. Yet it is the extent of Peace’s interest in and celebration of agriculture and country life – repeatedly emphasized by the refrain ‘ζὶς ἀγρόν’ – which sets it apart from Acharnians and the rest of the Aristophanic corpus most of all.

In addition to the end of military service, the Greek world of Peace looks forward to a return to farming, the public performance of drama, and the opportunity for the lavish feasting and sexual diversion which those two civic institutions provide (865-67). Such fantasy and wish-fulfillment is generic to Old Comedy, as Whitman pointed out, and Aristophanes was certainly not the only comic poet to show an interest in enacting radically improved living conditions. While Peace thus represents just one contribution to the late fifth-century’s evolving comic and political discourse on the subject of the utopian, it is nonetheless a unique and unparalleled one. There survives a great store of fragmentary evidence from utopian comic plays (c. 440-400) preserved through quotation in Athenaeus’ Learned Banqueters (267e-70a). The fragments from about seven plays in all are cited, allegedly in their order of performance, beginning with Cratinus’ Ploutoi and ending with two supposedly unperformed comedies, Aristophanes’ Fryers and Metagenes’ Thurio-Persians.

This evidence shows that a humorous, spirited, and ingenious discourse on the subject of the utopian was raised by fifth-century comic poets roughly during the career of Aristophanes. These utopias appear to have been chiefly characterized by hyperbolic natural abundance of food and drink developed to absurd, even grotesque, lengths and provided audiences with a comic window to a fantasy world. In Cratinus’ Ploutoi, a chorus identified as Titans from the ‘age of Cronus’ appeared from the past, now set free by the end of Zeus’ reign, to improve the lives of

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all Greeks.\textsuperscript{352} Details about the characters and plot of the play are impossible to recover, but evidence for automatist elements is explicit:

\begin{quote}
\centering
αὐτόματα τοῖς ἀνίσι τὰ γαμάδα

`For them god sent up good things of their own accord.' (fr. 172)
\end{quote}

Crates’ \textit{Theria}, probably performed before 425/4 BCE, was set outside the polis and featured an animal chorus which offered humans a choice of utopias.\textsuperscript{353} In fr. 16 tables miraculously set themselves (5-6), baskets knead the bread within them (6), cups wash themselves, and fish ensure they have been evenly cooked for human consumption (9). This magical catalogue is topped only by the voluminous description of food and drink in Telecleides’ \textit{Amphictyones} (fr. 1). The play dramatized an end to labor (3) resulting in a similar provision of all necessities by their own account (…\dot{\alpha}λλ’ αὐτόματ’ ἔν τὰ δεόντα): torrents of wine flow, barley cakes fight with bread rolls for access to people’s mouths (5), fish fry themselves (7), rivers of soup carry hunks of roast beef around couches (8), and roast birds fly into the mouths of the hungry (12).

Pherecrates’ \textit{Miners} depicts the discovery of utopia underground, most likely by a crew of miners who fall into a world of all good things mixed together (fr. 113.1-2): rivers of porridge and black broth carry along bread-bowls (3-5) and empty into the mouths of the dead; cuts of sausage lie in the gutters (8-9) and marinated fish fillets lie around with eels and beets (10-12).

It is impossible to know just how many comedies in the latter half of the fifth century treated comic utopias conceived along similar lines of abundance, but one can reasonably assume that Athenaeus’ fragments reflect the majority of them.\textsuperscript{354} The Athenian public had long been

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\textsuperscript{352} Bakola (2010) 122-41, 208-220.
\textsuperscript{354} Ruffell (2000) 475.
\end{flushright}
exposed to automatist fantasies, which had appeared in epic as early as Homer. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus describes the Island of the Cyclopes as automatist (*Od*. 9.105-11). A fragment of Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Unbound* (fr. 7) features the hero describing the land of the Gabians, where ‘neither the plow nor the earth cutting-mattock cleaves the soil, but self-sown fields yield men an ample livelihood’ (trans. Sommerstein).\(^{355}\) The vivid and absurd images of the comic poets, however, probably owe most of all to Hesiod’s famous description of the conditions of Golden Age life (*Works and Days* 116-18).\(^{356}\)

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...ἐσθλὰ δὲ πάντα
τοισιν ἐφ' καρπόν δ' ἐφερε ζειδωρας ἀρωμα
αὐτομάτη πολλόν τε καὶ ἀφθονον...
‘...They had all good things:
the grain-giving field bore crops of its own accord,
much and unstinting...’
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Hesiod looks back to a Golden Age without labor in order to cast the current Iron Age and its necessity of work in as unflattering a light as possible. The fragmentary evidence found in Athenaeus similarly identifies the end of agricultural labor as the logical corollary to the automatism in the majority of these contemporary comedies. A fragment from Pherecrates’ *Persians* exemplifies this:

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tίς δ' ἐσθ' ἡμιν τῶν σών ἁρωμάτων ἡ ζυγοποίων ἔτι χαρία,
ἡ δρεπανουργόγον ἡ χαλκοτύπων ἡ σπάθματος ἡ χαρακτισμοῦ;
αὐτόματοι γάρ...
‘What need do we still have for our plows and yoke-makers,
or sickle-makers or blacksmiths or what need of seed or prop?
For of their own accord...’
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\(^{355}\) Baldry (1953) 52.
While the incomplete evidence of comedy rarely yields much certainty on any given issue, the fragmentary evidence adduced here is sufficient to suggest that automatist utopias, predicated upon an end to all labor, were a popular subject in Old Comedy around the time of Peace’s performance. Herein lies the potential originality of Aristophanes’ preservation of work in the rejuvenated, utopian conditions of Peace. While its conception is not strictly ‘automatist,’ some hints in the play confirm automatism as one element of the postwar world (…οὐχὶ πᾶσαν ἡμέραν πλακόσαν ἐστιν ἐν τυχεῖν πλακόσαν ἑρῆμοις: 1313), which would seem to contradict Aristophanes’ stress elsewhere on the virtues of labor. However, according to the singular perspective of Peace, natural abundance is the result of labor and not something which precludes it. The celebration of agricultural labor stresses one of Peace’s most salient features, communal solidarity, which is key to the play’s affirmation of panhellenism. In his study of Old Comedy and food, Wilkins understands the promotion of communal solidarity to be the chief value of the agricultural economy for the comic agenda.\(^{357}\) Peace’s homage to the blessings of social cohesion is anchored in a uniquely favorable impression of agricultural labor, which seems to inform its comic conception of Greekness. The panhellenic thrust of the agricultural revival is more overt in Trygaeus’ comic sacrifice and wedding, which, albeit indirectly, continue the play’s conversion of tragic failure into comic success. Trygaeus rectifies tragedy’s dominant cultural narrative of the perverted sacrifice and the tragic wedding, which dissolves familial and communal bonds instead of affirming them. By offering competing versions of those two institutions, Trygaeus claims for comedy a cultural capital equal to that of tragedy while continuing his appeal to panhellenism.

\(^{357}\) Wilkins (2000) 104.
B. Sacrifice and Marriage in the World of Peace

Upon his successful return to Athens (819) with Peace and her two attendants, the victorious Trygaeus outlines a new comic agenda which shifts the cross-generic trajectory of the entire play. With the goddess now free, the hero sets about installing her in Athens by the foundation of her new cult, which will make permanent her benefits in three specific areas, including the revival of agriculture already mentioned. The return of ‘Festival’ to her rightful owners in the Council will ensure the continuation of the public institutions of ritual, athletics, and dramatic poetry. The hero’s own marriage to the second attendant, ‘Harvest,’ in turn ensures agricultural and domestic prosperity. Trygaeus’ proper performance of the institutions of sacrifice and marriage represent challenges to the negative representations of the same fundamental, cultural institutions by comedy’s chief rival, tragedy, as was earlier explained. Peace’s strategy of intergeneric engagement thus shifts from the comic distortions of motifs, themes, and subplots of tragedy and satyr play to the performative rectification of the distorted and perverted sacrifices and marriages of Greek tragedy. Although steeped in token features of comic busyness – oversized props, horseplay, food, obscenity, audience participation, beatings and comic imposters\(^{358}\) – the second half offers a ‘straight,’ non-parodic renewal of two panhellenic ritual institutions to promote broad cultural cohesion. Old Comedy’s (for once) ‘straight’ take on a rival genre, which is itself engaging in parody, once again creates success from tragic failure in a bid to challenge that genre’s cultural supremacy.

Hesiod described sacrifice as one of three fundamental cultural institutions which firmly situate humanity in the cosmos between inferior beasts and the gods above, along with

agriculture and marriage (*Works and Days* 42-4, 76-89). Among humans, sacrifice means community, as is highlighted at every stage of the sacrificial process – by the washing of hands, the drawing of the sacred circle, the throwing of the barley – and the distinct roles played by citizens (basket carrier, herder, priest, etc.). The shared aggression and guilt of the culminating act of violence – focused upon a domesticated animal regarded as a member of the community – harden this sense of solidarity among sacrificial participants. For this reason, sacrifice, when correctly performed, provides an ultimate standard for judging the health of a community, which expels violence from within, distributes goods justly, and eats according to defined, ritualized rules. Sacrifice and its corruption thus offer fifth-century tragedy an especially potent means of describing political and social conditions at moments of crisis when violence, particularly between members of the same household, spirals out of control and threatens its most sacred laws. This perversion most often takes the form of the substitution of a human for an animal victim, but can also be expressed through improprieties in procedure, the compromised state of the sacrificer and impurity in the participants and the manner of killing. Examples of this in the works of all three tragedians are pervasive, although the most famous instances are probably those of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*. Clytemnestra, claiming the status of avenger, memorably describes her killing of Agamemnon as a sacrifice (*Ag.*, 1037-8, 1056-7) to *Dike* in retribution for

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359 Vernant (1980) 169-85; Foley (1985) 35. Rather than being a target of comic appropriation by virtue of *Peace*’s focus on these particular institutions, Hesiodic poetry is the cultural discourse with which Aristophanes has chosen to frame his cross-generic play.


362 Foley (1985) 40; tragedy’s perverted sacrifices have been well-documented; see Zeitlin (1965), Burkert (1966) 117-21, Foley (1985), and Seafor (1994) 369-71. An early example of perverted sacrifice can be found in Homer (*Od.* 12.352-73), when the suitors fail to make a proper sacrifice.


364 Aeschylus: *Ag.*, 1037-8, 1056-7, 1278, 1298, 1309-10; *Sept.* 43-4; Sophocles: *Trach.* 765-7; Euripides: *HF* 995; *IA*; *Bacchae* 920, 1159, 1096-100.
the impious sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis.\textsuperscript{365} Although not a direct perversion of actual sacrifice, the oath of the Seven over a slaughtered bull prefigures the carnage and fratricide which will engulf Thebes (\textit{Sept.} 43-4). In this instance, as in so many others, sacrifice initiates violence between kin. The tragic perversion of all household rites (sacrifice, marriage, funeral) frequently reflects not only the death of the household through uncontrollable vengeance but also its self-destruction.\textsuperscript{366} The sacrifice of Pentheus in Euripides’ \textit{Bacchae} furnishes an excellent example of this. Transformed into a helpless scapegoat and victim of Dionysus’ punishment, the young aristocrat is dismembered by his own mother as a means of deflecting guilt away from Thebes.\textsuperscript{367} Seaford perceived that the destruction of the family for the benefit of the polis underscores an important corollary to the perverted sacrifice which is of particular relevance to the sacrifice performed in \textit{Peace}. A full return to normality for the ritual which has suffered perversion can only be achieved in tragedy by the foundation of an altogether new ritual out of the destroyed household. Since tragedy presents the benefits of household and polis as mutually exclusive, the annihilation of a family thus frequently benefits the polis at large through a cult whose future ritual will rehabilitate and promote social cohesion.\textsuperscript{368} In sum, sacrifice in fifth-century tragedy is identified with destructive, uncontrolled violence in deteriorating households and its perversion threatens the very social cohesion whose promotion was its original purpose. Social cohesion and healthy, ritual normality can only return to the community through the destruction of the guilty household and the foundation of new cult.

Trygaeus’ successfully executed sacrifice to establish the cult of the goddess Peace at Athens is therefore more than simply a gratuitous orgy of props and movements of generic comic

busyness, although the ostentatious collection of necessities (basket, barley meal, garland, knife, kindling [947-9], altar [942], victim [956]) along with their prominent display and proper application in the ritual, and Trygaeus’ prayer to the goddess (974-1015), doubtless furnished plenty of physical comedy. The comic ritual process emphasizes the propriety of the sacrificial proceedings which inaugurate Peace’s cult, although the sacrifice is ultimately not performed on-stage, after Trygaeus’ slave points out Peace’s natural disapproval of violent sacrifice (1018). 369 Trygaeus’ sacrificial discretion avoids the performance of violence while simultaneously preserving and promoting the distinctly positive benefits of the ritual: social solidarity and cohesion between hero, chorus, and theater audience. By removing the violence which is essential to even the most properly performed animal sacrifice, Trygaeus’ ‘bloodless’ offering sidesteps any negative associations it might have with its perverted, tragic counterparts. How this serves the play’s topical focus is clear: Peace’s particular interest in promoting panhellenic reconciliation and an end to retribution between states in the larger community of Greece is metatheatrically affirmed at the ritual level by this conscious departure from the generic ritual of tragedy. Aristophanes’ on-stage restoration of the ritual’s power to effect social cohesion, and its reversal of what Zeitlin refers to as tragedy’s ‘parody’ or ‘mockery’ of the institution of sacrifice, is instructive from a generic perspective: by conspicuously eschewing parody, the de facto mode of comic appropriation, Aristophanes for once offers a ‘straight’ treatment of a commonplace distortion or parody of a cultural institution in its loftier rival. Although Aristophanes normally distorts tragedy, when tragedy itself practices distortion, comedy in turn strives for accuracy.

369 Trygaeus’ subsequent order for the victim to be taken into the skene for sacrifice furnishes the occasion for a pointed metatheatrical joke and a rare reference to ‘comic Nike’ (see Wilson [2007] 279): by describing his sparing of the sheep a personal favor to the play’s choregos, Trygaeus alludes to the post-performance banquet which was customarily held for the victorious chorus (1022) by the choregos (who will now save money because he can serve the ‘sacrificed’ sheep).
Similarly, Aristophanes’ choice of an actual statue to represent the goddess Peace (κολοσσικὸν ἀγάλματος) epitomizes Old Comedy’s generic tendency to communicate in concrete and particular terms, especially where other discourses choose vagueness. It is unknown whether Peace had ever been similarly represented, if at all, or whether the statue, our knowledge of which we owe to a scholiast (Σ Plato, Apol. 19c), was considered innovative. Its mockery by Aristophanes’ contemporaries Eupolis and Plato Comicus suggests that it was, if in a bad sense. The intended effect of the decision to substitute a motionless, even attractive and imposing piece of craftsmanship for the goddess could be one of visual contrast, if it is possible to imagine the permanence of the statue and what it represents standing amidst the constant, frenetic movements of the comic stage during the rescue and sacrifice: the surrounding chaos would reinforce the stabilizing effect of the impending peace treaty on the Greek world at war. The literal reification of the goddess as an object to be established in her cult through a brisk, bloodless, and painless sacrifice gives the corresponding impression of the fulfillment of a concrete, immediate reversal of the fortunes of the Greek world and re-emergence of the benefits of peacetime – agriculture and festival. In addition, the simultaneous renewal of polis and household through the foundation of cult contrasts with the struggle between household and polis characteristic of the sacrifice in tragedy, where ritual normality in the polis and the cursed household are mutually exclusive.370

Immediately following the sacrifice, Trygaeus returns the personified attendant of Peace, Festival, to the Athenian Council (887-91), which is represented by the theater audience. Festival is to the council, much as Harvest is to Trygaeus, the crowning prize which gives a measure of the success of the comic project. Since she represents the ‘right of spectating at

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public festivals, Festival’s return to the Council (845-6) – which is represented by the audience (the public) – is a major metatheatrical reference to the current comic performance among numerous similar references to theatricality scattered throughout Peace. This self-conscious gesture momentarily collapses the worlds of the play and the city beyond the festival in order to underscore Peace’s innovative comic treatment of a real world event. The renewal of civic health in Athens is thus partly represented by the return of Festival – i.e., of games (894ff.), ritual, as well as, most importantly, of tragedy and comedy via Peace.

Peace is the goddess of weddings as well as of choruses (976), as Trygaeus prays. The hero’s culminating marriage to Harvest restores the positive social and cultural benefits of an institution with traditionally negative connotations in tragedy. Seaford has shown that tragedy is intensely interested in the associations of marriage and death and is fond of applying them as metaphors for one another. The ritual homologies between marriage and sacrifice are also deep: both involve voluntary death, real or symbolic, and are essential for the continuing health of the community. Numerous tragedies even conflate the two. Tragic marriage, like perverted sacrifice, expresses or signals the self-destruction of the family: Clytemnestra, for example, envisions her revenge against Agamemnon as his wedding with his mistress, Cassandra (1440-7). In Sophocles’ Antigone, the tomb to which the eponymous heroine is condemned is likened to a bridal chamber (781-6) and Haimon’s suicide over her corpse is described as a perverted wedding (1240-1). Iphigenia’s alleged marriage to Achilles is nothing more than a deceptive ruse which results in her sacrifice in Euripides’ Iphigenia at Aulis.

371 Hall (2006) 337 explains that the right to attend the ‘Festival’ almost certainly refers to a specific provision of the proposed peace treaty, under consideration at the time of the play’s performance, which protected the right to attend safely the festivals of the Greek world (Thuc., 5.18.1).
374 Foley (1985) 85.
375 Seaford (1994) 375.
As was mentioned in Chapter One’s discussion of the *Dionysalexandros* and Chapter Two’s discussion of the New York Goose Play, comic marriage is based not on love but on lust. Because of its enduring interest in only the bodily and the carnal, comic unions of any permanence or legitimacy are extremely rare.\(^{376}\) However, the concluding marriage of Trygaeus and Harvest is treated in unequivocally positive terms and its potential meaning operates on several levels.\(^{377}\) In contrast to the death which attends tragic marriages, Trygaeus’ bride, by her very name, is equated directly with fertility and life-giving agriculture. The metrical character (i.e., telesilleans) of the wedding procession depicts the union of bride and groom in starkly literal terms as an agricultural windfall for Greece (πάλιν εἰς τὸν ἀγρόν [1318]) and the beginning of a new era of plant and human production and regeneration to be enjoyed by all (τρυγήσωμεν αὕτην [1339]), with the hymeneal lyrics closing out the play. At the start of the procession, the open invitation by the chorus to partake in the celebration of peace is the play’s most sophisticated attempt yet to collapse its world with that of the audience. The communal enjoyment of Harvest also (comically) removes one of tragedy’s chief feminine anxieties about marriage, the trauma of the bride who is displaced from her family into the house of another man and experiences subsequent feelings of alienation, resistance, and hostility.\(^{378}\) Because Harvest will be enjoyed by all in the postwar era of panhellenism, there is no such conflict between her matrimonial and consanguineous obligations.

The panhellenism of *Peace*’s celebration does not preclude Trygaeus invoking the comic hero’s right to exclude certain individuals from participation in the restored polis. By degrading the wares of various arms dealers he refuses to have any dealings with them (1197ff.). For his

\(^{376}\) The wedding of *Birds* (1720ff.) and perhaps that of Cratinus and ‘Comedy’ in the fragmentary *Pytine* offer possible exceptions.


interest in martial poetry the son of Lamachos is denied entrance to the wedding feast (1270-97). Trygaeus’ revision of the values of epic, a public institution, has much in common with his effort to correct poetic failure and to return to public rituals their positive status. As a farmer himself, Trygaeus’ ‘marriage’ to Harvest is in many ways actually a reunion which takes place after the groom’s return from his heroic labors. But unlike the violent reunions of tragedy, such as those of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra or Heracles and Deianeira, the coupling of Trygaeus with Harvest and the hero’s return to his previous life as farmer is an auspicious, festive occasion and one of the many positive outcomes of the end of war. Comedy not only restores the positive status of this social institution, it dissolves the ritual antagonism between polis and household found in tragedy, where ritual normality and social cohesion only result from the foundation of a new civic cult after the destruction of the household. To sum up, then, the second, celebratory half of Peace continues the first half’s program of intergeneric competition, but in a non-parodic sense. Trygaeus’ proper performance of sacrifice and marriage represent Old Comedy (for once) ‘playing it straight’ and rectifying tragedy’s parodies of the institutions of sacrifice and marriage. This continues Old Comedy’s efforts in the first half to make claims to the cultural status enjoyed by its rival tragedy.

Peace’s panhellenic restoration of civic institutions culminates with the communal spirit of its final ending. The shared victory of hero and chorus is reminiscent of earlier statements looking forward to the chorus’ post-performance feasting – at the expense of the choregos – if and when Peace takes first prize. By exploiting the topographical setting of the theater of Dionysus at Athens, a simple stage exit from the eastern parodos would conclude the play on a note of audience integration and foster notions of inevitable victory for the cast and chorus of

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380 Seaford (1994) 269.
Peace in the broader competition of the festival. Peter Wilson addresses the possibility that Trygaeus, as well as other comic heroes, exited from the eastern end of the stage, down the parados of the theater that led to the so-called ‘Street of Tripods.’ The significance of this street of ‘choral Nike,’ which led from the Prytaneion to the theater of Dionysus, is its designation as the route of the procession of the god’s statue during the City Dionysia. A comic chorus exiting there would clearly associate itself with a select group of victorious choruses from years past as a way of explicitly prefiguring its own success in the current competition. In the final procession, the chorus’ open invitation to the subsequent feasting (1364), an invitation addressed to the theatre audience, represents an overt gesture to the panhellenic thrust of the play and a solicitation of audience approval of the current peace proposals in the world beyond the stage. Audience collaboration thus completely collapses dramatic fiction and historical reality in the closing sequence of Peace.

Conclusion

Peace, the earliest Aristophanic comedy to devote itself wholeheartedly to the exploration of Old Comedy’s unique relationship to tragedy and satyr play, occupies a special place in the genre’s ongoing project of self-definition in the fifth century. Aristophanes’ play especially challenges its loftier rival, tragedy, via both literature and culture in an ostentatious display of Old Comedy’s alleged capacity to dramatize and effect social and political change in comparison to its detached and impractical rival. Aristophanes charts a cross-generic comic project by exploiting an array of themes, motifs, and subplots from other genres in order to achieve a vision of panhellenic peace which paralleled the developments of the real world in 421.

The innovative Bellerophon paratragedy starts things off with a number of comic strategies now familiar from Chapters One and Two. The most virtuoso paratragic performance by a single character in extant comedy, Trygaeus’ performance combines visual and verbal paratragedy with striking inversions of mythological and tragic conventions to set a benchmark for intergeneric play. Although the hero’s Bellerophontian role has most frequently been the focus of analysis of *Peace*, the dung beetle arguably offers a more rewarding locus for cross-generic play, which reveals the cultural and literary depth of tragedy and Aristophanic appropriation more generally. A comic construction of poetics, culture, and social class, the beetle itself embodies Old Comedy: like the beetle, tragedy fuses lowbrow content and form with a higher purpose, makes claims to greater social status, privileges comic success over tragic failure, and, perhaps most importantly, recycles the material of its natural competitors. Finally, there is no better metaphor for Old Comedy’s obsessive and limitless aspiration to tragedy’s cultural status than the beetle’s paradigm-shifting transgression of the theater’s upper regions: comedy’s conversion of Bellerophon’s notorious failure into a successful endeavor which effects political and social change articulates most fantastically a primary aim of the cross-generic program of *Peace* and Old Comedy itself, to convert failure into success.

For the climactic rescue of the goddess Peace, Aristophanes shifts the focus of his cross-generic engagement from a particular model of tragedy to the non-specific generic modality of satyr play as a whole. Through the clever placement of multiple generic markers of all types – themes, motifs, gestures, movements, and worldview – Aristophanes evokes the tone and mood of satyr play in the pivotal scene of Peace’s rescue. The implicit identification of the panhellecene chorus and a generic satyr chorus would have raised specific generic expectations of satyr-like failure for an audience which had been accustomed to the generic peculiarities of that poetic
form. By ultimately defeating these raised expectations, and thus manipulating the generic competence of his audience, Aristophanes underscores – with performative immediacy – the challenges facing panhellenism during the Peloponnesian war and the frustrated efforts of contemporary peace initiatives. The eventual reversal of this expected failure and the successful liberation of Peace heralds the cooperative virtues of panhellenism which become the focus of the second half’s celebration of Greekness and its renewal of three traditional Greek institutions.

The return to agriculture, the quintessential occupation of Old Comedy, is not only an affirmation of labor in the postwar world but also a gesture towards a shared Greek identity, the celebration of which is central to the achievement and sustainability of peace. Aristophanes’ departure from contemporary comic discourse and its distinctively automatist utopias perhaps reflects his exceptional preoccupation with the immediate historical context, the parallel developments of the real world: so close was the impending Peace of Nicias at the time of Peace’s performance that the prospect of returning to the day-to-day labor of life would itself have seemed utopian to many war-weary Greeks.

The second half of the play signals a shift in the strategy of intergeneric engagement from the direct confrontation of performative rivals to indirect challenges to tragedy, in particular, through the traditional aristocratic institutions of sacrifice and marriage. By renewing the positive connotations of these fundamental cultural rituals, Old Comedy identifies itself as a force for good, and the good life, in the polis, while simultaneously challenging tragedy’s dominant cultural narrative of corrupted sacrifices and weddings. Trygaeus’ sacrifice and wedding are rare occasions where Old Comedy plays things ‘straight,’ instead of distorting, and rectifies the parodies of its rival. In place of the tragedy’s perverted sacrifices, the bloodless sacrifice to install Peace’s cult promotes the ideas of communal solidarity and peaceful
reconciliation which were fundamental to traditional conceptions of this hallowed practice. Because marriage of any permanence is so rare in Old Comedy, the fertile marriage of the hero and Harvest in the closing sequence is significant, and emblematic of the festivity and communal solidarity typically destroyed by the murder, impiety, and loss which is characteristic of marriage in tragedy. The simultaneous renewal of city and household symbolized in the comic wedding is also typical of comedy’s attempt to have things both ways. While a return to health for the polis in tragedy requires the destruction of the household, the comic restoration of both spheres of Greek life is complete and immediate, much like the comic presentation of the goddess Peace herself, whose emergence from underground as a statue, ready-made for dedication and worship, signifies the instantaneous shift from war to a Greek world at peace.

The pervasive panhellenism of Peace’s cross-generic program, especially in the second half, is symptomatic of its historical context. Dover describes best how this must have determined its final shape: “Trygaeus is not the mouthpiece of a far-sighted minority lamenting the continuation of an apparently unending war, but a man who performs on a level of comic fantasy a task to which the Athenian people had already addressed itself on the mundane level...[and this] made the play more of a celebration than a protest.” Aristophanes’ task in 421 BCE became much less a question of devising a plot of pure comic wish-fulfillment than of furnishing an aitiological account to explain the recent turn of events, which must have seemed like nothing short of miraculous after ten years of war. The innovation and experimentation of Peace could thus be said to parallel, at a literary level, the welcome, if short-lived, changes taking place in the Greek world at large.

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383 Dover (1972) 137.
Chapter 4: Tragic Plots, Comic Worlds, and the Paratragic Self in *Thesmophoriazusae*

It is hardly surprising that Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazusae* (411 BCE) failed for so long to garner the level of critical attention which its originality and sophistication clearly merits. Because modern readers often lack the literary background which is required to enjoy fully this thoroughly intertextual comedy, its reception history is rather unremarkable compared to that of other Aristophanic productions. The play is generally avoided by theatre directors wary of its less than politically correct humor in our modern era of multiculturalism. Students of gender have tended to forego it in favor of the more radical and complete economic and political inversions found in the *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*. Those interested in the nuances of Aristophanic paratragedy have found *Frogs* and its explosive poetry contest a much more attractive subject of study. The broad diversity of *Thesmophoriazusae*’s subject matter, represented in these various sub-disciplines, is what no doubt earned the comedy its reputation as an exuberant mishmash of comic tropes: it is a play, as Dover aptly explained, which offers something for everyone.

Ironically, some of the same sub-disciplines which indirectly marginalized *Thesmophoriazusae* for so long would eventually raise it to prominence among extant Aristophanic productions. Hansen’s early thematic analysis was eventually followed by Zeitlin’s exploration of Aristophanes’ association of gender and genre as subjects of mimesis. Its rich staging dynamics, reflected especially in frequent shifts of identity and intertext, have also made *Thesmophoriazusae* a preferred subject of performance-based analyses. One of the most

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384 Gamel (2002).
385 Foley (1982).
386 Dover (1972) 168.
radical shifts in attitudes to the play’s significance, however, was actually brought about by the discovery of non-textual evidence for the play preserved in theater-related iconography. With the publication and subsequent re-interpretation of the famous ‘Würzburg Telephus’ from fourth-century *Megale Hellas*, the *Thesmophoriazusae* gained the unique (and nearly unparalleled) distinction of being one of only two extant comedies for which visual evidence of actual dramatic performance survives. More than just a visual confirmation of the re-performance of Attic comedy, the Würzburg Telephus preserves – in its original context of production – a glimpse of an actual performance of paratragedy, the focus of the current chapter. Like the previous chapter’s exploration of cross-generic play in *Peace*, this study of *Thesmophoriazusae* analyzes some of Aristophanes’ most sophisticated paratragedy at the episodic, subplot, and plot levels. Arguably Aristophanes’ most innovative comic experiment, *Thesmophoriazusae* explores neither genre nor gender *per se*, but gender and genre as avenues of approach to the social, political, and philosophical aspects of a late fifth-century Euripidean style which had achieved quasi-institutional status.

