



Ritual in Old Comedy

Theatrical Representation of Cultic Performance

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Abstract

The study analyses the representations of Greek ritual in plays and fragments of Old Comedy within the religious framework of the dramatic festivals. The main focus is on the rites performed by comic characters as part of fictional plot, such as sacrifices, processions, libations, and prayers. The aim of the study is to explore how playwrights use the elements of Greek religion while building the imaginary world of comedy and linking it to Athenian religious practices. Comic representations of ritual retain basic aspects of actual Greek cult such as the interconnection between ritual speech and ritual act, the centrality of animal sacrificial offerings, and the ritualisation of space and time. These fundamental similarities make Old Comedy a valuable source for the study of Greek cultic performances as well as their religious and social function. At the same time the imitation of rituals in comedy is selective and distortive and cannot be taken for granted as direct reflection of real life. Furthermore, theatrical representations of ritual claim to be authentic and to transform the performance of the comic play into a religiously significant event. The complex multilevel interrelationship between the ritual experience of the audience and the manipulation of this experience in drama through representations allows poets to achieve comic effect and mediate crucial meanings.

To my Dad

Declaration

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

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Introduction

It is a well-known fact that dramatic performances in Athens were embedded in public festivals in honour of the god Dionysos. Staging and attending them meant, among other things, taking part in religious activities aimed at pleasing the deity. However, establishing the link between the content of the plays we have and Athenian religion has always been problematic. Whereas the religious context of the Attic theatre is beyond doubt, the question still to be answered is how the dramatic works themselves contributed to the religious event. Even with Euripides' *Bacchant women* and Aristophanes' *Frogs* where Dionysos is a character acting on stage, the relationship of the plays to cultic worship is far from easy to demonstrate. The present study seeks to further explore this problem and to offer an analysis of the interrelationship between the ritual context of the festival in which the plays were performed and the text of the plays. The method I have adopted is to investigate the rituals that were enacted in drama as part of the fictional plot.

The thesis focuses on Old Comedy for several reasons. Unlike tragedy or satyr drama which use mythical settings, the comic genre is more direct in its representations of the Athenian life of which religion was an important part. Religious rituals, such as sacrifices, processions, prayers, libations happen to be incorporated in comic plots as embodied actions – not just as references in narratives – more often than in tragedy. This makes the genre of Old Comedy one of the richest sources for the Athenian religion of the fifth century, albeit like any source it does not give a fully realistic picture and has to be used critically. In fact, Old Comedy has been amply used in studies of Greek religion.¹

¹For example, as a source for sacrificial practices: Van Straten 1995; for the use of laughter in Greek ritual: Halliwell 2008, 155-206; on the role of women in the cult: Goff 2004.

However, representations of rituals in Old Comedy have never been studied comprehensively from the point of view of the dramatic mechanisms that underlie them. The present study aims to provide a more thorough and clearer analysis of comic representations and to assess them as the evidence for actual ritual practices. At the same time, it provides an insight into the genre of comedy and how it handles religious matters. The overall conclusion offers an interpretation of Attic theatre as simultaneously a sociocultural and religious phenomenon. The chronological and geographical span is narrowed according to the standard definition of the genre of Old Comedy – only Athenian plays, both complete and fragmentary, of the 5th– early 4th centuries BCE are included.

In the first Chapter *Setting the Scene: Problems and Approaches to Ritual in Drama*, I discuss existing methodological frameworks for the interrelation between ritual and theatrical performances. I observe that previous interpretations tended to disregard the distinction between ritual as part of the real life and representations of ritual in drama as part of the fictional imaginary world. Scholars stressed the similarities and overlaps between ritual and theatre rather than the difference and distance that exists between them. By contrast, in this study, the difference between the actual historical cult and its depiction in the theatre (as well as the ability of the audiences to discern this difference) is my main methodological premise. I base my argument on an approach to comedy as a fictional dramatic genre which interacts with real world ritual experiences of the audience through dramatic representations. However, this approach does not mean that the structural similarities between ritual and drama, such as the performative and representational nature common to both, are not important. In the following chapters, I show how these are exploited by playwrights to achieve a comic effect, to show the importance of their dramatic art, and to achieve success in the theatrical competition.

In the second Chapter *Ritual Speech in Old Comedy*, I analyse the utterances in the plays which are marked as ritual: hymns, prayers, ritual exclamations

and shouts, and the recitations of oracles. I regard hymns, sung by the comic *choros*, as a powerful tool to ritualise the dramatic performance and to persuade the audience that the specific play is highly significant and relevant for the city and its religion, deserving victory at the festival. Prayers, shouts, and oracles in Old Comedy are also used to mark the moments of particular importance within the plot and to involve the audience emotionally. The discussion of these utterances allows me to demonstrate that comedies are a unique source for the study of the forms of Greek ritual speech since they are not just reported or referred to in narratives but enacted on stage. The comic imitations of real cultic performances allow us to see the prayers and other types of utterances *in action*. The performative aspect shared by drama and ritual hence can be used to reconstruct the functions of ritual speech in the real-life ritual practices.

The third Chapter *Ritual Space and Time in Old Comedy* addresses the physical and temporal dimensions of ritual. The main question is how ritual space and time are constructed in the imaginary world of comedy and how the dramatic representations reflect or exploit the actual ritual spaces of sanctuaries around the theatre as well as the ritual calendar of the Athenian festival year of which the theatrical events formed a part. As in the previous chapter, it is concluded that the comic dynamics consists of two simultaneous processes: on the one hand, to ritualise the themes and the dramatic action of the play through ritual representations and, on the other hand, to reflect, in a creative, often subversive way, the basic religious attitudes and experiences of the audience.

Finally, in the fourth Chapter *Sacrifice in Old Comedy Beyond Slaughter and Feast*, I explore the religious meanings which sacrifice embodies in comedy and discuss their relation to the actual attitudes of the Greeks towards their gods as expressed in ritual practices. In the analysis of the comic representations of sacrifice and other rituals, one of the main methodological *caveats* is not to take it for granted that all comic rituals refer to actual cult as part of the life of the Athenians. In fact, as my study shows, many of them refer to the literary

representations of rituals in other genres, such as lyric and epic poetry, and tragedy. The thesis demonstrates the complex relations between the world of comedy and the realities it represents and opens path for future investigation of ancient Greek cult and culture.

Chapter 1

Setting the Scene: Problems and Approaches to Ritual in Drama

1.1 Ritual origins: a critical approach to the theory of the Cambridge school

An outline of approaches to the Attic theatre and its relation to ritual needs to start with the “myth and ritual” theory of the Cambridge anthropological school. Although the theory dates back to the beginning of the 20th century, it continues to influence our understanding of the topic. The major work on ritual in Aristophanes’ comedies and one of the chief contributions to the topic, Bowie 1993 acknowledges his inheritance from the ritualists without offering any systematic discussion of the “myth and ritual” model in its application to Greek Comedy. A comprehensive analysis of the ritualist theory is beyond the scope of this work; nevertheless I shall present here a critical review of some of its key points to clarify my own approach.

The Myth and Ritual theory was developed in Harrison 1903, 1912, Murray 1913, Cook 1914, and Cornford 1914, using the material of Greek drama and religion. As it is clear from the name of the group used by them and their contemporaries, the ritualists concentrated on the *connection* between ritual and myth: according to their theory myths and rituals operate together and go hand in hand with each other. The strong interest in the link between the two

at that time seems to be partly motivated by the drastic divorce of the studies of Greek historical religious practices (rituals) and Greek literary texts, especially poetry (myths) – the rationalistic approach which had dominated the scholarly landscape since perhaps as early as the Alexandrian philologists.¹ In this regard, Harrison's rediscovery of Greek literature as myth that originally functioned as a script underlying the ritual events was very productive and opened a new perspective on the history of Greek religion and culture. The problem of the myth and ritual was taken up by major scholars and prepared the basis for the performance theory which revolutionised the field of Greek poetry in the 20th century. The interrelation between the literature (myth) and ritual 'reality' is important also for the present study which aims to explore the literary texts of Old Comedy as performed in their religious and historical context.

As far as Greek drama is concerned, the theory of the Cambridge ritualists followed in the footsteps of Aristotle's evolutionary framework of the ritual origins of theatre, imbuing it with anthropological models typical of the beginning of the 20th century.² According to ritualists, drama originated in the ritual of Death and Resurrection of the Year-Daimon. Dionysos was regarded as one of the incarnations of this Year-Daimon, a dying god of the type identified by Frazer.³ Originally the ritual enacted in Greek tragedy was only Dionysiac. Later, however, influenced by other genres and rituals tragedy incorporated other, not necessarily Dionysiac rituals. Following this theoretical model, Cambridge ritualists strove to interpret every tragic play as an aetiological enactment of a ritual with a ritual sequence underlying its plot. Thus the *Prometheus* represents a foundation of a ritual torch race, Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women* - an *aition* of the ritual of reception of suppliants at an altar. The

¹As stated in Harrison 1903, vii.

²Here and further in this chapter I mean by drama and theatre both tragedy and comedy, if not stated otherwise, partly because the majority of scholarship concentrated on tragic material and partly because I am going to discuss problems that are common for both dramatic genres.

³Murray 1913, 60-69, and Murray's *Excursus on the Ritual Forms Presented in Greek Tragedy* in Harrison 1912, 341-363.

main pattern of every tragedy was seen by Cambridge ritualists in the death or *pathos* of a hero. This included six stages: 1) *agon*, the fighting of the deity with his enemy; 2) *pathos* or disaster: his sacrificial death through *sparagmos*, tearing apart; 3) the arrival of a messenger with the news of his death; 4) lamentation; 5) the discovery or recognition of the dismembered god, and finally 6) epiphany or resurrection.⁴ Cornford 1914 applied the Year-Daimon theory to comedy. In his book he analyses the structure of comic plots as built of canonical formulas that reflect a ritual sequence. Cornford postulates that every one of Aristophanes' plays ends with a triumphant *exodos* combining a revel procession, *komos*, and a wedding procession to be followed by the marriage of a protagonist. He sees in this pattern a survival of the fertility ritual of sacred marriage led by the god of fertility himself, Dionysos or Phales. The motif of inversion of the existing order present in Aristophanes' plays is interpreted by Cornford as the annual accession of a new god or king to the throne of the old Zeus. He argues also that the content of the *parabasis* corresponds to the content of the phallic songs that according to Aristotle stood at the beginning of comic genre.⁵ In Chapter 5 he concentrates on *agon*, sacrifice, and feast as the main ritual elements of a comic plot that result in the sacred marriage at the end of the play. The comic *agon* stands for the ritual contest between Summer and Winter, Life and Death. The *agon* is followed by a scene of sacrifice and prayer with cooking and eating at a feast designed to celebrate the victory of protagonist in it. These parts of the sequence contain, according to Cornford, some traces of an older ritual where the god himself was the victim, passing through death to his resurrection and *apotheosis*.

The main principle of the Cambridge school, the evolutionary framework of the phases of the development of religion and the emergence of the theatre, partly derives from the general 19th-century preoccupation with the origins of

⁴For instance, the appearance of gods in the end of the plays was interpreted as epiphanies of the resurrected deity, the final part of the original ritual: Murray 1913, 112.

⁵On the *parabasis* as a nugget of unassimilated ritual embedded in the structure of the play, see Murray 1933, 12.

Greek drama fuelled by Nietzsche's renowned essay *Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (1872) and partly rests upon Aristotle's powerful account of the emergence of dramatic genres from ritual performances. In a short section of his *Poetics*, Aristotle stated that tragedy was derived from dithyramb with a strong element of satyric mood and dance while comedy arose from phallic songs.⁶ Stimulated by Aristotle (and Nietzsche), scholars for long time debated the origins of Greek tragedy. A great variety of theories about the original (ritual) form of tragedy have been suggested.⁷ To name only a few hypotheses scattered over the 20th century, Ridgeway argued that tragedy arose from the worship of the dead and funeral games in honour of kings and heroes;⁸ Thomson postulated that its origins were in initiation rituals;⁹ Burkert saw the origins of drama in a sacrificial ritual basing his argument on the etymology of the word *tragoidia* as 'song at the goat-sacrifice';¹⁰ Sourvinou-Inwood regarded drama as part of the ritual of entertainment and welcoming Dionysos at the Prytaneion as a *xenos*.¹¹

What was crucial, however, for early ritualists, is not the answer to the question of origins but the implications it had for their interpretational framework of dramatic works as a whole. According to Harrison, Greek drama of the fifth-century is the final stage of the development of the 'basic' religious ritual. At this stage no real ritual event is happening and the performance has been completely transformed into a piece of aesthetic literary entertainment. The ritual elements in tragedy and comedy are – for ritualists – mere atavisms of forgotten practices which prove their general thesis that Greek mythical narratives arose from practiced ritual activities. Harrison draws a clear chronological

⁶1449a. For analysis and deconstruction of Aristotle's evidence see Scullion 2005, 23-37.

⁷See the overview of the scholarship on ritual origins of comedy in Csapo and Miller 2007, 7-32; Lesky 1983, 1-25.

⁸Ridgeway 1915.

⁹Thomson 1946.

¹⁰Burkert 1966, 87-121.

¹¹Sourvinou-Inwood 1994, 269-290. The discussion continues into the twenty-first century. For instance, Rozik 2002, 336-347 rejects existing theories and proposes a psychoanalytic theory of theatre as institutionalised daydreaming that spontaneously creates images and allows one to experience the unconscious in a legitimate social context.

boundary between art and ritual: the two cannot coexist. Drama, in her view, is a literary phenomenon that came to being when the religious belief in the efficacy of the ritual had already decayed.¹² She justifies this assertion with a philosophical claim that we cannot live and look at once: where contemplation and spectatorship of the art begins, all practicalities of the ritual and magic inevitably have already been lost.¹³ The fifth-century drama is hence 'an end in itself' that brings aesthetic pleasure to the spectators, the enforced product of recycling by the society of a ritual practice that has lost its meaning and efficacy.

What Harrison left out of account in her discussion was the embeddedness of the fifth-century dramatic plays in the context of the religious Dionysiac festivals. One of the first scholars to challenge the evolutionary theories of myth and ritual school and to highlight the importance of the synchronic ritual context of drama was Pickard-Cambridge.¹⁴ The performance theory proposed by Richard Schechner further reinforced the simultaneous coexistence and unity of ritual and art in the fifth-century drama and suggested a new theoretical framework for studying ritual and drama.¹⁵ It assumed the inseparability of social drama (ritual) and aesthetic drama (theatre) within one performance.¹⁶ In Schechner's view ritual and theatre are two polarities, the former associated with efficacy, the latter with entertainment. Ritual is aimed at results, provides a link to an absent Other, and refers to symbolic time; its performers are possessed and its audience is involved through belief and collective creativity. Criticism and reflection are discouraged. Theatre, on the other hand, emphasises the time of 'here and now' and its aim is to generate enjoyment. Performers are conscious of what they are doing while the audience watches and appreciates. Criticism and individual reflection are encouraged. However, ritual and theatre never exist in isolation. The functions of effectiveness and

¹²Harrison 1918, 73.

¹³Harrison 1918, 71.

¹⁴Pickard-Cambridge 1968.

¹⁵Schechner and Schuman 1976; Schechner 2003. A discussion of performance theory in its relation to ritual in Bell 1997, 73-76.

¹⁶The concept of ritual as social drama was proposed in Turner 1982.

pleasure-giving are always interwoven in living forms of theatre, such as the Athenian theatre of the fifth century. The combination depends on the context and function of a specific performance.¹⁷ Bierl 2009 applied Schechner's ideas to Aristophanic comedy. In his analysis of the choral dance and song in Aristophanes' *Women at the Thesmophoria* he rejects the model of diachronic genesis and discusses the structural commonalities of drama and ritual and the relationship of interdependency between them. In his paradigm, the resemblance and overlap of the two phenomena are based on their performativity: both theatre and ritual are staged in a spectacular fashion in front of the whole polis.¹⁸ Bierl argues that a dramatic performance in fact *is* a ritual in the contemporary framework of the festival and that the text of the plays reveals their agents as worshippers performing at a ritual event.

Even though the diachronic aspect of the ritualist theory was ultimately rejected by the scholarly consensus, ritualist ideas have not ceased to be popular.¹⁹ They were in fact revived by Burkert in his highly influential essay "Greek tragedy and sacrificial ritual" (1966) where he argued that 'the essence' or the 'pattern' of sacrifice is present in the plays by three tragic poets.²⁰ The general idea of a unifying pattern derives from the assumption by the ritualists that myth is the plotline (script) of the ritual – something that pulls the actions together into a tale.²¹ The ritualist approach to drama was adopted by a great number of scholars.²² In the more recent studies (labelled 'New Ritualism' by Friedrich 2000), while the teleological ritualist model is dismissed, the synchronic connections between ritual and drama are stressed.²³

Concerning Greek comedy, Bowie 1993 also renounces the search for the

¹⁷Schechner 2003, 134-162.

¹⁸Bierl 2009, 267.

¹⁹The question of origins and the synchronic relations of ritual and drama have been separated in the scholarship. The former still remains highly debated.

²⁰Burkert 1966, 87-121.

²¹For *dromena* as equivalent to drama in the ritualist terminology see Harrison 1912, 328-330.

²²For example, Adrados 1975, Seaford 1984; recently Sfyroeras 2004, 259-262.

²³A summary in Csapo and Miller 2007, 32. Also Foley 1985 and Easterling 1988 for tragedy and Bierl 2009 for comedy.

origins of Greek drama and rejects the idea of one overarching ritual on which all comic plots were based. Nevertheless, he looks for mythical and ritual patterns behind the plots basing on them the interpretation of each play.²⁴ The structures are different for each play but the idea of 'mythical symbolism' that is hidden in every single comedy prevails in his method. Bowie opens his analysis with the discussion of the myth of Christ's death and resurrection encoded in Beethoven's opera *Fidelio* as an illustration for his method – an example of *interpretatio Christiana* which was common for the ritualist school.²⁵ The methodology applied by Bowie makes him leave out a lot of material in comedies that does not fit in the proposed structure of the mythical interpretation of the plays. In fact, despite the title of the study, Bowie does not examine the representations of ritual in comedy and is mainly focused on myth which he rather loosely defines as 'a wide spectrum of different kinds of story and discourse'.²⁶ This approach derives from Cambridge ritualists' concentration on myth and not ritual itself. Ritual for them was something simple and primitive which is of no interest and needs no explanation. This might sound paradoxical since ritualists saw their mission in restoring the significance of ritual and introducing the framework in which cult practices are crucial for religious conceptions. However, although they claimed the primacy of ritual over myth they were not interested in ritual as such, its mechanisms and complexities. Instead they were keen to understand the myth, the stories, which, according to them, could be best explained only through the ritual practicalities. Ritual itself was not studied but was employed as the means of interpretation of myth.²⁷ As Harrison writes in the opening of *Prolegomena*: 'What a people does in relation

²⁴Bowie 1993, 5; Bowie is following the school of structural anthropology of Jean-Pierre Vernant, Pierre Vidal-Naquet and Marcel Detienne.

²⁵Bowie 1993, 1-6. E.g. Robertson Smith's notion of sacrificial meal was modelled on Eucharist and Frazer's Dying god drew on Christ-figure, as well as Harrison's concept of monotheism, see Schlesier 1991, 218; also Murray 1913, 60-62.

²⁶Bowie 1993, 7. However, his later articles on the topic of ritual in comedy Bowie 2010, 2000 include overviews of rituals that were staged in comedy.

²⁷Noted by Ruffell 2011, 165: "Whereas, however, Levi-Strauss uses myth to explain ritual, for anthropological literary criticism the reverse is the case – stories are explained through, or more strongly, derive their meaning from, their interaction with ritual."

to its gods must be one clue [...] to what it thinks'.²⁸ The religious thoughts (in the form of myth) remained the focus of her attention.

Bowie's preoccupation with mythical structures rather than with ritual reality resulted in the absence from his book of many essential episodes in plays where Old Comedy interacts with ritual. Thus, for instance, his discussion of Aristophanes' *Peace* is concerned more with the pattern of the returning god than with the sacrificial scene mentioned only in passing²⁹ and in the chapter on the *Akharnians* there is no discussion of the ritual procession organised by Dikaiopolis. Although the book contains valuable insights that contribute to our understanding of the plays, it deals mainly with myth and plots, not with ritual and performance which are the focus of the present study (discussed in more detail in 1.3.1).

1.2 Nothing to do with Dionysos? Searching for cult in drama

Despite the dismantling of the ritualist theory, attempts to link drama to cult never stopped. One place to look for it was the Dionysiac festivals in which performances were embedded. The Great Dionysia were celebrated in honour of Dionysos Eleuthereus while the Lenaia worshipped Dionysos Lenaios.³⁰ Festivals consisted of a sequence of ritual activities in which theatrical performances were incorporated. The priest of Dionysos was present at the shows sitting in the centre of the front row and presumably the cult statue of Dionysos was brought into the theatre.³¹ The theatre in Athens was dedicated to Dionysos and was situated next to Dionysos' precinct on the southern slope of Acropolis. The sanctuary was the final destination of the great procession on the

²⁸Harrison 1903, vii.

²⁹Bowie 1993, 146.

³⁰The Great (or City) Dionysia were more international. On the difference between the audiences at these two events: Revermann 2006b, 165.

³¹See, for example, *Ran.* 297, *Eq.* 536. Pickard-Cambridge 1968, 268; Csapo and Slater 1994, 105; Revermann 2006b, 30.

first day of the City Dionysia. Here, the sacrifice was performed at the altar, and the next day the public gathered at the same place to watch the performances of the dramatic *choroi*. Theatrical buildings and theatrical festivals in Attic demes were also associated with the worship of Dionysos. Plato says that the spectacle-lovers visit every festival of Dionysos in all the demes.³² The oldest stone theatre in Greece in Thorikos has a small sanctuary of Dionysos in the western parodos³³ and the theatre in Rhamnous was situated in Dionysos' precinct as well.³⁴

However, the insightful discussions of the festival context of the plays do not answer the question in what ways the drama itself is related to ritual. In fact, the rich ritual framework of the plays actually makes more noticeable the absence of the direct relation to the cult in the dramatic action. This contrast was noted already in antiquity: as reported by lexicographers a proverb 'nothing to do with Dionysos' originated from angry cries of the audience disappointed in their expectations of Dionysiac rituals in the theatre.³⁵ The lack of obvious links between the cult and theatrical performances did not discourage scholars from searching for Dionysiac patterns, metaphors, or models hidden in the text of the plays.³⁶ While Murray and other ritualists interpreted tragic heroes as embodiments of the god Dionysos, more recent critics saw the

³²*Resp.* 5.475d.

³³The archaeological site is described in Mussche 1968, 105 and Mussche 1974. In Kolb's opinion the original function of the theatre building was of a meeting place as of an agora.

³⁴There is a dedication of the 4th BCE of the seats to Dionysos: *IG II²* 2849. The stibadeion-shaped building situated next to the theatre indicates the link with Dionysos according to Kolb 1981, 69, Pouilloux 1954, 72. A stibadeion was a semicircular building presumably for dining in honour of Dionysos, Picard 1944, 127-157.

³⁵*Zen.* 5.40 and in the *Suda*. Thematically only one extant tragedy, the *Bacchant women*, deals directly with the god and his cult. Although it is relatively late (the end of the fifth century) and probably composed in Macedon, it has received a lot of attention in terms of interpreting the god Dionysos and his worship reflected in the play. Overview of scholarship in Mills 2006 and Bierl 1991, 177. Also Winnington-Ingram 1969; Segal 1997; Seidensticker 1979; Henrichs 1993; Seaford 1996; Henrichs 1978. There are also a number of titles and fragments of lost tragedies that must have represented Dionysos in some way. See the list in Bierl 1991, 11.

³⁶See Schlesier 2007, 307, Segal 1997, Seaford 1994. A typical ritual pattern of Greek festival *pompe-agon-komos* is identified by several scholars in the *Bacchant women*: Seidensticker 1979, also Seaford 1996, 226, Foley 1985, 211, Thomson 1946. Seaford argues that the structure of the play contains an aetiological story of the foundation of the Dionysiac mysteries at Thebes, Seaford 1996, 35. Schlesier reveals maenads as models for female characters in tragedy Schlesier 1993.

Dionysiac qualities of ecstatic states, strangeness, metamorphosis, and ambivalence manifested in Greek theatre and regarded the god Dionysos as the exemplary Other which every tragic play celebrates.³⁷ Dionysos' ambivalence provides a link between the god and his theatre because the nature of the dramatic art and mimesis is itself ambivalent in its simultaneous reality and fictionality. Like wine, one of the forms the god can take, it creates illusion through which humans can be enlightened or deluded.³⁸ Moreover, Dionysos' lack of identity and fluidity,³⁹ his ability to transform and adopt different epiphanic appearances, make him the god of metamorphosis⁴⁰ and metamorphosis is especially appropriate for the god of drama where actors adopt fictional roles, *personae*. Theatrical masks and costumes are key means of losing one's identity and transforming oneself into the Other.⁴¹ Masks were closely associated with Dionysos in Greek culture. On vase paintings the god himself is represented as a mask in ritual context⁴² and the so-called Lenaia vases represent cultic masks of Dionysus suspended from pillars.⁴³ In modern scholarship the mask has become the symbol of the god's otherness and strangeness.⁴⁴ For example, Schlesier argues that the mask transforms the actor into a Bacchic figure thus revealing the manifestation of the god to the audience.⁴⁵ The whole idea of the masked theatre therefore expresses one of the crucial aspects of the god.

Furthermore, different dramatic genres reveal their associations with Dionysiac

³⁷Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1981, Goldhill 1986, Segal 1986, 48-74.

³⁸Segal 1997, 215, Mills 2006, 87. The *Bacchant women* can be taken as an example of Dionysos' ambivalence which is reflected in tragedy as the play represents religious fanaticism and at the same time manifestation of truly divine power.

³⁹Otto 1965, Henrichs 1982, 158, Henrichs 1984, 234-240.

⁴⁰In the *Bacchant women* he is transformed in bull, snake, lion; see Segal 1997, 231.

⁴¹Wiles 2007, 2008.

⁴²Wrede 1928.

⁴³Frontisi-Ducroix 1991.

⁴⁴Henrichs 1993, 36. The anthropological function of mask to remove one's identity and lead into the mythological and sacred reality is emphasised by Calame 1986, 97, 107. He also argues that mask is characteristic of cults of divinities who 'on the margins of civilisation guard the path between the interior and the exterior, between the self and the other', namely Dionysus, Artemis, Demeter. Mask has a protective function too. Dionysos is the god of possession and the mask assures that the citizen representing himself and the actor representing the Other can coexist and that the actor will be restored as citizen after the performance; see Calame 1986, 114.

⁴⁵Schlesier 1993, 97.

worship in different ways. Thus, the genre of satyr play has even been proclaimed by some scholars the embodiment of the Dionysiac cult in the theatre.⁴⁶ Indeed, the genre of satyr play reveals itself as related to Dionysos in some aspects. The *choros* of this dramatic genre always consists of a group of satyrs, mythological companions of Dionysos. Thematically, satyr play tends to represent mythological plots where either a group of satyrs or an individual hero is insulted with *axenia* or disrespect which is a typical motif of myths about the god himself.⁴⁷ The *choroi* of satyric drama are often regarded as revealing their ritual Dionysiac identity more directly than those of the other two dramatic genres.⁴⁸ The satyric choral identity of Dionysiac servants, however, remains within mythological, dramatic space of the mythical plot. They are bound by the genre of satyrplay to perform as Dionysiac companions and act as his worshippers within the boundaries of the imaginary world, not in the real 'here and now' of the Athenian theatre.

The similarities with Dionysiac cult are also evident in some aspects of comedy. One obvious feature is *phalloi* that formed part of comic costume and were carried by actors in comedy. The *phallos* is, along with the mask, one of the main symbols of Dionysiac worship. It is ubiquitous in the iconography of satyrs and was carried in Dionysiac processions as a symbol of the god and as the manifestation of his presence.⁴⁹ At the City Dionysia according to epigraphical and iconographical evidence, the *phalloi* were brought to Athens

⁴⁶Easterling 1997, 37. This view goes back to Aristotle and Cambridge ritualists. According to Aristotle's disciple Khamaleon (fr. 38 Wehrli), satyr play was added to tragic trilogy to satisfy people disappointed with the lack of Dionysiac content in the plays and to reintroduce it into the tragic performances. See discussion in Seaford 1984, 11; also Seidensticker 2003, 120, Voelke 2001, 394. Murray claimed that satyr-play was originally the epiphanic part of the whole tragic sequence revealing the god of the theatre to the audience in his satyr-servants; see Harrison 1912, 344.

⁴⁷Voelke 2001, 381; on *axenia*: Lämmle 2007, 345, 337. Dionysos acts as a *xenos* in many myths, and *axenia* is a crime directly against him. Moreover, the Great Dionysia celebrate Dionysos Eleutherios who comes from a deme on the margins of Attica integrated in the polis very recently and therefore at this festival he is a guest received in Athens. On the connection of the ritual of Dionysos' *xenismos* and the festival of Dionysos in Athens: Sourvinou-Inwood 1994, 273.

⁴⁸Seaford 1984, 10, Seidensticker 2003.

⁴⁹Cf Semos of Delos fr.20; Rothwell 2007, 25-28.

as tribute by allies and presumably were carried in the procession on the first day.⁵⁰ This similarity of cultic and comic performances is also reflected in Aristotle's theory of comedy's origins according to which it derived from revels, *komoi*, indecent processions in honour of Dionysos.⁵¹

Phalloi in the Dionysiac cult were an instance of ritual aischrology, which was considered as a further point of affinity between comedy and cult. The term aischrology (literally, 'shameful speech') is used to indicate the special mode of speech and behaviour – obscene, abusive, and invective – which is normally unacceptable in real life situations but is sanctioned in ritual contexts. It was associated primarily with worship of Dionysos and Demeter.⁵²

Aischrologic rituals include *gephyrismos*, joking ritual at the Eleusinian Mysteries, *tothasmos* (ritual mockery), some rituals at the Thesmophoria, phallic songs, and comastic performances. Apparently, aischrology was sanctioned at the Athenian dramatic festivals and cultivated in Old Comedy. The affiliation between comic mockery and ritual mockery has been explored by Halliwell who regards comedy to be a form of ritual laughter and argues that the obscenity and abusiveness of comedy is, in fact, a form of religious piety.⁵³ Others have emphasised the sociopolitical and literary dimensions of comic laughter and shame arguing against the ritual interpretation.⁵⁴ In general the evidence of cultic aischrology is not sufficient to allow us to draw conclusions about the extent to which comedy functioned in the same way or was linked to it genetically.⁵⁵

⁵⁰IG I³ 46.17; SEG 4.31, 67.2-6; Csapo 2013.

⁵¹Murray 1933, 10; Rothwell 2007, 7-21.

⁵²The evidence for the use of laughter in rituals was collected and analysed by Halliwell 2008, 155-206.

⁵³Halliwell 2008, 206-214, 262.

⁵⁴Stark 2004, 322-325; discussion of Halliwell's view in Rosen 2015, 23 who insists that despite the seeming similarity with ritual obscenity, aischrology in comedy is a phenomenon of literary *mimesis*.

⁵⁵Rosen 2015, 19-33, esp.27-28 makes a strong case that functionally comic aischrology was different from cultic aischrology.

Finally, a solution to the 'Nothing to do with Dionysos' challenge has been offered by the polis religion model. This framework was applied to drama in the collected volume *Nothing to do with Dionysos?* (1990). As explained in the introduction to the volume, this approach is based on the material collected by Pickard-Cambridge who demonstrated the embeddedness of Attic drama in the Athenian festivals. The editors of the volume, however, observe that an interpretative framework is virtually absent from Pickard-Cambridge's work. The new interpretation they offered regards the god Dionysos as well as the rituals connected with him as social entities defined and derived from the polis religion. According to Sourvinou-Inwood, the ordered community of the polis plays for Greek religion the same role as the Church organisation in Christianity:

The polis was the institutional authority that structured the universe and the divine world in a religious system, articulated a pantheon with certain particular configurations of divine personalities, and established a system of cults, particular rituals and sanctuaries, and a sacred calendar.⁵⁶

The Athenian social and political system manifests itself in the dramatic festival. Since the cult is part of this system, it is, therefore, inherently present in the performances. The authors of the volume claim:

"[...] if we turn to consider the circumstances of the festivals that centered on the god brought into the midst of the polis and the citizens, then we might propose the contrary – 'everything to do with Dionysos'."⁵⁷

⁵⁶Sourvinou-Inwood 2000b, 19. Also in Sourvinou-Inwood 2000a, 51: In the classical period polis religion encompassed all religious activities within the polis. All such activity was perceived as symbolically legitimated through the religious system of the polis, which shaped the perception of the gods and articulated the relationships between men and the divine... and the polis was the authority which sanctioned all cult activity within its boundaries and mediated it beyond them.

⁵⁷Winkler and Zeitlin 1990, 3.

In the case of the Athenian drama, the god Dionysos reveals the democratic nature of the polis and its civic ideology. The function of tragedy and comedy is, therefore, to provide a space where the polis can be put under inspection and exposed to itself for reflection:

“The other ritual theme was Athenian civic ideology. It is not alien to alterity: the polis is the focus of dramatic reflection. The rituals, furthermore, concentrated not on the city ordered by Athena and Zeus but on the exploits of its males: Dionysus himself was a military leader whose maenads and satyrs conquered the east. Thus, the rituals of the City Dionysia opened a liminal ritual space that allowed reflection on civic ideology, on Athens, its values and its destiny.”⁵⁸

In recent scholarship Ruffell 2011 applied the approach to comedy:

“Dionysian contexts... are sites for managing the relationship of individual and/or oikos to polis, in terms of both the logical structure of the fictional world and the thematic poles of inclusion and exclusion. ... The Dionysian represents the transcription of the polis into the comic sphere, but also links the techniques of the comic sphere back to the political.”⁵⁹

The approach opened up a broader perspective on tragedy and comedy as having a number of cultural, social, political, and ideological functions, and introduced the theatrical audience as one of the key participants of the performance who contribute to its cultural reception and interpretation. However,

⁵⁸As summarised in Graf 2007, 56. See also Seaford 1994. Cf also Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 513 on Greek tragedy: “The fifth-century audiences did not perceive tragedy only as a purely ‘theatrical’ experience, a discrete dramatic unit, simply framed by ritual, but also as part of a ritual performance. Aetiologies, deities, and other religious elements in the tragedies were not, for them, simply theatrical devices, insulated from their religious realities; they were charged with religious meanings; they were, in varying degrees and ways, part of those realities. Fifth-century tragedy was among other things, a discourse of religious exploration, part of the religious discourse of the Athenian polis.”

⁵⁹Pp.310-311.

the scholars that emphasise the social function of drama downplay its religious component. Research within the framework of polis religion mostly focuses on extratextual aspects of tragedy and comedy and the implications of these aspects for the polis structure.⁶⁰ Dramatic contests are regarded as “political events, part of the polis’ official celebration of itself and the god Dionysos”,⁶¹ similar to other public performances such as speeches in the Assembly or law-court. Aspects shared by these with drama are systematically highlighted in the volume and in later scholarship.⁶² Dramatic performance is compared with military, forensic, and political events but for some reason not with ritual ones. The subsequent scholarship of the social context of theatre paid minimum attention to its ritual aspect: for example, in the volume *Performance, Iconography, Reception* (Revermann and Wilson 2008) only one chapter deals with the ritual in the context of drama. Since the 2000s the approach has been becoming more balanced and scholars have tended to reintegrate ritual performances in the discussion.⁶³

1.3 Ritual and representations of ritual

What is common for the majority of the approaches discussed above is that none of them draws a clear boundary between ritual and theatre. On the contrary, they highlight the continuum between the two as if ritual was somehow diluted in drama or as if drama was some form of Dionysiac ritual. Indeed, the theoretical argument about how this line can be drawn proves to be a difficult one.⁶⁴ However, if we shift our focus to the rituals enacted within dramatic works, a clear and discernible difference for the audience between them

⁶⁰Ruffell 2011 presents an exception looking at the internal mechanisms of comedy and their political function.

⁶¹Winkler and Zeitlin 1990, 5.

⁶²E.g. Wilson 2000.

⁶³E.g. Csapo 2010; Wilson 2000.

⁶⁴Various solutions to the problem are discussed in Csapo and Miller 2007, 4-7. The view on the difficulty or impossibility to draw the line derives from the performance theory which “fails to account for the way in which most cultures see important distinctions between ritual and other types of activities” (Bell 1997, 76).

and the Athenian actual practices is necessarily present. The rituals enacted in comedy cannot be the same thing as the real ones performed as part of the worship of the gods – this is something of which any Athenian sitting in the theatre of Dionysos would be aware. This suggestion is corroborated by the evidence of the plays that do not present accurate replicas of any actual established ritual events but rather amalgamations of them.⁶⁵ The perception of ritual representations would be generally the same as the perception of the Athenian Assembly or other civic institutions, represented in comedy, as well as actors playing Athenian politicians and celebrities – no one would think of them as ‘real’. The spectators apparently were not expected to act in the same way as if they would do if they were present at a cultic performance. During the performance of a sacrifice or any other ritual on the comic stage, the spectators would not switch their code of behaviour to the one they usually would adopt during a religious ceremony. This presupposition does not exclude the similarities between literary dramatic forms and ritual practices. These similarities would be known for the audience and consciously exploited by the playwright. Deliberate play with the resemblance of dramatic forms to ritual practices was possible, however, only in so far as they belonged to two different realms.⁶⁶ Moreover, rituals enacted in drama as part of the theatrical performances resist an approach which seeks to link the ritual dimension in drama exclusively with the Dionysiac cult. The representations are not limited to the rituals of Dionysos: playwrights draw on a rich range of ritual experiences in the audience to create resonances.

In this study I draw a clear line between ritual as a social and religious practice and a representation of it in drama. Unlike the authors of previous stud-

⁶⁵Rosen 2015, 30, Graf 1974.

⁶⁶Discussed in Rosen 2015, 23, 30-33 who argues compellingly that although even the audience and the playwright could take interest in the similarities between the two kinds of aschrology, a ritual one and a comic one, they remained two different realms for them. See also in his earlier work on the *parodos* in the *Frogs*, Rosen 2007, 31: “Indeed, the *parodos* specifically encourages the audience to view comic and religious mockery as phenomena that require a special understanding, precisely because they are not what they seem to be.”

ies, I start with the difference, not the resemblance. I adopt Aristotle's (and Harrison's) division between the *dromenon* of religion and the *dromenon* of art (drama) but in the present study this division does not suppose any genetic or chronological continuum between them or any idea of one emerging from another. The criterion I am using is not something objective that can be observed by a historian of the theatre but rather the subjective relationship of the audience to the performance. The audience collectively interprets a performance as a fiction in cooperation with the author.⁶⁷ My general methodological assumption is that the audiences in the Athenian theatre in the fifth-century were able to distinguish between different types of drama such as non-fictional social *mimesis* of the ritual and fictional literary *mimesis* of the theatre. With this methodological principle established, I shall explore the interrelationship between the two. In the following, I discuss what I understand by ritual and by its representations in drama.

Ritual in cult

When referring to rituals, I refer only to those religious practices that were alive and active in the fifth-century Athens and were part of the everyday life of the audiences in the Dionysian theatre and therefore part of the historical context of Greek comedy. From the formal perspective, by ritual I mean social activities that were established and accepted within the polis cult of the gods. The focus of my research includes sacrifices, processions, libations and offerings to the

⁶⁷Ruffell 2011, 39: "If fiction is a mode of communication involving two consenting parties, then the audience has a much more active, constructive role than in models that rely on illusion or beguilement or charm. [...] The audience [...] actively constructs a fictional world or worlds on the basis of the fictional utterance (performance). That is to say, fictionality is not a matter of semantics but of pragmatics – not a matter of truth values, but an act of communication. [...] Exceptionally, an audience can interpret anything fictionally, but, as a rule, it is an act of cooperation. Gregory Currie argues that fiction operates on the basis of recognition of mutual intentions between author and audience: that is, the author makes a fictional utterance understanding that the listener will interpret it correctly and coherently, while the audience in turn interpret the fictional utterance on the understanding that this is how the author intends it. [...] On this model, the audience then are not passive, are not victims of a predatory, illusive text, or merely suspending disbelief, but positively constructing fictional worlds along the lines encouraged and anticipated by the text or, in the case of Old Comedy, the production."

gods, including rites conducted in the household. I shall discuss them taking into account the following aspects of Greek ritual: their dramatic performance and visuality, the emotional interaction and physical involvement of the participants, social and polis structures that lie behind the cult, religious and social meanings which they communicate, and the role of the rituals in the construction of the communal and individual identity. Ritual must be approached as part of the religious system, that includes also other elements such as beliefs, myths, ideologies, and can be understood only in the interaction with them.⁶⁸

Ritual as an action has a physical dimension of embodiment which includes ritual space, movements, bodies, gestures, and material objects. It also generates, articulates and communicates meanings and represents the reality of the communities through words, images, signs, and other media. In many cases these ritual meanings as well as details of the physical ritual event are lost to us which nevertheless does not mean we should not try to reconstruct them.⁶⁹ As a communicative system, ritual is unique in human society, as “communication through rituals is not just an alternative way of expressing something, but the expression of things that cannot be expressed in any other way”.⁷⁰ The messages which rituals transmit include messages between the participants as well as self-referential messages.⁷¹ Rituals are also dynamic and liable to change even if they claim to be static and canonical.⁷²

The communicative aspect of the ritual includes the idea of communicating with the divine. The religious function of rituals is to establish the relationship between the world of humans and the world of the gods. Ritual is an activity that unites mortal celebrants with the addressees and recipients of the worship. One aspect of this is that gods and ritual agents do things together. Gods are

⁶⁸According to Yatromanolakis and Roilos 2004, 12, ritual is “a dynamically enacted communicative system of collectively shared, or collectively marked out, cultural, religious or secular, constructs. Ritual employs a variety of symbolic and indexical media, both verbal and, mainly, representational – visual, sensory, acoustic.”

⁶⁹See discussion of methodology in Sourvinou-Inwood 2005b.

⁷⁰Stavrianopoulou 2006, 8.

⁷¹Rappaport 1999, 69-101.

⁷²Rappaport 1999, 70.

invoked and invited to come and share the meal, to perform a libation, to take part in a ritual dance or to assist and inspire a ritual hymn. By performing rituals and celebrating festivals, humans imitate gods' activities.⁷³ During the ritual event, the divine figures are present as recipients and objects of address and prayer and also as agents themselves.

Ritual primarily interests me as a real world practice which comedy uses to construct its own imaginary worlds. From this point of view, ritual is in line with other major polis institutions ridiculed in comedy such as the assembly, lawcourt, music, education, and festivals. On the other hand, ritual must be distinguished from them. For this study it is significant that ritual shares many core characteristics with dramatic performances.⁷⁴ Performance, explored by Schechner (see above) is one fundamental aspect of ritual. Being performances, both ritual and drama have actors, spectators, special space and time, secluded from daily life and ordinary environment and marked as special arrangement (sanctuary, theatre).⁷⁵ Another function shared by ritual with drama is to refer mimetically to the world which is not immediately and physically present and tangible but has to be imagined. This aspect helps both theatre and religious cult to construct the collective identity, *communitas*, of the audiences through the feeling of being together, sharing experience and participating in the creation of one same make-believe.⁷⁶ The difference which is hard to pin down theoretically (but which seems to be obvious), lies in the conventional attitude of the audience that acknowledges and accepts the performance as a theatrical one or as the one belonging to the cultic system.⁷⁷ I shall show that although comedy is aware of the difference between itself and cult, it is constantly play-

⁷³Cultic reciprocity and divine reflexivity of Greek religion is expressed in iconography where gods act as exemplary worshippers and performers of the ritual; see Patton 2009, 161-180.

⁷⁴Summarised by Graf 2007, 58-59.

⁷⁵Rosen 2015, 24: "Both ritual and Old Comedy are governed by protocols and postures that mark them off as specialized types of speech, different from that of the real world."

⁷⁶On the connection between ritual practices and poetic texts as means of creating cultural and social codes and constructing meaning; see Yatromanolakis and Roilos 2004, 16-28.

⁷⁷The issues of fictional/non-fictional and reality/fantasy in comedy are discussed in Ruffell 2011, 30-52.

ing with it, pretending to be a ritual and metatheatrically transcending it for dramatic purposes.

The dramatic festival of Dionysos in which the theatrical performance is embedded will be treated as the ritual frame which is significant for the interpretation of the plays. The focus of my study, however, will be not on the frame itself, but on the representations of religious cult in the plays. The main aim of the present study is to explore the interaction between the ritual context (both in the narrow sense of the dramatic festivals and the broad sense of Greek religion as a system) and ritual representations in Old Comedy.

Representations of ritual in comedy

In the real world ritual is a complex phenomenon which combines multiple social, cultural, psychological, and anthropological aspects. What is it when it is enacted in comic plays? Sacrifice performed as part of a comic plot is not the same thing as when it is performed as part of a ritual offering to the gods.⁷⁸ It is a representation, that is, according to one of the definitions, 'something that is in at least some sense equivalent to some other thing, most often because it resembles that other thing, but which is not the same as the actual object'.⁷⁹ In other words, when we call something a representation we mean that there is some relation between the representation and its object. But how can we describe or define the relation between the representations of ritual in comedy and the ritual? In a sense, my whole thesis attempts to provide an answer to this question. Here I shall give some preliminary theoretical grounds for the further analysis.

One term that can be encountered in scholarship with regard to representations of ritual is parody. It has rich a theoretical background introduced by Aristotle already and used by Aristophanes' ancient commentators. Despite the fact that some scholars, for example, Kleinknecht 1937 and Horn 1970, use

⁷⁸Already in Aristotle's theory of representation – *mimesis*, *Poet.* 1448b.

⁷⁹Buchanan 2010.

the term 'parody', I shall avoid using it with regards to ritual representations as misleading for one particular reason. Both in ancient and modern scholarship, parody is a term that is more or less limited to the imitations of literary works, not of real world practices. In the context of Old Comedy, parody usually refers to parody of tragedy, so called paratragedy, and of other literary genres. Literary parody and representations of historical practices can overlap in some aspects and then parody can be a legitimate term. For example, this is the case of the comic parody of ritual texts such as hymns and prayers which are on their own a type of poetic composition.⁸⁰ It is also true that comic representations of ritual share many aspects and potential functions with literary parody and, therefore, the theory of parody can clarify the mechanisms of such representations. I would like to outline two features of parody that are instructive for understanding of the representations of ritual.

First, according to the school of Russian formalism, in the process of parodic manipulation the work is taken out from its usual context and deconstructed as a system. In this process, particular aspects of the work which previously were only parts of the system are being clarified. The system can be deconstructed by changing just one element of the parodied text. This element can be verbal or even non-verbal, such as intonation or musical accompaniment. Substituting this element with a sign of another system is enough to destroy the whole system because it lays bare (another important formalist term) the conventional techniques of the system. Tynyanov illustrates his argument with an example from a dramatic play by Ludwig Tieck who in a metatheatrical scene introduces the space of the theatre (a sign from another system) to the space of the stage (the literary work). Tynyanov does not use the term 'metatheatre' but it is clear that parody for him includes an element of self-reflexivity because it lays bare the literary conventions not only of the

⁸⁰Thus, Tynyanov 1977 in an article on parody, mentions in passing that literary parody can also imply the parody of speech behaviour and speech practices and utterances on which literary works are based. Although parody manipulates a piece of literature, it also manipulates the real-world speech activity on which literature is based.

particular work but the conventional nature of literature in general and therefore the parody's own conventions to a certain extent, too.⁸¹ Self-reflective and metatheatrical aspects of parody are potentially useful for the present study, given the ubiquity of metatheatricality and self-referentiality in Old Comedy.

On the semiotic level, parody is a tool for creating new meanings because every element displaced from its context to a new context acquires the new meaning and also changes the meaning of the whole. The comic effect that is created by the incongruity between the new elements of the parody and the system of the parodied work can be regarded as one of those new meanings.⁸² Thus, the comic effect is created by the controlled evocation and destruction of audience's expectations when the quoted texts are placed in an ironic context. This principle of deceiving and destroying the expectations was described by Kant in his definition of laughter and goes back to ancient scholarship (*Tractatus Coislinianus* and Quintilian).⁸³ It covers the broad field of the comic and can be applied to the representations of non-literary events and institutions such as ritual. Instead of the literary system which is deconstructed in the case of the literary parody, we can speak of the deconstruction of the social performance of a religious ritual in Old Comedy.

Another function of parody according to Tynyanov is the special orientation or direction of the parody towards its object. The parody can be directed towards various aspects: to the specific genre, author, or a group of literary works, but this direction is emphasised in parody. While the deconstruction of the system of the imitated work is done deliberately and openly, it also intensifies the audience's awareness of the features of the parodied literary style or genre. Parody is thus a powerful tool for reflection on literary genres and techniques and provides space for commenting on them, criticising them and hence stimulates the development of the genres. In this aspect, parody comes

⁸¹Tynyanov 1977, 284-309.

⁸²Rose 1993, 29-33, 36.

⁸³Rose 1993, 32-34. Graf 2007, 61 also notes that rituals as part of the scenic performance are 'tools to shape the audience's expectations and perceptions'.

close to another concept, satire, that provides the society with critique of itself. One of the expressions of satire in Greek culture is iambography, a genre of archaic poetry. Iambography, however, is targeted at individuals, whereas in the case of comedy the polis with its institutions becomes the object of comic abuse.⁸⁴ Although iambographic elements can be also found in Old Comedy, the whole genre should not be defined as satire. As Rose explains, satire, unlike parody, does not place or incorporate its object in its own system.⁸⁵ The social criticism of the Athenian civic institutions in Old Comedy is far from being external or additional within its structure. On the contrary, it is essential and lies at the heart of comic plots.

Whether the aggressive censure of Old Comedy on the falsity and injustice of the real-world situations should be classified as satire or parody they are clearly present in comic representations. The comic potential to criticise provides an important healing function for society and its institutions.⁸⁶ The mechanism that makes this process possible is known in literary and theatre theories as “alienation”, another important theoretical concept in literary and cultural studies.⁸⁷ The comic representation by deconstructing and exposing the devices and conventions of polis institutions distances the audience from their everyday practices and provides space for reflection. In this sense, in agreement with the framework of polis religion, comedy functions as a polis institution that offers the society the opportunity for self-reflection via representation. This function of alienation is fully applicable to the representations of rituals in comedy.⁸⁸

⁸⁴The polis is the object of the iambography of Old Comedy, the civic institutions are mocked on stage and religion is here among other such as education, assembly, lawcourt.

⁸⁵Rose distinguishes parody both from burlesque and satire: for satire the object is external, does not become incorporated, while parody makes it its constituent part; Rose 1993, 81-82.

⁸⁶Parody can be seen as useful criticism or destructive ridicule: Rose 1993, 26. The positive function of parody explained by Stone in his book *Parody*, London, 1914, quoted in Rose: ‘Ridicule is society’s most effective means of curing inelasticity. It explodes the pompous, corrects the well-meaning eccentric, cools the fanatical, and prevents the incompetent from achieving success’.

⁸⁷Alienation is also a feature of parody, distancing from the quoted text, formulated as *priyom otstraneniya* by the Russian formalists; see Shklovsky 1929, Rose 1993, 79.

⁸⁸The alienating function of dramatic representations of choral performances has been discussed by Swift 2010, 369-370.

1.4 From ritual to ritualisation

Old Comedy is a unique literary genre that combines in itself elements of parody, satire, irony, and the grotesque providing space for attacking individuals and institutions of the city in a special mode of comic aischrology, 'shameful speech'. The comic representations of rituals are built upon the audience's real world lived experiences of actual cult. At the same time, comedy goes beyond criticising attacks (satire) and playful deconstruction (parody) of the existing practices by creating new meanings and communicating them back to the audience. These new meanings are created both for the entertainment and pleasure of the public (the comic effect) and for transferring messages.⁸⁹ Comic representations restructure models which they imitate while incorporating them into the world of imaginary.⁹⁰ I shall demonstrate that in the case of representations of cult, Old Comedy constructs its own system of comic ritual. The imitations of rituals in drama pretend to be 'real' rituals. This self-claim of Old Comedy to *actually* perform rituals of Greek religion triggers the process of ritualisation of the performance of a specific play at the festival.⁹¹

The concept of ritualisation has been developed by Bell 1992 and Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994 and applied to Greek lyric by Kurke 2005. Bell studies ritual as a practice shifting the view from looking at an activity as the expression of cultural patterns to looking at it as that which makes and harbours such patterns. Therefore, rituals are a set of activities that construct particular types of meanings and values in specific ways.⁹² Ritualisation, according to Bell, is

⁸⁹Rose 1993, 29. See also Auffarth 2007, esp. p.407 where he introduces the special term 'interrituality' to indicate the creation of new meanings through 'citing' real ritual practices on stage.

⁹⁰Rose 1993, 79, Ruffell 2011, 28. In the Russian formalist framework it leads to the evolution of new genres and in Bakhtin's theory of carnival it renews and transforms the society: Rose 1993, 125-170, esp. 160.

⁹¹Rosen discusses this false pretence of comedy also using the term ritualisation. He argues that the goal of the comedy's appeal to ritual is to seek for the divine authorisation of humour and mockery which would be otherwise threatening and abusive. He also argues that Aristophanes did not believe that comedy in fact needs such an authorisation so it is a faux-apologia and the aischrology of comedy remains secular: Rosen 2015, 32-33.

⁹²Bell 1997, 82.

a process of differentiating itself as a practice and activity from any other activities in a particular culture; the way of acting that establishes itself as more important and powerful than other practices.⁹³ It is based on producing contrast with other forms of cultural activity and with other ritualised acts.⁹⁴ It is also situational and strategic which means that it creates the very powers and authority on which it claims to rely.⁹⁵ The concept of ritualisation challenges the traditional notions of ritual, religion, and the sacred as something stable and preexisting to which human acts are addressed. It emphasises instead the dynamics of acting in a way that is capable of creating meanings and values. The ultimate goal of ritualisation as a strategic way of acting is to endow the agents through their embodied actions with new capacities and sources of power to reinterpret reality ritually. In this framework, ritual is a quality that action can come to have rather than a category of distinctive kinds of events. According to the theorists of the model of ritualisation, what makes a ritual act ritual is the displaced intentionality of the act so that the participants both are and are not the authors of their ritual actions.⁹⁶

As the concept of ritualisation highlights human creativity, ritual appears not as something fixed and presupposed but rather as something which people can choose to do.⁹⁷ On the one hand, people generally tend to ritualise something which is important to them. On the other hand, a ritual can emerge as a result of ritualisation initiated by one person as a conscious creative endeavour. Bell gives an example of a professor of black studies who invented and promoted an African-based new year ritual for African-American people in 1966 which was successful and efficacious in uniting the community because it was built on shared cultural traditions and symbolic actions.⁹⁸ Furthermore, Bell's theory stresses the relationships of power channeled by ritualisation. It

⁹³Bell 1992, 90.

⁹⁴Bell 1992, 118.

⁹⁵Bell 1992, 197-223.

⁹⁶Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 88-97.

⁹⁷Bell 1997, 81-82.

⁹⁸Bell 1997, 235.

makes the nonhuman power of the god or of the tradition amenable to individual and communal appropriation. Hence, according to Bell, ritual is not an expression of authority but rather a vehicle for construction of authority.⁹⁹

If we apply these aspects of ritualisation to the comic poet and his agency at the dramatic festival, he can be seen as an individual who chooses to ritualise the environment by creating values and channelling conflict, negotiating power relations, and forging images by which the participants (including the audience) can think of themselves as embracing collective identity. Part of the poet's strategy to achieve success in the dramatic competition is to establish his ability and authority to present the daily life of the society. The art of the playwright is to manipulate the audience emotionally and intellectually by merging the polis of the fictional world of the play and the real polis of the people attending the theatrical event. This can be done through incorporating in the plot enacted rituals constructed upon the models of the existing polis cult. The ritualisation is multi-faceted. The representations of cult ritualise the theatrical performance by imbuing it with elements of real religious practices. Comedy pretends that its rituals are real rituals, especially in contrast with tragic rituals which comic characters ridicule as unreal (4.3). The poet engages the audience by drawing on their personal ritual experience (and thus ritualising their theatrical experience) every time when there is a strong meta-theatrical intrusion like sprinkling grains over the audience (4.2) or inviting the spectators to join in a ritual shout (2.3). Through the ritualisation in the parabolic hymns, the comic performances are revealed as important events in the religious life of the polis (see 2.1). Thus by presenting itself as a ritual performance, comedy 'activates' the ritual dimension of drama. In a sense, the comic representations of rituals become – through the dramatic art – *real* rituals for the audience. The present approach, by using the concept of ritualisation, offers a perspective in which the ritual is not something that precedes comedy but in fact is created

⁹⁹Bell 1997, 82.

by it. At the same time, as I have stated in the beginning of the chapter, part of the theatrical convention is that the spectators, although being driven by the illusion, simultaneously remain aware of its artificiality and perceive the familiar religious practices performed on stage as part of the comic system. Hence we can speak of a special type of comic ritual which is both true and fictional.

Chapter 2

Ritual Speech in Old Comedy

2.1 Introduction

Although some types of Greek ritual speech such as prayers or acclamations have been under investigation, the general analysis that would bring them all together under one category of ritual speech has never been done. The concept of *legomena*, words pronounced during the ritual act, was introduced already by Cambridge ritualists and Jane Harrison in particular in the beginning of the 20th century. The dichotomy of *dromena* and *legomena*, however, was interpreted by ritualists as the dichotomy of ritual and myth. The *legomena* understood as mythical narrative eventually overshadowed the actual utterances that were pronounced in ritual contexts – ritual speech. At the same time the ritualist framework, which implies that ritual is non-verbal and action-orientated, was adopted by major scholars in the field, for example, Burkert. This approach started to be systematically challenged only recently¹ and the relation of prayers and other ritual utterances to sacrificial offerings and acts which they accompany still remains largely unexplored. It is generally agreed that the two aspects of a ritual occasion (speech and action) complement each other. Ritual speech expresses and explains the sacrifice whereas the act of offering completes and confirms the request formulated in the prayer.²

¹See the discussion in Pilz 2011. Also Naiden 2013.

²Depew 1997, 250; the discussion of the role of speech in the ritual in Pilz 2011; and in more general perspective: Podemann Sørensen 2014.