The first section of this chapter examines the paratragic plot of *Thesmophoriazusae* as a singular fusion of comic form and tragic content. In generic, formal terms, the adventures of comic Euripides and Inlaw represent a comic biography which is shaped and inspired by the tragedian’s persona as constructed in Aristophanic discourse. I argue that the motif, or the idea, of a comic dramatization of a fictional episode from Euripides’ life can ultimately be traced to an earlier, equally innovative comic production by one of Aristophanes’ rivals, the *Pytine*, which was composed by Cratinus for performance in 423 BCE. In this similarly ‘biographical’

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389 Csapo (1986) and (2010) 53-8, Taplin (1987) and (1993) 48-54. The other play from which an illustrated scene survives in iconography is *Frogs* (405 BCE). The opening door-knocking scene involving the comic Dionysus is preserved on the (now lost) ‘Berlin Heracles’ (see Chapter Two).
comedy, Cratinus cast himself as the protagonist of a humorous and candid comic plot about his (alleged) alcoholism and fading poetic talents, according to the generic conventions of comedy. Pytine’s unflinching rejoinder to very public and particular Aristophanic criticisms that its author was a washed-up drunk won first prize at the Lenaea that year. While Thesmophoriazusae’s Euripides is not a direct imitation of the comic biography of Cratinus in Pytine, I argue that it is an heir to its innovative poetic strategy of constructing a fictional comic biography in reaction to a poetic rival.

The second poetic innovation of Thesmophoriazusae is closely related to the first: the biography of the comic Euripides is not a purely fictional construction – like the domestic plot of Cratinus’ Pytine – but actually draws upon the tragic subplots of his own poetic oeuvre. Aristophanes constructs the events of Thesmophoriazusae from two distinct and recognizable Euripidean plots, the ‘disguise and infiltration’ and the ‘escape-tragedy’ subplots, which together comprise the substance of Euripides’ comic biography. The analyses of sections two and three devote special attention to the mechanics of these paratragedies in both their verbal and visual terms as well as conceptual and dramaturgical aspects of performance: the dramatic logic of particular tragic episodes, the shaping of language and motifs, the compression of dramaturgical process, the displacement of themes, and the final blend of word and movement which completes paratragic performance. The second section of the chapter treats the disguise and infiltration subplot, which is loosely based on three parts of Euripides’ famous Telephus (438 BCE), also parodied in Acharnians (see Introduction): the opening visit to Agathon, which programmatically establishes genre, gender, and paratragedy as the core themes of the play; Inlaw’s speech before the assembly of women; and the famous hostage-scene, in which Inlaw, in imitation of Euripidean Telephus, takes refuge on an altar.
The third and final section explores the latter half of *Thesmophoriazusae*’s escape-tragedy plot, which develops from the disguise and infiltration scene after the failure of Inlaw’s Telephus parody. The tragic template which structures the escape of Inlaw and Euripides associates the heroes with their Greek counterparts in Euripidean escape-tragedies. The primary, significant connotation of this association is that the all-female Thesmophoria festival is identified as the ‘*barbaros ge.*’ This is the traditional savage and uncivilized context of the mythological pattern which first (and most famously) appears in the literary record as the island of the Cyclopes in *Odyssey* Book Nine. Like other marginal dystopian locales in Greek mythology, the Thesmophoria does not lack its fair share of attractive, utopian features – the festival is attended by virtually all the married women of Athens. The implied ideological comparison of this panhellenic festival to an ‘anti-polis’ depicts the festival women and the Scythian archer as comic analogues to the barbarian Others terrorizing and threatening the civilized Greeks who find themselves stranded in the strange locales of these Euripidean tragedies. While the festival women are thus characterized by the most traditional hallmark of the Greek conception of otherness, savage aggression, their uncivilized natures are recast, according to comic logic, and defined chiefly by uncontrollable appetites for sex and alcohol, which define comic femininity. Moreover, also particularly uncivilized about the comic female race is its complete ignorance of tragedy, the marker of the civilized according to comic logic.

The centerpiece of Inlaw and Euripides’ escape attempts is obviously the famous sequence of three signature parodies of *Palamedes* (415 BCE), *Helen*, and *Andromeda* (412 BCE). Although each vignette furnishes substantial evidence for Aristophanic strategies of appropriation, they more importantly collectively reveal the unifying principle of intergeneric rivalry in *Thesmophoriazusae*: while the performance of tragedy repeatedly fails to produce the
positive, desired outcome of escape and salvation, this failure ensures comic success in the Aristophanic narrative. As does *Peace, Thesmophoriazusae* demonstrates the superiority of Old Comedy, which displays its potential to appropriate and subsume tragedy within itself for its own purposes in performance.

I. Entrance

A. The Paratragic Self

Intergeneric rivalry in the *Thesmophoriazusae* has traditionally been conceived primarily in terms of the famous parodies of Euripides’ *Telephus, Palamedes, Helen*, and *Andromeda*, arguably the best surviving evidence for the verbal and visual sophistication of Aristophanes’ reception of tragedy. Comparatively little discussion, on the other hand, has attended the literary qualities of the larger frame within which those vignettes are embedded. As mentioned in the Introduction, the course of Euripides and Inlaw’s adventures at the Thesmophoria conforms, in its basic outlines, to recognizable Euripidean plots of disguise, infiltration, and escape. Instead of heroes from the mythological past, however, *Thesmophoriazusae* casts Athenian citizens as its characters, one of which is the famous Athenian poet – Euripides – whose personal affairs comprise the subject of the comic plot: compelled to seek revenge for the outrages of his misogynistic tragedy, the women of Athens plan Euripides’ destruction at the Thesmophoria, the all-female Fall festival to Demeter at Athens. Insofar as it traces the poet’s efforts to avoid such a horrible fate, the plot offers a unique exception to the largely fictive characters and world with which Old Comedy is by and large concerned.

As innovative and unparalleled as it appears, *Thesmophoriazusae* is not the first comedy to feature as its protagonist a prominent Athenian poet and to take as its subject that poet’s
‘comic biography.’ It was just over ten years earlier that Aristophanes’ elder comic rival, Cratinus, had cast himself in the lead role of his Pytine, which humorously dramatized that poet’s (alleged) struggles with alcoholism and the unwelcome prospect of his declining poetic talents. As a response to previous Aristophanic mockery, Cratinus’ highly original production attests to the degree of self-consciousness and sophistication which often characterized intertextual exchanges between rival comic poets in the competitive environment of fifth-century Old Comedy. I argue that the conceptual terms of the ‘comic biography’ of Euripides in Thesmophoriazusae ultimately derive from this Cratinean innovation: as a mode of intergeneric engagement between Aristophanes and the chief exponent of his rival genre, the ‘comic biography’ of the Thesmophoriazusae is ultimately inspired by strategies of intrageneric rivalry between poets of Old Comedy.

While there is only space for a brief survey of its fragments and plot, the evidence for Pytine is sufficient to confirm the innovative and unusual character of the comedy, which was unique enough to exert considerable influence on the comic genre in the last quarter of the fifth century. Generally speaking, Pytine represents the single most important piece of explicit evidence for intertextual rivalry between any two dramatic poets of this period.390 This rivalry between Cratinus and Aristophanes appears for the first time with clarity in Aristophanes’ disingenuous comments on the dilapidated physical and mental state of his older rival in his Knights of 424 BCE:

\[\text{νυνὶ δ’ ὑμεῖς αὐτὸν ὄργυντες παραληφθοῦντ’ οἶχ ἐλείπει ἑκπιπτοσίων τῶν ἡλέκτρων καὶ τοῦ τόνου οὐκ ἔνωτος τῶν ἡ ἀριστοτῆς διαχασκουσῶν· ἀλλὰ γέρων ἃν περιέρχει. ἡσπερ Κοῦνας, στέφανον μὲν ἐκχον αὐνόν, δίψη δ’ ἄπολωλὼς.} \]

‘But now you see him driveling around town, his pegs falling out

his tuning gone, and joints gaping, but you don’t pity him. He’s just an old man doddering about, like Konnas, wearing an old crown and perishing of thirst.’”

A scholiast on a different line of the same play (*Knights* 400) records that Cratinus, outraged at his treatment in *Knights*, began composing his *Pytine* (‘Wine-Flask’) on the subject of himself and his alcoholism in response to this public mockery of Aristophanes. Its plot allegorized Cratinus’ consuming passions for poetry and wine as a domestic disagreement between himself and his wife ‘Comedy’ – the personified abstraction of the genre – who sought to divorce the poet for his mistreatment and neglect of her as a result of his devotion to drinking. A handful of tantalizing fragments from *Pytine* survive, and they are revealing. Frr. 193-5, which may be the complaints of Comedy herself, detail Cratinus’ voracious drinking. Fr. 199, probably spoken by a member of the chorus (consisting of Cratinus’ friends), features someone contemplating the destruction of the hero’s various drinking vessels. Although it is difficult to ascertain the rest of the plot, it seems to have concluded with the eventual and triumphant reconciliation of Cratinus and Comedy. However, the terms of said reconciliation are far from clear. Did Cratinus rehabilitate his flagging poetic talent by swearing off drinking for good? Or did the play’s closure reaffirm, with typical comic exuberance, Cratinus’ Dionysiac excess as essential to his inspired form of composition? Rosen’s conjecture that the play closed with Cratinus choosing a middle ground – drinking in moderation – seems most plausible.

More important for the current discussion than the play’s conclusion is the sheer innovation of Cratinus’ self-presentation as his play’s protagonist whose persona is constructed

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391 On personified female abstractions in Old Comedy, see Hall (2006) 170-83. On personifications in Old Comedy generally, see Chapter Two.
out of the hostile back-and-forth of comic discourse – which may or may not be based on fact – and developed according to generic expectations. Pytine treats ‘Cratinus’ as any other generic comic hero whose story is conceived and played out according to the dictates of established comic convention. The substance of Pytine’s comic plot is drawn from the unflattering portrait of the poet as presented in Aristophanic comedy. Finally, it is significant for my present purposes that Cratinus depicts the core issue of his poetic rivalry with Aristophanes – the consequences of his drinking on his poetry – in a very specific social context, a domestic arrangement.

To the student of Old Comedy, this brief overview of Pytine should immediately suggest certain parallels between the construction of its protagonist and the development of its biographical plot, and the analogous presentation of the comic Euripides in Thesmophoriazusae. Like Cratinus Euripides is a rival of Aristophanes who is brought onstage as the protagonist of Thesmophoriazusae, which constructs his character and fictional dilemma similarly with reference to his comic stage history. The plot is likewise conceived and developed according to the conventions of Aristophanic comedy and its distinctive obsession with paratragedy. To be fair, it was not uncommon for the poets of Old Comedy to introduce real citizens of the polis as characters, as the depiction of the Athenian statesman Cleon in Aristophanes’ Knights shows. However, only a limited number of such recognizable citizens were introduced by comic poets to play bit parts. The devotion of an entire plot to an Athenian citizen, a tragic poet no less, is unparalleled, and it is the scope of this treatment which sets apart the comic biography of Euripides in Thesmophoriazusae, not to mention that of Cratinus in Pytine. In other words, these

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characters have more than cameos in their respective comedies, which are essentially about them.

Like *Pytine*, *Thesmophoriazusae* similarly plays out a poetic dispute with Aristophanes – one which is completely one-sided, in this case – by contextualizing it within a very particular and exceptional Athenian social arena, the all-female festival of the Thesmophoria. The poetic persona of the comic Euripides, informed particularly by those controversial aspects of his style responsible for inflaming social tensions, is a construct of his unparalleled stage-history in Aristophanic comedy.\(^{396}\) So influential was this portrait that much of the biographical information of the later Euripidean *Vitae* is believed to be derived either from Aristophanes or from Euripides’ own tragedy. Aristophanes was an early, if not the earliest, major source of many less-than-flattering details about Euripides’ life in the biographical tradition.\(^{397}\) A brief review of this profile would be useful, as it highlights a few primary traits of Euripidean tragedy. As a rule, Aristophanic comedy consistently depicts tragic poets according to its own logic, the ‘assimilation principle,’ which conflates the individual and what is (perceived to be) the style and content of his work.\(^{398}\) Aristophanes’ Euripides first appears in *Acharnians* (425 BCE), where he is such a stuffy, pretentious, and reclusive intellectual that even his slave speaks in sophistic paradoxes (‘Οὐκ ἐνδον ἐνδον ἐστίν’: 396). Euripides speaks (*Ach.* 412-413), dresses, behaves (*Ach.* 410-411), and thinks like the most morally suspect characters of his dramas. Pretentious, detached, and immoral, comic Euripides possesses those very qualities which Aristophanic comedy (somewhat disingenuously) deemed scandalous about his tragedy. Aristophanes even implies that Euripides’ low character has a biological basis: the repeated

\(^{396}\) Henderson (1990), Halliwell (1993).
comic slander that his mother was a ‘vegetable-seller’ exploits popular class prejudices about the mercantile backgrounds of the new politicians of the late fifth century in order to parody Euripides as a demagogue.\footnote{Roselli (2005). As will be discussed in the following chapter, Euripides’ comic persona reaches the zenith of its development in \textit{Frogs}.} Another critical aspect of Aristophanes’ presentation of Euripides is the latter’s (alleged) dependence on props, special effects, and other innovative stage properties which fifth-century conventions dictated be used either sparingly or not at all. Once Dicaeopolis of \textit{Acharnians} secures the costume and props necessary to perform Euripides’ Telephus, Euripides laments, ‘You will rob me of my tragedy!’ (‘...ἀφαιρήσει μὲ τὴν τραγωδίαν...’: 464) and ‘Gone are my plays...’ (‘φοοίδα μοι τὰ δράματα...’: 470), suggesting that his tragedies are more or less reducible to their materiality.\footnote{Rau (1967) 30-6.} \textit{Frogs} (405 BCE) similarly mocks the tragedian’s interest in fashionable dramatic trends such as beggar-kings, affected rhetorical devices (841-2), the New Music, and new acting styles (919-20).\footnote{See Csapo (2002) for acting styles.} The love of dramatic realism and theatricality manifests itself in the comic Euripides’ constant interest in and dependence upon ‘schemes’ (μηχανήματα) – deceptive ruses or fabrications of the sort practiced by his fictional characters – especially in \textit{Thesmophoriazusae} (87, 765, 1132).

\textit{Thesmophoriazusae} privileges one particular Euripidean transgression above others, however, his tragedy’s depiction of morally corrupt women. As in Cratinus’ \textit{Pytine}, the protagonist Euripides must navigate the social and political effects of the dramatic style attributed to him by Aristophanic comedy. Although they respond in different ways, both ‘Cratinus’ and ‘Euripides’ confront their comic dilemmas through poetic composition: while Cratinus writes himself back into his old form (Cf. fr. 33), Euripides (with Inlaw’s help) tries to perform his way out of trouble (i.e., through paratragedy). Each play eventually concludes with
the protagonist reaching a compromise of some sort with his adversary: Euripides promises the women of Athens that he will no longer talk badly of them if they leave him alone (Th. 1160ff.) and *Pytine* likely ended with a reconciliation between Comedy and a reformed Cratinus, who probably agreed henceforth to drink only in moderation.

Yet the important differences between Cratinus and Aristophanes’ styles of approaching the biographical conceit in their respective comedies cannot be denied. Cratinus makes himself the protagonist of *Pytine*, while Aristophanes puts someone else, Euripides, onstage. This important difference underscores a second: Aristophanes’ rivalry with Euripides is only one-sided because Euripides can never reciprocate, unlike the direct and open warfare between poets permitted by the conventions of Old Comedy. Nevertheless, despite these basic differences, Aristophanes’ depiction of Euripides and his tribulations share enough with the equivalent features of Cratinus’ play to merit seeing the same poetic strategy in both. But I would also like to emphasize, once again, that the significance of this parallel poetic conceit in *Pytine* and *Thesmophoriazusae* is not that it establishes *Pytine*’s direct influence on Aristophanes’ play of 411, for which there is simply no compelling evidence. My aim is rather to show that the strategy of intergeneric engagement in *Thesmophoriazusae* is ultimately inspired by the type of intrageneric engagement found in the rivalry of Cratinus and Aristophanes. If this is accepted, the biographical conceit of *Thesmophoriazusae* represents a development in this particular comic technique and a milestone in the evolution of Old Comedy’s engagement with tragedy.

**B. Euripides’ Telephus**

\[402\] For an argument for Euripidean participation in the rivalry with Aristophanes, see Foley (2008) 28-33.
If the ‘comic biography’ is the formal element which shapes the perspective of events in *Thesmophoriazusae*, then the content of that biography – its plot and episodes – is drawn from tragedy. The plot of *Thesmophoriazusae* is a fusion of two recognizable Euripidean subplots: the first half, Inlaw’s infiltration of the Thesmophoria, is modeled on the Euripidean ‘disguise and infiltration’ plot (hence Inlaw’s parody of Euripides’ *Telephus*), while the subsequent rescue-efforts following Inlaw’s capture mimic recognizable episodes from Euripidean ‘escape-tragedy.’ This metatheatrical construction of Euripides’ comic project along the lines of his own highly recognizable plots constitutes an Aristophanic variation on the conceit of the comic biography and a conceptual advance from the fictional domestic dispute of Cratinus’ *Pytine*. Thanks to the fortunate survival of fragments from its Euripidean model, it is possible to confirm the disguise and infiltration subplot even before Inlaw actually reaches the festival. Since Miller’s 1948 article, it has been generally accepted that the structure, actions, and themes of *Thesmophoriazusae*, from Euripides’ initial appeal to his fellow tragedian Agathon for aid (173ff.) to Inlaw’s arrest (765), were modelled on Euripides’ famous (but no longer extant) tragedy *Telephus* (438 BCE). The title character of that play, the son of Heracles and the nymph Auge, was a Trojan War-era king of Mysia (in Asia Minor) who successfully repelled the Greek expedition to Troy after it mistook his city for the kingdom of Priam (Cf. *Cypria* Arg. 36-42 B). Telephus, wounded by Achilles in the victory, was told by an oracle that his incurable injury would only be healed by the one who dealt it. He thus sought out the Greeks, who had by then assembled at Agamemnon’s palace at Argos to revise their battle plan.

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403 For the plays normally classed in this group, see Wright (2005).
This hostile assembly is the setting of Euripides’ play. Fr. 696 suggests that things opened in token Euripidean fashion with a prologue by the hero, in disguise as a beggar, before the Argive palace (frr. 697-8). After brief remarks concerning his birth and quarrel with the Greeks, Telephus somehow managed to secure the aid of Clytemnestra (fr. 699), wife of Agamemnon and queen of Argos, to infiltrate the Greek assembly currently debating whether to seek vengeance against Mysia before proceeding anew against the Trojans. At some point, Telephus himself delivered a speech in defense of the Mysians’ resistance of the Achaeans (frr. 703, 706, 708-711), but only managed to convince half of the assembly (frr. 712-712a). Suddenly, a messenger entered to inform the Greeks of an intruder among them, a scene which might barely be discerned from the remains of fr. 727a(1). After his exposure (fr. 700), Telephus escaped to an altar with the baby Orestes as hostage (fr. 727; see also Figure 2). A further debate between Telephus and Agamemnon eventually resolved the conflict, whereupon Telephus’ wound was healed by Achilles. The play ended with the Achaeans enlisting the Mysian king as their guide to Troy on their second expedition to sack the city.

Although the Telephus subplot stands out among the paratragedies of the Thesmophoriazusae because it lacks an overt signal of paratragic borrowing – the Euripidean models of most extended Aristophanic paratragedies being explicitly announced from the start – the parody actually adheres to the structure and content of the Euripidean model with more fidelity than the famous (explicitly signalled) parody of the same scene in Aristophanes’ Acharnians (425 BCE). Although it is far from obvious, this opening vignette consists of three signature phases loosely corresponding to three discernible parts of the Euripidean model: Inlaw’s disguise and infiltration with the help of the effeminate tragedian, Agathon, corresponds to the aid given to the Euripidean Telephus by Clytemnestra; the speech of Inlaw before the
female assembly obviously corresponds to that of Telephus before the Achaeans; finally, the hostage scene in *Thesmophoriazusae* almost precisely mirrors that of *Telephus*, with certain comic adjustments.

**C. Disguise, Rhesis, Sacrifice**

The Euripidean Telephus managed to infiltrate the enemy assembly of the Achaeans only with the help of his enemy’s wife, the queen of Argos, Clytemnestra (Cf. fr. 699). In the role of Clytemnestra, Aristophanes’ parody substitutes the effeminate Agathon. Aristophanes’ reinvention of this scene of clandestine tragic collusion and disguise as a raunchy and slapstick encounter between a crude old man and an effeminate, pretentious poet may be the most significant creative departure from his Euripidean model in the entire Telephus parody. To meet the challenge of infiltrating the hostile assembly of women, Inlaw must resort to more than alterations of appearance and social class. He must change what is probably the single most important index of individual status in the comic genre, gender. Before Miller, Hansen, Zeitlin and others established the relevance of the Agathon scene to *Thesmophoriazusae*’s broader thematic concerns of gender, genre, and intertextuality, the significance of Euripides’ appeal to Agathon, and the poet’s distinctive literary-critical statements, had largely eluded scholars.406 Miller believed the visit to Agathon to be a rare allusion to an earlier Aristophanic intertext, the corresponding supplication of Euripides by Dicaeopolis, the comic hero of *Acharnians*.407 In each play, a hero appeals to the fashionable tragedian of the day (Euripides in *Acharnians* and Agathon in *Thesmophoriazusae*) to supply the disguises necessary to supplement a critical

407 Miller (1948) 174; Platter (2007) 144 describes it as the common link between the two plays.
defense speech. Dicaeopolis only successfully persuades an angry chorus of old men to accept his justification for his private peace after securing the costume and rhetoric of the Euripidean Telephus, as the Introduction explained. *Thesmophoriazusae*, conversely, recasts Euripides (this time) as the desperate comic hero who beseeches his younger colleague in the tragic art, the flamboyant Agathon. But the resulting support—a simple, cosmetic change of gender for Inlaw—brings about a strikingly different outcome from that enjoyed by Dicaeopolis: while the latter succeeded by effectively appropriating the complete persona of a successful tragic hero (that is, costume, rhetoric, and narrative), Inlaw fails because he appropriates merely the requisite gender for his task, and very poorly at that.

The little information about the historical Agathon to survive helps contextualize the particulars of his role in the transformation of Inlaw. A leading light of his generation of tragic poets after Euripides, Agathon must have been in his thirties at the time of *Thesmophoriazusae*’s production and had recently won his first victory in the Lenaea of 416.\(^{408}\) Besides that of *Thesmophoriazusae*, the only other detailed portrait of him to survive is found in Plato’s *Symposium*, where he hosts a dinner in honor of his dramatic victory of 416.\(^{409}\) Plato, like Aristophanes, confirms that he cultivated his effeminacy in both appearance and habit.\(^{410}\) Although the exact date of his death is unknown, a scholiast on *Frogs* 85 claims it occurred before that of Archelaus of Macedon (d. 399 BCE), for whose court the poet had left Athens sometime between 408 and 406 BCE.\(^{411}\) All that survives of his work is a handful of fragments which generally support the fondness for sophistic rhetoric he displays in Aristophanes and

\(^{408}\) Dover (1989) 144.
\(^{409}\) Pl. *Symp.* 173a.
\(^{410}\) *Symp.* 213c.
In Symposium (198c), Socrates refers to this when he insinuates Agathon’s lack of substance by comparing the young tragedian’s speech to the style of the Sicilian rhetorician Gorgias. The speech in question (Symp. 194e-197e) features such notable Gorganic hallmarks as extreme self-consciousness, poetic language, parallel phrasing, and rhythm, some of the same features which appear in Agathon’s few fragments.

Plato’s Agathon bears a strong resemblance to the Agathon savagely lampooned by Aristophanes, who introduces an effeminate, pretentious, and self-conscious poet of the ‘New Music’ which, according to its conservative critics, was known for sensuous melodies and ‘soft and voluptuous’ aulos-playing. It is therefore highly appropriate that the comic Agathon would enter Thesmophoriazusae with a musical performance (101-129) of just this kind. In his celebration hymn (101-129), Agathon plays the parts of both directing coryphaeus and (imagined) maiden chorus of Trojan girls in the immediate aftermath of the Achaean’s feigned abandonment of the expedition against Troy. Its exotic mix of ionics, choriambics, trochaics, and dactyls (near the end) confirms the eastern Aegean origin of the meters and corroborates Agathon’s own explicit identification of his personal style with that of Ibycus, Anacreon, and Alcaeus.

The distinctive gender-bending of singer and song (e.g., the feminine lyre’s ‘manly shout’:125) evokes Dionysus, the divine transvestite whose cult embodied the emotive and

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412 For the fragments, see Snell and Kannicht (1986) 155-68. Two poetic inventions in tragic poetry are credited to Agathon: he was the first poet to introduce ‘ἐμβόλια’ choral odes with no relevance to the dramatic context (Arist. Poet. 1456a26-30), and the first poet to compose a tragedy (‘Antheus’) of non-mythical, non-historical, original content (Arist. Poet. 1451b19-23).
415 Features include the chorus of Eastern maidens and references to the song (104), as well as the music (121), instruments (124), and cult deities of the Dionysiac persuasion (101) [see Rau (1967) 107-108, Csapo (1999-2000) 417-418]. This last feature explains the resemblance of the syncopated ionics found in the song’s first line to that of the parodos of Euripides’ Bacchae (64).
stylistic extremes of the New Music. An almost certainly erotic style of delivery,\textsuperscript{417} along with a transvestite appearance, would have accentuated the gender ambiguity of the song.\textsuperscript{418} For Agathon, the normal dark-red mask of comic masculinity would have been replaced by the effeminate’s pale-colored, beardless mask, which closely resembled the chalk-white face of stage femininity.\textsuperscript{419} Even if the articles of clothing eventually used to dress Inlaw (219-265) were not actually removed directly from Agathon’s person, they are surely representative of his wardrobe. Finally, the text suggests that Agathon was missing the fundamental index of comic masculinity, the comic phallos (142).\textsuperscript{420}

The point of Agathon’s gender-bending recital is not just that it provides an occasion for the gratuitous mockery of this fashionable poet: it actually prefigures Inlaw’s own eventual gender transformation, which is required for his infiltration of the female festival. After acquiring Inlaw’s consent, Euripides, like a producer, goes to work preparing him for his big role with a shaving and a dressing in Agathon’s \textit{ιμάτιον} and \textit{στρφιον} (250-251), saffron gown (253), \textit{περίζεπτος} (258), and \textit{ἔγκυκλος} (261) after an invasive singeing of the hair on his rectum (238-239). This emasculation neutralizes the hero’s phallos and beard, the most significant and visible indices of maleness upon which the potency and political initiative of a comic hero rest.\textsuperscript{421} The singeing symbolizes a kind of rape which introduces the formerly brash Inlaw to a new comic femininity foreshadowing his approaching passivity and helplessness in the company of the

\textsuperscript{417} Muecke (1982) 48-49.
\textsuperscript{418} There is some uncertainty about whether Agathon is wearing all women’s clothes, a combination of men and women’s, or the outdated style of Ionic dress; for a combination of male and female: Muecke (1982) 50; for female only: MacDowell (1995) 255 and Foley (2000) 286; Snyder (1974) offers illustrations of fifth-century vase-painting which depict the naturally effeminate Ionic dress of Anacreon, an explanation which removes the problem of establishing a gender for Agathon’s clothes.
\textsuperscript{420} Foley (2000) 286.
\textsuperscript{421} Stone (1981) 91 notes that next to \textit{Lysistrata}, \textit{Thesmophoriazusae} contains the greatest number of scenes directly involving the comic phallos. Gestures to or with the phallos at moments of political or social success are markers of comic heroism’s assertive masculinity (Cf. \textit{Birds} 1253-6).
women. Inlaw’s androgyny would have been constantly signaled by the conflation of male and female costume, one of the most explicit acknowledgements of layered juxtaposition in extant Aristophanes. The ridiculous juxtaposition of male and female attributes on Inlaw’s person – padded stomach and buttocks, with dark-colored mask, combined with feminine beardlessness and wardrobe – allows Aristophanes to sustain effortlessly and indefinitely the visual joke of the layered-style paratragedy, which is corroborated by the iconographic evidence of Chapter Two.

When Inlaw successfully infiltrates the Thesmophoria, the women are dealing with the chief item of their agenda, the denunciation of Euripides for slandering them in his tragedies (295ff.). After separate invectives against the poet by two worshippers (383-432, 443-458), the effeminized Inlaw assumes the speaker’s garland and begins an ill-conceived speech in defense of his kinsman (467ff.). In context and (to a lesser extent) in content, the speech corresponds to Dicaeopolis’ defense of his actions in Acharnians, as well as the model of both comic speeches, the defense of Mysia by Euripidean Telephus in the council of Achaeans. Before a similarly hostile audience, Dicaeopolis adopted the costume and rhetoric which immortalized Telephus as the paradigm of Euripides’ rhetorically gifted beggar-kings, and delivered a spirited criticism of Athenian foreign policy. By assimilating his endorsement of peace with the cause of a famous tragic hero, he successfully gained authority for his own case. The fragmentary Telephus makes any secure identification of parodied lines in either Dicaeopolis’ or Inlaw’s speech nearly impossible, but editors of the play generally conclude that places where the two comedies

\[^{422}\text{Foley (2000) 298.}\]
\[^{423}\text{Miller (1948), Platter (2007) 144.}\]
\[^{424}\text{Foley (1988) 132.}\]
overlap probably reveal a tragic archetype.\textsuperscript{425} Although its heavily anecdotal character suggests a sporadic adherence to the Euripidean model, Inlaw’s speech still shows some obvious borrowings from Euripides, such as the speaker’s attempt to reduce audience hostility (469-470), an echo of the strategy of Dicaeopolis (Cf. Ach. 509-512):\textsuperscript{426}

\begin{quote}
\textit{kαυτή γὰρ ἔγωγ’, οὕτως ὑπαίμην τῶν τέκνων, μισῶ τὸν ἄδει ἔκεινον, εἰ μὴ μαίνομαι.}
\end{quote}

‘I myself – so may I have no joy of my children abhor that man, I would have to be mad not to.’
(trans. Sommerstein)

Inlaw also echoes Dicaeopolis in his insistence on reasoned deliberation over ill-conceived action (471-2):\textsuperscript{427}

\begin{quote}
\textit{ὁμως δ’ ἐν ἀλλήλαις χρῆ δοῦναι λόγον, αὐταὶ γὰρ ἐσμέν, κοὐδὲμι ἐκφοβά λόγου.}
\end{quote}

‘All the same, we ought to argue out the matter among ourselves: we’re on our own, and no one is going to leak what we say.’
(trans. Sommerstein)

A similar appeal probably followed Euripidean Telephus’ opening plea to the Achaeans (fr. 703) not to begrudge him because of his low status. Inlaw then tries to undermine the justification for the audience’s anger by claiming that the offender could not have acted differently under the circumstances (473-5).\textsuperscript{428} In the section which shortly follows (476-515), Inlaw begins the personal anecdote of his experiences as a young wife. A well-attested parody of the original Telephus rounds out the speech at 518-19:

\begin{quote}
\textit{κατ’ Εὐριπίδη Συμοῦμεθα, οὐδὲν παξοῦσαι μείζων ἡ δεδηκάκαμεν;}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{425} Austin and Olson (2004) n. 466-519.  
\textsuperscript{426} Miller (1948) 180.  
\textsuperscript{428} ‘Τι παίτ’ ἔχουσαι ‘κεῖνον αἱτώμεθα | βαγείως τε φέρομεν’ (‘Why do we keep blaming it all on him and feel aggrieved…?’); cf. Ach. 574.
'And then we’re angry with Euripides for doing nothing worse to us than what we’ve done ourselves.’ (trans. Sommerstein)

Although Inlaw’s rhetorical strategy has some things in common with that of Dicaeopolis (and, by extension, of the Euripidean Telephus), its heavily comic content and infrequent use of elevated or tragic language suggests very little else which could have been borrowed from Euripides.429

The visual dimension of Inlaw’s defense would have easily rivaled Dicaeopolis and Trygaeus’ respective paratragedies in terms of the extent of its performative content. In addition to speaking register and costume, other markers almost certainly enhanced the feminine linguistic register of Inlaw’s speech.430 Among paralinguistic features, Inlaw’s delivery doubtless emphasized certain parts of the speech – perhaps where it directly borrowed from the Telephus – with grander tones to supplement the tragic pedigree of the hero’s arguments.431 To simulate feminine tone for comic effect, Inlaw could have relied on a falsetto voice, which perhaps rose to a fever-pitch during the comic anecdote (476-516):432 an audible buildup in pitch intensity could have peaked with the climax of the catalogue of female vices, the fraudulent birth of the supposititious child. The hero would probably also have expressed quasi-femininity with movement: in antiquity, such movements included wiggling and moving with small steps, both of which would have nicely supplemented Inlaw’s feminine linguistic performance.433

Like those of Telephus and Dicaeopolis, Inlaw’s defense enrages his audience. The women are on the verge of carrying out swift justice against the speaker when a new character

429 Rau (1967) 46.
432 Halliwell (1990) 76.
suddenly approaches. The figure is assumed to be female before he is recognized as the effeminate Cleisthenes, a frequent target of Aristophanic mockery for his beardlessness (Cf. *Th.* 235) and preference for the passive role in homosexual relationships.\(^{434}\) Cleisthenes evidently corresponds to the messenger of the Euripidean original, who similarly appears during the Achaean assembly to announce the presence of an intruder. This motif marks a transition in the paratragedy from its speech phase, which is the climax of the Telephus parody, to the hostage-scene. The subsequent search by the festival women (655-688) likely mimicked that performed by the chorus of *Telephus* (fr. 727a) and their eventual discovery of the disguised Telephus, who took shelter at an altar after boldly seizing baby Orestes. Inlaw too seizes a hostage, the ‘baby’ (wineskin) of Mika (689), and eventually sacrifices it (757). Paratragic language abounds in this scene, especially in the diction of lines 693-96: ‘φοινίας’ (modifying φλέβας: 694), the Euripidean word ‘καθαιματώσι’ (695), Mika’s typically tragic (and feminine) response ‘ςΩ τάλαιν’ ἐγώ’ (695) and tragic appeal ‘οὐκ ἄφηξεν’ (696), and the verb ‘δέσκομαι’ (700).\(^{435}\) The recitative exchange between the chorus and Inlaw of 699-725 uses dochmiacs to heighten the emotional tension of the crisis (700-1) only to bring it crashing back down in bathos with the eventual discovery of the wineskin (733). In a variation of tragic dialogue, Inlaw then responds in trochaic tetramer catalectic and iambic dimeter catalectic – the meters of common speech – to the excited chorus speaking in dochmiacs and anapests.\(^{436}\)


\(^{435}\) Rau (1967) 48 believes *Th.* 693-5 to be taken directly from the words of Telephus.

\(^{436}\) Parker (1997) 426. All extant instances of Aristophanic paratragedy survive solely in the medium of the written text, with the exception of this particular comic vignette of the sacrifice of the wineskin (Figure 1). This extremely rare theatre-related vase-painting furnishes unparalleled visual evidence for the moment of Inlaw’s ‘sacrifice’ of

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The arrest of Inlaw marks the conclusion of the Telephus parody and brings the disguise and infiltration subplot, as well as Euripides’ initial plan to avoid the wrath of Athens’ women, to a close. It is significant that Inlaw is the first hero of the Aristophanic corpus to fail outright in a paratragic comic project, a fact which reaffirms the importance of the trugedic nature of Dicaeopolis and Trygaeus’ projects as key to their successes. By appropriating the identity of a tragic hero at a moment of crisis, the paratragic hero exploits the narrative potential of the loftier genre to communicate important comic ideas in a public manner: Dicaeopolis exploits the cultural currency of tragic discourse to justify political policy and Trygaeus exploits the quasi-divine status of tragic heroism to reshape the cosmic order in a positive way. The success of the trugedic heroes contrasts with the abject failure of Inlaw’s comic project, which was derailed not only by the thematic content of his tactless, reckless defense of Euripides, but by its performative, narrative, and pragmatic aspects as well.

The first deciding factor can be called performative, as it concerns costume. Dicaeopolis’ paratragic costume in *Acharnians* represents not the cohesive picture of a beggar, but that of a famous tragic hero who, in all likelihood, had been immortalized in popular Athenian culture by 425 BCE. Dicaeopolis seeks to be the beggar-king Telephus down to the fine details, appealing for a walking stick (448), a basket burned by a lamp (453), a cup with a broken lip (459), a pot (463), and lettuce leaves (469) in addition to the fundamental rags and cap of Telephus. Comic heroes rejoice in the materiality of costumes and props not only because they reflect status in generic, social, and philosophical terms, but because they confer it. In this respect, Dicaeopolis’ ascension to paratragic hero affirms the generically transformative power of Euripidean drama in

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Mica’s wineskin (c. line 756) and one of our only glimpses of the visual dimension of Aristophanic paratragedy in performance, as Chapter Two explained.
the political context of Athens. Dicaeopolis’ paratragic agency is complete with the acquisition of Telephus’ superior *rhetos* (446), which is gained after he assumes the ‘rags’ (432) and felt cap (445) of the tragic hero. Dicaeopolis’ command of Telephus’ tragic persona not only makes his arguments intelligible to the internal audience of Acharnians who recognize his persona, but the costume also lends to his defense the authority of ‘serious’ drama.

Inlaw, by contrast, impersonates a generic woman. Because his cross-dressing reflects the same incongruent status which characterizes Agathon, a physical confusion of the male and the female, Inlaw’s project will suffer from the same generic sterility. This is even hinted at in Inlaw’s paratragic response to Agathon’s initial appearance. Drawing on a passage from Aeschylus’ *Edonoi*, in which he assumes the role of the Thracian king Lycurgus interrogating the effeminate Dionysus (136-145), Inlaw says ‘Where are you from, girly-man?’ (Ποδαπόνς ὁ γυνις; 136). In striving to be both man and woman, Agathon cannot convincingly be either, but only an effeminate man. Aristophanes connects the gender incongruity which defines Agathon’s person and artistic style to an overall sterility and failure in the world of public discourse. The Agathonian removal of Inlaw’s masculine indices thus compromises his comic agency: his loss of phalloïd and beard relocates the center of the comic body from those masculine markers of comic agency to a passive site, the anus, which is under threat throughout the play. The symbolic rape of the singeing initiates him into his new passivity through an Agathon-style sexual experience.

The failure of Inlaw is also connected to the absence of an overarching and compelling narrative as the vehicle for his cause. Dicaeopolis’ prudent choice of Mysian Telephus, a hero of

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considerable rhetorical range and one who faced a similar dilemma, allows him to exploit the
discursive authority of that hero. The popular conception of Telephus’ just and righteous cause
guarantees a favorable outcome to the man who can associate his situation with that of the
Mysian king. Dicaeopolis thus assimilates his decision to act for the sake of his own (essentially
selfish) interests with Telephus’ defense of himself and his people, who were compelled to act
for reasons of self-preservation. The hybrid status of Telephus is also relevant here: half
Greek and half barbarian, Telephus possesses a Greekness which not only gives him access to
the political context of his defense – the Achaean assembly – but also endows him with a certain
distinctive Greek cleverness. As a practitioner of tragedy, Dicaeopolis possesses a different
brand of hybrid status, one which must be understood in generic terms: instead of straddling the
Greek and barbarian worlds as Telephus does, the hero exploits the discursive strengths of the
loftier tragedy in the political realm of the comic genre. Hybridity of gender, on the other hand,
fails to increase comic agency.

In sum, Euripides’ Telephus structures the initial subplot of Thesmophoriazusae instead
of acting as the actual vehicle for Inlaw’s heroic comic project. Its overarching themes – the just
cause of the defender and the insufficient justification of the aggressor – are not utilized in
Inlaw’s argumentation, and he fails to assimilate his case to that of Telephus in any
meaningful way. While his gendered disguise ensures his admission into the hostile territory
of the festival, it fails to increase his comic agency. Instead of exploiting the cultural capital of
tragic discourse, and assuming the role of an iconic, recognizable hero to which an audience
might be receptive, Inlaw relates the fictional experiences of a debased married woman.

II. Exiting

With the poetic form of Euripides and Inlaw’s adventures now sufficiently outlined, their content and significance beyond the surface events of the comedy can be explored. Inlaw’s arrest transforms the shape of the plot from one of disguise and infiltration to an altogether different form – the escape-plot – which had recently been popularized in a few notable Euripidean productions. In this look at the second half of the *Thesmophoriazusae*, my focus is the virtuoso paratragedies of Euripides’ *Palamedes*, *Helen*, and *Andromeda*, which have traditionally commanded the most attention from scholars of the play. These vignettes furnish the finest extant evidence for Aristophanes’ paratragic strategy at the linguistic and performative levels: not only are they sustained for considerably longer periods than other extant Aristophanic paratragedies, but significant portions of their Euripidean models have also survived. As in *Acharnians*, the comic hero (here Euripides) aims to exploit the narrative inevitability of tragedy in order to liberate himself and his comrade, like the Euripidean protagonists of the actual escape-tragedies. The key difference is that the comic Euripides imitates or performs key events from his own productions. Like those examples from *Dionysalexandros* and *Peace*, the cross-generic play of *Thesmophoriazusae* is understandable in broader, generic terms which transcend the comic mechanics of episode and plot. The theme of failure in Inlaw’s infiltration also drives the second half of the play, where the repeated dramatic failures of Euripides’ paratragic schemes not only belittle his conflation of life and art, but they also implicitly affirm, through Euripides’ inability to influence events, tragedy’s limited potential to effect meaningful change in social and political terms. Tragedy’s failure, of course, also invites us to consider comedy’s successful exploitation of tragedy’s shortcomings for its own generic ends.
A. Tragic Escapes

Edith Hall was the first to outline, in any real detail, thematic and structural correspondences between *Thesmophoriazusae* and the so-called Euripidean ‘escape-tragedies,’ a small group of late fifth-century plays whose unconventional plot type gained some prominence (or notoriety). These plays each feature a variation of the traditional mythological pattern of a Greek hero escaping a foreign threat in an alien land. The most famous example of this pattern in Greek literature is Odysseus’ escape from Polyphemus in *Odyssey* 9 (105ff.). Those Euripidean plays which traditionally fall under the classification ‘escape-tragedy’ include *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (c. 414 BCE) and the two productions staged the year before *Thesmophoriazusae, Helen* (412 BCE) and the now fragmentary *Andromeda* (412 BCE). Arguably the most distinct feature of the escape-tragedy is its setting, a distant, exotic, and dangerous locale over which a savage and violent barbarian male holds power. The primary perspective of each play is typically that of the captive of this barbarian villain, a maiden (or even a male hero), who eventually encounters and recognizes a heroic male rescuer in a highly emotional recognition and reunion. In two of the plays, the *peripeteia* involves the clever deception of the barbarian villain by a ploy (μηχανή) involving a particular Greek custom, in a demonstration of the superiority of the Greek intellect over barbarian brawn and stupidity. For example, the heroes of *Iphigenia* concoct a ploy involving purification to escape their barbarian captor, while Helen and Menelaus depart Egypt in *Helen* by duping the Egyptians with a false funeral.

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442 Hall (1989) and (2006) 241. For an exhaustive study of Euripidean escape-tragedy, see Wright (2005). For an earlier treatment of these unconventional plays, see Burnett (1971).
Most of the tragic motifs of escape-tragedies, Hall explains, can be identified, in
comedified form, in *Thesmophoriazusae*. The all-female festival of the Thesmophoria is the
exotic, barbarian land, the βαρβάρος γῆ, and the emasculated Inlaw stands in for the captive
heroine while Euripides plays the role of token male rescuer. The festival worshippers, as well
as the Scythian archer, represent the violent and savage Other who threatens the captive Greeks.
By increasingly elaborate performances of Euripidean drama, the heroes attempt to deceive their
captors through the particularly Greek institution of tragedy. Further parallels between
*Thesmophoriazusae* and *IT* and *Helen* suggest themselves in light of the ‘ἄνοδος drama’ pattern
underlying the latter two plays.444 The heroes of those plays, Orestes and Menelaus, each
undergo a symbolic death after passing into the netherworlds of the Taurian Chersonnese and
Egypt. This is particularly underscored in the case of Menelaus, whose former stature of Atreid
hero of the Trojan War is dismissed outright by the portress, the domestic servant of the
Egyptian palace (437ff.). Inlaw’s symbolic death is obviously enacted in gendered terms, as his
status-transformation in the Agathon scene makes clear.

The escape-tragedy pattern in *Thesmophoriazusae*, however, is especially notable for its
Athenocentrism, which is no more clearly displayed than in its comic analogue to the barbarian
setting and inhabitants of escape-tragedy, the Thesmophoria festival of contemporary Athens and
its female worshippers. Those worshippers are the married women of Athens and (at least
nominally) real Athenian citizens, rather than the epic heroes and heroines which star in the
mythological plots of Euripidean escape-tragedy. Aristophanes thus radically reconceptualizes
or comedifies the cultural polarity at the heart of the mythological paradigm, the opposition of
the civilized and the savage, in accordance with comedy’s fundamentally Athenocentric

outlook.\textsuperscript{445} \textit{Thesmophoriazusae} (and Old Comedy generally) conceives of alterity \textit{primarily} on the basis of gender, rather than in cultural or racial terms, and the female worshippers represent a non-normative, alien community characterized by comic variations of the definitive geographical, dietary, and technological codes which typically defined savagery in Greek thought.\textsuperscript{446}

In Athens, the ‘Thesmophoria’ festival was the year’s most important female religious festival, held in honor of Demeter and Persephone on the fourth, twelfth, and thirteenth day of the month \textit{Pyanopsion}, just before the sowing season.\textsuperscript{447} Only married women were allowed to attend this fertility festival, considered by many to have been a defining experience for the married women of Greece.\textsuperscript{448} Because it was a fundamental part of the Thesmophoria to allow women to occupy areas normally restricted to men, the celebration was commonly conceived as a ‘city of women,’ and certain aspects of the festival mimicked the regular (male-dominated) state of affairs in Athens by allowing women to enjoy a small degree of autonomy which would have been unthinkable in real life. For three days, the wives camped out, in a tent city, near the primary site of Athenian government, the Pnyx, free of all male supervision. These women elected leaders (including two archons) in advance of the festival, held quasi-political assemblies, and conducted secret rites for the duration of their worship.\textsuperscript{449} This temporary replacement of men by women in the political arena was balanced by a corresponding pause in public business by normal society: prisoners were freed, court sessions were suspended, and the meeting of the Council was forbidden.

\textsuperscript{445} For this polarity in Greek literature, see Segal (1974).
\textsuperscript{446} See Segal (1974) for an overview of these categories in Greek literature.
\textsuperscript{449} Detienne (1989) 138 notes that the government posts of the festival were filled during the regular year in the \textit{demes}. 

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At the level of intergeneric discourse, Aristophanes’ mere representation of the Thesmophoria – a contemporary festival which could never be staged in tragedy – affirms yet again Old Comedy’s unlimited range of possible subjects for dramatization. Because the women were sworn to secrecy about the events of the Thesmophoria, Aristophanes or any other man (for that matter) would have had very little knowledge of the actual goings-on within the festival. The Thesmophoria thus becomes an opportunity for the exercise of the comic (male) imagination and, in this respect, it is difficult to imagine how the festival could not have been the object of Athenian male fantasy. The vast majority of citizens must have considered the gathering of all respectable Athenian women, without any male oversight or supervision, to be utterly utopian. This seems to be the angle of Aristophanes’ distinctive focus on the female festival as a substitution for the social and political arenas dominated by males. Aristophanes’ treatment of the festival focuses distinctively on the idea of the substitution of female for male in the social and political arena. His women call an ‘assembly’ (84, 277), in which orators address the *demos* of women (355, 353, 1145) to discuss *pephismata* and *nomoi* (361). Like the regular Athenian Assembly, the women’s Assembly opens in an extremely formal manner, with prose and verse prayers. Yet Aristophanes depicts his female worshippers and their occasional institutions less as polar opposites of the regular, male versions than as reflections of the gender stereotypes in which Old Comedy reveled.

For this reason, it is hard to believe that the actual festival only aroused fantasies for the male populace, whose suspicions must have run wild when their women met for the annual rites. In the male mind, the placement of so many females unaccustomed to contact with one another in the same place for any considerable duration of time could only have led to bad things. This is one of the timeless aspects of the tragic world-view. Some Athenian males almost certainly
suspected that the Thesmophoria provided a context for inappropriate female actions like the open confession of scandalous and shameless behavior and thoughts. Aristophanes’ depiction wholly obliges them in this respect. The female Assembly’s curses are directed not only against the corrupt or those plotting tyranny – as in the regular Assembly – but also against anyone who reveals female transgression, the women’s indulgence in illicit sex and alcohol. Male anxieties about the Thesmophoria were also at least partly rooted in mythological tradition: myths about the festival are dominated by tales of male intruders being victimized by the savage female worshippers protecting the rites of Demeter. The most noteworthy of such stories is perhaps that of Battus, the king of Cyrene, who was castrated after his encroachment upon the rites.\(^{450}\)

Therefore, conflicting feelings of both fantasy and fear must have characterized the duality of the Athenian male’s attitude to the Thesmophoria. In this respect, the Thesmophoria’s combination of both goods and evils parallels other traditional examples of utopia in Greek literature, especially Homer’s island of the Cyclopes. The savagely aggressive, compulsively lecherous (488ff.), and perpetually inebriated (733ff.) female worshippers of Aristophanes are thus comic analogues of the brutal, sexually aggressive, and uncultivated Others who were typically thought to inhabit the margins of civilization. With characteristic metatheatricality, the paratragic episodes of the \textit{Thesmophoriazusae} reveal what is perhaps most symptomatic of feminine savagery in the comic world, ignorance of tragedy. Again and again, the uncivilized status of the festival women is emphasized through their inability to understand the quintessential institution of fifth-century civilization, the performance of the stage. This is why the repeated failures of Euripides’ paratragic rescue schemes – which will be examined very shortly – tell Aristophanes’ audience as much about the race of comic women as about the

\(^{450}\) Detienne (1989) 130ff., 144-5 (for his identification of the Thesmophoria worshippers as Amazons).
ineptitude of Euripides himself. These cultural, ritual, and literary dimensions of the ritual subtext of the Thesmophoria festival, as part of the overarching conceptual frame of the escape-tragedy, thus assure a clearer understanding of the paratragic vignettes embedded within the comic plot.

B. Palamedes

Of the four Euripidean tragedies parodied in Thesmophoriazusae, we admittedly know the least about Palamedes. Performed at the City Dionysia in 415, along with Alexandros and Troades, this play dealt with the death of one of the most famous Greek heroes at Troy and rival of Odysseus. The earliest known literary account of Palamedes’ demise was in the Cypria (fr. 20 B) – which also narrated the Judgment of Paris – although Aeschylean and Sophoclean tragedies on the subject are also known. What little is known of Euripides’ play is preserved in the scholia of Aristophanes (Thesmophoriazusae 771) and of Euripides (Orestes 432), and contained in the text of Hyginus (105). The traditional account was that Palamedes, a Greek hero credited with the inventions of writing, numbers, and measures, incurred the hatred of Odysseus for his intellectual gifts. While at Troy, Odysseus managed to frame Palamedes on the false charge of treason, according to supplementary evidence preserved in the variant stories of Hyginus and Apollodorus (Epit. 3.8): a forged letter implicated the hero in a plot to betray the Greek army to the Trojans. Tried and condemned, Palamedes was executed by the army.


\[452\] Another possible motivation for Odysseus suggested by tradition is Palamedes’ exposure of his ruse to avoid military service, as told in the Cypria (Arg. 30-3 B).

\[453\] Scodel (1980) 49-52. Unlike the epic tradition’s narration of his death at the hands of Diomedes and Odysseus (Cypria fr. 30 B), all three major tragedians told of Palamedes’ destruction through judicial process.
Much of Euripides’ play is difficult (if not impossible) to reconstruct, although its agon seems to have been part of Palamedes’ trial, in which the hero spoke eloquently in his own defense (frr. 583-5) against the treacheries of Odysseus: fr. 578, in which Palamedes discusses the virtues of the written word, likely belonged to that defense speech. Following the execution, the Greeks detained Palamedes’ brother Oiax, who sent word of the prosecution and death to their father, Nauplius, in Euboea. Oiax’s rather improbable plan to get word to his father by carving messages in oar blades and casting them into the sea, in the hopes that they would float to Euboea, serves as the pivot of the Aristophanic allusion and parody.

Though brief, Aristophanes’ parody of Palamedes is amusing. Immobilized and helpless on the altar, Inlaw assumes the role of Oiax in order to get word to his partner Euripides and expedite his escape (Th. 776-84). His paratragedy begins with an adaptation of Oiax’s tragic monologue (fr. 588a), which is audibly signaled by high tragic anapests and an apostrophe to his hands (776-77), the latter being a very common tragic trope. Special paralinguistic markers of tone and pitch doubtless supplemented the increasing emotion of the speech. Its elevated register, marked by the periphrasis for the writing tablets of the tragic model (‘heralds of my sufferings’: 779) and the use of rare poetic vocabulary (βάςκες’: 783), is brought crashing down by Inlaw’s bathetic struggle with his own handwriting. Since no oars are at hand, he writes on votive tablets from the altar of the festival (775). The comic substitution of sacred religious items for the profane, or vice versa, is consistent with the utter irreverence of comic appropriation in Aristophanes.

The near complete loss of its model forces one to conclude that the focus of the Aristophanic paratragedy (as it is most apparent to us) is its extraordinary stage business.

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Aristophanes’ interest in Oiax’s distress call was no doubt stirred by the unusual means through which it was carried out. His parody turns (again) on a popular perception of Euripidean dramaturgy disseminated by comedy, its love of materiality and novelty. The abbreviated nature of the paratragedy would have made the writing on the tablets crucial for audience-recognition of the model text. The parody is almost certainly a response to the sheer audacity of Euripides’ expectation that an audience would assent to something as fantastic and absurd as Oiax’s message-motif, which was far enough outside of the norm of tragic decorum that it probably could not have been performed (but would have been reported in a speech) in the Euripidean original.

The chief value of the Palamedes parody for the overarching narrative of *Thesmophoriazusae* is dramaturgical, as it provides a transitional link between the two main subplots. The paratragedy features as much (if not more) continuity with the Telephus subplot as with the escape-tragedy scenarios to follow. Like Telephus, Palamedes was a brave, isolated speaker, faced with convincing a hostile audience of an ugly truth. Aristophanes makes Inlaw assume, not the primary heroic role of Palamedes, but the secondary role of Oiax seeking to escape captivity. Since its story consists of two subplots, the speech to a hostile audience (of the disguise and infiltration pattern of *Telephus*) and an escape pattern, *Palamedes* allows for a fluid transition between the two halves of *Thesmophoriazusae*.

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456 Revermann (2006) 139; MacDowell (1995) 267; Austin and Olson (2004) *ad loc*; Sommerstein (1994) n. 776-784 says that Oiax could hardly have been shown throwing oars into the ocean on a tragic stage any more than the Euripidean Telephus could have made a speech standing over a chopping block (as Dicaeopolis does in imitation at *Ach.* 479ff.).