Ritual speech has been inadequately studied partly due to the scarcity of evidence. We are very poorly informed about Greek ritual procedure in general, and Greek prayers and hymns are present in very few sources to build the study on. The studies of prayers and other ritual utterances are usually based on the evidence of literary works, including comedy, as well as on (often late) epigraphic evidence.³ Despite the elusive evidence for Greek ritual speech, it is certain that cultic oral performances included a variety of utterances: prayers, oaths, curses, proclamations, songs, supplications, advice given during the sacrificial ceremony and others.⁴ Old Comedy is a valuable source for Greek ritual speech as it shows that it was not secondary but actually crucial to every ritual act. The objective of this chapter is to set out the variety of Greek ritual speech and its functions as reflected in comic plays. I have selected four types of ritual speech for my analysis: cultic songs, prayers, cries, and oracles. A study of dramatic representations is essential for understanding these types of ritual speech. Although prayers and hymns have received a lot of attention in terms of their formal structure and language, there are very few studies that look at religious and social functions they had within the context of particular rituals in which they were embedded. Formal analysis is useful but does not get us very far in that. For instance, the model of the tripartite structure of prayers consisting of invocation-argument-request does not explain in a satisfactory way the rich variety of hymnic openings. Thus, the 'invocation' part often can be called so in a very loose sense as it takes the indirect form with the name of god in the form of the accusative ('I invoke the god', 'I pray the god') and the cletic addresses in the third person instead of the second as well as the self-referential meta-ritual hymnic openings announcing the intention to sing ('Let me sing of'), appealing to other participants ('Let us begin to sing') or even asking about the correct speech of the hymn ('How should I sing of...?').⁵

³Pulley 1997, 2-3; for inscriptions: Depew 1997.

⁴Hitch 2011, 113-114.

⁵West 2007, 305-306, 316-317, Metcalf 2015, 131-139. For the tripartite structure see Furley 2007, 122; Meyer 1933, 2; Pulley 1997, 15, 134.

This problem has fundamental implications for the study of Greek prayers because ritual speech as such exists only in its performative aspect.⁶ Although to achieve a full picture we would actually need to discover suddenly a number of previously unknown ancient texts on the subject, we should nevertheless make an attempt to explore the performative aspect of Greek prayers from the evidence we possess. Comedy comes in here as an important source because as a dramatic genre it does not represent prayers as texts but in fact stages them as part of the dramatic action, usually within a broader ritual scene.

Using a performative approach that regards ritual utterances not as texts but as elements of a ritual event, I shall focus not on the formal aspects of the text but on the functional aspects of hymns and prayers. I examine the representations of ritual speech in comedy from a number of perspectives. The relation between words and acts, *dromena* and *legomena*, within a ritual event has an important place in my study. Speech act theory offers useful theoretical models that allow me to discuss the extent to which words constitute the ritual act. Secondly, I look at the ways ritual speech is announced, framed and embedded in the dramatic action of a play and how this framing reflects the performance of ritual speech during actual ritual occasions. Thirdly, I discuss the function of prayers and other types of ritual speech using the broader context of Greek religion studies.

⁶See Depew 1997, 229-231; Pilz 2011, 154, 151: "In the absence of detailed descriptions of ritual practices in literary sources, it is therefore difficult to reconstruct whole ritual sequences, which would greatly facilitate their interpretation as performative acts."

2.2 Hymns

2.2.1 Comic hymns as part of Greek *khoreia*

Among different types of ritual speech in drama, hymns have been the most studied. About one hundred years ago Cambridge ritualists saw in hymns the ritual core of previous stages of evolution of dramatic genre. The most recent framework for dramatic cultic songs is that developed by Henrichs and Bierl who suggest that the self-referentiality of the dramatic *khoros* reveals the performance as a ritual in honour of Dionysos. Taking Greek culture of choral performances and the existing theories as a starting point, I offer an approach that implies a more conscious attitude of the playwright and his audiences to the theatrical performance. I discuss hymns in the *parabasis* which stand out compared to the rest of comedy being fully-fledged ritual elements of a religious practice. My argument is that Aristophanes intentionally builds them using the formal structure and vocabulary of actual cultic hymns and charging them with the same ritual functions as at a cultic event – they ritualise the performance making it attractive and pleasing for the gods. The ritual potential of the choral performance in the case of comic hymns is so powerful that it transcends the limits of the dramatic representation and creates a ritualised performance with a religious meaning.

Being cultic songs, Greek hymns ensure communication with gods as they usually contain direct invocations accompanied with requests. The praise of the gods produces aesthetic pleasure, the feature which characterises a hymn. Hymns are the non-material counterpart of animal sacrifice, an embellished offering to the gods from mortals who expect to receive help and benevolence from them in return.⁷ Together with sacrifices, hymns constitute two essential cult elements – offerings and praise – and establish a relationship with the

⁷Cf Willi 2007, 14: “a hymn is designed just like a sacrifice to win or retain divine favour so as to create conditions under which a prayer is likely to be heeded. The encomastic or aesthetic element has therefore priority over the request.” See also Naiden 2013, 33,39,327, Parker 2007, 181, Calame 2011b, 336.

divinity whom they are praising.⁸ Kowalzig has recently demonstrated that hymns also have an important ritualising function. While they tell stories of the mythical past they transcend time and place and transform the here and now of the performers and spectators into the religious space and time of ritual.⁹ They unite in one ritual activity the narrative and performative aspects of religion. *Khoreutai* sing in honour of gods and about gods and thus offer society the chief medium through which myth and ritual interact.¹⁰

The ritual functions of Greek choral performances are inseparable from their social contexts. From the social and cultural viewpoint, hymns embedded in musical performances and poetic contests are a crucial part of the so-called Greek song-culture and society,¹¹ being powerful vehicles for producing, transmitting and reaffirming social and religious values of the society during significant moments of communal life.¹² The fundamental social function role of Greek *choros* in the archaic society has been explored by Calame 1977. In social terms music and dance relate participants to the tradition and bring into relation with past generations as well as with each other, shaping civic identity of the group. These capacities enable the educational potential of choral performances for the young of the society.¹³

An access to the performance contexts of Greek hymns is hindered by the literary nature of our evidence. Recent scholarship has put a lot of effort in reconstructing the performance context of Greek lyric and emphasising its essential role in our understanding of Greek hymns. Despite considerable insights, the studies of the performance context remain tentative due to the lack of evidence.

⁸Kowalzig 2004, 49f; Hdt 5.67, Thuc. 3.104, Pl. *Leg.* 804a, 803e1-3.

⁹Kowalzig 2007b, 80.

¹⁰Kowalzig 2007b, 3-5, 68, also Calame 2009b.

¹¹The term appeared for the first time in Herington 1985.

¹²See the discussion of various socially and culturally significant aspects of choral performances in Kowalzig 2007b; also in Swift 2010, 36.

¹³Discussed already in Plato's *Laws*; on the initiatory functions of *choroi*: Calame 1977, 189ff, 361ff, Shapiro 2004, Winkler 1990, Rutherford 2004, 69, Nagy 1995.

The ritual aspects of the choral performances of poetry have often come to the attention of scholars working on performance. Although it is hardly possible to deny the religious function of Greek hymns, the specific expressions of this function as seen in the extant texts remain problematic and debated. With some literary hymns, Pindar's works for instance, we can be almost sure that they were performed at religious festivals and occasions that involved ritual activities. With other hymns, like Homeric Hymns, their *Sitz im Leben* remains obscure. Even if the texts of the hymns contain many components characteristic of ritual, such as addressing the god by name and attributes, cletic requests, repetition, speech-acts, and deictic utterances,¹⁴ one can never be sure whether these are imitations of a ritual undergone through a number of literary adaptations or genuine scripts of invocations that took place in Greece during public and private events. On the other hand, the hymns composed by Pindar and Bakkhylides to be performed at specific occasions are elaborate pieces of poetic work that go far further in their mythological and encomastic narratives than the immediate cultic context would require of a hymn to the gods, that is, praise and prayer. The interaction between literature and ritual is a complex one, revealing a lot of processes of mutual influence, rather than a straightforward dependency of "real event / its imitation in literature". The extent to which Greek choral lyric was perceived by the audiences and performers as religious or secular is, therefore, not something immediately obvious, even more so that the boundary between secular and religious was in general less rigid in ancient Greece than in modern societies. This problem is further hindered by the fact that we have vanishingly few non-literary, 'purely' cultic hymns at our disposal (and usually preserved in quotations by later authors) for a congruent comparison with the literary hymns.¹⁵

¹⁴On *deixis* in Greek hymns in general see Depew 2000; on *deixis* as essential aspect of Pindar's hymns see Bonifazi 2004; on hymns in the Indo-European perspective see West 2007.

¹⁵This problem was indicated already by von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1921, 242. See also the discussion of the case of the dithyramb in Swift 2010, 22-26 and in Ford 2013, 315-317. Devlin 1994 has attempted a case study comparison between literary and cultic hymns in epic genres and concluded that the classification is misleading.

When the context of the performance is lost the classification of cultic and literary hymns cannot be applied and we cannot judge about the function of a hymn in the society.¹⁶ In the case of the Attic theatre we are well informed about the performance context of poetry but lyric hymns embedded in dramatic plays have been treated in scholarship separately from other choral lyric as an institution on its own. As a consequence, the aspects shared by dramatic hymns with other performances of choral songs have been to a large extent overlooked.¹⁷ In recent decades the tendency has appeared to revisit the generic interactions of dramatic choral poetry and other types of lyric poetry through a more integral approach that re-contextualises the dramatic *choros* within a broader framework of choral performances in Greece.¹⁸

The interpretation of hymns embedded in drama presents complex methodological problems that have to be addressed in a separate study and on no account can be resolved in this work.¹⁹ These problems are further complicated by general issues of relationship between parody, representation, and real-world practices in Old Comedy discussed in 1.3. Some principles of my approach to comic hymns specifically can be outlined as following:

- As part of choral culture, choral songs when enacted in tragedy or comedy, actualise in the audiences (both consciously and unconsciously) all social and religious meanings of choral performances. The choral cul-

¹⁶The context is crucial. Devlin discusses hymns quoted in Athenaios which have all formal features of a cultic hymn but were performed at a party, therefore, belonged to the genre of *scolia*, sympotic songs (Page, *PMG* 884-7 = Ath. 694c-d).

¹⁷Swift 2010, 2 writes in the introduction to her study of the relationship between dramatic and non-dramatic *choroi*: “For the tragic chorus is still often regarded as an institution in its own right, and one which requires an explanation to make sense of it, whether this is as ‘the ideal spectator’, ‘the voice of the polis’, or ‘marginalized other’”.

¹⁸In tragedy: Nagy 1995, Nagy 2013, Swift 2010; in comedy: Bierl 2009 and Calame 2004.

¹⁹To illustrate how perplexing the problem of a comic hymn can be let us consider Agathon’s hymn in *Thesm.* 101ff. Scholars do not agree on whether the language of the hymn is exaggerated or normal: Kleinknecht 1937, 101ff; Rau 1967, 104; Furley and Bremer 2001, 352ff; Horn 1970, 94ff. Agathon is described in the text of the play as composing lyrics (52-7, 67). Yet, no piece of Agathon’s work is available for comparison and it is hard to tell to what extent the hymn resembles Agathon’s tragic poetry or imitates something else, for example, his non-tragic poetic works, dithyrambs and other lyric hymns. It has been interpreted also as a dramatic adaptation of a cult hymn which is for some reason ascribed to the comic character Agathon to perform: see commentary in Austin and Olson 2004.

ture is always on the background to a dramatic play.²⁰ In other words, the spectators in the theatre of Dionysos, either Athenian or from another Greek polis, even though they acknowledged the conventions of the genres of tragedy and comedy, still expected the dramatic *choros* to be part of a celebration with certain musical, poetical, social and religious connotations.²¹

- The distinction between ‘ritually authentic’ and literary hymns must be recognised as highly problematic and addressed with caution. These categories, when understood as sharp and final classifications, limit our understanding and dismiss the cultural overlap between ritual and literature in ancient Greece and their mutual transparency. On one hand the form of a hymn would evoke religious overtones and ritualise even a purely secular context (of a symposium, for instance). On the other hand the cultic texts and performances were influenced by and incorporated the cultural and poetic tendencies of their time.
- Based on this misleading distinction is the approach that demands to categorise all hymns in drama as imitating either literature or ritual occasions. As noted above, it is problematic enough to find criteria of distinction between literary and purely ritual elements for the poetry of Pindar and other lyric poets. In drama, it becomes even more complicated as multiple levels of intertextuality and meta-chorality (Swift’s term) are simultaneously at play. Hence, it will be more helpful to speak about ritual components (direct addresses to the divinity, prayers, self-referential elements) that can be shared by a poetic hymn in drama, lyric and epic poetry with cultic occasions, and about the function of these components in a particular dramatic passage.²²

²⁰Kurke 2007, 64 on tragedy: “[...] we need to think about choral performance in its complex social and religious embedding as the substrate or background to tragedy, to be able to see what is the same and what is distinctive or different about tragedy’s appropriation of choral forms.”

²¹See also Carey 2013.

²²Devlin 1994, 107-134 comes to a similar conclusion. Since the literary analysis is her primary focus, she calls these shared components ‘hymnic topoi’ and analyses them across the

- The distinction between ‘serious’ hymns and parodies of cultic hymns in comedy is also problematic and should be avoided even though it is the starting point of standard classifications of hymns in comedy.²³ This terminology, however, is methodologically naive since it is based on the subjective assumptions about seriousness and humour made by the 19th and 20th century scholars. The idea that some hymns in comedy are parody which is meant to evoke laughter and some are genuine addresses to the gods full of religious awe ignores the fact that in ancient Greece one did not contradict the other. Humour, mockery, and laughter were embedded at some religious celebrations as part of the ritual (See on aischrology 1.2).

To recapitulate, the classifications of hymns in comedy that attempt to label them as secular or religious should be abandoned as too simplistic and ignoring the complex dynamics between literature, theatre, religion, and society in ancient Greece. In my analysis I apply to hymns in Old Comedy a perspective that re-contextualises them in these dynamics.

The dramatic *choros* consisting of 24 *khoreutai* is the main performer of hymns in comedy. They draw their activities on the tradition of Greek choral performances, present themselves as ritual agents, and claim the continuum of their performance with ritual *choroi* at cultic events.²⁴ This phenomenon has been examined by Henrichs 1995 in his pioneering discussion of the choral self-referentiality, or ‘the self-description of the tragic *choros* as performer of *khoreia*’, in regards to Greek drama. He considers two tragic scenes: the Erinyes’ prelude to the first stasimon in Aesch. *Eum.* and the second stasimon of Soph. *OT.* In the latter case the *choros* of the old men of Thebes are not physically strong enough to dance yet they refer to their *khoreia* and thus ‘step out’ of the play

corpus of Greek hymns without applying the ritual/literary classification to the texts.

²³Kleinknecht 1937; Horn 1970; Furley and Bremer 2001. This approach appeared already in Crusius 1894, 21.

²⁴To highlight this aspect of comedy I use the spelling *choros* and not the more traditional ‘chorus’. See for example Nagy 1995 who uses the spelling *choros* to include both song and dance as performance activities.

in the act of choral self-referentiality. Another way of tragic or comic *choros* to refer to its own ritual activity is choral projection, that is, recalling model ritual performers and performances in choral odes. Thus the Theban elders in Eur. *HF* compare themselves with the performance of the Delian Maidens singing the *paian* on Delos.²⁵

The ritual self-representation of the comic *choros* has been studied by Bierl 2009 who has examined the choral parts, especially the choral song in *Thesm.* 947-1000, and their ritual function. Bierl has demonstrated that the *choros* performing in comedy balance between the two levels of representation: on one hand, their role assigned within the dramatic plot, and, on the other hand, their social role of the *choros* of citizens celebrating in the theatre the gods of the city. In the example of the scene in the *Women at the Thesmophoria*, the *khoreutai* dance in the orchestra acting as a fictional cultic *choros* at the Thesmophoria festival and at the same time they refer to their activities as performed in honour of Dionysos, the god of the theatre, inviting him to become the leader of their performance. According to Bierl, the self-referentiality is the technique which allows the *choros* to act not only in its fictional role but also as a ritual agent.

The ritual self-representation of the *choros* in the plays is built on the extensive experience of choral performances in the audiences. At the festival of the City Dionysia, the Athenians and their guests enjoyed dancing and singing by twenty eight *choroi* of which only eight were dramatic.²⁶ These *choroi* were recruited from citizens and it is likely that many Athenians had personal experience of *khoreia* during their life. Singing and dancing in a *choros* was a duty to fulfil in the presence of the society and on behalf of it and to represent the city that trained the *choros* on the interstate occasions, for instance of ritual *theoriai*. The occasions of choral performances all had a religious dimension. The dramatic *choroi* at the Dionysiac festivals in Athens also had a religious role

²⁵Henrichs 1996. On the tragic *choroi* drawing on the circular dances in honour of Dionysos see an article by Csapo fthc.

²⁶Wilson 2000, 22. 20 *choroi* for the dithyrambic agon, 3 for tragedy and 5 for comedy.

being involved in the festive ritual activities during the pre-performance and post-performance phases of the festival.²⁷ Presumably they were led by their *khoregoi* in the Dionysiac procession which was one of the major events of the Great Dionysia.²⁸ It is possible that they performed during the procession as well: Xenophon mentions *khoroï* that dance for the gods on the agora during the procession at the City Dionysia.²⁹ The members of the *khoroï* perceived themselves as fulfilling a service for Dionysos and expressed their ritual identity through dedicatory monuments that often represented close relationship of victorious *khoreutai* and *khoregoi* with the god. Commemorative reliefs that decorated the monuments show artists of Dionysos as his worshippers performing a sacrificial procession while the god himself is depicted feasting.³⁰ Walking along the street with these choregic monuments before the performance allowed the participants – citizens-*khoreutai* and citizens-spectators – to enter the religious context of the dramatic agon through creating a link with the list of past winners who gained their place among Dionysos’ friends.

I shall show in the following that the ritual context of Greek *khoreia*, in which every dramatic *khoros* was rooted, makes the choral hymns the primary means of ritualising the comic performances.

2.2.2 Hymns in the *parabasis*

The ritual dimension of comic hymns has been associated largely with the hymns in *parabasis*, parabolic odes. These odes have been studied by scholars as a separate group that is closer to the ‘real’ cultic worship than other hymns embedded in comedy.³¹ Indeed five Aristophanes’ extant comedies and one fragmentary include parabolic odes that contain direct addresses to the gods:

²⁷Revermann 2006a, 162f.

²⁸Wilson 2000, 97f.

²⁹Xen. *Eq.mag.* 3.2. It is not clear whether these *khoroï* are the same that perform later at the festival or some other specially trained for this particular purpose.

³⁰On choral imagery of choregic dedications see Csapo 2010.

³¹This assumption is shared by Fraenkel 1962; Gelzer 1993, 207; Furley and Bremer 2001; Horn 1970.

to the Muses in the *Birds* (737-751, 769-781), *Frogs* (674-685), and *Akharnians* (665-675), to Athena and Poseidon in the *Knights* (581-594, 551-564), and to a group of gods in the *Clouds* (563-574, 595-605). There is also a fragment of lost comedy by Aristophanes which includes a hymn presumably addressed to Apollo (Kassel-Austin, *PCG* 590 = *POxy.* 2737). These odes closely authentic ritual hymns metrically, structurally and thematically.³² The *choros* in them pray for victory in the comic contest and for the divine aid for the performance, reflecting the status of comedy as an element in the state religious festival.³³ These hymns are central for the relation between ritual and drama and require careful investigation.

The Cambridge ritualists regarded the hymns in the *parabasis* as relics of the original ritual sequence that later developed into the dramatic genre of comedy.³⁴ In their view, parabolic odes, being the core of the original ritual performance, were initially addressed to Dionysos even though in the fifth century comic plays these hymns were preserved in the form of songs addressed to other gods. The assumption that lies behind the theory of ritual origins is that the ritual precedes secular drama chronologically and, consequently, songs in the *parabases* are to be interpreted as atavisms of some forgotten practices. The ritualist interpretation has received a lot of criticism. Bierl, criticising this model, has shifted the focus from the particular group of parabolic odes to comic choral performances in general and has made a compelling case that ritual and theatre can exist simultaneously without originating one from another. However, in doing so, Bierl dismissed the special role of the *parabasis* as ritual environment claiming that the *choros* in comedy can represent the ritual tradition of cultic songs whenever it performs song and dance in the play.³⁵ Hubbard, meanwhile, has offered an interpretation that retains

³²Sifakis 1971, 69, Fraenkel 1962, 194-5, 214, Zimmermann 1985, 209.

³³Devlin 1994, 133.

³⁴Detailed analysis of previous scholarship can be found in Bierl 2009, 310n.116. One of the best and most recent summaries on the interpretations of the *parabasis* also in Imperio 2004, 3-104.

³⁵Bierl 2009, 310-312. However, that the scene in the *Women at the Thesmophoria* that Bierl

the special status of the *parabasis* within a play as a fifth-century literary invention, but dispensed with any ritual relevance of the *parabasis*. Equally Sifakis has argued that *parabasis* is not a primitive element but a sophisticated poetic development.³⁶

I suggest an approach that retains the significance of parabolic odes as a special group of performances within a play. I build my argument both on Hubbard's and Bierl's studies, developing Hubbard's ideas about the importance of the *parabasis* for the poetic competition as well as applying to the *parabasis* Bierl's findings about the ambivalent identity of the comic *choros*. I also combine the methodology based on the context of choral performances as outlined above (1.4) with the conceptual framework of ritualisation. Looking at the parabolic odes from the perspective of the Greek *khoreia*, I argue that the intense rituality of these hymns must be explained by the prominence of the *choros* in the *parabasis* which is, in its turn, determined by the specific goals of the comic genre. At the same time the ritual function of parabolic odes lies not in the evolutionary process of the Greek drama, but in the here and now of the theatrical performance. They ritualise the comic plays, showing them as beneficial for the city and bestowing ritual and poetic authority on the *choroi* and the poet behind them.

The *parabasis* is indeed a special environment in comedy. It is the moment in the play when, according to the orthodox description, the dramatic action is suspended, the *choros* 'steps out' of its fictional role and addresses the audience directly on behalf of the playwright. As demonstrated by Hubbard and other critics, in the *parabasis* the poet invites the audience to reflect on the play, to compare it with other poetic works, to assess it and to form their judge-

chose as central for his analysis is quite exceptional in this respect as is the play on the whole (see 2.2.3).

³⁶Sifakis 1971, 20, 59-70, 68-69. Nevertheless, while denying the original cultic relevance of *parabasis*, Sifakis still thinks of the parabolic hymns as relics of *Kultlyrik* that go back to the early ritual stages of history of comedy without giving any explanation about the function of these hymns in the fifth-century drama.

ment (a benevolent one) on it.³⁷ The major elements of the parabolic thematic content are praise and defence of the poet and self-praise of the *choros* aiming at *captatio benevolentiae*.³⁸ The main theme of the *parabasis* is comedy as part of the dramatic competition between poets which reveals ‘drama’s cognitive self-realization as both a literary and social event’.³⁹

Since the *parabasis* referred to the dramatic contest, which was seen largely as the competition between *choroi*, the comic *choros* become the focus of the parabolic performance. The *choros* was central to the contest from the very first stages of the play’s production. It was the main responsibility of the *khoregoi*, rich citizens who funded the theatrical performances, to recruit and train a *choros* for the competition. The poets had to compete to receive a *choros* along with funding for the production of their play and those successful in the selection process were ‘granted a *choros*’ by the archon. The *choros* was among the main recipients of the award. After the contest the victorious *choros* with their *khoregos* and poet were awarded tripods, ivy crowns and animals. The awarding ceremony consisted of a procession and a special victory-celebration, *epinikia* which was a form of ritual thanksgiving for the victory.⁴⁰ The members of the *choros* were main recipients of these *epinikia* celebrations as can be concluded from Plato’s *Symposium*, an example of a sacrificial meal given by the *khoregos*.⁴¹ The tripods, victory-prizes for *choroi*, were placed on the choregic monuments along the street of tripods that the *choroi* passed before the start of the dramatic contest as they approached the theatre in a procession.⁴² The street gives a strong sense of the value of victory in a dramatic agon and the monuments communicate that the *choroi* were main agents in it.⁴³

³⁷The reflection on poetry is present not only in Aristophanes’ plays but also in *parabases* in Kratinos and Eupolis; see Kratin. *Dionysalexandros*, test.i = *POxy.* 663, and in Heath 1990, Luppe 1988, although Storey 2003, 300-303 argues against the identification of Eup. fr. 392 as part of the *parabasis*.

³⁸See Imperio 2004.

³⁹Hubbard 1991, 17.

⁴⁰Wilson 2000, 102, Bierl 2009, 66.

⁴¹Wilson 2000, 102n.243; cf Pl. *Symp.*173a. References to this type of feast can be also found in plays as comic claims for the victory in advance: e.g. *Pax* 1017-22.

⁴²Wilson 2000, 198-235.

⁴³On the value of victory and sense of competition expressed by this street Revermann 2006a, 114ff.

The *choros* are the main agents of the *parabasis* both formally and thematically. Only the *choros* are present on stage in the *parabasis* and they celebrate their own performance as a real event happening in the theatre.⁴⁴ The *parabasis* consists mainly of self-representation, self-glorification and self-celebration by the *choros*. They present themselves not as general practitioners of *khoreia* but as a particular *choros* taking part in the dramatic competition here and now. The *choros* therefore does not 'step out of its role' but rather takes on the standard role of any *choros* within the context of choral performance culture in Greece. In other words, the *choros* acts in the *parabasis* in a sense as other *choroi* competing at a Greek religious festival would do. It is significant for my discussion that parabolic hymns appear in this context. I argue that by taking on in the *parabasis* the usual functions of the *khoreia*, the dramatic *choros* regains the power to transform the performance into a ritual one. To do so they employ a number of traditional choral strategies and techniques, such as the ambivalence of identity, self-referential utterances, and meta-chorality. As a real Greek *choros* they also have the authority to address the gods in hymns to establish communication with them and to present their own performance as a form of worship pleasing to the gods and therefore beneficial for the city. The comic play undergoes the process of ritualisation through the choral performance of parabolic hymns, that is, the *khoreia* in the *parabasis* enables the poet to present his play as a ritual offering to the gods being part of the city's communal worship. Parabolic hymns, therefore, are indeed core to the ritual aspect of comedy because they fulfil the function of ritualisation within a comic play by combining the standard choral strategies with the content specific to the particular play. The goal of this ritualisation is to establish the authority of the *choros* that ensures their victory in the dramatic competition.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Imperio 2004, 22-23, Sifakis 1971, 69.

⁴⁵A similar idea about parabolic ode is presented in passing by Hubbard 1991, 21, without any further development though: "The request for audience favor is thus paralleled and reinforced by a prayer for divine assistance to the chorus, serving to confirm the role of the chorus, and ultimately of the poet, as agents of public benefaction in the city's cultic system."

The execution of this poetic authority appear in the parabolic songs. The motifs of worthy and unworthy poetry and of poetic rivalry also appear to be interwoven in the prayer. The hymns praise the performance of the *choros* and mock other poets, such as tragic poets Karkinos, Morsimos and Melanthios in *Peace* or Phrynikhos in *Birds*. The idea is to discredit them and to prove that the *choros* of the present play deserve the Muse's assistance at the festival while other poets do not as, for example in the antode in the *Peace*. The *choros* names the 'bad' poets, Morsimos and Melanthios and concludes with a prayer (815-817):

ὦν καταχρεμψαμένη μέγα καὶ πλατύ,

Μοῦσα θεά, μετ' ἐμοῦ ζύμπαιζε τὴν ἑορτήν

*Spit at them abundantly, o goddess Muse, and assist me with my performance at the festival.*⁴⁶

The hymns can also refer to the comedy's rival plays in the dramatic contest. The enemies in the last line of the hymn in the *Knights* (discussed above) are competitors; earlier in v. 528 the same word ἐχθροί is used in the context of poetic rivalry.

More importantly, the *choros* refer to their ritual and poetic authority in the rest of the *parabasis*, especially in the *epirrhema*, the part which immediately follows the hymn. In the *epirrhema*, they address the audience communicating the idea of the play's superiority over the other two comedies in the competition and also over other past and future performances. By the means of a choral hymn, a non-religious non-ritual message ("this play is great") is ritualised and charged with religious value.

⁴⁶Throughout this study I quote Aristophanes' plays following the Greek text in Wilson N.G., *Aristophanis Fabulae*, Oxford, 2007, with minor digressions. Translations are mine unless stated otherwise.

Double identity of *choros* in parabolic odes

I shall now consider these strategies in more detail. The ambivalence of choral identity in parabolic hymns is used by the comic poet for a specific purpose. In order to comment on the dramatic contest happening in the theatre, the *choros* act as the group of citizens performing at the festival. At the same time they refer back all the time to the dramatic action and reflect on their fictional character which makes them balance constantly between the two identities. The references to the fictional identity of the *choros* within the framework of a hymn performed by the *choros* as a group of ritual agents, take the dramatic plot to the new level by linking it to the idea of dramatic competition and the festival of Dionysos.

The double identity of the *choros* permeates all parabolic hymns.⁴⁷ It is present first of all in the addresses to deities. In Greek hymns addressing the gods and calling them by their names in the beginning of a hymn was a crucial matter that required a lot of attention to the right choice of words. As Furley notes, the “tricky part of polytheism was first to establish to which god(s) one should address oneself in prayer and sacrifice”. Comic hymns represent a ‘lyric conceptualisation of the process of selecting gods as helpers in a given task’, Furley continues.⁴⁸ The *choros* address a mixture of divine powers that are able to help them as participants in the dramatic competition but also as the patrons of the fictional *choros* of the play. Opening the hymn with an invocation to Muses is a standard element of hymnic style – a Greek singer calls on Muse to assist him in performing praise of the gods.⁴⁹ At the same time the emphasis on the Muses in the comic hymns and elaborate invocation of them can be explained by their special association with poetry and performance *par excellence* and their special power to assist the *choros* in the musical and poetic competition. Athena and Poseidon are addressed in their capacity of granting

⁴⁷Scholars have attempted to classify some of them as performed by the *choros* in their fictional role and *vice versa* but this approach does not seem to work.

⁴⁸Furley 2007, 123-124; see also West 2007, 305-306.

⁴⁹Metcalf 2015, 138-141.

victory in the *Knights*: Poseidon is presented as helper in chariot races; Athena brings Nike with her. These meta-theatrical addresses are intertwined with the fictional role of the *choros*.⁵⁰ The deities are invoked as patrons of a particular *choros* with appropriate attributes and characteristics corresponding to the *choros*' comic character. The Muse in the *Acharnians* is the Acharnian Muse, the fire deity of the demesmen who engage with charcoal. Equally, Poseidon in the *Knights* is addressed as the god dealing with horses, ἵππι' ὄναξ (551), which corresponds to the *choros* as ἱππεῖς.⁵¹ In the *Birds* the *choros* invoke the 'Muse of thickets', Μοῦσα λοχμαία (737). In the *Frogs* the word *terpsis* alludes to the Muse invoked as Terpsichore, the goddess of the dance in particular. In the *Peace* the Muse invoked is the one that puts away war (775-6). These are not just poet's inventions for the sake of comic puns and word play. In fact, the name of the deity within the invocation and cultic song has a ritual meaning. As West notes: "in certain cases the god's name or one of his titles – at least, as understood by the worshipper – itself implies his power to act in the manner desired, and this is pointed out by making an etymological play on it".⁵²

Singing a hymn to deities that are invested with particular characteristics according to the fictional role of the *choros* shows that the *choros* do not completely abandon their fictional identity (they do not 'step out of the role') but on the contrary incorporate it within the other – 'real' – identity of the *khoreutai*.

An illustration of this process can be observed in the ode and antode in the *Clouds*. The *choros* of cloud-goddesses invoke the gods that are connected with the sky and weather: Zeus, Poseidon, Helios, and Aither — a non-traditional deity that has a particular significance in the play.⁵³ These deities correspond to the fictional role of the *choros* but they are also ambivalent since they were all (except Aither) worshipped in Athens. The inclusion of Aither indicates the

⁵⁰See the discussion in Imperio 2004.

⁵¹Furley and Bremer 2001, 2, 333.

⁵²West 2007, 324-325.

⁵³Apparently, this deity is ridiculed as part of Euripides' 'teaching', *Nub.* 265, also in Eur. fr. 941.

choral identity of performers as the Clouds within the plot. In the antode, the *choros* address the gods of the *khoreia* and of Athens – Apollo and Artemis as patrons of choral performance in particular, and Athena as the city-goddess. The invocation of Athena as their patroness (ἡ τ' ἐπιχώριος ἡμετέρα θεός, 601) contradicts the dramatic identity of the *choros* as the Clouds who just came to the city as visitors. Finally, they invoke Dionysos, the patron of the theatre and comedy, calling him 'reveller', *χωμαστής*.⁵⁴ The sequence of deities reveals the intention of the *choros* to ritualise their fictional identity within the framework of the Dionysiac festival. They start with the deities who are patrons of their comic identity and they pass on to the deities of the *khoreia*, to the patroness of the city that hosts the dramatic competition, and finally to the god of the theatre himself.

In the parabolic ode in the *Birds* the *choros*, stress their fictional role as they invoke the Muse that is particularly benevolent to them as birds. They describe their choral activity as addressed to the gods of the wild nature: Pan and the Mountain Mother. Their dramatic identity of birds is emphasised also through onomatopoeic utterances. At the same time, the multiple self-references to their choral activity distance them from their fictional role and highlights the role of the *khoreia* in their performance. They sing of dances, *χορεύματα*, which reveals them as a *choros* of Dionysiac worshippers rather than birds because for the birds are associated mainly with music and song, not dance (see on the dance as characteristic of Dionysiac cult 2.2.3).

The choral ambivalence is also present in the parabolic ode and antode in the *Knights*: Athena is invoked as the most sacred both in war – essential for the *choros* of Athenian young males, knights – and poetry. The *choros* ask her to come and bring the Victory which is simultaneously military and poetic (586-590):

⁵⁴Cf *Thesm.* 987. Dover interpreted the mixture of deities in the two hymns as the invitation of the triad of Zeus, Poseidon, and Athena to come to the festival.

δεῦρ' ἀφικοῦ λαβοῦσα τὴν
ἐν στρατιαῖς τε καὶ μάχαις
ἡμετέραν ξυνεργὸν
Νίκην, ἣ χορικῶν ἐστὶν ἑταίρα
τοῖς τ' ἐχθροῖσι μεθ' ἡμῶν στασιάζει.

*Come hither, bringing Victory who is our assistant in military campaigns
and battles and who is the companion of choral performances and strives
with us against or enemies.*

In the parabolic hymns, the dramatic contest becomes the theme of the invocation and prayer. The *choros* ask the deity to come and assist them in their performance, and to grant them the divine power of song and dance so that they could win the award. The dramatic contest becomes the reason for the deity's epiphany as in *Eq.* 591-4:

νῦν οὖν δεῦρο φάνηθι· δεῖ
γὰρ τοῖς ἀνδράσι τοῖσδε πά-
ση τέχνη πορίσαι σε νί-
κην εἴπερ ποτέ, καὶ νῦν.

*Come and appear then now; for you should by all means grant victory to
these men performing here if you have ever done so before.*

The deity is invited not only to help the *choros* but also to take delight in their performance and to join it which is a typical feature of a Greek hymn.⁵⁵ In the *Frogs* the Muse is addressed with an ambivalent request to delight in their song which can also mean 'make song delightful', ἔλθ' ἐπὶ τέρψιν ἀοιδᾶς ἐμᾶς (674). The gods are summoned to bring the song or the victory with them (λαβοῦσα in *Ach.* and *Eq.*). Again, it is significant that this is not a random song, but the song corresponding to the plot of the play and to the fictional role of the

⁵⁵Depew 2000, 74-75.

choros. Thus, in the *Akharnians* the song has to be violent, vigorous and rustic-sounding (σοβαρόν, εὐτόνον, ἀγροικότερον).

Meta-chorality

The techniques employed by the comic *choros* in their self-representation in the *parabasis* can be defined as, to use Swift's term, meta-chorality. Swift uses it in her study of lyric genres in tragedy (2010) to describe a technique of generic interaction that 'draws our attention to the fact that the tragic chorus still represents a chorus and does so by alluding to choral song in other contexts and the social role it can play'. For the present study, meta-chorality means that the intensified chorality presents the comic *choros* as ritual agents. In parabatic hymns the *choros* draw on other choral performances to affirm themselves as performers of the *khoreia* and to activate a range of social and religious meanings encoded in the practice of choral performances.

The meta-chorality in comic hymns is achieved by using the high style language of the lyric genres and the structural patterns of ritual speech. This feature of parabatic hymns has been studied by scholars in detail who were interested in finding intertextual parallels with other hymns written by lyric poets, Pindar, for instance.⁵⁶ The parallels include the invocations of Muse in high-style manner reminiscent of lyric poetry.⁵⁷ A direct citation of Stesikhoros' *Oresteia* is identified in the *Peace* by the scholiast.⁵⁸ In the *Clouds* the opening of the hymn is a dithyrambic formula according to the scholia: *grant me thy presence too, Phoibos Lord* (595 ἀμφί μοι αὖτε, Φοῖβ' ἄναξ).⁵⁹ In the *Knights* the formulaic μεδέων, ruler, in 560 and 585 indicates parallels with lyric hymns.⁶⁰ In the parabatic ode performed by the Birds the vocabulary of high style lyric

⁵⁶See, e.g., Kugelmeier 1996, 83-95, Willi 2007, 35-37, also Fraenkel 1962, Gelzer 1972.

⁵⁷Kugelmeier 1996, 95.

⁵⁸V. 775 and 797; analysis and discussion in detail in Kugelmeier 1996, 84-90; also in Horn 1970, 17-18.

⁵⁹Kugelmeier 1996, 90-91. Dover 1968, 175 translates the phrase as 'let me also sing of'. The expression occurs in Terpander fr. 697 PMG, *Hymn.Hom.Pan.* 1, Eur. *Tro.* 511, Kratin. fr. 67.

⁶⁰Furley and Bremer 2001; also discussed in Fraenkel 1962, 194.

songs is used: ποικίλη (*intricate*), φυλλοκόμου (*thick-leaved*), ξουθῆς (*twittering*), ἀναφαίνω (*proclaim*).⁶¹ The image of the bee used in their song as the symbol of a poet is also very common. Dunbar notes that the form of the invocation without the actual prayer to come or self-reference of praying is normal for lyric poetry.⁶²

The lexical, metrical, and structural parallels between the parabolic hymns and Greek lyric poetry have been often interpreted as intertextuality, that is, references to a specific choral performance or author.⁶³ However, the identification and attribution of quotations embedded in comic plays are very problematic. First of all the search for the particular lyric source of the citation is hindered by the insufficiency of evidence. For ancient readers the provenance of the citation was already not obvious. This can be illustrated by a papyrus fragment of Aristophanes (fr. *adesp.* 590 = *POxy.* 2737).

The text of the papyrus presents a commentary on a passage of Aristophanes' lost play hypothetically identified as *Anagyros*. It contains lemmas that come from the *parabasis* to judge from the metre and content, as identified by Fraenkel 1962. Two lemmas belong to the openings of the ode and antode respectively. The other two lemmas coming from *epirrhema* and *antepirrhema* discuss the circumstances of staging and details about the appointment of the *khoros* at the Lenaia festival and the Dionysia, mentioning 'new *didaskaloi*', producers, and dramatic contests, – the content which is typical for these parts of comedy.

1. *ode*: l. 19-20 κύ[κν]ος ὑπὸ πτερύγων τοιόνδε (*swan from under the wings this (song?)*),⁶⁴

2. *epirrhema*: l. 27-28 ἀλλ'ἔχρηῖν χορὸν [δι]δόντας τὸν ἐπὶ Ἀθηναί[ωι] σκοπε[τ]ιν

⁶¹Cf ποικίλος ὕμνος in Pind. *Ol.* 6.87 and *Nem.* 5.42.

⁶²With examples in Theogn. 15-18, Pind. *Pyth.* 1. 1-4, Aesch. *Ag.* 1470-1. Soph. *Ant.* 781-6.

⁶³See especially Hubbard 1991, 32.

⁶⁴Here and further the Greek text of the fragments of comedy follows Kassel-Austin, *PCG*. Trojahn 2002, 63-65 excludes τοιόνδε from the lemma and prints it in the text as the first word of the commentary following Calame on Alkman fr.231, cited in Trojahn. However, Gelzer 1972, 148 gives reliable parallels for τοιόσδε in hymnic language.

(but those who were assigning the khoros in the Lenaeian competition should have considered...);

3. *antode*: 1. 52 χρυσοκόμα φιλόμολπε (o golden-haired lover of song and dance);
4. *antepirrhema*: 1. 53-56 ὡς δίκαιον εὐθέως/ καταπαλα[ί]ειν ἐστὶ τούτου[ς το]ῦς νέους διδασκάλου[ς]. (So that it is simply fair to overthrow these young producers).

The lemmata from hymns suggest that both ode and antode of the *parabasis* are hymns to Apollo, and the antode opens with a cletic invocation of him. The language of the two openings present images, epithets and structures typical of the hymns in honour of this god. The commentary to the hymns confirms this. The author lists the lyric poets who are likely to be the source of citation in the ode (20-27):

..]τὸ μὲν Ἀρισταρχεῖον δο-
κοῦν ὅτι Τερπάνδρου ἐστὶ(ν)
ἦ] ἀρχή, Εὐφρόνιος δὲ ὅτι ἐκ
τῶν Ἴωνος μελῶν, ὁ δὲ τὴν
παραπλοκὴν ὅτι τῶν Ἀλ-
κμᾶνος. ἔστι δ' ἐκ τῶν εἰς Ὀμη-
ρον (ἀναφερομένων) ὕμνων.

*Aristarkhos' opinion is that this is the opening of Terpander's poem, but Euphronios says that this comes from Ion's songs, and the author of 'Poetical quotation' says it comes from Alkman's poetry. And the expression is also in one of the hymns attributed to Homer.*⁶⁵

Ἀλκμᾶνος ἦ ἀρχή (The beginning of Alkman).⁶⁶

This ancient commentary shows that although the 'lyric' style was felt by the recipients of the hymn, even the educated authors of commentaries, who

⁶⁵Of the poems mentioned here only Homeric hymn to Apollo is extant. It has indeed a parallel phrase that opens the song, 21.1: Φοῖβε σὲ μὲν καὶ κύκνος ὑπὸ πτερύγων λίγ' αἰεῖδει.

⁶⁶= Davies, *PMGF* S1; ἀρχή is a technical term for a hymn opening; see Race 1982, 5-8; but it probably means here the beginning of the book of poems. See Gelzer 1972, 141-144.

had a considerable number of poetic texts at their disposal, could not agree on the source of citation. The range of the opinions is likely to mean that all the mentioned poets could use the phrase in their songs.⁶⁷ The language in the antode is also very typical with parallels in Pindar, Bakchylides, Stesikhoros, Alkaios and Anakreon.⁶⁸ The hymns in the fragment, therefore, exhibit the shared hymnic language employed in a variety of poetic works. Ancient scholars, however, disregarded this possibility and were instead preoccupied with the search for literary allusion. Hence, despite explicit indications in the scholia, we should not take the lexical parallels to be deliberate citations of other poets positioning the hymn in the literary milieu by the means of intertextuality. Comic hymns rather exploit the basic 'cultic' language of hymns in order to produce ritualised speech.

To bring the discussion to a close, parabolic hymns share a common style with other existing ritual practices or literary works but are not dependent on them. Instead, they fulfil the function of ritualisation within a comic play by employing a set of choral strategies such as the ambivalence of choral identity and meta-chorality, combining them with the content specific to the particular play. The cletic invocations of the parabolic hymns are a powerful ritual form that the *choros* use to present their performance as relevant for the polis cult at the public festival and therefore deserving of an award. The *choros'* self-praise and drawing attention to their own choral performance through deictic markers is a ritualising tool as it transforms the song into a ritual offering inviting the god himself to assess the choral art and take delight in it.⁶⁹ This corresponds to the main function of the *parabasis* to present the competing *choros* to the audience in the most beneficial light. The goal of this ritualisation is to establish the authority of the *choros* which will ensure their victory in the dramatic competition. The ritual mastery and efficiency of the *choros* (in the art

⁶⁷Cf. also *Av.* 769.

⁶⁸Gelzer 1972, 143.

⁶⁹These features is typical for Greek hymns in general: Depew 2000.

of the hymn) has a strategic aim of establishing the poetic mastery of the poet (in the following *epirrhema*). In conclusion, the parabolic hymns are indeed the ritual core of the comedy but not in the sense proposed by the ritualist school. It is the part of comedy that makes the audience reconsider the fictional plot and imaginary setting of the play as integrated into the polis cult of the gods.

2.2.3 Songs accompanying cultic dance

Whereas in the *parabasis* the *choros* present themselves as agents of ritual song, in non-parabolic contexts the choral performance highlights the ritual aspect of the dance. The two examples of such songs outside the *parabasis* in the extant corpus of comedies are present in the *Women at the Thesmophoria* and *Frogs*. Both passages have parallels with parabolic environment. The two choral songs serve as a kind of *parabasis* substitutes in the plays. There is no lyric song in the *parabasis* in the *Women at the Thesmophoria* while in the *Frogs* the epirrhematic speech, normally performed in the parabolic environment, is instead moved to the *parodos* and placed after the choral hymn. Scholars have noted that the parabolic tone and mode of these hymns.⁷⁰ In these two scenes, the *choros* also present themselves simultaneously as a group of performers at the festival and a fictional character of the comic plot. In the *Women at the Thesmophoria*, they address the gods of the city, of the dramatic festival and choral activities, Dionysos, Pan, Apollo and Artemis, as well as refer to their performance in honour of the goddesses of the fictional festival, Demeter and Kore, and recall the activities corresponding to their fictional role such as fasting on the second day of the Thesmophoria. In the *Frogs*, the *choros* of initiates invite the god Iakkhos, who is the god of the Eleusinian mysteries but also one of the names of Dionysos, to join them in a ritual dance. Their choral performance indicates the comic nature of the *choros*: they play, dance, jest, and pronounce both funny and serious things. At the same time, their choral dance is repre-

⁷⁰Dover 1993a, 239; Horn 1970, 129-138; Bierl 2009, 186ff.

sented as a processional journey to Eleusis, part of the celebration of the Great Mysteries.

The *choroi* in these two scenes do not affirm their poetic authority through reflections on poetry and requests to grant victory as explicitly as in the *parabasis*. Although some references to the dramatic competition may be present (like the prayer to Artemis to grant victory in *Thesm.* 972), the focus of these hymns is not on poetry and the divine assistance in the poetic competition but rather on the dance as the main choral activity. The choral song in these scenes concentrates on the dance as well. References to it are so numerous that the hymns essentially become the ‘scripts’ of a dance. In the *Frogs*: the *choros* describing themselves: ἐλθὲ ...χορεύσων 326; ἀγνήν, ἱερὰν ὁσίοις μύσταις χορείαν 335-336; φιλοπαίγμονα τιμήν 334; ἔξαγ’ ἐπ’ ἀνθηρὸν ἔλειον δάπεδον χοροποιόν, μάκαρ, ἦβην. 351-352; παίζων 375; παῖσαι τε καὶ χορεῦσαι 388; παίσαντα 392; τῆσδε τῆς χορείας 396; in the refrain Ἴακχε φιλοχορευτά 403, 408, 413; παίζειν τε καὶ χορεύειν 407; συμπαιστρία 411; and Dionysos’ final consent: παίζων χορεύειν βούλομαι 415;

In the *Women at the Thesmophoria*: ποσὶν ἄγ’ εἰς κύκλον 954; ῥυθμὸν χορείας 956; βαῖνε καρπαλίμοι ποδοῖν 957; κυκλοῦσαν χοροῦ κατάστασιν 958; χορομανεῖ 961; εὐκύκλου χορείας 968; πρόβαινε ποσί 969; τοῖς χοροῖσιν ἐμπαίζει 975; χαρέντα χορείας 981; χάριν χορείας 982; φιλοχόροισι 990; χοροῖς τερπόμενος 992; ἀναχορεύων 995; κύκλω 1000.

Almost every line of the song contains a self-reference to dancing. Remarkably, in both scenes the *choroi* allude to circular dances that were mainly associated with non-dramatic cultic performances, such as Dionysiac dithyrambs and perhaps Eleusinian rites. Tragic Euripidean *choroi* often associate themselves by choral projection with circular *choroi* when the ritual aspect of their choral activity is highlighted.⁷¹ Dance is especially prominent in the cult of Dionysos. Dionysos is reputed to be a choral leader himself and imagery shows

⁷¹The *choros* in the *Women at the Thesmophoria*, therefore, refers not only to the cultic models but also ridicules Aristophanic dancing and searching *choroi*. See the discussion in Csapo fthc.

his followers as dancers.⁷² The verb *παίζω* which is another Greek term for dance is often associated with Dionysiac religious practices, and personified *Paidia* appears in iconographic representations among dancing maenads and satyrs as a female companion of the god.⁷³

Therefore, the references to dance in the scenes highlight the ritual function of the *choros* as worshippers in the plot.⁷⁴ At the same time, associations of the *choros* with Dionysos establishes the ritual character of the performance and situates it within the cultic environment of the dramatic festival.⁷⁵

The song which accompanies the hymn reveals an important function of ritual speech – to describe the ritual action, to direct it, to comment on it, and to establish the link between the worshippers and the deity through explicit self-referential utterances. The rich self-referentiality of the song presumably imitated the actual content of the choral songs accompanying dancing. The dithyramb was, for instance, a highly self-referential genre that reflected on its own performance and function.⁷⁶ Another example is Alkman's *Partheneion* in which the *choros* refer to their own performance and make it the theme of the song. The *choros* name themselves, describe their appearance, their actions, their intentions, and state their authority as a *choros* to praise and blame Agido in a series of deictic utterances.⁷⁷ The self-description of performers as *choros* is frequent in Pindar's *paian*s, *partheneia* and dithyrambs. Self-referentiality and enunciative references to choral performance are encountered also in Bakkhylides' *epinikia*.⁷⁸ This function of the ritual speech will be explored in more detail in the next section discussing prayers.

⁷²Eur. *Hel.* 1362-1363; Soph. *OC* 678-80, *Ant.* 152; Xen.*Symp.* 9, 4. In imagery: LIMC III Dionysos 151, 415, 472.

⁷³For personifications of *Paidia* see Smith 2011, 64ff. The terms *παίζω* and *παιδιά* are difficult to translate as they include fun, laughter, enjoying oneself, and festivity. See Dover 1993b, 173ff.

⁷⁴References to the choral dance serve to emphasise the ritual activity of the *choros* also in tragedy; see Davidson 1986, Henrichs 1995.

⁷⁵Henrichs 1995, 90.

⁷⁶Kowalzig 2013, 4, Calame 2013, 340-345.

⁷⁷On the *choros* of maidens contesting a rival group of girls: Page 1951, 52-57 and Ferrari 2008, 109-118.

⁷⁸See Calame 2011a, 128-137.

In this section, I claimed that we should understand choral performances on stage as the process of ritualisation that transforms a comic performance into a ritual performance by the means of *khoreia* and its standard techniques. From this perspective comic hymns have a function similar to other Greek hymns at any religious festival. Greek hymns link the here and now of the event (for example, the athlete who has won in the agon or the arrival of a theoric embassy to a sanctuary) with the mythical narratives of the superhuman beings preexistent in the reality of the 'eternal'. The comic hymn has the same dynamics: it associates a particular comic play which is being performed in the here and now of the theatre with the ritual reality of the Dionysiac festival and its dramatic contest of the *choroi* in honour of the gods of the city. The comic hymn therefore is not something secondary in its relation to the cult. It is not just a literary imitation of existing practice but is in fact a creative type of ritual speech with specific religious and social meanings. In the case of the *parabasis*, the performance of a hymn endows the *choros*, the competitor at the festival, with the authority to praise themselves as performers both of high-quality poetry and ritually significant activity. The representation of the ritual performance on stage transmits the message about the comedy as something religiously relevant. By claiming to be a 'real' religious ritual, comedy becomes, in a sense, what it represents.

2.3 Prayers

2.3.1 Performative aspect of prayers

While hymns are artistic performances and have a distinct poetic and musical form, prayers are ritual utterances without additional embellishment. They lack aesthetic dimension and express more direct requests to the gods than hymns.⁷⁹ Because prayers are more embedded in a religious occasion as part

⁷⁹See the discussion in Furley 2007, 118-119, 121.

of the ritual communication between humans and gods and within the group of worshippers, the performance context is more important for this type of ritual speech. Comedy presents prayers within the performance context of the imaginary comic world.⁸⁰ Since prayers are enacted in plays as part of the scenes that imitate the real-world cultic performances, the evidence of comedy can be used to reconstruct the function of prayers in actual Greek rituals.

In order to study the prayers in their performative aspect, I have selected five scenes – in the *Wasps* (860-890), *Birds* (846-1057), *Women at the Thesmophoria* (295-371) and two scenes in the *Peace* (428-458, 937-1125) – where prayers are embedded in a larger ritual sequence. Two of the scenes under analysis, in the *Wasps* and *Women at the Thesmophoria*, represent the ritual that precedes the opening of a civic event, a law court session and the meeting of the Assembly, respectively. The other three, in the *Peace* and *Birds*, imitate the ritual sequence involving an offering, sacrifice or libation. I shall concentrate on the role that prayers play in the (fictional) ritual environment in these scenes.

As outlined in 2.1, the relation between speech and action within one ritual event has not been studied sufficiently. Old Comedy contributes to the question some important evidence showing prayers as essential part of the sacrificial offering and of Greek ritual in general. In comic scenes ritual speech is represented as an indispensable part of a sacrifice or libation. Moreover, a ritual offering is always accompanied by prayers in comedy. It is remarkable that prayers and not hymns are mainly chosen for the representation of sacrifices. The ritual speech in these scenes are distributed between various speakers.

⁸⁰Representations of prayers in comedy are more direct than in its tragic counterpart. For example, one of the most frequent formulas, that mark rituals in comedy is the proclamation of *euphemia*: *Ach.* 237-8, 241, *Pax* 46, 434, 1316, *Thesm.* 39, *Ran.* 354, *Nub.* 263, *Plut.* 758; see Willi 2007. In comic plays it is embedded in the dramatic action whereas in tragedy we find mainly reports or descriptions of *euphemia*: *Aesch. Ag.* 28, 595; *IT* 1403, *IA* 1469, 1564, *Soph.* fr.893. A detailed discussion of the symbolic of *euphemia* in tragic contexts can be found in Göttsche 2011, 95-288. The concept of *euphemia* is often used in tragic contexts not as ritual formula, but as a description of the quality of the speech. Such use of the adjective εὐφημος is typical for tragedy in or out of ritual context *Aesch. Ag.* 636, 1247, *Soph. Aj.* 362, 591, *OC* 132, *El.* 630, *Eur. Ion* 98, *Bacch.* 70, *Tro.* 1072. A direct announcement of *euphemia* as part of the performed ritual in tragedy can be found in *Aesch. Eum.* 1035, 1039, and *Cho.* 386.

The *choros* – in contrast with the scenes representing the choral performances – does not play any central role but only joins in the prayers pronounced by the dramatic characters. In the two selected scenes the main prayers are spoken out in prose (*Av.* 864-88, *Thesm.* 295-311), which makes them stand out for the audience in a noticeable way. In the other two plays, the metre is changed to anapaests (*Vesp.* 875-879, *Pax* 975), and extrametrical ritual formulas (*Vesp.* 874 ἰήιε Παιάν, *Pax* 433-434 σπονδῆ σπονδῆ εὐφημεῖτε εὐφημεῖτε) are used. The breaking of the theatrical convention of metrical speech emphasises the role of prayers in the ritual representation. The structure of the scenes reveals the close connection between the ritual speech and ritual action, as I am going to demonstrate below in detail.

The Peace

There are two scenes in the play which include prayers. In the first one Hermes announces the libation, proclaims *euphemia*, and utters a prayer to Dionysos and the goddess Peace which is repeatedly interrupted by Trygaios' comments (434-457). The prayer concludes with a libation (453-457).⁸¹

EP. ἡμῖν δ' ἀγαθὰ γένοιτ'. ἰή Παιών, ἰή.

TP. ἄφελε τὸ παῖσιν, ἀλλ' ἰή μόνον λέγε.

EP. ἰή ἰή τοίνυν, ἰή μόνον λέγω.

Ἐρμῆ, Χάρισιν, Ὠραιοσιν, Ἀφροδίτη, Πόθῳ.

TP. Ἄρει δὲ μή. EP. μή. TP. μηδ' Ἐνυαλίῳ γε. EP. μή.

HERMES *May the blessings be upon us. Iē Paion, iē.* TRYGAIOS *Omit the 'striking' part, say 'Iē' alone.* HERMES *Iē iē then, I'm saying iē alone.* *To Hermes, Graces, Seasons, Aphrodite, Desire [libation].* TRYGAIOS *But not to Ares.* HERMES *No.* TRYGAIOS *Neither to Enualios.* HERMES *No.*

⁸¹I follow the assignment of lines by Sommerstein 1985, 153.

In this scene, the ritual acclamation of *Iē Paion* accompanies the ritual act of libation (on libation see below on the scene in the *Wasps*). The scene implies that the words of the prayer and the ritual acts have equal impact on the efficacy of the ritual. Trygaios corrects Hermes: the verb 'to strike' (which he mishears instead of *Paion*) should not be used in a prayer to the goddess of Peace. By correcting the ritual speech, Trygaios prevents Hermes from making a libation to Ares on the grounds that it is inappropriate for the purpose of their endeavour.

The second relevant scene in the play represents the sacrificial sequence in which prayers and actions are also closely associated. It starts with the preparation of a sheep and the altar along with all necessary ritual paraphernalia: basket, barley-grains, garlands, knife, lustral water (937-938, 948-9, 956-7). When everything is ready, the water and the barley-grains are sprinkled over the altar and the animal. Then Trygaios begins the sacrificial ritual with an exhortation to pray (967), followed by a long prayer to the goddess Peace (974-1015) which is concluded with the sacrifice (1016-117). As in the libation scene, the end of the prayer is supposed to correspond to the ritual act itself, in this case of the sacrificial slaughter. At that point the language of the prayer becomes the focus of attention as having direct impact on the efficacy of the ritual act which it describes. Trygaios orders the slave to take the knife and to perform the sacrificial slaughter. The Slave, however, objects that it is forbidden to kill the victim on the altar of the goddess of Peace and suggests to kill the victim inside the house. The verbs for sacrificing which are used here illustrate the close connection of ritual speech with the acts. The verb of bloody slaughter σφάζειν cannot be accepted for the ritual in honour of Peace (1016-1020):

TP. ταῦτ' ὧ πολυτίμητ' , εὐχομένοις ἡμῖν δίδου.
 λαβὲ τὴν μάχαιραν· εἴθ' ὅπως μαγειρικῶς
 σφάζεις τὸν οἶν. OI. ἀλλ' οὐ θέμις. TP. τὴ τί δή;

ΟΙ. οὐχ ἤδεταί δῆπουθεν Εἰρήνη σφαγαῖς,
οὐδ' αἱματοῦται βωμός.

TRYGAIOS *Give us all this, o the most honoured one, as we are praying.*

Take the knife. And try to slaughter the sheep as professionally as you can.