457 The *Thesmophoriazusae*’s version of the messenger’s betrayal of the spy – Cleisthenes’ exposure of Inlaw – has traditionally been grouped with the Telephus parody. However, it could also reflect a detail from the *Palamedes*: the fact that Cleisthenes’ collusion with the women (574ff.) is perceived as a betrayal of his fellow man (Inlaw) may point to Odysseus’ similar betrayal of his fellow Greek (Palamedes) through a messenger in the tragedy.
C. Helen

After his parody of Palamedes fails to gain Euripides’ attention (848), Inlaw realizes that his feminine dress naturally equips him to imitate another Euripidean production, the ‘New (καινὴ) Helen,’ which was produced in the previous year of 412. Its uniquely philosophical focus and provocative revision of one of antiquity’s most well-known myths no doubt made Helen an obvious target for Aristophanic paratragedy. This particular parody gives us the clearest glimpse of Aristophanes’ paratragic technique. Stesichorus’ Palinode (sixth century BCE) is the earliest known account of the variant myth that Helen never went to Troy with Paris, but was actually transported to Egypt by Hera for safe-keeping and replaced by a shade (εἴδωλον) for the duration of the war.458 The Trojan War’s significance in Greek myth and culture and Helen’s crucial role in bringing about that event made the myth of the Palinode one of the most (if not the most) radical examples of mythical revision in early Greek poetry.459 While Stesichorus’ version seems to have been the most famous, it was not necessarily Euripides’ model for Helen, which was almost certainly composed using other versions of the same myth which were subsequently lost. But Euripides adopts two of the most striking details of the Palinode, the concealment of Helen in Egypt and the motif of the εἴδωλον.460 The play’s action takes place in Egypt sometime after the destruction of Troy and the passing of king Proteus, who was Helen’s protection from the lecherous, savage Theoclymenus, Proteus’ tyrannical son. The chance shipwreck of Menelaus on Egypt after his departure from the smoldering Troy, followed by a fortuitous encounter with his long-lost wife and the simultaneous discovery of Hera’s

458 Stesichorus’ poem is mentioned by Plato (Phaedr. 243a-b) and Isocrates (Hel. 64).
459 See Wright (2005) 86-113 and Willi (2008) 111-15 for the relationship between the Palinode and Helen. See also Herodotus’ Histories (2.112-20) for the myth.
scheme, are just a few of the fantastic episodes which made Helen one of the most popular and controversial tragedies of the extant Euripidean corpus.\textsuperscript{461}

Comparison of Thesmophoriazusae’s parody with the Euripidean original reveals a paratragic strategy characterized above all by a compression and excision calculated to undermine the suspense and anticipation painstakingly built by Euripides through chance occurrences and deferred recognitions. Aristophanes’ parody effectively illustrates Old Comedy’s disregard for the dramatic process which is fundamental to the dramaturgical effects of a tragedy like Helen.\textsuperscript{462} The paratragedy (846-919) compresses the motifs, themes, and speech of three distinct scenes from the original into one concentrated stretch of iambic trimeter dialogue – Helen’s opening monologue (1-67), her encounter with the Greek hero Teucros (68-166), and the abortive initial recognition scene between her and Menelaus (528-596).\textsuperscript{463}

The beginning of Aristophanes’ parody is signaled with a Euripidean-style prologue, marked in visual and verbal terms: like Helen, Inlaw covers his head as a suppliant on an altar (Cf. 889-90)\textsuperscript{464} and recites the heroine’s distinctive introductory words (Νείλου μὴν αἰδή καλλιπάραξενι ὄοαι). Gone are the model’s genealogical details of Egypt’s ruling family, which are distinctly Euripidean inventions,\textsuperscript{465} and this allows the parody to proceed immediately to Inlaw’s dramatic identification of himself as Helen (Th. 859-60, 862 = Hel. 16-17, 22).\textsuperscript{466} The jarring incongruity between Inlaw’s words and appearance provokes the abuse of the outraged Critylla, the festival woman now guarding the fugitive Inlaw at this point of the play. By

\textsuperscript{461} Arnott (1990), Allan (2008).
\textsuperscript{462} Silk (2000) 276.
\textsuperscript{463} Arnott (1990) 2, 14. Sommerstein (1994) 212 prints a chart recording which lines Aristophanes has employed where and to what extent they are modified.
\textsuperscript{465} Allan (2008) 145 n. 4 notes as inventions the death of Proteus (4), who in previous accounts was alive at the time of Helen’s eventual departure from Egypt, and the significant roles of Proteus’ two surviving children Theoclymenus and Theonoe (8-13).
\textsuperscript{466} Th. 864-65 = Hel. 52-3, Th. 868 = Hel. 56.
transposing lines from the opening monologue’s description of the heroine’s life (her alleged responsibility for the war, the name of her husband, etc.), the comic mimesis sustains a constant sequence of slapstick humor all the way through the confusion and provocation of the internal audience, which reacts with shock and hostility to Inlaw’s outrageous claims. The escape-tragedy paradigm invites the viewer/reader to understand such female ignorance as symptomatic of comic woman’s otherness and alterity. Innovative Euripidean myth-making is thus made to serve the interests of Aristophanic slapstick.

The primary target of Aristophanes’ parody is a signature dramatic effect of Euripidean tragedy, recognition, of which the Helen featured a rather involved and notorious example. Euripides was fond of both successful recognitions and reunions leading to escape from danger and death as well as failed and deferred ones. Helen skillfully defers reunion between husband and wife in a way that emphatically underscores the play’s thematic tension between appearance (δόκησις) and reality. The scene adapted by the Aristophanic parody is roughly comparable to the first half of episode two in the tragedy (528-760), when Menelaus and Helen finally meet face-to-face and come to terms with their situation before fully recognizing one another and plotting their escape. Upon first sight of the shipwrecked Menelaus, Helen mistakes him for a barbarian and retreats to the sanctuary of the tomb (541ff.). When he approaches, however, she recognizes him as her long-lost husband and reveals the details of the gods’ plot, including the εἴδωλον. At this point, the central obstacle to the couple’s recognition becomes Menelaus’ refusal to believe his own eyes because of the implications of the existence of the εἴδωλον – that the Trojan War was fought for a phantom and therefore meaningless (573). After

467 Allan (2008) 37 lists Aegus, Alope, Electra, IT, Auge, Alcmaeon in Corinth, and Helen as plays with recognitions. See also Bond (1974).
rejecting his wife this first time, the Euripidean Menelaus prepares to depart for the shore when his servant approaches bringing his critical revelation of the εἰδωλόν.

In the comedy, Inlaw’s struggle with Critylla’s ignorance is overcome when ‘Menelaus’ enters (871) to deliver a tragic flourish using the first words of a different Euripidean character, Teucer (τίς τῶν δ’ ἐρωμῶν δωμάτων ἐξει κράτος: Helen 68).\textsuperscript{468} This entrance was no doubt very effective comedy: draped in both seaweed and the characteristic rags (910) of Euripides’ beggar-kings, the extended visibility of ‘Menelaus’ to the audience along entrance A (to and from the seashore) was almost certainly exploited to great comic effect.\textsuperscript{469} The excision of Teucer completely from the scene, however, is central to Aristophanes’ particular strategy of compression and simplification because it dispenses with the tragic model’s attempts to complicate and problematize Helen’s identity.\textsuperscript{470} In the original, Teucer not only gives Helen the key information about the supposed death of Menelaus, the suicide of her family, and her large share of blame for the war, their exchange (68-163) first signals the play’s central preoccupation with appearance and reality when Teucer refuses to believe that the woman before him is the true Helen.\textsuperscript{471} By eliminating the scene which prefigures the approaching struggle for recognition between Helen and Menelaus, the paratragedy is able to proceed directly to a comic-style recognition.\textsuperscript{472}

The second main structural change in the parody of Helen is Aristophanes’ substitution of a blocking-figure, the aggressive and boorish Critylla, for the all-important tritagonist upon

\textsuperscript{468} Rau (1967) 59-60 notes that the lines of the portress addressed to Menelaus at Hel.460 are given to ‘Helen’ at Th. 874; other ‘high style’ features of paratragic diction include ‘ποντίῳ σάλῳ’ (872), ‘σκάφει’ (877), ‘πεπλώκαμεν’ (878), use of the terminal accusative in 877, and a form of question normally found in tragedy ‘...Προτέες εἶδον ἢς’ ἢ ἢκτιτος;’ (881).

\textsuperscript{469} For the use of entrances, see Revermann (2006) 133-9.

\textsuperscript{470} Austin and Olson (2004) n. 855-919.


\textsuperscript{472} Allan (2008) n. 528-96.
whom tragic recognitions are often dependent in Euripides. Helen demonstrates, with dramaturgical precision, how this third actor significantly alters the course of plays through recognition scenes: the tritagonist fills the crucial roles of Menelaus’ servant, who confirms the truth of the εἴδωλον and paves the way for Menelaus’ recognition of Helen, as well as the role of Theonoe, the sympathetic priestess whose support of Helen and Menelaus ultimately enables their escape. It may be Aristophanes’ acknowledgment of the importance of the third actor in the original when he makes Inlaw attempt to identify Critylla as Theonoe (897), despite the latter’s fervent denial of Inlaw’s ludicrous assertions that they are sitting before the streams of the Nile (858), on a tomb (898), in the land of Egypt (879ff), instead of at an altar in the Athenian Thesmophoria. The paratragedy’s substitution of the militant and boorish Critylla for the pious and just Theonoe, particularly distinguished in the Helen for her compassionate regard for the foreign Other, underscores the extremity of the contrast between the two women and the comic otherness of the female worshippers. Where Theonoe has superhuman knowledge of even the hidden workings of Fate (Helen 13-14), Critylla is oblivious of the paratragic performance taking place before her eyes. Aristophanes transfers the agonized wrestling with truth, falsity, and appearance between husband and wife in the tragic original to the combined efforts of ‘Helen’ and ‘Menelaus’ to deceive a suspicious Athenian woman through a flimsy and unconvincing comic ruse.

Other aspects of the comedification of Helen are more subtle than the comic simplification of the delayed recognition scene. The rags of the shipwrecked Menelaus, which obscure his heroic status as part of the tragedy’s play on appearance and reality, are divested of their dramaturgical significance and reduced to damning evidence of Euripides’ prop-fetish. The

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473 Goward (1999) 133.
famous gender reversal of the Euripidean original, whereby Helen assumed the mantle of the enduring, intelligent, and resourceful Euripidean hero and reduced her heroic husband to a feckless, incompetent variation of his traditional persona, is restored by Aristophanes to the more traditional gender dynamic of Old Comedy: ‘Helen’ once again plays the helpless female in complete dependence on her masculine ‘husband,’ who is the one to initiate recognition: ‘What said’st thou, lady? Return my pupils’ gaze!’ (902). The concentrated dochmiacs at the climax of the comic recognition (‘λαβέ με λαβέ με πόσι, περίβαλε δὲ χέρας. φέρε σὲ κύσω. ἄπαγέ μ’ ἄπαγ’ ἄπαγέ με λαβὼν ταχὺ πάνυ’; 913-915) play up Inlaw’s effeminized role and punctuate it with a choice bit of comic obscenity at line 912. Aristophanes thus reduces Helen’s expression of conjugal affection to the crude sexuality which typically defines love in Old Comedy, as it was likely depicted in the ‘comic marriage’ of Cratinus’ Dionysalexandros (Chapter One). Comedy, therefore, replaces the most famous marriage of Greek culture with a paratragic performance imbued with latent homoeroticism, whose coarse sexuality looks forward to much of the same in the approaching Andromeda parody.

D. Andromeda

After the Helen parody is disrupted by the arrival of the prytanis and the Scythian archer (929), Inlaw is bound to ‘the board’ for torture and execution. But his spirits suddenly revive after he catches a glimpse of Euripides disguised as Perseus, which Inlaw takes to be a signal that he must play the corresponding role of the heroine of Andromeda, part of the same tetralogy as

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476 Parker (1997) 428. See Sommerstein (1994), Austin and Olson (2004), ad loc. Obscenity: in place of the Euripidean Helen’s ‘How long you have taken to come to your wife’s arms!’ (‘Ὦ χρόνιος ἔλξων σὺς δάμαςτος ἐς χέρας’: Hel. 567) Inlaw exclaims ‘Ὦ χρόνιος ἔλξων σὺς δάμαςτος ἵπηγάς’ (912; ‘ἵπηγάς’ = ‘cunt’).
Euripides’ (now fragmentary) highly influential play was based on the most widespread version of the dramatic rescue of the princess Andromeda by the Argive hero Perseus. Cassiopeia, wife of king Cepheus of Ethiopia, offended Poseidon by bragging that she (or her daughter, Andromeda) exceeded the Nereids in beauty. When the god sent a flood and a sea monster against Ethiopia as punishment, Cepheus ordered that Andromeda be bound to a rock along the coastline as an offering to appease the beast. The maiden was eventually joined by a chorus of Ethiopian friends before Perseus, fresh from his victory over the gorgon, heard the piteous cries of the chained maiden and was instantly overcome by her stunning beauty. After Andromeda offered herself in exchange for deliverance (Cf. Euripides fr. 129a), Perseus slew the monster and took her for his wife. Although very little of the play can be reconstructed beyond these initial scenes, its second half may have introduced Cepheus and Cassiopeia as opponents of the union (Cf. fr. 141) and dramatized Andromeda’s defiance of them in an extraordinary display of independence (fr. 129a).

One of the few details of the play which is beyond dispute is that Andromeda opened with a spectacular display of over-the-top pathos, which was likely a notable departure from its Sophoclean precursor. Instead of opening with his traditional expository prologue, Euripides revealed a bound, isolated, and helpless Andromeda on the seashore (i.e., facing outward toward the audience) before a cave (represented by the stage building). Awaiting the approach of the

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479 For Sophoclean tragedies featuring both Andromeda and Perseus, see Gibert (2004) 143. Aristophanes was evidently not the first comic poet to recognize the comic potential of the Perseus myth. On Cratinus’ Seriphians and Eupolis’ Marikas, see Bakola (2010) 158-68 and Storey (2003) 205 n. 21, respectively.


482 The cave (represented as a rock) is the most common feature of depictions of Andromeda’s binding and exposure, which were favorite subject in Attic and South Italian vase-painting (Cf. Taplin [2007] 174-85).
monster, the maiden recited an anapestic monody in the highly emotive style of the New Music (ffr. 114-16). Inlaw’s opening anapests in the parody trade on the excessive pathos of this scene, partly by frontloading the most emotive parts of the original song to emphasize Inlaw’s display of Agathonian effeminacy. The anapests, ‘φίλαι παρθένοι, φίλαι’ (1015-55; cf. Euripides fr. 117), are drawn from a later phase of the monody and consist of a sporadic mixture of tragic original and paratragic pastiche, which privilege the pathos of the Euripidean meter. Since Inlaw’s immobility essentially eliminated the physical markers of paratragedy – gesture and movement – the task of conveying the parody fell overwhelmingly to linguistic and paralinguistic cues like pitch and tone (αιαί αιαί ἐ ἔ: 1041). But Inlaw’s monody differs from that of Andromeda, not only because of his gender but also because of his culpability: the youthful innocence of the extremely desirable tragic heroine is contrasted with the guilt of the randy old Inlaw.

In addition to its overblown pathos, Andromeda’s opening scene boasts what is perhaps the most audacious special effect attested in all of Euripidean drama. From offstage, the voice of the nymph ‘Echo’ appears to have added her own senseless repetitions of Andromeda’s lamentations from within the cave. Euripides thus used the disembodied voice of the nymph to enhance the extreme pathos of his opening scene with added loneliness and solitude. That Echo was actually personified in Euripides seems confirmed by Andromeda’s plea for silence in order to complete her lamentations (fr. 118). In Aristophanes’ parody, the personified Echo

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483 Rau (1967) 69 compares the Euripidean Andromeda’s isolation to that of Prometheus in Aeschylus’ P.V.; Webster (1967) 194, Austin and Olson (2004) lxiii. Andromeda’s captive, foreign, female status fits the profile of the maiden or effeminate male usually tasked with delivering the sorts of highly emotional laments, which are not uncommon in later Euripidean tragedy (See Csapo [1999-2000] 425).
485 This is emphasized by frequent breaks in paratragic illusion (Cf. ‘ἄνωικτος ὡς μ’ ἔδησε, τῶν πολυποιώτατον βροτῶν’: 1022-1023) when ‘Andromeda’ loses concentration out of fear for the immediate Scythian threat (1016-1017, 1026-1027) and out of anger at Euripides (1041-1046).
actually appears on-stage as a token display of the Euripidean exhibitionism and novelty which is featured elsewhere in his comedy. The comic appropriation of Echo (probably impersonated by comic Euripides) is enacted in material and modal terms. As with the staging of Oiax’s writing, the Echo parody cleverly evokes its Euripidean model by realizing it in the fullest, most literal way, which tragedy’s stricter sense of decorum forbid it to perform. In contrast to the tragedy’s (almost certain) concealment of all but Echo’s voice, Aristophanes introduces the personified Echo as a character, which is in keeping with Old Comedy’s tendency to represent and embody the abstract and intangible (e.g., Euripides’ Muse, Frogs 1305ff.). As Gibert explains, the comic Echo is a characteristic concretization of a poetic conceit.487

Commonly represented as beautiful in iconography,488 the uglified Echo (Cf. 1073) entered from the central stage door to enjoin (1059) ‘Andromeda’ to perform her monody (Th. 1067-1072 = Andromeda frr. 114-15). The mere fact of Echo’s entrance in place of Perseus would have brilliantly overturned audience expectations formed at 1010.489 The extremely brief span of two lines between Echo’s exit (1096) and the arrival of Perseus (1098) would have permitted the second actor only enough time to make a lightning-swift costume change from Echo to Perseus.490 This may suggest, instead of a complete costume change, that Euripides had simply removed an Echo mask and garment which was donned over his existing costume for the role. It is thus probable that Euripides’ appearance reflected the layered-style of paratragedy preserved in the iconographic evidence of Chapter Two: in this case, the Echo costume would be

489 Hourmouziades ([1965]: 154-5) ingeniously suggested that Euripides/Perseus, after a brief circuit of the stage, appeared as Echo on the roof of the skene. The comic value of this entrance at this juncture of the play would have been immense: visible only to Inlaw (1092) and the audience, Euripides/Perseus could have sprinted back and forth on the theoloeion above the stage while ludicrously repeating the curses of the confused Scythian.
490 Hourmouziades (1965) 154 is skeptical that the Euripides actor could accomplish the complete switch of costume for Echo’s part in the time between her flight (1096) and the reappearance of Euripides two lines later (1098).
worn over the winged boots, *harpe*, and gorgon head (either in hand or peeking out from the *kibisis* [1099-1100]) of the Perseus costume, which would be worn over that of the comic Euripides for a visually satisfying (and sophisticated) conflation of multiple roles and genres (Cf. St. Agata Antigone, Figure 4).  

In Euripides’ *Andromeda*, a vaguely personified Echo repeated the heroine’s piteous cries, which are reenacted in Aristophanes in the words of Inlaw (1073-81/2) and the Scythian (1081/2-1096) by turns. Where the Euripidean Echo inspires *pathos*, however, the Aristophanic Echo causes annoyance and quickly antagonizes the exasperated Inlaw enough that he begins to hurl abuse, which reduces the paratragedy to comic banality (1073ff.). Echo’s tit-for-tat repetition of this abuse shifts the featured dialogue beyond straightforward paratragedy into a different modality, which in certain respects approaches the very specific cultural practice of ‘capping.’ In certain cultures, such aggressive, agonistic exchanges represent a subliterary form of public ritual or entertainment which confers social or political status. Capping also frequently appears in Aristophanic comedy. According to Jon Hesk’s analysis of capping in Aristophanes, these quasi-improvised cultural rituals are characterized by combinations of multiple styles including (among other things) lexical repetition, structural mirroring, and neologism. The verbal confrontations between Paphlagon and Sausage-Seller in *Knights*, Stronger and Weaker Argument in *Clouds*, and Philocleon and various symposium guests in *Wasps* conform to the fundamentals of the capping genre, which is frequently associated with informal contexts like the symposium, the *deipnon*, and the *agora*. *Knights*, whose plot is little more than an extended contest of invective, thematizes capping as a Cleonic perversion of the appropriate mode of

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492 For ‘layered juxtaposition’ in paratragedy, see Revermann (2006)102.
public discourse in Athenian political life. In the Echo scene of *Thesmophoriazusae*, capping serves the defamiliarizing ends of comic appropriation by reinvesting this Euripidean innovation with a different emotional thrust: instead of taking Euripidean pathos to an extreme, Echo’s repetition of abuse from Inlaw and the Scythian promotes the rancor and aggression of a completely inappropriate agonistic context.

A second apparent innovation of *Andromeda* was its positive treatment of love, a groundbreaking development for a tragic genre which typically represented male and female interactions in categorically negative terms, as Chapter Three’s discussion of tragic weddings should have made clear. Almost without exception, tragedy presents eros as a perverse and destructive force.\footnote{John Gibert has cogently argued that *Andromeda*’s positive depiction of love, and the representation of its hero falling into it on-stage, may have signaled a landmark for the tragic genre. Some solid evidence for this positive presentation of love in *Andromeda* is famously preserved in fr. 125, which is Perseus’ own account of his sudden vision of the bound Andromeda, probably at an early point of his ‘romantic recognition.’ In fr. 136 Perseus defines eros as a force strong enough to impel him to risk his life against the monster:} \footnote{Gibert (1999-2000) 83-86 and Gibert (2004) 140; Austin and Olson (2004) lxiii. For tragic marriage specifically, see Seaford (1987); Aristophanes himself confirms the Eros theme of *Andromeda* in *Frogs*, when he has the comic Dionysus locate his own motivations for seeking out the dead Euripides during a reading of the *Andromeda* (52-54), when a certain ‘longing’ (πόθος) for the poet seized his heart. The god’s passion almost certainly recalls Perseus’ passion for Andromeda, which apparently dominated ancient reception on the play.} John Gibert has cogently argued that *Andromeda*’s positive depiction of love, and the representation of its hero falling into it on-stage, may have signaled a landmark for the tragic genre. Some solid evidence for this positive presentation of love in *Andromeda* is famously preserved in fr. 125, which is Perseus’ own account of his sudden vision of the bound Andromeda, probably at an early point of his ‘romantic recognition.’ In fr. 136 Perseus defines eros as a force strong enough to impel him to risk his life against the monster:

\begin{quote}

σοὶ δ’ ὃς ἔκειν τίραννα καῦσιμον ἄριστον ἐρωτικόν
η μὴ δίδασκε τὰ καλὰ φαίνεσθαι καλὰ,
η τοῖς ἐρωτικοῖς εὑρίσκεις συνεκπόνει
μοιχεύσαι μάχους ὕπνον σὺ δημιουργός εἶ.

‘And you, Eros, tyrant of gods and men
either do not teach us to deem fair things as fair,
or work out favorably for lovers
toiling in the toils of which you are creator.’
\end{quote}
If the Eros theme was, in fact, an innovation for the tragic genre, *Andromeda* could be representative of tragedy’s incursion into a different generic sphere and its moral universe. Griffith has suggested that the inclusion of romantic themes – a feature most often association with satyr play – was characteristic of ‘middle-brow’ literature, which stood between the loftiness of tragedy and comedy’s crudeness. If *Andromeda* was perceived as a not so subtle attempt to appropriate the themes and worldview of genres connected to, yet nonetheless beneath the dignity of, tragedy, it might explain Aristophanes’ very particular reaction to the Eros theme in his paratragedy. As the Introduction explained, there is some evidence that comedy sometimes seems to be attempting to establish control over the ‘border zones’ between genres of the late fifth century. In any case, *Thesmophoriazusae*’s parody of the Eros theme marks yet another moment of this study when Old Comedy uses marriage as a topic for intergeneric competition: the comic marriages of *Dionysalexandros* and *Peace* have already been discussed as contexts of Old Comedy’s engagement with its rival genres. As a response to tragedy’s monopoly over the public presentation of marriage, Trygaeus’ union with Harvest presents the fertility and renewal of a positive matrimonial commitment. *Thesmophoriazusae*, on the other hand, reacts to the rare positive image of a fruitful, lawful union of two youths in tragedy with its own perverse comic analogue, a bawdy, shameless ‘homosexual romp’ between two elderly men with no possibility for production of any kind. The noble, edifying love of Euripides’ play is replaced by the crude, carnal sexuality of the comic world. Much like the parody of *Helen*, the success of the Andromeda parody depends on dispensing with the dramaturgical process of the

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model text, which in this instance is the gradual ‘falling into’ love of Perseus and Andromeda. The paratragedy substitutes its own clever yet crude form of comic recognition. After he beholds ‘the girl’ (1105-6), ‘Perseus’ identifies ‘her’ to the Scythian. Because he shares Critylla’s ignorance of tragedy, the barbarian disputes this characterization (perhaps) with some special stage business, according to Gibert: to prove the true gender of ‘Andromeda,’ the Scythian offers ‘Perseus’ a glimpse of ‘her’ phallos (1114) and, ‘...as if struck by a vision of beauty,’ the hero begs to be allowed to touch the ‘girl’ and explains the ‘disease’ of his affliction (1116-18). The raunch of this recognition of ‘Andromeda’ continues. The Scythian interprets the hero’s description of his love as a disease to mean that he requires some kind of sexual relief, which the former offers to the hero by drilling a hole in Inlaw’s plank so that he can be anally raped by ‘Perseus.’ Much like the Helen parody, the tritagonist of the Andromeda parody serves the function of creating a ‘mismatch’ between the crude sexuality of Old Comedy’s world and the tragic narrative which the comic Euripides tries, in vain, to use to resolve his comic dilemma.

Aristophanes’ deflation of Euripides’ lofty tragic ideal of love through the carnal sexuality of the comic context continues in the next exchange (1121-24), when the hero appeals for the right to take the maiden away to a legitimate ‘marriage bed’ (1122). By stripping its narrative development and process in much the same way as in the Helen parody, Aristophanes’ comic abbreviation of Andromeda belittles the innovative staging and intellectual depth which were most distinctive about these so-called ‘escape-tragedies.’

Closure

Once Euripides realizes that paratragic schemes are useless against the barbarian (1130-2), he hatches a final plan for escape. Donning the outfit of a ‘procuress’ he introduces a scantily-clad dancing girl (‘Elaphion’) and an auletes (‘Teredon’) to distract the Scythian with sex while he releases Inlaw. The play ends with the long-awaited escape of Euripides and Inlaw, with some help from the chorus of festival women, who collude with their former enemies: they misdirect the panicked Scythian, who returns from his romp only to find his captive gone. The barbarian spends the final scene charging back and forth across the stage in vexation. While it contains the fundamental generic ingredients of comic closure – the success of the hero and the wrapping up of the story\textsuperscript{500} – the conclusion of Thesmophoriazusae offers curiously mixed signals about the kind of success which has actually been achieved. In the first place, the villain (rather than the hero) is the beneficiary of sexual intercourse. While the comic hero’s triumph is normally defined by sex, as the cases of Dicaeopolis and Trygaeus show, the consummation of intercourse is usually a guaranteed reward to which the hero looks forward rather than something achieved within the temporal frame of the action. Because the Scythian’s sexual gratification results in feelings of enervation and confusion (1210), this motif is implicitly connected with defeat rather than virility.\textsuperscript{501} Comic heroes also typically exit in prolonged scenes of triumph with singing, dancing, and ruminations about the glorious future, while the two heroes of Thesmophoriazusae swiftly escape in fear of the archer’s return (1208-09) without the accompaniment of the chorus.\textsuperscript{502}

The closure of Thesmophoriazusae is a special case among extant comedies insofar as it emphasizes the concluding defeat of the Scythian over the successful escape of the comic heroes.

\textsuperscript{501} Austin and Olson (2004) n. 1210-11 suggest that the Scythian’s enervation was possibly confirmed visually by his limp stage phallos,
\textsuperscript{502} See Revermann (2006) 232-233 who notes that the only parallel of this type of choral departure is Clouds.
Hall explains this outcome with reference to the escape-tragedy template which patterns the play’s events. The barbarian is a comic travesty of the parts played by duped barbarians in the recent Euripidean escape-tragedies, which brings this analysis back to the tragic subplots of Euripides’ comic biography. As previously discussed, these plays feature a cruel, stupid barbarian of a foreign land who is ultimately duped by a superior Greek intellect deploying a particularly Greek invention as a ruse. A concrete fixture of day to day life in Athens, the Scythian policeman was generally considered an inferior inhabitant of the city by the citizen-populace, which would have taken considerable pleasure in seeing his humiliation and defeat. It is with the Scythian in mind, Hall has argued, that Aristophanes conceived his parody of the Echo scene, which was calculated to achieve the maximum humiliation of the foreigner for his barbaric, mispronounced Greek. This Greek would have been ‘mercilessly’ broadcast throughout the theater of Dionysus during the capping scene. Interestingly, although his ignorance of tragedy, savage aggression, lechery, and broken Attic excludes him from the class of free-born Athenian males, it links him to their women. As a last-minute substitution for the defeat of the barbarian villain in escape-tragedy, the embarrassment of the Scythian allows Aristophanes to end his play on a note of proper social cohesion: by shifting the blocking role from the women of Athens to the barbarian whose defeat unifies both genders of the polis and the theater audience, the closure of Thesmophoriazusae can still achieve the complete social cohesion which is most fitting for a comedy.

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504 For a similar Scythian policeman in comic iconography, see the New York goose play of Chapter Two (Figure 10).
Conclusion

Arguably the most developed and self-conscious articulation of the dynamics of performative rivalry in Old Comedy, *Thesmophoriazusae*’s paratragic experiment offers especially rich insights about the state of intergeneric discourse in 411. Scholarship of the last few decades has left little doubt that this play ranks among Greek literature’s most sophisticated intertextual projects for its comprehensive demonstration of Old Comedy’s distinctively parasitic nature: while Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and other fifth-century tragedians had to create their work anew from the raw material of tradition, only Old Comedy composes its material by openly and directly harvesting the products of other poets. Every major aspect of *Thesmophoriazusae*’s cross-generic play advances our knowledge of Aristophanic appropriation beyond the comic agendas of *Dionysalexandros* (c. 431 BCE), *Acharnians* (425 BCE), and *Peace* (421 BCE), the major cross-generic productions before 411. In order to take full stock of *Thesmophoriazusae*’s place within the timeline of poetic rivalry in the latter half of the fifth century, and in the broader scheme of this dissertation, my concluding remarks are organized around what seem to be its three features of greatest significance for Old Comedy’s project of self-definition. The most important (unexplored) innovation of *Thesmophoriazusae*, from a dramaturgical standpoint, is its use of the ‘comic biography’ as the overarching frame of its paratragic subplots and vignettes. The second significant feature is connected to those sub-plots: as part of its parody of Euripidean escape-tragedy, the primary ideological focus of *Thesmophoriazusae* is the concept of comic femininity. To understand the scope and depth of this aspect of the comedy, one might compare *Thesmophoriazusae*’s festival of women to the class dimension of *Peace*’s dung beetle, which Chapter Three showed was limited to the single vignette of the Bellerophon paratragedy. This ideological focus on the feminine is central to
Aristophanes’ comedification of escape-tragedy, whose barbarian world is reconceptualized with respect to its fundamental cultural polarity of the civilized vs. the savage, which Aristophanes recasts along the lines of gender. Finally, it is important to recognize that the micro-level parodies of the escape sub-plot target not the individual plays *per se*, but a common feature of *Palamedes, Helen, and Andromeda* – the novel absurdity. This critical focus upon Euripidean tragedy produces a completely ineffective comic project which revels in the failure, rather than the success, of its comic heroes.

Unlike the theme and motif-based comic appropriation of the *Dionysalexandros*, and the vignette and scene-based appropriations of *Peace, Thesmophoriazusae* completely integrates its paratragic vignettes and their subplots under an overarching poetic frame. Aristophanes’ use of the comic biography as the ordering principle of his paratragic experiment is a landmark in cross-generic technique. Previous appropriations of Euripidean tragedy in *Acharnians* and *Peace* are confined to self-contained episodes deployed for one particular phase of the comic project. As *ad hoc* solutions to the comic dilemma, their tragic models have little significance, beyond that episode, for the struggle and triumph of that particular hero in the larger scheme of the plot. By contrast, each one of *Thesmophoriazusae*’s famous paratragic vignettes is thematically and dramaturgically anchored to a larger paratragic subplot, the infiltration and escape-tragedy patterns, which innovatively comprise the material of comic Euripides’ project. The resulting play offers a direct and uninterrupted multi-leveled engagement with tragedy which transcends the episode-based paratragedy deployed for the narrower, practical purposes of the comic project. Aristophanes has taken a trusted strategy of engagement between rival comic poets, the fictional biography, and directed it outwards against a separate genre, tragedy. This application
of an intrageneric strategy for intergeneric engagement signals an important shift in the attitude of comic poets, who ‘take on’ tragedy in the same way which they do one another.

The dung beetle demonstrated the ideological depth of Aristophanic paratragedy within the context of episodic paratragedy. The ideological thrust of *Thesmophoriazusae*, by contrast, is concentrated in the ritual frame of the play, the Thesmophoria, a comic analogue to the foreign geography of the Other in the Euripidean escape-tragedy. *Thesmophoriazusae* reconceptualizes the alterity of this sub-plot in terms of gender, rather than class. The married Athenian female is the sustained ideological focus of the paratragedy for the duration of *Thesmophoriazusae* and a reflection of Old Comedy’s Athenocentrism: the female Other inhabits the innermost spaces of the polis, rather than the uninhabitable margins; the uncivilized feminine character is defined, above all, by its addiction to drink and sex and, most of all, its ignorance of tragedy, rather than by the aggression, lawlessness, and anti-social tendencies of traditional paradigms of the savage in Greek thought. Inlaw’s attempt to perform this otherness instead of an effective tragic narrative – like a tragicomic hero, for example – results in the complete failure of his comic agency.

Unlike the paratragic vignettes of previous Aristophanic comedies, which provide springboards for the hero’s comic project and enhance his agency, the famous sequence of paratragedy in the second half of *Thesmophoriazusae* aims primarily to ridicule its tragic models. These performances indefinitely defer the success of the heroes and target different manifestations of the same Euripidean tendency, absurd novelty. The ‘message in a bottle’ ploy of *Palamedes*, the painfully delayed recognition between Helen and Menelaus, and the soaring special-effect of *Andromeda*’s Echo scene are variations of the same fundamental Euripidean drive to push the boundaries of late fifth-century genre. The fundamental comic strategy of this
Paratragic sequence appears to be simplification, by means of compression, excision, and displacement. These strategies remove the tragic process which is fundamental to the effect of each Euripidean innovation and thereby strip the particular poetic conceit of its dramaturgical significance. For example, the compression of action, excision of select detail, and overall comedification of motifs in Aristophanes’ parody of Helen swiftly and incisively deflate the skillful dramaturgy, intellectualism, and novel cleverness which distinguished the original. The very recent performance dates of each tragic model would have maximized the percentage of the audience capable of recognizing the comedification of tragic episodes which they had so recently witnessed on stage.\(^{507}\)

Paratragedy in Acharnians and Peace shows comedy converting tragedy into comic success: by emulating tragic heroes, Dicaeopolis and Trygaeus succeed in their comic projects. Thesmophoriazusae, however, shows Old Comedy exploiting tragic failure, not for dramaturgical ends, but purely for the sake of laughter. Euripides floundering in the comic world of Thesmophoriazusae is Old Comedy’s most overt attempt to assert the parity of itself and tragedy: while tragedy falls apart, comedy soars.\(^{508}\) The dramaturgical failure of Euripidean tragedy assures the comic success of Aristophanic comedy and thus perfectly illustrates Old Comedy’s desire to have its cake and eat it too.

Thesmophoriazusae’s sustained paratragic experiment also represents a hitherto unattested dialogue of sorts with the theater-going public. Possibly even like the play which inspired the Choregoi Vase, Aristophanes uses Euripides’ comic biography to step beyond the purely fictional world of the comic frame and into the interstices between the comic world and that of the audience. While tragedy speaks to the public from its detached, self-contained

\(^{507}\) Revermann (2006a) 116.  
\(^{508}\) Bowie (1993) 223.
mythological world, Old Comedy transcends its regular boundaries to perform, modify, and even critique other poetic forms in the gap between its world and that of the audience. *Thesmophoriazusae*’s pronounced critiques of Euripidean tragedy also foreshadow the approaching exegesis of tragedy in *Frogs*, which will be the subject of the fifth and final chapter of this project. Dionysus’ adjudication of the poetry contest in that play, where comedy, and only comedy, has the potential to preserve and spend the political capital inherent in tragic discourse in order to save the polis, is the culmination of comedy’s efforts to achieve tragedy’s literary and institutional prestige.
V. Literary and Ritual Discourse in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes

**Introduction**

No Aristophanic play, with the possible exception of *Clouds*, has attracted more critical commentary in the past fifty years than the *Frogs* of 405 BCE. Frequently hailed as a landmark of ancient literary criticism, this paratragic meditation on the aesthetic and moral value of tragedy draws from an established tradition of the competitive performance of poetry and represents the culmination of Aristophanes’ own career-long, cross-generic project of raising comedy to the heights of its loftier counterpart. While the metapoetic examination of poetry’s true value was hardly unique in fifth-century Old Comedy, \(^{509}\) *Frogs*’ self-conscious exegesis of tragedy distinguished itself as a landmark of ancient literary criticism which anticipates much of the developed theory found in later thinkers such as Plato, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Longinus.\(^ {510}\)

As the opening remarks of the previous chapter made clear, *Frogs*’ elaborate verbal parodies have traditionally been the primary focus of seminal studies on paratragedy in Aristophanic comedy. The fundamental contributions of Peter Rau and Michael Silk have thoroughly scrutinized the elaborate paratragic vignettes of the comic Aeschylus and Euripides and held them up as stylistic models of Aristophanic comedy’s distinctive brand of intertextuality.\(^ {511}\) Dionysus’ Underworld experiences during his quest to resurrect Euripides, and tragedy itself, have long-proved to be fertile ground for ritual-based analyses, beginning with the

Cambridge Ritualists’ attempts to unearth the traditional ritual patterns of Greek drama. More recent studies of ritual in comedy have seized upon Frogs’ katabasis, frequent cross-dressing, and initiate chorus to argue that the play offers a series of discrete mimetic performances of ritual. \(^{513}\) The authentic significance of the play is, according to those readings, the special metapoetic thrust of Dionysus’ personal initiation into the art of tragedy, which his comic project aims to resurrect from the dead. But while such treatments discern ritual patterns or formulas here and there, they largely fail to provide a satisfactory account of Frogs’ primary agenda, the critical evaluation of the traditionally superior genre of tragedy. The original approach of the current chapter lies in its recognition that the ritual elements of Frogs are a function of its cross-generic play and that the Mysteries furnish the vehicle for this final Aristophanic attempt to negotiate Old Comedy’s place in a fifth-century poetic culture dominated by the tragedy of the past.

As so many other studies of Frogs, this chapter focuses primarily on the material of the agon between Aeschylus and Euripides. I examine this cross-generic play not in isolation from, but as a reaction to, the broader literary and ritual macro-texts framing it. It is impossible to articulate Frogs’ significance in Aristophanes’ broader project to define Old Comedy’s place on the fifth-century stage without an understanding of the larger agonistic tradition in which such comic vignettes are embedded. The poetry contest of Aeschylus and Euripides belongs, in the first place, to a tradition of agonistic poetic contests which can be traced back to the famous contest of Homer and Hesiod in the Certamen. Ralph Rosen has shown persuasively how this work of practical reception provides the structural and conceptual template for Aristophanes’

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comic agon: the most recognizable model for a literary contest, the Certamen provides the frame for Aristophanes’ exploration of the ‘badness,’ or failure, of each tragedian’s style. Aristophanes not only exploits that text’s use of ‘moral value’ as a primary criterion in poetic criticism, but also models Dionysus’ seemingly arbitrary final judgment in favor of Aeschylus on the Certamen’s equally unexpected outcome in favor of Hesiod.

The agon’s literary macro-texts are my primary focus because they frame the specific paratragic strategies through which Aristophanes dramatizes the failure of both Aeschylean and Euripidean poetry. Each of these strategies is informed by the unifying principle of ‘reification,’ which I define as the concretization or materialization of the verbal, poetic, or abstract. The most ubiquitous form of comic reification, which introduces the agon, is the characterization of poets by their particular tragic styles, a form of comic logic known as the ‘assimilation principle,’ according to Muecke, or ‘biographico-poetics,’ according to Halliwell.514 The comic personas of the tragedians are ‘hypostasized from their plays in an inversion of the ‘biographical’ critical perspective which takes poems as imprints of the qualities of the authors’ personalities,’ to quote Halliwell.515 A second form of reification is performed in the test of the prologues (1119-1247), when comic Aeschylus dismantles Euripidean artistry with a trivial object, the ‘oil-flask,’ the banal materiality of which is emphasized with each predictable clash of flask and text. Another very common form of reification – encountered already in the iconographic evidence of Chapter Two and in the extant Aristophanic corpus – occurs during the combatants’ comic recitation of each other’s poetry, the personification of an abstract concept. In this case, the personification is the ‘Muse’ of Euripides (1305-7), a notably unique expression of this particular poetic conceit. The final form of reification is perhaps the grandest, the ‘weighing of verses’ in

514 Muecke (1982), Halliwell (Forthcoming) 18-19.
515 Ibid.
the second-to-last round of the *agon* of *Frogs*. As in *Thesmophoriazusae*, the repeated failures of tragedy in the *agon* register as successes for Old Comedy, which holds its traditional superior up to clever and penetrating ridicule.

There is also some evidence that Aristophanes’ contest reacts to a second text, a second poetic contest, in a comic play by a now all too familiar Aristophanic rival. A few decades before *Frogs*, Cratinus had dramatized a similar poetic rivalry between the iambic poet Archilochus and the traditional representatives of the epic genre, Homer and Hesiod. Archilochus’ eventual defeat of Homer and Hesiod in *Archilochoi* (435-22 BCE) apparently celebrated iambic poetry, the poetic form which inspired Cratinus’ own brand of comedy, at the expense of an epic whose cultural prestige was diminished in the face of the more socially and politically useful iambos. Like *Frogs*, Cratinus’ play – which almost certainly influenced Aristophanes’ *agon* – represents an early attempt to articulate Old Comedy’s cultural and political significance against the dominant poetic genres of the period. Dionysus’ choice of martial Aeschylean tragedy over the socially oriented Euripides can be seen as a reaction to the earlier thrust and outcome of the contest of *Archilochoi*, which celebrated the socially oriented iambic poetry of Archilochus at the expense of what was then the culturally dominant poetry of epic. I argue that *Frogs’* defeat of the practical, democratic Euripides in the *agon* inverts the direction of the poetic contest of its Cratinean predecessor in order to accommodate the current state of tragedy and the Athenian polis, which once again required the martial virtues of epic poetry, now represented by Aeschylus.

The second half of the chapter maintains the focus on generic interaction, but from the perspective of a prominent, non-literary discourse of Athens, the Mysteries of Eleusis. This ritual subtext, symbolized by the initiate chorus, frames the comic appropriation of tragedy in the
agon, not only to raise the stylistic register and tone of the contest, but also to act as the means for Aristophanic comedy’s political and cultural self-definition during its critical exegesis. Eleusis is a particularly appropriate choice for such a vehicle for a number of reasons, which include its special status among Athenian cults, its connection to Dionysus, the god of the dramatic festivals, and the legend which claimed that Aeschylus himself belonged to the deme of Eleusis. But the Mysteries’ deeper institutional qualities, because they are emblematic of the public persona of Old Comedy itself, are what truly make them ideal for the cross-generic agenda of Frogs: the Mysteries were highly performative, simultaneously democratic yet elite and prestigious, and, most importantly, redeeming and transformative. First, the initiation process of the Mysteries was distinctively performative, even for a religious cult. Not only did the candidates for initiation observe ‘ritual dramas’ which are now largely obscure to us, they themselves were observed by other initiates at a higher level of membership. Although extremely accessible, panhellenic Eleusis was associated with a certain prestige, which could be purposely (and conveniently) misconstrued as elitism by an opportunistic comic genre: while initiation was open to almost anyone, it demanded individual commitment, was highly secretive, and claimed to reward its adherents with exclusive knowledge. The most famous aspect of the cult, however, was its central promise of a blessed afterlife for its members. Through the initiate chorus’ participation in Frogs’ critical examination of tragedy, Aristophanes presents comedy as an analogue to the cult by evoking each institutional facet of the Mysteries and articulating its value as an essential Athenian institution. Just as the Mysteries promises the renewal of the individual, so does comedy renew tragedy and the polis itself.

I. Failure in Frogs
Before leaping into the first half’s analysis of the macro-texts of *Frogs*, it is important to acknowledge two early programmatic moments of failure which introduce this crucial theme as fundamental to the comic *agon*, in the same way it has proved crucial to all cross-generic play of this study. Like *Peace, Frogs* also begins with a journey by the comic hero, with the important difference that Dionysus’ journey down to the Underworld encounters a few early setbacks, while Trygaeus’ upward course was an unmitigated success. As in *Dionysalexandros* (Chapter One), Dionysus experiences multiple failures at several stages of *Frogs*. Despite this, the hero nonetheless advances the plot all to the way to his own successful resolution of the poetic dispute and renewal of tragedy and Athens. Dionysus’ first instance of failure, at the house of his brother Heracles, is particularly significant because it is, as discussed in Chapter Two, one of only two examples of extant Aristophanic comedy preserved in a scene-specific South Italian vase-painting (Figure 3). The ‘Berlin Heracles’ depicts Dionysus at the moment he knocks at the door of his brother, Heracles, to learn the best way to get to, and through, Hades. The ubiquity of door-knocking scenes in Old Comedy would seem to make them ideal moments for programmatic content, which this opening scene of *Frogs* would seem to present.  

Despite his best effort, Dionysus’ attempt to appropriate his brother’s heroism by assuming his heroic markers – lion-skin, club, bow – comically fails. The unsuccessful impersonation of Heracles in appearance (42ff.) and behavior (108-15), as illustrated on the ‘Berlin Heracles,’ performs the Dionysus ‘out of his element’ motif already discussed in Chapter One’s examination of the *Dionysalexandros*.

The rowing scene (180ff.), Dionysus’ crossing of Styx and his competition with the frog chorus, is the most blatant (and famous) example of comic failure in the first half of *Frogs*. A

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scholiast’s remark at *Peace* 348 alleges that Aristophanes borrowed the motif of Dionysus’ struggle with the oars from Eupolis’ lost *Taxiarchoi*, which depicted the same physically challenged Dionysus learning to row.⁵¹⁷ Significant fragmentary evidence for *Taxiarchoi* (c. 415 BCE)⁵¹⁸ supports the scholiast’s comment. Eupolis’ play apparently featured Dionysus seeking out the great Athenian general Phormion in order to be taught ‘the rules of generals and wars’ (*οἱ τῶν στρατηγῶν καὶ πολέμων νόμοι*). *Taxiarchoi*, in other words, featured a military version of the same Dionysus ‘out of his element’ plot,⁵¹⁹ of which *Frogs* furnishes the best surviving example. As in *Frogs*, *Taxiarchoi*’s Dionysus was a buffoonish, effeminate coward forced to undertake a role for which he was physically and mentally unsuited.

The musical accompaniment to Dionysus’ rowing provided by the frog chorus no doubt underscored the ineptness of the hero’s efforts. While their deceased status (215-17) makes them highly appropriate to a *katabasis*, their association (by Charon) to an *auletēs* guiding the strokes of rowers on a trireme links Dionysus’ current quest to find Euripides to the contemporary naval campaign to save Athens. The references to Arginusae (33, 191, 693-9) framing this scene practically invite the audience to experience Dionysus’ task within the exceptional historical context of this event and its political repercussions.⁵²⁰ While the music of the *aulos* ideally facilitated the collective efforts of Athenian rowers on board ship – not to mention being a key component of the spectacle of the dramatic festivals – the amphibian song of the chorus

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⁵¹⁸ Storey (2003) 246-8; Dionysus’ response to Heracles’ unusual and abrupt question as to his brother’s recent whereabouts when appearing at this door early in the play (*Frogs* 48) may represent a further allusion to *Taxiarchoi*. Dover (*ad loc.*) explains, ‘...we might have expected, “Where are you going, dressed like that?”’, but Heracles asks, “Where were you?”’, as if he had missed his brother’s presence in Godstown for some time...’ Dionysus’ description of his recent service on a trireme captained by Cleisthenes possibly alludes to the god’s exploits in Eupolis’ earlier play, an especially likely possibility if the latter was performed as recently as 415.
⁵²⁰ In 406, the shorthanded Athenians were forced to enlist slaves as rowers, promising them freedom, before a pivotal sea battle against the Spartans at Arginousae. Despite a resounding Athenian victory, the *demos* tried and executed the commanding generals for their perceived failure to rescue shipwrecked Athenians (See Xen., *HG* 1.6.24-35).
ultimately obstructs Dionysus’ passage. This has fueled speculation about the true identity of the frog chorus, and whether it might stand in for one or more unnamed competitors of Aristophanes, possibly even an opponent in the very same festival of the current comic performance. While their identity remains uncertain, the frogs’ heavily iambic and trochaic song parodies the conventions of the hymn and juxtaposes elements both high and low in keeping with the tendencies of Aristophanic parody. While Dionysus eventually manages to reach the other side of Styx and the palace of Hades, his struggles at the oar, as well as his ridiculous Heraclean costume, prefigure the failure which will eventually come to define the approaching poetic contest between Aeschylus and Euripides.

II. Macrotext: The Certamen Tradition

Now that these two opening comic scenes have introduced the theme of failure, the central discussion of the broader intertextual nexus can go forward. The disappearance of the vast majority of the Greek tragic and comic corpus and the scarcity of truly helpful hints in the manuscript tradition make it impossible to perceive and confirm every intertextual moment in the work of a poet as literate and self-conscious as Aristophanes. Within these limits, one can cautiously assert that the bulk of intertextual activity in Frogs is concentrated in the poetry contest between the tragedians. Like so many Aristophanic comedies, Frogs climaxes with a

521 For the poets of the New Music as targets, see Defradas (1969). It just so happened that the comic poet Phrynichus performed a play entitled Musae at the same Lenaea of 405. His comedy featured a very similar poetic contest between Sophocles and Euripides (see Demand [1970] 84-5 and Harvey [2000]). Demand saw Aristophanes’ chorus as a thinly-disguised reference to Phrynichus (whose name derives from φρυνικός [‘toadlike’]) and its defeat in the shouting match as a metatheatrical prefiguration of the inevitable victory of Frogs over Musae in the current festival.

522 Campbell (1984) 164-5 offers a concise, detailed analysis of the stylistic features of the song. The hymn combines Dorisms (βοάν, ἐμὰν ἀοιδάν: 212-14), elevated diction (λαῖος: 219; καλαμόφθογγα: 230; φορμίκτας: 231; εὔλυροι: 229; πολυκολύμβοις: 245), and elevated periphrasis (λιμναῖα κρην῵ν τέκνα: 211) with comic vocabulary (κραιπαλόκωμος: 218), compounds (σναργυρωταφλάσματι: 249), and the absurd refrain of the croaking (βρεκεκεκέξ κοάξ κοάξ).
verbal contest between two characters which in style and structure resembles a forensic dispute in an Athenian courtroom.\footnote{Dover (1972) 66-8; for a systematic treatment of the shared elements of comedy and oratory see Dover (1974) 23-33. Henderson (1996) 273 even goes so far as to identify the comic poets themselves, via the words of their choruses, with the leading speakers of their day, as passionate partisans in the most crucial and divisive issues facing the polis: both groups use the same arguments, hurl the same abuse, and largely play by the same rules.} But the \textit{agon} of \textit{Frogs} is not simply a generic element of the comic plot: it is an elaborate, intertextual reformulation of a particular traditional text which was widely known in the fifth century. Ralph Rosen has persuasively argued that the contest of \textit{Frogs} owes both its shape and its distinctively literary concerns to an identifiable, but now obscure, literary model, the \textit{Certamen} or \textit{Contest of Homer and Hesiod}.\footnote{Rosen (2003).} This self-contained story within the Homeric biographical tradition recounts a (fictional) legendary poetry contest between Homer and Hesiod at the funeral games for Amphidamas, king of Chalcis. This tradition can ultimately be traced to a remark in the Hesiod corpus (\textit{Works and Days} 650-9), in which the poet described his triumph in a poetry contest at Chalcis at the funeral games for Amphidamas, king of Euboea. At least one ancient source, a variant in a ‘wild’ papyrus fragment, asserts that this opponent in the contest was none other than Homer himself.\footnote{See Σ\textsuperscript{vet} (ancient scholiast) on \textit{Works and Days} 657.} Although not the first to suggest such a link between \textit{Frogs} and the \textit{Certamen}, Rosen is the first to flesh-out persuasively the key structural and thematic correspondences between the pervasive tradition of the \textit{Certamen} and the dispute of Aristophanes’ play.

The primary overlapping motifs of the two texts are the competitive recitation of poetry, the identification of aesthetic value with socially and politically useful moral content, and the motif of the sudden, unexpected choice of the contest winner. The \textit{Certamen} tradition, Rosen maintains, informs Aristophanes’ conception of the \textit{Frogs}’ contest and can even illuminate some of the opaque aspects of the comic narrative. While the conclusion of Aristophanes’ \textit{agon}
clearly adopts the *Certamen*'s motif of the unexpected declaration of the winner, Dionysus’ choice of the warlike Aeschylus over the democratizing, domestically minded Euripides reverses the *Certamen* tradition’s earlier preference for the peaceful poetry of Hesiod over the martial poetry of Homer. Such a departure, Rosen argues, represents Aristophanes’ implicit acknowledgement of the difficulties of using ‘moral benefit’ as a criterion for evaluating poetry and the complexity of attempting to define, in practical terms, its precise didactic value to an audience.\(^526\)

The surviving version of the *Certamen* dates from the second century AD and is preserved in a sole manuscript from the fourteenth century (Laurentianus 56.1). However, it seems likely that the outline of the story belonged to a tradition of even greater antiquity, as was shown by the early publications of Friedrich Nietzsche. He first argued that our version of the *Certamen* derives from the lost work of the fourth-century sophist Alcidamas entitled the *Mouseion*.\(^527\) One hundred years later, Richardson persuasively argued for a pre-Alcidamantine tradition of the *Contest* to which Aristophanes would have most certainly had access. His argument has been generally accepted.\(^528\) This dating shrinks the chronological gap between the fourth-century tradition of the *Certamen* and the *Frogs* of 405.\(^529\)

The *Certamen* is preserved within a larger biographical narrative of the two poets, where it records Hesiod’s repeated testing of Homer’s skills of poetic improvisation and recitation in three main phases. In the first stage, Homer is asked to name the best thing for men, which he answers by describing a feast from his *Odyssey* (7). The second section (8-10) relates Homer’s

\(^{527}\) West (2003) 298; see Rosen (2003) 297-302 for the complete background of the dating and authorship of the *Certamen*.  
\(^{528}\) See O’Sullivan (1992) 63-6, 79-105 and Bakola (2010) 67 n. 163, for example.  
\(^{529}\) Richardson (1981).
skillful answers to logical conundrums set by Hesiod. In the final section (11), Hesiod asks Homer a series of questions concerning political expediency, morality, religion, and human happiness. While Homer’s excellent performance wins the approval of the audience, who declare him most worthy of the victory, the crowning of the victor is briefly deferred when the brother of the dead Amphidamas, king Panedes, steps forward and commands both poets to recite their best examples of verse in one final round (12). Hesiod recites verses on farming from his *Works and Days* (383-92), Homer leaves the audience awestruck with a battle scene from his *Iliad* (13.126-33 + 339-44). Against the wishes of the crowd, however, Panedes ultimately names Hesiod the victor on the grounds that poetry ought to encourage the virtues of peacetime, whose activities must always be preferred to the violent poetics of heroic epic. Unexpected and arbitrary, Panedes’ decision at the critical point of the story has baffled students of the text ever since.

Rosen argues that the *Certamen* accounts for Dionysus’ seemingly arbitrary crowning of Aeschylus for the martial benefits of his work and explains the obvious problems which ensue in *Frogs* when ‘moral benefit’ is the primary criterion for the aesthetic judgment of tragedy. Literary criticism aside, the *Certamen* narrative affords *Frogs* a recognizable literary frame, a macro-text, within which it can stage its verbal and situational paratragedy. Aristophanes retains the *Certamen*’s emphasis on poetic improvisation and the necessary moral value of poetry, but recasts its shape in key respects to suit his comic agenda. The most basic alterations are in format and tone: the question-and-answer arrangement, with Hesiod performing the latter role and Homer the former, is replaced with a duel in which both contestants play questioner and respondent. The rancorous tone of Aristophanes’ contest departs from the restrained and professional attitudes of the poets in the *Certamen*, although the character of Hesiod occasionally
shows signs of frustration and annoyance (8, 11). It is chiefly through its aggressive, confrontational tone that the *agon* conveys the poetic and moral shortcomings of Aeschylus and Euripides, their poetic failures. While Homer and Hesiod recite only their own work, the combatants of *Frogs* quote, criticize, and parody the poetry of one another. The overwhelmingly positive, eulogistic tone of the poetry contest in the *Certamen* is thus recast into an aggressive, abusive confrontation, which ultimately aims to expose the poetic shortcomings of the combatants – a fundamental strategy of the Aristophanic *agon* – instead of celebrating their virtues. Rosen has written that *Frogs* offers a glaring exposure of the ‘badness’ of Aeschylus and Euripides, their various failures as artists, rather than a positive celebration of their poetic achievement. Failure and its relationship to success, as the previous chapters of the dissertation have shown, are key principles of comic appropriation not just in *Frogs*, but also in all forms of intergeneric competition in which Old Comedy engages in the late fifth century. What makes failure in *Frogs* distinctive, at least in the *agon*, is the particular comic strategy which ensures it: reification. The precise concept of physicality or concretization in each example of reification uniquely disrupts the tragic text under consideration in different ways. Individual variants of this principle have appeared in the previous evidence of this dissertation, but no single text deploys a sequence of so many diverse manifestations of it as the paratragic sequences of *Peace* and *Thesmophoriazusae* show.

**A. The Assimilation Principle**

The much-anticipated contest of *Frogs* does not actually begin with proper poetic trials, but with a protracted, largely unstructured series of abusive exchanges to introduce the poets.

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This preliminary stage establishes (or rehashes, in the case of Euripides) the comic profiles of the combatants and their various shortcomings in order to set the tone of poetic failure which dominates these scenes of reification. Aristophanic comedy consistently depicts tragic poets according to a certain logic which conflates the individual and that which is (perceived to be) the style and content of his work. As I mentioned in my introduction, this concept is termed by Muecke the ‘assimilation principle’ and Halliwell the ‘biographico-poetic.’ Since poet and poetry are interchangeable in comedy’s world, Aeschylus thus possesses the authority, traditional morality, and martial spirit of his dramas, while Euripides is characterized by the sophism, moral ambiguity, and democratic (or demagogic) pretentions of his tragedy. One might think of such comic profiles as examples of what Silk deems ‘deconstructive’ paratragedy, a form which distorts by exaggeration in order to capture what the parodic target is rather than what it actually does, the latter being the function of strictly imitative parody. Deconstructive parody, in other words, makes a particularly emphatic point about the artist’s manner by an extreme and exaggerated distortion which the artist would ‘never have entertained.’ Much like the comic biography of *Thesmophoriazusae*, the embodied poetics of these caricatured tragedians collide with their comic surroundings at the linguistic, visual, and performative levels, with the key difference that ‘Aeschylus’ and ‘Euripides’ play out, not a particular tragic subplot, but a broad, literary-cultural narrative.