SLAVE *But this is forbidden.* TRYGAIOS *Why is that?* SLAVE *The goddess Peace certainly does not take pleasure in slaughter nor the altar is bloodied.*

The verb σφάζειν was in particular associated with cruel and bloody murder of tragic poetry (see 4.3.3) and it corresponds well to the paratragic style of Trygaios' speech. His long prayer to the goddess Eirene about shopping and trading in the agora ends with a passage about a tragedian Melanthios at which point he sings a lyric aria from Euripides' *Medea* (1012-1015). It is possible that having cited the tragic play Trygaios has not changed his tragic intonation and gestures and carries on speaking in the same tragic manner. He uses the tragic vocabulary of animal sacrifice: σφαγαῖς, αἱματοῦται.⁸² The Slave's correction makes Trygaios aware of inappropriateness of the tragic type of sacrifice. He changes immediately the stylistic register and drops the vocabulary of slaughter, σφαγαῖς, substituting for it the verb θύσας, the standard and unmarked word for the sacrificial ritual. The interruption and correction of ritual speech would be perhaps impossible during real ritual events. However, comic representations express human concern about correctness of speech and reveal the significance of utterances in the cultic performance. It is crucial that ritual words are correct and correspond to the message of the ritual.

The Wasps

In the *Wasps* the prayer accompanies a libation. Libations – ritual pouring out of liquids – are general offerings that all Greek gods received. Probably the

⁸²Aesch. *Eum.* 187, *Soph. El.* 37, *Eur. Andr.* 399, *El.* 123, *Ion* 616; Aesch.*Ag.*1656, *Eur. Andr.* 260, *Phoen.* 1149, *Bacch.* 1135.

most usual ritual in Greek religion, they are ubiquitous both on private and public level. Libation is closely associated with prayer, especially personal (and sometimes spontaneous). In comedy, libation affirming the words of the prayer is represented in the *Wasps* and *Peace*. It is usually followed by drinking up of what remained of the liquid (cf in the *Akharnians*).⁸³ It was an act of piety and consecration showing respect to the gods.⁸⁴ In public sphere libations accompanied animal sacrifices and affirmed the efficacy of other rituals and statements such as oaths, contracts, and peace treaties.⁸⁵

Libation comes into special focus also in the *Akharnians* when Dikaiopolis makes a personal and spontaneous peace treaty for himself and his deme. The libation in that scene plays with several meanings of the Greek word σπονδαί which is simultaneously a ritual libation, wine used in it, a peace treaty, and the peaceful life as the result of the peace settlement. In other scenes in comedy where libation is represented, its liquid nature is emphasised as well. Since Old Comedy employs obscene and scatological humour among its comic techniques the ritual outpouring of libations can serve as euphemism for lubrication and ejaculation⁸⁶ as well as excrement (*Ran.* 479).

In the scene in the *Wasps* the act of libation and mixing different substances of honey and milk paraphrases the prayer and the desired aim of the ritual to soften the old man's character. In the passage the word 'prayers' can refer to 'ritual' as a whole including both ritual words and acts. At all stages of ritual preparations and performance speech and action interact with each other and the words of prayers are in fact themselves ritual. The scene demonstrates this in several ways:

1. Ritual objects are physically manipulated in preparation for *prayers* which means that prayers were not perceived as something separate from the

⁸³Hdt. 7.192, Xen. *An.* 4.3.13. Cf Socrates' pious intention to make a libation with the poison he is about to drink in Plato's *Phaedo*; see Patton 2009, 33.

⁸⁴Patton 2009, 28.

⁸⁵Patton 2009, 56.

⁸⁶Seaford Fthc.

ritual act but on the contrary were central to it. When Bdelykleon commands the preparation of fire, wreaths, and incense he says (860-2):

ἀλλ' ὡς τάχιστα πῦρ τις ἐξενεγκάτω
καὶ μυρρίνας καὶ τὸν λιβανωτὸν ἔνδοθεν,
ὅπως ἂν εὐξώμεσθα πρῶτα τοῖς θεοῖς.

*Now will someone bring fire as quickly as possible and myrtle-wreaths
and the incense from the house so that we can first pray the gods.*

2. Libation and prayer are referred to as one event. The *choros* recognise this suggestion as a start of the ritual and assert that they will join the libations and the prayers with an appropriate speech (863-865):

καὶ μὴν ἡμεῖς ἐπὶ ταῖς σπονδαῖς
καὶ ταῖς εὐχαῖς
φήμην ἀγαθὴν λέξομεν ὑμῖν

*And we joining these libations and prayers shall utter good words for
you...*

3. The words of prayer describe and paraphrase the ritual action. After the formula of *euphemia* (868) and a short hymn (869-874), Bdelykleon pronounces the second prayer to Apollo (875-884)⁸⁷. The offering is supposed to be performed during this prayer. This can be seen from the content of Bdelykleon's request which is parallel to the ritual act of libation itself (875-878):

ὦ δέσποτ' ἀναξ γείτον Ἄγυιεύ, τοῦμοῦ προθύρου προπύλαιε,
δέξαι τελετὴν καινὴν, ὦναξ, ἣν τῷ πατρὶ καινοτομοῦμεν.
παῦσόν τ' αὐτοῦ τουτὶ τὸ λίαν στρυφνὸν καὶ πρίνινον ἦθος,
ἀντὶ σираίου μέλιτος σμικρὸν τῷ θυμιδίῳ παραμείξας.

⁸⁷It was probably addressed to the stone pillar *Agyieus*, which is present on the stage.

O master lord and neighbour Agyieus, the one standing at the entrance of my door, accept this new rite, o lord, which we are introducing for my father. Stop him from being too harsh and tough, mixing a bit of honey in his dear little heart just like in newly boiled wine.

In the last example the request to assuage the father's character paraphrases the ritual actions of mixing libations.⁸⁸ Therefore, the words share the ritual power with the act itself.

The Birds

The sacrificial scene in the *Birds* features a long prayer to the birds pronounced by the priest. The prayer is represented as deliberately close to authentic practices: Hestia is invoked first as was the case of historical prayers.⁸⁹ Furthermore, it is significant that the priest says the prayer in prose while Peisetairos' remarks throughout the scene are in iambic trimeter. The prayer in this scene is part of sacrificial preparations: Peisetairos orders the slave to fetch the basket and the lustral water and organises a procession (846-859). As in the passages in other plays, the scene reveals the direct impact of the words of prayer on the sacrificial rite. At one point Peisetairos realises that the gods invoked – some very large bird species – will hinder the sacrifice. The threat of a 'wrong prayer' is so serious that he makes the decision to drive the Priest out and to carry on sacrificing himself (890-894):

ἐπὶ ποῖον, ὦ κακόδαιμον, ἱερεῖον καλεῖς
ἀλαιέτους καὶ γῦπας· οὐχ ὄρᾳς ὅτι
ἰκτῖνος εἷς ἂν τοῦτό γ' οἰχοῖθ' ἀρπάσας;
ἄπελθ' ἀφ' ἡμῶν καὶ σὺ καὶ τὰ στέμματα·
ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτὸς τουτογὶ θύσω μόνος.

⁸⁸The ritual speech as paraphrase is discussed in Podemann Sørensen 2014.

⁸⁹*Av.* 864. *Plat. Cra.* 401b-d; ἀφ' Ἑστίας ἀρξέσθαι became proverbial meaning 'begin at the beginning'; Dunbar 1995, 510.

To what sacrificial victim, o miserable fool, are you inviting vultures and ospreys? Don't you see that one single kite could grab this animal and leave? Go away from us and take your wreaths with you. I am going to sacrifice it on my own.

This shows – though in a comic way – that the words of prayers were perceived very seriously by the Greeks as the means to evoke the presence of the gods and to initiate the ritual power related to their presence. The *khoros* confirms this in a short hymn (895-900): you must summon only one god if you don't have enough meat to offer for many (see also below 4.2.2 and 4.2.3).

The Women at the Thesmophoria

The protagonist and the leader of the women Kritylla pronounces a solemn prayer in order to open the meeting of the improvised women's Assembly with it. She starts with the proclamation of *euphemia* and concludes it with an *Ie Paion* formula (295-311). After a short hymn, there follows the second prayer to the gods in which a solemn curse is embedded (331-351). It imitates the Athenian fifth-century practice of opening the meeting of the Assembly with a curse upon enemies and traitors.⁹⁰ There is no sacrifice or libation in this scene but the curse itself must be regarded as a ritual speech act. The function of the prayers which frame this curse is to summon the gods who ensure its efficacy and 'ratify' it. Thus the *khoros* respond to Kritylla expressing their consent with the curse (368-371):

ἀλλ', ὦ παγκρατὲς
Ζεῦ, ταῦτα κυρώσειας, ὥσθ'
ἡμῖν θεοὺς παραστατεῖν
καίπερ γυναιξὶν οὔσαις.

O almighty Zeus, give force to these so that the gods assist us although we

⁹⁰The curse is attested in oratory prose Isoc. 4.157, Din. 2.16. Another typical formula of the opening of the Assembly to follow in 372: ἔδοξε τῇ βουλῇ.

are women.

The function of a prayer to ensure the efficacy of human rituals can be paralleled also in the libation scene in the *Peace* where the first Trygaios' request to the goddess Peace is to accept the sacrifice (974-977):

ὦ σεμνοτάτη βασίλεια θεά,
πότνι' Εἰρήνη,
δέσποινα χορῶν, δέσποινα γάμων,
δέξαι θυσίαν τὴν ἡμετέραν.

*O most revered sovereign goddess Lady Peace mistress of choral dances,
mistress of weddings, accept our sacrifice (tr. Sommerstein)*

The prayer hence does not only frame the sacrifice but it also operates on the meta-ritual level asking the gods to recognise the act as efficacious.

The analysis of the scenes show that prayers represented in comedies are closely associated with the ritual actions which they frame. Prayers are not secondary or just explanatory utterances but on the contrary they are crucial for the fulfilment of the ritual act. An incorrect prayer has power to ruin the sacrifice just like an appropriate prayer can construct the ritual with words describing and paraphrasing the agent's actions. The ritual act by itself is not enough: the gods must be addressed with a request to accept the offering or to ratify the ritual act. The prayer is shown in comic scenes as something that actually makes an action ritually efficacious.⁹¹ Old Comedy imitates the close relation between prayers and ritual acts presumably because this was a feature characteristic of Greek ritual in general. The analysis allows us to revisit Greek prayers and to regard them not as texts on their own but as utterances embedded in ritual performance and to study the dynamics and function of spoken words within a ritual sequence. Given the very limited evidence for the topic, comedy serves here as a valuable source for the performative aspect of Greek ritual.

⁹¹On the function of sacred texts to make the act ritual Podemann Sørensen 2014.

2.3.2 Prayers as ritual communication

One of the main functions of prayers in religion is to establish the communication between humans and gods. However, ritual communication has not only vertical direction but also a horizontal one, that is, to unite the participants of the ritual and provide them with a new group identity of ritual agents.⁹² This horizontal aspect of ritual communication is also self-referential because the agents of the ritual communicate important ritual messages to themselves as a group and individual worshippers. As a result, ritual fulfils its fundamental social function of constructing collective identity.

The performance of prayers in the scenes under analysis is based on the dialogic exchange between two or more speakers. The ritual speech is distributed among the characters of the play, namely, between an individual, usually the protagonist (Bdelykleon, Peisetairos/priest, Kritylla, Trygaios/Hermes) and the rest of the assembly of worshippers (*choros*). The leaders have some ritual authority over the rest of the assembly. The *choros* leader, the protagonist of the play or a specially appointed character with some ritual proficiency, such as the Priest or the god Hermes can take on this role. The assembly primarily consists of everyone else present on stage but it is implied that this communality extends beyond the 'fourth wall' to all the spectators gathered in the theatre, too. This can be seen through meta-theatrical gestures of involving the audience in the ritual: when the barley grains are thrown at the spectators in the *Peace* (962) or when the hero invites all the theatre to shout the paian in the *Knights* (1318).

Usually the leader of the ritual marks the beginning of the ritual and exhorts other participants to join him in prayers and ritual activities. He proclaims the beginning of the ritual while the *choros* express their consent and join him in prayers and hymns. This structure is attested for the historical ritual of the beginning of the civic meeting in the law court and in the Athenian

⁹²On ritual as communication Rappaport 1999, 50-54.

assembly, the two occasions represented in the scenes in the *Wasps* and the *Women at the Thesmophoria*. We know from the literary and epigraphic evidence that during these ritual events, the herald usually shouted out the *euphemia* proclamation and then pronounced prayers.⁹³ The structure of dialogic exchange between the leader saying the longer parts and the congregation responding to it with shorter refrains ensures communication within the ritual: one person, who is in charge of delivering a ritually correct utterance, directs it to all the others who in their turn express their approval and consent in order to take part in what he is saying. A similar structure can be also seen in lyric hymns where it was classified as *amoibaion*.⁹⁴ The leader, *exarkhos*, instructs his or her *choros* what to do, how to perform and praise. The assembled congregation takes up the theme introduced by the leader. This ritual pattern is reproduced in two comic *amoibaia*: Agathon's hymn in the *Women at the Thesmophoria*, 101-129.⁹⁵

The communicative and self-referential function of ritual speech is also revealed in meta-ritual utterances – the worshippers include in their prayers comments on and references to their own actions and words. These comments are usually positive. Thus, for example, in the *Wasps* the *choros* approve of the character's intention to pray by saying that they will also utter a ritual speech (863-865). At the end of the sequence of prayers, the *choros* conclude with a final expression of approval and consent (885-890):

ξυνευχόμεσθα <ταῦτά> σοι καὶπάδομεν
 νέαισιν ἀρχαῖς ἔνεκα τῶν προλελεγμένων.
 εὖνοι γάρ ἐσμεν ἐξ οὗ
 τὸν δῆμον ἡσθόμεσθά σου

⁹³Aeschin. 1.23, Din. 2.14, Thuc. 6. 32 and inscriptions IG II² 112, 6-12, IG II² 114. 6-8.

⁹⁴See Zimmermann 1985, 228; Aubriot-Sevin 1992, 40n.23.

⁹⁵Furley and Bremer 2001, 352. Apparently, the dialogic model of the distribution of the ritual speech between participants is cross-cultural. It can be seen in the Indian and Hittite ritual traced by (Watkins, 1995, 135-144) and in the people's response in form of short formula *Kyrie eleison* to the priest's prayers in early Christian liturgy; see Baldovin 1987 and a letter of Gregory the Great to bishop John of Syracuse in 598 CE, *Ep.* 9.12 p.244; as well as in the dialogism and dramaturgy in medieval liturgic lyric; see Kowalik 2010.

φιλοῦντος ὡς οὐδεὶς ἀνὴρ
τῶν γε νεωτέρων.

*We join you in prayers and sing for the new institution because of what
has been said. We favour you since we understood that you love the people
like no other man among the young does.*

In the *Women at the Thesmophoria* the *choros* respond with consent (δεχόμεθα) to Kritylla's prayer and again approve of the curse at the end of the sequence (συνευχόμεσθα...). A negative response is also possible. Thus, in the *Peace*, as I have shown above, Trygaios comments disapprovingly on Hermes' prayer and takes the liberty of stopping and to correct it. He does this twice: when he misunderstands the paian-formula for παίειν, a verb inappropriate for the goddess of Peace, and then when he forbids Hermes to perform the libation to Ares. In the second scene, the Slave corrects Trygaios' words (1016-1020) (see the Greek text above).⁹⁶

In the *Birds*, both types of meta-ritual speech are present. The *choros* respond to the protagonist's announcement of the sacrificial ritual expressing their eagerness to join the ritual (852-856):

ὁμοροθῶ, συνθέλω,
συμπαραινέσας ἔχω
προσόδια μεγάλα σεμνὰ προσιέναι θεοῖ-
σιν, ἅμα δὲ προσέτι χάριτος ἔνε-
κα προβάτιόν τι θύειν.
ἴτω ἴτω ἴτω δὲ Πυθιάς βοά,
συναυλείτω δὲ Χαῖρις ᾠδᾶ.

*I agree, I consent, I approve that I shall approach the gods with great
solemn processional hymns, And at the same time sacrifice some sort of
sheep for the sake of divine favour. Let go, let go, let go the Pythian shout,*

⁹⁶This almost looks like a ritual explanation of a ritual. For the explanatory function of ritual texts see Podemann Sørensen 2014 and Assmann 1999.

And let Khairis accompany the song with the pipe.

Later in the scene, the same scenario is employed as in the *Peace*: Peisetairos at first approves of the Priest's prayers and expands them with additional utterances. However, when he recognises the utterances of the cult official as inappropriate he takes the liberty to stop his ritual speech and drive him out. The ritual speech becomes the medium of communication through which the participants affirm, control and direct both the prayer and ritual actions.

The dialogic structure of the comic representations possibly reflects the aspects of communication and meta-ritual in the performances of prayers in the actual historical contexts. These aspects are encoded in 'to pray', εὐχομαι and 'prayers', εὐχαί which became the principal verb of praying in fifth-century and was reserved for spoken prayers as opposed to hymns.⁹⁷ Through this verb the ritual action and words are linked together constructing the illocutionary act of prayer. It has communicative power since the enunciative references to 'praying' announce to all the participants and spectators that the ritual is happening making it a public act. The verb εὐχομαι has great performative potential and semantically it is associated with the public character of an utterance. The analysis of the earlier Homeric usage, undertaken by Corlu and Pulleyn, shows that εὐχομαι is used to make an affirmation about oneself with a range of meanings from 'vow' to 'promise' and even 'boast'. The semantics of the verb combines the personal and public aspect of speech.⁹⁸ Utterances described with the verb εὐχομαι are open and public (at least virtually).⁹⁹ From the analysis of a wide range of texts, Corlu concludes, that prayers introduced with the verb εὐχομαι either appear within ritual context: sacrifice, libation, or accompany hymns. This reveals the performative power of the verb to frame ritual acts.

⁹⁷Willi 2007, 25.

⁹⁸Corlu 1966, 117.

⁹⁹Chapot and Laurot 2001, 7.

In all the analysed scenes 'to pray' εὐχομαι and 'prayers' εὐχαί occur very often:

1. *Wasps*

- (a) 863 ὅπως ἂν εὐξώμεσθα πρῶτα τοῖς θεοῖς: Bdelykleon initiates the ritual asking that fire and incense be brought in.
- (b) 864 ἐπὶ ταῖς σπονδαῖς καὶ ταῖς εὐχαῖς: The *choros* joins Bdelykleon's actions and words with their own speech.
- (c) 885 ξυνευχόμεσθα <ταῦτά> σοι κάπᾰδομεν: After Bdelykleon's long prayer and libation, the *choros* expresses their consent and assert their participation in the ritual.

2. *Peace*

- (a) 432 εὐξάμενοι τοῖσιν θεοῖς: Trygaios gives the bowl to Hermes so that they could perform a ritual of libation and prayer before releasing the goddess Eirene.
- (b) 435 σπένδοντες εὐχόμεσθα: Hermes performs a libation accompanied with the *euphemia* formula and then a prayer of blessings for all the Greeks.
- (c) 973 ἀλλ' ὡς τάχιστα εὐχόμεσθα: In the second ritual scene Trygaios opens up the performance of the sacrifice to Eirene with an exhortation to pray.
- (d) 973 εὐχόμεσθα δῆ: The Slave responds with affirmation.
- (e) 1016 ταῦτ', ὦ πολυτίμητ', εὐχομένοις ἡμῖν δίδου: Trygaios summarises the long prayer to Eirene with the repetition of the request and proceeds to the sacrificial slaughter.

3. *Birds*

- (a) 864 εὐχεσθε τῇ Ἑστία τῇ ὄρνιθείῳ: The priest starts performing the sacrifice with a long prayer that opens with an exhortation to pray and then carries on with the list of the bird-gods.
- (b) 903 θύοντες εὐξώμεσθα τοῖς πτερίνοις θεοῖς: Peisetairos takes over the performance of the ritual and starts it anew with this formula.

4. *Women at the Thesmophoria:*

- (a) 295 εὐχεσθε ταῖν Θεσμόφορον: Kritylla invites women to pray to the gods. She names the gods and then continues the exhortation with a list of requests.
- (b) 310 ταῦτ' εὐχεσθε: after the long exhortation, Kritylla sums it up in a brief formula to grant them blessings.
- (c) 313 ταῖσδ' ἐπ' εὐχαῖς χαρέντας: the *choros* expresses consent to Kritylla's prayer. They ask the gods to take pleasure in these prayers. After that they start invocations of the gods.
- (d) 328 ἰαχῆσειεν ἐπ' εὐχαῖς ἡμετέραις: the *choros* conclude their hymn to the gods with a wish that the golden lyre will sound in response to their prayers. The final concluding wish follows to hold the Assembly without blemish – the main request of the ritual that is being performed.
- (e) 331 εὐχεσθε τοῖς θεοῖσι: Kritylla starts her second prayer with another exhortation to pray gods. After the list of the gods who are to be invoked, comes the list of betraying actions and traitors to be cursed.
- (f) 351 τοὺς θεοὺς εὐχεσθε πολλὰ δοῦναι κάγαθά: The prayer is once again summarised in one line. Kritylla bids women to pray the gods to grant many blessings.

- (g) 352 ξυνευχόμεσθα τέλεια...τάδ' εὔγματα γενέσθαι: "We pray together with you that these prayers may be fulfilled." The *choros* respond with a consent and the summary of the prayers above including wishes for the city and the people and curses for the traitors.

This list reveals a number functions that the verb 'to pray' which correspond to the functions of prayers in the scenes discussed above. The main function is to frame the action of libation and sacrifice, thus giving it the status of a ritual act. The verb 'to pray' does not distinguish between ritual speech and ritual acts within one ritual performance. This can be seen especially in the examples 1b, 2b, 3b where the actions (libation or sacrifice) and the prayers are referred to as two aspects of the same action. In all other examples, it can be also seen from the context that it is used to refer to the idea of the ritual offering in general without distinguishing prayers as something separate from the act. It is especially evident in 1a, 2a, 2c, 3a where the verb 'to pray' marks the beginning of the sacrificial offering. The request to the gods starts or concludes with a summarising formula containing deictic references and descriptions of the speech as prayer (2b, 3a, 4a, 4e for the opening and 2e, 4b, 4d, 4f for the conclusion).¹⁰⁰

The verb 'to pray' in the sequences also provides communication between the participants. Through the means of this verb the on-lookers get an opportunity to play a full part in the ritual by saying 'we join in prayers' as in 1c and 4g and build their communal identity as a group around it. The verb channels the communication between different agents of ritual speech and links the parts of the sequence together. The leader uses it to exhort other participants to pray, to control and communicate the content of the request and of the ritual being performed. For the worshippers this verb becomes the means of expressing consent and taking over the ritual speech.

¹⁰⁰As Kleinknecht 1937, 38 suggested, these representations reflect as well the ritual practice to start and finish prayers with εὐχομαι.

2.4 Shouts

2.4.1 Ritual shouts in Greek religion

If prayers are a type of ritual speech that provide communication and unity of the worshippers cries are even more significant in this respect. They appear to be a powerful ritual vehicle of exhortation and approval. Ritual cries and acclamations are forms of utterances well attested for the Greek religious ritual in the classical period and beyond. They are encountered in various rites, such as, for example, sacrifice, all-night celebrations at the Panathenaia,¹⁰¹ and Dionysiac celebrations.¹⁰² The most common shouts are ἰὴ παιάν, ὀλολυγή, and ἀλαλαί.¹⁰³ Others include εὐοῖ, ἐλελεῦ, ἰού, τήνελλα καλλίνικε, and double invocations of divine names. The expressions σπονδή σπονδή and ἐυφημεῖτε ἐυφημεῖτε can be also included into the category of ritual cries and exclamations.¹⁰⁴

The semantics and functions of these ritual utterances are still very rarely explored. Burkert related them to the sacrificial slaughter, implying that they served as an emotional counterpoint to the moment of shedding blood. As he describes the sacrifice in his book *Greek religion*, at the blow of the weapon, when the animal is being killed, women raise a shrill cry.¹⁰⁵ Despite the emphasis on guilt in Burkert's theory, Greek ritual shouts do not necessarily express anxiety or grief of death.¹⁰⁶ On the contrary, they are usually represented as exclamations of joy and jubilation.¹⁰⁷ Neither do cries belong exclusively to the contexts of animal sacrifice. They are closely related to and are usually emded-

¹⁰¹Eur. *Heracl.* 781-783.

¹⁰²Eur. *Bacch.* 689-90, 142, Dem. 18.260: Demosthenes claims that a cry εὐοῖ σαβοῖ was uttered by Aeschines along with another cry ὕης ἄττης ἄττης ὕης) and in military rituals (one comes across a paian-cry addressed to the god Enialios before a battle (Xen.*An.* 6.5.27, 5.2.14) and ἀλαλαγή (Schol. *Pind.* *Ol.*7.68).

¹⁰³Although ὀλολυγή is not a shout but a noun derived from the cry; how the shout itself sounded is unknown. The formal distinction between them is that the paian-shout and ἀλαλαί are usually performed by men, while ὀλολυγή is associated with female ritual activities. See Rutherford 2001, 18-23, Pulleyn 1997, 178-184, and Porta 1999.

¹⁰⁴Porta 1999, 129. In later times we are informed of acclamations that may include a whole sentence, for example, 'Great is Artemis of Ephesos'.

¹⁰⁵Burkert 1985, 56.

¹⁰⁶See for instance Aesch. *Sept.* 267-70 and *Ag.* 594-6).

¹⁰⁷For example, on the paian-cry: Rutherford 2001, 19.

ded in prayers and hymns.¹⁰⁸ The paian-cry, for example, is used to round off ritual utterances serving as an analogue of the Christian 'Amen'.¹⁰⁹ In this case it has a function of confirming and ratifying the prayer, 'a marker performing the speech-acts of closure and endorsement', almost like a signature or seal at the end of a document.¹¹⁰

Ritual cries are not just chaotic emotional outbursts. They construct the nonverbal ritual experience by creating, channelling and controlling emotions of the participants. Cries and acclamations exist in a borderline zone of language, lacking fixed semantic content. This is why they easily become a means of expressing affect and of creating phonetic symbolism. The special 'magical language' of ritual shouts being a marginal linguistic space 'seeks to dismantle the analyticity of language and to return to the density of the experience'.¹¹¹

The magical potential and emotional charge of ritual cries make them apt for grounding the sense of group participation.¹¹² Easy to pronounce and to repeat together, they are often uttered in response to the priest's actions, by the whole group of participants, who take part in the ritual. Their lack of verbalised meaning gives them a kind of magical power to confirm the fulfilment of the ritual. A good illustration of how this function works in ritual performances can be found in Clement of Alexandria. He describes how the crowd recited a special set of short formulaic utterances that do not have any clear meaning but clearly express consent and approval of the priest's actions as well as some magic potential.¹¹³ The crucial role of emotional power of ritual shouts and acclamations in grounding the community has been acknowledged and studied by Chaniotis.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸In epic poetry: Hom.*Il.* 6. 301, *Od.* 4.767.

¹⁰⁹Willi 2007, 45f; Rutherford 2001, 21; *Thesm.* 295ff, *Vesp.* 874, *Pax* 453, *Thesm.* 310-11; cf Xen. *An.* 3.2.9. See discussion in Pulleyn 1997, 182.

¹¹⁰Rutherford 2001, 21.

¹¹¹Theodoropoulou 2012, 446-447.

¹¹²On this function of the paian-cry Rutherford 2001, 21 and *ololuge*-cry: Pulleyn 1997, 178,183.

¹¹³*Strom.* 5.8.48: *And Apollodoros of Corcyra says that these lines were recited by Brankhos the seer, when purifying the Milesians from plague; for he, sprinkling the multitude with branches of laurel, led off the hymn somehow as follows: Sing Boys Hekaergus and Hekaerga. And the people accompanied him, saying, Bedu, Zaps, Khthon, Plektron, Sphinx, Knaxzbi, Khthyptes, Phlegmos, Drops.*

¹¹⁴Chaniotis 2012, 172-173, Chaniotis 2009, 200-201, also Knottnerus 2014, 319.

As with other types of ritual speech, the emotions connect participants not only with each other but also with the superhuman powers.¹¹⁵ Some parallels with Hittite rituals suggest that cries of joy and triumph at the sacred events were meant to honour gods or to summon them to attend the sacrificial feast.¹¹⁶ Shouts are used in warfare rituals to commend oneself and one's fighting to the gods. Cries may also serve as a human response to the divine presence.¹¹⁷ The emotional intensity of a cry corresponds to the feeling of the divine presence at the high point of the ritual and may have deeper apotropaic functions to avert the dangers that the presence of the god may cause.¹¹⁸

In this section, I analyse how the functions of ritual cries are reflected and used in comic performances. Occurrences of ritual cries in comedies are important evidence of how these utterances were performed outside the theatre in historical rituals. At the same time specific ways in which cries are represented and employed demonstrate strategies of handling the ritual speech and ritual in the comic genre. Ritual cries in comic representations appear to be an essential part of ritual scenes. They are accompanied by music of the *aulos* (*Av.* 222, 683, 858) and performed during the dance (*Av.* 222, *Lys.* 1291-4) or associated with processional hymns (*Av.* 858). They are means to celebrate deities serving as a kind of refrain in a joyful triumphant song as in *Lys.* 1291-4, and in the sequences of cries in *exodoi*: *Eccl.*1180-3, *Av.*1763-5, and *Ach.*1227.¹¹⁹ A cry can frame a prayer starting it off (*Vesp.* 874) or finishing it (*Thesm.* 311).¹²⁰

¹¹⁵Davies 2011, 67: "The intensification of emotion in combination with core values enhances the self as a social being and frequently aligns the devotee with a transcendent 'other'."

¹¹⁶Collins 1995 analyses the parallels between Greek *ὀλολύζω* and Hittite *palwai-*; Jameson 1988 also regards the *ololuge* cry to be a means of summoning the gods, as in Eur. fr. 351.

¹¹⁷Rudhardt suggests this hypothesis concerning the *ololuge*-cry Rudhardt 1992, 179f. In *Hymn.Hom.Ap.* 119, 445-447 goddesses and mortal women greet the god with this cry.

¹¹⁸Pulley 1997.

¹¹⁹The expression *τήνελλα καλλίνικε* as a refrain of a ritual song is attested in the *Schol.Pind.Ol.* 9.1

¹²⁰On this function: Willi 2007, 46 and Rutherford 1991, 4.

2.4.2 Terminology: the case of the ‘Pythian shout’

Comedy reflect an overlap that exists in Greek terminology of cries and hymns. Cries, prayers, and songs are closely interrelated in Greek ritual performances and can be performed by the same choral group with musical accompaniment. Furthermore, it is difficult to distinguish between them because usually the cry concludes the cultic song or is embedded in it.¹²¹ A cry then functions as a part of a cultic song playing the role of a refrain, or an ‘amen’, as noted above. Quite often in comedy, cries are not uttered at all – but they are referred to as part of poetic imagery and embellishment (as in several passages in the *Birds*, 221 and 857, discussed below). In this case they still contribute to the emotional effect of the ritual performance by alluding to the experience of the ritual use of cries. The noun βόα or βόαμα can mean both shout and any loud musical performance including lyric poetry.¹²² The verb βοᾶν with various prefixes means ‘to lift one’s voice, to say something loud, to shout’. Greek public prayers as a rule were pronounced in a loud voice so it can refer to any kind of emotional address to the gods.¹²³ At the same time, the verb is used as a technical term of uttering a cry in a ritual context¹²⁴:

ἔγχει κάπιβόα τρίτον παιῶν’, ὡς νόμος ἐστίν

*pour in [wine for libation] and shout the third paian according to the custom.*¹²⁵

When the verb refers to cries it can also mean to invoke, honour, or thank the deity with a cry as in *Plut.* 633-640 (see below).¹²⁶

¹²¹On the close relationship between the cry and the song in the case of paeanic utterances Rutherford 2001, 21-22.

¹²²*Nub.* 967, *Pind. Pyth.* 1.13, 10.39, *Ol.* 3.8, *Bacchyl.* 9.68; Dunbar 1995, 507.

¹²³Jakov and Voutiras 2005, 123.

¹²⁴Pherekrates *Persians* fr.138.5. On the custom to shout the paian-cry three times: *PMG* 933; also see Porta 1999, 142-3.

¹²⁵Cf. *Aesch. Ag.* 246 τρίτοσπονδον ... παιῶνα.

¹²⁶Cf. *Av.* 1504 where Peisetairos acclaims Prometheus in a loud voice and Prometheus asks him not to shout. In tragedies *Soph. Trach.* 212, *Eur. Med.* 168, *Phoen.* 679, 1036, *Bacch.* 524, *Tro.* 335.

The overlap between shouts and hymns brings us back to the problem whether comic representations reflected the actual ritual and not the literary conventions of lyric (including tragic lyric) genres. As I outlined earlier in the discussion of hymns in comedy, the coexistence and overlap of ritual and poetry in ancient Greek culture led to the constant interchange and mutual enrichment between the two. As one consequence of this methodological assumption, it is necessary to approach with caution the scholia where ritual cries are labelled as paratragic elements. As I showed above (2.2.2), the ancient scholiasts were usually keen to look for literary parallels and tended to assign a citation to a particular poet or work whenever a typical lyric formula was used. There are several occurrences of ritual shouts in comedies that are labelled by the scholiasts as modelled after tragic poetry: *Av.* 857, *Nub.* 1154, *Plut.* 637. I shall discuss in detail the shout in *Av.* 857.

The sacrificial scene in *Birds* starts with the protagonist's announcement of a sacrifice to which the *choros* responds with a short choral song and, presumably, choral dance. The 'Pythian shout' is proclaimed by them although not directly pronounced in the end of the song (851-858):

Ὅμορροθῶ, συνθέλω,
 συμπαραινέσας ἔχω
 προσόδια μεγάλα σεμνὰ προσιέναι θεοῖ-
 σιν, ἅμα δὲ προσέτι χάριτος ἔνε-
 κα προβάτιόν τι θύειν.
 Ἴτω Ἴτω Ἴτω δὲ Πυθιάς βοά
 συναυλείτω δὲ Χαῖρις ᾠδα.

See the translation above.

Schol. Πυθιάς βοά. βοᾶ ὁ αὐλητής. εἴρηται ὅτι ἐπὶ ταῖς θυσίαις ἠΰλουν. Ἄλλως. ἢ μετ' αὐλοῦ γινομένη βοή. τὸ Πύθιον μέλος. ἔνθεν καὶ πυθαύλης γίνεται. οὕτω δὲ ἔλεγον τὸν παιᾶνα. καὶ τοῦτο δὲ ἐκ Πηλέως.

Pythian shout. The piper shouts. It is said that they played the pipe at sacrifices. Or: the loud sound produced by the pipe. The Pythian song.

And from this derives pythaulēs. And so they called the paian. And this is from Peleus.

The expression 'Pythian shout' is not attested elsewhere. The contextual meaning of the noun βοά is not clear: is it a paian-hymn or a paian-cry? Should it be identified with the choral song (ὥδᾱ) in 858? Or, perhaps with the great *prosodia* mentioned by the *choros*? The scholion is controversial and the attribution to Sophokles' *Peleus* does not help much because it lacks a precise quotation. Most likely, the tragedy had a similar or identical line but as it is usual in this case both tragedy and comedy borrowed it from a common pool of hymnic language. In Soph.*El.*630 the shout, βοά, is an element that accompanies sacrifice. It is plausible that both Sophokles and Aristophanes embed a ritual formula that was used in hymns. A reflection of this formula can be found also in Eur.*El.* 879: ἴτω ξύναυλος βοὰ χαρᾶ (*Let the shout go with the pipe joyfully*). In the passage in the *Birds*, tragic parody and literary allusion are not in any way emphasised and consequently there is no need to suggest that the comic representation contains an allusion to a particular tragedy or an element of tragic style in the first place. Even if the cry was taken as a citation from a particular literary hymn and alluded to a particular tragic context unknown to us and well-known to the audience, the cry has important ritual functions of its own in the ritual scene in which it is embedded, as I shall show.

What is the meaning of this reference in the context of the play? In the *strophe* the *choros* in a short response express their willingness to take part in the sacrifice and describe in a nutshell the ritual sequence in which they agree to participate. The rite starts with processional hymns performed by the *choros* while the worshippers approach the gods leading the sacrificial victim to the altar. Then, the sacrifice is fulfilled accompanied by the sound of the pipe and of the shout.

Although the primary meaning of the Pythian shout in the song is to accompany the sacrifice (which is not yet happening in the scene), it also has a

self-referential dimension. The hymns and the shout which the *khōros* promise to utter in the future overlap with their performance in the present. Furthermore, the final position of the reference to the shout in the song is probably typical for a cultic hymn and can serve as a sort of ‘amen’. For example, Hoopoe finishes the song by portraying gods responding to Apollo’s music with a harmonious shout (*Av.* 220-222):

διὰ δ’ ἀθανάτων στομάτων χωρεῖ

ξύμφωνος ὁμοῦ

θεία μακάρων ὀλολυγή

*The divine cry of the blessed ones goes in harmony as one voice through the immortal lips.*¹²⁷

The performative and self-referential aspects of the Pythian shout in this scene are strengthened by the onomatopoeic beginning of the verse, the triple ἴτω which works on several levels. It imitates the birds’ twittering and emphasises the resolution and participation of the *khōros* of bird performers in the enterprise by the repetition of a strong imperative. Earlier in the play, the same sequence imitates the birds’ twittering in the beginning of Hoopoe’s lyric hymn (227-228). The representation of the Pythian shout can be also compared with the parabolic hymn of the birds (770-784) in which the shout also ‘goes forth’ (ἦλθε βοά, 776). Furthermore, the imperative of the verb to ‘go’ is characteristic of liturgical language of processions and sacrificial rituals. The formulaic repetition of ἴτε occurs in the Dionysiac procession in the *Bacchant women*.¹²⁸ There are three later literary reflections of this expression in rituals dedicated to various deities.¹²⁹ As a refrain ἴτω ἴτω χορός is used in the hymn to Demeter: *POxy.* 2625.¹³⁰ These parallels indicate that the triple ‘let go’ in the *Birds*

¹²⁷The shout of the gods must serve as a ritual model for humans. The self-reflexive image of gods performing rituals and uttering prayers is an important one in Greek religion. See Patton 2009, 116-117, 177.

¹²⁸83, 151, and 992, cf. 977, 1020.

¹²⁹*Anth. Pal.* 9.147 and in *Ap. Rhod. Argon.* 4.1410, *Callim. Hymn.* 5.1; Porta 1999, 148-152.

¹³⁰= Page, *SLG* 460, 461, 462, 465. See Rutherford 1995.

has ritual meaning. The expression is part of the ritual representation of the sacrificial scene.

The analysis shows that Aristophanes consciously constructed the representation of a ritual cry which taps into the scene on several levels:

- a ritual cry performed by birds is onomatopoeic;
- the *choros'* approval and participation in the ritual is emphasised by a strong emotional sentence which includes a repetition, a reference to a ritual cry, and a diction of liturgical style;
- in the *choros'* description of the ritual sequence which is about to take place, the cry anticipates the sacrificial act prescribing that it should be performed accompanied by auletic music and shouting;
- the strong association with choral performances through the use of lyric language affirms the participation of the *choros* in the sacrificial ritual. This reflects the historical practice of choral performances accompanying public ritual events.

2.4.3 Shouts as ritual communication

As discussed above, the primary function of cries is to create and communicate emotions in ritual contexts. This function is well presented in comedy. Thus, the good news of Ploutos' healing and announcement of his arrival evoke the emotions of joy, awe and thankfulness which need to be communicated through shouts (*Plut.* 633-640):

ΚΑ. ὁ δεσπότης πέπραγεν εὐτυχέστατα,
μᾶλλον δ' ὁ Πλοῦτος αὐτός· ἀντὶ γὰρ τυφλοῦ
ἐξωμμάτῳ καὶ λελάμπρυνται κόρας,
Ἄσκληπιοῦ παιῶνος εὐμενοῦς τυχῶν.
ΧΟ. λέγεις μοι χαρὰν, λέγεις μοι βοᾶν.
ΚΑ. πάρεστι χαίρειν, ἦν τε βούλησθ' ἦν τε μή.
ΧΟ. Ἄναβοάσομαι τὸν εὐπαιδα καὶ

μέγα βροτοῖσι φέγγος Ἴσκληπιόν.

KARION *My master has had a great fortune and rather Wealth himself, he is not blind any longer, but he has his sight restored and shines with his pupils, since he found a good-willed healer in Asklepios.* KHOROS *What you are saying is joy for me, what you are saying makes me shout.* KARION *It's time to rejoice, whether you wish or not.* KHOROS *I shall shout aloud Asklepios with many fine children, the great light for humans.*

Here the exclamation ἰὴ παιῶν is implied by the news of healing and the mention of Asklepios Paion, but it is not included into the text of the play. However, the shouting performed in this scene is – in reality or in imagination – quite loud. It is heard inside the house by the Wife who comes out with a question: τίς ἦ βοή ποτ' ἐστίν; *What on earth is this shout?* Similarly, the *choros* in the *Knights* express their joy about the Sausage-Seller's victory by inviting everyone to shout a ritual cry (616):

νῦν ἄρ' ἄξιόν γε πᾶσιν ἐστὶν ἐπολοοῦξαι

And now it befits that everyone shouts a shrill.

This scene of epiphany of Demos after his miraculous rejuvenation in the *Knights* is very similar to the announcement of good news in the *Wealth*. The Sausage-seller proclaims Demos' arrival and invites the audience to act as if it were a ritual occasion. He announces the *euphemia*, ritually correct utterance (1316), and proclaims the interruption of law courts, as during some sacred festival (1317). Then he instructs the audience in the theatre to shout paian at the good news which he brought (1318):

εὐφημεῖν χρὴ καὶ στόμα κλῆειν καὶ μαρτυριῶν ἀπέχεσθαι

καὶ τὰ δικαστήρια συγκλῆειν, οἷς ἡ πόλις ἦδε γέγηθεν,

ἐπὶ καιναῖσιν δ' εὐτυχίαισιν παιωνίζειν τὸ θέατρον.

Keep reverent silence and close your mouth and restrain from giving evidence and close down the law courts, in which this city delights, and let the theatre shout the paian for the sake of the good news of success!

The invitation to the audience to join with a paian-cry, παιωνίζειν 1318, (and later δλολύζειν 1327) contributes to the ritual-like representation of Demos' arrival. The ritual cry here is a means of communicating emotions and responding to them in a ritually correct way. Shouting a paian involves the participants physically and emotionally in the event and makes it highly ritualised. The cry immediately evokes the idea of sacrifice: the *choros* reacts to the Sausage-seller's invitation by mentioning sacrificial meat (1319-1320):

ὦ ταῖς ἱεραῖς φέγγος Ἀθήναις καὶ ταῖς νήσοις ἐπίκουρε,
 τίν' ἔχων φήμην ἀγαθὴν ἤκεις, ἐφ' ὅτῳ κνισῶμεν ἀγνιάς;

O light of the sacred Athens and protector of the islands, with what good words have you come for whom we are going to smoke the streets with sacrifices?

These two lines are ritually charged implying festive dance or procession through the street¹³¹ and a divine command that a whole city should join in religious festivity. This passage in the *Knights* is the evidence that the congregation could respond to ritual acts and events with cries. In the case of the theatrical play, the response is expected from the audience of the theatre. This meta-theatrical gesture transforms the spectators into participants of the ritual performance.

Ritual shouting brings participants of a ritual together, It is stressed in comic representations that loud ritual utterances are unanimous and harmonious: ξύμφωνος ὁμοῦ (*Av.* 209-222) and in the bird's parabolic hymn συμμιγῆ βοῆν ὁμοῦ (771). In Hoopoe's song the formula ἴτω (also used in the sacrificial hymn, see above) is used to summon the participants (227-229):

Ἐποποποῖ ποποῖ, ποποποποῖ ποποῖ,
 ἰὼ ἰὼ ἴτω ἴτω ἴτω ἴτω
 ἴτω τις ὧδε τῶν ἐμῶν ὁμοπτέρων

¹³¹cf Eur. *Bacch.* 87, Pind. *Pyth.* 8.55, 258, 9.83, Bacchyl. 3.16, Soph. *Ant.* 1135, Eur. *HF* 782, and *Av.* 1233, Dem. 21. 51, Dem. 43. 66, Lucian *Prom.* 19.

*Erporopoi poroi, poropopoi poroi! Io io let let let let let everyone of my
fellow-feathered folk come here!*

Hoopoe continues the invitation to come and join him with imitations of birds' cries (258-262):

Ἄλλ' ἴτ' εἰς λόγους ἅπαντα,
δεῦρο δεῦρο δεῦρο δεῦρο·
τοροτοροτοροτοροσίξ
κικκαβαῦ κικκαβαῦ,
τοροτοροτορολιλιλίξ.

*But come to this speech all of you hither hither hither hither! Torotorotoro-
torotix! Kikkabau kikkabau! Torotorotorolililix!*

As with other types of ritual speech, shouts have to correspond to the situation in general and to the gods to which the participants address. In comedy shouts are adapted to the fictional plots. One example discussed above in 2.3.1 is the libation scene in the *Peace* which shows that paian-cry has distinct military connotations and cannot be pronounced in honour of the goddess Peace. In the *Birds*, the sacrificial shouts of the *choros* (see above on the hymn in 851-858) as well as the shouts of the goddesses Kharites and Muses resemble birds' twittering (781-783):

Ὀλυμπιάδες δὲ μέλος Χάριτες Μοῦ-
σαι τ' ἐπὶ ὠλόλυξαν,
τιοτιοτιοτίγξ.

Olympian Graces and Muses shouted a song, tiotiotiotinx!

The cries of birds in Greek religion have a special status of divine omens.¹³² Birds were an important means of receiving information from the divine world because they move between earth and the celestial realm.¹³³ Divination by

¹³²Studied in detail in Dillon 1996.

¹³³Johnston 2008, 129.

bird cries is attested in Homer (*Il.* 10. 274), Xenophon (*An.* 6.1.23), Sophokles (*Ant.* 999), and Menander (fr. 844.11). Aristophanes deliberately plays with the ominous nature of birds in his comedy. In the *parabasis*, the *choros* address the spectators explaining their mantic character through the pun on the word ὄρνις, ‘bird’, which can by metaphor also mean ‘omen’ (719-722):

Ὅρνιν τε νομίζετε πάνθ’ ὅσα περὶ μαντείας διακρίνει·
 φήμη γ’ ὑμῖν ὄρνις ἐστί, πταρμόν τ’ ὄρνιθα καλεῖτε,
 ξύμβολον ὄρνιν, φωνήν ὄρνιν, θεράποντ’ ὄρνιν, ὄνον ὄρνιν.
 Ἄρ’ οὐ φανερώς ἡμεῖς ὑμῖν ἐσμὲν μαντεῖος Ἀπόλλων;

*And you call ‘a bird’ anything that in any way is significant for divination;
 an utterance is ‘a bird’ for you, you call a sneeze ‘a bird’, a chance encounter
 ‘a bird’, a sound ‘a bird’, a servant ‘a bird’, a donkey ‘a bird’. Is it not
 obvious that we are prophetic Apollo for you ?*

Part of the humour is that birds are the creatures that are normally responsible for spontaneous and ominous cries but in comedy they are producing controlled ritual cries instead. In fact the Greek world was full of signs and any spontaneous sound made by a creature could become a superstition including human sounds of sneezing, farting, or speech.¹³⁴ Another joke revealing the tension between the controlled ritual shouts and unexpected sounds (farts) is present in *Pax* 96-101.¹³⁵ Trygaios explains:

Εὐφημεῖν χρὴ καὶ μὴ φλαῦρον
 μηδὲν γρύζειν, ἀλλ’ ὀλολύζειν·
 τοῖς τ’ ἀνθρώποισι φράσον σιγᾶν,
 τοὺς τε κοπρῶνας καὶ τὰς λαύρας

¹³⁴A late source informs us that there was a superstition concerning braying of a donkey, John Chrysostom, *In Epist. ad. Eph.*, Migne 62.92.31. Melampous was said to have written a poem on the art of divination by human bodily twitches *Peri Palmon Mantike*. On the type of divination by chance utterances called cledonomanicy: Dillon 1996, 101.

¹³⁵Farting appears to be an omen in *Hymn.Hom.Merc.* 293-303; cf. farting compared to a divine sign also in *Nub.* 291-298.

καιναῖς πλίνθοισιν ἀποικοδομεῖν

καὶ τοὺς προκτοὺς ἐπικλήρειν

*Keep reverent silence and don't utter anything disparaging, but shout!
and tell all people to be silent and to fence off all lavatories and sewers with
new brickwork and to close their arses.*

The onomatopoeic cries of the *choros* in the *Frogs* can be also seen as a parody of unexpected animal sounds that turn into institutionalised religious utterances. Dover 1993a, 219 rejected the ritual interpretation of the *koax* of the frogs without any further explanation. Having stated that the frogs' cries resemble hymnic refrains, paian-cries, and magic spells, but nevertheless they have nothing to do with invocation. I would like to return to the possible ritual meaning of the *koax* and explore it in the context of the scene in *Frogs*. The context, in which the *choros* start croaking, is a hymn to Dionysos. It is full of indications of ritual style and is clearly represented as a cultic song; cf *Ran.* 209-220. As Wills 1969, 313, 316 notes, 'the Frogs base their right to sing on the divine favours' and 'on the reeds (ἐν λίμναις) they cherish', that is, in the sacred domain of the Dionysiac festival (ἐμὸν τέμενος). They also employ exalted poetic vocabulary (εὐγερυν, βυνῶ), doricisms (βοᾶν, ἐμὰν ἀοιδὰν, αἰόλαν), and hymn-terminology (ἰαχήσομαι ... ἀμφί). While for Wills these features represent the poetic pretensions of the frogs' song, it is clear that at the same time they have very strong ritual connotations. I quote the frogs' hymn in full. In the play this is the moment when Dionysos and Xanthias notice the frogs and hear the *koax* for the first time:

Βρεκεκεκεῖ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ,

βρεκεκεκεῖ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ,

Λιμναῖα κρηνῶν τέκνα,

ξύναιλον ὕμνων βοᾶν

φθεγξώμεθ', εὐγερυν ἐμὰν

ἀοιδὰν, κοᾶξ κοᾶξ,

ἦν ἀμφὶ Νυσηῖον
Διὸς Διώνυσον ἐν
Λίμναισιν ἰαχήσαμεν,
ἦνίχ' ὁ κραιπαλόκωμος
τοῖς ἱεροῖσι Χύτροισι
χωρεῖ κατ' ἐμὸν τέμενος λαῶν ὄχλος.
Βρεκεκεκεξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ

Brekekekex koax koax! Brekekekex koax koax! Marsh-dwelling children of springs, let us utter the shout in accordance with the pipe, my harmonious song which we sang in honour of Dionysos Nysean son of Zeus while during the sacred day of Pots the crowd of people passes through my holy precinct in drunken revelry. Brekekekex koax koax!

Frogs are servants of Dionysos, they sing the hymn to him, they belong to his sacred precinct and fulfil ritual duties of song for the worshippers, who pass by the place during the festival of the Anthesteria. Moreover, the onomatopoeic *koax* has characteristics of ritual cries discussed above. It is placed in the beginning and the end of an utterance as in *Av.* 783, 227, 262. It is referred to with the noun βοᾶ, loud utterance. In this case we can speak of a poetic use of the meaning 'shout' metaphorically applied to hymns – 'let us utter the harmonious shout of hymns'. The *koax* is accompanied with a pipe in a harmonious way like the shouts in *Birds* (857, 221, 782).

The meaning of the contest between Dionysos and frogs in this scene is debatable but it is evident that part of the humour lies in the idea of the god meeting his own 'cult personnel'. A ritual hymn with embedded cries is supposed to invoke the god and attract his attention. The frogs' hymn undoubtedly achieves this goal. The communication with the god takes a form of ritual imitation which reverses the normal situation: while during a real sacred event mortals imitate divine rituals and learn from them, in comedy it is the god himself who takes his ritual *choros* as a model for his own utterances.

2.5 Oracles

2.5.1 Oracles as ritual speech

In this section I consider oracles as part of ritual communication with the gods. This approach can be justified from several points of view. Like other forms of ritual speech, such as prayers or hymns, oracular consultations establish contact with the world of divine through the medium of human language. The process consists of an exchange of spoken and written texts. Consultants submit their questions to the sanctuary formulated orally or written down and receive the answer from the god which can be then interpreted by an individual or passed on to the community for discussion. At all stages, it is the verbal communication that enables people to connect with the wisdom and omniscience of the gods. Oracles, being verbal messages, stand out from other divinatory practices in that respect, such as observation of sky and stars, birds, animals' entrails, and interpreting dreams. Moreover, oracular texts conform to the conventions of the language and style, such as the metrical pattern of hexameters which makes it possible to speak of oracles as a specific genre of ritual speech.¹³⁶ The interpretation of divine answers explains and extends the texts of the oracles helping the community to decipher and interiorise the divine words. The correct interpretation is crucial for the safety of the society. The exegetic part of the consultation including debate about the true meaning is therefore no less important than the text of the oracle itself.

Divination was most relevant in the situations when decision-making and divine confirmation of the future benefit were required, such as marriage or a journey (at the individual level) and military campaign or foundation of a colony (at the state level). While oracles provided divine authority for decisions they were also used as a powerful vehicle of political manipulation and could become subject to forgery and charlatanism. An image of a corrupted

¹³⁶In that respect, oracles overlap not only with divinatory practices but also with hymns and oral epic tradition.

religious expert, a false prophet, or a greedy soothsayer is one of the recurrent motifs associated with oracles in the corpus of Greek literature.¹³⁷ The use of oracles in politics has become the focus of many studies including the scholarship on oracles in comedy.¹³⁸

For the purpose of this study the problems of manipulation and authenticity of oracles will be included in a broader context of divine revelation and ritual speech, its performance, re-performance and interpretation. I shall concentrate on the aspects of the representation of oracles in Old Comedy that have been largely neglected or downplayed. These are: the circulation of oracles outside the mantic events in the places of consultation; the ritualised re-performance of oracles; and the importance of exegesis for oracles as sacred messages of the gods. I shall analyse the agonistic tradition of oracular interpretation reflected in comic plays paying special attention to the potential of oracular performances to produce ritual authority by establishing the 'true' meaning of the divine message.

2.5.2 Oracular language

There are ten oracles recited in Aristophanes' comedies: *Knights* (197-201, 1015-1020, 1030-1034, 1037-1040, 1055-1057), *Birds* (967-968, 983-985), *Peace* (1064-1079, 1090-1098), and *Lysistrata* (770-776). Comic representations reflect the tradition of the oracular genre with its themes and figural language. Oracles in comedy retain the metre of dactylic hexameters which makes them stand out from the rest of the dramatic dialogue and sound as belonging to the actual extradramatic tradition.¹³⁹ An extensive study of the language and formal structure of oracular texts is offered by Fontenrose 1978¹⁴⁰ who distinguishes for-

¹³⁷Bonnechère 2007, 147.

¹³⁸See Smith 1989 who concludes that the negative representation of oracles was due to the political situation of the Peloponnesian war and the unattractive role of soothsayers in this current political context of the time. On the political interpretation of the oracles in comedy; see also Nilsson 1972.

¹³⁹In the *Peace* the dactylic hexameters even continue during the whole scene 1063-1114.

¹⁴⁰He classifies recorded Greek oracles into three categories: historical, quasi-historical and legendary and concludes, that historical oracle texts tended to be simple and directive, while

mulae, devices, diction, and structural patterns of the oracular texts.¹⁴² Among some hallmarks of oracular language, that Fontenrose discusses, are:

- the use of concrete pictorial images for abstractions.
- use of the traditional store of *gnomai* and proverbs; these show a fundamental affinity between oracular and gnomic poetry.
- partiality for animal metaphors and similes; the favourite animals are the lion, bull, snake, boar, mule, eagle.¹⁴³
- assonance and alliteration.
- use of Homeric language, epic, vocabulary of Hesiod, Theognis, Pindar.
- compound epithets.¹⁴⁴

Comic oracles bear many of these features including also formulas, conventional openings, and structural patterns of transmitted verse oracles. Such typical features as animal imagery (*Lysistrata*, *Knights*, *Birds*, *Peace*), the first-comer motif (*Wealth*, *Birds*) and recourse to proverbs (*Peace*) are present in comic oracles. Linguistic and thematic patterns found in oracles can be traced in Hierokles' oracle of Bakis in *Pax* 1063-1086. Hierokles' oracle shows the same components as, for example, Kadmos' oracle: salutation, statement of mantic authority, the message, reason for the message, the conditional precedent.¹⁴⁵ Some standard openings of oracles can be found in comic examples. The *Birds* (967-968) feature the Soothsayer beginning his oracle with the traditional ἄλλ' ὄταν.¹⁴⁶ In the *Knights* (197–201) Demosthenes reads out an oracle also starting with ἄλλ' ὀπόταν. The same opening is found in *Lys.* 770-776, where Lysistrata reads out an oracle to the group of women. Other traditional openings are ἐστὶ/εἶσι,

other, legendary or 'non-genuine' oracles were more obscure and ambiguous. This difference leads Fontenrose to suggest, that the tradition of oracular narrative constituted a special genre of mantic poetry that differed from authentic verse oracles.¹⁴¹ Maurizio 1997 compellingly challenges Fontenrose's interpretation claiming that being part of an oral tradition oracular texts undergo a completely different process of authentication than a modern historian applies to his sources.

¹⁴²Fontenrose 1978, 174.

¹⁴³See also Desfray 1999.

¹⁴⁴Fontenrose 1978, xxiv.

¹⁴⁵Fontenrose 1978, 176.

¹⁴⁶Cf Hdt. 8.77 on the oracle of Bakis.

followed by τις (Eq. 1037) and φράζεσ/φράζεο (Eq. 1030, Pax 1099). The Bakis' oracle in the *Peace* starts with a typical address 'O wretched...'

The oracular language has been further examined by Dougherty 1992 using the material of foundation oracles. Foundation oracles usually contain directives to go to a place and a description of that place.¹⁴⁷ This description might include geographical and climatological details, mention animals, that inhabit the place, and give other details of the environment.¹⁴⁸ An example of such a foundation oracle is perhaps a fragment of Theopompos' comedy *Theseus* where someone is told to go to a certain place with further description and characteristics of this place (fr.18):

ἴξει δὲ Μήδων γαῖαν, ἔνθα καρδάμων

πλείστων ποιεῖται καὶ πράσων ἄβυρτάκη

Go to the land of Medes, where sour sauce is cooked of plenty leek and mustard seeds.

The adverb ἔνθα used in the fragments appears frequently in oracular responses.¹⁴⁹ The landscape of the land, its animals and vegetation often are included in the oracle. They are often obscure since, as Dougherty wrote: "riddles within colonial traditions defamiliarize the familiar as a way to represent Greek occupation of foreign land in terms of intellectual prowess and the divine authority of Greek Apollo. Colonization traditions make the act of foundation mysterious in retrospect; they reorganise the commonplace process of founding a colony and make it temporarily alien." For comedy it is natural to parody the style of the oracle using the culinary language.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷Paus. 5.7.3; Euseb.*Praep. Evang.* 5.31.15; Diod. 8.17.1.

¹⁴⁸Paus. 10.10.6, Hesych. *Mil.Hist.Rom.* 32.