The persona of the comic Euripides and his unparalleled comic stage history was extensively discussed in Chapter Four. The portrait in *Frogs* represents the zenith of Euripides’ development as a character of Old Comedy and Aristophanes’ mastery of the

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533 On the dynamics of comic publicity, see Henderson (1990) and Halliwell (1993).
assimilation principle. Euripides’ notorious pomposity, sophism, and immorality are reinforced everywhere, perhaps most memorably in his use of the diet metaphor to describe his refinement of tragedy (939ff.), his quibbling over Aeschylean prologues (1119-74), and the chorus’ summary judgment of his failure as an outcome of his Socratic associations (1491-99). His immorality is confirmed by, among other things, the atheism of his opening prayer to his own special gods (892-4) and Aeschylus’ criticism of his ‘Phaedras and Stheneboeas’ (1043) and ‘unholy marriages’ (850), which have allegedly driven women to their deaths. The scurrilous claim that Euripides’ mother was a ‘vegetable-seller’ exploits Athenian class prejudices against the lower orders in order to satirize the poet as a demagogue, since comic discourse popularly attributed similar class backgrounds to the new speakers of Aristophanes’ generation. By identifying him with popular demagogues, Aristophanes denigrates Euripides’ mass appeal as a product of the favoritism of the capricious Athenian populace.

A corollary of Euripides’ claim to democratize tragedy (952) is the excessive theatricality of his persona and lifestyle, which epitomizes the Aristophanic joke that Euripidean drama was crassly dependent on props, special effects, and other innovative stage properties which were either sparingly used or openly discouraged by the standards of dramatic convention. Acharnians’ memorable identification of Euripides with the suffering, pathetic beggar-kings which stock his plays also makes reference to this ostentatious materiality. His movements on the ekkuklema, his ragged clothing, his possession of props, his affected manner of speaking (409, 419), and his relatively poor physical condition make him a living parody of his art. The

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535 Dover (1993) ad loc., explains that this accusation seems to suggest that Athenian wives, emboldened by Euripidean heroines’ adultery, attempted their own adulterous advances and committed suicide after being spurned or detected; cf. Sommerstein (1996) ad loc., who sees here a reference to a recent, well-known suicide of an upper-class wife.
toiletry scene and elaborate parodies of the *Thesmophoriazusae* involve an array of props and schemes (*mechane*) which speak to this Euripidean love for the accoutrements of spectacle. A noteworthy example of this passion for materiality will actually appear very shortly (*Frogs* 1305), when Aeschylus mocks the Euripidean *Hypsipyle*, whose eponymous heroine allegedly sang and played castanets (*κρόταλα*) on-stage. Euripides’ obsession with innovation also extended to the musical realm and he is often partly credited with the increasing popularity of the New Music at the Festivals of Athens.

In contrast to comic Euripides, the Aristophanic Aeschylus does not appear in an extant comedy before *Frogs*. A perfect foil for the style of the demagogic Euripides, comic Aeschylus is associated with the very beginnings of tragedy (and poetry in general), when it had more in common with the style and content of epic. Aeschylean tragedy and Aeschylus himself – according to the assimilation principle – are frequently described in distinctly epic terms. His use of big, sometimes incomprehensible words earns him Euripides’ scorn as an ‘uncontrolled, unruly...a big bombastolocutor’ (ἀχάλινον, ἀχρατές...κομποφακελοφήμονα)\(^{537}\) who distracts his audiences with bluster (961-2) about Scamanders, moats, and bronze-bossed shields with griffin-eagles (928-9). Frequently described with imagery drawn from simile,\(^{538}\) Aeschylus is likened to an animal from epic, perhaps a boar, whose fearful wrath (*χάλος*) fills his heart, whose eyes whirl in his head, and whose neck bristles stand up straight (*φρίξας...λασιάχενα χαίταν*);\(^{539}\) his roar is likened to a gale (*φύσημα*) ripping away (*ἀποσπάω*) the timbers off a ship (824-5), a hurricane (*τυφώς*) about to strike (848), or even a roaring oak tree on fire (859). In contrast to the honed and polished statements of Euripides, Aeschylus’ tragedy unleashes the raw power of nature,

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\(^{537}\) *Frogs* 838-9.


\(^{539}\) *Frogs* 814-823.
scattering arguments torn up by the roots (ἀνασπῶντ᾽ αὐτοπήμνοις), and dust clouds of words (902-4); his approaching speech is likened to the opening of floodgates (1005) and his inner turmoil at the prospect of facing his rival is identified with a ship in full sail being driven off track by the winds (999-1000). The figure of Aeschylus is identified by both himself, Euripides, and the chorus with the martial heroes of his plays, as when the chorus solicits from him a response to Euripides’ accusations with a line from his lost Myrmidons (fr. 131): ‘Behold all this, glorious Achilles!’ Aeschylean audiences, the man himself answers, became noble and brave, with ‘seven-ply oxhide hearts’ (1017), and a lust for battle after seeing Seven Against Thebes (1021-2); Euripidean tragedy has now reduced them to the vulgar mob. At best, the Aristophanic Aeschylus embodies a past golden age of poetry whose raw power was thought to derive from an origin loftier than the human.540 This is why he places his art within the didactic tradition of Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod, and Homer, all of whom communicated knowledge of fundamental social and civic institutions (1021-22).

Despite the slightly favorable treatment it affords Aeschylus, the contest has the undeniable effect of casting even him and his work as loud, uncontrolled, and incomprehensible to audiences. Yet Aristophanes looks even less favorably on Euripides and his style, with its premium on τέχνη and artisanship at the expense of truth and morality. Its domestic content and distinctly political cast could not be more different from the grand Aeschylean persona and style and its noticeable divorce from everyday human life. The full significance of this distinction, as the basis of Frogs’ intertextual response to the analogous contest of Cratinus’ Archilochoi, will be explored shortly.

B. Test of Prologues

The *ad hominem* attacks which open the confrontation of the *agon* eventually lead to situational vignettes whose comic effect is dependent upon the conception of tragic poetry in uniquely objectified terms. The first real trial of poetic talent in *Frogs* is the test of the prologues (1119-1247), in which Aeschylus and Euripides scrutinize and deconstruct the beginnings of each other’s productions. Aeschylus claims that a simple oil flask can dismantle the edifice of the Euripidean prologue, and each time Euripides is on the verge of completing one of his grand tragic introductions, Aeschylus interjects a special phrase, ‘ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν’ (‘he lost his oil-flask’), at the very same place in the line. These repeated interruptions reduce Euripidean openings to absurdity in order to show their artificial, formulaic character. To Euripides’ opening recitation, for example,

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\text{Αἴγυπτος, ὦς ὁ πλεῖστος ἔσπαρται λόγος,}
\text{ἐὼν παισὶ πεντάχορνα ναυτίλων πλάτη}
\text{Ἀργὸς κατασχῶ...}^{541}
\]

‘Aegyptus, as the story is most widely told, by sailor’s oar with his fifty sons making for Argos...’ (1206-08)

Aeschylus robotically appends ‘ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν.’ Seven Euripidean productions are thus successfully ‘capped’ by this same phrase which in all likelihood had obscene connotations on multiple levels.\(^{542}\) A minor controversy has erupted over the exact meaning of ‘lost his oil flask’ in this context and several possible interpretations have emerged. It seems that the joke plays on some obscene sexual pun, albeit one which no single piece of scholarship has been able to define adequately. ‘ληκύθιον’ or ‘λῆκυθος,’ as Dover points out, suggest ‘ληκάν,’ a slang verb for...

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\(^{541}\) This quotation is attributed to Euripides’ lost *Archelaus* by the scholia, but ancient scholars were unable to locate the lines in their version of the play.

\(^{542}\) Sommerstein (1996) *ad loc.* provides the best outline of the main theories.
Another possibility is suggested by the shape of the flask, since one especially common type of oil flask resembled a penis. One ingenious reading of the ‘phallic interpretation’ sees the flask as a metaphor for the poetic impotence of Euripides, who has ‘lost’ his ‘oil flask’ (tragedy). A particularly attractive aspect of Sider’s theory is its performative component: Euripides’ recitation and Aeschylus’ ‘capping’ could have been accompanied by a simple gesture – finger raised in the air while Euripides speaks, then drooped. Added emphasis along such lines could have been accomplished paralinguistically if one is prepared to imagine Aeschylus effeminately pitching his voice in contrast to the deeper tragic tones of Euripides’ recitation. The ‘phallic interpretation’ admirably allows room for a corresponding visual dimension which must have been central to many comparable scenes of Old Comedy, however difficult to prove their existence may be.

At the most basic level, the humor of the ‘capping’ of the prologues works by the insertion of the low, trivial, and even obscene into the lofty and the tragic. After the initial disruption, repetition takes over and carries the joke to absurdity. The insertion of something as banal as an oil flask into a tragic context corroborates to an extreme, absurd degree one of Euripidean tragedy’s core claims: the unvarnished dramatic reproduction of everyday life in all of its quotidian detail (959). At the same time, this comic reduction of all prologues to the same low template simultaneously undercuts an altogether separate claim of Euripidean style, that is to reproduce reality in all of its variety. Here Aristophanes may be consciously inverting the ‘conundrums’ challenge found in the Certamen (8). That segment tested the ability of the participant to find a phrase to complete logically an illogical first statement by appealing to shared cultural beliefs. Aristophanes inverts this practice so that an intelligible beginning phrase

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543 Dover (1993) ad loc.
is derailed by an absurd complement, which is in this case represented by an object. The oil flask becomes logical, but in a perverse way, as the predictable ending of all Euripidean prologues. In a Bergsonian sense, this joke exposes a systematic Euripidean automatism and uninspired repetitiveness whose ignorance of its own nature is the definition of the truly comic.\footnote{Bergson (1911) 87.} One might even describe the materiality of the flask as a form of ‘re-mediation,’ a mode of adaptation which is described by Linda Hutcheon and discussed in the Introduction.\footnote{Hutcheon (2006) 16.} This refers to the translation of material from one sign system (words) to another (acts/images). The repeated disruption of Euripidean text by the banal oil flask, possibly reinforced by the physical performance of Aeschylus, constitutes movement in the direction of materiality.

C. Muse of Euripides

Perhaps the most clear-cut example of material reification appears just one hundred lines after the contest of the prologues. As Aeschylus rears up to parody Euripidean lyric, he calls for the ‘Muse of Euripides,’ the ‘female percussionist who plays potsherds’ (1305-7), to come out and assist his recitation. There is broad agreement that at this point in the play a silent actor in a female mask entered clicking pairs of potsherds and dancing.\footnote{Dover (1993) \textit{ad loc.}; Hall (2006) 173.} This is almost certainly a reference to the recent Euripidean production, \textit{Hypsipyle}, performed sometime between 412-407.\footnote{Kannicht (2004) 736-97.} Aeschylus here reminds the audience of the unconventional musical performance which gained the play some notoriety: at some point in its events, the heroine Hysipyle had entertained the baby Opheltes by singing and clacking castanets (κρόταλα). The Muse, who perhaps remained onstage for Aeschylus’ recitation and danced continuously, is an interesting exception.
to the general avoidance of physical personifications of literary concepts in extant Aristophanic comedy.\textsuperscript{549} Even more interesting, as Hall points out, is that the Muse is not so much an objective personification of Euripidean drama as a highly subjective focalization of it on the part of the comic Aeschylus – the Muse is a ‘qualitative aesthetic evaluation’.\textsuperscript{550} Aeschylus’ description of her underscores class in a way which recalls the social connotations of two prominent personifications already featured in previous chapters, ‘Tragoidos’ from the New York Goose Play (Chapter Two) and the dung beetle of Peace (Chapter Three). Dover conjectures that ‘castanets, let alone potsherds and shells’ were perhaps a form of low-class music linked to the marketplace.\textsuperscript{551} Such associations are consistent with the social terms in which the Aristophanic Euripides is conceived, as Roselli has convincingly shown,\textsuperscript{552} and has led most recent treatments of the scene to suspect that the Muse was visually unattractive.\textsuperscript{553} If Dionysus’ remark at 1308 is sarcastic – ‘This Muse never played a Lesbian tune, oh no!’ (\textit{αὐτη ποδ’ ἡ Μοῦσ’ ὄν ἔλεσθιαζεν, ὦ}) – it likely implies that Euripides’ repulsive Muse is skilled at fellatio, a specialty of prostitutes, in addition to being promiscuous in both behavior and musical style. Like her counterpart ‘Echo’ in Thesmophoriazusae (1059ff.), the Muse of Euripides is a concretization of one facet of the Euripidean poetic mode. While Echo personified Euripides’ tendency to over-the-top special effects, the promiscuity of his Muse reflects the indiscriminate combination of high and low poetry which defines his lyric, according to Aeschylus:

\begin{quote}
...οὔτος δ’ ἀπὸ πάντων μὲν φέβει, πορνομίδων,
sκολίων Μελήτου, Καρικῶν αὐλημάτων,
Σφήνων, χορειῶν... \\
‘...whereas this one takes material from everywhere:
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{549} Hall (2006) 173.  
\textsuperscript{550} Hall (2006) 174.  
\textsuperscript{551} Dover (1993) \textit{ad loc.}  
\textsuperscript{552} Roselli (2006).  
Whore songs, drinking songs by Meletus, Carian pipe
tunes, dirges, and dances.” (1301-1303)

As a comic representation of an aesthetic judgment on Euripidean poetry, the Muse of Euripides is thus a token comic personification which is characterized by some of comedy’s favorite class and gender prejudices.

D. Weighing of Verses

The final scene of reification is also the most spectacular, the famous weighing of verses (1364-1412). This scene has had something of a mixed reception among critics, many of whom consider it too frivolous for comment, Sommerstein being the significant exception. The earliest appearance of the ‘weighing’ motif and the scales, the centerpiece of this scene, is in epic, in the duel of Achilles and Hector, the climax of the Iliad (22.208-13): as Zeus raises his scales, which are weighed by the fates of the two warriors, the heavier ‘fate’ (κηρ) of Hector settles to the earth towards Hades and determines his death.554 Homeric scholia reveal that this scene was the inspiration of Aeschylus’ play entitled Weighing of Souls (Ψυχοστάσια), which has unfortunately been lost.555 Homer’s story, it seems, was inspired by an older episode in the cycle tradition which eventually formed part of the Aithiopis, which narrated a similar duel between Achilles and Memnon. This is the specific subject of Aeschylus’ lost play. The duel of the Aithiopis with its scales was a popular subject in sixth-century vase-painting, which occasionally depicted each warrior’s divine mother pleading with Zeus for her son’s life.556

There are no surviving fragments of Aeschylus’ Ἀγωστασία. Everything that is known about the play is preserved in the comments of Plutarch (Moralia 17a), of scholia to the Iliad (8.70 and 22.210), and of Pollux (4.130). Its title indicates that the plot revolved around the weighing of the souls of two heroes, Achilles and Memnon, to determine the outcome of their duel in the Aethiopis. Whether this was actually performed onstage has been the subject of some debate. West’s detailed reconstruction of the play locates the actual weighing, the psychostasia, in the opening prologue before the pivotal duel, which could not have been performed onstage. According to Pollux, Zeus, in his only known appearance on the tragic stage, weighed from a position on the θειολογεῖον. The two other characters who were apparently present during this scene were Eos and Thetis, the mothers of Memnon and Achilles respectively, and each implored the king of the gods on behalf of her son. Citing the evidence of the Homeric scholia, West argues that Aeschylus conceived of Homer’s δύο κῆρες (two fates) as souls of the warriors and represented them with children. After stepping into his scalepan, the heavier soul of the tragic Memnon sunk downwards to determine his death in the fight. Sommerstein explains that ‘heavy’ in its epic/tragic context translates into ‘grievous or sorrowful or bound downwards towards Hades.’ The only other detail known with any degree of certainty is the conveyence of Memnon’s body offstage up to Olympus by Eos in what West suspects was a visually stunning sequence of closure.

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557 About nine vase-paintings depicting the weighing of Achilles and Memnon’s fates as narrated in the Aithiopis survive which date from before Aeschylus down to about 450 BCE.
559 Taplin (1977) 433, citing Pollux’s unreliability, is again skeptical of this information, as well as his remark that the mechane was used in the play’s final scene to remove the body of the Memnon (cf. n. 54 below).
561 Sommerstein (1996) 280 n. 1365.
562 West (2000) 345 and Sommerstein (1996a) 23 believe the crane was used for the ascension of the body, pace Taplin (1977) 432.
Doubts about the onstage performance of the weighing and the presence of Zeus are entirely reasonable, since the weighing would represent considerable departures from the accepted understanding of Aeschylean stagecraft. In this event, the Aristophanic weighing would be yet another example of its generic impulse to stress the superiority of Old Comedy through its capacity to perform what tragedy cannot. Previous examples of this, one might recall, included Bellerophon’s flight to Olympus in *Peace*, and the messages of Oiax and entrance of the embodied Echo in *Thesmophoriazusae*. If the weighing was performed onstage, under the control of Zeus, it would have been a rare and noteworthy attempt to quantify what was vague, undefinable, and terrifying about Fate and death in Greek thought.

Aristophanes displaces the weighing from its position at the beginning of the tragic model, where it is a catalyst for the tragic course of events, to one of the final, climactic moments of his comic episode. The effect of the realignment of this popular epic motif in the sequence of events might be likened to that of Trygaeus’ deus-like ascension of the heavens in the opening scene of *Peace*. It goes without saying that Aristophanes would have exploited the physical and conceptual properties of the scales for maximum comic effect. One can be fairly certain that they were comically aggrandized, perhaps even to the extent that the actors themselves could have stood in the scalepans. The actual size, however, need only be sufficient for the audience to see the results of each poet’s verse coming in contact with them, however this was accomplished. Did the actors place their hands on each side and recite their poetry? Might they have used their phalloi as weights on the scale while reciting verses? This would have made incredibly effective visual comedy. Instead of determining the fates of the warriors in battle and consigning their souls to Hades, the scale itself is situated in Hades and determines who among the dead is allowed to leave death in resurrection. The experience of the loser in the
epic and tragic weighing, the sinking of the pan, becomes the sign of the victor in the comic adaptation.

The nature of the reification in this scene is noteworthy: poetic works are conflated with fate. Aristophanes replaces children, the symbol of the warriors’ fates, with intangible poetry. In the tragedy, the scales represent an attempt to come to grips with one of the most pressing, deep-seated mortal concerns of the genre – death – by viewing it concretely. Aeschylus’ play seems to have attempted to express the mysterious process of Fate through some quasi-logical performance of its workings. The Aristophanic adaptation attempts the same for the most pressing issue of its genre, that is, the true value of tragic poetry. The focal point of the act of weighing has been displaced from the valuation of the individual fate to the valuation of the symbol of that fate in the comic world of the play, tragedy. Although the tragic outputs of the comic Aeschylus and Euripides are still equated with fate in the comic world, they possess more than a symbolic status and have real value in their own right. Important to bear in mind, however, is that the epic and tragic weighing scenes with Achilles – whether in Homer, the Aithiopis, or Aeschylus – ultimately foreshadow that hero’s approaching death with each triumph over another. On the scales of the epic and tragic worlds, in other words, all contestants are ultimately losers in life, no matter who emerges as the winner in the immediate weighing. Although Aristophanes’ test must have a clear loser, in recognition of comedy’s love of zero-sum competition, it also declares a winner who will be (and ultimately is) rewarded with a new life, with resurrection from the dead. Aeschylus’ weighty verse and its resurrection bespeaks a certain timelessness and immortality which persists despite the physical death of its creator.

Fun and amusing as they are, each of these vignettes of poetic concretization expresses the failure or ‘badness’ of both Aeschylus and Euripides through reification which is
fundamental to the competitive stance assumed by Old Comedy in *Frogs*. The logical corollary of this exposure of the respective faults of Aeschylean and Euripidean tragedy is a corresponding elevation in the status of Old Comedy, which can mock and criticize its loftier rival with impunity. The significance of Aristophanes’ preferred strategy of repeated derision over celebration becomes clearer when his *agon* is contrasted with the poetic contest of one of his chief rivals, Cratinus. The final section of this first half of Chapter Five now turns to Cratinus’ *Archilochoi*, which also featured a poetic contest, in order to flesh out the singularity of *Frogs’* strategy of competitive engagement with tragedy.

III. The *Agon* in Old Comedy

A. The Poetic Contest in Old Comedy

As a function of literary criticism, the poetic contest was practiced in Greek culture long before the sophisticated debates of the Hellenistic schools. The selection and judgment process entailed by the recitation of epic in the archaic period bestowed canonical status on poetic works. Even then, the poetry contest served its programmatic purpose of scrutinizing and evaluating poetry, as it does in *Frogs*. Out of this early tradition of the poetic contest arose the tradition of the *Certamen*, which ultimately inspired the fifth-century *agon* of *Frogs*. However, it is unlikely that the *Certamen* was the sole model for the contest of Aeschylus and Euripides, since a similar poetic contest was actually a trope of earlier comedy. Chapter Four’s analysis of *Thesmophoriazusae* demonstrated the tendency of comic poets to recycle and redeploy one another’s conceits within the sphere of their genre. Just as that Aristophanic production’s cross-generic play almost certainly adopted an earlier comic strategy of Cratinus, the comic biography,

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just so does *Frogs* appear to appropriate different elements from a different Cratinean play for its poetic contest. The few surviving fragments and ancient comments about Cratinus’ *Archilochoi* (435-22 BCE) indicate that this comedy also staged a poetic contest, similar to that of *Frogs*, at the center of its action. Like *Frogs, Archilochoi* assumed a hierarchy of fifth-century genres, a social and political function of poetry, and a specific relationship of Old Comedy to other poetic forms. Yet the ways in which the contest of Aristophanes departs from that of his predecessor offer an intriguing intrageneric perspective on the *Frogs’* project of 405.

**B. Archilochoi**

Although admittedly few facts are known about Cratinus’ *Archilochoi*, those which are known are highly relevant to the *agon* of *Frogs*. Dated to roughly 435-22 BCE, the play presented a chorus of Archilochus and his friends, who were probably identified as other poets.564 The hero, presumably Archilochus himself, participated in a literary *agon* in defense of his style of iambic poetry against Homer (Cf. fr. 2). Fr. 6 appears to preserve a moment from this *agon*:

εἴδες τὴν Θασίαν ἄλμην, οἴ' ἄττα βαῦζει;  
ὡς εὖ καὶ παχέως ἀπετείσατο καὶ παραχρῆμα.  
οὐ μέντοι παρὰ κωφὸν ὁ τυφλὸς ἐνελήσαι.

‘Have you seen what things the brine of Thasos is braying?  
How well and swift and sudden is his payback.  
No sir, the blind one does not seem to have spoken to a deaf person.’

If the ‘brine of Thasos’ and ‘the blind one’ refer to Archilochus and Homer, respectively, as practically every scholar assumes, fr. 6 confirms both Homer’s role in the contest and

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564 For the dating of the play, see Luppe (1973); for good assessments of the plot based on the evidence, see Whittaker (1935) 185-6, Rosen (1988) 42-8, and Bakola (2010) 65-80.
Archilochus’ eventual victory, since the second speaker in an *agon* typically triumphs according to comic convention.⁵⁶⁵ The additional information supplied by Diogenes Laertius, that Hesiod appeared as a supporter of Homer,⁵⁶⁶ leaves little room for doubt that the contest pitted the poetic forms of iambos, represented by Archilochus, against epic, as represented by Homer and Hesiod.

Because of Archilochean poetry’s particular significance for Cratinean comedy – Cratinus’ style of invective comedy emulated iambic poets – scholars agree that Archilochus’ victory in the contest of *Archilochoi* likely vindicated or celebrated Cratinus’ distinctive approach to the comic form.⁵⁶⁷ Bakola’s attractive conjecture that the victory of Archilochus was likely predicated upon the practical importance of iambos’ blame poetry, which proved to be of greater value to the polis than the praise poetry of epic, is thematically consistent with the *Certamen*’s reason for extolling Hesiodic poetry over Homeric. The two contests share this feature of the affirmation of the practical benefits of poetry despite the fact that *Archilochoi* concluded that Homeric and Hesiodic epic were too detached and removed from the daily concerns of the polis to be of any concrete value to Athens, while the *agon* of *Frogs* affirms Aeschylean poetry precisely for the martial benefits of its epic style. By assuming its traditional posture as protector of the community, Archilochean iambos (and, by extension, Old Comedy) identified its primary generic concern as the specific social and political issues of contemporary life in the polis.⁵⁶⁸ Final judgment, therefore, probably favored Archilochus and his poetic form over the more traditional genre of epic. Bakola suspects that Cratinus’ play sought to extol indirectly the virtues of Old Comedy, which has no perceivable role in the contest or its outcome,

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⁵⁶⁵ See Whittaker (1935) 185 for bibliography of the early scholarship on fr. 6.
⁵⁶⁶ A valuable hint in Diogenes Laertius (1.12) confirms that Hesiod was also involved in the contest, as a supporter of Homer.
by associating Cratinean comedy with the style, content, and everyday concerns of Archilochean
iambos.  By comparing Bakola’s (admittedly conjectural) conclusions about the concerns and
outcome of Cratinus’ contest with those of Aristophanes’ analogous agon, it is possible to
understand better the distinctive thrust of the latter – the specific stakes of the contest and
underlying reasoning of its final judgment – as a contribution to Old Comedy’s self-definition
and intergeneric discourse in the fifth century.

C. From Archilochoi to Frogs

Bakola’s modest interpretation of the available evidence for Archilochoi potentially
illuminates three interesting peculiarities of Aristophanes’ later contest. On the surface of things,
the apparent similarities between the poetic contests of Archilochoi and Frogs are too striking to
dismiss, especially in light of comic poets’ tendency to borrow within the genre, and to engage
and recycle each other’s tropes and themes in the competitive marketplace of comic business.
These parallels better underscore the Aristophanic departures from Cratinus’ model of the
contest.

The first two differences, the contrasting hierarchies of genre and the justification for the
declaration of the winner, can be taken together. Both plays present Old Comedy in similar
ways, as something of a ‘dark horse’ in the poetic contest: because it is not directly involved in
the poetic rivalry in question, comedy must somehow assert its own significance indirectly. In
the Athens of Archilochoi, the primary poetic rivalry seems to have been between iambos and
epic, if Cratinus’ contest reflects the current state of intergeneric competition in Athens. The
poetic rivalry of Frogs, by contrast, is intrageneric, between contrasting styles of tragedy, the

570 Ruffell (2002).
Aeschylean and the Euripidean. The second important difference between the Cratinean and Aristophanic contests concerns the deciding factor in the judgment for one poet over the other. If Bakola is correct, Archilochi celebrated iambos as the preferred genre of the polis because of its topicality and overriding concern with the here-and-now, i.e., its practical value to the polis, as against epic and its detached, removed world of universals and mythological aristocrats. If the terms of Cratinus’ judgment are thus understood, his play chose blame poetry’s concern with particular individuals and daily life over epic in the same way that Hesiodic poetry was preferred for extolling the benefits of the world at peace, as opposed to the martial virtues of heroic epic, in the Certamen.

In terms of generic hierarchy, Archilochi’s intergeneric rivalry between iambos and epic indirectly underscores the cultural dominance of tragedy assumed by Frogs by the end of the fifth century, at least in the mind of Aristophanes. Archilochi’s choice of iambos for its practicality, however, has much more significant implications for our understanding of Dionysus’ ultimate decision in favor of Aeschylus. The evidence for the comic contest of Archilochi encourages one to understand the victory of Aeschylus over the favorite Euripides in Frogs as more than a choice of civically beneficial martial epic over the didacticism of Euripidean tragedy, or even an admission of the absurdity of using moral benefit as a criterion in the evaluation of poetry, as Rosen argues.\(^571\) When compared with the details of Archilochi, Dionysus’ choice of Aeschylus’ traditional, epic-style tragedy seems like a deliberate reversal of Cratinus’ earlier preference for a socially and politically oriented poetry – the iambos of Archilochus – over martial epic’s detached, aristocratic, and impractical content. Frogs certainly presents Aeschylus as the late fifth-century analogue to the detached, mythological, and martial

epic poetry which was rejected in favor of the more practical, civically oriented poetic alternatives in *Archilochoi* and the *Certamen* before it. Aristophanes’ apparent departure from these existing traditions in his final judgment illuminates more than the logic of Dionysus’ choice, it invites us to see the influence of these previous contests in Aristophanes’ characterizations of Aeschylus and Euripides. One can surmise that the figure and poetry of Aeschylus was probably comparable to the profile of (at least) Cratinus’ Homer, while the ostentatiously realistic Euripidean tragedy was informed by the similarly practical, polis-oriented style and concerns of iambic poetry which won the day in *Archilochoi*. The probability of these associations increases when one considers the extent to which the practical, ‘democratic’ dimension of Euripidean drama is especially developed and underscored throughout *Frogs*. While much of Aristophanes’ contest rehashes aspects of the Euripidean persona from earlier Aristophanic comedies, Euripides’ claim to have made tragedy something democratic – ὅτι αὐτ’ ἔδρων (952) – seems to break new ground.