¹⁴⁹Euseb.*Praep. Evang.* 6.7; Diod. 8.32.2; Diod. 8.21.3. Fontenrose 1978, 173 states, that it introduces the defining clause in oracles about cities and places.

¹⁵⁰If this is indeed a colonisation oracle, what city or land could be colonised in the context of the myth about Theseus? Theseus was not a prolific colonisator: the only colony he founded was Pythopolis. However, Oinopion who is known to colonise Chios appears to be Theseus' son in the poem by Ion of Chios *The foundation of Chios*. There are some indirect details that corroborate this suggestion. Ion is probably making a political statement by linking an important figure from Chian history to Athens as part of the ideological agenda during the time of

The obscurity of the language of oracles is ridiculed. Oracles in comedy become not just obscure but absurd, pure nonsense.¹⁵¹ The obscurity of oracular language is one of the main points of the comic effect. The women's remark in *Lys.* 777 about the clarity of the oracle is ironical. In the *Peace* when the oracle is read out by Hierokles, Trygaios laughs at the expression "fierce-eyed monkeys" and at the idea that a wolf can wed a sheep (1066, 1076). He mocks the prophetic style predicting the future: 1083-1084 οὔποτε δειπνήσεις.... In the agon of oracles in the *Knights* the excellent parody of oracular style plays upon the obscurity of the mantic poetry. Demos is genuinely puzzled with the oracle's obscurity and formulates a legitimate question after one of them, 1048:

ΔΗ. πῶς δῆτα τοῦτ' ἔφραζεν ὁ θεός;

DEMOS *So what did the god mean by that?*

However funny and exaggerated the obscurity of oracles is, the obscure language of oracles has an important function.¹⁵² It reflects the gap between the divine and human worlds and expose the mantic skill of interpretation as a bridge between them.¹⁵³ The message of the gods appears in a form of a riddle that is not accessible directly, but needs an interpreter, someone who acquired the *techne* of divination.¹⁵⁴ The correct interpretation of foundation oracles

the Delian league. One indirect link might connect Theopompos' *Theseus* with Chios: fr. 2 features the Athenian orator Isaios who taught rhetorics on Chios till 403 BCE. Oinopion became popular in 4th century comedies. Nikostratos and Philetairos wrote plays with the title *Oinopion* although both seem to represent Oinopion as Dionysos' son. For comedy as a Dionysiac genre, Oinopion was apparently a fitting character. If the oracle in fr. 18 is a foundation oracle, the word *kardamon* might be a riddle playing with the Kardamyle, the name of a Chian city. Calling Chios a Persian land would be in that case an exaggeration of oracular style which put special emphasis on the foreignness of the land of the colonisers' destination.

¹⁵¹Plato *Sophists* fr. 161 χρησιμωδότης.

¹⁵²As shown by Dougherty 1992.

¹⁵³Muecke 1998.

¹⁵⁴Flower 2008, 188, Scarpi 1998; *Od.* 10. 304, 12. 59-72, *Il.* 2. 813-14, 1.403, 14.291. The human and divine languages differ because gods have more knowledge of the world and therefore more words to describe what lies beyond human knowledge. The divine language indicates the nature of the things Maurizio 1998, 141. See also Watkins 1970 and Bader 1989. The ambiguous language of oracles is an extensive use of metaphor and is never evident (Pythia indicates, σημαίνει, in Herodotos) because of its poetic nature, Maurizio 1998. Oracles serve as a 'conversion mechanism between the inscrutable divine and the domain of human deliberation' (Kurke 2009, 438).

reveals the superiority of Greek colonists which gives them the authority to found and rule the new city.

2.5.3 Framing oracles in comedy

How are oracles embedded and performed in comedy? The dramatic reasons for reciting oracles vary. An oracle may introduce the plot (*Knights*), structure the central debate of two opponents (*Knights*) or justify the 'great idea' of the protagonist (*Lysistrata*). The oracles proclaimed by intruders in sacrificial scenes (*Peace*, *Birds*) are a special case marking an (unsuccessful) attempt to regulate the sacrifice. The value of these oracles for the society also vary. In the *Knights*, by reciting an oracle, Demosthenes introduces the Sausage-Seller, the benefactor of the city and the saviour of Demos, the allegorical figure personifying Athenian people. Later in the play, oracles are used by two political rivals in a long and spectacular agon of oracles to take control over Demos, thus showing that the oracles are used by both 'bad' and 'good' sides of the political game. In the *Birds* and *Peace*, oracles are recited by itinerant prophets, *khresmologoi* (*Pax* 1085, *Av.* 965), with some clear negative connotations associated with them. These oracles are rejected by the protagonists as inauthentic and lacking authority.

Oracles are represented in comedy as sacred messages (ἱερὸν χρησμόν, *Eq.* 116) that come from the gods. People should pay attention to them and follow what they say. Cf *Eq.* 193-195:

ΔΗ. ἀλλὰ μὴ παρῆς

ἄ σοι διδώσ' ἐν τοῖς λογίοισιν οἱ θεοί.

ΑΛ. πῶς δῆτ' ἄ φησ' ὁ χρησμός;

DEMOS But do not pass by what the gods offered you in the oracles.

SAUSAGE-SELLER So what does the oracle say?

In *Plut.* 32-47 Khremylos narrates his journey which he undertook to consult the oracle about his son's education and reveals the answer that he received.

The text of the oracle is embedded in the story as reported speech of the god himself (*Plut.* 40):

XP. σαφῶς γὰρ ὁ θεὸς εἶπέ μοι τοδί·

KHREMYLOS *Because the god told me clearly the following*

and *Plut.* 45:

KA. εἴτ' οὐ ξυνίης τὴν ἐπίνοιαν τοῦ θεοῦ,
φράζουσας, ὦ σκαιότατέ, σοι σαφέστατα [...]

KARION *Don't you understand the god's design conveyed to you, o stupid fool, in plainest words [...]*

It is highly important to understand oracles and obey them, as *Lysistrata* says (*Lys.* 779-80):

ΛΥ. [...] καὶ γὰρ αἰσχρὸν τοῦτό γε,
ὦ φίλταται, τὸν χρησμὸν εἰ προδώσομεν.

LYSISTRATA *It will be shameful indeed, if we, o dearest friends, abandon the oracle*

To ensure that the proper attention is paid, the delivery of an oracle is framed in comedies in a way similar to other ritual utterances such as prayers, hymns, and cries. It is marked by the speaker as speech of high importance requiring reverence and observance from those present (*Lys.* 768-769):

ΛΥ. [...] ἔστι δ' ὁ χρησμὸς οὕτοσί.

ΓΥ. λέγ' αὐτὸν ἡμῖν ὃ τι λέγει. ΛΥ. σιγᾶτε δῆ.

LYSISTRATA *There is this oracle. WOMEN* *Tell us what it says. LYSIS-*
TRATA *Keep silence, then.*

The framing in the *Lysistrata* requires silence which although it is not the ritual silence of *euphemia*, still functions as a special framing and communicates the idea of special reverence towards the reading to follow. A similar framing of

the requirement to listen can be found in the *Knights* when the agon of the oracle recitations begins (1014):

ΠΑ. ἄκουε δὴ νυν καὶ πρόσεχε τὸν νοῦν ἐμοί.

PAPHLAGON Listen then and pay your attention to what I'm saying.

The performance of an oracle starts with a special formula ἔστι ὁ χρησμός which introduces the subject of the oracle (*Eq.* 1068, 1005, *Av.* 962, *Lys.* 768, with *περί* in *Eq.* 1004-1010).

2.5.4 Transmission and authenticity

While the performance of oracles is ritualised and the texts in general are represented as sacred, every oracular performance raises anew the question of authenticity of a specific oracle. In all the scenes where oracles are recited they have to undergo the process of interpretation to be accepted as authentic by its audience. The religious authority of the oracles is debated by the characters in the plays. One of the main questions in that respect is the provenance of an oracle and its transmission.

The oracles are brought on stage in written form, perhaps represented as book rolls with help of theatrical props, and are read out aloud by the performers. This can be seen from the expressions: read out aloud, ἀναγιγνώσκειν (*Eq.* 118, 1011, 1064), or fetched, φέρω (to fetch the roll/rolls with the oracles *Eq.* 118, 961). In *Birds* the Oracle-monger repeats λαβὲ τὸ βιβλίον in response to Peisetairos' doubts about the oracle (*Av.* 980-982). The soothsayers who own these book collections of oracles are particularly fond of insisting on the divine provenance of their texts. They claim that their oracles come from the authoritative collection of Bakis, a famous seer who was inspired by the nymphs to make prophecies which were then codified and circulated in Greece. The idea of an oracle-monger always relying on a more authoritative prophet is perhaps reflected in a joke about Apollo who himself gets oracles from Zeus in a frag-

ment of Aristophanes' *Heroes* (fr.324= *Schol. Soph. OC 793*).¹⁵⁵ The succession of oracles from one person to another, perhaps with negative connotations is recorded in fr.10 of Ameipsias' *Konnos* cited in a Aristophanic scholia about the soothsayer Diopeithes:

ὥστε ποιοῦντες χρησμούς αὐτοὶ
 διδόασ' ἄδειν
 Διοπεΐθει τῷ παραμεινομένῳ.
*so that they make oracles themselves and give them to that mad Diopeithes
 to sing.*

The name of Bakis (or Apollo) is built into the oracular text as a kind of *sphragis* in order to indicate the authenticity in all the three episodes representing untrustworthy seers Hierokles in *Peace* (1070-1072) and Oracle-monger's in *Birds* (972), and by Paphlagon, the manipulator of Demos in *Knights* (1015). The written form serves for professional (and manipulative) seers as an indicator and guarantee of authenticity.

However, Aristophanes shows that in fact oracles written down are not automatically authentic. On the contrary, the oracles that are recited in his plays by more sympathetic characters, the comic leaders Lysistrata, Peisetairos, and Trygaios, are represented as improvised and less dependent on their transmission than the oracles of false prophets. Lysistrata takes an oracle out when she needs a powerful instrument of political persuasion and does not explain where it comes from (*Lys.* 767). Trygaios makes up an oracle stitching together Homeric formulae pretending it to be the prophecy of Homer himself. The humour of this scene is that Hierokles does not seem to realise that Homer was not a soothsayer in the same sense as Bakis or Sibylla. Similarly, the Sausage-Seller, the saviour of the city, in the *Knights*, when asked about the provenance of his (Sausage-Seller's) oracles, quickly makes up the name of the soothsayer Glanis, the brother of Bakis.

¹⁵⁵ *Apollo seems to get his oracles from Zeus, as he also says in the Iphikles (= fr.313) and Aiskhylos in Priestesses (= fr.86) ... and Aristophanes in the Heroes.*

Peisetairos claims that he has got an oracle written down from the words of the god Apollo himself which surely must weigh out the authority of the collection of the texts by prophet Bakis which circulated in Greece at that time (981-982):

οὐδὲν ἄρ' ὅμοιός ἐσθ' ὁ χρησμὸς τουτῶι,
ὄν ἐγὼ παρὰ τὰ πόλλωνος ἐξεγραψάμην·

*But the oracle is in no way similar to this one which I wrote down from
Apollo.*

The way the comic hero receives his oracles is unclear and somewhat miraculous pointing to his direct contact with the god. These examples are of course comic fantasy but they also imply that self-appointed religious experts could be, at times, more useful for the society than acknowledged professionals. It is almost as if the improvised character of those oracles make them more genuine and divinely inspired than thoughtful and calculated presentation of the professional seers.

Historical accounts seem to corroborate this impression presenting political and military leaders who take upon themselves the role of self-appointed seers to facilitate the decision making process, like Xenophon in the *Anabasis*¹⁵⁶ and Themistokles before Marathon who being just one of the influential citizens offered his own interpretation of the 'wooden wall' oracle which turned out to be 'correct'.¹⁵⁷ In the case of Themistokles the individual leader is opposed to the body of professional seers, *khresmologoi*.¹⁵⁸ To whatever extent these ac-

¹⁵⁶Parker 2004; the discussion of laymen and experts in the divinatory process in Beerden 2013, 55-58, 65-66.

¹⁵⁷Hdt 7.143.

¹⁵⁸Hdt 7.143.1-3: *Now there was a certain Athenian, by name and title Themistocles son of Neocles, who had lately risen to be among their chief men. He claimed that the readers of oracles (χρησμολόγοι) had incorrectly interpreted the whole of the oracle and reasoned that if the verse really pertained to the Athenians, it would have been formulated in less mild language, calling Salamis 'cruel' rather than 'divine' seeing that its inhabitants were to perish. Correctly understood, the gods' oracle was spoken not of the Athenians but of their enemies, and his advice was that they should believe their ships to be the wooden wall and so make ready to fight by sea. When Themistocles put forward this interpretation, the Athenians judged him to be a better counsellor than the readers of oracles (τῶν χρησμολόγων), who would have had them prepare for no sea fight, and, in short, offer no resistance at all, but leave Attica and settle in some other country. Tr.Godley.*

counts reflect actual attitudes to different types of seers and oracle-mongers, it is clear that oracles circulated freely in Greece and anyone interested could have access to them. This can be seen from a story Herodotos tells about Mardonios at Plataea who cited an oracle in order to persuade his generals to give a battle. However, as Herodotos explains, he attributed the oracle incorrectly – it was not in fact applicable to their campaign. The historian then cites another, this time correct, oracle by Bakis about the Persians.¹⁵⁹ Neither Mardonios nor Herodotos were professional soothsayers. Nevertheless, they demonstrate knowledge of the texts as well as expertise in citing and manipulating them for their purposes.

This leads us to the point, characteristic for comedy as well, that reciting an authentic oracle was not enough. The skill of the performer was required to pick a relevant oracle, to interpret it and apply it correctly to the current situation.¹⁶⁰ If the seer is false it is rather because of the lack of their skill, and not because the oracle itself is faulty. So, for example, in fr. 1 of Nikokhares' *Agamemnon* the skill of a prophet proves the authenticity of her prophecies:

γνώση δὲ τέχνην τὴν ἐμὴν ἐτητύμως
 ἀψευδόμαντιν οὔσαν

you will know from my skill that I am (fem.) indeed no false prophet.

The soothsayer is the true agent of the ritual speech, not just a passive transmitter, and he is responsible for its quality. He engages creatively in unlocking its meaning thus making the interpretation part of the ritual speech as well. Old Comedy shows that the soothsayer's skill is open to the public assessment by the community. A good oracle must be publicly approved and its meaning accepted as clear enough.¹⁶¹ To be accepted oracle had to be not only to make

¹⁵⁹Discussed in Maurizio 1997, 328; cf Hdt. 9.42-43.

¹⁶⁰Otherwise the consequences can be disastrous as Herodotos shows *passim*, see especially the story of Kroisos.

¹⁶¹This makes oracles resemble other types of ritualised speech, such as prayers which also required some kind of the expression of consent. On the acceptance or denial of oracles in Greece: Maurizio 1997, 314-315. The formula in comedy (and in Herodotos) for accepting the

sense but also to be relevant to the current situation. Thus, when the *choros* in the *Lysistrata* express strongly their approval of the oracle they do it by stating that the meaning is clear to them (*Lys.* 777):

σαφής γ' ὁ χρησμὸς νῆ Δί', ὧ πάντες θεοί.

The oracle is clear indeed, by all the gods

The meaning is fully applicable to Lysistrata's enterprise. It is clear from the scene that the oracle is understood as referring to the women's restraint from sexual activities and the advantages (understood also in terms of sexual intercourse) it will bring in the future.

Clearly, not all soothsayers were equally good at the tasks described above and Old Comedy reflects the competitive market of religious experts that existed in Athens in the 420s.¹⁶² The comic fragments show that there was a choice of seers and competition between them. Hierokles is addressed as the best lord of all oracle-singers in Eup. fr. 231 *Cities*: Ἱερόκλεες, βέλτιστε χρησμοφῶν ἄναξ. A character in this play asks advice which seer he should approach (fr.225):

ὥς οὖν τίν' ἔλθω δῆτά σοι τῶν μάντεων;

πότερος ἀμείνων, Ἀμφοτέρος ἢ Στιλβίδης;

So in your view, to which of the seers I should go? Which one is better,

Amphoterus or Stilbides?

In a play *Fishes* by Arkhippos, a certain type of fish is characterised as the wisest of all *manteis* (fr. 15):

A. τί λέγεις σύ; μάντιες εἰσὶ γὰρ θαλάττιοι;

B. γαλεοί γε, πάντων μάντεων σοφώτατοι

oracle as an authentic one is the verb *δέχομαι*, the same verb which used in ritual speech to confirm a prayer in an amen-like utterance: *Plut.* 63; Kurke 2009, 429.

¹⁶²Dillery 2005, 213-214, 217 discusses the flourishing industry of oracle-mongers, *khresmologoi*, involved in the representation of oracles or their interpretation at that time which was probably caused by plague (Thuc. 2.54.2, 6.27.3), mutilation of herms, Sicilian expedition (Thuc. 8.1.1, 7.50.4).

A. *What are you saying? There are sea-soothsayers?* B. *Yes, sturgeons, the best of all soothsayers.*

The difference in qualification and trustworthiness of soothsayers is reflected in the terminology: the term *khresmologos* designated a less respectable soothsayer than *mantis* as seen in the dialogue in *Peace* (1045-1047). In two fragments the term *mantis* appears in the context implying that the soothsayer is 'true': Nikokhar. fr.1 see above and Kratin. fr.505 = (Dem.29) τ _ υ τὸν θεὸν δ' ἐμοῦ κλύων σέβει, / ὡς ὄντα _ τ μάντιν ἀψευδέστατον.¹⁶³

Several notorious Athenian soothsayers appear in comedies as *komodoumenoi*: Lampon, Hierokles, Diopeithes. Hierokles who appears in the sacrificial scene in *Peace* was indeed appointed to supervise sacrifices in 446/5 BCE at Chalcis. Lampon was satirised in a number of comedies and called *exegetes*, expounder of sacred law (Eup. *Golden Race* 319). He actually acted as an *exegetes* in Athens at some point and being Perikles' friend, became one of the key figures of the foundation of the colony of Thurii. In the *Birds* he and Diopeithes are included by Peisetairos into the text of his oracle as two exemplary soothsayers (988). Comedy reflects the Athenian industry of prophecies in many aspects close to the reality and reveals that the main criterion of the authenticity of oracles is their relevance and applicability to a current problematic situation. The person who is the most successful in unlocking the value of the oracular text by interpretation gains the ritual and political authority, no matter how 'professional' his mantic skills are.

2.5.5 Exegesis as ritual speech

In Greek society the interpretation of oracles is an essential element of their presentation to the society.¹⁶⁴ Oracles are always open to criticism and questioning. Competing ideas reconstructing what the gods actually say through

¹⁶³Also *Av.* 724, 594; *Plut.* 11.

¹⁶⁴Parker 2000, 80.

the oracles are assessed by the society and the exegetic skills and competence of experts are weighed one against another. In the famous case of the Wooden Wall oracle the Athenian ambassadors received the Pythia's oracle, returned to Athens and recited this oracle before the Athenian assembly. The oracle demanded interpretation by the community and its leaders while the ambiguity of the language left room for correct and incorrect interpretation. The successful interpretation of an oracle is the condition that the communication between gods and humans is established correctly leading to the salvation and prosperity of the community.¹⁶⁵ Failure leads to the illusion of welfare which later turns into a disaster and destruction.

Oracles recited in comedy all receive some kind of interpretation. In the *Wealth* after Khremylos has revealed what the god had told him in the oracle about his son, the other man immediately offers an interpretation, with which Khremylos does not agree (32-55) and especially 45-55:

KA. εἴτ' οὐ ξυνίης τὴν ἐπίνοιαν τοῦ θεοῦ
φράζουσας, ὦ σκαιότατέ, σοι σαφέστατα
ἀσχεῖν τὸν υἷον τὸν ἐπιχώριον τρόπον;
XP. τῷ τοῦτο κρίνεις; KA. δῆλον ὅτι καὶ τυφλῷ
γνώσθαι δοκεῖ τοῦθ', ὡς σφόδρ' ἐστὶ συμφέρον
τὸ μηδὲν ἀσχεῖν ὑγιᾶς ἐν τῷ νῦν γένει.
XP. οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅπως ὁ χρησμὸς εἰς τοῦτο ῥέπει,
ἀλλ' εἰς ἕτερον τι μεῖζον. ἦν δ' ἡμῖν φράση
ὅστις ποτ' ἐστὶν οὕτως καὶ τοῦ χάριν
καὶ τοῦ δεόμενος ἦλθε μετὰ νῶν ἐνθαδί,
πυθοίμεθ' ἂν τὸν χρησμὸν ἡμῶν ὃ τι νοεῖ.

KARION Don't you understand the god's design conveyed to you, o stupid fool, in plainest words that you should train your son in the standard way?

KHREMYLOS For what reason you think so? KARION It's so obvious

¹⁶⁵Barker 2006, 15.

that even a blind person seems to understand that it in these days it is very profitable not to endeavour anything virtuous. KHREMYLOS But it is impossible that the oracle is implying that. It is pointing at something different which is bigger than that. And if this man explains to us who he is and what the reason is and the need of coming here with us, we might understand what our oracle means.

In the *Lysistrata* a comment by the *choros* of women interrupts the reading of the oracle with a sexual interpretation of the oracular metaphor (770-3):

ΛΥ. ἀλλ' ὀπότεν πτήξωσι χελιδόνες εἰς ἓνα χῶρον,
τοὺς ἔποπας φεύγουσαι, ἀπόσχονται τε φαλήτων,
παῦλα κακῶν ἔσται, τὰ δ' ὑπέριτερα νέριτερα θήσει
Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης – ΓΥ. ἐπάνω καταχεισόμεθ' ἡμεῖς;

LYSISTRATA But when the swallows gather in one place fleeing from hoopoes and abstain from the phallos, then will be the end of troubles and Zeus the high Thunderer make what is now above below... WOMEN. [it means] we'll be lying on top in future?

There are elements of interpretation of oracles also in the *Birds* and *Peace*. In the *Birds* Peisetairos interrupts the oracle with a question and the Soothsayer has to interpret it (969-970).

ΠΕ. τί οὖν προσήκει δῆτ' ἐμοὶ Κορινθίων;
ΧΡ. ἤνιξαιθ' ὁ Βάκις τοῦτο πρὸς τὸν ἀέρα.

*PEISETAIROS What have I got to do with the Corinthians? KHRES-
MOLOGOS Bakis alludes by this to the air.*

In the *Peace* when Hierokles starts reciting an oracle Trygaios comments at every line of it in an unfriendly and disrespectful way. He laughs at the oracular utterances, and insults the soothsayer. At one point he starts asking him questions, ironically undermining the relevance of the oracle and implying that it

is erroneous and should not be accepted because it seems to be pure nonsense and a satisfactory interpretation would be impossible (1076):

TP. καὶ πῶς, ὦ κατάρατε, λύκος ποτ' ἂν οἶν ὑμεναιοῖ;

TRYGAIOS and how on earth, you cursed one, could a wolf wed a sheep?

Also 1077-1080:

IE. ἕως ἢ σφονδύλη φεύγουσα πονηρότατον βδέϊ,

κώδίνων Ἀκαλανθίς ἐπειγομένη τυφλὰ τίχτει,

τουτάκις οὔπω χρῆν τὴν εἰρήνην πεποιῆσθαι

TP. ἀλλὰ τί χρῆν ἡμᾶς; οὐ παύσασθαι πολεμοῦντας;

HIEROKLES Until the root-beetle flees and farts most foul and Akalanthis hurries up in her birth pangs and gives birth to blind offspring, till then the peace should not be made TRYGAIOS But what should we have done? Continue the war?

In the *Knights* after the two slaves steal the oracle from the sleeping Paphlagon, Demosthenes starts reading it, but interrupts himself thrice asking for his cup to be filled with wine. Nikias misunderstands his request and takes it for the words of the oracle (120-122):

ΔΗ. ὦ λόγια. δός μοι, δός τὸ ποτήριον ταχύ.

ΝΙ. ἰδοῦ. τί φησ' ὁ χρησμός; ΔΗ. ἑτέραν ἔγχεον.

ΝΙ. ἐν τοῖς λογίοις ἔνεστιν 'ἑτέραν ἔγχεον';

DEMOS O oracles! Give me give me the cup quick. NIKIAS Here it is.

What does the oracle say? DEMOS Pour another. NIKIAS Is it in the oracles, "Pour me another"?

This question echoes the question asked by Trygaios and Hierokles in the *Peace* as it has the same verb ἔνεστι which indicates the content of the oracle. As the scene in the *Knights* continues Demosthenes, instead of reciting the oracle, starts to interpret (125-140). The humour in the scene is in this reversal of order and in the tension in which the audience is kept for about 80 lines. The

oracle itself comes only after the interpretation is already announced and after the person referred to in the oracle, the Sausage-Seller is found. Surprisingly, the recited oracle is totally different from what Demosthenes reported first in his interpretation (197-202). We can understand that the first version is either Demosthenes' odd interpretation or that he made up the second version. The second version is read out with solemnity to the Sausage-seller, who is stunned at this enigmatic version of the oracle, so that Demosthenes has to explain it to him again (203-210):

ΑΛ. πῶς οὖν πρὸς ἐμὲ ταῦτ' ἐστίν; ἀναδίδασκέ με.

ΔΗ. βυρσαίετος μὲν ὁ Παφλαγῶν ἐσθ' οὔτοσί.

ΑΛ. τί δ' ἀγκυλοχῆλος ἐστίν; ΔΗ. αὐτό που λέγει,
ὅτι ἀγκύλαις ταῖς χερσὶν ἀρπάζων φέρει.

ΑΛ. ὅτι δράκων δὲ πρὸς τί; ΔΗ. τοῦτο περιφανέστατον.

ὁ δράκων γὰρ ἐστὶ μακρὸν ὃ τ' ἀλλᾶς αὔ μακρόν·

εἴθ' αἱματοπώτης ἐσθ' ὃ τ' ἀλλᾶς χῶ δράκων.

τὸν οὖν δράκοντά φησι τὸν βυρσαέτον

ἤδη κρατήσῃν, αἶ κε μὴ θαλφθῆ λόγοις.

SAUSAGE-SELLER *So what does it have to do with me? Explain it to me.*

DEMOS *The leather eagle is Paphlagon here.* SAUSAGE-SELLER *And*

why is it crook-taloned? DEMOS *It speaks for itself – he snatches things*

with his crooked hands. SAUSAGE-SELLER *And what does the serpent?*

DEMOS *This is very clear. The serpent is long and the sausage is long.*

Then both the sausage and the serpent are blood-drinkers. So the oracle

says that the serpent will overcome the leather-eagle, if he is not made soft

by words.

Finally, the agonistic scene in the *Knights* is built upon the contested exchange of oracles. The interpretation and misinterpretation is intrinsic to the comic action as it provides humour, jokes, metaphors, and allegories essen-

tial for the scene.¹⁶⁶ The sequence of oracles presented through the debate over their interpretations invites the audience to participate in the inventive interplay of the semantic levels of tropes and metaphors. Contest is central to that scene but the contested subject is not the authenticity of the oracles or the rational discourse, but their correct interpretation.¹⁶⁷ The Paphlagon and the Sausage-seller do not agree about the meaning (οὐ τοῦτο φησὶ ὁ χρησμός *Eq.* 1025, 1070-1071. *this is not what the oracle says*). They contradict each other, interrupt each other and blame each other of poor practice of divination for about 100 lines citing oracles and suggesting their interpretations. The correct interpretation in its turn is the one that is compelling enough for Demos to accept the oracle. After he asks a series of questions about the meaning of the Sausage-seller's oracles and receives satisfactory answers, he concludes (1097-1099):

οὐκ ἦν ἄρ' οὐδεὶς τοῦ Γλάνιδος σοφώτερος.
καὶ νῦν ἑμαυτὸν ἐπιτρέπω σοι τουτονὶ
γερονταγωγεῖν κάναπαιδεύειν πάλιν.

No one ever is wiser than Glanis. And now I shall yield myself to you to guide me in my old age and educate me anew.

The audience gets involved in the process of interpretation, too, as they have a possibility to adopt their own perspective and form their own understanding of the oracles.¹⁶⁸ This presumably reproduces the actual practice of the performance of oracles in the Assembly where everyone could make a judgement about the oracle which was recited.¹⁶⁹

It is quite natural for comedy to evoke laughter in such a way: comic characters constantly interrupt each other and comment unpleasantly on each other's activity. However, this structure is not just a device of comic theatre, but it re-

¹⁶⁶Ruffell 2011, 68-69.

¹⁶⁷Muecke 1998, 259.

¹⁶⁸Muecke 1998, 270; cf *Eq.* 233.

¹⁶⁹Bowden 2003, 271-272.

flects the agonistic tradition in which individuals compete in their mantic skill to interpret the riddles of the oracular language. This tradition goes back to the poetic mantic contests of archaic times represented in epic poetry of the Hesiodic corpus. One poem, the *Melampodeia*, deals specifically with stories about manteis and oracular institutions. A key episode in the poem represents the divinatory contest at Claros between the prophet Kalkhas and Mopsos in which Kalkhas fails and dies. As Cingano suggests, the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* was modelled upon a divinatory contest of this kind consisting in verse sequences in oracular style.¹⁷⁰ The pattern of divine wisdom that requires explanation in the agonistic context possibly derives from the earlier Indo-European tradition.¹⁷¹ The agon in the *Knights*, therefore, does not have to be limited to a political function. It engages with broader connotations of divinatory practices and poetic traditions. It is to these ritualised practices that Aristophanes refers his audience in the contest of oracles in the *Knights*.

Oracles are represented in comedy as ritualised performances of sacred texts that mediate communication of messages from gods to humans. This communication sometimes requires active questioning, interpretation, and even contest to measure the skill of understanding the words of the god. I suggest that comedy dramatises elements of real performances of oracles which the audience could encounter in ritual and civic contexts of public sacrifices, political debates, and poetic contests. The agonistic and interpretational aspects of oracular performances as represented in comedy demonstrate that these are

¹⁷⁰Cingano 2009, 121-123.

¹⁷¹The prophet Zarathushtra of the Iranian tradition exchanges questions and answers with Ahura Mazda. The alteration of questions and answers is a model present also in the Edda and Rigveda. The recurrent type of question in Avestan hymns has a recognisable folklore structure of a question or riddle with a superlative embedded in it: who is the best/most...? which is present both in the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* and in Hesiodic *Melampodia*. The obscure language of riddles that finds its place in the oral tradition requires the special skill of an Indo-European poet to understand metaphor. As West 2007, 364-365 writes: "... the Indo-European poet was master of a special language and style that often obscured the plain identity of things under periphrases and symbols, a language that was in fact sometimes 'riddling', presenting to hearers unfamiliar with the code a challenge to comprehension. It is not surprising that we find stories of poets measuring themselves against one another in contests both of riddling language and of mythological learning."

a type of ritual speech grounded in the Indo-European poetic and ritual tradition. Within this tradition it is essential for an individual to be able to decipher the sacred message as well as to win out over rival interpreters in order to communicate with divinity successfully.¹⁷² The significance of contest and interpretation for oracular performance suggests that oracles had ample potential for conveying ritual authority to their performers and listeners. The authority contained within oracles made them powerful political vehicles which is well-reflected in Old Comedy. The stylistic features of oracles as well as their religious and political relevance for the society made them a good object of ridicule for comic poets. Oracles are used in comedy for characterisation – sympathetic characters exercise their religious and political leadership by reciting oracles whereas ‘bad guys’ fail to present a compelling case for the authenticity and relevance of their oracles. The audience get engaged in the dramatic action by listening oracles and relating to the attempts of the characters in the play to interpret them. Comedy thus encourages collective interpretation of oracles which was part of the Athenian religious and political life.

Concluding observations

I have shown in this chapter that the ritual speech is represented along with sacrifice not only accompanying it but also controlling and constructing the ritual experience both on the fictional and meta-theatrical levels in various ways. Hymns in the *parabasis* are highly significant for the representation of the play, its *khoros*, and the playwright himself in the dramatic competition; prayers are represented as important ritual utterances ensuring that gods receive the right message about the sacrificial offering; cries are shown in all their compelling emotional force and potential to engage the participants of the ritual and unite them with each other and even with gods; oracles transmit the divine will to

¹⁷²Muellner 1976, 132-134: prayer and ritual are decidedly agonistic in Indic and Iranian, a characteristic which can be paralleled for institutions based on reciprocity in other archaic cultures

mortals which if interpreted correctly, can be impactful in ritual and civic contexts. These imaginary speech acts, although as imitations they are devoid of ritual power, have potential to transcend the theatrical conventions and regain their performative efficacy through meta-theatrical gestures. This can be seen in the scenes where the audience is invited to shout a paian or participate in the interpretation of an oracle. The ritual speech is represented in Old Comedy through imitations but these imitations possess the necessary set of characteristics for functioning as a 'real' ritual which means that every re-enactment of a ritual utterance on the comic orchestra might in one simple meta-theatrical step become religiously efficacious.¹⁷³

¹⁷³Perhaps, reminding of late antique hagiographical narrative of the actor Genesius who imitated the rite of baptism on order to mock the Christians and suddenly experienced the power of the ritual speech act finding himself converted into the Christian faith; see Panayotakis 1997.

Chapter 3

Ritual Space and Time in Old Comedy

3.1 Introduction

Performances, both ritual and cultural, are special occasions that require temporal arrangement and spatial embodiment. The spatio-temporal dimension of performances is built into the wider social framework of space and time, the two universal categories that structure human lives and practices. Ritual practice, in particular, can be defined as the physical embodiment of religious systems and beliefs in the *here and now* of the performance. Ritual events take place in spaces that are marked as extraordinary and sacred, opposed to other, profane spaces, being dedicated to the gods. Through these spaces, be it a temple building, a natural sanctuary (for example, a cave), or just an altar, the divine is channelled for the benefit of the society.

If the spaces of a temple or an altar physically express the notion of sacred, the special time of ritual events is also seen by the participants as invested with the hierophanic potential. The time of ritual performances and festivals is systemised according to the life cycles of the society – agricultural, ecological, economic, political. Such a systemisation is usually codified and presented in the form of ritual calendar, a complex meaningful system of events where single performances receive additional importance respective to their place in the calendar. One of the main functions of the ritual calendar is to link the

system of ritual events with the mythical past of the society. As Calame 2009a, 15 notes:

“While organising a social space, calendar time thus offers a composite and rhythmical temporality. It is in its realization that the conjunction between all the cultural representations of the past which we class in the vague category of ‘myth’, and all the regulated and recurrent symbolic practices which we place under the no less vague name of ‘rite’ take place.”

It is important, as Calame continues, that performance has the potential to “transform individual apprehensions, prefigured by the time and space of the world, into a shared knowledge and practical collective memory, performed as cultic songs. These apprehensions, felt as psychic time and space based on the development of organic time and the deployment of physical space, are transformed in mythico-ritual configurations and realized as ritualized collective memory.”¹ The calendar time thus configures socially and symbolically the cosmic order according to which the social and ritual behaviour is in its turn structured. In sum, the ritualised space and time (*hic et nunc*) of the performance secures the identity of a social group.

In drama, as in ritual, the construction of time and space is at the heart of the performance. The following observation of Seaford is true *mutatis mutandis* for ancient comedy²:

“Drama is action in space and time that represents action in another space and another time. It transcends itself, both spatially and temporally. And beyond the space and time of a represented action (in Argos, say, in the time of Agamemnon), Aeschylean poetry imagines other spaces and times that may be more remote (Troy, the underworld, the time of Kronos).”

¹Calame 2009a, 16.

²Seaford 2012, 1.

The dramatic performance operates on several spatial levels including the 'here (and now)' of the performance (theatrical space), the scenographic space deriving from the staging, the mimetic space of the dramatic action communicated visually (fictional space onstage), the diegetic space of the narratives communicated verbally (fictional space offstage). All these levels operate not separately but in interaction with each other.

One of the special features of any dramatic performance is the meta-theatrical potential that derives from the difference between the performance and the fiction.³ The meta-theatrical meaning rooted in the spatial dimension is implicitly present in any self-referential utterance or deictic gesture. In the particular case of the representations of ritual in Attic drama, this means that the simulations of ritual space and time onstage signal the ritual context ('here and now') of comic performance, that is, the time of the Dionysiac festival and the space of the theatre adjacent to the Dionysos' *temenos* and situated amid other sanctuaries on the slope of the Acropolis.⁴

Time and space, both in drama and ritual, are inseparable constituting the integral spatio-temporal framework of the performance or text, the *chronotope*, to use Bakhtin's term. Representations of time in ancient Greek poetic texts are integrated into space, as they refer to the ritualistic action done in a precise place. On the other hand the festivals often present the ritual setting for movements and ritual events mapped onto network of spaces. Although spatio-temporal unity and interconnection is common for religious (ritual) and cultural (dramatic and poetic) performances,⁵ for the clarity of argument I shall divide the analysis of ritual space and ritual time in Old Comedy.

³Lowell 1996, 32-33: "In the theatre, it is the peculiar relation of instances of discourse to an already given stage space and an already given theatrical fiction that creates the meta-theatrical potential."

⁴Worman 2014, 224-225: "On the dramatic stage quite generally any referential or deictic gesture points up a here and now that is first and foremost fictional mimetic of some other time and place, and secondarily resonant with the actual space of the theater – say on the south slope of the Acropolis, in the ritual swing of the spring-time."

⁵Seaford 2012, 4: "In its spatiality, especially as a performance in which a community is present as spectators (or even as choral participants), drama resembles ritual, and may embody the same chronotope." On the pragmatics of Greek poetry combining spatial and temporal aspects in the extra-discursive time and space of the ritual performance also: Calame 2009a, 6-8.

3.2 Constructing ritual space

I explore here to what extent space is important for dramatic representations of ritual. The focus of analysis is on the interaction between multiple spatial levels of the dramatic event. Such an interaction includes not only comic stagecraft (that is the construction of the comedy's dramatic space through special uses of the orchestra, scenery, entrances and exits, doors, buildings, stage props and technical devices) and spacecraft (that is, setting of a play, scene changes and location, the identity of *skene* and other conventions of space which acts as a 'shaper of narrative and theme'),⁶ but also the 'real' places and spaces of worship to which Old Comedy refers and which evoke in the spectators their own ritual experience of sacred space.

The dynamics of this interaction is complex. A comic playwright uses the elements of real ritual practices to reflect the notion of ritual space in comedies. These real elements are represented in a new subversive context and invested with new meanings. At the same time they continue to convey values and ideas assigned to them in 'normal' contexts. As Worman argues: "[...] though primarily fictional and only secondarily directly referential, these settings are not abstract spaces in any true sense; rather, they are deeply rooted in the ground of civic practices, organized and assigned value in relation to recognisable transactions in familiar places."⁷ Hence, comedy creatively engages with the ritual reality and transforms it by building its own imaginary world of ritual through narratives, imitation of embodied ritual practices, deictic elements of speech and gestures. This new comic ritual space is different from the normal expectations and experiences of the spectators. However, in a certain sense it refers to them directly, offering to the society room for self-reflection on its own ritual practices.

Three particular types of spatial representations will be the focus of this

⁶Lowe 2006.

⁷Worman 2014, 202.

section. Firstly, the role of the Athenian urban environment and sacred spaces visible for the audience sitting in the theatre in the construction of comic ritual space. Secondly, the ritualisation of the theatrical performance space (orchestra) and the construction of fictional ritual space onstage with non-verbal means, such as props (e.g. altar), and verbal references (explicit references to a sanctuary as setting of the play). Thirdly, the diegetic and mimetic representations of the processions and other types of religious movement.

3.2.1 Sanctuaries around the theatre of Dionysos and comic ritual space

Attic drama interacts with the urban sacred space due to the location of the theatre of Dionysos on the South slope of the Acropolis, the major symbolic space of the gods' presence within the city. The theatre is open air with no physical boundaries that would isolate dramatic performances from the rest of the surroundings. In particular, spatial overlaps between the cult of Dionysos and the theatre in his honour include the location of the theatre adjacent to the Dionysos' precinct; the procession at the Great Dionysia that moved from Piraeus towards the sanctuary of Dionysos on the slope of the Acropolis where the dramatic performances were held⁸; the location of the altar on which the opening sacrifice to Dionysos was performed either in proximity to or even within the theatrical space. All these are highly relevant for the understanding of the theatre as part of the Dionysiac cult and the Athenian polis cult in general.

In Attic demes theatres were also located next to Dionysos' precincts. The oldest stone theatre in Greece in Thorikos has a small sanctuary of Dionysos near the western parodos. The theatre in Rhamnous presumably was situated

⁸The procession at the Great Dionysia and its generic overlap with comedy in particular has been studied by Csapo 2013. Other Dionysiac processions were likely to end in the theatre (as in the case of the theatre in Thorikos argued by Wiles 2003, 64-66).

in Dionysos' precinct as well.⁹ Outside Attica theatre was frequently associated with another divine figure, Asklepios. Performances were dedicated to Asklepios in the theatre of Epidaurus that was visited by many spectators who came to the sanctuary to receive treatment. Asklepios' sanctuaries in Pergamon, Kos, Messena, and Dion include theatre buildings (odeons) as well.¹⁰ In Athens, the Asklepieion was built next to the theatre of Dionysos in the 420s and the choice of this place was purportedly deliberate and revealing Asklepios' connections with theatrical performances.¹¹

This spatial vicinity of Greek theatres to a sanctuary is significant: it demonstrates the need for distinction between the space of cult and the space of the theatre (otherwise why create two different spaces) but at the same time it testifies to their overlap and interaction. The god may be perceived as the recipient of the theatrical performances since he takes delight in the dramatic contests. However, the division of the theatrical and cultic spaces shows that the Greeks perceived the dance and song on the orchestra as a phenomenon not linked directly to sacrificial offerings. These had to be performed elsewhere and, as archaeological evidence shows, there was no altar on the orchestra that would be used for sacrifices (on the altar see the next section).

The space of dramatic performances is not, therefore, cultic space in the strictly ritual sense: it is neither an appropriate space for sacrifice nor the space controlled solely by priests or other cult officials. It cannot be called secular either since it is a public space where polis religion reveals itself through various ways of civic participation in the dramatic contest presented not only to mortals but also to the gods of the city. I argue that Old Comedy, its poets and audiences were well aware of both the overlap and distinction between ritual and theatrical spaces, so that they could enjoy the interaction of the two in comedy.

⁹There is a dedication of the 4th c. of the seats to Dionysos: *IG II² 2849*. Also the stibadeion-shaped building situated next to the theatre indicates the link with Dionysos: Kolb 1981, 69; Pouilloux 1954, 72. A stibadeion was a semicircular building presumably for dining in honour of Dionysos: Picard 1944.

¹⁰Melfi 2007.

¹¹Melfi 2007, 324ff.

The dynamic interaction of the real landscape and fictional setting of the play can be illustrated by several scenes including the arrival of the *choros* in the *Clouds*, an address to Athens in the fragment of Aristophanes' fragmentary play *Farmers*, and the arrival of Ploutos in the *Wealth*. All these scenes involve a direct address, *apostrophe*,¹² to the surrounding landscape which as it seems extends the dramatic space of the play beyond the physical boundaries of the orchestra into the 'real' sacred and civic spaces. The most revealing in this respect is the scene in the *Wealth* which will be discussed in a separate case study (see below).

The staging of the *choros* entering the comic stage in the *parodos* in the *Clouds* implies interaction with the landscape around the theatre. The cloud-goddesses are new to the city and they reveal in their song that they have come to Athens to praise it and to take part in its sacred rites (300-304):

ἔλθωμεν λιπαρὰν χθόνα Παλλάδος, εὐάνδρον γᾶν

Κέκροπος ὀψόμεναι πολυήρατον·

οὗ σέβας ἀρρήτων ἱερῶν, ἵνα

μυστοδόκος δόμος

ἐν τελεταῖς ἀγίαις ἀναδείκνυται

Let us come to the glowing land of Pallas to look upon the much-loved soil of Kekrops, rich in fine men; where there is the awe of ineffable sacred rites, where the house receiving initiates is opened during the holy celebrations...

In their praise they mention the Eleusinian Mysteries, the cult which gave Athens an international importance in religion and attracted visitors from other places. At this point the *choros* of *Clouds* themselves strongly resemble a theoric *choros* of visitors who come to a city to perform hymn and dance. The style of their hymn imitates the addresses in Pindaric hymnic poetry that celebrates a particular location in the context of ritual praise. It is significant that

¹²For the *apostrophe* in tragedy and comedy see below the section on the *Wealth* and in Wagener 1931.

the visual aspect is emphasised in the scene. The Clouds describe in detail the landscape that they 'see' around them (275-284):

ἀέναοι Νεφέλαι,
ἀριθῶμεν φανεραὶ δροσερὰν φύσιν εὐάγητον
πατρὸς ἀπ' Ὠκεανοῦ βαρυαχέος
ὑψηλῶν ὀρέων κορυφὰς ἔπι
δενδροκόμους, ἵνα
τηλεφανεῖς σκοπιὰς ἀφορώμεθα
καρπούς τ' ἀρδομένην ἱεράν χθόνα
καὶ ποταμῶν ζαθέων κελαδήματα
καὶ πόντον κελάδοντα βαρύβρομιον·

and (287-290): ἀλλ' ἀποσεισάμεναι νέφος ὄμβριον
ἀθανάτας ἰδέας ἐπιδῶμεθα
τηλεσκοπῶ ὄμματι γαῖαν.

Eternal Clouds! Manifesting our watery bright nature, let us arise from the deep-roaring father Ocean to the tree-crowned peaks of high mountains, in order that we may behold clearly the far-seen watch-towers, and the fruits, and the fostering, sacred earth, and the rushing sounds of the divine rivers, and the roaring, loud-sounding sea; [...] Having shaken off the rainy mist from our immortal forms, let us survey the earth with far-seeing eye.

We may suggest that the staging of the scene included some deictic gestures of the *choros* towards the landscape around them extending the imaginary dramatic space of their vision from the orchestra where they are physically performing to the city as their destination and to some particular places around it like the Sacred Way towards Eleusis, the countryside surrounding the city and the sea that is visible (or easily imagined as visible) from area on the slope of the Acropolis.¹³

¹³Before the *parodos* there is a scene in the play in which one of Socrates' students shows

The hymnic style similar to the passage in the *Clouds* can be found in a fragment of lost Aristophanes' comedy *Farmers* fr. 112, where the Pindaric word λιπαρός is used in an *apostrophe* to Athens:

ὦ πολι φίλη Κέκροπος, αὐτοφυῆς Ἄττική,
χαῖρε λιπαρὸν δάπεδον, οὖθαρ ἀγαθῆς χθονός
*Dear city of Kekrops, self-grown Attica,
hail, the shiny plain, the most fertile land*

It is hardly possible to restore the context but the fragment implies that the character who utters the address would perform some kind of a gesture and it would be difficult to imagine this address without involving the physical space around the theatre. The city is invoked as sacred entity in a solemn hymn. By addressing the ritual space beyond the stage comedy engages with the city landscape, the Acropolis hill and the land, all of which can be seen from the seating space, and opens up the theatrical space into the natural environment. At the same time it creates the fictional space of the dramatic action.

The technique of *apostrophe* appears to be very effective in construction of ritual space. This can be illustrated with a scene in the *Wasps* where Philokleon wants his improvised court to be placed near the shrine of the hero Lykos. The shrine of Lykos in Athens was indeed situated near an Athenian law-court called 'the court at Lykos'.¹⁴ The dramatic space of *Wasps* is closely associated with law-court and Lykos is addressed as the 'neighbour hero' earlier in the play (389). When Philokleon prepares his improvised court hearing he needs a portable shrine of Lykos to brought in. Bdelykleon points at something claiming that the altar is visible and the hero himself is present at it. Philokleon's first reaction upon 'noticing' the shrine is to address it immediately in a prayer (821):

the map of Greece illustrating the advantages of studying geometry and pointing to Athens, Euboea and Sparta on it (205-215). A similar scene of mapping real places onto some imaginary space in comedy can be found in *Lys.* 1162-1172 where Greece is visualised as a girl's body.

¹⁴Poll. 8.121; MacDowell 1971, 184.

ὣ δέσποθ' ἦρωσ, ὡς χαλεπὸς ἄρ' ἦσθ' ἰδεῖν
O Lord hero, how difficult it is to see you...¹⁵

The object to which Philokleon addressed his prayer is no real sacred space but by the performative act of naming it as the space of the god the comic ritual space is constructed.

3.2.2 Altars in the orchestra

The altar appears in comedies as the visual centre of the audience's attention and the physical point of gathering for the participants of the comic ritual. In Aristophanes' extant comedies it is used for the staging of sacrificial scenes in the *Wasps*, *Peace*, *Birds*, *Women at the Thesmophoria*, *Frogs*, *Lysistrata*, *Akharnians*.¹⁶ A fragmentary comedy *Danaids* presumably had an altar on stage as well: fr.256 mentions special pots for the consecration of an altar to Zeus. Other fragments also may suggest use of altars. Fr.381 of Aristophanes' lost play *Lemnian women*, in which the cult of the goddess Bendis appear to have been significant, refers to Bendis' altar 'which now is warm'. Many comic fragments mention sacrifices and we can assume that the altars could be used in them.¹⁷

The altar in them was probably represented by portable stage props installed *ad hoc* in different locations in the orchestra, not by a permanent theatrical construction. There was perhaps a theatrical *agyieus*-altar standing on the raised stage as token of a house¹⁸ but, despite the traditional view, there is no certain literary or archaeological evidence for a large permanent sacrificial altar in the middle of the orchestra in Greek theatres.¹⁹ Even if the actual sac-

¹⁵The Greek allows for ambivalent meaning of the phrase. It can be also taken as 'how stern your aspect is'. Lykos could be represented in a form of wolf (Poll. 8.121).

¹⁶Orfanos 2001, Arnott 1962, 49-50.

¹⁷Theopomp. *Penelope*, fr.49; Kratin. *Bousiris*, fr.23; Aristoph. *adesp.* fr. 648; Eup. *Demes*, fr.99, 41-48; Aristoph. *Banqueters* fr. 236; Theopomp. *Barmaids* fr. 29; Hermipp. *adesp.* fr.76; Pherekr. *Deserters* fr. 28, 33; Plato *The little kid* fr. 98 and *Phaon* fr.188.

¹⁸Poe 1989, 137.

¹⁹The centre stones found in several theatre orchestras were building bench marks, not altar bases. The hole in the orchestra of the theatre of Dionysos belongs to the construction of a Christian basilica of the 5th CE. The only Attic theatre with archaeological evidence for an altar within the theatrical space is Thorikos where an altar base is found to the side of the

rificial altar of Dionysos was present within the area of the orchestra (perhaps in front of the seat of the priest of Dionysos) it was most likely a small one used for nonanimal offerings and libations and was not used in the stagings of the plays. The altars of tragedy and comedy existed in their own fictional space which did not overlap with the sacrificial space of the city festival.

What role did the altar play in the comic representations of the ritual? Orfanos offers a classification of altars represented in comedies regarding their function. There are three main types: (1) altars as scenery decoration, a stage prop that is never actually used (*Wasps*, *Frogs*) for offerings and do not create any cultic context; (2) altars used for the representations of blood sacrifice in the *Peace* and *Birds*; (3) and altars used in the parodies of famous tragic scenes that contribute to the paratragic representations (*Akharnians*, *Lysistrata*, and *Women at the Thesmophoria*). In the analysis below I show that the comic scenes representing the altar of Orfanos' type 1 contribute to the ritualisation of the dramatic space. In both types 1 and 2, the altar is the focal point of the episodes. As such, it is significant for the dramatic action and conveys meanings important for the episode and the entire play. There is a drastic difference between the altars of 'real' sacrificial offerings (Orfanos' type 1 and 2) and altars as part of the tragic poetic strategies (type 3). While the former are treated as 'serious' ritual objects within the fictional plot, the latter are substitutes for an altar meant to evoke laughter. Aristophanes recognises in such tragic altars the metaphorical system of sacrificial symbolism representing death, distortion, and destruction, and ridicules tragedy by exaggerating the metaphor: the altar is not a normal altar but the metaphor of an altar which is exposed to the audience as an odd replacement: a shield (*Lysistrata*), a chopping block (*Akharnians*), or a tomb (*Women at the Thesmophoria*).

rectangular 6th century orchestra. Ashby 1999, 42-61 bases his argument on this lack of clear archaeological evidence arguing for a peripheral position of the altar, most likely in front of the seat of the Dionysos' priest. He does not exclude that the altar could be absent altogether from the theatre and the sacrifices were held in the adjacent sanctuary.

Ritualisation of space: The *Wasps* and *Frogs*

In the *Wasps* a small altar was presumably part of the setting of the *skene*. It is the stone pillar altar dedicated to Apollo Agyieus standing in front of the house door which is present also in the dramatic stage-setting in *Thesm.* 748 and in *Pherekr.* fr. 92.²⁰ In the scene of the sacrificial offering in 859-890, this altar becomes the focus of attention. Bdelykleon addresses Apollo under the name of Agyieus in his prayer to soften his father's heart (See 2.3.1). The epithets chosen for Apollo show that Bdelykleon addresses the deity in the form of the pillar altar (875-876):

ὦ δέσποτ' ἄναξ γείτον Ἀγυιεῦ, τοῦμοῦ προθύρου προπύλαιε,
δέξαι τελετὴν καινὴν, ὦναξ, ἣν τῷ πατρὶ καινοτομοῦμεν.

*O Master and Lord neighbour Agyieus, standing at my door, accept the
new rite, o Lord, which we are instituting for my father.*

After the prayers he makes the libation at this altar. The scene in which the pillar altar features is ritually charged. The ritual character of the scene is emphasised for the sake of the comic effect: preparations for the law court are shown as some kind of sacred rites which would not be the case in the usual Athenian life. The scene combines the elements of animal sacrifice, mysteries, and a consecration rite for a new cult. The ritual starts with solemn preparations: various paraphernalia are brought in as in a sacrificial procession. One such object – railings – is compared to a sacred object shown during the mysteries while the jurors in the court are represented as participants watching it. After that slaves bring incense and wreaths to perform a ritual and Bdelykleon encourages the *choros* to pray to the gods. The prayers that follow contain some authentic ritual elements and involve ritual actions enacted on stage by Bdelykleon (860-890).

The pompous preparations increase the humour of hearing the case of the two dogs litigating about a piece of cheese. The altar becomes one of the physi-

²⁰MacDowell 1971, 125, 241.

cal objects that creates the ritual space for this event. The ritual meaning of the preparations is carefully tailored through the creation of space (the altar, the railings) within which the ritual speech (prayers, ritual formulas) and ritual actions (the manipulation of wreaths and incense) are then performed. Although the stone altar with the figure of Apollo was probably standing on the *skene* from the beginning of the play to indicate the entrance to the house, Bdelykleon ‘activates’ its religious meaning only in the ritual context of the libation. The ‘activation’ is achieved by the direct address to the altar and by integrating the space into the prayer. We can observe here the same strategy of ritualising the surrounding space through the *apostrophe* to landscape surrounding the theatre and to the shrine of Lykos in the *Wasps* (see 3.2.1).

Likewise it is difficult to agree with Orfanos that the altar in the *Frogs* is a mere decoration and does not have any ritual function. It appears in a climatic moment of the play in a scene preceding the poetic agon. Dionysos marks the beginning of the agon with a preliminary offering and prayers (871-874):

ἴθι νυν, λιβανωτὸν δεῦρό τις καὶ πῦρ δότω,
ὅπως ἂν εὐξομαι πρὸ τῶν σοφισμάτων
ἀγῶνα κρῖναι τόνδε μουσικώτατα·
ὑμεῖς δὲ ταῖς Μούσαις τι μέλος ὑπάσατε.

Now, someone, give me here the incense and fire, so that, before the contest of intellectual devices, I could pray to judge it in the most artistic way. And you sing a song to the Muses.

Just as in the *Wasps*, the ritual offering here creates sacred space for the contest and institutes it as an extraordinary event of special significance. During this episode some kind of altar with the fire must have been present on stage. Dionysos orders the *khoros* to perform a hymn and makes the two poets say prayers and offer some incense. The confrontation between the poets is implicit already in their prayers – while Aiskhylos is a conservative and pious initiate of the Eleusinian mysteries, Euripides prays to some new ridiculous gods of

his own. The habitual ritual setting of the scene makes Euripides' claims about his 'different' gods sound more comic. The altar in this scene creates special space to perform the ritual procedure and remains its focal point. It is likely that the altar was not present on stage but was brought on together with the incense and fire when Dionysos asked for them.

Sacrificial altars: *Birds* and *Peace*

The altars in the *Birds* and *Peace* are crucial for the dramatic space of several episodes since they serve as focal points for the action. In the *Peace*, Trygaios wants to celebrate with a sacrifice the *hidrusis*, the installation of the cult of the new goddess (923). He starts to look for an altar (938):

ἐγὼ δὲ ποριῶ βωμὸν ἐφ' ὅτου θύσομεν.

And I'll provide an altar on which we'll sacrifice.

It is not entirely clear whether the slave fetches a portable altar or some construction is already there on the orchestra and Trygaios only notices it in 942:

ὁ γὰρ βωμὸς θύρασι καὶ δῆ.

Look, here's the altar at the doors.

Other equipment necessary for the sacrifice is brought in and all the preparations are carried out in front of the audience. The ritual space created during this scene transcends the stage space and extends to the seating space of the theatre. Trygaios orders the slave to throw some barley seeds (964-966) over the spectators. The audience are involved with this meta-theatrical gesture into the ritual space of the orchestra and become the participants of the comic ritual.

The altar remains the centre of the dramatic action till v.1125. The staging of the preparation of the sacrificial meat on the altar by Trygaios must have drawn a lot of attention. The intruder Hierokles is desperate to enter the sacred space and to take part in the ritual (which would provide him with some free food, of

course), but Trygaios does not let him to do that. The deictic references imply that the visual representation must have played an important role (1117-1119):

IE. οὔτοι μὰ τὴν Γῆν ταῦτα κατέδεσθον μόνω,

ἀλλ' ἀρπάσομαι σφῶν αὐτά· κεῖται δ' ἐν μέσῳ.

TP. ὦ παῖε παῖε τὸν Βάκιν.

HIEROKLES By earth, this is not to be eaten by the two of them only. I'll snatch it from them. It lies in the middle. *TRYGAIOS* O beat, beat Bakis.

The ban of Hierokles from the ritual space creates the contrast with the openness of the ritual for the audience – Trygaios invites them to share the sacrificial meat (1115-1116):

TP. ἄγε δὴ, θεαταί, δεῦρο συσπλαγχνεύτε

μετὰ νῶν. IE. τί δαί ᾿γώ; TP. τὴν Σίβυλλαν ἔσθιτε.

TRYGAIOS Come on spectators, approach and share the offals with us two. *HIEROKLES* And what about me? *TRYGAIOS* Eat your Sibylla.

The altar in this scene indicates the space of ritual commensality closed for the intruders like Hierokles who only pretend to be pious but in fact do not care about the community's welfare. In the similar scene in the *Birds*, the Oracle-monger seeks to control the sacrifice (see above 2.5) and through that to get access to the sacrificial meat but is expelled by Peisetairos.

In the *Birds* the altar on stage is also used as a focal point of dramatic action during a substantial part of the play. The sacrifice introducing the cult of the new gods and celebrating the foundation of the new city, starts in 848 and runs till 1057. Throughout the scene Peisetairos refers to the sacrifice which he is trying to deliver (922-923):

οὐκ ἄρτι θύω τὴν δεκάτην αὐτῆς ἐγώ,

καὶ τοῦνομ' ὥσπερ παιδίῳ νῦν δὴ ᾿θέμην;

Isn't it that I'm only now making the sacrifice of the tenth day of the city and I have just given it its name as to a child?

As in the *Peace*, the performance of the sacrifice is suspended because of intruders (Poet, Oracle-Monger, and the architect Meton) who turn up one by one, present themselves to the protagonist and enter the sacred space of the newly founded city. Orfanos' concludes from these scenes that the altar in comedy is a place of rupture of the community by the intruders.²¹ However, the rupture does not take place since they never succeed in their attempts to interact with the space of the sacrifice. The altar in these sacrificial scenes is rather the space of consolidation, the sacred enclosure, which resists the threats of the intruders and therefore ensures the safety of the community.

The Poet's failure to glorify the city properly is represented through the notion of space. In the tradition of lyric poets such as Pindar, the praise of a particular city usually implies the arrival of the poet or the *choros* of the performers at the place. The motif of arrival is often emphasised in poems: the poet after his prayer to the place explains how and why he arrived to Delphi and highlights repetitively the fact of his arrival at the place.²²

However, in the *Birds* the 'arrival' motif is parodied. Before leaving the stage he utters the following verses (948-952):

ἀπέρχομαι,
 κάς τήν πόλιν γ' ἐλθὼν ποιήσω τριαδί·
 'Κληῖσον, ὦ χρυσόθρονε, τὰν τρομεράν, κρυεράν·
 νιφόβολα πεδία πολύπορά τ' ἤλυθον. Ἄλαλαί.'

I am leaving, and going to the city I will compose these verses: You of the golden throne, glorify the shivering, chilling land; to snow-blasted many-pathed plains I have come. Alalai!

Instead of coming he is departing from the space of the city, and instead of praising he is actually ironical about the city by describing it as snow-covered

²¹Orfanos 2001, 47 concludes from the scenes in the *Birds* and *Peace* that the altars in them are surrounded and approached by the personages that would be best described as *bomolochoi* despite the fact that they are never called like that in the context of that scenes.

²²Rutherford 2001, 307-308. The pattern of delivering praise upon arrival fits into a larger pattern of 'wandering' lyric poets which was central for many figures in ancient Greece such as Orpheus, Thamyris, Empedokles discussed in Hunter and Rutherford 2009, 1-22.

and abundant in harvests at the same time. An *apostrophe* to the landscape included in his speech emphasises the physical dimension and constructs the imaginary space of the new city with the same dramatic technique as in other passages with *apostrophe* discussed above. The expulsion of the intruder helps to demarcate the space of the city from the hostile outer environment.

Cloude cuckooland is closely associated with sacrifice in this scene and the ritual space of the altar becomes also the symbolic space of the city. This can be observed even more clearly in the scene with the architect Meton following the Poet's departure. Meton wants to manipulate the space of the city transforming it with his measurements.²³ He proposes to divide the circular space of the city into four parts, to 'square' it and put the *agora* in the centre (1004-1009):

ὀρθῶ μετρήσω κανόνι προστιθείς, ἵνα
ὁ κύκλος γένηται σοι τετράγωνος, κὰν μέσῳ
ἀγορά, φέρουσαι δ' ὥσιν εἰς αὐτὴν ὁδοὶ
ορθαὶ πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ μέσον, ὥσπερ δ' ἀστέρος
αὐτοῦ κυκλοτεροῦς ὄντος ὀρθαὶ πανταχῆ
ἀκτῖνες ἀπολάμπωσιν.

I'll take measurements with a straight ruler so that your circle will become square and the agora will be in the middle, and straight streets will lead to it, right at the very centre like straight rays shining in every direction from this circle star.

It is plausible that Meton's verbal suggestions were accompanied with gestures and visualisation within the theatrical space. Dunbar suggests in his commentary that Meton is drawing circles in the air (cf v.557) while Sommerstein puts in a stage direction that Meton starts making a diagram on the ground. In both cases it would be conceivable that the characters refer to a visual central point of the imaginary city circle which has to be replaced with the agora according to Meton's plan. The physical embodiment of this point

²³Discussion of Meton's geometry and its role in the play structure Amati 2010.

could be an altar if it was installed in the centre (ἐν μέσῳ which is also the expression of Hierokles in the *Peace*). It would remind the spectators of the altar of the twelve gods in the Athenian agora which was regarded as the symbolical and physical centre of the city from which the distance between Athens and other places was measured.²⁴ Furthermore, it would at the same time visually represent the concept of ‘*polos*’ fundamental for the ‘great idea’ of the play to build a city in the air.²⁵ The theme of *polos* is introduced in the description of the hero’s plan in the beginning of the play (178-184):

ΠΕ. οὐχ οὗτος οὖν δῆπου ἴσθιν ὀρνίθων πόλος;
 ΕΠ. πόλος; τίνα τρόπον; ΠΕ. ὥσπερ εἶποι τις τόπος.
 ὅτι δὲ πολεῖται τοῦτο καὶ διέρχεται
 ἅπαντα διὰ τούτου, καλεῖται νῦν ‘πόλος’.
 ἦν δ’ οἰκίσθητε τοῦτο καὶ φάρξθηθ’ ἄπαξ,
 ἐκ τοῦ ‘πόλου’ τούτου κεκλήσεται ‘πόλις’.

PEISETAIROS Isn’t this a pole for the birds? *HOOPOE* A Pole? In what sense? *PEISETAIROS* As one might say, a place. But because it moves around and all things pass through it, it is called a Pole. But if you settle it and fortify it one day, it will change its name from a pole to a “polis”.

By using the word *polos* Aristophanes plays with multiple meanings: celestial sphere, centre or axis of the circle around which it rotates and hence the locus of power, as well as the comic pun on *polis*.²⁶ The *polos* is the space *per se*, the *topos*, which is to be colonised by the birds. If our suggestion that the altar reflected the idea of the *polos* is correct, the altar is used in the play to construct not only the ritual space of the sacrifice but to symbolise also the imaginary utopian space of the Cloudcuckooland. The sacrificial altar hence becomes crucial for the construction of the newly colonised city.

²⁴Rutherford 2010, 43-44.

²⁵Amati 2010, 217.

²⁶The word used for Meton’s sundial in the *Banqueters* is also *polos*. On Meton see below 3.3.3.

'Paratragic' altars

The representations of altars in the *Lysistrata*, *Women at the Thesmophoria*, and *Akharnians* evoke particular tragic settings and patterns familiar to the audience.

In the beginning of *Lysistrata* women perform a solemn oath that they will abstain from any sexual intercourse with their husbands (181-239). The oath is accompanied with a libation and sacrifice which is modelled upon the oath-sacrifice in Aiskhylos' *Seven against Thebes*. The ritual is probably a parody of the oath which fourteen Athenian women took at the festival of the Anthesteria according to the account in Demosthenes.²⁷ It was led by the wife of the King Archon, the Basilinna, who played the role of Dionysos' bride at the festival (on *Lysistrata*-priestess organising her own rites see 3.3.1). The venerable priestesses (*gerarai*) swore with this oath to abstain from sex and to celebrate the rites of the god. The similarity with *Lysistrata*'s oath is obvious but, as Seaford shows, the meaning of the oath is in fact reversed by multiple sexual double entendres.²⁸

The oath of the *gerarai* priestesses was part of a larger and spectacular sequence.²⁹ It had to be performed with the sacrificial baskets in the sanctuary of Dionysos in the Limnai in front of an altar and it was followed by the rites which, like mysteries, it was forbidden to disclose to anyone who was not involved. One of the functions of the oath was to make women swear about this non-disclosure.

In comedy the ritual is represented through the tragic oath-sacrifice which makes it abnormal and creates the comic effect.³⁰ All the elements of the sacrifice are distorted. *Lysistrata* suggests that they perform a sacrifice over a shield

²⁷Dem. 59.78; Fletcher 2014.

²⁸Seaford Fthc.

²⁹Poll. 8.108.

³⁰The ritual actions are not typical for an official civic oath made in a public temple (like the oath of ephebes) or a pre-battle oath sacrifice. Dipping hands or spear into the blood would not be a standard Greek oath sacrifice (attested only once in Xenophon and there as the alliance with the barbarians); see Parker 2004, 137n.17.

and not in front of an altar.³¹ At this point the tragic imagery of slaughter and blood shedding is brought in: *μηλοσφαγούσας* (189), *τόμιον ἐντεμοίμεθα* (192), *μηλοσφαγοῦσαι Θάσιον οἴνου σταμνίον* (196), *τὰ σφάγια* (204) (see 4.2.2, 4.3.3). Furthermore, *Lysistrata*'s suggestion evokes another intertextual link to Aiskhylos' tragic poetry – not only in the *Seven* but also in the *Suppliants* the shield metaphorically substitutes for an altar. In v.190 Danaos tells the group of scared maidens to take their place around the altar using it as a shield (the same word *σάκος* is used here for shield as in the *Seven*):

κρεῖσσον δὲ πύργου βωμός, ἄρρηκτον σάκος
the altar is stronger than a tower, a shield unbreakable.

When *Lysistrata* suggests they swore over a shield she uses the same epithet of tight alliance, 182³²:

τί δῆτα ταῦτ' οὐχ ὡς τάχιστα, Λαμπιτοῖ,
 ξυνωμόσαμεν, ὅπως ἂν ἀρρήκτως ἔχη;
*So why don't we join in swearing an oath about this as quickly as possible,
 Lampito, so that it can't be broken?*

The allusion to the Aeschylean female group gathering around an altar could have been visualised in the staging of the scene.

It is clear why Aristophanes chose both tragic contexts in the *Seven* and the *Suppliants* for his parody of the women's oath. *Lysistrata* and her friends are, like Danaids, a group of women who stay together to resist male sexual pursuit. The resemblance to the *Seven* lies in their militant resolution and in the capturing of the Acropolis. The comic effect of the allusions is also easy to recognise. While Danaids are indeed virgins who hate the idea of marriage, the women in the *Lysistrata* are secretly longing for their husbands and lovers. The tragic oath in the *Seven* is not appropriate as a model for their sex-strike because

³¹An official oath taken before an altar (*lithos*) where the *tomia* are placed is attested also in Arist. *Pol.* 55.5.

³²Also in Soph. *Aj.* 576 as an epithet of the shield, *σάκος*.

they seek to stop the war. In Aiskhylos' *Seven* the meaning of the ritual is to consolidate the bond of the seven kings and empower them in the war (39-49). Lysistrata's plot is about peace (v.169, 190) and in this context an outstandingly martial passage from a war tragedy creates a comic effect. The abnormality of the shield proposed for the ritual by Lysistrata is noticed by the women. Kalonike objects that a shield is not an appropriate object, 190: you can't swear about peace over a shield.³³

Lysistrata then rejects her initial plan and introduces a new version in which a wine skin is used instead of the sacrificial victim and the wine substitutes for blood which is collected in a bowl. The women touch the bowl to show their allegiance to the oath. In the actual ritual oath of the priestesses at the Anthesteria the object to touch could be the sacrificial victims on the altar in front of which the oath was performed.³⁴ Touching an altar to confirm the oath is attested in Andoc. 1.126.³⁵

Aristophanes thus mocks the tendency of tragedy to employ metaphorical symbolism in regards to the sacrificial ritual, like calling an altar a shield or using a shield for an altar. A similar pattern can be observed in the paratragic scene in the *Akharnians* (317-365) where a chopping block takes the place of a tragic altar. Dikaiopolis seizes a basket of charcoal imitating Euripides' Telephos who kidnapped the child Orestes, and promises to lay his own head on a piece of wood to be slaughtered as a guarantee of the truth of his speech (317-318):

³³The same joke about a military/bloodshedding ritual performed for establishing peace can be found in the *Akharnians* (3.3.1) and in the *Peace* (2.3.1). The shield is a symbol of war in the *Akharnians* 58, 279, 1140, and *passim*.

³⁴This is a possible interpretation of touching 'the sacred things' by the women (πρὶν ἄπτεισθαι τῶν ἱερῶν) in the Demosthenes' account; Schlesier 2011, 267n.10, for taking the sacred things into one's hand while swearing an oath see Aeschin. 1.114; Lycurg. *Leokr.* 20; cf. Dem. 23.68.

³⁵See Berti 2006, n.143 on the importance of the physical contact with the victim or the altar. The bowl the women touch in comedy is also called a boar which is an euphemism for penis (Seaford Fthc). It is possible that the 'sacred things' which women had to touch after an oath in the Athenian ritual of the Anthesteria were not the sacrificial victims but some other sacred objects, among which there were some symbolising the genitals, male or female. These are one of the items, as Clement of Alexandria reports, which the initiates had to touch and manipulate during the Eleusinian Mysteries (*Protr.* 2. 22). The parody thus might be not so far from truth.

Κἄν γε μὴ λέγω δίκαια μηδὲ τῷ πλήθει δοκῶ,
 ὑπὲρ ἐπιζήνου ἕελήσω τὴν κεφαλὴν ἔχων λέγειν.
*and if I don't say just things nor does it seem so to the people I'm willing
 to speak having my head on a butcher's block.*

Two tragic motifs are combined here. The rhetorical argument about the willingness to be slaughtered imitates the one used in Euripides' *Telephos* fr. 706³⁶ while the metaphor of chopping block as an altar is used by Cassandra in *Ag.* 1277.³⁷ The altar could be present on stage as physical object since in the previous scene Dikaiopolis was leading the procession in preparation to sacrifice (see 3.2.4 on religious processions). In that case pointing to a normal altar and calling it a chopping block would enhance the comic effect.

The *Women at the Thesmophoria* ridicules Euripides' *Helen* by contrasting the 'normal' (comic) and 'abnormal' (tragic) use of altars. At v. 888 the theatrical installation of *thymele* in the centre of the orchestra is called Proteus' tomb by Inlaw which causes the resentment of the women (885-888):

EΥ. Αἰαῖ, τέθνηκε. Ποῦ δ' ἐτυμβεύθη τάφῳ;
 ΚΗ. Τόδ' ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ σῆμ', ἐφ' ᾧ καθήμεθα.
 ΚΡ. Κακῶς ἄρ' ἐξόλοιο, – κάξολεῖ γέ τοι, –
 ὅστις γε τολμᾷς σῆμα τὸν βωμὸν καλεῖν.
*EURIPIDES alas dead? but where is he buried in a sepulchre? INLAW
 This is his very tomb on which I am sitting. KRYTILLA May you be
 perished – and you will – for daring to call an altar a tomb.*

In the appeal to the tomb that featured in the staging of Euripides' *Helen* Aristophanes employs spatial intertextuality or, one could say, inter-spatiality.

³⁶ Ἀγάμεμνον, οὐδ' εἰ πέλεκυν ἐν χεροῖν ἔχων
 μέλλοι τις εἰς τράχηλον ἐμβαλεῖν ἐμίν,
 σιγήσομαι δίκαιά γ' ἀντειπεῖν ἔχων.
*Agamemnon, I will not keep silent even if someone with an axe in his hands were going to strike my
 neck for I have just things to respond with.*

³⁷ 1277-1288, βῶμοῦ πατρῶου δ' ἀντ' ἐπίξενον μένει,
 θερμῷ κοπέισης φοῖνον προσφάγματι.
*Instead of my father's altar a butcher's block is awaiting for me, warm with the bloody sacrifice of the
 slaughterers.*

The image of Proteus' tomb must have been recognisable for the audience – Euripides' play begins with a scene where Helen uses his tomb as an altar for retreat and supplication upon her arrival to Egypt (*Hel.* 1-67). The tomb is present on stage throughout the play and is used to mark key moments of the plot. Proteus' tomb in the tragedy might have been alluding to the altar by its visual presentation or location within the theatrical space. There are also explicit verbal indications (*Hel.* 547, 800) that the association between the tomb and an altar was implied. In general using a tomb as an altar to seek refuge is unusual for Greek tragedy and features an exotic barbarian custom appropriate for the representation of the Egyptian landscape.

The altar which is the focus of the scene in the *Women at the Thesmophoria* is the altar of the sanctuary where the women gather to celebrate the festival. By making Inlaw and Euripides insist that the altar is actually Proteus' tomb, Aristophanes ridicules the tragic prologue and the tragic symbolism of space in general. The audience is invited to reimagine the physical theatrical space of the orchestra (already set as the ritual space of the celebration) as the tragic setting of the *Helen*.

In the three scenes the altars become the means by which comedy engages in the dialogue of intertextuality and inter-visibility with tragedy. With these representations of tragic altars comedy reflects and comments on the tragic use of space through the techniques of dramatic spacecraft.

3.2.3 Imaginary sanctuaries

The altar is the most evident and remarkable stage prop that can be used to ritualise the space on a more or less temporally basis. Its appearance and presence marks sacrificial settings. Other means of stage scenery can indicate to the audience a permanent setting of the play within a ritual space, a sanctuary or a temple. There is not enough evidence to reconstruct the scenery, but we can presume that what is available to us only through verbal references and

testimonies, was presumably represented to the original audience by visual means.

Extant plays: *Women at the Thesmophoria, Lysistrata*

Two extant plays the *Women at the Thesmophoria* and *Lysistrata* feature civic spaces that are situationally transformed into sacred precincts in the context of a ritual celebration. The sacred space in these two plays does not reflect a particular sacred location but represents an instance of creative improvisation *ad hoc*. The ritual space in the two plays is embedded in the temporal setting of a festival celebration (which will be discussed in 3.3.1).

The Women at the Thesmophoria

After initial scenes in Agathon's house the action moves to the Thesmophorion for the rest of the play. The attention of the audience is drawn to the sanctuary multiple times (83-84, 88-89, 277-278; cf also 879-880). The ritual space of Thesmophorion is, nevertheless, crucial for the plot of the play. It creates the framework for the women's celebration and for Euripides' and Inlaw's crime of transgression into the restricted space. The women's enterprise is introduced in the beginning of the play through the sacred space dedicated to the Thesmophoroi goddesses where the celebration takes place (82-84):

ΕΥ. αἱ γὰρ γυναῖκες ἐπιβεβουλεύκασί μοι,
κὰν Θεσμοφόροιν μέλλουσι περὶ μου τήμερον
ἐκκλησιάζειν ἐπ' ὀλέθρῳ.

EURIPIDES Because the women have conspired against me and they are going to hold an assembly today in the sanctuary of the Thesmophoroi about ruining me.

The place of the celebration is highlighted once again in Euripides' plan (88-89):

ΕΥ. Ἀγάθωνα πείσαι τὸν τραγωδοδιδάσκαλον
εἰς Θεσμοφόρον ἐλθεῖν.

*EURIPIDES To persuade Agathon, the tragic poet, to go to the sanctuary
of the Thesmophoroi.*

It is visualised on stage for the first time when Euripides and Inlaw are approaching the sanctuary (277-278):

ΕΥ. ἔκσπευδε ταχέως· ὡς τὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας
σημεῖον ἐν τῷ Θεσμοφορίῳ φαίνεται.

*EURIPIDES Hurry up quickly; the signal has been shown at the Thes-
mophorion for the assembly.*

The Inlaw then addresses to his girl-servant (280-293):

ΚΗ. ὦ Θραῦττα, θέασαι, καομένων τῶν λαμπάδων
ὅσον τὸ χρῆμ' ἀνέρχεται ὑπὸ τῆς λιγνύος
Ἄλλ', ὦ περικαλλεῖ Θεσμοφόρω, δέξασθέ με
ἀγαθῆς τύχῃ καὶ δεῦρο <καὶ> πάλιν οἴκαδε.

*INLAW Look, Thratta! How many people are coming in the smoke while
the torches are burning. O the two beautiful Thesmophoroi, receive me
with good fortune here and then back home.*

Inlaw's address to the deities serves an introduction to the meeting that women are going to hold which they start with prayers and hymns (295-371; see on prayers 2.3).

Later in the play, a paratragic scene from the *Telephos* takes place in a sacred space in which the altar plays the key role: Inlaw kidnaps the child and wants to kill it like a sacrificial victim (3.2.2). Aristophanes makes fun of the tragic metaphor of murder-sacrifice. When Inlaw is carried away by the Scythian guard, the *choros* of the women start celebrating the Thesmophoria with dance and hymns within the space of the sanctuary. The gods they address in their

prayers are a mixture of figures – Hera, Hermes, Pan, Dionysos – which probably would not be present as statues in a hypothetical sanctuary of the two Thesmophorian goddesses. Aristophanes constructs the ritual space of this temple showing it as a place for ritual and sacrifice, which is indicated by the presence of the altar.

The identification of this Thesmophorion with some particular place in Athens is problematic. The unique mentioning of a sacred location with this name in Attica dates from the mid 4th BCE and belongs to a sanctuary in Piraeus (*IG II² 1177, IG II² 2498*). In a decree of the deme of Melite which lay in the centre of Athens the sanctuary where the Thesmophoria were presumably celebrated is officially called the temple of Demeter and Kore, not Thesmophorion.³⁸ There is no archaeological site in Athens either that could be positively identified as the Thesmophorion, the central Athenian sanctuary where the festival was celebrated.³⁹

In the play the only direct topographical link of the Thesmophorion is the setting of the action on Pnyx in 658. The women, after exposing Inlaw, start searching the Pnyx area with lamps in order to find other intruders (655-658):

ἡμας τοίνυν μετὰ τοῦτ' ἤδη τὰς λαμπάδας ἀψαμέναις χρῆ
ξυζωσαμέναις εὖ κἀνδρείως τῶν θ' ἱματίων ἀποδύσας
ζητεῖν, εἴ που κάλλος τις ἀνὴρ ἐπελήλυθε, καὶ περιθρέξει
τὴν πύκνα πᾶσαν καὶ τὰς σκηναὶς καὶ τὰς διόδους διαθρήσαι.

*Now after that we must take the torches, hitch up well our clothes, bravely
take off our mantles and search in case any other man has come here and
run around the whole of the Pnyx and the tents and examine the passage-
ways.*

However, no trace of such a sanctuary has been found on the Pnyx and it is unlikely that the Thesmophoria were celebrated anywhere near the Pnyx.⁴⁰ The

³⁸Clinton 1996, 120-122, 123-124.

³⁹Clinton 1996; Broneer 1942.

⁴⁰Broneer 1942, 258-259. As Broneer argues, the festival was one of the oldest and most

silence of the sources about the Pnyx being the location of the Thesmophorion made scholars reinterpret the direct reference to the Pnyx in *Thesm.* 658 of the comedy metaphorically, 'assembly' called like this by the women in accordance with the nature of their gathering.⁴¹ However, it is clear that 655-658 emphasise the spatial aspect of the place which they should run around. Besides this explicit reference to the Pnyx/ Assembly-place in 658 there are also indications of the location of the Thesmophorion high on a hill. The ascent from the Agora to the temple is stressed several times in the play (281, 585, 623, 893).

As Clinton shows in his analysis, there was no temple in central Athens that would be used for a national celebration of the Thesmophoria for the whole polis, the impression that arises from Aristophanes' depiction.⁴² Instead, the festival was administered by the demes and the celebrations took place in many different places in Attica (Piraeus, Eleusis, Halimous, Cholargos, Pithos, Oe) with possible variety in the dates of the celebration. One possible location that could be used by the Athenian women was the Eleusinion in the City on the north slope of the Acropolis.⁴³

All that said, it can be concluded that the space of the Thesmophorion in Aristophanes' place is imaginary. It is called with a generic name which could be applied to any temple where the festival was celebrated and did not imitate a particular location in Athens.⁴⁴ There was no such a location in Athens that would host all women during the Thesmophoria and the festival was not celebrated at the national level. At the same time the women's gathering which represented the meeting in the male Assembly would evoke the space of Pnyx, later corroborated in the play in the episode of searching the space around the sanctuary. As Clinton indicates, part of the joke could be in the use of the Ekklesia as a Thesmophorion whereas in reality the City Eleusinion where the

well-known while the Pnyx was a relatively new area of the city

⁴¹Broneer 1942.

⁴²Clinton 1996.

⁴³Hill 1953, 94, Judeich 1931, 398-399.

⁴⁴Clinton 1996, 125: "The generic happily allowed the scene to be set in a more imaginative realm than if it were tied to a particular sanctuary in a particular deme."

Thesmophoria presumably took place was used as a Bouleuterion for meetings after the Mysteries.⁴⁵ The ritual space thus constructs the comic plot and develops the major themes of the play – the presentation of the women’s gathering as both a religious and political event.

The *Lysistrata*

The transformation of a familiar cityscape into a space for ritual celebration can be observed also in the *Lysistrata*. The women seize the Acropolis, the sacred space of Athena, and establish themselves there (341-345)⁴⁶:

ἄς, ὦ θεά, μή ποτ' ἐγὼ πιμπραμένας ἴδοιμι,
ἀλλὰ πολέμου καὶ μανιῶν ῥυσαμένας Ἑλλάδα καὶ πολίτας·
ἐφ' οἷσπερ, ὦ χρυσολόφα
πολιοῦχε, σὰς ἔσχον ἔδρας.

*So that, O Goddess, I may never see them burnt up but see them rescue
Greece and the citizens from war and all madness for which purpose, o
Golden-crested Guardian of the City, they have occupied your abode.*

The Acropolis is a cultic space in comedy where the gods live: Ploutos and Demos are to be settled as gods on the Acropolis.

Just like in the *Women at the Thesmophoria*, the women led by Lysistrata defend their sacred space from men and guard it. The enclosed space embodies the idea of sex-strike and is intruded by men longing for sex (847-849):

ΛΥ. τίς οὗτος οὐντὸς τῶν φυλάκων ἐστῶς; ΚΙ. ἐγώ.
ΛΥ. ἀνὴρ; ΚΙ. ἀνὴρ δῆτ'. ΛΥ. οὐκ ἄπει δῆτ' ἐκποδών;
ΚΙ. σὺ δ' εἶ τίς ἠχβάλλουσά μ'; ΛΥ. ἡμεροσκόπος.

LYSISTRATA Who is that person standing within the guards. KINESIAS

It's me. LYSISTRATA A man? KINESIAS A man indeed. LYSISTRATA

⁴⁵Clinton 1996, 125.

⁴⁶See Martin 1987.

And you are not going away from here? KINESIAS And who are you to send me off? LYSISTRATA I am a daytime sentry.

At the same time, the space of the women's gathering is embedded into the Athenian topography. Kinesias first approaches the Acropolis passing the shrine of Demeter Khloe. The scene is represented in detail with the sanctuary being the marker of space. The staging must have included gestures pointing to the imaginary temple which would construct the dramatic space of the scene. The women gather around Lysistrata to watch the man approaching and get prepared to defend their sacred space when Myrrhine recognises her husband in him (829-838):

ΛΥ. Ἴου ἰού, γυναῖκες, ἴτε δεῦρ' ὡς ἐμὲ
ταχέως. ΓΥ. Τί δ' ἐστίν; Εἰπέ μοι, τίς ἦ βοή;
ΛΥ. Ἄνδρ', ἄνδρ' ὄρω προσιόντα παραπεπληγμένον,
τοῖς τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ὀργίοις εἰλημμένον.
ᾠ πότνια, Κύπρου καὶ Κυθήρων καὶ Πάφου
μεδέουσα'. ἴθ' ὀρθὴν ἤνπερ ἔρχει τὴν ὁδόν.
ΓΥ. Ποῦ δ' ἐστίν, ὅστις ἐστί; ΛΥ. Παρὰ τὸ τῆς Χλόης.
ΓΥ. ᾠ νῆ Δί' ἐστὶ δῆτα. Τίς κάστιν ποτε;
ΛΥ. Ὅρατε. Γινώσκει τις ὑμῶν; ΜΥ. Νῆ Δία
ἔγωγε· κάστιν οὐμὸς ἀνὴρ Κινησίας.

LYSISTRATA alas o women, come here to me quickly. WOMEN What's the matter? tell us, why are you shouting? LYSISTRATA I see a man, a man approaching stricken and possessed by the secret rites of Aphrodite. O lady mistress of Cyprus, Cythera and Pathos come to the straight road which you have taken. WOMEN Where is he whoever he is? LYSISTRATA By the shrine of Khloe. WOMEN Oh yes by Zeus he is. But who is he? LYSISTRATA Watch. Does any of you recognize him? MYRRHINE By Zeus I do. This is my husband Kinesias.

Later, Kinesias suggests that they go to the shrine of Pan, Pan's cave, to have

sex and the whole scene is set there (911-958). In this scene much attention is drawn to the space of the cave. Myrrhine pretends to dislike the bare ground and keeps going to and fro fetching cushions, blankets, and other objects instead of lying down with Kinesias. Later Kinesias suggests that Myrrhine can wash herself in Klepsydra, which was situated next to Pan's sanctuary.

Both Pan's and Khloe's sanctuaries were real places of cult on the north and west slopes of the Acropolis⁴⁷. They could not be seen from the theatre of Dionysos but they were reachable within physical distance of walking and were locations well-known to the spectators and could be referred to with a gesture in their direction. When the women notice Kinesias approaching their 'Acropolis' they observe his movement from one place to another which had to be more or less realistic.

The setting of the play in the sanctuaries (the Acropolis and sacred locations nearby) contributes to the portrayal of the sex-strike as sacred rites performed by the women. In the very first lines of the play, Lysistrata compares the women's secret meeting which she organises with a ritual gathering in the shrine of an orgiastic deity (v.2) : εἰς βακχεῖον, *to the place of Bacchic revelry*, and ἧ 'ς Πανός, ἧ 'πὶ Κωλιάδ' ἧ 'ς Γενετυλλίδος, *to the shrine of Pan, or to the sanctuary at Kolias, or to the shrine of Genetyllis*.⁴⁸ All the three sanctuaries were associated with Aphrodite and sex. Pan's cave will feature in the play as the place for the sexual intercourse of Kinesias and Myrrhine; Kolias hosted a sanctuary of Aphrodite, probably in the deme of Halimus or Anaphlystos; Genetyllides who were women's goddesses of child birth, mentioned as responsible for seductive kissing in *Thesm.* 130, had a shrine possibly at the Aphrodite's enclosure at Kolias. The representation of the sex-strike as sacred rites is further revealed in the choice of the two female leaders' names: a priestess of Athena Polias in the 5th century was called Lysimache. She had a residence on

⁴⁷Judeich 1931, 285-286.

⁴⁸I follow the text of the manuscripts accepted by Henderson. See also 3.3.1.

the Acropolis and held her office for 64 years.⁴⁹ Moreover, the participation in Lysistrata's endeavour requires ritual purity (v.912) which is characteristic of ritual celebrations.

To recapitulate, in the *Lysistrata* and *Women at the Thesmophoria* the group of women improvise a sacred space where they perform their celebration which appears to be an enclosed space located in some known area of the city. The locations in Athens are used to ground the improvised sacred space of the comic plot within the familiar topography. Aristophanes tends to present the religious activities of marginal groups through the representation of enclosed space of their activities. Another example is Socrates' *Phrontisterion* in the *Clouds* which is represented in the play as a sacred location: it is a separated enclosed space accessible only to the initiated; it is first introduced in the play as a sacred precinct where the character is heading (127-8);⁵⁰ it serves also as the temple of the newly introduced gods, the Clouds, where the worshippers can meet and converse with them. The Thinkery is compared to Trophonios' cave (506-508), a well-known location of mystery rites.⁵¹ There is a sacred bed (v. 254) which Socrates offers to Strepsiades to sit on. The space of the Thinkery is suitable for performing ritual: Socrates wants to lay a wreath on Strepsiades as a preparation for his initiation and Strepsiades recognises the ritual meaning of this gesture (v. 256).

Fragments

There are a number of other Athenian and Attic sanctuaries mentioned in fragments as part of the comic imaginary space:

- The sanctuary of Demeter Khloe is mentioned in Eupolis' *Marikas* fr.196

⁴⁹See Henderson 1987, xxxviii-xxxix. It has been suggested that Myrrhine's name also hinted at a priestess of Athena Nike.

⁵⁰ἀλλ' εὐξάμενος τοῖσιν θεοῖς διδάξομαι
αὐτὸς βαδίζων εἰς τὸ φροντιστήριον
praying to the gods I am going to learn myself and go to the Thinkery.

⁵¹Kratinos' *Trophonios* featured intellectuals as one of the main themes of the play (fr. 239 says something about 'coiners of the speeches', ἀργυροκοπιστῆρας λόγων).

in a context that would suggest some dramatic use of the space

ἀλλ' εὐθύ πόλεως εἶμι· θύσαι γάρ με δεῖ

κρίον Χλόη Δήμητρι

I'm on my way straight to the Acropolis;⁵² I must sacrifice a ram to Demeter (Khloe).

- In Polyzelos' *Birth of Muses* fr. 8:

ἱερῶ γὰρ ἐντετύχηκας Ἐπακρίου Διός

for you have reached the shrine of Zeus Epakrios

a scene might have been set in the temple of Zeus of high places on Hymettos which is attested in the Erchia calendar.⁵³

- In Strattis' *Potamians* fr.38 is an order to go to the Pythion:

ὕμεῖς τε πάντες ἔξιτ' ἐπὶ τὸ Πύθιον,

ὅσοι πάρεστε, μὴ λαβόντες λαμπάδας

μηδ' ἄλλο μηδὲν ἐχόμενον Φιλυλλίου.

You all who are present here go to the Pythion, without torches or anything else which Philyllios has.

There are two possibilities of the identification of this shrine. One sanctuary of the Pythian Apollo was located on the north slope of the Acropolis, called also the sanctuary of Apollo Hypoakraios. This is presumably where Thargelia were celebrated and from where the Attic Pythais departed to Delphi.⁵⁴ The other possibility is the Pythion between the temple of Olympian Zeus and the Ilissos river to the south of the Acropolis.⁵⁵

- The Theseion which was probably situated at the east end of the Acropolis where Theseus' bones were laid (Plut.*Thes.* 36.2-3, *Cim.* 8.5-7; Dontas

⁵²Without an article πόλις usually mean the Acropolis in Classical Attic; cf. *Nub.* 69.

⁵³IG II² 1294; SEG 21.541 col.5.60-2.

⁵⁴Travlos 1971, 100.

⁵⁵As possible starting point of the Pythais, this temple is discussed in Rutherford 2013, 177; cf Travlos 1971, 91 and Thuc. 6.54.

1983, 62n.42) could be a setting for two plays: Pherekrat. *Slave-trainer* fr. 46 mentions Kallaiskhros who is sitting in the Theseion:

Κάλλαισχρον ἐν τῷ Θησέῳ καθήμενον

Kallaiskhros sitting in the Theseion.

This precinct was used by slaves and people in distress as a place of refuge (cf *Eq.* 1312, *Plut. Thes.* 36.4). As the main theme of the comedy was education of slaves, the choice of the temple seems justified. Another mentioning of the same sanctuary is in Aristoph. *Seasons* fr. 577 where a slave is going to take refuge in the Theseion.

ἐμοὶ κράτιστον ἐς τὸ Θησεῖον δραμεῖν

ἐχεῖ δ' ἕως ἂν προῶσιν εὐρωμαι μένειν

I think it's best to run to the Theseion and wait there till I arrange the sale

- The temple of Poseidon is mentioned in Eup. *Helots*, fr. 149:

τέμενος Ποτειδᾶ ποντίῳ

the precinct of Poseidon, the sea god.

As some scholars note the title of the play does not require a Spartan setting and the *khoros* could well represent suppliants that come to a Poseidon's temple in Athens. The *khoros* probably represented slaves mistreated by Spartans who came as suppliants to the shrine in Sounion. Storey 2003, 177 suggests also that fr. 149 was spoken by them on arrival to Sounion, hence at least some part of the action was set in the temple. In another fragment 147 a ritual Spartan feast (*kopis*) is in the middle of celebration 'here and now' (αἶ κα γένηται τοῦδε σήμερον κοπίς) which makes the setting in a sanctuary possible.

- In Krates' *Wild beasts* fr.17 we find a description of the temple of Asklepios Mounikhios in Piraeus, perhaps the same one where Ploutos was healed in the *Wealth*. The sanctuary is attested in the inscription IG II² 4962 of the second quarter of the fourth century, so the comic fragment is probably

the first attestation of the temple.⁵⁶

ἀλλ' ἀντίθεος τοι· ἴγὼ γὰρ αὖ τραπέμπαλιν
τὰ θερμὰ λουτρὰ πρῶτον ἄζω τοῖς ἐμοῖς
ἐπὶ κιόνων, ὥσπερ διὰ τοῦ Παιωνίου,
ἀπὸ τῆς θαλάττης ὥσθ' ἐκάστω ῥεύσεται
εἰς τὴν πύελον· ἐρεῖ δὲ θύδωρ 'ἀνέχετε'.
εἴθ' ἀλάβαστος εὐθέως ἦξει μύρου
αὐτόματος ὁ σπόγγος τε καὶ τὰ σάνδαλα.

*But just consider the other side. I shall do the exact opposite and provide hot baths for my people on columns, just like at the House of Paionios, so that it will flow from the sea into everyone's bathtubs. The water will say, "Turn me off" and then immediately will arrive on its own a jar full of unguent, a sponge, and sandals.*⁵⁷

- the shrine of Curse in Athens (Aristoph. *Seasons* fr.585 = Hesych. α 6978)

Ἄρᾶς ἱερόν· ἱερόν Ἄρᾶς Ἀθήνησιν. Ἀριστοφάνης Ὠραις.

Shrine of Curse: Shrine of Curse, at Athens. Aristophanes in the Seasons

- a temple in Theopomp. *adesp.* fr. 74:

ὁ δὲ ταῦρός ἐστιν ἀγόμενος πρὸς τῷ νεῷ

The bull is being led beside the temple

- According to test.iii, the *khoros* in the *Banqueters* come from the Herakles' temple after ritual dining:

καὶ Δαιταλεῖς δρᾶμα Ἀριστοφάνους, ἐπειδὴ ἐν ἱερῷ Ἡρακλέους δειπνοῦντες
καὶ ἀναστάντες χορὸς ἐγένοντο

The Banqueters is also a play by Aristophanes when feasting in a shrine of Herakles and then standing up, they formed a khoros.

⁵⁶Judeich 1931, 441.

⁵⁷The fragment reflects the theme of utopia, see below on the *Seasons* and reflects the ambitions of the Athenian leaders. The luxurious baths to be constructed for the pleasure of the Athenian people feature in Ps.Xen. 2.9-10; see Ceccarelli 1996, 148.

There were several sanctuaries of Herakles in Athens. Herakles' shrines were usually attached to gymnasia which were centres of education and of cultural life and place of meeting of different clubs and the *khoros* of the play could represent one of them. Possible locations include the sanctuary at Kynosarges and the sanctuary in the Academy. There was also the temple of Herakles Alexikakos in Melite mentioned also in *Ran.* 501.⁵⁸

Unfortunately the fragments are too short and isolated to tell anything certain about the contribution of these sacred locations to the creation of comic ritual space. All the temples represented in these fragments are Attic. Rare occurrences of temples outside Attica include Kratinos' *Trophonios* which dealt with visiting the oracle of Trophonios in Boeotia and the Ephesian temple of Artemis in Autokrates' *Tambourine players*, 1.⁵⁹

These spaces were familiar for the audience and presented possibilities for play and parody. The resemblance of dramatic representations to real sacred locations helped the poet to achieve the verisimilitude of the ritual and to engage the audience with it emotionally by evoking their own experiences.

3.2.4 Dynamics of ritual space

So far I have discussed only how comedy constructs static ritual space, that is the space of sanctuaries and temples as well as the space of sacrifice focused around the altar. The analysis would be incomplete without turning to the dynamic aspect of ritual space – ritual journeys.

Old Comedy is a genre known for unstable and complex settings, as Lowe demonstrated for Aristophanes' comedies.⁶⁰ While in tragedy journeys are usually narrated, comedy tends to visibly enact space.⁶¹ Journeys, being one

⁵⁸Travlos 1971, 274.

⁵⁹The fragment suggests a ritual dance that Lydian girls perform in the temple of Artemis of Ephesus. It does not necessarily imply that the action was set in that place and could be just a reference like in *Nub.* 598 where a Lydian dance in the Ephesian temple is also mentioned.

⁶⁰Lowe 2006; see also Bakola 2010, 246-248.

⁶¹Bakola 2010, 239.

of the key themes in Old Comedy,⁶² are incorporated into comic plays as ‘itinerant spectacles’ with consecutive change of images and landscapes.⁶³ Aristophanes’ plots in the *Birds*, *Frogs*, and *Peace* are structured around a journey that connects the familiar world with some unknown fairyland while Eupolis’ *Demes* feature a *katabasis* to the underworld. One of the fragments of Kratinos’ *Odysseuses* represents a scene set on the ship in mid-voyage which was possibly staged during the *parodos* symbolising the transfer of the setting to some exotic and distant land.⁶⁴

Comedy features also a special kind of procession – the joyful *komoi*, revelry, with which the plays usually end. They mark the departure of the *choros* from the stage, *exodos*, marking the final point of the plot, a wedding or the protagonist’s triumph. These partying processions also contain ritualising elements such as hymnic addresses to deities and triumphant shouts. The choral activities during the *exodoi* have been studied as examples of ritual processions on stage by Calame 2004. Within a play they have the function of conventional endings reminding the audience of the ritual value of the dramatic performance and evoking the victory which the poet hopes to achieve (see 2.2.2 on the ritualisation of the play in the context of dramatic competition). The comic *exodoi* have cultic elements incorporated in them, such as ritual exclamations addresses to the gods, and elements of prayers and others. However, their function in the comic spacecraft is straightforward – they mark the happy end of the play praising the gods for the victory of the hero and greeting the audience while leaving the orchestra. In this section, I am going to discuss other representations of ritual travel and processions embedded in the plot of the play and contributing to the dramatic action that have been overlooked in the scholarship. By ritual travel I understand representations of *theoria*, state-embassy to a sacred destination, and journeys at a shorter distance, such as

⁶²On the ‘Wegmotiv’ in comedies see von Moellendorff 1995, 135-148.

⁶³Russo 1994, 210.

⁶⁴Bakola 2010, 235-246. In fr.143 characters speak to one another about an approaching storm with cues to the ship present in the scene.

processions.

Theoriai and processions in fragments

Sacred state-pilgrimages known as *theoriai* are well represented in the comic plots, as the analysis of fragments reveals.⁶⁵

- Aristophanes wrote a play *Women put their tents* which could portray a ritual travel to see the Isthmian games with which putting tents was generally associated (*Schol. Ar. Pac.* 880). A testimonium claims that in fr.487 Aristophanes himself is speaking about his experience of the journey:

... λήχυθον

τὴν ἑπτακότυλον, τὴν χυτρείαν, τὴν καλήν,

ἣν ἐφερόμην ἵν' ἔχοιμι συνθεάτριαν

[...] *the flask, the one holding seven kotylai, the ceramic one, the beautiful one, which I brought with me so that we could watch the show together*

- Kratinos' *Trophonios* could have contained a journey to the oracle of Trophonios in Boeotia. Trophonios was popular topic in Greek comedy: Kephisodoros, Alexis, and Menander all wrote a play with this title. Kratin. fr. 235 is an invocation of the gods of the Boeotian land which was attributed to the play *Trophonios* by Runkel. If the attribution is correct, the *khoros* uttered these verses upon their arrival to Boiotia:

χαίρετε δαίμονες οἱ Λεβάδειαν Βοιώτιον οὔθαρ ἀρούρης

Hail, deities who <guard> Lebadeia, Boeotian fertile plain.

This fragment is in anapaestic tetrameters so this could be the *khoros*' arriving to Boeotia in a *parodos* as Quaglia suggests.⁶⁶ A good paral-

⁶⁵Rutherford 2013, 341-345. Outside the chronological frame of Old Comedy the titles of Sicilian and Athenian comic plays point to *theoriai* and their participants: Epikharmos' *Spectators*, Sophron's *Women Viewing the Isthmian Games*, imply that the *khoros* might have consisted of the delegates of state pilgrimages. A poet of Middle comedy, Plato produced a play about returning from a ritual journey, *Women on their way from sacrifice*.

⁶⁶Quaglia 2000, 461f.

lel would be *Nub.* 356.⁶⁷ Other fragments may indicate the ritual procedure of oracle consultation: 233 mentions abstinence from food and sleep, snakes and lighting of the lamps appear in 241 and 245.

- Aristophanes' *Amphiaraos* probably featured pilgrimage to the Amphiareion at Oropus in North Attica including the consultation of an oracle there.⁶⁸

- Kratinos' *Run-Aways* might have represented some kind of procession or journey either to the Underworld or to Eleusis or both. Fr.65 is a mention of Sacred way between Eleusis and Athens:

ἱερὰ ὁδὸς ἐστὶν ἣν οἱ μύσται πορεύονται ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄστεος ἐπ' Ἐλευσίνα. [...]
μνημονεύει δ' αὐτῆς Κρατῖνος ἐν Δραπέτισιν

is the sacred road along which the initiates travel from the city to the Eleusis...
Kratinos mentions it in the Run-Aways.

Fr.53 refers to Kerkyon, ruler of Eleusis who was killed by Theseus.

- Fragments of Hermippos' *Gods* suggest some kinds of ritual celebrations with a public procession enacted or narrated in the play fr.25:

A. ὥσπερ αἱ κανηφόροι

λευκοῖσιν ἀλφίτοισιν ἐντετριμμένος.

B. ἐγὼ δ' ἐνέκαψα λανθάνων τὴν διαφοφόρον

A. [...] like the basket-bearers powdered with bleached barley dust. B. And I grabbed secretly the stool bearer

Another fragment mentions a festival in Laconia: fr. 32: παραταιναρίζειν.

καὶ σὲ τί χρὴ παραταιναρίζειν; *Why must you act madly at the Tainaria.* Tainaria

is a Laconian festival of Poseidon.⁶⁹ The prefix *para-* probably means some abnormal way of celebration.

⁶⁷It is likely that this address preceded the descension to the cave which was the practice of travellers to the oracle of Trophonios suggests this based on the assumed parallel with the scene of entering the Thinkery in the *Clouds* 506-508 Quaglia 2000, 459. We know about the practice to descend into the cave from Paus. 9.39.5.

⁶⁸Rutherford 2013, 343.

⁶⁹Cf Thuc. 1.128.1, Soph. *Satyrs at Taenarum* fr.191-198, Aristoph.*Ach.* 510.

- Kratinos' *Delian Maidens* came to us in scattered fragments (fr.23-37). The Delian Maidens are known to be a *choros* of Apollo's servants who masterfully sing hymns to Apollo, Leto and Artemis on Delos⁷⁰ They also appear as ritual performers in two tragedies by Euripides, where the dancing and singing *choros* of Delian maidens becomes a model for the tragic *choros* along with other ritual personal such as girls weaving the peplos at Athens.⁷¹ In the Hellenistic period the sacred group of young women, *Deliades*, are well documented as performing on Delos for pilgrims and visitors.⁷² Delos was known in the antiquity for its rich choral culture, created by locals and foreigners from other cities.⁷³ The name of the play and the presence of the Hyperboreans in fr. 24 indicate that the play may have dealt with Apollo and Delos and probably with the Athenian festival, the *Delia*, that was reintroduced under the Athenian empire on Delos in 426/425 BCE. The *Delia* was held every four or six years and the second celebration of it in 422/1 BCE or 418/7 BCE, led by Nikias was particularly splendid.⁷⁴ The main event of the *Delia* festival was *theoria*, the pilgrimage from Athens to Delos.⁷⁵ It was organised by Athenian officials⁷⁶ and brought offerings and sacrificial animals to Delos. The *theoroi* sent to Delos also took trained *choroi* with them who performed in honour of Apollo. The Delian part of the festival included a procession, a sacrifice, an agon and a banquet. The fragments indicate that the Kratinos' play depicted some kind of public celebration (fr. 24, 32, 33). Fr.32 suggests a procession enacted on stage.

τούτοισι δ' ὀπισθεν ἴτω δίφρον φέρων Λυκοῦργος,

⁷⁰*Hymn.Hom.Ap.* 151-164. On their professional virtuosity: Peponi 2009.

⁷¹Eur. *HF* 687-690, *Hec.* 464. See Henrichs 1996.

⁷²The performances of *Deliades* in Hellenistic time were even funded by visiting *theoroi*. See Rutherford 2013, 148,238.

⁷³We know of at least 12 religious songs performed on Delos in the 5th century. The majority of those songs were of the genres of paian, processional paian or processional song (*prosodion*), See Kowalzig 2007a, 57 and Calame 1997, 104-110.

⁷⁴Plut. *Nic.* 3.5. See Rutherford 2013, 221-223.

⁷⁵Rutherford 2004.

⁷⁶*IDélos* 1.43 (426/5 BCE) lists five magistrates – *arkhitheoroi*.

ἔχων καλάσιριν.

Let Lycurgus march behind them, carrying a stool and wearing a kalasiris.

This fragment must belong to the passage with instructions given by someone arranging the procession. This is indicated by the form ἔτω, which additionally may allude to the processional formula, as mentioned above (2.4.2). If the plot of the play was structured around the Delia festival it could reflect the sacrificial procession on arrival to Delos or, alternatively, a depiction of the whole sacred pilgrimage sent to Delos.

Extant plays: the *Peace*, *Frogs*, *Akharnians*

The *Peace*

The *Peace* starts with Trygaios traveling on a beetle to heaven to reach Zeus' house. The action then continues in the heaven until Trygaios rescues the goddess Peace and flies back to earth with girls Oporia and Theoria whom he received from Hermes. Theoria is the symbol of peaceful life and its pleasures associated with spectacular games and festivals, *theoria* (894-905). Several jokes are focused on Theoria as the personification of ritual journeys. The aspects of festival time and religious journey are intermingled in the figure of Theoria. When the slave learns about her he exclaims (v.873):

αὕτη Θεωρία 'στιν, ἣν ἡμεῖς ποτε
ἐπαίομεν Βραυρωνάδ' ὑποπεπωκότες

Is this the Festival-going we used to bang to Brauron after a few drinks?

and then he finds that she is πρωκτοπεντετηρίδα, a sexually charged epithet, hinting at the five-year interval at which large *theoriai* happened in Athens. Slaves start to fantasise about their journeys, 879-880:

τὸ δεῖν', εἰς Ἴσθμια
σκηνὴν ἐμαυτοῦ τῷ πέει καταλαμβάνω.

Well, actually, I'm making a space for my tent for the Isthmian games with my prick.

The scene when Theoria is handed over to the Councillors who were sitting in the first row in the theatre is full of sexual connotations but at the same time suggests the practice of *theoroi* reporting to the *boule* after being abroad.⁷⁷ As Trygaios returns Theoria to the Council, his journey receives the ritual meaning of a state-sanctioned journey to a sacred destination.

The Frogs

In the *Frogs*, too, the plot is structured around Dionysos' journey to the underworld.⁷⁸ It starts with the god knocking at the door of the hero Herakles asking him to consult him about the quickest path. The playful dialogue about the route takes a significant part of the play's opening scene. Dionysos leaves Herakles following his advice to take the road to Hades that goes through a big marsh where he meets the frogs in the rowing scene. Upon crossing the water, he meets the souls of initiates who enjoy the blessed life in Hades singing and dancing on the meadows. Where are these places to be located on the mimetic map of the play? The way to Hades, of course, has to be imagined as passing by mythical places: the Acheron lake and the Elysian fields. However, the symbolic route may be not enough for the comic poet who intentionally combines mythology with the actual Athenian cityscape. It has been suggested that Aristophanes alludes to the real places in representing fantastic locations.⁷⁹ The route of Dionysos can be mapped on the topography of Athens where each place (Herakles' house, marshes, meadows, Hades' door)

⁷⁷Rutherford 2013, 345.

⁷⁸See, for example, Thiery 2000, 21; Russo 1994, 209.

⁷⁹Worman 2014, 201-202: "Such orchestrations of place and space engage a mapping of schemes, within topographies that are usually quite well known, that are imbued with intellectual and political significance, and that constitute a unique intermingling of the aesthetic, the ethical, and the spatial. ... *Frogs* traces the route to the literary judgement as passing through a landscape that is grounded in local topographies and rituals of aesthetic and religious import." A similar comic device in the *Birds* where the centre of Cloudcuckooland alludes to the altar in the Athenian agora; see above on altars 3.2.2.

corresponds to a particular Athenian location through the relation with festivals held in them.⁸⁰ It is hardly possible to prove this hypothesis because the staging of the play which could help the audience envisage the particular sanctuaries cannot be recovered. However, it is not to be doubted that the encounter with the frogs evokes the ritual space of the sanctuary of Dionysos Limnaios which was the setting of the Anthesteria, an important Dionysiac festival. The sanctuary in the marshes was associated with the Lenaia festival and hence evoked the 'here and now' of the theatrical performance.⁸¹

The journey continues passing along the meadows where the *choros* of the blessed souls of the initiates "play" and rejoice. The identity of the *choros* remains highly debatable.⁸² According to one view, the second, principal *choros* of initiates appear on the orchestra in 316-322 after the *choros* of Frogs have left.⁸³ Their *parodos* represents a ritual procession with elements of the centrifugal procession from Athens to Eleusis being part of the Eleusinian Mysteries festival. The main indication of the procession in the *Frogs* is the invocation of the god Iakkhos, usually identified with Dionysos. The processional song on the way to Eleusis was called *iakkhos* after this god.⁸⁴ The procession was accompanied with dance, song, sacrifice, and libations. The *parodos* is naturally focused on ritual dance and movement. The processional movements of the

⁸⁰Purportedly, he starts at the temple of Herakles at Kynosarges or of Herakles Alexikakos, then proceeds to the sanctuary in the marshes close to Ilissos, then moves to the meadows associated with Lesser Mysteries rituals and finally arrives to the door of Hades which corresponds to Agrai where the temple of Demeter and Kore was situated, the place of the celebration of the Lesser Mysteries. Both Ilissos and Agrai could be seen from the seats in the theatre of Dionysos; see Worman 2014, 224-225.

⁸¹The *Frogs* were staged at the Lenaia in 405; see Worman 2014, 223.

⁸²The comic grotesque seems to combine elements of several different ritual chronotopes including the Eleusinian mysteries celebration, the Anthesteria, the Lenaia festival and the Lesser Mysteries; see Segal 1961. The scenes with the *choroi* of Frogs and Initiates and their relation to the Athenian festivals in the *Frogs* has been analysed in the following works: Bowie 1993, 227ff, Lada-Richards 1999, 87f, 100, 224-5, 279-80, Furley and Bremer 2001, 561ff, Biles 2011, 211ff, Tierney 1935, Dover 1993b, Dover 1993a, 53ff. The *opinio communis* is that elements of the Eleusinian mysteries are interwoven in the scene. Further bibliography in Biles 2011, 219 n.32.

⁸³Dover 1993a, 57.

⁸⁴Hdt. 8. 65.1-4; Plut. *Phoc.* 28.2, *Alc.* 34.4; IG II² 1078.19. The statue of Iakkhos was presumably carried in the procession from the sanctuary in Athens to Eleusis. See Dover 1993a, 61, Richardson 1974, 214.

choros are referred to first in 372 indicating their march around the orchestra. The movement is continued (377) and develops to the full extent in the second hymn to Iakkhos. The *choros* summon him to join the dancing of the procession and to show how to walk the long way without difficulties. This invitation is emphasised in the refrain *Iakkhos dance-lover march with me and help me on my way* (see also 2.2.3).

The initiates' processional movement in this scene is embedded in a larger journey of Dionysos and Xanthias which is central for the dramatic action of the play.⁸⁵ When Dionysos on his way to the Underworld meets the *choros* in a ritual procession, he becomes himself an observer and participant of sacred rites performed in his honour. The travel to the Underworld symbolises the journey that initiates experienced during the mysteries as described by Plutarch (fr.178) and Apouleios (*Met.* 11.23.6-8), with the same end of salvation in view.⁸⁶ The dancing procession enacted in the *Frogs* visibly embodies the metaphor of religious salvation and at the same time the idea of the god travelling together with his worshippers.

The Akharnians

A centrifugal ritual procession is represented also in the *Akharnians* (on the festival celebration of which it is part, see 3.3.1). In the first part of the play Dikaiopolis performs a sacrificial procession to celebrate the Rural Dionysia. The focus of the scene is on the movement and procession, not the sacrifice. When Dikaiopolis asks Dionysos to rejoice in the procession and the sacrifice the word *pompe* comes first in the phrase jointly with the word *κεχαρισμένως* and is emphasised by the deictic demonstrative pronoun *τήνδε*, 247-250⁸⁷:

⁸⁵ As Russo 1994, 209-210 notes, 'the progressive representation of a voyage, and of the landscape through which it passes, is unique in the extant corpus of ancient drama'.

⁸⁶ Cf Lada-Richards 1999, 87-88 who also suggests that the pilgrimage from Athens to Eleusis was a cultic analogue to Dionysos' quest.

⁸⁷ Kavoulaki 2010.

ὦ Διονύσε δέσποτα,
κεχαρισμένως σοι τήνδε τὴν πομπὴν ἐμὲ
πέμψαντα καὶ θύσαντα μετὰ τῶν οἰκετῶν
ἀγαγεῖν τυχερῶς τὰ κατ' ἀγρούς Διονύσια

See the translation below.

The staging of the procession presents a problem which currently remains unsolved. Dikaiopolis explicitly states his intention to perform the Rural Dionysia and goes inside the house to make preparations for it (202). At 267 Dikaiopolis proclaims in the hymn that he has arrived at his deme which is outside Athens. Where is this house situated then? If according to Dikaiopolis' intention the house is in the countryside, the setting of the play must have been suddenly relocated from the centre of the city (Pnyx) to some area outside it. Such unexplained change of setting is not feasible even within a comic play. Russo and Olson suggest that Dikaiopolis possesses two houses, one in the countryside and one in Athens. His house serves as the means of 'transportation' of the setting from the city to the countryside. As Olson 2002, 134 writes: "*Dik. exits into the door in the scaenae frons, transforming it momentarily into his own house and making it clear to the audience that the setting is no longer the Pnyx but the Attic countryside.*"⁸⁸ Thiery argues that the whole play is set in Athens and that the procession only starts off to the fields but never reaches them.⁸⁹

I suggest a different interpretation – the setting changes during the procession and the ritual movement corresponds to the change of the landscape. Dikaiopolis starts off in the city and continues to the countryside. The change of the setting happens somewhere between 202 where Dikaiopolis enters his house in Athens and 267 where he states in the hymn that he has arrived to his native deme and the ritual movement stops there. The house of Dikaiopolis is now his rural house and it reappears as such again in 365. He moves back to

⁸⁸Also Russo 1994, 45-47. Bakola 2010, 248 recognises the difficulty which cannot be solved. At 719 and 729 his house is again in Athens.