εἶπεν τὸν τουσκάλα λαλεῖν ἔδίδαξα... (954)

λεπτῶν τε καὶ καλῶν εἰσδολὰς ἐπὶ τὴ γνωσιασμοὺς

νοεῖν, ἄραν, ξυνείναι, στρεφεῖν ἔδραν, τεχνάζειν,

κάχ ὑποτείνοιται, περινοεῖν ἀπαντα... (956-8)

οἰκεία πράγματ’ εἰσάγων, οἷς χρῶμες, οἷς

ξύνεσμεν... (959)

‘Then I taught these people how to talk...

...and how to apply subtle rules and square off their words, to think, to see, to understand, to be quick on their feet, to scheme, to see the bad in others, to think of all aspects of everything...

...by staging everyday scenes, things we’re used to, things we live with...’
Euripides goes on to explain that among the practical, didactic aims of his poetry is the development of the audience’s critical faculties for everyday matters and the cultivation of their reasoning skills (971-9). This represents something of a shift in the profile of the Aristophanic Euripides, from the brainy, bookish, and reclusive intellectual in *Acharnians* to the demagogic, larger-than-life polis celebrity whose ‘dialogic’ tragedy directly engaged the audience. In *Frogs*, Euripides’ style even resembles that of the outspoken, iambographer whose poetry is directly concerned with the polis and its citizens. One might here think of the slave’s account of Euripides’ arrival in Hades and his ensuing public recitations, which whipped the Underworld *demos* into a frenzy (771-78). But Aristophanes’ overriding point may be that while Euripides’ poetry strikes a discursive pose which resembles iambos, its outcomes cannot claim the positive effects which must have been credited to Archilochean poetry in the final judgment of *Archilochoi*. *Frogs* makes clear that Euripidean tragedy’s ambiguous treatment of moral issues allowed audiences to draw ‘bad’ conclusions on their own and then impute such badness to the author himself. Far from helping the polis, the public advocacy of Euripidean poetry has harmful social and political effects: among other consequences, his scandalous heroines lead to adultery (1043) and his beggar-kings encourage wealthy citizens to claim bankruptcy in order to shirk civic liturgies (1065-6).

There is enough evidence, therefore, to suggest that Aristophanes’ *agon* reacts to more than just an established literary tradition of poetic contests. His choice of Aeschylus and repudiation of Euripides may constitute an original response to a comic rival’s poetry contest, and not just a reaction to the conventional preference for practical, topical poetry over the martial and aristocratic emphases of canonical epic and Aeschylean tragedy. The democratic aspects of

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the character of Euripides, the loser of the contest, seem to sharpen *Frogs’* contrast with *Archilochoi*’s previous preference for polis-oriented poetry over epic-style poetry. Part of the novelty and innovation of Aristophanes’ contest was thus probably found in its departures from the comic, as well as the serious, contest traditions.

**IV. Ritual Discourse: The Eleusinian Mysteries**

My discussion has thus far focused primarily on *Frogs’* most prominent literary subtexts, the tradition of the *Certamen*, the contest of *Archilochoi*, Old Comedy, and tragedy. A final, non-literary discourse, which is represented by *Frogs’* chorus, is critical to affirming Aristophanes’ contest as the culminating, triumphant expression of Old Comedy’s late fifth-century intergeneric project: the Eleusinian Mysteries. The ritual modality of the initiate chorus, of course, elevates the climactic *agon* in an almost paratragic fashion. It is not difficult to imagine why the cult of Eleusis, in particular, was the chosen frame for *Frogs’* climactic scenes: Dionysus’ traditional connection to the cult allowed a seamless overlapping of his identities as both god of dramatic poetry and Iacchus, associate of Demeter.\(^{574}\) However, the Mysteries are not a target of intergeneric engagement, but the vehicle which facilitates its perfection in the contest of *Frogs*. At least part of the purpose of the ritual framing of the *agon* by the chorus is the presentation of Aristophanic comedy as an institutional analogue to the cult of the Mysteries. The second half of this chapter identifies those dimensions of the Eleusinian cult which seem to be exploited in Aristophanes’ closing definition of Old Comedy against other poetic forms. One of several secret cults accessible only through a special, individual initiation, the Eleusinian Mysteries are the most famous exemplar of a special class of religious institutions in the Greek

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world. Aristophanes, however, was probably focused on the deeper, institutional qualities of the Eleusinian cult when he envisioned his initiate chorus. He exploits three specific aspects of Eleusis – its performative mode, combination of accessibility and prestige, and soteriological function – to affect the structure and tone of the poetry contest in a way that stresses the literary and ideological affinities between the cult and Old Comedy.

Like all ritual, the Mysteries were highly performative at every stage of the festival of the Greater Mysteries, but especially during its climax, the initiation of the mystai at the sanctuary of Eleusis. Role-playing and spectacle were ubiquitous in the ‘ritual drama’ of initiation, which was witnessed by both those undergoing initiation as well as those previously initiated. The Eleusinian cult was also unusual for being at the same time inclusive and accessible to the vast majority of the Greek world as well as a mark of prestige for those who could claim affiliation.\(^{575}\) Initiation was open to all – citizen or slave, man or woman, Greek or foreigner – who could pay the necessary fees and invest time to the extensive ritual process: there were multiple stages of ritual and initiation to undergo before the central rites of full membership were achieved. From this experience, the initiate allegedly gained privileged insight, not just into the cult, but also into nature itself. The special status enjoyed by initiates because of this knowledge is analogous to the status which Aristophanic comedy frequently bestows on sympathetic audiences who recognize its poetic achievement. Religious and aesthetic insight are fused in the function of the chorus, the internal audience of the agon which enjoys a privileged knowledge of nature as well as poetry.

Finally, the closing scene of Frogs exploits what was the most famous benefit of Eleusis, its promise of radically improved conditions in the afterlife, a new life after death, for the

\(^{575}\) Sourvinou-Inwood (1997) 144.
initiate. The literal resurrection of the dead Aeschylus, who will in turn breathe new life into the only art form capable of resurrecting the city, performatively enacts the Mysteries’ figurative promise of rebirth in death. As the agent of resurrection, Dionysus – representative of comedy – enacts comedy’s power of renewal in literary and cultural terms. Frogs thus presents Aristophanic comedy and the Eleusinian cult as analogous democratic institutions working toward the same goal, the salvation of the polis. As was previously mentioned, the Mysteries enjoyed a special status among the cults of the polis, and many Athenians viewed its creation and evolution as a development parallel to Athens’ foundation and ascension to power in the Greek world.\textsuperscript{576} Aristophanic comedy likewise presents itself as an institution whose continued existence was fundamental to the health of the Athenian democracy. Each institution belonged to the cult of a central civic deity and enjoyed its distinctive sphere of influence: as part of the cult of Demeter, the Mysteries provided guidance in the spiritual world, while Old Comedy belonged to the cult of Dionysus and shepherded Athenians in the world of the living.

The significance of the ritual modality of Frogs becomes most apparent when considering the centrality of ritual in the cross-generic programs of Peace (Chapter Three) and Thesmophoriazusae (Chapter Four) and their distinctive ritual contexts. Trygaeus’ proper performance of the public rituals of sacrifice and marriage certifies the success of his intertextual comic project and extends its reach into the cultural domain: comedy rejuvenates acts of public ritual which have fallen into perversion under the stewardship of tragedy by restoring their potential to promote civic and panhellenic cohesion. The quasi-utopian female world of the Thesmophoria, by contrast, is a ritualized frame for the comic project of Thesmophoriazusae: as the antithesis of the comic Athens, the women’s urban festival represents a (literary) comic

\textsuperscript{576} Sourvinou-Inwood (1997).
analogue to the barbarian locale of Euripidean escape-tragedy. In *Frogs*, the cult of the Mysteries is the primary means by which Old Comedy represents its own potential to effect poetic and political change in Athens.

### A. Ritual as Performance

The ‘text’ of the Eleusinian Mysteries cannot be called literary in the same way that tragedy, comedy, or satyr play can, despite the cult’s association with a special body of literature, best represented by the extant *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.\(^{577}\) The rituals of the cult were nonetheless of a formulaic, performative type which are comparable to the stage genres of the fifth century. According to Catherine Bell, drama qualifies as a ‘ritual-like’ activity because it communicates on multiple sensory levels, deliberately frames itself, and creates a complete, condensed world.\(^{578}\) While performance and spectacle belong to all public ritual by virtue of its aim and function, the Eleusinian Mysteries were especially known for the protracted dramatic character of its festival, especially its central initiation rite. The Mysteries, and comparable ancient mystery cults, stand at an extreme when it comes to performance in religious cult, since their setting, organization, and rituals were especially tailored to performance and spectacle. *Frogs’* initiate chorus, the focal point of the comedy’s ritual subtext, stresses performance as a common bond between Old Comedy and ritual throughout the *agon*. It accomplishes this in everything from its repetition of the term for ‘rites’ (τέλη), which means ‘performance,’\(^{579}\) to its parody of key cult features like the *prorrhesis*, the initiate procession along the Sacred Way, its

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\(^{578}\) Bell (1997) 160ff.  
role – in mimicry of the observance of Eleusis’ central initiation rite – as internal audience of the poetic contest, and the glorious closing procession of the Greater Mysteries.

This performative side of the Eleusinian cult is broadly attested in archaeological, epigraphic, iconographic, and literary evidence. The Mysteries were the most prominent festival of the agrarian cult of Demeter and Persephone and performed secret rites in the month of Boedromion in the sanctuary at Eleusis, located over thirty kilometers west of Athens.\textsuperscript{580} Its primary initiation ceremony was preceded by a series of preliminary activities including purifications, ritual baths in the sea, minor sacrifices, and the ‘Procession of Iacchus’ from Athens to Eleusis along the Sacred Way.\textsuperscript{581} Before the procession, on the first day of the festival proper (Boedromion 15), the hierophant began the ceremonies with a prorhesis, or ritual call for the exclusion of all uninitiated, in the Athenian agora. After arriving at the precinct at Eleusis, the participants began the initiation rites by filing into a dark temple, the telesterion, a square, rectangular windowless building.\textsuperscript{582} There were two distinct groups of participants: the mystai – those to be initiated – and the epoptai, the mystai of the previous year who were required to observe the initiation of new members as part of the final stage of full membership in the cult.

Many of the core details of the highly secretive initiation rite in the Greater Mysteries remain either unknown or obscure, and much of what we do know is speculative and preserved in the testimonies of later writers such as Plutarch, Clement of Alexandria, and an unknown Gnostic.\textsuperscript{583} Their accounts of the diverse activities which went on inside the telesterion are anything but uniform, but collectively they indicate that the performances fell into three rough

\textsuperscript{580} Clinton (1992) 8; Parker (2005) 328-34 gives a good overview of the multiple Eleusinian festivals of the Attica.
\textsuperscript{581} Burkert (1985) 276, 285.
\textsuperscript{582} Burkert (1985) 287 explains that this structure was unique because it was clearly conceived with spectacle in mind and held several thousand people. Most Greek temples, he explains, appealed to the observer through their exterior since the interior was normally home to the cult image. See also Parker (2005) 346, 351 and Clinton (1992) 126-8.
\textsuperscript{583} Burkert (1985) 285-6.
categories (not without some partial overlap between them): the ‘showing’ or revelation of basic things or objects, terrifying apparitions, and a ‘sacred drama’ of some kind. It seems clear that initiates were led inside the structure by a guide and shown things at various moments in the ceremony. The hierophant drew out from a *kiste* a number of unknown objects – torches, mortar and pestle, ears of corn – to be displayed to the confused *mystai*, who were also given barley drafts (*kukeon*) to drink. The initiates also saw or heard terrifying things, whose exact nature remains unclear, in the darkened space of the *telesterion*. These crucial stages in the initiation apparently aimed to arouse intense terror and fear, in imitation of the experience of death, which at some point would give way to joy and elation. Such emotional extremes apparently symbolized the actual conquering of death and the experience of the light and bliss of a promised, happy afterlife. A famous fragment of Plutarch gives some glimpse of the experience.\(^585\)

When most think of spectacle and performance in the Mysteries, they think of the ‘ritual drama’ (*ἱερὸς λόγος*), a performance of ritually significant vignettes from the myth of Demeter and Persephone. ‘Performance’ is the correct term to use, since the earliest accounts of the ‘drama’ consistently feature expressions of ‘showing’ and ‘doing,’ and also describe gestures and dances. In this regard, it is helpful to consider the scandal which erupted in Athens in 415 BCE, after it was alleged that the Mysteries were parodied in the house of Alcibiades.\(^586\) This

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\(^{584}\) Burkert (1985) 286.

\(^{585}\) Πλάναι τά παράτα καὶ περιήθομαι κατώτερης καὶ διὰ σιωπὸς τινὸς ὑποπεποίηκεν | πορεῖ καὶ ἀτέλεστοι, εἶτα πρὸ τοῦ τέλους αὐτοῦ πάντα γῆν. Ὁφυγε | καὶ τρόμος καὶ ἱδρώς καὶ ἱάμβος· ἐκ δὲ τοῦτον φως τὸ διαμάχασιν ἀπώφησεν | καὶ τότε καθαρὸς καὶ λαμμὸν ἐδέξατο, φωνής καὶ χορείας καὶ σεμνότητας | ἁκουσμάτων ἱδρῶν καὶ φασμάτων ἁγίων ἔχοντες...

‘First of all there are wanderings and wearisome rushings about and certain journeys fearful and unending through the darkness, and then before the very end all the terrors – fright and trembling and sweating and amazement. But then one encounters an extraordinary light, and pure regions and meadows offer welcome, with voices and dances and majesties of sacred sounds and holy sights...’ [On the Soul, fr. 178 (Sandbach)]

\(^{586}\) Parker (2005) 353.
report at least illustrates that the Mysteries were performable in some way. One such performance was evidently a ‘search for kore,’ which had the blindfolded initiates awkwardly seek after some clue for the missing Persephone after her abduction by Hades.\textsuperscript{587} A so-called ‘Sacred Marriage,’ presumably referring to the union of Hades and his reluctant bride, may have been acted out by the hierophant of the cult and the priestess of Demeter.\textsuperscript{588} Archeological evidence from the sanctuary at Samothrace, a mystery cult known to have borrowed from the Eleusinian cult, attests to the performance of a θρόνωσις as a preliminary purification ritual in that cult: participants circled a seated initiate in a wild, ecstatic dance to the sound of music. Clinton reports that a circular area, nine meters in diameter and similar to an orchestra, was completely surrounded by five rows of seated spectators.\textsuperscript{589} At the high point of the Eleusinian initiation, both mystai and epoptai witnessed the emergence of the goddess from the Underworld, which was somehow performed inside the telesterion. One last detail of the initiation is crucial to understanding the performative status of the Mysteries and worth underscoring, although mentioned previously: the entire initiation of the mystai was observed by an internal audience, of epoptai, who were the mystai of the previous year and obliged to participate continually in the cult through observance of the annual rites.

The initiate chorus is the focal point of the Eleusinian subtext in the Underworld, as perceived by Dionysus and Xanthias.\textsuperscript{590} Xanthias’ detection of roasting pork (337-8) references the sacrificial animal required of each mystes in the preliminary rites; the ragged clothing of the chorus’ costume (405-6) reflects the Athenian practice of donning older garments for the actual

\textsuperscript{588} Burkert (1985) 288.
\textsuperscript{589} Clinton (2003) 65.
\textsuperscript{590} Further Eleusinian elements are catalogued by Bowie (1993) 228-30.
initiation process;\textsuperscript{591} the dancing of the \textit{parodos} reflects the eternal reenactment of the Eleusinian rites promised to the initiates in the form of the ecstatic procession (‘\textit{Iackch’ o Iackche’}) along the Sacred Way to the precinct at Eleusis.\textsuperscript{592} The meadows mentioned by the chorus are a standard feature of the geography of the afterlife described by mystery cults, most notably on the gold leaves from Thurii. The personal and political invective which litters the remarks of the chorus could reflect the ritual practice of \textit{gephurismoi} (‘abuse from the bridge’), where masked figures allegedly mocked the procession of \textit{mystai} as they crossed the river Cephisus on the boundary of Athens and Eleusis on their way to the sanctuary.\textsuperscript{593}

The initiate chorus’ almost imperceptible straddling of the worlds of theater and theatrical fiction – as both Dionysian and Demetrian chorus – facilitates the smooth, almost seamless, integration of the ritual subtext into the fabric of the \textit{agon}:\textsuperscript{594} the chorus simultaneously plays (\textit{παιζει}) as a typical comic chorus and plays as a group of initiates in the Underworld. This duality collapses two distinct choral functions normally kept apart in a comic chorus – Dionysiac chorus competing in the Great Dionysia and fictional identity of the stage – through an enlarged view of Dionysus as cult divinity.\textsuperscript{595} The literary subtext of the \textit{agon} is thus framed by a ritual one thanks to the special function of the initiates as both blessed worshippers of the cult and elite, internal audience of comedy. The chorus’ ritual function is comprised of a few distinct actions – procession, \textit{prorrhesis}, spectatorship, closing commentary (\textit{makarismos}) and final procession of the victor – which will be treated in the following two sections. The entry (323ff.)

\textsuperscript{591} Dover (1993) 180-1.
\textsuperscript{592} Dover (1993) 176-77.
\textsuperscript{593} Burkert (1985) 287.
\textsuperscript{594} Dover (1993) 60; see Revermann (2008) 9.
\textsuperscript{595} Dionysus’ close association with the Mysteries through the figure of Iacchus enables the initiate chorus to be devotees of two distinct cults and their divinities. Both initiation cults were based on personal choice, featured an encounter with the divinity, involved a procession along the Sacred Way, and promised a blessed afterlife in which the mysteries would be repeated eternally.
of the chorus of Eleusinian initiates with dancing (326, 335) shaking heads, crowns of myrtle, and stamping of feet (330-1) – all markers of the ecstatic worship of mystery cults – marks the beginning of the ritual frame for the approaching contest. This ritual modality elevates the register of the comic exegesis of tragedy in the *agon* and sustains it through the ritual exit of the chorus.

**B. Inclusion and Exclusion**

Despite its Attic location, Eleusis was the most panhellenic cult of the Greek world. Initiation was famously open to all – male or female, Greek or foreigner, citizen or slave – with the exception of non-Greek speaking barbarians and murderers. The cult’s accessibility was perfectly adapted to the important role that Eleusis acquired in Athens, where it complemented the new ideology of hoplite warfare and the emerging democracy. Yet despite its panhellenism, Eleusis’ particular ‘Athenianness’ is evident in both its administrative and ritual character. What is more, Athens’ integration of the Mysteries as one of its civic cults was even regarded as simultaneous with the formation of the constitution, according to popular perception. Like the festival of Dionysus, Eleusis operated under Athens’ oversight: the Greater Mysteries were organized by the polis and supervised by its archon; a post-festival review was officially conducted in the Athenian Assembly each year just days after the initiations; and the administration of the sanctuary at Eleusis was ultimately the responsibility of the *demos*. Eleusis cult officials enjoyed special civic privileges and were often closely

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596 Foley (1994) 142-5.
involved in the foundation of new civic cults.\textsuperscript{599} These close administrative links to Athens are matched by the cult’s geographical significance to the city. The continued residence of the sanctuary in Eleusis at the frontier with Megara, a ‘live’ frontier in the words of Sourvinou-Inwood, helped define the very boundaries of Athens itself.\textsuperscript{600}

Eleusinian ritual too reinforced its special bond with Athens. Preliminary to the Greater Mysteries was the transfer of ‘sacred objects’ across the distance of fourteen miles along the Sacred Way, from the sanctuary at Eleusis to the Athenian Eleusinion, several days in advance of the procession which would bring them back to Eleusis. The initiation of a ‘hearth child’ (\textit{pais aph'hestias}) – ‘hearth’ here referring to the \textit{prytaneion}, the center of the polis – symbolized the initiation of the entire city.\textsuperscript{601} Athenians almost certainly viewed the cult and its sanctuary as a benevolent entity, and not just in spiritual terms: the cult had enough wealth in reserve to loan twenty thousand drachmas to the Athenian state when times were dark in 408/7.\textsuperscript{602} This evidence indicates that Eleusis was nearly capable of operating on a self-sufficient basis even just before the performance date of \textit{Frogs}.

Both panhellenic and an integral part of Athenian polis religion, Eleusis also has certain peculiarities which might have earned it a special reputation for elitism or exclusivity. The first peculiarity is the focus and demands it made upon the individual. Membership in Eleusis was dependent upon one’s initiative to seek out the cult, pay the requisite fees, and undergo initiation.\textsuperscript{603} As a spiritual pursuit partially beyond the mainstream, the Mysteries represented a ‘special opportunity for dealing with the gods within the multifarious framework’ of the

\textsuperscript{599} Sourvinou-Inwood (1997) 146-150.  
\textsuperscript{600} Sourvinou-Inwood (1997) 146.  
\textsuperscript{602} Cavanaugh (1996) 211-13 relies chiefly on the evidence of \textit{IG} I\textsuperscript{3} 386-7.  
polytheistic religion of the Athenian polis.\(^{604}\) Eleusis thus demanded a special level of commitment from its members, who underwent about three different stages of ritual for full-fledged membership.\(^{605}\) After preliminary purifications, either at the Athenian Eleusinion or the sanctuary, mystai were expected to attend the Lesser Mysteries held during the Anthesterion, where, according to Clement of Alexandria, teaching and preparation prepared the candidates for the Greater Mysteries.\(^{606}\) Seven months later came the core initiation at the Greater Mysteries in Boedromion, followed by the required attendance of the mystai at the same event in the following year as epiptai. All in all, it is reasonable to assume that the extensive commitments demanded of new members in physical, emotional, and monetary terms would have contributed to a popular perception of the cult as enjoying elite status in Aristophanes’ day.

Because initiation was said to afford special knowledge, whether through some sort of preliminary instruction to the secret rites or through the actual experience of initiation itself, Eleusinian initiates enjoyed a privileged status which set them apart from the uninitiated.\(^{607}\) Isocrates says that only the initiates know the services done for Demeter by the inhabitants of Eleusis (Paneg. 28). Pausanias alleged that only the initiates are familiar with the reason for Demeter’s hatred of the bean (1.37.4). Clement explains that initiates alone understand why specific parts of some animals cannot be eaten (Strom. 2.20.206.1).

An intriguing balance between accessibility and exclusiveness thus seems fundamental to the Eleusinian cult. The very same duality can be found in the public (poetic) persona of Aristophanic comedy. In broad conceptual terms, Aristophanic comedy is perennially concerned

\(^{604}\) Burkert (1985) 216.
\(^{606}\) Strom. 5.70.7-71.1.
\(^{607}\) Parker (2005) 352.
with negotiating for itself an *ethos* which could be seen as similar to that of Eleusis, somewhere between the principles of inclusion and exclusion. Like all purveyors of mass entertainment, Aristophanes – as well as his rivals – understood that popular success was heavily dependent on gaining audience support through constant appeals to the tastes and views of the broadest part of the audience. Aristophanic *parabases*, in particular, repeatedly identify the poet and his views with those of ‘the people,’ whose aesthetic and political edification is the ostensible aim of his style of comedy. A corollary of this poetic conceit is the explicit assumption, voiced in several Aristophanic comedies, that individuals and audiences can differ widely in their poetic tastes and competence (Cf. *Wasps* 1048-9, where ignorant spectators are distinguished from the wise). A recurrent source of Aristophanic exasperation is an audience lacking the necessary sophistication to recognize the overall quality of the poet’s labors and/or his broader effort to reform the genre through cleverness, sophistication, and innovation. On occasion, however, Aristophanes and his comic rivals single out audiences, or the wiser portion of them (*oī σοφοί*), in special praise of their refined tastes. The poet vows not to disappoint these ‘clever ones,’ even if his work remains underappreciated by the multitude (*Clouds* 528). In a famous passage of *Frogs* (1109-18), in fact, the initiates reassure the disputing tragedians that their audience is smart enough, due to the gifts of nature and studious diligence, to understand the poetic subtleties of the *agon*.

Old Comedy’s recognition of different levels of poetic competence in its audiences, of different degrees of intellectual capacity, establishes a dichotomy between the many and the

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609 Ach. 370-6, 630-5; *Wasps* 1017, 1044-55; *Clouds* 521.
610 Dover (1972) 188-89.
612 In reality, it was certainly true that any given audience was composed of spectators with widely varying literary and dramatic tastes and educations: while most could enjoy the comedy at a very basic level, only the most elite spectators were capable of grasping every bit of comic subtlety (See Revermann [2006a]).
select which is analogous to that of *Frogs’* presentation of Eleusis. *Frogs* neither projects Aristophanic comedy as a religious or ritual institution nor views its favorite spectators as anything like a religious congregation. The play does, however, exploit the conventions of the accessible yet prestigious Eleusinian cult to stress the broadly representative yet elite status of those who can claim an affiliation with the subtlety and cleverness of Old Comedy. The extent to which the Athenian popular imagination actually identified Eleusis as an exclusive institution, which brought prestige to all who had experienced its rituals, is far less important than Aristophanes’ clear attempt to present the cult in these terms in order to further his own poetic aims.

The exclusive character of the Mysteries is signaled in *Frogs* in two chief ways, beginning with the rather explicit gesture of exclusion of the *prorrhesis*, and its literal prohibition of undesirables, which serves as the preface to the all-important *agon*. This proclamation, which signaled the beginning of the festival of the Greater Mysteries, announces the ritual modality of Aristophanes’ poetry contest. After such formulaic ritual elements as the standard call for silence (354) and the exclusion of the impure (355ff., 369ff.), the criteria for exclusion are suddenly broadened to reflect the generic concerns of comedy: while ‘impurity’ was normally identified with murderers and barbarians, the definition now excludes the poetically challenged – spectators ignorant of the Muses (356), of Cratinus’ comic innovations (357), and of good comedy (358) – as well as those guilty of civic and political misconduct (359-65), anyone who fails in his service in the chorus or choregos (366-7), and anyone who attempts retaliation after being mocked by the comic poets (368). Shortly afterward, the chorus excludes Archedemus for illegitimacy and demagoguery (416-21), Cleisthenes for effeminacy (422-27), and Callias for shameless hedonism (428-30). Particularly noteworthy in this *parodos* are the
anapests, which are normally set in the *parabasis*.\(^1\) Aristophanes thus draws attention to the quasi-religious proclamation of the chorus at the start of the play’s main event. The call for exclusion continues in the *parabasis* – where the younger class of extreme democrats is dismissed at 730-33 (particularly Cleophon at 674-85) – and even in the play’s closing scene with the mockery and exclusion of Cleophon, Myrmekis, Nicomachus, and Archenomus from the renewal of Athens which is promised by Aeschylus’ return.

A second gesture of exclusion in *Frogs*’ ritual subtext exploits Eleusis’ promise of special knowledge by conflating the mental and spiritual rewards of initiation with the special insights into comic and tragic poetics. The initiate chorus’ display of ritual knowledge as poetic insight is performed in the poetry contest itself, where the *choreutai* act as highly competent judges of Aeschylean and Euripidean tragedy. While the *prorrhesis* was direct and explicit, the chorus’ ongoing focalization of the *agon* is a more indirect gesture of exclusion and a primary narrative strategy of the comic exegesis of tragedy. By virtue of its collective function as a seasoned observer of tragedy, the chorus affirms the existence of audience stratification in terms of poetic competence: the initiates’ superior poetic insight differentiates them from the average spectator in Hades and Athens. As expert focalizers who establish the terms upon which the external, theater audience understands the assessment of poetic value, the initiates possess a poetic knowledge which is conflated with their superior insight about the natural world, the reward of full-fledged initiation. This poetic insight is exemplified in, among other places, the chorus’ prelude to the *agon* (814-29). This vivid introduction effectively characterizes the combatants and prefigures the outcome of their dispute by highlighting (among other things) the distinctively martial traits upon which rests Aeschylean poetry’s claim to superiority at the

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\(^1\) Dover (1993) n. 354-71.
current moment in Athenian history. Aeschylus rages (816) like a boar (822), a creature from Homeric simile, roaring (823) and spewing ‘bolted utterances’ (824) and gigantic blasts (825). The incomprehensibility of these piled-on metaphors from a critical standpoint is beside the point. The metaphors define the combatants: Aeschylus is a Homeric creature and Euripides is a craftsman of words, a ‘mouthsmith’ (στοματουργός), who unfurls his tongue (827), tests his words (826), and most importantly, whets his sharp-talking tusk (815). The key word of the last phrase is ‘talking’ or ‘chattering’ (λάλος), the hallmark of the Euripidean style.