⁸⁹Thiery 2000, 18f.

the city when he decides to go and see Euripides at 393. Although Dikaiopolis makes preparations for a procession to go to the countryside, some of his initial orders point out to an urban context of the processional movement rather than a rural one. Watching from the roof would be more appropriate for city streets.⁹⁰ There is also a crowd mentioned in 257-8 which implies that the procession is being held in a city.⁹¹ The time and space is transformed during the procession and at some point the audience has to imagine that the orchestra now represents the rural deme. The ritual procession constructs the change of the setting in this scene.

Dynamics of ritual space in the *Wealth*

Aristophanes' play *Wealth* illustrates how ritual space is constructed in comedy on different levels, both imaginary and 'real', being embedded in the dramatic action and evoking various contexts of the performance. The setting is remarkably static – the action takes place throughout the play at the door of Khremylos' house. Nevertheless, space plays essential role in the plot and the 'great idea' of the play. The theme of movement and travel marks key phases of the establishment of the new utopian order including the discovery of the god Ploutos, his miraculous healing, and his installation in the city of Athens. The door of the protagonist's house is represent the important liminal space which introduces the theme of moving across the spaces of *oikos* and *polis*.⁹² At the end of the play Ploutos is finally transferred to the public space of the Acropolis and his blessings are transmitted from one household to the polis as a whole.

There are two ritual journeys in the *Wealth* embedded in the narrative of the play and serving as essential points of the plot. During the first journey

⁹⁰*Lys.* 389, 395. On the stage representation of the roof in comedy see Mastronarde 1990, 258-262.

⁹¹See Olson 2002, 147: "here the idea is that the imaginary crowd lining the street is so large that Dikaiopolis' Wife must get on the roof to have a good view of the procession..."

⁹²Lowe 2006, 51.

the protagonist meets the god Ploutos and takes him back to his home. The journey is narrated in the prologue of the play drawing on *nostoi*-stories of tragic heroes. An Athenian citizen, Khremylos is returning from Delphi which he has visited for an oracular consultation. Following the oracle which he has received, he meets there a blind beggar, the god Wealth himself and persuades him to go live with him in his house. The theme of ritual journey reappears in the play for the second time when Ploutos is taken by Khremylos to Asklepios' sanctuary and returns back to Khremylos' house with his sight restored. The diegetic space of the temple of Asklepios where Ploutos comes to seek divine healing is constructed in many details (659-747). Khremylos tells his wife how they reached and entered the sacred precinct (*temenos*), approached the altar with some offerings, and then made the patient lie down on a bed. He describes other people who were at the sanctuary at that time and narrates how a minister extinguished the lamps inside. His description mentions objects and spaces within the temple: he speaks about the pot located near an old woman's head, about the offerings on the sacred table and many altars. The described space might have been recognisable for the audience referring to the interior of a particular sanctuary or a type of sanctuary. One possibility is that Khremylos recreated in his narrative the space of the temple of Asklepios in Piraeus. It is also likely that he made verbal references and physical gestures towards the temple of Asklepios located on the Acropolis next to the theatre and visible from the theatrical space.

The narrative receives visual fulfilment when Ploutos appears on stage. He is represented returning from the journey cured of his blindness. The scene of his arrival and welcoming into Khremylos' house in his new status of the just, 'seeing' Wealth, is the key episode of the plot. Reminiscent of tragic arrivals, it removes the tension of the audience's expectations and confirms the installation of the Wealth in the protagonist's house. The spatial and ritual dimensions are central to the construction of the scene. Upon arrival Ploutos pronounces

a ritual greeting to the sun, the hill of Pallas and the whole land of Attica (771-773):

καὶ προσκυνῶ γε πρῶτα μὲν τὸν ἥλιον,
ἔπειτα σεμνῆς Παλλάδος κλεινὸν πέδον
χώραν τε πᾶσαν Κέκροπος ἧ μ'ἔδέξατο.

*And first I prostrate myself before the sun;
Then before the famous plain of august Pallas,
And before the whole land of Kekrops which has received me.*

This triple invocation has been interpreted as a paratragic allusion to the Messenger's speech in Aiskhylos' *Agamemnon*⁹³ which opens with a praise to the land of Argos and to the gods. The resemblance to tragic pattern is evident but the comic passage has one crucial difference. Whereas in *Agamemnon* and in tragedy in general the emphasis lies on the speaker's return home and his 'familial' affection,⁹⁴ in comedy there is no indication that Ploutos' relationship with Attica was intimate. Ploutos' arrival evokes rather theoretic contexts arriving at the sacred destination: he comes as a foreigner who asks to be welcomed – this is shown by the verb 'receive', δέχομαι he uses. This verb is used in Pindar's *Paian* 6. 3: the poet delivers a prayer to Delphi asking that the deified place receives him. Additionally, the verb προσκυνῶ, 'to make obeisance to the gods or their images, fall down and worship' expresses strong ritual meaning in fifth-century texts, indicating either the worship of gods or the barbarian custom of *proskynesis*, prostrating oneself in front of men of power, a practice, that is generally condemned in Greek texts.⁹⁵ Ploutos' *apostrophe*, therefore, reinforces the ritual context of the journey which he has just made.

⁹³By Fraenkel 1950, 257. Cf Ag. 503-509: *All hail, soil of Argos, land of my fathers! On this happy day in the tenth year I have come to you. Many hopes have shattered, one only have I seen fulfilled; for I never dared to dream that here in this land of Argos I should die and have due portion of burial most dear to me. Now blessings on the land, blessings on the light of the sun, and blessed be Zeus, the land's Most High, and the Pythian lord* (tr.Smyth).

⁹⁴The address to one's homeland is typical for tragic apostrophe of this kind, as Wagener 1931, 86-87.

⁹⁵An example of it in Xen. *An.* 3.2.13. Also in Hdt. 1.119, 8.118, 3.86. In tragedy this verb is used to express the idea of honouring the Earth together with other gods: Soph. *OC* 1654, *El.* 1374, Aesch. *Pers.* 499, as well as *Eq.* 155-6

The Messenger's invocation in Aiskhylos' tragedy is focused on the fictional space of the tragic action, that of Argos which has to be imagined by the audience. The scene in the *Wealth*, however, opens up to the space outside stage surrounding the theatre. Stretching out to the hill of the Acropolis (and perhaps to the temple of Asklepios in Khremylos' narrative) it creates a continuum between the orchestra and the landscape and uses real physical space around the theatre for constructing the fictional land of Attica of the play (See above on sanctuaries around the theatre 3.2.1).

The arrival and greeting is followed by the induction of Ploutos into Khremylos' house. His entrance is represented as a ritual of reception of a newly-bought slave into the household. Lines 768-9, 789, 801 allude to the custom, according to which the mistress of the house threw sweetmeats, nuts, figs, dates over the head of a newly-bought slave when he first arrived at the house. Ploutos' entry into the house in this scene has more emphasis in the play than his *hidrusis* in Athena's temple.⁹⁶ Apparently, the *apostrophe* to the Acropolis and to the land of Attica in this scene gives a clue to the audience about the induction into Khremylos' house and its meaning. Ploutos' invocation of the landscape anticipates his official foundation as a god of the polis pantheon at the end of the play. In this scene he becomes not only Khremylos' slave but, through involvement of the surrounding landscape, the slave of Athens which receive him into their '*oikos*'.

⁹⁶Bowie 1993, 290, Dem. 45.74, Plut. *Mor.* 753d.

3.3 Performing ritual time

While ritual space is configured in comedy mainly through sanctuaries, ritual time is represented through the theme of festivals. Festivals are default time periods for ritual performances and celebrations. In the Greek religious system festivals structured the ritual year. The relation of Old Comedy to festivals is multi-layered and can be approached from different perspectives. It is well-known that comedies were performed as part of the Athenian public festivals of the Great Dionysia or Lenaia. In the festival context comic performances existed within the same temporal frame as other cultic activities, for instance, the Dionysiac procession on the first day of the festival. The comic genre, unlike tragedy, shared with the festival culture the general atmosphere of joyful festivity and with the Dionysiac cult in particular playfulness and dance, grotesque costumes and carnivalesque cross-dressing. The leather *phalloi* and the god Dionysos with his companions in satyr's disguise were characteristic of both the Dionysiac cultic procession and the comic plays.⁹⁷

The prominence of the festival theme in Old Comedy has been recognised by scholars.⁹⁸ Some extant plays, like the *Akharnians* and *Frogs* include various festival scenes while others, like the *Women at the Thesmophoria*, have their plots framed by a particular festival. Judging by fragments, many Greek comic plays are set during a specific festival, for example, Pherekrates' *Stove or All-night Festival*, Kratinos' *Pylaia*, which was perhaps a festival at Thermophylai; Philyllios' *Twelfth Day*, the Day of Pots which was the second day of the festival Anthesteria and the twelfth day of the month. Among them we can distinguish plays with *khoros* representing a celebrating group: Aristophanes' *Women at the Thesmophoria*, *Women at the Thesmophoria II*, and *Women Bagging Tent-sites*.⁹⁹ The

⁹⁷Csapo 2013.

⁹⁸Hall 2014, 310, Parker 2007, 148. Some even regarded the general structure of comic plots to reflect the structure of dramatic festivals including procession, sacrifice, preparation of the meal and feasting; see Sfyroeras 2004, 259. I do not think, however, that there is enough evidence in the plays to ground this suggestion.

⁹⁹We do not know what festival in particular features in the *Women Bagging Tent-sites* but it is likely that preparing tents would for a special time of a festival, although it is not certain if

theme of festivals would be presumably central in Krates' and Plato's plays the *Festivals* and *Women returning from the Sacred rites*.¹⁰⁰ Later, in New Comedy, the festival setting of a play becomes typical.¹⁰¹ In this section, I shall argue that Old Comedy (1) alludes to the festival context of the theatrical performances by embedding the festivals in the dramatic plots and (2) reflects and manipulates the notions of festival time and calendar fundamental for Greek religion.

it was a religious festival or athletic one

¹⁰⁰Bowie 2000, 330 notes that Phrynikhos' *Initiates* and Philyllios' *Herakles* could well have a festival as their major theme too. For the former, the suggested festival would be the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries, for the latter we can suggest the Anthesteria, as it featured as one of the characters Dorpeia, the first day of that festival.

¹⁰¹In Men. *Col.*, *Sam.*, *Epitrep.*, *Kitharista*.

3.3.1 Festivals on stage

In a number of extant plays elements of celebrations are enacted on stage. The recognisable festive activities that are imitated as parts of festivals are processions (*Akharnians*, *Frogs*, *Strattis' Macedonians*¹⁰²) dance (*Frogs*, *Women at the Thesmophoria*), ritual drinking (*Akharnians*, *Women at the Thesmophoria*, *Lysistrata*), ritual bans and proclamations (*Akharnians*, *Frogs*, *Women at the Thesmophoria*),¹⁰³ oaths (*Lysistrata*), offerings (cake and soup at the Rural Dionysia in the *Akharnians*), libation (to start the Rural Dionysia in the *Akharnians*, to perform the oath in the *Lysistrata*), hymns and prayers,¹⁰⁴ and night celebrations (*Frogs*).¹⁰⁵ My analysis of the representation of festivals and festive elements in the extant plays and fragments will concentrate on the temporal aspect of these representations in order to study how ritual time is represented, or rather, constructed in the plays.

The *Akharnians*: the Dionysia

The play incorporates a representation of the Rural Dionysia contributing to the crucial theme of the play – peace.¹⁰⁶ The representation of the Rural Dionysia in the first part of the play establishes the explicit link between the festival and cult of Dionysos on one hand and the theme of peace on the other hand through the idea of regular celebration without any impediment.

The idea of temporal regularity of festivals linked with the theme of peace is introduced during the performance of the ritual procession. When Dikaiopolis starts it off he proclaims the establishment of peace for thirty years as the main reason of his celebration (247-252):

¹⁰²The Panathenaian procession was perhaps depicted in *Strattis' Macedonians* as we can see from the fragment 31 where somebody speaks of a *peplos* lifted on a ship mast (cf *adesp.* 73).

¹⁰³There are a ban from the participation in the sacred mysteries in the *Frogs*, the proclamation of *euphemia* in the Rural Dionysia in the *Akharnians*, and the proclamation of the beginning of the assembly during the Thesmophoria in the *Women at the Thesmophoria*.

¹⁰⁴To Phales and Dionysos during the Rural Dionysia in the *Akharnians*, to Iakkhos and Demeter in the *Frogs*, *Women at the Thesmophoria*.

¹⁰⁵Sacrifice is not represented as part of any festival. It is intended in the *Akharnians* at the Rural Dionysia but never fulfilled.

¹⁰⁶The festival theme discussed in Habash 1995; Fisher 1993; Kavoulaki 2010.

ὦ Διόνυσε δέσποτα,
κεχαρισμένως σοι τήνδε τὴν πομπὴν ἔμε
πέμφαντα καὶ θύσαντα μετὰ τῶν οἰκετῶν
ἀγαγεῖν τυχερῶς τὰ κατ' ἀγροὺς Διονύσια,
στρατιᾶς ἀπαλλαχθέντα· τὰς σπονδὰς δέ μοι
καλῶς ξυνεγεχεῖν τὰς τριακοντούτιδας.

O Lord Dionysos, may be pleasing to you that I hold this procession and make a sacrifice to celebrate with good fortune the Country Dionysia with my household, being freed from the war campaign. And may the thirty-year peace libation turn out well for me.

In the hymn addressed to Phales, which is the essential element of the procession, Dikaiopolis stresses that the normal yearly cycle of celebrations was interrupted because of the war and it is only now, after six years of such disorder, that Dikaiopolis resumes the tradition. The celebration of the festival is presented as the direct consequence of the protagonist's 'individual' peace treaty (263-270):

Φαλῆς, ἑταῖρε Βακχίου,
ξύγκωμε, νυκτοπεριπλάνη-
τε, μοιχέ, παιδεραστά,
ἔκτω σ' ἔτει προσεῖπον εἰς
τὸν δῆμον ἐλθὼν ἄσμενος,
σπονδὰς ποιησάμενος ἔμαυ-
τῷ, πραγμάτων τε καὶ μαχῶν
καὶ Λαμάχων ἀπαλλαγεῖς.

Phales, comrade of Dionysos, fellow-reveller, night-wanderer, adulterer and pederast, I have addressed you after six years, having returned happily to my deme, having made peace for myself, freed from businesses, battles and Lamakhoses.

In the second part of the hymn (271-279) Dikaiopolis describes the festive

activities: drinking (277-278), encounters with young girls (271-275), and neglect of weapons (279), opposed to the war-time full of toils and discomfort (269, *πραγμάτων τε καὶ μαχῶν*) and characterising the time of peace:

πολλῶ γάρ ἐσθ' ἦδιον, ὦ Φάλης Φάλης,
κλέπτουσαν εὐρόνθ' ὠρικὴν ὑληφόρον,
τὴν Στρυμοδώρου Θραῖτταν ἐκ τοῦ φελλέως,
μέσῃν λαβόντ', ἄραντα, κατα-
βαλόντα καταγιγαρτίσαι.

Φάλης, Φάλης,
ἐὰν μεθ' ἡμῶν ξυμπίης, ἐκ κραιπάλης
ἔωθεν εἰρήνης ῥοφήσει τρύβλιον·
ἢ δ' ἀσπίς ἐν τῷ φεψάλῳ κρεμῆσεται.

For it's much more pleasant, O Phales, Phales, to catch a blooming slave-girl stealing wood, Thratta of Strymodoros from the rocky hills and seize her about the waist, and lift her up and throw her down and stone her fruit. O Phales, Phales, if you drink with us, after the party in the morning you will slurp up a bowl of peace. And the shield will be hung up in the chimney.

The same idea of sex with young girls on the days of festivals being characteristic of the peaceful times is developed by the *choros* further in the play when they address a personified girl Reconciliation (*Διαλλαγῆ*). The old men boast about their sexual capacities and fantasise themselves celebrating the festivals of New Moons together with the Reconciliation (999):

ὥστ' ἀλείφεσθαί σ' ἀπ' αὐτῶν καμὲ ταῖς νουμηνίαις.

[...] so that you and I could be anointed from them (olives) at the new-moon festivities.

Immediately after this claim, the herald invites everyone in the theatre to celebrate the day of the Pitchers, which was the second day of another Dionysia

festival, the Anthesteria (1000-1003; cf also 1076). Dikaiopolis joins the herald in encouraging people to participate (1004-1007).

The theme of peace and ritual celebration are united on the linguistic level, too. For the first time Dikaiopolis refers to the festival of the Dionysia in the discussion with Amphitheos in the line 195. The key topic of this dialogue is σπονδαί meaning both wine, ritual libation of wine, and a peace treaty made through libation (*Ach.* 179-202).¹⁰⁷

The quality of *spondai*, meaning simultaneously wine and peace, is defined through the time period. Dikaiopolis tastes three samples of a five-year, ten-year and thirty-year libation, respectively and chooses the last. Immediately after tasting it, he decides straightway to make peace and perform the Rural Dionysia, being inspired by ritual drinking. The themes of festival, time, peace, and ritual appear to be closely interconnected with one another in his speech (195-202):

ὦ Διονύσια:

αὐται μὲν ὄζουσι ἀμβροσίας καὶ νέκταρος
καὶ μὴ ἵπιηρεῖν “σιτί’ ἡμερῶν τριῶν”,
κάν τῷ στόματι λέγουσι· “βαῖν’ ὅπη ἴθελεις.”
ταύτας δέχομαι καὶ σπένδομαι κάκπιόμαι,
χαίρειν κελεύων πολλὰ τοὺς Ἀχαρνεάς.
ἐγὼ δὲ πολέμου καὶ κακῶν ἀπαλλαγεῖς
ἄξω τὰ κατ’ ἀγροῦς εἰσιῶν Διονύσια.

O Dionysia! This [thirty-year libation/peace/wine] smells of ambrosia and nectar and not of looking for “three days provision” and as if it says to my mouth: “Go where you like”. I accept this and I’m making the libation and I’m drinking of it, and I bid farewell to the Akharnians. Myself, freed of

¹⁰⁷On the ritual character of Amphitheos, a god-sent mediator for a peace treaty. Cf Kavoulaki 2010, 235: he ‘seems to embody to a certain extent and in theatrical terms - the sacredness which surrounded the very notion of *spondai* in classical Athens. Far from being a neutral term, *spondai* literally means libations - an important ritual act - and discloses the cultic associations that the concept and practice of making peace treaty entailed’.

the war and troubles, I shall celebrate the Country Dionysia going inside.

The theme of the festival as drinking wine is continued at the end of the play in the announcement of the competition of the Pitchers. Dikaiopolis in 1068, 1202 and 1211 repeatedly associates drinking with the day of Pitchers at the Anthesteria.

Dikaiopolis' decision to celebrate the Dionysia and the preparations for the Anthesteria are problematic in terms of the temporal setting. At the start, Dikaiopolis gives an impression that he himself is attending a theatrical performance. Although it becomes clear soon that Dikaiopolis finds himself in the Assembly, not in the theatre, the audience has already got a feeling that the dramatic action is set somewhere in the year very close to the dramatic festival. Later in the parabasis, Dikaiopolis explicitly states that he is celebrating the Lenaia together with the spectators (504). The Lenaia were celebrated in January whereas the Rural Dionysia were held in the month Poseidaon (roughly, December) and the Anthesteria in January-February. The fictional festivals celebrated on stage are incorporated into the context of the theatrical performance as part of the Lenaia. Different festivals are united into one chronotope of the Dionysiac celebration full of joy, drinking, and peace.

Since the representation of festival time in the *Akharnians* emphasises the protagonist's utopian idea of freedom and everlasting paradisiacal life, the potential of the ritual in honour of Dionysos to bring peaceful life to the city is meta-theatrically transferred from the fictional plot to the 'here and now' of the theatrical audience.¹⁰⁸ The idea of the everlasting festival as symbol of peace and prosperity transcends the fictional ritual time of the play towards the ac-

¹⁰⁸Fisher 1993 in his article gives a different explanation of this multiplicity of festivals and shifting of settings. He claims that "they all help to suggest the complexity, the Dionysiac ambiguities, of the comic voice embodied in this hero, and the sustained ambivalence of his 'peace' and of his relation to the city [...] his participation in three Dionysiac festivals, Rural Dionysia, Lenaia, and Anthesteria, all serve to emphasize his independence and isolation from the communities of the deme and the city rather than celebrate his solidarity or re-integration". In fact, the character of the Dionysiac celebration is quite uniform, highlighting drinking and pleasure; Habash 1995 argues that the representation of the festivals adds to the 'peaceful theme' the motifs of generative fertility and vegetative bloom.

tual ritual time of the theatrical performance. At the end of the play Dikaiopolis is invited to the ritual feast by the priest of Dionysos, who was present in the theatre. The spectators see the preparations start which stresses the feeling that the festival is happening here and now. The winter time of the festival (which corresponds to the time of the Lenaia) is emphasised but the time of joyful celebration has the potential to prevail over the winter cold, for those who celebrate it. The contrast is shown in the following joke (1140-1142):

ΛΑ. τὴν ἀσπίδ' αἶρου καὶ βᾶδιζ', ὦ παῖ, λαβῶν.

νεῖφει. βαβαιάζ· χειμέρια τὰ πράγματα.

ΔΙ. αἶρου τὸ δεῖπνον. συμποτικὰ τὰ πράγματα.

LAMAKHOS Take the shield and walk, o boy. It is snowing. Ah! The things are wintery. DIKAIOPOLIS Take the dinner. The things are drinkery.

The toils of war are associated with the hardships of ordinary time and winter weather whereas the festival is the means to overcome it (1143-1145):

ΧΟ. ἴτε δὴ χαίροντες ἐπὶ στρατιάν.

ὡς ἀνομοίαν ἔρχεσθον ὁδόν·

τῷ μὲν πίνειν στεφανωσαμένῳ,

σοὶ δὲ ῥιγῶν καὶ προφυλάττειν

KHOROS Go then on your campaigns and good luck to you both. How different are the ways for you to go! For one it is to drink with a wreath on his head, but for you it is to keep watch in the freezing cold.

Since the Lenaia took place in winter, the scene has meta-theatrical dimension and references to wintertime evoke the *here and now* of the dramatic performance. The fictional festival celebrated by the protagonist is presented here as the same Dionysiac festival which is celebrated by the audience. The Rural Dionysia and the Anthesteria took place also in winter and must have been chosen by Aristophanes deliberately to allow for such interplay of the dramatic plot and its theatrical context.

At the end of the agon the ‘today’ refers to both festivals Lenaia and the Antheisteria. When Dikaiopolis’ opponent Lamakhos shouts the paian-cry lamenting his fate, Dikaiopolis notes that today is not Paionia (1212-1213):

ΛΑ. Ἰὼ ἰὼ, Παιᾶν Παιᾶν.

ΔΙ. ἀλλ’ οὐχὶ νυνὶ τήμερον Παιῶνια.

LAMAKHOS *O Paian, O Paian!* DIKAIOPOLIS *But it’s not a festival of Paion today.*

The joke consists in word play with the ritual cry *O Paian*, associated with war, and with the derivation of the names of Greek festivals from the names of the gods to which they were dedicated.¹⁰⁹ The time of the festival is the time of a particular god, and this time necessarily acquires the god’s characteristics and attributes. The deictic reference to the *here and now* (reinforced by the repetition of “now” and “today” in Greek) confirms the association of Dikaiopolis’ celebration with the celebration of Lenaia and invites the audience to enter with him the eternal ritual time where there is no need to work or do the military service and one can booze and have sex all time.

The Frogs: the Eleusinian Mysteries

In the *Frogs* the first part of the play represents a number of changing scenes of Dionysos’ journey to the underworld which involves meeting the *khoros* of celebrants.¹¹⁰ The festival they celebrate is never named although they explicitly call it ‘festival’ (μέλος ἑορτῆς 398, 443 θεοφιλοῦς ἑορτῆς), ‘this festival’ (ὕμεῖς δ’ ἀνεγείρετε μολπὴν / καὶ παννυχίδας τὰς ἡμετέρας αἰ τῆδε πρέπουσιν ἑορτῆ 370-371), ‘Demeter’s festival’ (Δήμητερ, ... τῆς σῆς ἑορτῆς ἀξίως / παίσαντα καὶ σκώψαντα νι-/χῆσαντα ταινιοῦσθαι 385-391). They repeatedly characterise the occasion as **rites and mysteries** (342 τελετή, 334-335 ἀγνὴν ἱερὰν / ὁσίοις μύσταις χορείαν)

¹⁰⁹Presumably, there was no such festival of Paionia in Athens which makes the scene even funnier.

¹¹⁰The spatial aspect of the procession has been discussed in 3.2.4 and the ritual role of the *khoros* in this scene in 2.2.3.

and are called initiates by Xanthias (318, οἱ μεμνημένοι / ἐνταῦθά που παίζουσιν), worshippers, and *mystoi* by themselves (327, εἰς θιασώτας, μύσταις χοροῖς 370, 456 μεμνήμεθα).

Their celebration has some typical festive elements such as dance and all-night revel but at the same time it draws on more specific patterns like a procession accompanied with the hymn to Iakkhos, hymns to Demeter, and another female deity, possibly Persephone or Athena. The *prorrhesis*, the proclamation to warn off those who were not permitted, which the *choros* utters (354-371), is a recognisable element of the celebration of the Great Mysteries. It begins with the ritual formula of *euphemia*. During the historical festival the *prorrhesis* was proclaimed by a Dadoukhos four days before the procession to close access to foreigners and murderers. However, in the play there is no time interval; the procession starts immediately after the proclamation. The festival hence is not imitated in every detail but gives a sort of summary of the main events so that the resemblance to the Great Mysteries could be recognised by the audience. At the same time the generic depiction of a festival is applied, appropriate for portraying the utopian life lead by the blessed initiates.

The temporal aspect of the festival is represented in the *parodos* as the night-time. Making a proclamation of the start of the rites accompanied with the ban to the impious, the *choros* states that they are performing the all-night revel which is suitable for the festival, 371 (also later in 446/7): καὶ παννυχίδας τὰς ἡμετέρας, αἶ τῆδε πρέπουσιν ἑορτῆ. The fact that they perform the night rituals is underlined and visualised: the torches are brought on stage which must have been a spectacular feature of the production (340-352).

ἔγειρ' ὦ φλογέας λαμπάδας ἐν χερσὶ τῶν ἄλλων
τινάσσων †
Ἰακχ' ὦ Ἰακχε,
νυκτέρου τελετῆς φωσφόρος ἀστήρ.
φλογὶ φέγγεται δὲ λειμών·

γόνυ πάλλεται γερόντων·
ἀποσεύονται δὲ λύπας
χρονίους τ' ἐτῶν παλαιῶν ἐνιαυτοὺς
ἱεράς ὑπὸ τιμῆς.
σὺ σὲ λαμπάδι φέγγων
προβάδην ἔξαγ' ἐπ' ἀνθηρὸν ἔλειον δάπεδον
χοροποιόν, μάκαρ, ἦβην.

Rise up! You have come shaking torches in your hands, Iakkhos o Iakkhos, the light-fetching star of nocturnal rites! The meadow is radiating with fire; old men's knees are leaping; and they shake off their griefs and the long years of old age because of the sacred honour. O blessed one, lead forth the dancing youth yourself lighting the way with a torch to the flowering marshy plain.

The nocturnal setting of the choral celebration increases the dramatic effect of the comic imitation of rites, emphasises the aspect of mysteries, and makes it more familiar for the audience to recognise. The time of celebration is represented here as eternal renewal of temporal circles: the old men are released through the ritual festive dance of their age.

At the same time, the celebration of the rites in the *parodos* refers with remarkable frequency to the *here and now* of the performance. The density and intensity of deictic and self-referential utterances of the *choros* in this scene is exceptional. Here I list deictic pronouns and adverbs which build the pragmatics of the choral song in the *parodos*: ἐνταῦθα 319, ἐνθάδε 323/4, τόνδ' ἀνὰ λειμῶνα 326, ὅστις ἄπειρος τοιῶνδε λόγων 355, τῆδε ἐορτῆ 371, χώρει νυν πᾶς... 372 and χώρεϊτε νῦν 440, ἄγε νυν... 382 and 394, δεῦρο 395 and 399 τῆσδε τῆς χορείας 396/7, τόδε τὸ σανδαλίσκον 405, νῦν δὲ 410. Together with these markers, the self-description of the *choros'* activities ('we are marching', 'we are dancing', 'we are celebrating' etc) creates a strong meta-theatrical dimension of the scene. It is further reinforced by the presence of the 'internal audience'

consisting of Dionysos and Xanthias who are observing the performance of the *khoros*. In the framing dialogue they announce the appearance of the dancing initiates and comment on it, thus implicitly inviting the audience to join them in watching the ‘play within a play’. The overlap between the theatre and the festival in this scene is enhanced by the word τελεταί, rites, which is equally used to mean the comic theatrical productions. The trespassers who sin against the poets are included into various groups who are not permitted to attend the sacred mysteries (367-368):

XO. ἢ τοὺς μισθοὺς τῶν ποιητῶν ῥήτωρ ὦν εἶτ’ ἀποτρώγει,
κωμωδηθεὶς ἐν ταῖς πατρίοις τελεταῖς ταῖς τοῦ Διονύσου.

*KHOROS [...] or if he being a politician eats away the wages of poets,
having been ridiculed in the ancestral rites of Dionysos.*

As in the *Akharnians*, we can see that the boundary between the fictional and ritual time is intentionally blurred.

The Women at the Thesmophoria

Among the extant plays, *Women at the Thesmophoria* is the only one entirely set during a religious festival: the *khoros* consists of women celebrating the Thesmophoria and the plot is built upon their festive gathering. The temporal frame of the second day of the Thesmophoria, *Nesteia*, is sustained throughout the play. Several times it is referred to directly (78-80):

KP. καὶ πῶς; ἐπεὶ νῦν θ’ οὔτε τὰ δικαστήρια
μέλλει δικάζειν οὔτε βουλῆς ἐσθ’ ἔδρα,
ἐπεὶ περ ἐστὶ Θεσμοφορίων ἡ μέση.

*KRYTILLA But how? Surely, the lawcourts are not going to hold trials
now nor the Council is holding a session, because it’s the middle day of the
Thesmophoria.*

and (983-984):

ΧΟ. παΐσωμεν, ὧ γυναῖκες, οἷάπερ νόμος·
νηστεύομεν δὲ πάντως.

KHOROS Let us celebrate, women, as the law bids. We are fasting by all means.

The association of the *khoros* with the festival and their involvement in the ritual activities is extensively discussed by Bierl.¹¹¹ Analysing the structure of the hymns in the play, Bierl observes constant shifting between the festival of the dramatic action, the Thesmophoria, and the festival of the dramatic contest, the Great Dionysia. I am not going to examine the representation of the Thesmophoria in the play in every detail as Bierl's book already contains a convincing discussion. Instead, I shall draw attention to the role of ritual time in the representation of the festival.

In the beginning of the play, when the women's gathering is announced for the first time, the temporal aspect is stressed. Euripides shares with Inlaw his worries about the verdict about his fate which is going to be decided 'this very day' (76). Inlaw objects that the Assembly does not gather today because it is the middle day of the Thesmophoria. Euripides explains that this is exactly the reason why the women gathered their own assembly in the sanctuary of the two goddesses of the Thesmophoria, presumably, Demeter and Persephone. The audience learns about the plot and the setting of the play in relation to the time arrangements concerning the celebration and civic affairs. It can be assumed that the audience were well familiar with the ritual practices of the second day of the Thesmophoria, Nesteia. The requirement of ritual fasting held on that day is reflected also in another comedy in which an unidentified character speaks of celebrating the Thesmophoria and fasting (*com. adesp.* fr.112 = Ath.7.307f):

Θεσμοφορίων τὴν μέσῃν,
ἄγομεν· δίχην γὰρ κεστρέων νηστεύομεν.

¹¹¹Bierl 2009.

We are celebrating the middle day of the Thesmophoria, because we're fasting like grey mullets.

The theme of fasting on that day must have been a usual object of jokes in comedy. In Aristophanes' play the cultic choral performance in lines 947-1000 starts off with the reference to the day of Nesteia.¹¹² The *choros* leader stresses the annual repetition of the celebration of that day (947-952):

ἄγε νυν, ἡμεῖς παίσωμεν ἄπερ νόμος ἐνθάδε ταῖσι γυναιξίν,
ὅταν ὄργια σεμνὰ θεᾶϊν ἱεραῖς ὥραις ἀνέχωμεν, ἄπερ καὶ
Παύσων σέβεται καὶ νηστεύει,
πολλάκις αὐτᾶϊν ἐκ τῶν ὥρῶν
εἰς τὰς ὥρας ξυνεπευχόμενος
τοιαῦτα μολεῖν θάμ' ἑαυτῷ.

All right, now, let's do a cheerful dance, as is the women's custom here, when at the sacred seasons we celebrate solemn mysteries for the Twain Goddesses — which Pauson,¹¹³ too, honours by fasting, as he many times from one season to another joins in our prayers to the Twain that these celebrations may frequently happen to him.

Bierl 2009, 97 discusses the ritual importance of the choral performance in this scene by highlighting the performative nature of this self-introduction pronounced by the *choros*:

“The inevitable illocutionary emphasis on the *choros*' own activity of dancing and praising leads to a perlocutionary result, to the *comunitas* of internal and external spectator in a feeling of coming closer to the gods, which establishes a sense of community.”

The dance is introduced as a ritual activity with explicit characteristics (ὄργια σεμνὰ; ἱεραῖς ὥραις; σέβεται), deictic (ἐνθάδε, *here*) references to the sacred space

¹¹²947-952, the scene discussed in Bierl 2009, 94-150.

¹¹³Pauson was an Athenian painter. He is said to be fasting too, not because of his piety, though, but he is very poor. His name is the future participle of the verb παύω, *to stop, to cease* which could be a pun on his unceasing fasting.

of the sanctuary, with the emphasis on the ritually correct behaviour (ἄπερ νόμος, the ritual fasting). By including the choral performance among other ritual elements the playwright represents it as part of the religious celebration. The reference to ritual fasting is in this passage coupled with the deictic concept of time ἄγε νυν, just as the emphatic ἐνθάδε is a deictic gesture of space. The spatio-temporal pragmatics of the speech reinforces the performative aspect of the utterance.

It is significant that in such intense ritual context the concept of the annual repetition of the festival is emphasised. The *choros* leader says that Pauson often prays to the goddesses together with the women 'from season to season', ἐκ τῶν ὥρῶν εἰς τὰς ὥρας. The idea is that he never ceases fasting but because it coincides also with the annual celebration of the Thesmophoria, he also 'joins' the women in their fasting every time they celebrate the Thesmophoria. The notion of the annually repeated cycle of the celebration is built into the representation of the festival. It is, however, like in the *Akharnians*, ambiguously coupled with the idea of the festive continuum, the ritual time of eternal celebration.¹¹⁴

The *Lysistrata*: the Adonia?

In an implicit way, *Lysistrata*, too, is structured around a festival. The play opens with the protagonist complaining to the audience (1-4):

ἀλλ' εἴ τις εἰς βακχεῖον αὐτὰς ἐκάλεσεν,
ἢ 'ς Πανός ἢ 'πὶ Κωλιάδ' ἢ 'ς Γενετυλλίδος,
οὐδ' ἂν διελθεῖν ἦν ἂν ὑπὸ τῶν τυμπάνων.
νῦν δ' οὐδεμία πάρεστιν ἐνταυθοῖ γυνή·

But if someone invited them to a Bacchic revelry or to Pan's shrine, or to Kolia's, or to Genetullis' shrine, it would be impossible to walk through

¹¹⁴Perhaps, the idea of this passage is that a correct ritual performance according to the *nomos* is defined through the regularity of time whereas Pauson who symbolises incorrect non-stop celebration which does not distinguish between different seasons is ridiculed.

with the drums around. And now none of the women has come here.

The first lines of the play have distinct meta-theatrical meaning. Lysistrata observes the audience of the theatre the majority of which were men and moans that the women have not come to the gathering. Her words flatter the spectators by rendering them superior in comparison with women who engage themselves in less socially appropriate entertainments, the orgiastic cults of foreign origin accompanied with loud drums and music.¹¹⁵ At the same time, the implication is that the gathering in the theatre is in itself – metaphorically and literally – a religious festival.

Furthermore, very soon it is revealed that Lysistrata herself organises a ritual-like gathering and hence her opening words can be referred to that one, too.¹¹⁶ The protagonist's enterprise is equivalent to a festival in several ways. She invites women to occupy the sacred space of the Acropolis where they stay together secluded from men and restraining themselves from sexual activity which resembles the practices of 'female' festivals like Thesmophoria, Adonia, and Skira.¹¹⁷ In the play they perform ritual activities of swearing an oath and making a libation. The oath might be a parody of the ritual performed by 14 Athenian women selected to act as *gerarai*, venerable priestesses of Dionysos at the Anthesteria. They were led by the Basilinna, the wife of the King Archon and symbolically the bride of Dionysos.¹¹⁸ Lysistrata's association with the priestess of Athena Polias, Lysimache, makes her a suitable figure for this kind of ritual leadership.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵This is the usual comic self-boasting about the sophisticated character of the performed play distancing itself from cheap slapstick; cf the *parabasis* in the *Clouds*.

¹¹⁶Reitzammer 2008, 292: "The first lines of Lysistrata signal the centrality of religious festival in the play as a whole and they warrant careful scrutiny. An irritated Lysistrata appears on stage, muttering under her breath. The women she has convened are late."

¹¹⁷Parker 2007, 173-177; Reitzammer 2008; Burkert 2000.

¹¹⁸They swore with the oath to celebrate the rites of Dionysos in the appropriate time (Dem. 59.78). See 3.2.2 on altars.

¹¹⁹Lysimache was holding this honourable office in 411, the same year when the play was performed. Lysimache's career was a long one – she served Athena for 64 years according to Plin. *HN* 34.76. The priestess had a residence on the Acropolis and was a public figure in the Athenian society Henderson 1987, xxxv, xxxviii.

What is then this festival of hers, of which she takes the leadership? The play *Lysistrata* according to the scholia had another title *Women at the Adonia*.¹²⁰ The scholiast's note about the title indicates that the audience in antiquity recognised the reminiscences of the Adonia festival in the play. The elements characteristic of the Adonia celebration have been traced by Reitzammer (2008) who argues that the women's sex-strike on the Acropolis is a metaphorical celebration of the Adonia. Among the allusions listed by Reitzammer are the Acropolis that symbolises the rooftops of the city, the main space of the Adonia celebration; the boar, the animal which killed Adonis, appearing in the oath-taking scene (202-204);¹²¹ myrrh which Lysistrata suggests using to attract men and consequently to stop the war, a substance that also had significance for Adonis' myth;¹²² Gardens of Adonis reflected in the Magistrate's metaphor of plant vegetation in regards to the women's plot (404-406); the old women's claim that they will water the old men so that they grow again (383-385); the symbolical representation of the women as the powerful Aphrodite and the feeble men as Adonis. One of the most explicit passages in which the women's plot is compared to the celebration of the Adonia festival (and where the scholiast makes his comment on the title) is the Magistrate's speech in 387-396:

ἄρ' ἐξέλαμψε τῶν γυναικῶν ἡ τρυφή
 χῶ τυμπανισμὸς χοῖ πικνοὶ Σαβάζιοι,
 ὅ τ' Ἄδωνιασμὸς οὗτος οὐπὶ τῶν τεγῶν.
 οὐ γὰρ ποτ' ὦν ἤκουον ἐν τῆρακλισίᾳ
 ἔλεγεν ὁ μὴ ὄρασι μὲν Δημόστρατος

¹²⁰ A scholium to *Lys.* 389: ὁ τ' Ἄδωνιασμὸς: Ἑορτὴν γὰρ ἐπετέλουν τῷ Ἄδώνιδι αἱ γυναῖκες καὶ κήπους τινὰς εἰς τὰ δώματα ἀνέφερον. τινὲς δὲ ἐκ τούτου τὸ δράμα Ἄδωνιαζούσας ἐπιγράφουσιν οὐ καλῶς. *The Adoniasmos: women celebrate the festival in honour of Adonis and put gardens on the roofs of the houses. Because of that some report the title of the play as Women celebrating the Adonia which is not correct.*

¹²¹ Lysistrata invites women to seize the jug with wine which she calls a *kapros*, a boar, hinting at the sacrifice which was to be performed to confirm the oath; see Reitzammer 2008, 305.

¹²² Adonis' mother Myrrha was turned into a myrrh tree and myrrh was used into his cult as shown on vase paintings; see Reitzammer 2008, 309. Note that the second important character in the *Lysistrata* is called Myrrhine.

πλεῖν εἰς Σικελίαν, ἥ γυνή δ' ὄρχουμένη
'αἰαῖ Ἄδωνιν' φησὶν· ὁ δὲ Δημόστρατος
ἔλεγεν ὀπλίτας καταλέγειν Ζακυνθίων,
ἥ δ' ὑποπεπωκυῖ' ἡ γυνή 'πὶ τοῦ τέγους
'κόπτεσθ' Ἄδωνιν' φησὶν·

So again the women's extravagancy has kindled and the drum-beating and their constant Sabazios-cries, and the Adonian rites on the roofs. I heard them once when I was in the Assembly. Demonstratos, curse him, was saying we should sail to Sicily and a woman dancing says "Woe for Adonis". Demonstratos was saying we should enrol hoplites from Zakynthos, and the woman on the roof, having drunk a bit, says "Bewail Adonis".

This passage is problematic in terms of the timing of both events recalled by the Magistrate: the Assembly meeting and the celebration of the Adonia. The ancient evidence places the celebration of the Adonia in the mid-July. In particular, Plutarch states that the Adonia in 415 BCE were held just before the departure of the Sicilian expedition in July (*Alc.* 17-20, *Nic.* 12-13). However, the Magistrate associates it with the time of the Assembly meeting where the Sicilian expedition was discussed. This Assembly meeting was held in early March that year, not in July. Servais and Simms suggest that Aristophanes moved the date of the Adonia celebration several months earlier and linked it to the assembly for dramatic purposes.¹²³ Although a shift like this would not be impossible for comedy it needs some explanation or rationale behind it that would be clear for the audience.¹²⁴

One possible explanation is that the Magistrate in his speech is making a meta-theatrical reference to an earlier production in the Athenian theatre. The vivid description of the Magistrate of the women performing at the same time

¹²³See Simms 1998; Servais 1984. Dillon 2003 argues that the summer time for the festival should be abandoned.

¹²⁴In the *Akharnians*, for example, Dikaiopolis performed the festival disregarding the usual time in the year calendar because he suddenly got a revelation after tasting the wine of the peace-treaty libation.

as the Assembly is happening is quite exaggerated for an actual historical event and suits better a comic plot. The presence of Sabazios cries at a festival of Adonis would be strange. However, if the Magistrate is describing a comedy, these features could be easily combined in one comic plot. The line to line rendering of the words by Demostratos and the woman could be an example of comic intertextuality which was very popular with playwrights of Old Comedy.¹²⁵ A hypothetical comic play on Adonis/Adonia would be produced between 414 and 411. We can speculate that the poet of that play would combine in his plot the political satire of the events of 415 with the religious festival. Key political figures in the Assembly would be portrayed along with the women celebrating ecstatic rites like the Adonia. The link between the Adonia and political activities is plausible since it was already regarded as an ill-omen before the expedition in 415 BCE according to Plutarch's account. The Magistrate refers thrice to Demostratos who would be a perfect object of political satire in such a play. He was an important Athenian politician who advocated the Sicilian expedition in 415 BCE. He is mentioned in Eup. *Demes* in 412 BCE as one of the clan of *Bouzygai* who held hereditary priesthood in Athens.¹²⁶ Representations of chief political figures as followers of marginal cults were popular with Athenian comic playwrights: Alkibiades was a target of Eupolis' play *Dyers* about the cult of the Thracian goddess Kotyto and Perikles appeared as a character in Kratinos' *Thracian Women* with the chorus of the devotees of Bendis.

The festival of Adonia was popular with comic playwrights. Plato wrote a comedy with the title *Adonis* and Kratinos referred to Adonia in the *Cow-Herders* fr.17, in the context of literary polemic as a festival of vulgar culture not worthy of performance of a good poet. Photios lists under the entry *Adonia* also a fragment from an unidentified comedy by with someone announcing the

¹²⁵For instance, cf the *parabasis* in *Clouds*, the opening of the *Akharnians*.

¹²⁶Fragments 103 and 113. The scholia report that comic poets portrayed him as crazy, *Χολοζύγης*. Another possibility would be that he was the producer of the play since it is known that one of Eupolis' plays *Autolykos* was produced in 421 BCE 'through Demostratos' (Ath. 216c-d). On *Bouzygai* see Guía 2009.

celebration of the the Adonia (fr.181 *We are celebrating the Adonia and weeping for Adonis*). Adonis is also referred to in Pherekr. fr.213. 414-411 would be probably too late for Kratinos, and a bit too early, although feasible for Plato while Pherekrates would fit. Aristophanes himself would be another plausible option: Photios mentions that Aristophanes wrote about Adonis (fr.759) in his plays.¹²⁷

Linking three different events together – political (Assembly and war), religious (festival and ecstatic rites) and theatrical (comparison of the *Lysistrata* with another play) Aristophanes would be making a multi-faceted joke perhaps mocking some of his rivals or bringing in an intertextual link with his own earlier works. The comparison with a hypothetical play explains why the events of the Sicilian expedition might occur here in the play. Otherwise, it is difficult to understand the poetic intention behind the Magistrate's speech. Perhaps, the allusion to another play in the passage brought to the scholiast's mind its title *Women at the Adonia* and reminded him that some critics attribute it to the *Lysistrata*, too, perhaps out of similarity of the two pieces.

The Adonia, with which *Lysistrata*'s enterprise is compared, is a festival of the same 'foreign' nature as the ones announced in the opening of the play. Like Pan's and Bacchic worship it was associated with Eastern rituals of ecstatic orgiastic character.¹²⁸ Other comic poets who incorporated Adonia in their plays are Kratinos (*Cow-Herders*), Pherekrates (*Adonis*), Nikophon (*Adonis* in 388), Plato (*Adonis*). It seems that the popularity of the festival among comic playwrights was quite stable from the end of the 5th century. The authors of the 4th century Middle Comedy were keen to write plays on this topic as well (Philiskos' *Adonis*, Philippides *Women at the Adonia*, Antiphanes' *Adonis*, Araros' *Adonis*). Menander, the exponent of New Comedy, chose the festival of

¹²⁷On Aristophanes referring to his own earlier plays in a similar meta-theatrical way in the *Clouds*: Chepel 2014.

¹²⁸Other eastern cults representations include: Diokles' *Bacchant Women*, Kratinos' *Thracian Women*, Autokrates' *Tambourine-players*, Eupolis' *Dyers*, Lysippos' *Bacchant Women*, *Thyrsos-keeper*, Magnes' *Lydians*; see Bowie 2000.

Adonia as a setting for the starting point of the plot, the seduction of Plangon by Moskhion in the *Samia*, 30-55. In the *Peace* (416-420) it is mentioned along with Panathenaia and the Eleusinian mysteries. It is difficult to assess though to what extent this reference is supposed to evoke laughter because of the juxtaposition of festivals of very different type and status. The Adonia probably was established publicly in Athens but was never officially celebrated by the state and, hence, remained associated with marginal groups such as women and foreigners. It was depicted with features that were stereotypical for these groups as represented in *Lysistrata*: τυμπανισμός, drum music used for ecstatic Eastern cults such as Sabazios and Kybele, τρυφή γυναικῶν, eastern type of luxury, Sabazios-cries.

Despite the resemblance of *Lysistrata*'s festival to the Adonia, it is perhaps more significant for the play that she organises an improvised celebration of her own which she has invented, not recreating one of the festivals of the Athenians. It reminds us of the Adonia because it is a women's festival and its key theme is the suspension of sex and reproduction that were also included in the Adonia, the celebration of Aphrodite's grief for Adonis. I believe, though, that these features are intended to represent metaphorically *Lysistrata*'s enterprise as a ritual-like and festival-like event rather than to make it a clearcut imitation of the Adonia. The choice of the Adonia as a metaphor for women's ambiguous sex behaviour is not random. In the celebration of Adonis the elements of sexual abstinence (the death of Aphrodite's lover) are interwoven with the general association of the festival with Aphrodite and her gifts. Similarly, in the *Lysistrata* the sex-strike turns out to be only a superficial cover for women's sexual desire towards their husbands.

Conclusions:

1. Festivals were a major theme in comedies and contributed to the communication of important ideas and concepts such as peace, pleasure, sexual desire, and playfulness.

2. The festivals in comedies do not follow the actual events in every detail although they retain some recognisable features. They can be detached from their usual time in the year as, for example, in the *Akharnians*, or from the usual space, as in the *Frogs*.
3. The temporal aspect is significant for the representation of festivals. The regularity of celebrations symbolises the stability of peaceful life. The time of a celebration is usually represented as a realistic detail of the historical festival which is, however, placed in the comic context of fantasy.
4. The time of a represented festival oscillates between the dramatic setting of the play and the meta-theatrical context of the Dionysian festival (the Lenaia or City Dionysia). Spectators are reminded about particular dates during the festival year but they are also constantly reminded about the 'here and now' of the performance.
5. In a way festivals are re-invented and re-created in comedy. Comedy establishes its own special dramatic time where different cultic occasions coexist in an unrealistic temporal mixture. The comic ritual time draws on the calendrical system of the actual festivals but it is not concerned to recreate it consistently within the play.

3.3.2 Ritual time embodied

Festivals as units of ritual time are physically embodied in Old Comedy through female personifications. Personifications are in general one of the favourite devices of the genre: Peace, Opora and Theoria in the *Peace*; Basileia in the *Birds*; Komoidia and Methe (Drunkenness) in Kratinos' *Wine-Flask*; presumably *khoroï* of personifications in Eupolis' *Cities*, Aristophanes' *Islands* and Platon's *Islands*; Poiesis, Mousike, and Dikaiosyne in Pherekrates' *Cheiron*.¹²⁹ Among male personifications there are Ploutos in Aristophanes' play and in Krati-

¹²⁹On personifications in Pherekrates: Henderson 2000, 142, 148 and Hall 2000.

nos' *Wealth-Gods* and *Polemos in Peace*. The personifications of ritual activities related to festivals such as *Theoria*, *Pandaisia* (Banquet), *Pannykhis* (Night Revel), *Pompe*, and panhellenic festivals *Olympias* and *Pythias* were common in Athenian vase paintings.¹³⁰ Old Comedy tends to make its personifications of festivals, concepts and activities related to them, female. Female personifications make it possible to embody the idea of sex with a beautiful young girl. Thus, *Reconciliation* (Διαλλαγή) in the *Akharnians* (989-999),¹³¹ and *Theoria* in the *Peace* are to be given to the Athenian male society as a symbol of the peaceful time of the festivals. Similar figures are the *Peace-treaties* (Σπονδαί) in the *Knights* (1389) given to *Demos*, the personified body of Athenian people, as a symbol of peaceful life full of drinking and sex for the period of thirty years.

When *Trygaios* hands *Theoria* over to the Council he mentions among sexual innuendos some basic festive elements of which a religious celebration would consist. He suggests that the councillors celebrate an *anarrhysis*, hinting at a sacrifice¹³² followed by the feast (indicated by the oven) and by the *agon* next day (887-891):

βουλή, πρυτάνεις, ὄρατε τὴν Θεωρίαν.
 σκέψασθ' ὅσ' ὑμῖν ἀγαθὰ παραδώσω φέρων,
 ὥστ' εὐθέως ἄραντας ὑμᾶς τῷ σκέλει
 ταύτης μετεώρω κατ' ἀγαγεῖν ἀνάρρυσιν.
 τουτὶ δ', ὄρατε, τοῦπτάνιον.

Council, Prytaneis, look at Theoria. Consider how many blessings I have brought to give you. You can raise up her legs straight in the air and then celebrate the Anarrhysis. And, look, here is the oven.

Here the same sex imagery is used as in the *Akharnians* in the *Dikaiopolis'* hymn addressed to *Phales* about the Thracian slave-girl (see 3.3.1). *Theoria* is

¹³⁰Smith 2011, especially 83-89.

¹³¹See above 3.3.1; cf. *Lys.* 1114, 1162-1172. She is only mentioned in the *Akharnians* and a mute character in the *Lysistrata*.

¹³²V. 890; the word derives from ἀναρρῦω, 'to pull back (the victim's head to facilitate the slaughter)'. This is also the name of the second day of the *Apatouria* festival.

represented as a girl for sexual pleasures (like Reconciliation) available during the festival time. At the same time she brings this time with her and personifies it – those who possess her can hold athletic contests and other festive entertaining activities (894-895):

ἔπειτ' ἀγῶνά γ' εὐθύς ἐξέσται ποιεῖν
ταύτην ἔχουσιν αὖριον καλὸν πάνυ,

Then, those who have her will be able to hold tomorrow a beautiful contest...

Other personifications of festivals come from fragments:

(1) Plato wrote a comedy *Festivals* (Ἑορταί) in which conceivably a *choros* represented personified festivals. The Athenian word for festival, ἑορτή, is feminine gender which suggests that the personifications were female. The fragments reveal that the play portrayed a sacrifice (fr.27) and other offerings (fr.32).

(2) The title of Philyllios' play *Twelfth day* could also refer to the name of one of the female characters of the play, a personification of the Pitchers, the second day of the festival of the Anthesteria, which was celebrated on the twelfth day of the month Anthesterion. Remarkably, the title does not use a standard name of the festival but the date of the month instead. This must be deliberate choice of a feminine word ('day') to make the personified character female (while most names of festivals of several days were neuter plural). She would then plausibly be depicted with a habit of heavy drinking since this was the main activity during the Pitchers. This assumption about the day of Pitchers is corroborated by the unique fragment of the play (fr.6, containing an *apostrophe* to an amphora) where drinking is apparently the central theme. The second day of the Anthesteria had some special relevance for the dramatic performances. It is on this day that contests, dithyrambs and other poems were performed. Moreover, according to Thucydides, the more ancient Dionysia were celebrated on that day in the temple of Dionysos in the Marshes (*Limnai*).¹³³

¹³³Thuc. 2.15.

(3) A similar personification appears in another Philyllios' play *Herakles*. In fr. 7 the character speaking is Dorpia, the first day of the Apatouria festival, a three-day meeting of the phratries¹³⁴

βούλεσθε δῆτ' ἐγὼ φράσω τίς εἰμ' ἐγώ;
ἢ τῶν προτενθῶν Δορπία καλουμένη.

Do you wish me to tell you who I am? I am the so called Dorpia of the Fore-Tasters.

During this day banquets were held. Herakles who is known in Old Comedy for his gluttony would be a suitable character in such a setting.

(4) Hesychius reports that Plato used the name Aletis to indicate the day of the Athenian festival Aiora in one of his plays (fr.233).¹³⁵ Nothing is known about the play or the fragment, but as a guess, Aletis could be a female personification of the festival.

(5) In the *Women at the Thesmophoria II*, Kalligeneia, the third and last day of the festival, was one of the characters who spoke the prologue (fr.331):

δαίμων περι τὴν Δήμητραν, ἣν προλογίζουσιν ἐν ταῖς ἐτέραις Θεσμοφοριαζούσαις ἐποίησεν.

a deity associated with Demeter, whom he made saying a prologue in the other Thesmophoriazusae.

In the *Women at the Thesmophoria* (298) Kalligeneia is a deity invoked by the women-worshippers together with the Thesmophoroi goddesses, Ploutos, Kourotrophos, Hermes, and Kharites. The scholiast characterises Kalligeneia as a divine personification associated with Demeter. In *Women at the Thesmophoria II*, she could be the speaker in fr. 334 who is bidding someone to restrain from wine, presumably, on the day of Kalligeneia or on some other ritual occasion.

The analysis of personifications of festivals in the plays shows that days were important time-units for the representation of the festivals. This corre-

¹³⁴Parker 2007, 458-461.

¹³⁵This festival celebrated the myth of the Attic heroine Erigone; see Chepel 2009.

sponds to other practices of Greek religion. Some days were regarded as auspicious and some not.¹³⁶ Days were also quite important within the month cycle.¹³⁷ Different days of the month were associated with different deities and required certain celebrations and rituals. The first eight days of each month had some festival associated with each of them, and were, therefore, holy days in the religious calendar.¹³⁸ The observance of these days was relevant in the life of the society. For example, the Spartans would not set out on campaign in the early part of the month (when the important monthly festivals occurred). There were also private societies named after the days of the month during which they met and performed rituals together.¹³⁹

The most important among these festivals repeated on the monthly basis was the first day of the month, *noumenia*.¹⁴⁰ Months started with the new moon because Athenians like all Greeks used the lunar calendar.¹⁴¹ A play by Eupolis, of which only a mentioning in the hypothesis to *Akharnians* survived, bears a title *New-Moons, Noumeniai*. Storey suggests two possibilities of interpreting the title: (1) the *khoros* of New Moons or (2) the celebrations during the time of the new moon. He discusses also the possibility that the MS reading of title is corrupt and we should read *Noumenistai*. In that case the play might have featured a *khoros* of worshippers performing rituals on the day of the new moon (Storey 2003, 215). In fact, the first suggestion is quite plausible and there is no need to suspect a mistake in the transmitted title. *Noumenia* (fem.) is the first day of the month. Consequently, the *khoros* members represented the 12 first-days of 12 months. As the moons are female the *khoros* members would be female personifications as well. The other 12 members of the comic *khoros* could be, for example, complemented by male personifications of each month,

¹³⁶For instance, Alkibiades arrived in the Piraeus on the day of Plynteria and it was considered ill-omened because business was prohibited on that day. *Plut.Alc.* 34.1-2. *Xen.Hell.*1.4.12.

¹³⁷Parker 2007, 192: "The internal structure of the month was a vehicle of religious meaning."

¹³⁸Mikalson 1975, 24.

¹³⁹They were called Tetradistai, Dekadistai, Eikadeis; see Parker 1996, 335f.

¹⁴⁰Parker 2011, 196 (as in Lysias fr.53, Dem. 25.99). In *Plut. Mor.* 828A it is called the holiest of days.

¹⁴¹Parke 1977, 24. On the calendar see below 3.3.3.

menes.¹⁴²

A *choros* like this is probably depicted on a fourth-century calyx krater attributed to the Oinomaos Painter, dating 380-370 BCE. The female figures on it are holding attributes of the different festivals and each has a moon above her head. Smith interprets the figures as ritual events such as festivals, *Pompai* and *Theoriai* represented according to their monthly distribution. This is exactly what the New Moons could be – a group of female personifications of celebrations each attached to a particular moon, in other words, month. Perhaps some attributes were added to their ‘moon’ costumes to specify a particular festival celebrated during this month. A later calendar frieze (with a range of dates attributed to it, from late Hellenistic period to 2 CE) displayed 12 Athenian months with attributes and activities of classical Athenian festivals that were happening during those months.¹⁴³ If this suggestion is correct *Eupolis’ New-Moons* would be somewhat similar to Plato’s *Festivals* with a *choros* of women representing ritual events throughout the year.

To recapitulate this section, Old Comedy represents festivals by personified days and rituals related to them. The personification of festivals in comedy visualises them and helps the audience to experience ritual time through physical visualisations. Festivals as marked periods of time are interchangeable with rituals performed during those periods. For instance, *Theoria* is a figure that can be interpreted both as a festive occasion and as rites and spectacles held at this occasion.

3.3.3 Ritual cycles: calendar

People experience time not statically but dynamically, as the flow of days, months, and years. Ritual events distributed over the course of the year follow each other, being systemised in the calendar. The ritual calendars of Greek cities

¹⁴²Attic months are personified as young males sometimes accompanied by women that have been interpreted as personifications of festivals. See Palagia 2008; Wachsmann 2012.

¹⁴³It was interpreted as an attempt to coordinate lunar calendar (Athenian festivals) and solar calendar (zodiac): Palagia 2008.

were recorded to regulate sacrifices and other offerings.¹⁴⁴ The ritual cycle of the year is built into Greek calendars along with the seasonal and agricultural cycles. The majority of Greek months had names according to their religious significance and ritual events happening in that month.¹⁴⁵

In Athens there were simultaneously operating more than one calendrical system. The lunar calendar was based on the movement of the moon and consisted of twelve lunar months each starting with the new moon. The natural cycle of seasons were also part of the Greek time experience and they were observed through the natural change of weather due to the movement of the sun, but also through solstices, equinoxes and visibility of stars.¹⁴⁶ Regular adjustment of the lunar and solar systems was needed.¹⁴⁷

The calendar of major public festivals repeated on annual basis was under the control of the archon eponymous who had the right to shift the events in the course of the month disregarding the actual dates in the lunar calendar. The decisions concerning the dates of the month and of religious celebrations held on them could have far-fetching political consequences in Greece. Thus, Spartans did not arrive to the Battle of Marathon because they were waiting for a full moon (Hdt. 6.106.3-107) and waited for a month to go on a campaign so as not to start it during the sacred month of Karneios (Thuc. 5.54.2-4). Finally, the meetings of the Assembly were scheduled by the Boule, forming one more calendar. This bouletic calendar divided the year into ten periods of prytanies

¹⁴⁴Hannah 2005, 27. Already a Mycenaean calendar in Linear B, for example, records details of sacrifices to different gods according to the months: Hannah 2005, 16, Gemin. *Eisagoge* 8.6-9; also Pritchett 2001, 31, Pl. *Leg.* 7.809c.

¹⁴⁵Carbon 2015, 537-8.

¹⁴⁶The value of seasonal system contrasted to the political calendar is argued in Thuc. 5.20. 1-2; see discussion in Hannah 2005, 46.

¹⁴⁷Discussed in Hannah 2005, 30; Persky 2009, 35-36; Pritchett 2001, 35; Parker 2007, 192ff; Parker 2011, 196; Samuel 1972, 57. The Athenian calendars are complicated and debated matters; cf Dunn 1998, 1999; Waerden 1960; Meritt 1961; Pritchett 2001. It seems that both the festival civic calendar ('according to the archon') and lunar calendar ('according to the goddess') based on the lunar cycle were to some extent irregular and did not follow any strict astronomical scheme. The calendric system had to be adjusted both *ad hoc* and on a regular basis with intercalations. The festival calendar is also called archon's calendar because the archon had the authority to regulate it and to insert intercalary days if needed. The changes in the calendar were allegedly proclaimed through a public notice by special heralds. Cf Makhon fr. 11; Gow 1965, 86.

during which each Athenian tribe had service in the Boule.

The Athenians attributed the introduction of the public sacrificial calendar to Solon, the famous law-giver. Solon's calendar was recorded in archaic inscriptions known as *kyrbeis* which were still in use in the fifth century along with other inscriptions regulating the calendrical system.¹⁴⁸ The ritual calendar drew political and social attention and underwent revisions in the last decade of the fifth century that were documented in the so called Law Code inscription found on the Athenian Agora.¹⁴⁹ The purpose of those revisions was to put in order the system that must have grown too complicated over the centuries. The public discussion must have been quite resonant (judging from the Lysias' speech, recent discussion in Carawan 2010). In the Attic demes, the ritual calendars were, too, inscribed in stone as important documents. There are local calendars from Eleusis, Erchia, Salaminioi, Teithras, Thorikos, and Tetrapolis dating from second half of the 5th/first half of the 4th century.¹⁵⁰ All that said, it can be concluded that following and observing the calendar was a serious matter of religious piety in Greece which as especially relevant during the time when Aristophanes' comedies were produced.

The Clouds

The theme of calendar is prominent in the *Clouds*.¹⁵¹ At the beginning of the play Strepsiades debt and his terror are introduced through the monthly cycle of time. As the moon makes its way through the month, the day of the return of debt is approaching (16-18):

ΣΤ. ἐγὼ δ' ἀπόλλυμαι

ὄρων ἄγουσαν τὴν σελήνην εἰκάδας.

¹⁴⁸There existed also *stelai*, presumably more recent inscriptions on the sacrificial law and *syngraphai*, further instructions how to use *kyrbeis* and *stelai*. See the chapter *Solon's Calendar* in Parker 1996.

¹⁴⁹*Lys.* 30,17-22 is the main source for the process of the revisions and the work of the commission appointed to do this: Lambert 2002.

¹⁵⁰Four of them are discussed extensively in Ekroth 2002.

¹⁵¹This has been noted in existing scholarship by Persky in his unpublished thesis: Persky 2009, 58-59.

οἱ γὰρ τόκοι χωροῦσιν.

*STREPSIADES I'm dying when I see the moon is nearing the twenties
because the interest is mounting up.*

The last day of the month was the day for creditors to collect the interest in the loans. Literally, the interest is increasing, 'moving forward' (χωροῦσιν) with the movement of the moon.¹⁵² In this and other passages of the play the moon becomes a metonym for time,¹⁵³ and time can be manipulated through the moon. When Strepsiades seeks to abolish the payment, he plots to invite a Thessalian sorceress so that she performs a magic ritual of drawing the moon from the sky in order to hide it and keep shut in a box.¹⁵⁴ The idea is that the moon will not be able to rise again and the time of payment will never come (749-756):

ΣΤ. γυναιῖκα φαρμακίδ' εἰ πριάμενος Θετταλὴν

καθέλοιμι νύκτωρ τὴν σελήνην, εἴτα δὴ

αὐτὴν καθείρξαμ' εἰς λοφεῖον στρογγύλον,

ὥσπερ κάτοπτρον, κᾶτα τηροίην ἔχων –

ΣΩ. τί δῆτα τοῦτ' ἂν ὠφελήσειέν σ'· Στ. ὅ τι;

εἰ μηκέτ' ἀνατέλλοι σελήνη μηδαμοῦ,

οὐκ ἂν ἀποδοίην τοὺς τόκους. ΣΩ. ὅτι ἡ τί δῆ;

ΣΤ. ὅτι ἡ κατὰ μῆνα τὰργύριον δανείζεται.

*STREPSIADES If I bought a Thessalian woman-sorceress I would take
down the moon at night and then shut it in a round case like a mirror, and
then I would guard it constantly... SOCRATES So how would that help
you? STREPSIADES How? If the moon never rose again, I wouldn't have
to pay the interest. SOCRATES How's that? STREPSIADES Because
money is lent by the month.*

¹⁵²The same idea of the money growth according to the time is repeated in 1287-1289

¹⁵³Persky 2009, 58.

¹⁵⁴To trap the moon is a typical magical trick particularly associated with Thessalian women; cf Pl. Gorg. 513a; Sophron's mime *The women who are said to expel the Moon*; Men. *Woman from Thessaly*.

The theme of the calendar is resumed after the second *parabasis*. Strepsiades appears on stage fearfully counting days until the debt is demanded (1131-1134):

πέμπτη, τετράς, τρίτη, μετὰ ταύτην δευτέρα·
εἴθ' ἦν ἐγὼ μάλιστα πασῶν ἡμερῶν
δέδοικα καὶ πέφρικα καὶ βδελύττομαι,
εὐθύς μετὰ ταύτην ἔσθ' ἔνη τε καὶ νέα.

Fifth, fourth, third, and then second, and then the day which I dread and loathe the most of all days, right after that comes the Old-and-New day.

Then, in a lengthy dialogue with Pheidippides he shares his fear of the last, 30th (or 29th in the hollow months) day of the month ἔνη καὶ νέα (1178-1201). This scene marks Pheidippides' graduation from Socrates' school and this is the first instance where we see the outcome of his education. The first task that Strepsiades sets before him is related to the calendar and time. Pheidippides turns the word ἔνη καὶ νέα into an etymological pun delivering a sophistic argument that the suit will be not valid since the day both old and new, cannot exist.¹⁵⁵ Pheidippides then structures his sophistic argument upon his own interpretation of Solon's law which appointed the day of the payment of loans to the last, 'old-and-new' day of the month.¹⁵⁶ He says that by the ἔνη καὶ νέα Solon meant not the last day of the month but the last and the first, with the debts to be paid on the first day, νουμηνία (1189-1195):

ἐκεῖνος οὖν τὴν κλήσιν εἰς δὺ' ἡμέρας
ἔθηκεν, εἷς γε τὴν ἔνην τε καὶ νέαν,
ἰν' αἱ θέσεις γίγνοιτο τῇ νουμηνίᾳ.

¹⁵⁵The point is that 'the deposits should have been made on a fixed day, and consequently the parties will lose them, since they have not obeyed this regulation' (Starkie 1966, 257).

¹⁵⁶Starkie 1966, 258: "The arguments ἀπὸ διανοίας τοῦ γράψαντος were permitted in the Athenian courts [...] . When the language of a law was equivocal, the speaker might argue that the received interpretation was erroneous, or might refer to the motive of the lawgiver." Cf Dem. 22. 30; also Sommerstein 1982, 218: "Pheidippides' argument is based on the pretence that 'Old-and-new' in reality a current expression familiar to everybody - is an archaism to be found only in the laws and requiring interpretation [...] If the deposits are made on the wrong day, then suits will be null and void. The scene ends with Strepsiades being triumphant."

*He set the summons for two days, for the Old Day and for the New Day,
so that the lodgings of the deposits happened on the day of the New Moon.*

We can see that the calendar theme is crucial for the plot of the play as Aristophanes represents the main character's troubles and their solution through the idea of the specially appointed days of the month. Besides financial and legal issues of the calendrical system, the *Clouds* addresses also the ritual calendar. In the *parabasis* (608-626), the *choros* discloses to the audience that the Moon asked them to remind Athenians that it is very important to calculate days of the month 'according to the Moon' (κατὰ σελήνην ἄγειν χρὴ τοῦ βίου τὰς ἡμέρας) which is the term for lunar calendar in Greek¹⁵⁷. The *choros* of the *Clouds* report also that the Moon complains of being treated poorly by the Athenians who count the days incorrectly jumbling them up. She also reveals her own relation with gods who threaten her because they do not in their turn receive feasts from people during the festivals on the fixed days of the year. The correctness of the calendar, therefore, has direct impact on religious festivals and sacrifices and on the relationship with the gods (615-623):

ὕμᾱς δ' οὐκ ἄγειν τὰς ἡμέρας
οὐδὲν ὀρθῶς, ἀλλ' ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω κυδοιδοπᾶν·
ὥστ' ἀπειλεῖν φησιν αὐτῇ τοὺς θεοὺς ἑκάστοτε,
ἥνίκ' ἂν ψευσθῶσι δείπνου κἀπίωσιν οἴκαδε
τῆς ἑορτῆς μὴ τυχόντες κατὰ λόγον τῶν ἡμερῶν.
καῖθ', ὅταν θύειν δέη, στρεβλοῦτε καὶ δικάζετε·
πολλάκις δ' ἡμῶν ἀγόντων τῶν θεῶν ἀπαστίαν,
ἥνικ' ἂν πενθῶμεν ἢ τὸν Μέμνον' ἢ Σαρπηδόνα,
σπένδεθ' ὑμεῖς καὶ γελᾶτ'·

and she says that you don't celebrate days correctly, but you make a disorder of it. So that, she says, the gods are constantly making threats against

¹⁵⁷The phrase 'according to the moon' is a term for lunar calendars corresponding to the phrase 'according to the goddess' meaning Selene which is attested epigraphically in Athens and other Greek cities; see Pritchett 2001, 89-91.

her when they are deprived of a feast and go home without having a festival according to the calendar of days. And again when there should be a sacrifice you are extracting evidence and judging. and very often when we gods are holding a fast mourning Memnon or Sarpedon, you are making libations and laughing.

A similar implication that gods are in a way dependent on the Moon due to her 'calendrical duties' is made in the *Peace*, 406-415 where Hermes claims that the treacherous Sun and Moon were stealing days biting them out from the year cycle, conceivably hinting at the irregularities of the Athenian calendar¹⁵⁸:

TP. ἡ γὰρ Σελήνη χῶ πανοὔργος Ἥλιος
ὕμῖν ἐπιβουλεύοντε πολὺν ἤδη χρόνον
τοῖς βαρβάροισι προδίδοτον τὴν Ἑλλάδα.
EP. ἵνα δὴ τί τοῦτο δρᾶτον; TP. ὅτι ἡ νῆ Δία
ἡμεῖς μὲν ὑμῖν θύομεν, τούτοισι δὲ
οἱ βάρβαροι θύουσι· διὰ τοῦτ' εἰκότως
βούλονται ἂν ἡμᾶς πάντα ἐξολωλέναι,
ἵνα τὰς τελετὰς λάβοιεν αὐτοὶ τῶν θεῶν.

EP. ταῦτ' ἄρα πάλαι τῶν ἡμερῶν παρεκλεπτέτην
καὶ τοῦ κύκλου παρέτρωγον ὑφ' ἁμαρτωλίας.

TRYGAIOS The Moon and the treacherous Sun have been plotting against you for a long time already in order to betray Greece to the barbarians.
HERMES For what purpose they want to do this? TRYGAIOS Because, by Zeus, we sacrifice to you, and the barbarians to them. That's why they obviously want that we all perish so that they could themselves take over

¹⁵⁸However, Persky 2009, 59 sees the two passages as inconsistent and contradicting each other drawing on different systems of time counting: "In the *Clouds*, the moon relayed the Greek gods' complaint that mortals have been mismanaging their festival calendars and thus cheating the gods out of their festivals. Here, it is the moon that is cheating the gods, with the sun as co-conspirator. Taken together, these passages clearly do not add up to a consistent critique of Athenian timekeeping, nor does Aristophanes unquestionably regard religious festivals as divinely ordained to the extent that he has been taken to." In both passages through the relationship of the gods with the moon Aristophanes shows the importance of the calendar for the performance of rituals and celebration of festivals.

the rites of the gods. HERMES So that it explains it! they have been stealing since long ago some of the days and nibbling off at the calendrical cycle because of their wickedness.

The gods are offended because their days are suppressed. It is significant that immediately after this statement Trygaios offers Hermes that he will organise traditional festivals of Panathenaia, Eleusinian mysteries, Dipolieia, and Adonia in his, Hermes' honour, which would disrupt, of course, the normal calendar of ritual celebrations (416-420):

πρὸς ταῦτ', ὦ φίλ' Ἑρμῆ, ξύλλαβε
ἡμῖν προθύμως τήνδε καὶ ξυνέλκυσσον,
καὶ σοὶ τὰ μεγάλ' ἡμεῖς Παναθηναίᾳ ἄξομεν
πάσας τε τὰς ἄλλας τελετὰς τὰς τῶν θεῶν,
μυστήρι' Ἑρμῆ, Διπολίει', Ἀδώνια·

Therefore, dear Hermes, help us eagerly with this and join in hauling up Peace, and we will celebrate in your honour the great Panathenaia, and all other rites of the gods, the Mysteries, the Dipolieia, the Adonia, to Hermes.

In the *Clouds*, the main conclusion which can be deduced from the *parabasis* is that 'the festival calendar was seriously out of record with the the moon, and that the Athenians were aware of that fact'.¹⁵⁹ I shall add to this that not only were they aware but, moreover, that Aristophanes considered this topic important enough to include in his comic agenda in the *parabasis* which makes it sound highly significant for the Athenian society. We can also see that the calendar was a matter of piety in the sense of correct worship of god and that it ensured the effectiveness of the sacrifices. The gods in the Moon's complaint are concerned with the fact that the human festival calendar and the gods'

¹⁵⁹Samuel 1972, 58.

festival calendar do not coincide and hence the festivals are not performed on the dates when the gods expect them to be.

A possible interpretation of the passage is that the Moon was irritated with the adjustments of the festival calendar made by the archon which was a frequent case in Athens.¹⁶⁰ The evidence from inscriptions suggests that the adjustments were made in connection with the Eleusinia, Panathenaia, Great Dionysia, and other festivals: the addition of days may have been to allow more time to prepare for festivals which could still occur on what was nominally their proper day.¹⁶¹ In that case it is possible that the minor deities and heroes (like Memnon and Sarpedon mentioned in the *parabasis* of the *Clouds*) did not get their sacrifices as their days were suppressed in order to provide more convenient celebration of the bigger ones.¹⁶²

Although the calendar issues are represented in the main dramatic action of the play mainly through the schedule of legal procedures, the theme of ritual calendar is not limited to the *parabasis* but is present in the dramatic dialogues as well. When Strepsiades and Pheidippides discuss Solon's arrangement of the legal procedures and their appointment to a certain day in the month, the calendar of the payments is juxtaposed with the religious festival calendar and explained through it. Pheidippides claims that the deposits should be brought on the day of the New Moon and Strepsiades is surprised that the magistrates actually accept them on the day before that, the Old-and-New one. Explaining this fact, Pheidippides compares the magistrates to the Fore-tasters, a guild of cult officials who tasted food before others at the first day of the Apatouria

¹⁶⁰Storey 2003, 215 suggests that Eupolis' play *New-Moons* could be also about calendrical issues of this kind.

¹⁶¹Dunn 1998, 230-231; Parker 2007, 193.

¹⁶²The problem described in the *parabasis* refers to the deviation between the dates of festivals set by the archon on one hand and the actual time which passed between the same festival from year to year. Cf Persky 2009, 38: "Festivals took place on specific dates in the festival calendar, unchanging from year to year, although, in practice, the eponymous archon could intercalate or omit days from the calendar at his discretion, so even though festivals happened on set dates, the date does not necessarily indicate how much time had passed since the last performance of that festival. Set dates, therefore, did not necessarily mean fixed times."

festival, and stole the best parts of meats (1198-1200)¹⁶³:

ΦΕ. ὄπερ οἱ προτένθαι γὰρ δοκοῦσί μοι παθεῖν·
ὅπως τάχιστα τὰ πρυτανεῖ' ὑφελοίατο,
διὰ τοῦτο προὔτένθουσιν ἡμέρα μιᾶ.

PHEIDIPPIDES I think they are up to the same as the Fore-tasters. In order to embezzle the deposits as quickly as possibly they taste them one day earlier.

By mentioning the Fore-tasters, the 'legal' time is compared with the 'ritual' time and both appear relevant for the play's action.¹⁶⁴

Pheidippides acquired his ability to challenge and rhetorically subvert the notions of time and calendar during his education in Socrates' school. Observing the sky and celestial bodies, τὰ μετέωρα (v.229), appears to be among scholarly activities of the students of the Thinkery (94-99):

ΣΤ. ψυχῶν σοφῶν τοῦτ' ἐστὶ φροντιστήριον.
ἐνταῦθ' ἐνοιχοῦσ' ἄνδρες οἱ τὸν οὐρανὸν
λέγοντες ἀναπέιθουσιν ὡς ἔστιν πνιγεύς,
κάστιν περὶ ἡμᾶς οὗτος, ἡμεῖς δ' ἄνθρακες.
οὔτοι διδάσκουσ', ἀργύριον ἦν τις διδῶ,
λέγοντα νικᾶν καὶ δίκαια κᾶδικα.

STREPSIADES This is a Thinkery for smart souls. There live the men who argue in speeches that the sky is a baking-tray and that it is around us and that we are charcoal. They teach anyone who pays them money to win in speeches, either the cause is just or unjust.

Socrates himself studies the ways the moon revolves around the sky: τῆς σελήνης τὰς ὁδοὺς καὶ τὰς περιφοράς (171-173, cf 1507). Observing celestial bodies and

¹⁶³The verb προτενθεύειν means here metaphorically to take money before the proper time. Athenaios cites a fragment of Philyllios' *Herakles* (Ath.4.171 c-e = fr.7) where Dorpia, the personified second day of the Apatouria festival describes herself as 'Dorpia of Fore-tasters'. In Pherekrat. *Wild men* fr.8 the Fore-Tasters are the characters speaking.

¹⁶⁴This is not unusual. *Noumenia* was probably familiar for the audience as both significant in the 'legal' and 'ritual' calendars. As the special day for business in the *Wasps* (96, 171) and as ritual day for religious celebrations in Theopomp. *Penelope* fr.47.

astronomical phenomena is paralleled the fragment 227 of Aristophanes' lost play the *Banqueters*. It mentions a monumental sundial which Meton erected in Colonus as a place for observing τὰ μετέωρα.¹⁶⁵ Meton was a prominent Greek astronomer renowned in antiquity for establishing the so-called 'Metonic cycle' in 432 BC in order to regulate to bring the solar cycle in step with the moon.¹⁶⁶ The *Banqueters* featured sophistic education and intellectual activities as its main theme. It is conceivable, therefore, that both plays represented some kind of philosophical schools interested in astronomy.¹⁶⁷

The intellectuals' astronomical activities relate to some extent to their religion as well. The *Banqueters* most likely featured a group of young intellectuals enjoying the same type of sophistic education as Socrates' pupils in the *Clouds*, but at the same time they were gathering in the temple of Herakles and presumably involved in some ritual celebrations (*Banqueters*, test.i). Socrates' school is portrayed in the *Clouds* as a kind of religious association, a *thiasos* which celebrate their own 'new' gods (see above on hymns 2.2.2). The groups of this kind in Athens usually either followed their own calendar or had individual preferences within the existing calendar system picking some particular days to celebrate.¹⁶⁸

Finally, the *choros* of the Cloud-goddesses develops the theme of the ritual calendar in the play. Being deities themselves and belonging to the same celes-

¹⁶⁵It is mentioned also in *Av.* 997. There is some disagreement about the number of the sundials set by Meton and their location reported already in the scholium. According to the text of *Birds* and a fragment of *Banqueters*, the sundial was built in Colonus while the Hellenistic historian Philokhoros gives the Pnyx location. Halliwell suggests that there was only one monument and that Colonus should be understood just as 'hill': Halliwell 1980, 88 n.16. However, in this case the audience must have known the pattern of calling Pnyx just a 'hill' which is not attested anywhere else.

¹⁶⁶On Meton and his cycle: Hannah 2005, 52-59, Bowen and Goldstein 1988, 78. Meton as comic figure of intellectual discussed in Zimmermann 1991. A lexical parallel between Socrates's and Meton's occupation with astronomy in comedy is the word *πυργεύς* which both use for comparison of the dome of the sky with a bread-oven: *Av.* 998-999, *Nub.* 95-6, also in *Kratin.* fr.167 ascribed to philosopher Hippon. The adoption of Metonic cycle as reason for Moon's concern in the *parabasis* of the *Clouds* was argued by Guidorizzi 1996, 268-269 and by Amati 2010, 225.

¹⁶⁷The astronomy practised in the Thinkery would be cosmological, not calendrical, strictly speaking, but at that time the two were independent of one another; see Bowen and Goldstein 1988, 41.

¹⁶⁸Parker 1996, 333-336.

tial realm as the astronomical bodies, they advocate the abundance of sacrifices and festivals in Athens and their systematization throughout the year. In the *parodos* (302-313), the *choros* praises Athens and its religious system:

οὐ σέβας ἀρρήτων ἱερῶν, ἵνα
μυστοδόκος δόμος
ἐν τελεταῖς ἀγίαις ἀναδείκνυται·
οὐρανίοις τε θεοῖς δωρήματα,
ναοὶ θ' ὑπερεφεῖς καὶ ἀγάλματα,
καὶ πρόσοδοι μακάρων ἱερώταται
εὐστέφανοί τε θεῶν θυσίαι θάλια τε
παντοδαπαῖσιν ὥραις,
ἦρί τ' ἐπερχομένῳ Βρομία χάρις
εὐκελάδων τε χορῶν ἐρεθίσματα
καὶ μοῦσα βαρύβρομος αὐλῶν.

where there is the awe of ineffable sacred rites, where the house receiving initiates is opened during the holy celebrations; <where> there are gifts to the celestial gods and high-roofed temples and statues, and the most holy processions of the blessed [gods], and the garlanded sacrifices to the gods and festivities in all and every season; and the grace of noisy Dionysos at the beginning of spring, and the rivalry of melodious khoroi and the deep-sounding Muse of the pipes.

They list the sacred rites of the Eleusinia (τελεταὶ ἀγίαι), the offerings to the gods (δωρήματα), processions (πρόσοδοι), and sacrifices (θυσίαι) as ritual activities that prove the piety of the Athenians. In the end of this list they refer to festivals (θάλια) that happen in all seasons (ὥραις) and specifically, to one of these festivals, the City Dionysia, associating it with the spring season, in particular. In the second *parabasis*, they reveal their own contribution to the calendrical order by giving or restraining rain and controlling the natural agricultural calendar keeping it 'in season', ἐν ὥρᾳ (1115-1125):

τοὺς κριτὰς ἃ κερδανοῦσιν, ἦν τι τόνδε τὸν χορὸν
ὠφελῶσ' ἐκ τῶν δικαίων, βουλόμεσθ' ἡμεῖς φράσαι.
πρῶτα μὲν γάρ, ἦν νεᾶν βούλησθ' ἐν ὥρᾳ τοὺς ἀγρούς,
ὑσομεν πρῶτοισιν ὑμῖν, τοῖσι δ' ἄλλοις ὕστερον.
εἶτα τὸν καρπὸν τεκούσας ἀμπέλους φυλάξομεν,
ὥστε μήτ' αὐχμὸν πιέζειν μήτ' ἄγαν ἐπομβρίαν.
ἦν δ' ἀτιμάσῃ τις ἡμᾶς θνητὸς ὦν οὔσας θεάς,
προσεχέτω τὸν νοῦν πρὸς ἡμῶν οἷα πείσεται κακά,
λαμβάνων οὔτ' οἶνον οὔτ' ἄλλ' οὐδὲν ἐκ τοῦ χωρίου.
ἦνίχ' ἂν γὰρ αἶ τ' ἐλαῖαι βλαστάνωσ' αἶ τ' ἄμπελοι,
ἀποκεκόψονται· τοιαύταις σφενδόναις παιήσομεν.

We' d like to explain how the judges will benefit, if they help this khoros and do justice them. First of all if you wish to plough and sow your fields in season, we shall rain on you first and on everyone else later. Then we shall protect your crops and your vines so that they are not damaged either by drought or too much rain. If anyone of mortals dishonours us, goddesses, let him be cautious about the great evil that will fall upon him from us: he will get no wine nor anything else from the land. for when the olives and vines are sprouting the shoots will be cut off. These are the slings with which we shall strike.

I have shown that the theme of calendar is multifaceted in the *Clouds*. First of all, there is the traditional calendar of legal procedures with dates fixed by Solon which is in contrast with the sophistic manipulation of the laws and prescriptions by Pheidippides. His skill to challenge the traditional Solon's system for his father's benefit might result from his education in Socrates' school where the astronomical calendar is studied. There is also the calendar of festivals and rites which is usually shared by humans and mortals. Occasionally it can deviate from the standard as conveyed in the Moon's speech, causing disorder and abnormal relationship between the gods and the humans through

sacrifices. The *khoros* of divine Clouds control the natural calendar of seasons and weather conditions. The theme that unites all these calendars is the activity of celestial bodies and, first of all, the moon. The moon is responsible both for the ritual calendar and for the growth of the interest and approaching of the payment day which makes Strepsiades panic. The action of the play is, hence, grounded in the experience of civic and ritual time and calendar.

The Seasons

Aristophanes' fragmentary play *Seasons* represents the 'natural' cycle of seasons which reflects the climatic and geographical conditions of a particular land. In comedy, this cycle is dependent on the worship of certain gods. The fragments allow to suggest that one of the main themes of the play was the conflict between more traditional conservative deities and 'new' foreign gods. The worship of the latter in Athens resulted into the 'adoption' of the Egyptian seasonal cycle (see below fr.581).

The title of the play suggests that the comedy featured personified Seasons, Horai, known in myth and Athenian cult, being also as Dionysos' companions.¹⁶⁹ They were responsible for the order of time, born of the goddess of justice Themis. In epic poetry they are associated with the organised, civilised running of time.¹⁷⁰ They control the coming and going of clouds and weather in general and the change of the seasons and times of the year.¹⁷¹ Although in Hesiod the Seasons have nothing to do with the calendar their names indicate that they are responsible for order and peace: Eunomia, Dike and Eirene. As cult figures, they had a sanctuary at Athens with an altar of Upright Dionysos and there is a record of the sacrifices which were brought to them.¹⁷² They were associated with fertility and harvesting at the festival

¹⁶⁹Delneri 2006, 75n.19.

¹⁷⁰*Il.* 22.450; 2.471; *Od.* 5.485, *Od.* 24. 344; 9.135. See also Jolles 1913, 2302-2303. The word in the singular can be used for 'time'.

¹⁷¹*Il.* 5.749, 6.393.

¹⁷²*IG II*³ 1.1002 (250/49 BC); cf *IG II/III*² 4877. See Smith 2011, 77-78

of Thargelia which addressed natural and agricultural phenomena related to ripening corn.¹⁷³ Scholia to Aristophanes report that there existed festivals of Sun and Seasons, namely, Thargelia and Pyanopsia as festivals (*Schol.Ar.Eq.* 729a, *Schol.Ar.Plut.* 1054c). One of the elements of the Thargelia was a festive procession with first offerings of harvest which is probably identical with the procession dedicated ‘for the Sun and the Seasons’ known from Porphyry’s account.¹⁷⁴

In Old Comedy the Seasons seem to belong to the group of deities which personified natural phenomena like Clouds, Moon phases (cf 3.3.2 on personifications), and Sun. In the *Peace* Seasons are a symbol of peaceful life together with other personified deities like Kharites and Desire who receive the peace-treaty libations.¹⁷⁵ Hermipp. fr. 5 *Birth of Athena* represents Seasons personified and weaving *peploi* of flowers, which, given the subject of the play, may refer to the festival of Panathenaia attached to Athena’s birthday (a role similar to the one they are given in Hesiod’s *Work and days* to decorate Pandora with flowers (v. 75)):

καιροσπάθητον ἀνθέων ὕφασμα καινὸν ὦρῶν.

*Seasons’ fast-woven*¹⁷⁶ *new garment of flowers.*

As natural phenomena, seasons in comedy retain some of their divine qualities. They are referred to as part of the divine institution, not a human invention: in the *Birds* the *khoros* of bird-gods claims to make known the seasons ὥραι of the year to the mortals (709-715). They are also mentioned as structuring the cycle of the ritual festival year. The *khoros* of Clouds is praising Athens in the *parodos* for having festivals performed in every season (309-310). The festival in the *Women at the Thesmophoria* (950-952) is attached to the annual cycle of

¹⁷³The festival reveals itself as a having special relevance for fertility and growth. Special bread, *thargelos*, was shown at the festival and a sacrifice was offered to Demeter Khloe.

¹⁷⁴Porphyry cites verbatim Theophrastos’ *On piety* 2. 44. (= Porph. *Abst.* 2.7; see also Parker 2007, 203ff.

¹⁷⁵Olson 1998, 189; Theocr. 15.102-5, Philokhoros *FGrH* 328 fr.5 and 173.

¹⁷⁶The Aristophanic *hapax* plays with the two words καιρός, time, and καῖρος, thrum in the loom, perhaps the parody of the tragic word λεπτοσπάθητος, fine-woven.

ῥοραι (cf. 3.3.1 on the Nesteia day).

Aristophanes' and Kratinos wrote plays with the title *Horai* (Seasons). We do not know anything about Kratinos' play but there are a few fragments of Aristophanes' *Seasons*. The consensus on the identity of the *choros* is that personifications were involved. As the number of Seasons cannot be more than four, the *choros* must have been complemented with other divine personifications, for example, of plants, and nymphs.¹⁷⁷

Judging by the fragments, the religious theme was significant in the play (fr. 577, 578, 581, 585 deal with religious matters) and there was probably a conflict between 'new' Eastern, Phrygian and Egyptian gods like Sabazios (fr. 578) and their cult (test.ii) and more traditional figures and practices which included Seasons. If the attribution of Cicero's reference to this comedy is correct, then there were also some night cultic celebrations of those eastern gods.¹⁷⁸ In fr. 581 a dialogue is happening between two gods, one of them possibly an Eastern deity.

A. ὄψει δὲ χειμῶνος μέσου σικυούς, βότρους, ὀπώραν,
στεφάνους ἴων. <B. οἶμαι δὲ καὶ> κονιορτὸν ἐκτυφλοῦντα.
A. αὐτὸς δ' ἀνὴρ πωλεῖ κίχλας, ἀπίους, σχαδόνας, ἐλάας,
πυόν, χόρια, χελιδόνας, τέττιγας, ἐμβρύεια.
ὑρίσους δ' ἴδοις ἂν νειφομένους σύκων ὁμοῦ τε μύρτων.
B. ἔπειτα κολοκύντας ὁμοῦ ταῖς γογγυλίσιν ἀροῦσιν,
ὥστ' οὐκέτ' οὐδεὶς οἶδ' ὀπηνίχ' ἔστι τοῦναιαυτοῦ;
A. <ἄρ' οὐ> μέγιστον ἀγαθόν, εἴπερ ἔστι δι' ἑνιαυτοῦ
ὅτου τις ἐπιθυμεῖ λαβεῖν; B. κακὸν μὲν οὖν μέγιστον·
εἰ μὴ γὰρ ἦν, οὐκ ἂν ἐπεθύμουσιν οὐδ' ἂν ἐδαπανῶντο.

¹⁷⁷Moreau 1954, 330; Delneri 2006, 74, 106. Harvey 2000, 107 suggests that since the Horai were responsible for growth their multiplicity of them is possible. He suggests two options for the *choros*: either of traditional gods or of two groups of new gods and old gods.

¹⁷⁸Test. ii = *Leg.* 2.37: *novos vero deos et in his colendis nocturnas pervigilationes sic Aristophanes, facetissimus poeta veteris comoediae, vexat, ut apud eum Sabazios et quidam alii dei peregrini iudicati e civitate eiciantur. (Thus Aristophanes, the very witty poet of old comedy, attacked new gods and the nocturnal vigils that accompanied their worship, so that in his play Sabazios and certain other immigrant gods are expelled from the city after a trial. Tr. Henderson.)*

ἐγὼ δὲ τοῦτ' ὀλίγον χρόνον χρήσας ἀφειλόμην ἄν.

A. κᾶγωγε ταῖς ἄλλαις πόλεσι δρω ταῦτα πλὴν Ἀθηνῶν·

τούτοις δ' ὑπάρχει ταῦτ', ἐπειδὴ τοὺς θεοὺς σέβουσιν.

B. ἀπέλαυσαν ἄρα σέβοντες ὑμᾶς, ὡς σὺ φής. A. τιῆ τί;

Αἴγυπτον αὐτῶν τὴν πόλιν πεποίηκας ἄντ' Ἀθηνῶν.

A. *You will see in the middle of winter cucumbers, grapes, fruit, crowns*

of violets. B. And the cloud of blinding dust, I think. A. The same man

is selling sea-fish, pears, honeycomb, olives, beestings, haggis, swallows,

cicadas, embryos. You will see baskets with figs and myrtles even when it

snows. B. Then they saw the pumpkins at the same time as turnips, so that

no one knows any more what time of the year it is. A. Isn't it the greatest

good if you can get what you want throughout the year? B. It's the biggest

evil. If it were not like this, they would not want things and would not

spend on them. As for me, I would give them all this for some time and

then take it away. A. And as for me, I would do that to other cities, but

not to Athens. It is like this with Athenians because they worship gods. B.

Well, they've succeeded in worshipping you, as you say. A. What is that?

B. You have turned their city from Athens into Egypt.

The scene represents the normal agricultural rhythm of seasons reverted by the new gods. One character tells the other that the fruit of all seasons will be available during the winter emphasising the contrast of the tempest and snow (χονιορτόν ἐκτυφλοῦντα) and the products associated with autumn (fruit of harvest), spring (violets, swallows), and summer (cicadas). The character, apparently of divine nature, advocates such supernatural abundance while the other attacks it accusing the first character of disrupting the natural order and turning Athens into Egypt.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹The reference to Egypt implies not only the lack of seasonal change and excessive fertility of the land but also barbarian luxury: Storey 2011, 379 n.33; Moreau 1954, 332; cf. Hdt. 2.19, 77. The passage is discussed in Pellegrino 2000, 178 n.7 who provides a summary of interpretations. Pellegrino comes to the conclusion that the episode praises the wealth of Athens. See also Ceccarelli 1996 on the fragment reflecting imperial ambitions of Athens.

The emphasis on the richness during the winter season makes the whole passage sound utopian as if it referred to the Golden Age. Abnormal fertility of the earth is one of the signs of the utopian orders of the past as in Hesiod's *Work and days* 169, when Zeus gives to the heroes of the fourth generation a blessed life which includes the earth bringing fruit three times per year.¹⁸⁰ The list of products of the fr. 581 which includes such exotic and grotesque items as πύον, χόρια, ἐμβρύεια reminds of other comic examples of utopian gastronomic fantasies of abundance typical of the Golden Age which was a recurrent theme in Old Comedy.¹⁸¹ As Ceccarelli argues convincingly, the utopian theme reflects the political claims and ambitions of the Athenian empire in the second half of the 5th c. BCE.¹⁸² Apparently, the character A makes an attempt to represent the disruption of the seasonal order in Athens caused by the increase of the international trade as wealth and harmony of the Golden Age, while the other one sees corruption and Eastern depraving influence in it.

Like other comic passages, this fragment shows that festivals in comedies are associated with the people who celebrate them and their cultural and ethnic identity. The ritual calendar also varies from one culture to another. However, different temporal cycles are controlled by the same celestial deities, the Sun and Moon. In the *Peace*, they are reported to 'bite away' ritual time of the year cycle thus suppressing some important days of sacrifices and festivals. The reason for that is their alliance with barbarian gods and contempt of the Greek ones (406-415). The idea behind this joke is that the gods and the cultic events dedicated to them can be either Greek or barbarian and the Moon and Sun choose which time to be present at them and which to skip according to their sympathies.

What side did the personified Seasons then take in Aristophanes' play? The

¹⁸⁰ τοῖσιν μελιηδέα καρπὸν / τρις ἔτεος θάλλοντα φέρε ζείδωρος ἄρουρα.

¹⁸¹ For instance, Kratin. *Ploutoi*, fr.176, 363, Aristoph. *Thesm II* fr.333, Pherekr. *Basket-bearers* fr.63, *Didaskalos*, fr.50. See Ruffell 2000 and Pellegrino 2000.

¹⁸² Ceccarelli 1996, 153 interprets the abundance of all products at every time of the year as a comic metaphorical parody of Periclean promises concerning thalassocracy. Cf Thuc. 2.38.2 and Ps.-Xen. *Ath.Pol.* 2.7-9.

fragment does not allow us to draw decisive conclusions. One possibility is that Horai took an ambivalent position between the two views, as their relation to the fertility during the year is ambiguous. Since they belong to the group of deities who guarantee the agricultural cycle of the year they control it and have power to shift the traditional order and to bestow fertility throughout the year. They might not be happy with the change of the normal order of the year but at the same time they would be the figures responsible for altering it.

The idea of the harvest taking place in abnormal time, not according to the calendar, seems quite prominent in the fragment. The allusions to the disorder of the calendar could be one of the themes of the comedy as well as the comparison between different (Greek and Eastern) calendrical systems.¹⁸³ It seems that Aristophanes reflects here a negative attitude to the Egyptian system of annual cycles and ritual time. Herodotos, on the contrary, writes about the Egyptian calendrical system with respect and admiration as being older and superior to the Greek one (Hdt. 2.4):

Ἄγουσι δὲ τοσῶδε σοφώτερον Ἑλλήνων, ἐμοὶ δοκέειν, ὅσῳ Ἑλλη-
νες μὲν διὰ τρίτου ἔτεος ἐμβόλιμον <μῆνα> ἐπεμβάλλουσι τῶν ὠρέων
εἵνεκεν, Αἰγύπτιοι δὲ τριηκοντημέρους ἄγοντες τοὺς δωδέκα μῆνας
ἐπάγουσι ἀνα πᾶν ἔτος πέντε ἡμέρας πάρεξ τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ, καὶ σφι ὁ
κύκλος τῶν ὠρέων ἐς τῷτὸ περιῶν παραγίνεται. δωδέκα τε θεῶν
ἐπωνυμίας ἔλεγον πρώτους Αἰγυπτίους νομίσαι καὶ Ἑλληνας παρὰ σφέων
ἀναλαβεῖν, βωμούς τε καὶ ἀγάλματα καὶ νηοὺς θεοῖσι ἀπονείμει σφέας
πρώτους καὶ ζῶα ἐν λίθοισι ἐγγλύψαι.

*And their reckoning is, to my mind, a juster one than that of the Greeks;
for the Greeks add an intercalary month every other year, so that the sea-
sons agree; but the Egyptians, reckoning thirty days to each of the twelve
months, add five days in every year over and above the total, and thus the*

¹⁸³Moreau 1954, 343-344 suggests that the reference is to the Egyptian calendar as less organised than the Athenian one. Moreau even speculates whether the dialogue between Trygaios and Hermes in the *Peace* could refer to the *Seasons* as a comedy depicting the calendrical disorder in Athens related to the conflict between indigenous and immigrant (barbarian) gods.

completed circle of seasons is made to agree with the calendar. Furthermore, the Egyptians (they said) first used the names of twelve gods (which the Greeks afterwards borrowed from them); and it was they who first assigned to the several gods their altars and images and temples, and first carved figures on stone. (Tr. Godley)

In this passage Herodotos reports that the system of twelve (lunar) months was adjusted by the Egyptians to correspond to the cycle of seasons, that is, the solar agricultural year. He continues his account by mentioning the twelve gods and their cults invented by Egyptians and then adopted by the Greeks as if the worship of twelve gods was connected to the division of the year into twelve months which the Egyptians were first to invent. Both the comedian and the historian relate the idea of the cycles of time with the cult. (In Aristophanes, the change of the normal calendar in Athens is due to the worship of new foreign gods.)

Concluding observations

Old Comedy constructs the spatio-temporal dimension of comic rituals using a number of techniques. The fictional *here and now* of the dramatic action is constructed with the help of verbal deictic references (describing the temple or sanctuary and referring to the specific day of the festival) and non-verbal stage props (altars) and actions (libations), as well as movements onstage (processional, dance). The land- and cityscape around the theatre can be included in the fictional ritual space of a play. Ritual time can be embodied in comic characters and *choroi* representing personified celestial bodies, days of festivals, or even the notion of festivity (Theoria).

The constructed ritual time and space appear to be highly significant for the plots of comedies, their major themes, and staging. The altar on stage can serve as the focal point of attention for the audience and the gathering point for the characters symbolising the great idea of the protagonist. Festival occasions

serve as setting for religious and political gatherings which constitute the plot. Being special events in the life of the society they become associated with abnormal flow of time which makes possible comic fantasy and grotesque. Ritual movement through space frames comic journeys and processions. The movement through the cycles of ritual time bring up the discussion of ritual correctness and normative code of the calendar.

By constructing ritual time and space, Old Comedy evokes the audience's general experience of ritual *here and now* in order to associate it with the *here and now* of Dionysos' theatrical festival. The interplay of the two levels is meta-theatrical. The fictional setting of the dramatic action refers to the play's spatio-temporal context blurring the boundary between the imaginary and real.

Comic ritual space and time does not just reflect passively or imitate slavishly existing ritual settings. On the contrary, Old Comedy transforms ritual space and time creatively, constructing its own comic places and spaces as well as its own comic ritual celebrations manipulating elements of existing festivals. The poetic inventions of time and space ritualise the dramatic performances, presenting them to the audience as part of the city's worship of the gods and, therefore, deserving the audience's favour and admiration.

Chapter 4

Sacrifice in Old Comedy Beyond Slaughter and Feast

4.1 Introduction

Sacrifice is central to many ritual scenes in Old Comedy even though the act itself is not performed on the stage. It is often inseparable from prayers; it can be accompanied by hymns and cries and regulated by oracles. It is employed as an instrument to ridicule tragedy (see 3.2.2 and 4.3.3) or to ritualise space in which it is performed (3.2.2). The centrality of sacrifice in comedy was observed by the Cambridge ritualists who built their interpretational framework on it. They believed that a sacrificial performance underlay every dramatic play and scrutinised tragic and comic plots in search of traces of ritual structure and patterns. According to their theory, the ritual of death and resurrection of Frazer's dying god was enacted in Greek tragedy and the tragic *pathos* represented the god's sacrificial death through *sparagmos*. Applying this model to comedy, Cornford 1914 considered agon, sacrifice and feast to be the main ritual elements of a comic plot. In his analysis, sacrifice in comedy either is linked with the agon of the two opponents and celebrates the victory of one of them or is represented as a prelude to the following feast reflecting the myth of the slaughtered deity which is to be distributed and consumed by the members of the society.¹ Sfyroeras has recently applied a new ritual scheme to comedy ar-

¹Cornford 1914, 93-102.

guing that comic plots followed a pattern of ritual sequence performed at the Dionysia, which consisted of a procession, sacrificial slaughter, preparation of meal and feast which can be traced in the text of the comic plays, though not always continuously.² However, these rigid models are too generalising and do not work when applied to the plots of the plays.

A different approach has been recently taken scholars who consider feast and celebration as central to Old Comedy. Redfield has argued that sacrifice is in many instances equivalent in comedy to feast and consumption of food.³ Henrichs notes that the sacrificial ritual in comedy is represented through its pre-kill (preparations and libations) and post-kill phases (cooking the sacrificial meat and feasting) rather than the killing itself. Both Redfield and Henrichs stress that the shift of focus in comedy towards joyful communal consumption as opposed to animal sacrifice of Burkert's theory as primarily killing that channels aggression and guilt of Burkert's theory.⁴ Comic plays, however, present a much more heterogeneous picture of sacrifice not limiting it to the aspect of feasting or food. The representation of sacrifice as food for the gods has a completely different function from human communal feasting as I argue below.

²Sfyroeras 2004, 252.

³Cf the cooking of meat in *Peace*; the scene of cooking on stage in *Akharnians* with sacrificial overtones, e.g. the word *knisa*, 1040-6. A direct link between sacrifice and feast is expressed in Pherekrat. *Kheiron* fr.162, 4-7:

ἡμῶν δ' ἦν τινά τις καλέσῃ θύων ἐπὶ δεῖπνον,
 ἀχθόμεθ' ἦν ἔλθῃ καὶ ὑποβλέπομεν παρέοντα,
 χῶττι τάχιστα θύραζ' ἐξελθεῖν βουλόμεθ' αὐτόν.

εἶτα γνούς πως τοῦθ' ὑποδεῖται, κᾶτ' αἰς εἶπεν

and 9-10: ὁ δ' ἄχθεται αὐτὸς ὁ θύων

τῷ κατακωλύοντι καὶ εὐθὺς ἔλεξ' ἔλεγεία:

But if one of us is holding a sacrifice and invites someone to dinner, we get upset when he arrives and scowl at his being there, and we hope he goes back outside as soon as possible. Somehow he gets the message and is starting to put his sandals back on, when one of the other guests says [...] The man hosting the sacrifice gets upset at the person who is interfering and immediately rhymes off those elegiacs [...]. Also in Aristoph. *Gerytades* fr.167 (= Hesych. α 8417): αὐτοὶ θύομεν· ἀντὶ τοῦ αὐτοὶ πίνομεν ἐνηλλαγμένως, παρόσον οἱ καλοῦμενοι εἰς ἐστίασιν λέγουσι 'καὶ αὐτοὶ θύομεν.' ἐπὶ γὰρ τῶν καλουμένων ὑπὸ τινῶν λέγεται; 'we're sacrificing' by enallage meaning "we are at the symposium" inasmuch as those invited to a feast say "we're sacrificing too" for it is said of those invited by someone.; and in Epikharm. fr.148 ἐκ θυσίας θοῖνα (from sacrifice, feast). The association of comedy with sacrificial banquet in scholarship might be overstressed also as a result of the ancient reception of comedy since many comic fragments can be observed in Athenaios' *Learned Banqueters* with special sections on sacrifice and cooking (Ath. 7.288c-293e, 9.376c-383f, 14.658e-662d).

⁴Redfield 2012, 172.

The interpretations of Greek sacrifice as primarily slaughter and consumption have recently been challenged by Naiden who suggests that we regard the sacrificial ritual primarily as a performance.⁵ Being a performance, sacrifice is directed not only to mortal spectators, but to the gods as its primary recipients. Mortals make a sacrifice with the gods' reaction in mind, expecting them to judge it against the standards of beauty and propriety. To ensure that the gods are pleased, sacred regulations are introduced covering many aspects of sacrificial rites, such as processions, the quality of the victim, the actions of the priests, the inspection of the entrails and others. The key role of the slaughter as well as the feasting in Greek sacrificial ritual is, therefore, overestimated. Naiden rethinks social and psychological interpretations of sacrifice in terms of communication. According to him, "sacrifice is partly a form of behaviour, but partly a renegotiation of the relation between worshipper and god".⁶ The vertical communication with the gods does not exclude a horizontal (social) dimension⁷ which consolidates the group and grounds its life and values in the divine authority.

In this chapter, I study the scenes in Old Comedy where sacrifices are enacted as part of the dramatic action from the perspective of ritual and theatrical performance. Within this approach the standard view that feasting is essential for comic representation of the sacrifice will be revisited.⁸

4.2 Staging the sacrificial procedure

The analysis of the sacrificial scenes shows that Old Comedy tends to represent sacrifice as a procedure which has to be performed correctly. The aim of the correct performance is to establish a favourable relationship between the gods and humans. This representation reflects the attitude of the Greeks to the

⁵Naiden 2013, Naiden 2015, 467-471.

⁶Naiden 2015, 471.

⁷Rutherford *ftbc*, 3.

⁸Redfield 2012; Sfyroeras 2004; Scodel 1993; Henrichs 2012, 184, 193.

historical rites and corroborates the recent theoretical discussion of the Greek sacrifice in Ullucci 2011. In the sacrificial act, as it is argued, human social patterns are projected onto the sphere of the divine. A sacrificial offering is an attempt to create a human-like reciprocal relationship with the gods. The logic of reciprocity in this case is similar to delivering gifts to people and is opposite to the economic exchange because goods do not have definite value and the balance cannot be measured or achieved. Although sacrifices are free gifts within this framework, certain social hierarchies are still involved and a wrong gift can lead to undesirable consequences. As Ullucci observes: “Ancient participants in animal sacrifice had similar mastery in the arts of reciprocity. Different gods and different circumstances demand different sacrifices. The ritual must fit the occasion, and the offering must fit both the giver and the deity.”⁹

The most common scenario of Greek sacrifice includes several phases. During the first, pre-kill phase, instruments and the victim are prepared and led to the altar in a procession. Prayers are spoken and a libation is made. After the killing of the animal its parts are burnt on the altar accompanied with libations. Consumption by the congregation follows. As I am going to demonstrate, Old Comedy focuses mainly on the preliminary phase. Neither the killing itself or the feast is ever represented. The representations of the post-kill phase emphasise the correctness of the ritual procedure rather than the communal feast.

4.2.1 Announcement

As I have discussed in Chapter 2, characters in comedies refer to their own ritual actions, such as prayers, announcing and specifying them or reflecting upon them. The performance of sacrifice is also explicitly articulated in Old Comedy. Whereas the *euphemia* exclamation takes place in the beginning of the ritual, the verb $\thetaύω$ serves to label actions at different stages of the sacrificial procedure ‘happening’ in the play. Characters use it to announce the ritual

⁹Ullucci 2011, 63-64.

that they are about to perform thus marking the beginning of it as an important threshold.¹⁰ The initial announcement is often not enough – it is repeated throughout the pre-kill phase to remind the audience of the ritual meaning of the preparations that are taking place at the moment. It is especially explicit in the *Birds* where the protagonist (862, 848, 894, 903, 1057) and the *choros* (855, 1060) repeatedly proclaim their intention to make a sacrifice to the new gods. In the *Akharnians* Dikaiopolis organises a procession which is to be accomplished with a sacrifice. He asks the god to rejoice both in the procession and the sacrifice (247-250). The verb marks the preliminary phase of the sacrifice in the *Akharnians*, but it also describes the procedure of the post-kill cutting and cooking of the meat in the scene in the *Peace*. The verb θύω is a general term for sacrificial offerings and can be used also to refer to non-animal sacrifice. In *Thesm.* 285 Inlaw uses it when he makes an offering of cakes to Demeter and Persephone. The verb θύω does not refer to the slaughter specifically but to the whole ritual sequence labelling it with one concept. As long as the character affirms that he or she makes a sacrifice the audience can be assured that sacrificial ritual is happening. The stages of sacrifice lacking from the dramatic representation they can be complemented in the spectator's imagination. The actual sacrificial slaughter is not shown in Old Comedy which can be explained by technical difficulties or a dramatic convention not to perform a sacrifice on stage.

Several fragments contain statements about the performance of a sacrifice expressed with the verb θύω. Although we cannot be sure, it is conceivable that the sacrifice might have been included in the action of the play:

- Theopomp. *Barmaids* fr.29 Ἐστία θύεις (*You are sacrificing to Hestia*);
- Pherekr. *Deserters* fr.33 οὐ γαλαθηνὸν ἄρ' ὕν θύειν μέλλεις (*you are not going to sacrifice a suckling pig then?*);
- Eup. *Golden Race* fr. 301 οὐκ ἄλλ' ἔθυσον δέλφρακ' ᾠδὸν θῆστία / καὶ μάλα

¹⁰*Av.* 903, *Pax* 1062, *Ach.* 249.

καλήν (*no, I was (they were?) sacrificing a pig singer (?) to Hestia and a very fine one*)¹¹;

- Eup. *Marikas* fr.196 ἄλλ' εὐθὺ πόλεως εἶμι· θύσαι γάρ με δεῖ / κριὸν Χλόη Δήμητρι (*I am on my way to Acropolis to sacrifice a ram to Demeter Chloe*);
- Aristoph. *Gerytades* fr. 167 αὐτοὶ θύομεν (*we ourselves are sacrificing*);
- Aristoph. *adesp.* fr.648 θύειν με μέλλει καὶ κελεύει βῆ λέγειν (*he is going to sacrifice me and tells me to say "baa"*);

4.2.2 Pre-kill phase: the *Akharnians* and *Birds*

Large Greek sacrifices are normally preceded by a procession. While its broader social function is to display the community's welfare, it also has a practical aim within the ritual procedure, namely to lead the victim and to carry all the necessary *paraphernalia* to the altar. When in the *Akharnians* Dikaiopolis announces a sacrifice, the actual focus of the scene are the preliminary rituals and sacrificial procession (247-250; see also above 3.2.4):

ὦ Διόνυσε δέσποτα,
κεχαρισμένως σοι τήνδε τὴν πομπὴν ἐμὲ
πέμψαντα καὶ θύσαντα μετὰ τῶν οἰκετῶν
ἀγαγεῖν τυχερῶς τὰ κατ' ἀγροῦς Διονύσια

O lord Dionysos, may be pleasing to you that I am holding this procession and the sacrifice and let me celebrate with good fortune the Dionysia in the fields together with my family.

Dikaiopolis begins with the proclamation of the *euphemia* that marks the beginning of the religious ritual. It makes the *choros* realise that a sacrifice is about to be performed (240):

¹¹For the verb θύω cf. also *Nub.* 426, Aristoph. fr. 504, 714, Hermipp. fr.36, Pherekr. fr.28.

θύσων γὰρ ἀνὴρ, ὡς ἔοικ', ἐξέρχεται.

it seems that the man is coming out in order to make a sacrifice

In comic representations of the preliminary phase, including the procession, manipulation of objects plays a significant role. The instructions appear to be an important part of the ritual language. Dikaiopolis orchestrates the procession giving directions to the participants. His daughter will play the role of a *kanephoros*, the girl carrying the sacrificial basket which usually contained the *aparkhai*-offering, the knife,¹² the ribbons for the decoration of the victim, barley grains for sprinkling, and other *paraphernalia*. He orders the slave to set up a *phallos* (241-243):

ΔΙ. εὐφημεῖτε, εὐφημεῖτε.

προίτω 'ς τὸ πρόσθεν ὀλίγον ἢ κανηφόρος.

ὁ Ξανθίας τὸν φαλλὸν ὀρθὸν στησάτω.

DIKAIOPOLIS Silence, silence! May the basket-bearer come forward a bit. May Xanthias hold the phallos up straight.

After they perform preliminary offerings (of cake) and prayers to Dionysos, Dikaiopolis gives final instructions and they begin to march. The *kanephoros* leads the procession, the slave follows with a *phallos*, Dikaiopolis himself proceeds singing a hymn while his wife is watching them from the roof (253-263). The sacrifice itself does not happen as the celebration is interrupted by the *choros* of angry demesmen.

Some processional elements are present also in the sacrificial scene in the *Birds*. After the announcement of the sacrifice in line 849, Peisetairos calls for a priest to perform the sacrifice starting with the procession. He also orders the slaves to bring in the sacrificial basket and the lustral water (848-850):

ἐγὼ δ' ἵνα θύσω τοῖσι καινοῖσιν θεοῖς

τὸν ἱερέα πέμψοντα τὴν πομπὴν καλῶ.

¹²Cf Plato *Little kid* fr. 98, φέρε τοῦτ' ἐμοί, δεῖξον τὸ κανοῦν μοι δεῦρο· πῆι μάχαρ' ἔνι; *bring this basket here to me, show it to me. Where is the knife inside?*

παῖ παῖ, τὸ κανοῦν αἴρεσθε καὶ τὴν χέρνιβα.

In order to sacrifice to the new gods, I call the priest to organise the procession. You and you, lift the basket and the jar of lustral water.

The *choros* responds with a short hymn (see also above 2.4). It is not clear whether the *choros* at the same time moves around the orchestra imitating a procession. At least they refer to the processional behaviour which is closely related to the animal sacrifice (852-858): they announce processional hymns (προσόδια) which accompany the main sacrificial activity (προβάτιόν τι θύειν). The ritual shouts of the bird-*choros* imitates a processional formula 'let go'. After the hymn, the priest appears on stage to start the prayers and perform the sacrifice. First of all he looks around searching for the attendant with the sacrificial basket (863). In their second sacrificial hymn, the *choros* mentions again that they are singing during the ritual of lustral water (895-900):

εἴτ' αὖθις αὖ τάρρα σοι
δεῖ με δεύτερον μέλος
χέρνιβι θεοσεβῆς ὅσιον ἐπιβοᾶν, καλεῖν
δὲ μάκαρας – ἓνα τινὰ μόνον, εἴ-
περ ἱκανὸν ἔξειτ' ὄψον.