A hallmark of Aeschylean tragedy, by contrast, is σύνεσις, ‘sense’ or ‘understanding,’ a term which appears at the conclusion of the agon in the chorus’ closing insights and final judgment of the poets after the decision:

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μακάριος γ’ ἀνήρ ἔχων
ζύνεσιν ἄρχουμένην.
πάρα δὲ πολλοίσιν μαζεῖν
όδε γὰρ εὐ φρονεῖν δοκήσας
πάλιν ἀπείσιν οὐκαδ’ αὖσις,
ἐπ’ ἀγαθῷ μὲν τοῖς πολίταισιν,
ἐπ’ ἀγαθῷ δὲ τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ
ζυγγεσάει τε καὶ φιλοσιν,
διὰ τὸ σύνετος εἶναι.
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Happy the man who has keen intelligence,
as is abundantly clear:
this man, for his eminent good sense,
is going back home again,
a boon to his fellow citizens,
a boon as well
to his family and friends,
through being intelligent.

(1482-99)

According to Dover, σύνεσις (1483), here attributed to Aeschylus, should be taken to mean the understanding of theater and what produces audience satisfaction. It is implied that the absence
of this in Euripidean tragedy undermines its core contention that it improved Athenians by teaching them to think.  

The initiate chorus’ dramatic role as elite internal audience places it at the heart of Aristophanes’ poetic agenda of prestige and exclusion, which Frogs cultivates by associating Aristophanic comedy with the Eleusinian Mysteries. The chorus excludes the profane in its opening prorrhesis and proceeds, with its narration of the contest, to set itself apart as an ideal internal audience. The initiates’ supernatural insight into tragedy reflects a comic conflation of the spiritual with the aesthetic and performs a comic variation of that superior insight into the cycles of the natural world which the mystery cults promised to their members. Shaping our perception of the events of the contest, the chorus acts as a mediator of the worlds of Hades and the theater by performing the double role of deceased initiates of the Mysteries of Demeter and comic chorus worshipping Dionysus at his festival. In generic terms, the overall effect of such a conflation of comic and ritual discourse is an elevation of Aristophanic comedy to a quasi-religious status. Aristophanes’ skillful integration of Eleusinian ritual into Frogs allows him to draw certain parallels between the elitist, yet fundamentally democratic, Eleusinian Mysteries and his own brand of comedy.

C. Closure and Redemption

The final, and perhaps most important, aspect of the Eleusinian Mysteries to be exploited in Frogs is its eschatology, the most famous and innovative feature of the cult. Aristophanes harnesses the cult’s promise of a better afterlife to aggrandize the conclusion of the poetry

contest and articulate its transformative poetic and political effects beyond the immediate scope of the dispute. The closing choral procession of initiates continues the agon’s ritual modality into the comic closure which emphasizes the Athenian cultural and political reversal of Aeschylus’ victory and resurrection. The tragedian’s return to life will revive Athenian tragedy from its state of decline and this, in turn, will revive the martial vigor of Athens, which in 405 BCE was facing the prospect of defeat.

However, the pronounced ritual closure of the play is not only informed by the Eleusinian subtext, but also by a tragic model: the final, celebratory procession of Aeschylus’ Eumenides with its creation of the Areopagus and integration of the baneful, intractable Furies into Athens as chthonic guardian spirits. As in similar conclusions of tragedy, the ritual procession of Eumenides resolves conflict by directing the emotional experiences of the audience toward a community-affirming sense of closure. Aristophanes shrewdly appropriates this famous ending and its ritual affirmation of civic cohesion, which was performed at a culturally and politically formative moment in the history of Athens (458 BCE). Taplin first identified the visual and textual echoes of Eumenides in Frogs’ final metapoetic gesture, which closes out the play by its culminating statement about comedy’s relationship to tragedy and its true value to the polis. Despite the value and significance of Taplin’s observations, they do not take account of the additional ritual subtext of the Eleusinian Mysteries and its implications for the comic closure as the culminating statement of Aristophanes’ long-standing rivalry with tragedy. Where the aetiology of Eumenides sheds light on the present world of the audience through the events of the past, Frogs’ closure employs the ritual discourse of the Mysteries to shift the temporal focus of

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617 Herington (1963) 122; see also Bacon (2001) 57-9.
618 Segal (1996) 157-9; he goes on to mention that tragic closure may feature ‘competing voices’ which complicate or work against the communal resolution secured by the religious ritual (161-2).
its tragic model from the past to the future, the temporal sphere which is most germane to comedy’s particular world view. By integrating the Eleusinian promise of deliverance into the Aeschylean model of closure, *Frogs* projects Old Comedy as a fundamental Athenian institution, like the Mysteries themselves, which bypasses the past and looks beyond the dire circumstances of the Athenian present.

First, the eschatology of the Eleusinian Mysteries. According to at least one scholar, the immediate aim— which was both chronologically earlier and original— of the worship of Demeter and Kore in Attica was the renewal and preservation of the grain supply.\(^\text{620}\) This would eventually come to be surpassed by the most famous benefit offered by the cult of Eleusis, its goal according to Parker the blessed and privileged afterlife it guaranteed to the witnesses of the Mysteries.\(^\text{621}\) At the high point of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (480-2), it is stated that the initiates will be happy after death while the uninitiated will not enjoy the same fate, which Richardson interprets to mean suffering.\(^\text{622}\) This promise is regularly repeated over the many centuries of the cult’s existence, although representations of this improved afterlife in later prose and poetry have no official authority.\(^\text{623}\) Robert Parker actually sees the best evidence for public perceptions of the nature of the afterlife promised by the Mysteries in the chorus’ words in the *parodos* of *Frogs*, where the pleasures of the afterlife are vividly set out: the *mystai* enjoy flowery meadows, the uninitiated face mud and monsters. Yet the Mysteries did not teach death as something that could be overcome. Even the initiates must face death: what is rather at issue

\(^\text{621}\) Parker (2005) 354; Burkert (1987) 15 views the eschatological facet of the Mysteries essentially as an extension of the basic votive practice of any religious cult.
\(^\text{622}\) Richardson (1974) 310-11.
\(^\text{623}\) Burkert (1985) 289; a gold leaf from Hipponion depicts *mystai* and *bakchoi* in the Underworld in procession along the Sacred Way towards bliss.
in antiquity is whether or not a different kind of life is secured by the initiate after earthly existence has ended.

This eschatological subtext adds a second, deeper level of ritual sophistication to the literary ending of the Aeschylean text. By most scholarly accounts, the closing procession of Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* was a solemn, grandly staged event. After the acquittal of Orestes and the Furies’ reconciliation with Athena, some assert that a supplementary chorus consisting of the Areopagites entered carrying torches, singing strophic pairs (1033-47), and even directly encouraging the audience to participate in the quasi-ritual cry of joy (1040: ὀλολύξατε νῦν). The chorus of Furies probably underwent visible transformations from baneful to benevolent divinities after assuming the ceremonial red robes of metics. These elements signaled the outright resolution of the conflict in the house of Atreus by stressing the reconciliation of the Erinyes with Athena and affirming the former’s new role as guardians of civic health in the glorious Athenian future. The foundation of the Areopagus, which is now subject to the protection of the Erinyes who have become the Eumenides, brings to a final end the mythical cycle of intrafamilial violence in the *Oresteia* and initiates a new era of Athenian justice by jury trial.

In *Frogs*, the comic Aeschylus’ victory and his consequent escort by the initiates from Hades to the upper world exploits this tragic model to bestow an analogous mood of permanence, or finality, upon the contentious contest of the poets. The illustrious tragic pedigree of the final procession would have surely been recognizable to an Athenian audience thoroughly

625 See Taplin (1977) 410-11 for references; cf. Sommerstein (1989) 277, who prefers to see servants of Athena as the torchbearers.
steeped in the re-performance of Aeschylean tragedy.\textsuperscript{626} The spectators would have recalled such elements as the explicit calls for escorts, torches, and song (1524ff.), the heavily-dactylic Aeschylean rhythms,\textsuperscript{627} and the Aristophanic paraphrase (‘...δότε, δαίμονες οί κατὰ γαίας, τῇ δὲ πόλει μεγάλων ἁγαθῶν ἁγαθὰς ἐπινοίας...’: 1529-30) of the thinking at Eumenides 1012: ‘...εἰς δ’ ἁγαθῶν ἁγαθὴ διάνοια πολίταις.’\textsuperscript{628}

The ritual fabric of the closing processions of both Eumenides and Frogs is permeated with political concerns. Eumenides climaxes with the integration of the savage, primordial, pre-Olympian Furies into a new Athenian future: their final reconciliation with Attica and Athena marks their endorsement of and participation in the new brand of Δίκη, trial by jury, now institutionalized in the Areopagus. Frogs exploits its tragic model’s premium on communal integration and social stability as early as the parabasis’ (674ff.) plea for the recall and reinstatement of disenfranchised Athenians with full citizen rights. The Aeschylean promise of an illustrious Athenian future is also paralleled by the presumed outcome of the Aristophanic Aeschylus’ resurrection from Hades and return to Athens, whose prospects shall be revived at this similarly dark hour. While passage between worlds is not unusual for characters of Old Comedy, as we know from Birds and Peace, Aeschylus’ return to the living as a representative of comedy expresses something that transcends the immediate context of the play. In appearance, this movement from the Underworld to Athens mimics the metaphorical movement of the Eumenides from violence (darkness) in the house of Atreus to a state of benevolence and peace (light). Aeschylus’ choral escort returns him from Hades (death) to Athens (life) in a literal journey ‘to the light’ (‘εἰς φάος’) of the living world above, thereby mimicking the

\textsuperscript{626} Taplin (1996) 199; Revermann (2006) 72-4 points to Aeschylus’ own statements at Frogs 868 as confirmation of re-performance; see also Easterling (2005).
\textsuperscript{627} Dover (1993) \textit{ad loc.}
\textsuperscript{628} Taplin (1996) 198-9.
symbolic ritual undergone by the mystai in the darkness of the telesterion during the Mysteries proper.

Dover’s succinct description best captures the comic logic behind the idea that the resurrection of Aeschylus, and his tragedy, will revive Athens: ‘Since Aeschylus’ career coincided with the great days of old, an error of logic...could easily generate a belief that revival of Aeschylus would cause a revival of the great days of old.’\textsuperscript{629} If Taplin is correct, however, the resurrection should be understood in much broader, generic, terms: ‘Above all, at the end of Frogs, with Euripides and Sophocles both dead, it is comedy, and the Dionysus of comedy, that brings back the contemporary equivalent of Aeschylus to the city.’\textsuperscript{630} This point no doubt develops from a separate argument about Eumenides he makes elsewhere, in an article with Peter Wilson. They argue that the incorporation of the Furies into Athens in the procession of the Eumenides represents the incorporation of tragedy itself into the polis on a figurative level.\textsuperscript{631} In light of my earlier remarks on the initiates as an internal audience, I would add that Aristophanes’ implicit claim is not only that comedy saves tragedy and the choruses of the festival, but that the power of critical evaluation of its dramatic rival rests solely with comedy itself. The difference between the resurrection of the initiate and the resurrection of Aeschylus can be understood as a difference between salvation of the individual and salvation on a broad, civic scale. The spectator is invited to see Aristophanic comedy’s powers of renewal as analogous to that of the Mysteries: Old Comedy ensures the salvation of the polis as the Mysteries do for the individual citizen.

\textsuperscript{629} Dover (1993) 23-4.
\textsuperscript{630} Taplin (1996) 198.
\textsuperscript{631} Wilson and Taplin (1993) 175.
In addition, the closing sequence can be even further illuminated if the inclusive Aeschylean model is taken as a foil. Comedy loves to have things both ways, and the case is no different with comic closure and its promotion of the familiar ideas of inclusion and exclusion. While *Frogs*’ closure is nominally inclusive, the invective of the initiates against named individuals reveals only a *partially* integrative closure which differs from the all-encompassing acceptance of the equivalent scene in *Eumenides*. Aristophanes reserves the right to exclude his enemies from his play’s glorious future. Generic convention prevents Old Comedy from realizing the full reconciliation in the manner of its tragic counterpart, since it always reserves the right of exclusion from its vision of an improved society. Euripides’ loss, for example, fully excludes him from life, let alone the improved conditions of life, ensured by comedy. Even though Aeschylus’ ascension to Athens is ratified by the initiate chorus and Hades himself in an echo of the human and divine concord reached in *Eumenides*, in practice comedy must constantly retain its enemies in order to remain relevant as a social institution. Therefore, even in the inclusive ending of *Frogs*, the comic polis must remain divided and the poet must articulate his list of enemies. This is exemplified in Aristophanes’ substitution of the promise of literal death for certain demagogues in the upper world for the sacrificial victims brought onstage for the chorus’ final exit in the *Eumenides* (1003ff.). To those departing for the world above, Hades bequeaths certain ‘instruments of death’ for dispatching Cleophon (1504) – who is also abused in the final lines of the play (1532-3) – and three otherwise unknown figures named Myrmekis, Nicomachus, and Archenomus (1506-7).632

When compared to Aeschylus’ Furies, the chorus of initiates furnish further insights into the *Frogs*’ closure. The Furies of Aeschylus are unique exceptions to tragedy’s typically

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632 Dover (1993) *ad loc.* determines these instruments to be a sword, two nooses, and hemlock judging from the genders of the demonstrative pronouns.
helpless, dependent, and largely non-participatory *choreutai* for their constant physical engagement and aggressive, violent opposition to the other characters of the play.\(^6\) Social marginality is the norm for tragic choruses, who are typically elders or captive women, but the Furies are liminal to an extreme: as ‘monsters’ (κνώδαλα: 644) in spatial and geographic terms with chthonic affiliations they are shunned as ‘maidens in old age, ancient children’ (κόραι γηραιοι παλαιαι παιδες: 6ff.) and ‘children not yet children’ (παιδες ἀπαιδες: 1034) for their paradoxical age and youth.\(^7\) Their pursuit of and desire to punish Orestes for matricide is enjoined upon them by their traditional, divinely sanctioned function as guardians of Δίκη, as avengers of murder, perjury, and other serious crimes, who punish perpetrators or their descendants.\(^8\)

Although they are Underworld spirits in one sense, the initiates of *Frogs* could not be more different from their Aeschylean counterparts. When Dionysus and Xanthias come upon their entrance in the parodos, they witness an everyday scene of bliss in the afterlife.\(^9\) The introductory hymns to Iacchus and Demeter identify them specifically as Eleusinian worshippers initiated during life, who are now happy souls residing near Hades’ palace: this affords them the requisite knowledge to fulfil their essential role as Aeschylus’ escorts to the world above.\(^10\) While the liminality of the Furies enables their relentless pursuit and punishment of transgressors, the liminality of the initiates allows them to live a life after death, which is a privilege afforded by their initiation into the Mysteries, a source of hope for humanity. Where the Furies’ intention to punish Orestes will perpetuate the bloodshed and strife plaguing the

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\(^6\) Herington (1963) 116 was convinced that their partial anthropomorphism, hostility to the protagonist, and relatively late arrival in the play were evidence of comedy’s influence on Aeschylus’ conception of the Furies; see also Taplin (1996) 194.

\(^7\) Revermann (2008) 243-5.

\(^8\) Sommerstein (1989) 9ff.


house of Atreus, the reinstatement of Aeschylus in Athens under the guidance of the initiate chorus prevents further civic violence and brings much-needed poetic and civic restoration.

Conclusion

Few (if any) works of ancient literature combine sophisticated intertextuality and comic ingenuity as deftly as Frogs. By cleverly intertwining literary and ritual subtexts, Aristophanes reformulates a literary-critical debate, which some trace as far back as the sixth century, on comedy’s own terms of caricature, materiality, success, and failure. The integration of both poetry and ritual in the agon of Frogs is Aristophanes’ original contribution to the literary tradition of the poetic contest: Frogs not only works against the established tradition of the poetic contest of the Certamen, it also reacts to that tradition as staged by a rival of Aristophanes’ own genre. The insight which is fundamental to the originality of this chapter’s approach is that neither the cross-generic play nor the ritual subtext of Frogs can be analyzed in isolation from one another: the Eleusinian subtext is the vehicle for Aristophanes’ (indirect) intergeneric engagement of tragedy and for his expression of Old Comedy’s superiority over all other literary forms.

Failure, above all, drives Aristophanes’ appropriation of other genres, tragedy especially. The performance of failure amuses, but more importantly, it reiterates the very specific cross-generic dynamic between Old Comedy and its fifth-century rivals: tragedy’s failure is comedy’s success. Aristophanes foreshadows the failure, which is so crucial to Old Comedy’s aggressive posture towards tragedy in the agon of Frogs, through early minor episodes such as Dionysus’ door-knocking and rowing. The bulk of failure, however, is reserved for the agon’s paratragic vignettes, which have traditionally garnered the most attention from scholars. Although sources
of valuable evidence for the development of Aristophanic paratragedy at the micro-level, their significance within Aristophanes’ overall project remains obscure apart from the larger literary and cultural frames which embed them. In its basic details and broader agenda, Aristophanes’ contest was heavily influenced by the cultural and literary tradition of the Certamen, the fabled contest between Homer and Hesiod which was presumably familiar to Aristophanes’ audience. The Certamen’s details, themes, and overall analysis of the epic genre furnished a rough template, if not in mood and tone, for Aristophanes’ alternative exegesis of tragic failure. The Certamen’s generally eulogistic treatment of its poetic combatants effectively emphasizes, by way of contrast, Aristophanes’ showcase of the poetic badness and failure of his tragic poets. In a general sense, Aristophanes’ exegesis only serves the generic interests of Old Comedy, to be funny and to stress its own natural superiority as a poetic form. The abusive exchanges between Aeschylus and Euripides underscore the reifying process of the assimilation principle. In the test of the prologues, an everyday object (probably with obscene associations) is interjected repeatedly into a particularly elevated tragic context to collapse the level of its register. Collapse, of course, is meant figuratively here. A grotesque personification of tragic style, Euripides’ Muse symbolizes the most shameless tendencies of his method of poetic composition, which Aeschylus proceeds to parody. The final reification scene, the ‘weighing of the verses,’ interprets the value of poetry literally, in absurdly physical terms.

While its basic structure and concern look to the Certamen, the finer details of Aristophanes’ agenda of failure may respond to a later literary contest in the comic genre, in Cratinus’ Archilochoi. When compared with the (admittedly) limited surviving evidence of this production, the poetic and moral badness of Aristophanes’ agon only comes into sharper focus. Much like his deployment of the comic biography in Thesmophoriazusae, Aristophanes’ contest
appears to be a reaction to his older contemporary’s own poetry contest, which provides an extremely enriching foil for Aeschylus and Euripides’ struggle. Cratinus’ *agon* between iambos and epic illuminates Dionysus’ ultimate decision against Euripides, the practical poet of the polis, and, more importantly, the ultimate significance of the initiate chorus as the indirect means of Old Comedy’s assertion of its exceptional status.

This explosion of poetry in *Frogs* is filtered through a second, ritual discourse, the Eleusinian Mysteries. The focal point of this ritual subtext is not any particular textual model but the actual tradition of the cult itself as represented by Aristophanes’ initiate chorus. Aristophanes’ parody of certain features of the cult – the *prorrhesis* and the chorus’ privileged access to knowledge as internal audience – effectively suggests (perceived) institutional similarities between this prestigious Eleusis, which was both Athenian and panhellenic, and Old Comedy. Eleusis thus provides the vehicle with which Old Comedy negotiates its place in the contest, fifth-century performance culture, and Athens itself.

The ritual subtext of *Frogs* reaches a climax in Aristophanes’ appropriation of the innovative soteriology of the Eleusinian Mysteries, which is powerfully invoked in the play’s comic closure, where the initiates – those who have crossed over into a new life in death – symbolically resurrect Aeschylus and return him to Athens. The enduring message of this final procession punctuates the evolving comic intergeneric discourse, which has been explored throughout this dissertation, with the implicit yet unambiguous statement that only Old Comedy can save Athens. Dionysus’ resurrection of Aeschylus renews tragedy and ‘preserves the choruses’ at the dramatic festivals which educate the populace. Moreover, it is possible to go further than Taplin and others, who argue that comedy credits itself with the preservation of the festivals and the salvation of the city. By assuming credit for the social and political benefits
which accrue from Aeschylus, Aristophanic comedy lays claim not just to the title of savior of tragedy, but to that of exclusive judge and critic of it. Although the ritual frame endows the decision of the comic contest with a sense of permanence and some degree of social and civic cohesion, *Frogs* (or Old Comedy in general) can never promise or perform the complete reconciliation of the closure of its tragic counterpart, the *Eumenides*. Although ostensibly inclusive, Old Comedy, like the Mysteries, reserves the right to exclude whom it pleases.

As a prestigious civic institution with a unique, public dimension, the Eleusinian cult is presented as something of a curious spiritual analogue to the (alleged) morally and intellectually edifying Aristophanic comedy. Athens’ connection to the cult in ideological and administrative terms, as far as they can be known from evidence discussed earlier, may help explain Aristophanes’ brazen association of his comedy, and Old Comedy in general, to this cult on the geographical periphery. So closely was the health of the cult associated with the overall well-being of Athens that the fourth-century orator Isocrates asserts that revelation of the secrets of the Mysteries was tantamount to overthrowing the democracy.638 Aristophanic comedy’s evocation of this religious discourse and its special role in Athenian society represents the most sophisticated rhetorical strategy in the most sophisticated comedy of the entire corpus. By conflating its civic function with one of the most exceptional institutions of Athenian life, the genre seeks to define its relationship to the Athenian public, and against tragedy, in the grandest, most transcendent terms it can.

638 De Bigis 6.
Conclusion

This dissertation has aimed to advance the study of Old Comedy’s cross-generic play with its poetic rivals by contextualizing it in performative, institutional, and competitive frames. In its original context of production, Old Comedy’s adaptation of tragedy and satyr play (directly and indirectly) was fundamentally performative, and therefore defined by both visual and verbal communicative channels. The dramaturgical significance of such adaptation – e.g., as an essential element of a hero’s project or a play’s broader discursive aims – is shaped by the institutional contexts which inevitably frame it. Finally, paratragedy and parasatyrism do more than amuse, they are the means by which Old Comedy negotiates (what it perceives to be) its special status in the fifth-century polis.

While the evidence of the preceding chapters does not support a specific teleology of cross-generic play in Old Comedy, it suggests that this phenomenon evolves in both its mechanics and its expression of comedy’s public persona over the last third of the fifth century. Certain comic strategies are fundamental to intergeneric engagement in extant Cratinean and Aristophanic comedy and reappear with increasing sophistication in the latter (e.g., substitution, reification, compression). However, comic poets in the highly competitive marketplace of the dramatic festivals were under constant pressure to innovate simply in order to win funding for their productions, let alone triumph in the actual dramatic contests. Comic strategies and their application thus evolve over time. Cratinus’ generalized comedification of the most distinctive generic hallmarks of satyr play in his *Dionysalexandros* – chorus, motifs, and themes – gives way to the scene-specificity of Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* (425) and *Peace* (421). Aristophanes’ refinement of the comic biography, which is first attested as an intrageneric strategy of comedy in 423, furnishes an overarching frame for his sustained engagement with
Euripides and his tragic style in the *Thesmophoriazusae* of 411. As distinctive stages of the comic heroes’ escape-tragedy, the infamous parodies of *Palamedes, Helen,* and *Andromeda* are seamlessly integrated into the comic plot and raise the bar for comic metatheatricality. In the *Frogs* of 405, the comic plot itself provides the frame for the critical exploration of Greek tragedy’s cultural and political value, with the comedified tragedians representing the available alternatives for the genre’s past and future.

The physical juxtaposition of Old Comedy’s generic ugliness with the visual markers of satyr play and tragedy in theater-related comic iconography proves that competitive appropriation is more than an abstract, literary exercise whose nuances are created by modern scholars: materialized and localized in the body of the comic actor, paratragedy and parasatyrism could in theory be signaled and sustained at every moment of every performance. As paradigmatic, diachronic, and sophisticated treatments of texts, Attic and South Italian pots furnish visual supplements which illuminate existing evidence for performance and text. The signature-scenes of the Würzburg Telephus, the Berlin Heracles, and the St. Agata Antigone preserve not only invaluable evidence for irrecoverable aspects of comic performance at the episodic level, such as costumes, props, gesture, and proxemics, but also the paratragic layering which furnished a visual correlative to the predominantly linguistic manifestations of paratragedy found in, for example, *Acharnians, Peace,* and *Thesmophoriazusae.* The visual poetics of vases such as ‘Ajax and Cassandra,’ ‘Priam and Neoptolemus,’ and ‘Oedipus, Creon, and the Sphinx’ correspond to the analogous strategies of reversal, displacement, substitution, and reification in the extant textual evidence for intergeneric engagement. The ‘Getty Birds,’ ‘Choregoi,’ and ‘Goose Play’ vases preserve scenes from unknown plays which performed direct confrontations between Old Comedy and its rivals, tragedy and satyr play.
Old Comedy’s parasitic appropriation of its rivals has far-reaching effects for its self-definition in the late fifth century: Old Comedy is practical, able to do what its rivals cannot, and key to the salvation of tragedy and the state. The comedification of rival poetic forms – performative or not – thus entails the corresponding characterization and aggrandizement of Old Comedy itself. The parodies of *Dionysalexandros*, *Peace*, *Thesmophoriazusae*, *Frogs*, and a slew of prominent literary narratives alluded to in comic iconography all show Old Comedy’s aggressive adaptation of performative rivals as central to its obsessive presentation of itself as an essential polis institution. Cratinus signals Old Comedy’s ownership of satyr play in *Dionysalexandros* by recasting that genre’s performative and thematic conventions and, more importantly, by exploiting its innate social dynamic of leaders and led to advance its uniquely comic agenda. By injecting the apolitical world of satyr play with generic comic topicality, Old Comedy ostentatiously stamps the fifth-century’s lesser-known brand of drama with its own distinctive seal. *Dionysalexandros*’ comic agenda – especially its political subtext – represents Old Comedy’s first attempt in the surviving textual record to present itself as a practical Athenian institution.

Aristophanic paratragedy’s particular obsession with displacing tragedy as the dominant genre of the Athenian stage illuminates its own aesthetic, cultural, and political status. The explicit engagement of literary texts which leads to the comic hero’s success in the first half of *Peace* segues into the celebratory second half which indirectly challenges tragedy’s culturally dominant narratives of perverted sacrifice and marriage. Trygaeus’ celebration of panhellenism equally celebrates Old Comedy’s productive contributions to day-to-day life in the polis. This play’s (so to speak) ‘piecemeal’ appropriation is widened in *Thesmophoriazusae*’s direct encroachment upon the world of tragedy which infuses its comic escape-plot. Euripides’ comic
biography heralds Old Comedy’s ability to consider the social and political impact of one particular conception of tragedy. *Frogs* develops *Thesmophoriazusae*’s literary-critical gestures by exploring the ‘badness’ of Aeschylean and Euripidean tragedy, the pinnacle of Old Comedy’s self-presentation. Old Comedy’s critical adjudication of tragedy celebrates its loftier rival’s value to the polis, but not as something more valuable than the comic genre itself which is the public mechanism for tragedy’s appreciation and survival. *Frogs* closes by suggesting that Old Comedy offers the polis what the Mysteries offer the individual: sacred experience, exclusive knowledge, and continued health. Old Comedy goes from being the practical genre to being the redemptive one in the space of about thirty years.

Innovation was key to poetic survival on the fifth-century comic stage. Poetic appropriation was one possible path to such innovation which allowed comic poets to profit from the labor of other artists. When cleverly wielded, appropriation could therefore keep the threat of early retirement, or even outright failure, at bay. It is an irony worthy of Old Comedy that a strategy which aimed to cultivate a sense of distinction has the ultimate effect of broadly defining the comic genre at this particular moment of its history.
Figure 1: Würzburg Telephus (Martin von Wagner Museum der Universität Würzburg, Antikensammlung, H5697)

Figure 2: Bari Telephos (Museo Nazionale, 12531)

Figure 3: Berlin Heracles (formerly ‘Berlin 3046,’ Staatliche Museen zu Berlin)
Figure 4: St. Agata Antigone (S. Agata dei Goti I)

Figure 5: Cassandra Rapes Ajax (Villa Giulia, 50279)

Figure 6: Oidipus, Creon, and the Sphinx (Ragusa Collection, 74)

Figure 7: Priam and Neoptolemus (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 3045)

Figure 8: Getty Birds (formerly ‘J. Paul Getty Museum, 82. AE. 83’)

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Figure 9: Choregoi (J. Paul Getty Museum, 96.AE.29)

Figure 10: New York Goose Play (NYMM, 24.97.104)

Figure 11: Boston Goose Play (BMFA, 69.695)
Figure 12: ‘Tragoidos’ (Detail of Figure 10)

Figure 13: Ferrara T579 (a)

Figure 14: Ferrara T579 (b)

Figure 15: Ferrara T579 (c)

Figure 16: Oxford 525
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