Then again I must sound to you a second pious and holy song for the lustral water, and invoke the gods – just one god, if only you want to have enough meat.

The jar with lustral water appears once again to resume the interrupted sacrifice in 958-959. The jar (χέρνιψ) and the basket (κανοῦν) which appear in these scenes are essential sacrificial utensils that were used in the preliminary rites performed at the altar. Manipulation of these objects represented with stage props must have served to attract the attention of the audience. The emphasis on the two specific items is far from incidental. These are typically used in vi-

sual representations to indicate the performance of sacrifice.¹³ Demosthenes singles out the jar and the basket as the two sacred objects of the sacrificial procession that require moral purity from those who hold them.¹⁴

4.2.3 Post-kill phase? The *Peace*

The only play in which the post-kill phase of the preparation of the sacrificial meat is staged before the audience is the *Peace* where Trygaios installs the cult of the goddess Peace (923). However, I show that this is not the only aspect or the focus of the sacrifice. Other phases are represented in the play in equal detail. The preparations start with selecting a sacrificial victim and then sprinkling of the barley grains over it and over the spectators in the theatre. Trygaios discusses the victim with the Slave. They consider, at first, an ox, then, a pig, and, finally, a sheep (925-929):

TP. τῷ δαί δοκεῖ; βούλεσθε λαρινῷ βοῖ;

XO. βοῖ; μηδαμῶς, ἵνα μὴ βοηθεῖν ποι δέη.

TP. ἀλλ' οὐ παχείᾳ καὶ μεγάλῃ; XO. μὴ μὴ. TP. τῆ;

XO. ἵνα μὴ γένηται Θεογένους ὑηνία.

TP. τῷ δαί δοκεῖ σοι δῆτα τῶν λοιπῶν; XO. οἶ.

TRYGAIOS With which victim shall we install the cult then? Do you prefer a fatted bull? KHOROS A bull? No way. So that we don't need to come to aid. TRYGAIOS Then a big fat swine? KHOROS No, no. TRYGAIOS Why not? KHOROS So that we do not get the swinnishness of Theagenes. TRYGAIOS Which other victim then? KHOROS A sheep.

¹³Van Straten 2005, 22. For vase paintings and reliefs see Van Straten 1995, 31-35 and Hermary 2004, 112-116.

¹⁴22, 78: ὑμεῖς δ' εἰς τοῦτ', ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, προῆχθ' εὐηθείας καὶ ῥαθυμίας ὥστ' οὐδὲ τοιαῦτ' ἔχοντες παραδείγματα ταῦτα μιμεῖσθε, ἀλλ' Ἀνδροτίων ὑμῖν πομπείων ἐπισκευαστῆς, Ἀνδροτίων, ὦ γῆ καὶ θεοί. καὶ τοῦτ' ἀσέβημ' ἔλαττον τίνος ἡγεῖσθε· ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ οἶομαι δεῖν τὸν εἰς ἱέρ' εἰσιόντα καὶ χερνίβων καὶ κανῶν ἀψόμενον, καὶ τῆς πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς ἐπιμελείας προστάτην ἐσόμενον οὐχι προειρημένον ἡμερῶν ἀριθμὸν ἀγνεύειν, ἀλλὰ τὸν βίον ἡγνευκένας τοιοῦτων ἐπιτηδευμάτων οἶα τοῦτω βεβίωται.

The main criterion in this scene is the resemblance of an animal with the deity and with the occasion of the sacrifice which ensures the efficacy of the sacrifice. The ox (βοῦς) does not fit because it reminds phonetically of helping allies (βοηθεῖν) whereas the sheep will help the people who sacrifice it to be more gentle to each other (935-936):

XO. ὥστ' ἐσόμεθ' ἀλλήλοισιν ἄμνοι τοὺς τρόπους
καὶ τοῖσι συμμάχοισι πραότεροι πολὺ.

*KHOROS And we shall all be lambs in our attitude towards each other
and milder still toward the allies.*

The selection of a specific animal for a new cult corresponds to the Greek practice of animal sacrifices. Attic calendars prescribe specific animals for specific gods on specific occasions: a pregnant ewe must be sacrificed to Demeter according to the calendar of Thorikos (lines 38-39, 44-45) and a black he-goat to Ge according to the calendar of Marathon (17-18).¹⁵ In comedy, the resemblance of the animal to the intentions of the fictional characters makes the sacrifice closely connected to the plot. Other characters in other plays of Old Comedy show similar concern about the type of animals which are appropriate for the sacrifice. Various sacrificial victims for particular bird-gods are discussed in the *Birds* (565-569):

ΠΕ. ἦν Ἀφροδίτῃ θύῃ, κριθὰς ὄρνιθι φαληρίδι θύειν·
ἦν δὲ Ποσειδῶνι τις οἶν θύῃ, νήπτη πυροὺς καθαγίζειν·
ἦν δ' Ἑρακλέει θύῃ τι, λάρω ναστοὺς θύειν μελιτοῦντας·
καὶν Διὶ θύῃ βασιλεῖ κριόν, βασιλεύς ἐστ' ὄρχιλος ὄρνις,
ᾧ προτέρω δεῖ τοῦ Διὸς αὐτοῦ σέρφον ἐνόρχην σφαγιάζειν.

*PEISETAIROS If someone sacrifices to Aphrodite, you should sacrifice
grain to the coot; and if someone sacrifices a sheep to Poseidon, you should
make a burnt offering to the duck; and if someone sacrifices to Herakles,*

¹⁵Ekroth 2002, 343-346.

you should sacrifice honey cakes to the seagull; and if someone sacrifices a ram to the king Zeus, the wren is the king bird to whom an uncastrated gnat must be slaughtered, before Zeus.

As in the *Peace*, there is a reason behind the choice of each animal. The Greek word φαληρίς hints at the *phallos* and works of Aphrodite while the barley corn κριθάς is Brunck's conjecture basing on the pun alluding to penis, another meaning of κριθή. The seagull, being a symbol of greediness, gets a larger offering than others, and the king bird gets an animal complete with testicles which was sacrificed only on solemn occasions. The requirement about the gnat is quite standard to highlight the importance of the god-recipient as it implies that the less valuable offering is not by all means permitted. The ritual term ἐνόρχης occurs frequently in prescriptions of sacrificial animals.¹⁶ It is important that a chosen animal has certain parts of its body present and intact. Thus, the tail was an important part of the sacrifice because it was burnt as part of god's portion. While examining a Megarian girl presented as a young pig, Dikaiopolis assesses it in terms of sacrifice (*Akharnians*, 784-785):

ΔΙ. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ θύσιμός ἐστιν αὐτηγί. ΜΕ. σά μάν;

πᾶ δ' οὐχὶ θύσιμός ἐστι; ΔΙ. κέρκον οὐκ ἔχει.

DIKAIOPOLIS But she is not even suitable for a sacrifice. MEGARIAN

Why not? In what way she is not suitable? DIKAIOPOLIS She doesn't have a tail.

A similar pattern of reflecting on the sacrificial victim can be found in the beginning of *Lysistrata* (see 3.2.2) where the women debate which animal is more appropriate to accompany their oath of loyalty (*Lys.* 184-202; also Seaford Fthc). The idea behind the right choice of the victim is that the honour of the sacrificial gift corresponds to the status of the god to which it is offered. In comedy one of the criteria of correspondence is size.¹⁷ The size of the animal

¹⁶Van Straten 1995, 183-186. See also below on Plato *Phaon* fr. 188.

¹⁷Van Straten 1995, 179-180.

resulting in the quantity of meat, hints at the idea that gods consume the sacrificial meat (see below on theory of sacrifice in comedy 4.3). At the same time it reflects the practice of getting away with smaller victims for financial reasons which was probably quite common. Peisetairos promises to the embassy of the gods in 1618-1621:

ἐάν τις ἀνθρώπων ἱερεῖόν τῳ θεῶν
εὐξάμενος εἶτα διασοφίζεται λέγων·
‘μενετοὶ θεοί’, καὶ μάποδιδῶ μισητῖα,
ἀναπράζομεν καὶ ταῦτα.

If any of the men vows to one of the gods a sacrifice and later tries to trick them saying “the gods are patient”, and out of greed does not fulfil the vow, we’ll demand these as well.

In Hermipp. *Kerkopes* fr.36 quoted in Ath. 12.551a someone is speaking to Dionysos:

νῦν γὰρ πενόμενοι
ἀνάπηρά σοι θύουσιν ἤδη βοΐδια,
Λεωτροφίδου λεπτότερα καὶ Θουμάντιδος.

but now being poor, they sacrifice to you stunted little cows, leaner than Leotrophides and Thoumantis.

Going back to the *Peace*, the primary reason for the careful selection of animal is to please the goddess Peace with the victim that suits her. This reason is behind the slave’s warning not to slaughter the victim because it would not be correct for the cult of Peace. After the decision on the animal is made, the preparations start. Trygaios orders the slave to bring the sheep in (937-8); then an altar is set (943); and he brings in the basket with barley grains (ὀλαί, κριθαί)¹⁸, ribbons (στέμμα), and a knife (μάχαιρα); the fire is prepared (948-949).

¹⁸Barley was sprinkled over the head of the sacrificial animal; see discussion of evidence in Van Straten 2005, 38-39. The grain features also in Kratin. fr. 23: ὁ βοῦς ἐκεῖνος χῆ μαγίς καὶ τᾶλφια (*that ox and the sacrificial tray and the barley grains*).

The *choros* respond with a hymn, while Trygaios orders that they sprinkle the altar and the sacrificial sheep with lustral water (χέρνιψ). The barley grains are thrown onto the spectators (950-965) and a long prayer follows (974-1005). The meta-theatrical sharing of the sacrificial grain involves the spectators directly making them the participants in the performance.

The scene in the *Peace* is the only one in the corpus of extant comedies that demonstrates in detail the cooking of the offals (liver, kidney, heart, lungs), τὰ σπλάγχνα after the slaughter. The cooking takes place on stage (1039-1127). It continues the performance of the sacrifice – this is how Trygaios refers to his own actions (1062): Εἰρήνη γὰρ ἱερὰ θύομεν, *for we are sacrificing sacred things to Peace*. The libation is poured into the fire (1102-1110) as Greek animal sacrifice was normally accompanied with several libations: marking the beginning of the sacrifice and poured onto the meat while it was being cooked on the altar.

The cooking of the meat is represented through the contest of sacrificial expertise between Trygaios and Hierokles, the oracle-monger, who appears as an unwelcome intruder, pretending to be a religious professional (1052-1059). However, Trygaios acts himself as a skilled and experienced in the sacrificial procedure. Throughout the scene he controls the cooking activities giving orders and performing necessary rites. Observing the process he comments on the specific portion: *the tail is doing nicely* (1054). “Nicely”, καλῶς, is a ritual term indicating a successful sacrifice accepted by the gods.¹⁹ Trygaios also regulates who takes part in the sacrifice and who is excluded. The distribution of the portions is an important marker of social inclusivity. The audience are invited to approach the rite and to share the offals with the characters on stage, whereas all intruders are to be excluded (1115-16). The ritual transcends the dramatic conventions, expands from the orchestra to the *theatron* and unites the external and internal audiences of the sacrificial performance.

¹⁹Naiden 2013, 114.

Sacrificial regulations, correct procedure, and compliance with the divine sanction are the focus of the scene. Hierokles wants to take part in the rites and assume control using his knowledge of rituals. He asks Trygaios and his attendants about the type of sacrifice so that he can offer an appropriate oracle and advise on the sacrifice as an expert: τίς ἡ θυσία ποθ' αὐτῆι καὶ τῷ θεῶν; (1052); then he comments on their actions and instructs them with some “professional” advice (1056): ἄγε νυν ἀπάρχου, κᾶτα δὸς τᾶπάργματα, *come now, separate the first share and then give it to me*; he insists that there must be some ritual prescription — an oracle — according to which the sacrifice is to be performed (1088): ποῖον γὰρ κατὰ χρησμὸν ἐκάουσατε μῆρα θεοῖσιν;; as he himself pronounces solemn oracles according to which the sacrificial meat must be cooked. It turns out, however, that his professional expertise is a cover for greediness and intention to snatch the meat (1058-9): ἀλλὰ ταυταγὶ / ἤδη ᾽στὶν ὀπτᾶ. *but these [offals] are already roasted*; and in 1060: ἡ γλωττα χωρὶς τέμνεται. *the tongue is cut separately*. The tongue was treated as a meat portion separate from offals and was set aside for the priest.²⁰

All that said, the emphasis is on technical details regarding the portions of the meat rather than the idea of the communal feast. Establishing the correct performance of sacrifice is the main concern of the participants. The cutting of meat into portions is important because it ensures that everyone (including the gods) receive their portions. For this reason, the procedure was usually trusted to a professional, a priest, who is in charge of performing the sacrifice on behalf of the community. The topic of the distribution of meat portions has a long tradition in Greek literature and mythology going back to Hesiod. In comedy, the core of the problem is the gods’ portion and its relation to the portions assigned to humans, especially to the cult personnel. The plays reflect the distribution of meat portions to the priests and assistants of the sacrifice, *parasitoi*²¹ as well as the question of the price of the sacrificial animal which

²⁰*Av.* 1704-1705 and in *Plut.* 1110.

²¹Naiden 2013, 205-209.

had to be paid by the community.²² The priest's portion and god's portions are interrelated in comedy, and the greediness of gods is represented in the same way as that of priests (see on the *Wealth* below).

In later, Middle and New comedy, cooking and feasting becomes more important. The stock character, the "boastful chef", demonstrates his erudition and skills in the sacrificial context, the art of cooking that includes also sacrificial cooking μαγειρική.²³ This image of a sophisticated cook developed from earlier comic representations of sacrifice with emphasis on technical details.²⁴ However, despite the later development of the genre, for Old Comedy sacrifice is never primarily about dining. Sacrificial meat tends to be the focus of scenes involving negative contexts such as fraudulent itinerant freelance prophets and priests.²⁵ The comic hero with whom the audience is supposed to empathise is more concerned about the sacrificial preparations, the choice of appropriate animal, the regulations of the procedure than the consumption of meat.

4.3 Comic interpretation of sacrifice

As I have shown above, comic scenes represent the urge of human agents to provide the best offering to please the gods. The selection of a suitable animal, the concerns about the legitimacy of the sacrifice, the correct distribution of meat portions, the staging of the procession and appropriate utterances all contribute to this aspect of the ritual. In what follows, I argue that the correct performance of sacrifice in comedy aims at the establishment of favourable

²²Naiden 2013, 209-211.

²³Wilkins 2000, 369-379.

²⁴The practices described in the *Peace* concerning offals receive attention in Ameips. *Konnos* fr.7: ἐντευθενὶ δίδεται μάλισθ' ἱερώσυνα, / κωλῆ, τὸ πλευρόν, ἡμίχραιρ' ἄριστερά, and from this beast the priest's portion is offered: haunch, ribs, left half of the head; see Van Straten 1995, 154-155. The fragment implies that the character speaking reveals his knowledge and expertise in the subject; see Carey 2000, 420-422. It seems from other fragments that the themes of the play were oracles (fr.10), professional experts in various areas including religion. The knowledge and professionalism is, therefore, part of the requirements for a sacrificial performance.

²⁵The inverse representation of sacrificial space in comedies distorted by intruders has been observed by Orfanos 2001, 55-56 with regards to the role of the altar in the scenes in the *Birds* and *Peace*. See on altars 3.2.2.

relationship with the gods. It is revealed first of all through the place of the sacrifice in comic plots: it is usually performed as part of the protagonists' private initiative of creating a new utopian order. The comic heroes need to secure the gods' blessing so that their endeavour is successful. The choice of the gods to whom the sacrifices are offered in comedies fits the extravagant ideas of the comic plots – they are not standard deities of the Athenian religion. The sacrifice becomes a tool for the comic hero to succeed in his or her endeavour. It works in both horizontal and vertical directions building the relationship between the protagonist and the gods on one hand and on the other hand that between the protagonist and the community on behalf of which he performs rituals.

Secondly, I shall show how the concept of the sacrifice as a means to establish a relationship with the divine entities (which was standard for Greek religion) is reversed in comedy. In fact, comedy offers its own theory of sacrifice representing the gods as dependent on human offerings and thus transforming the fear of rejection into the feeling of superiority. Finally, the comic interpretation of sacrifice is different from its representation in tragedy. In the last section, I am going to analyse how the comic genre demonstrates its awareness of and uses the tragic techniques of sacrifice.

4.3.1 Sacrifice as private initiative

No sacrifice in Old Comedy is performed as part of an established festival or any other familiar ritual framework. In all scenes where the sacrifice (or preparations for it) is enacted, it is spontaneous and initiated by the protagonist in order to pursue their project.

The *Akharnians*: Dikaiopolis makes the decision to celebrate the Dionysia after he tastes the wine libation. His intention results from his private interaction with Amphytheos, a god-like figure, and, through him, with Dionysos. Although Dikaiopolis performs the rituals in the public space and they are vis-

ible for his fellow demesmen, he engages only the members of his household. The celebration is spontaneous and happens not on the day usually assigned to it (See on festivals and ritual time). The individual character of Dikaiopolis' peace treaty is asserted by the private character of the ritual celebration. In celebrating the Dionysia, Dikaiopolis wishes to please Dionysos, to secure his favour and to establish by that a peaceful life for the years to come (See above on festivals 3.3.1). Although the Akharnians resist this plan at first, by the end of the play they acknowledge Dikaiopolis' victory and join him in enjoying the time of peace and avoiding the toils of war.

The *Peace*: Trygaios is represented in the play as an efficient sacrificer. He is successful in securing the help of the god Hermes by offering him a libation and promising more sacrifices in future (416-425). Although the liberation of the goddess Peace is a private initiative, it eventually benefits the society and the audience in the theatre (539-559, also 914-915). After the goddess is released, Trygaios seeks to establish contact with her in prayers (560) and to get her response (657). The conversation between Trygaios and Peace is mediated by Hermes (658-705) resulting in the goddess's sanction of the marriage of Trygaios and Opora and the reintroduction of Theoria to the council. In the next scene Trygaios is back on earth and after handing Theoria over to the Council he announces the sacrifice to celebrate his success. The prayers are addressed and sacrifice is offered to the goddess Peace and it is crucial to make sure that she enjoys them (see on prayers 2.3). The sacrifice accomplishes the protagonist's undertaking to liberate the goddess for the benefit of the people. His ritual authority is closely connected with his role as benefactor to the community (918-923): The celebration is a communal offering led by Trygaios. It is represented as a new rite – the installation of the cult of the goddess (ταύτην χύτραις ἰδρυτέον 923) – that demands a divine sanction: an oracle regulating its performance (1088-1095). Trygaios has the authority to provide the oracle himself without any help of religious experts such as the oracle-monger Hierokles

(see above on oracles 2.5). He attributes his oracle to Homer (1089) which is surprising since Homeric epos was not a typical source of oracles. The reference to Homer associates the ritual authority of the comic character with the power of an epic hero to perform sacrifices in the *Iliad*. Agamemnon's royal superiority over Greeks and specifically over Achilles is shown through the performance of animal sacrifice. In the social hierarchy of the poem, only the divinely sanctioned king can bring a gift of honour – sacrifice – to the gods.²⁶ In the *Iliad* Agamemnon enacts sacrifices on the same basis of private initiative as military leaders would also do during a campaign in the 5th century.²⁷ By 'citing' Homer, Trygaios affirms his leadership both in religious and political matters.

The *Birds*: Peisetairos' sacrifice is a new ritual building the relationship with the new gods, birds (848 ἵνα θύσω τοῖσι καινοῖσιν θεοῖς, 862 ἱερεῦ, σὸν ἔργον, θῦε τοῖς καινοῖς θεοῖς) which requires special prayers and particular sacrificial animals (see above; 565-569). It is 'invented' for the celebration of the newly-founded city Cloudcuckooland, the protagonist's private endeavour, and does not represent any regular ritual practice.²⁸

The *Wealth*: Sacrifice is being performed privately inside the house and is invisible for the audience.²⁹ The smell attracts the god Hermes, suffering from hunger without human sacrifices (1136-7). The sacrifice is, however, only for the members of the household and Hermes has to be accepted into it to get a share. The play ends with the procession heading to Acropolis to install the cult of the god Wealth with the ritual offering of pots. The installation is Khremylos' private initiative and celebrates the successful establishment of the so-

²⁶Hitch 2009, 141-143. Agamemnon carries five out of the seven enacted sacrifices in the *Iliad* 1.312-317, 2.402-432; 3.267-302; 7.313-323; 19.249-268. He asserts his supremacy making a sacrifice as first thing done after Achilles withdrew.

²⁷Agamemnon's initiative is emphasised; most characters in the *Iliad* speak about sacrifice in terms of the relationship between themselves and their god: Hitch 2009, 108-109.

²⁸The foundation-linked sacrifice is not attested as a historical practice; see Dunbar 1995, 501-502.

²⁹This can be seen from the line 1110: when Hermes arrives, Karion makes a joke about the tongue (a usual portion of sacrificial meat) to be cut off for (or from) the messenger – ἡ γλῶττα τῷ κήρυκι τούτων τέμνεται.

ciety's relationship with the god through Khremylos' efforts. He decides to install the cult of Wealth and uses the same term as Trygaios (*Plut.* 1197-1199): τὰς χύτρας, αἷς τὸν θεὸν / ἰδρυσόμεθα (*take*) *the pots, with which we are going to install the god.*

In three other plays by Aristophanes the sacrificial offerings are vegetarian but they are structured upon the same model.

The *Wasps*: There is no animal sacrifice in the play but the libation offering to open the law court is also represented as a private initiative that establishes a novel ritual practice (876 δέξαι τελετὴν καινὴν, ὦναξ, ἣν τῷ πατρὶ καινοτομοῦμεν, *accept the new rite which we institute for my father*); and new authorities (885-886 ξυνευχόμεσθα σοι ἀπάδομεν / νέαισιν ἀρχαῖς, *we join in prayers and we chant to the new magistrates*). The prayer that accompanies the libation highlights the personal relationship between Bdelykleon and Apollo: he is addressed 'lord neighbour' (ἀναξ γείτον 875) in the opening invocation.

The *Frogs*: The offering of incense is stage-managed by Dionysos as a ritual opening the agon between Aiskhylos and Euripides. It is a spontaneous idea – nothing was prepared for it in advance when Dionysos asks to bring the paraphernalia and the altar with the fire (871-874). The prayers with which the two poets accompany the offering refer to the gods who are supposed to act as their patrons in the contest. Euripides prays to the 'newly-coined' gods of his individual choice (889-894), whom Dionysos also characterises as 'private' gods (891 τοῖσιν ἰδιώταις θεοῖς).

The *Lysistrata*: Lysistrata seeks to affirm her bonding with the fellow-women by an oath-sacrifice in the beginning of the play (175-239; see also on the altars above 3.2.2). The sacrificial offering combines elements of different practices (animal oath-sacrifice, pre-battle sacrifice, libations) and is 'invented' *ad hoc* for Lysistrata's project.

It can be concluded from the analysis that the representation of sacrifice in comedy follows a recurrent pattern. The protagonist's sacrificial agency is

connected to his social and political leadership. This representation goes back to Homer's *Iliad* and reflects the potential of sacrifice to serve as a political tool, distinguishing the sacrificer and displaying his power.³⁰ The performance of sacrifice strengthens the horizontal bonds within a group consolidating them around the distributor of the sacrificial meat, the community's spokesman to the gods. Secondly, the rite itself is not a standard one. It is either introduced for the first time, or enacted outside the usual ritual framework for personal reasons. The sacrificial scenes create a comic effect by customising the ritual to match the dramatic plot of the play. The agents follow the usual ritual practices and incorporate familiar cult elements but the occurrence of the sacrifice is embedded into the plot to celebrate the protagonist's success in creating the new social order or fulfilling his or her plan and is not connected to any specific established sacrificial practice of Greek religion.³¹ The sacrifices represented in comedy recall an observation made by Sourvinou-Inwood 2000a that the individual, and not the community, was "the basic, cultic unit" in *polis* religion and that the individual sacrifice lay in the basis of every sacrifice:

"First, the modalities of individual acts of worship are the same as those of group worship [...] This suggests a religious mentality in which the individual's act of worship is not different in nature from that of the group's, and thus a religious system in which the basic cult units are individuals, who are also grouped in a variety of ways and participate in group cults. Personal prayers have counterpart in polis prayers, offered from and on behalf of , the polis [...]" (p.44)

She regards curses, votive offerings and dedications, foundation of shrines and altars as examples of both individual and state worship, as well as the sacrifice:

"Another important individual cultic act is the individual sacrifice.

In many sacred laws the category 'sacrifice of a private individual

³⁰Hitch 2009, 160-161.

³¹This feature was later adopted by New Comedy where the cook *mageiros* is hired by a character for a private celebration.

at a sanctuary' is treated as normal, for regulations are set out on the one hand for polis sacrifices and on the other for a private individual's sacrifice [...] Obviously, the people who sacrificed did not consume the sacrificial meat on their own, but what concerns us is not who participated on an *ad hoc* basis, but the fact that this was considered to be an individual cultic act, an individual sacrifice, and that this was a significant category. [...] Consequently, it is clear that individual cult acts were not abnormal in polis religion, or different in nature from cult activities performed in groups; individual worship was one of the main modalities of Greek cult." (p.45)

Old Comedy, therefore, shows the sacrifice in its basic aspect, "disembodied" from its *polis* context, performed spontaneously by individuals, although retaining its potential function to impact social and political matters. This comic strategy to avoid imitations of public sacrificial events must have eliminated to large extent the possibility of 'offence' of the city's cultic practices by placing them in the inappropriate comic context. Nevertheless, the primary and fundamental function of the sacrifice, common both for public and private contexts, that is, to secure contact and favourable communication with the gods, is used in comedy to construct the comic ritual. Although the sacrifices in comedy do not imitate any established public model they function within the dramatic plot as a powerful tool of social and political success. In the meta-theatrical dimension the comic sacrifice also hints at the success of the play in the dramatic competition, for example, in the most explicit way in the *Peace* (1022) where the sacrificial animal is 'spared' for the *khoregos*.³² The sacrifice which is enacted on the comic stage is thus, in a sense, the vow of sacrifice anticipating the victory of the poet. In this sense, it receives the religious meaning within the religious framework of the theatrical festival and beyond the dramatic plot.

³²Although the meta-theatrical reference is without any doubt, the exact meaning of it is not entirely clear.

4.3.2 Reciprocity reversed

Greek sacrifice is a ritual with multiple overlapping meanings.³³ Despite the efforts of modern theorists and anthropologists of sacrifice, one simple meaning can hardly be deduced from the variety of sacrificial practices that existed in ancient Greece. Sacrifice, as most rituals, is a non-discursive activity which means that the discursive meanings are not inherent to it and that agents and observants of sacrifices can reflect on the ritual in different ways offering a range of interpretations.³⁴ This thesis is corroborated by the variety of theological interpretations and representations that existed in antiquity with respect to the sacrificial offerings to the gods. Philosophical schools produced different theoretical frameworks of sacrifice according to their agendas³⁵ and literary genres were also at liberty to propose their own view. Tragedy, for instance, portrays sacrifice mainly as killing and metaphor of death and murder.³⁶ I argue that in Old Comedy we encounter an interpretation of sacrifice specific for this genre and the selection of certain aspects of real sacrificial thought and procedure.

At least two comic plays, the *Birds* and *Wealth*, offer explicit theoretical reflection on the nature of sacrifice and on its function in the Greek religious system: gods survive on the offerings made by men. As I shall show, this theological model is implicitly corroborated in other plays as well. However, it does not appear in Greek sources of classical and archaic period outside comedy. Greek gods, unlike Mesopotamian deities, were not consumers.³⁷ On the contrary, the material form of smoke in the performance of sacrifice separated the gods from the human world.³⁸ The idea of gods feasting on hecatombs is

³³Van Straten 1995, 26.

³⁴Ullucci 2011, 60-61.

³⁵E.g. Platonic, Epicurean, and Stoic interpretation; see Ullucci 2011, 58-59, Rives 2011, 64-65.

³⁶Henrichs 2012.

³⁷Ekroth 2011, 35: "Greek gods apparently did not crave meat or any food in this sense, and the hungry gods we encounter in some comedies, who almost drool at the thought of juicy back legs or freshly grilled *splanchna*, cannot be taken as indications of the gods being thought of as consuming the meat at *trapezomata* and *theoxenia*, nor from *thysia* sacrifices."

³⁸Ekroth 2011, 16 writes about *thysia* sacrifices that they were marker of the gods' immor-

mentioned in the *Iliad* in four places but there is no indication that they depend on them or that sacrifices are their daily sustenance.³⁹ The model of the relationship between men and gods in Homer is reciprocity but it involves the misrecognition of the economic value of goods and services involved.⁴⁰ Sacrifices are regarded both by men and gods in epic poems as free gifts of honour.⁴¹ Comedy removes the mis-recognition and exaggerates the economic aspect in the most material way possible. The straightforward language of payment and exchange (and perhaps even prostitution) regarding the sacrifice can be found in Plato's *Phaon* fr.188. A deity is speaking, calling herself Kourotrophos (Tender of Youths), presumably Aphrodite, and ordering women to make her a sacrifice as a payment for seeing Phaon. She then lists offerings to minor sexual deities and personifications in a series of double-entendres (5-21):

εἰ γὰρ Φάωνα δεῖσθ' ἰδεῖν, προτέλεια δεῖ
 ὑμᾶς ποιῆσαι πολλὰ πρότερον τοιαδί.
 πρῶτα μὲν ἐμοὶ γὰρ Κουροτρόφῳ προθύεται
 πλακοῦς ἐνόρχης, ἄμυλος ἐγκύμων, κίχλαι
 ἐκκαίδεχ' ὀλόκληροὶ μέλιτι μεμιγμένοι,
 λαγῶα δώδεκ' ἐπισέληνα. τᾶλλα δὲ
 ἤδη †ταῦτ' εὐτελέστατα: † ἄκουε δῆ.
 βολβῶν μὲν Ὀρθάννη τρί' ἡμικτέα,

tality and distance from men: "The common denominator of these actions was that the gods were given what men cannot eat. The transferral of the offerings to the divine sphere was accomplished by burning them and turning them into smoke, or by pouring out or discarding them. These are modes of consumption incompatible with human ways of eating. [...] The smoke rising from the altars emphasized the fact that gods were immortal, and that smoke was enough for them, contrary to men or animals who actually had to eat in order to survive."

³⁹See Hitch 2009, 108-109. *Il.* 4.44-49: Zeus describes the altar as never lacking his appropriate share. Kirk 1990, 10-11 observes the 'de-carnalisation' of Homeric gods – they rarely consume food and the divine reception of sacrifice is distanced from the food of the gods, nektar.

⁴⁰Ullucci 2011, 62-63: "Within reciprocal exchange, the social consequences of the reciprocal relationship (that is, power hierarchies) are often consciously or unconsciously ignored (misrecognized) by both parties. This allows both parties to view the objects of exchange as free gifts, although each party understands the social realities involved."

⁴¹Ekroth 2011, 36: "As the gods were not thought of as actually eating the meat, what they received must have been the honour inherent in being the recipients of the prestigious meat offerings, and at theoxenia also being the guests of honour."

Κονισάλω δὲ καὶ παραστάταιν δυοῖν
μύρτων πινακίσκος χειρὶ παρατετιλμένων·
λύχνων γὰρ ὀσμάς οὐ φιλοῦσι δαίμονες.
† πυργῆς τετάρτης † Κυσί τε καὶ Κυνηγέταις,
Λόρδωνι δραχμή, Κυβδάσω τριώβολον,
ἤρω Κέλητι δέρμα καὶ θυλήματα.
ταῦτ' ἔστι τὰναλώματ'. εἰ μὲν οὖν τάδε
προσοίσετ', εἰσέλθοιτ' ἄν· εἰ δὲ μή, μάτην
ἔξεστιν ὑμῖν διὰ κενῆς βινητιᾶν.

Now if you want to see Phaon, you have to provide the following advance payment: first to me as Tender of Youths an initial sacrifice is to be made, a cake with testicles still attached, a pregnant scone of the finest meal, sixteen immaculate thrushes mingled with honey, twelve hares marked with the moon (?). The rest will not cost much – so listen. For Orthanes three pecks of bulbs, and for Konisalos and his two sidekicks a little dish of myrtle berries plucked by hand, since the gods don't like the stench from lamps. For the Hounds and hunters a backquarter of rump (?), a drachma for Bend-over-Backwards, three obols for Crouch-Forward, and for the hero Upright Rider leather hide and barley cakes. This is what it will cost you. If you were to provide all this, you would get in. But if not, you can be horny all you want, but not to avail. Tr.Storey.⁴²

Furthermore, the material basis of the exchange between gods and men make gods vulnerable and dependent. According to the comic interpretation of sacrifice, gods feed on sacrifices and would be ruined without them. The comic theology has a clear and important function. It shows gods the weaker, interested party within the sacrificial communication which means that unsuccessful sacrifice will affect them, not the men. The reversed sacrificial hierarchy

⁴²On this fragment Pirrotta 2009, 341-353. Cf also Farnell 1920, 139-146 who explains the mixed terminology of vegetal and animal ('pregnant', 'immaculate', 'with testicles still attached') offerings in the passage with Aphrodite's drunkenness.

allows comic poets to address the anxiety of the negative outcome of a ritual and alleviate the fear that the gods will not accept the offering.

Extant plays: Zeus and Hermes ruined

Wealth offers an explicit example of the reversed theology at work. It is revealed in the beginning of the play that money is the primary motivation and the basis behind human sacrifices. People sacrifice because they desire to acquire wealth and also provided they have wealth. The power of Zeus depends on sacrifices and sacrifices depend on Wealth. If this god decides to stop people from sacrificing, Zeus will be overthrown (133-143):

XP. θύουσι δ' αὐτῷ διὰ τίν'; οὐ διὰ τουτονί;
KA. καὶ νῆ Δί' εὐχονται γε πλουτεῖν ἄντικρυς.
XP. οὐκ οὐδ' ἔστιν αἴτιος καὶ ῥαδίως
παύσειεν, εἰ βούλοιο, ταῦτ' ἄν; ΠΛ. ὅτι τί δή;
XP. ὅτι οὐδ' ἄν εἷς θύσειεν ἀνθρώπων ἔτι,
οὐ βούν ἄν, οὐχὶ ψαιστόν, οὐκ ἄλλ' οὐδὲ ἔν,
μὴ βουλομένου σοῦ. ΠΛ. πῶς; XP. ὅπως; οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅπως
ὠνήσεται δήπουθεν, ἦν σὺ μὴ παρῶν
αὐτὸς διδῶς τὰργύριον· ὥστε τοῦ Διὸς
τὴν δύναμιν, ἦν λυπῆ τι, καταλύσεις μόνος.
ΠΛ. τί λέγεις; δι' ἐμὲ θύουσιν αὐτῷ; XP. φῆμ' ἐγώ.

KHREMYLOS Who causes people sacrificing to Zeus if not this fellow (*Wealth*)? *KARION* Indeed, because they openly boast to be wealthy (or they pray to be wealthy). *KHREMYLOS* And isn't it him who is to blame and who could easily stop this, if he desired? *PLOUTOS* And how so? *KHREMYLOS* So that no man would sacrifice not an ox, nor a cake, nor anything else any longer, if you didn't wish so. *PLOUTOS* Why? *KHREMYLOS* Why? Is there a way to buy anything if you are not yourself present to give money? Hence you will destroy the power of Zeus by

yourself, if it troubles you somehow. PLOUTOS What are you saying? Is it because of me that people sacrifice to him? KHREMYLOS Yes, indeed.

After realising the mechanism behind sacrifices, Khremylos decides to establish a personal relationship with Wealth and to welcome him in his household. The disruption of sacrifices happens later in the play when Wealth gains his sight back. It is reported by Hermes who comes to Khremylos' house to complain about the current state of the hungry gods (1113-1120):

EP. ὅτι δεινότατα πάντων πραγμάτων
εἴργασθ'. ἀφ' οὗ γὰρ ἤρξατ' ἐξ ἀρχῆς βλέπειν
ὁ Πλοῦτος, οὐδεὶς οὐ λιβανωτόν, οὐ δάφνην,
οὐ ψαιστόν, οὐχ ἱερεῖον, οὐκ ἄλλ' οὐδὲ ἐν
ἡμῖν ἔτι θύει τοῖς θεοῖς. KA. μὰ Δί' οὐδέ γε
θύσει· κακῶς γὰρ ἐπεμελεῖσθ' ἡμῶν τότε.
EP. καὶ τῶν μὲν ἄλλων μοι θεῶν ἤττον μέλει,
ἐγὼ δ' ἀπόλωλα κάπιτέτριμμα. KA. σωφρονεῖς.
EP. πρότερον γὰρ εἶχον μὲν παρὰ ταῖς καπηλίσι
πάντ' ἀγαθ' ἔωθεν εὐθύς, οἰνοῦτταν, μέλι
ἰσχάδας, ὅσ' εἰκός ἐστιν Ἑρμῆν ἐσθίειν·
νυνὶ δὲ πεινῶν ἀναβάδην ἀναπαύομαι.

HERMES Because you have done the most horrible of all deeds. Since Ploutos started to see again, no one sacrifices to us, other gods, neither incense, not laurel, nor cake, nor victim, nor anything at all. KARION Yes, and no one will because you did not care about us well before. HERMES About other gods I care nothing at all but I myself am undone and perished. KARION You are wise. HERMES Formerly, right from the morning I used to receive all good things from the tavern-keepers, wine-cakes, honey, dried figs which are fit for Hermes to eat. And now I am lying down and dying of hunger.

He describes the sacrificial offerings he used to receive and almost begs Kario to give him some food being willing to negotiate and even asking to accept him as a member of the household (1146-1170). Hermes is represented as tempted with sacrifices also in the *Peace* where he is bribed by Trygaios with promise of sacrifices and festivals (410-425).

The *Wealth* ends with the scene in which a priest of Zeus Saviour complains that people do not need to make offerings to Zeus in return for his blessings and no one comes to the sanctuary, so that the priest does not get share in the sacrificial meat (1177-1184). Like Hermes earlier, he joins Aiskhylos' household and together they install the cult of the god Wealth in the Athena's temple.

Likewise in the *Clouds* gods blame mortals for omitting sacrifices or performing them on wrong days so that the human and divine sacrificial calendar do not coincide causing inconvenience for the gods (617-619):

XO. ὥστ' ἀπειλεῖν φησιν αὐτῇ τοὺς θεοὺς ἐκάστοτε,
ἤνικ' ἂν ψευσιθῶσι δείπνου κἀπίωσιν οἴκαδε,
τῆς ἑορτῆς μὴ τυχόντες κατὰ λόγον τῶν ἡμερῶν.

*KHOROS [...] so that she says the gods are constantly threatening her, whenever they are cheated of a dinner and sent home not having had the festival according to the reckoning of the days.*⁴³

These passages reveal that the gods consume sacrificial meat and the lack of sacrifices means for them hunger and ruin.

Fragments: displeased gods

In comedy, the disruption of sacrifices that affects the gods usually finds expression in the displeased voice of the recipients of the sacrifices who worry about their regularity and quality. In a reversed way their complaints reflect

⁴³See Moon's speech reported by the *choros* in the *Clouds* 607-626 which I discussed in 3.3.3. Earlier in the *parabasis* the *choros* of Cloud-goddesses address the spectators blaming them for not making any sacrifices to Clouds although they benefit the city more than any other deity (580).

the sorts of things humans would worry about. Thus, the quality and value of the offering are discussed in a dialogue with the god Dionysos in Hermipp. fr. 36 (see above, *but now being poor, all they sacrifice to you are stunted little cows, leaner than ever Leotrophides and Thoumantis.*). The context is hardly possible to reconstruct but it is clear that the god must be displeased with the insufficient nourishment.

Three comic fragments transmitted by a Christian author, Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 7.30.3-4), report that gods blame humans for insufficient sacrifices and general neglect. The argument revolves around the sacrificial portions allotted to the gods:

ὁ γε κωμικὸς ἐκεῖνος Φερεκράτης ἐν Αὐτομόλοις χαριέντως αὐτοὺς
πεποίηκεν τοὺς θεοὺς καταμεμομένους τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τῶν ἱερῶν·
ὅ τι τοῖσι θεοῖς θύετε, πρῶτιστ' ἀποκρίνετε < _υ_ _>
τὸ νομιζόμενον τῶν αἰσχύνη· τῶ κατ' εἰπεῖν †
εὔ τῶ μηρῶ περιλέψαντες {χομιδῆ} μέχρι βουβώνων < υ_ _>
καὶ τὴν ὀσφὺν κομιδῆ ψιλὴν, λοιπὸν τὸν σφόνδυλον αὐτὸν
†ὥσπερ ῥινήσαντες νέμεθ' ὥσπερ καὶ τοῖς κυσὶν ἡμῖν
εἴτ' ἀλλήλους αἰσχυνόμενοι θυλήμασι κρύπτετε πολλοῖς.

And that comic poet Pherekrates in the Deserters, wittily represents the gods themselves as reproaching men for sacrifices:

what when you sacrifice to the gods, separate off the customary part... it is a shame on you to mention this — cutting off the thigh meat right up to the groin... the bone completely bare, and the rest of the spine... you apportion to us, as if we were dogs, but being ashamed of one another you hide it with many offerings. (Tr.Storey.)⁴⁴

⁴⁴Pherekrat. fr.28 *Deserters*; see Van Straten 1995, 125.

αὐτοῖς δὲ τοῖς θεοῖσι τὴν κέρκον μόνην
καὶ μηρὸν ὥσπερ παιδερασταῖς θύετε

*but you sacrifice to the gods only the tail and thigh as to pederasts.*⁴⁵

Dionysos himself (according to Clement) complains in another fragment by Euboulos:

πρῶτον μὲν ὅταν ἐμοί τι θύωσιν τινες,
ταῖμα κύστιν μὴ καρδίαν
μηδὲ ἐπιπόλαιον. ἐγὼ γὰρ οὐκ ἐσθίω
κλυκείαν οὐδὲ μηρίαν †

*first whenever people sacrifice to me something, they offer blood, the bladder, not the heart or caul. For I do not eat not a sweet thigh (?).*⁴⁶

The discussion of the portions recalls the Hesiod's myth about Prometheus teaching men how to sacrifice and trick the gods (Hes. *Theog.* 540-560). However, comedy complements the story with the idea of the gods feeding on the portions which is absent in Hesiod. It is telling that Clement has to rely on comedy to illustrate his idea about the Christian God who does not have the need of food and, therefore, does not desire sacrifices out of hunger and is not like pagan gods nourished by sniffing the smoke of the offerings.

A wall without sacrifices: the *Birds* and the *Iliad*

The comic theory of sacrifice is best illustrated in the *Birds*. In this comedy, as I am going to show, Aristophanes reverses the epic pattern of the reciprocal relationship between men and gods through sacrifice. The plot of *Birds* starts with the idea of disrupting sacrifices in order to make the gods pay for them. We first hear about it in the beginning of the play (188-193):

⁴⁵Eubul. *adesp.* fr.127.

⁴⁶Eubul. *Semele or Dionysos* fr.94. The text is heavily corrupted.

ΠΕ. εἴθ' ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς, ἦν ἰέναι βουλώμεθα
 Πυθώδε, Βοιωτοὺς δίοδον αἰτούμεθα,
 οὕτως, ὅταν θύσωσιν ἄνθρωποι θεοῖς,
 ἦν μὴ φόρον φέρωσιν ὑμῖν οἱ θεοί,
 διὰ τῆς πόλεως τῆς ἀλλοτρίας καὶ τοῦ χάους
 τῶν μηρίων τὴν κνῖσαν οὐ διαφρήσετε.

PEISETAIROS So then, just as when we want to go to Delphi we have to ask the Boiotians for the transit, in the same way, when men sacrifice to the gods, you won't let the aroma of the thigh-bones pass through the city hostile to them and through the space, unless the gods pay you tribute.⁴⁷

This plan is accomplished after Peisetairos sacrifices to the new gods, the birds, celebrating the foundation of Cloudcuckooland, and achieves successful communication with them. At v.1117 he reports that the sacrifice was favourable: τὰ μὲν ἰέρ' ἡμῖν ἔστιν, ὤρνιθες, καλὰ. Immediately after that the messenger appears reporting that the wall of the city has been built blocking the Olympian gods from the sacrifices. The wall of the bird-city alludes to the renowned Achaean wall, the focus of the Book 12 of *Iliad*. The scene in comedy draws on Homeric mythology and imagery. Before the scene starts with the dialogue between Peisetairos and the messenger, the *khōros* in the *parabasis* addresses the judges comparing them to Paris and their decision to his judgement (1103-1104). The description of the wall by the messenger contains several allusions to *Iliad*: it is so wide that the two chariots with horses of the size of the Trojan wooden horse can pass by each other (1125-1129):

κάλλιστον ἔργον καὶ μεγαλοπρεπέστατον·
 ὥστ' ἂν ἐπάνω μὲν Προξενίδης ὁ Κομπασεὺς
 καὶ Θεογένης ἐναντίω δὺ' ἄρματε,

⁴⁷Smoke, being meat in its immaterial form, communicated the portion of burning fat from the worshippers to the god accompanied by prayers; see Redfield 2012, 174; Naiden 2013, 21, 111-113.

ἵππων ὑπόντων μέγεθος ὅσον ὁ δούριος,
ὑπὸ τοῦ πλάτους ἄν παρελασαίτην.

MESSENGER. *It's a most beautiful, a most magnificent work so that Proxenides, the Braggartian, and Theogenes could pass by each other in two chariots upon its width, even if they were drawn by steeds as big as the Trojan horse.*

The wall in the *Iliad* was wide enough for heroes to fight on it (for instance, *Il.* 12.265). Just as the birds' work, it was worthy of admiration and was constructed in one day (7.436-444, 465; cf *Av.* 1164-1166). The wall of the bird-city is also associated with war which refers to the book 12 of the *Iliad* where the wall became the focal point of the battle (1169, 1186-1195).⁴⁸ In the *Birds*, the war incited by the wall is mentioned later in the scene with the embassy of the gods. The text is reminiscent of the Trojan war – Herakles alludes to Helen, reproaching Poseidon who is reluctant to pledge Basileia to Peisetairos (1639):

ἡμεῖς περὶ γυναικὸς μιᾶς πολεμήσομεν;
Are we going to war about one woman?

The penetration of the goddess Iris within the enclosure (1170-1199) is one further allusion to Homer. Iris is the messenger of the gods in epic poems; she does not occur elsewhere in extant comedies or in tragedies. The goddess appears in the scene charged with tragic overtones which suits the high style of the epic. She reveals that her mission is to persuade mortals to resume sacrifices to the Olympian gods (1230-1237). In the confrontation with Peisetairos (1200-1255), Iris appears to be weaker and can only disappear in anger whereas the comic hero is confident in his offensive behaviour and opposed to the traditional gods whom Iris represents. The *khoros* is equally resolved to shut off the Olympian gods from the sacrificial smoke (1264-1268):

⁴⁸Interestingly, the central point of the book 12 before the decisive attack is the debate between Hektor and Polydamas about birds and the signs they give. Hektor claims that he despises birds and trusts Zeus more.

ἀποκεκλήκαμεν διογενεῖς θεοὺς
μηκέτι τὴν ἐμὴν διαπερῶν πόλιν,
μηδέ τιν' ἱερόθυτον ἀνὰ τι δάπεδον ἔτι
τῆδε βροτῶν θεοῖσι πέμπειν καπνόν.

*We have blocked Zeus-born gods so that they can't pass through my city
nor will any mortal upon earth any more send the smoke of the holy sacri-
fices to the gods by this road.*

The parallels with *Iliad* invest the comic disruption of sacrifices with crucial meanings. The wall in the *Iliad* is the reason of the gods' awe and concern. Poseidon sees in it a threat for people's reverence towards the gods because men did not make any hecatombs to the gods when building it (7.445-449):

τοῖσι δὲ μύθων ἤρχε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων:
Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἦ ῥά τίς ἐστι βροτῶν ἐπ' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν
ὅς τις ἔτ' ἀθανάτοισι νόον καὶ μῆτιν ἐνίψει;
οὐχ ὀράας ὅτι δ' αὖτε κάρη κομόωντες Ἄχαιοὶ
τεῖχος ἐτειχίσσαντο νεῶν ὕπερ, ἀμφὶ δὲ τάφρον
ἤλασαν, οὐδὲ θεοῖσι δόσαν κλειτὰς ἑκατόμβας;
τοῦ δ' ἦτοι κλέος ἔσται ὅσον τ' ἐπικίδναται ἠώς:
τοῦ δ' ἐπιλήσονται τὸ ἐγὼ καὶ Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων
ἦρω Λαομέδοντι πολίσσαμεν ἀθλήσαντε.

*And the god Poseidon who shakes the earth began speaking among them:
'Father Zeus, is there any mortal left on the wide earth who will still declare
to the immortals his mind and his purpose? Do you not see how now
these flowing-haired Achaians have built a wall landward of their ships,
and driven about it a ditch, and not given to the gods any grand sacrifice?
Now the fame of this will last as long as dawnlight is scattered, and men
will forget that wall which I and Phoibos Apollo built with our hard work
for the hero Laomedon's city.'* (Tr. Lattimore)

Zeus shares Poseidon's anxiety and allows him to destroy the great wall once the Achaeans depart. The destruction of the wall is confirmed in book XII in which the wall becomes the focus of the narration. After the war ends, Poseidon, Apollo, and Zeus together destroy it by directing waters of the rivers and the streams of rain upon it (12.15-35). This passage has drawn attention of the scholars and has been interpreted by Scodel as a parallel to Near Eastern myths about the deluge and the Babylonian tower.⁴⁹ Others citing the uniqueness of the passage in the Homeric corpus suggested that it is not authentic and was added after the 4th century BCE. It makes, however, perfect sense that Aristophanes alludes to the Achaian wall in the play. The wall in the *Birds* is also a grand and wonderful endeavour accomplished by bird-heroes without sacrificing to the Olympian gods. Accordingly with the comic interpretation of sacrifices, the outcome is reversed in comedy. The gods do not ruin the wall but are themselves ruined by it. Prometheus, a figure known for depriving Zeus of best sacrificial portions, appears on stage to announce that Zeus is undone: ἀπόλωλεν ὁ Ζεὺς (1514). Poseidon who in the *Iliad* is the mastermind of the destruction of the wall has now to lead the embassy of the gods to the bird-city to negotiate that the sacrifices are resumed. The wall in the *Iliad* illustrates "the fragility of human existence, the tininess, – yet not insignificance – of human enterprises, even those of semi-divine men, when set against the eternity of nature and the immortal gods".⁵⁰ On the contrary, the wall in the *Birds* is the symbol of the gods' vulnerability, weakness, and dependency on the men's ritual.

It can be concluded that the sacrifices become in comedy an ambivalent tool of communication of which men are in full control. This reflects a serious anxiety of the Greeks that the sacrifice might be rejected by the gods causing disaster and ruin. The cases of rejection of human offerings are numerous already in Homeric poems and are attested also in the fifth century demonstrat-

⁴⁹Scodel 1982, 33-50.

⁵⁰Kirk 1990, 88.

ing divine omnipotence and human weakness.⁵¹ In comedy the fear of divine rejection is removed because the comic hero is more powerful than the gods being capable of taking control over sacrifices. Men in comedy are the ones in power to initiate, perform, or withdraw the sacrifices. While the normal belief of the Greeks is that the failure to perform sacrifice leads to destruction of human plans and works, in comedy when the mortals break off the communication with the gods by stopping sacrifices, the gods are those who suffer.

4.3.3 Tragic sacrifice in comedy

The comic interpretation of sacrifice is different from the tragic representation, as it has been noted in scholarship. In the last section, I am going to analyse how the comic genre demonstrates its awareness and makes use of the tragic techniques of sacrifice to enhance the comic effect.

Although tragedy is keen on using ritual metaphorically as part of its imagery it is quite reluctant to enact it explicitly on stage. Thus, even in tragedies with clearly ritual framework sacrifices tend to be reported and described and not directly staged (such as Eur. *El.*, *IT*, Aesch. *Cho.*, Soph. *El.*). Ritual equipment is occasionally mentioned in the accounts of sacrifice, for example the basket in Eur. *HF* 926, lustral water in Eur. *El.* 792. When the enactment of rituals takes place, neither *paraphernalia* are referred to nor the preparation phase with bringing in various objects plays any significant role. One exception is *Iphigenia in Tauris* which can be explained by the need to highlight the tension between the ritual reality of the audience and the human sacrifice that is about to happen on stage. The references to ritual equipment and preparations fulfil this function.⁵² Therefore, while comedy enacts rituals in many detail highlighting the physicality and materiality of the sacrificial ritual, tragedy tends towards symbolical representation of sacrifice using it as a forceful metaphor contributing to the imagery of the plays. When analysing sacrifice in drama it

⁵¹See *Appendix A* in Naiden 2013 and Hitch 2009, 129-140.

⁵²Sourvinou-Inwood 2005a, 301.

is crucial to recognise the distortions and exaggerations of this metaphorical use. The dangers and consequences of ignoring the distance between the literary representations and the 'normal' practices have been discussed in Henrichs 2012. Tragic sacrifices appear to be perverted, abortive and associated with murder and disaster. Comic sacrifices, on the contrary, mark the celebration of the new beneficial order.⁵³

Since Old Comedy ridicules unceasingly the conventions of the tragic genre, tragic sacrifices are also included in the comic parody. I have already shown above how the use of altars in tragedy is mocked as inappropriate and abnormal (see 3.2.2). In a similar way, the tragic metaphor of sacrificial killing as violent death is shown in comedy in paratragic scenes.⁵⁴ The focus on bloodshed and slaughter is associated with tragedy and helps comedy to create references and allusions to tragic contexts. The association between the tragic style and the act of sacrificial slaughter can be found in *Lysistrata*, *Akharnians*, *Women at the Thesmophoria*, *Birds*, and *Peace*. It can be traced by the use of the vocabulary of sacrifice. The default Greek word for sacrifice in comedy is *θύω* and *θυσία* but in the paratragic scenes other terms are used: *σφάγια* and its derivatives.⁵⁵ These terms highlight the sinister character of tragic sacrifice as murder.⁵⁶

Lysistrata's oath sacrifice is described in the terminology of bloodshed and cutting the victim. She explicitly recalls a tragic episode in Aesch. *Sept.* 42-47, where the allies swear an oath of military loyalty. The scene is reversed in comedy: Lysistrata's conspiracy seeks to provide peace and to stop the war. The reference to the *sphagia*-sacrifice is repeated several times in the short episode

⁵³Scodel 1993, 164.

⁵⁴Henrichs 2012, 193.

⁵⁵On the contrary *θύω* is less frequent in tragedy, for example in Eur. *Phoen.* it does not occur a single time, while *σφάζω* is used extensively. On the use of this verb meaning 'to assassinate' in tragedy: Casabona 1966, 160-165; also on the connotations of cutting up the victim's throat to kill the victim and of shedding blood: Casabona 1966, 155-157. Unfortunately Casabona uses tragic evidence without any considerations of its possible literary distortion. On the difference between *σφάγια* and *θυσία* see Naiden 2013, 36,101-102.

⁵⁶In fact in the fifth century usage the verb already moved from the language of ritual to the metaphorical sense of massacre although it retains its meaning of sacred killing (Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.3, Hdt 1.119, Antiph. 2, Dem. 9. 66, Aeschin. 1.191). In some contexts the two verbs are opposed as two types of sacrifices, e.g. for chthonian and Olympian gods. Cf. Xen. *Cyr.* 8.3.24).

(see above 3.2.2). After the σφάγια (204) the blood gushes out (205):

ΛΥ. δέσποινα Πειθοῖ καὶ κύλιξ φιλοτησία,

τὰ σφάγια δέξει ταῖς γυναιξὶν εὐμενής.

ΚΑ. εὐχρων γε θαῖμα κάποπυτίζει καλῶς.

LYSISTRATA O Lady Persuasion and the loving-cup, accept this sacrifice with goodwill to the women. KALONIKE The blood is of a good colour and spurts beautifully.

The verb *μηλοσφαγεῖν* is repeated in the scene twice (189, 196) marking the tragic style⁵⁷.

Another verb of sacrifice employed in the scene is *τέμνω* (*ἐντεμοίμεθα* (193)). It is also characteristic of the tragic language and has the same connotations of cutting with a blow and pouring blood to the earth.⁵⁸ It often appears in tragedy in an expression 'to cut a beast's throat'.⁵⁹ The sacrifice, however, turns into a joke: the women are going to slaughter a jar of wine to drink it. The idea of slaughter and blood pouring from the victim on the altar is visualised in this scene through wine flowing into a cup when the vessel is opened. While one woman is holding the jar pretending it to be the animal, the other cuts the jar's neck just as during the animal slaughter (195-197).

The Women at the Thesmophoria

A paratragic scene in the *Women at the Thesmophoria* reveals a similar emphasis on bloodshedding which turns into pouring out of wine. Inlaw snatches a baby from a woman and threatens to kill it on the altar (692-695):

ΚΗ. Κέκραχθι· τοῦτο δ' οὐδέποτε σὺ ψωμιεῖς,

ἦν μή μ' ἀφῆτ'· ἀλλ' ἐνθάδ' ἐπὶ τῶν μηρίων

πληγὲν μαχαίρα τῆδε φοινίας φλέβας

καθαίματώσει βωμόν.

⁵⁷Cf Soph. *El.* 280, Eur. fr. 628.

⁵⁸Casabona 1966, 165, 226.

⁵⁹Cf Eur. *Hel.* 1584, *Heracl.* 400, *Supp.* 1201, *El.* 812.

INLAW Keep shouting. You will never give this baby food unless you let me go. But here upon these thigh-bones stricken by this knife it will ensanguinate the altar with blood-red veins. ⁶⁰

Yet, the tragic sacrifice is subverted – the baby turns out to be a bottle of wine (734) and the blood is substituted, as in the *Lysistrata*, for wine (750-758):

KH. Αὕτη δ' ἀποσφαγήσεται μάλ' αὐτίκα.
ΓΥ. Μὴ δῆθ', ἰκετεύω σ'. ἀλλ' ἔμ' ὅ τι χροῖζεις ποίει
ὑπέρ γε τούτου. KH. Φιλότεκνός τις εἶ φύσει.
Ἄλλ' οὐδὲν ἤττον ἤδ' ἀποσφαγήσεται.
ΓΥ. Οἴμοι, τέκνον. Δὸς τὸ σφαγεῖον, Μανία,
ἵν' οὖν τό γ' αἷμα τοῦ τέκνου τοῦμοῦ λάβω.
KH. Ὑπεχ' αὐτό· χαριοῦμαι γὰρ ἔν γε τοῦτό σοι.
ΓΥ. Κακῶς ἀπόλοι'. Ὡς φθονερός εἶ καὶ δυσμενής.
KH. Τουτὶ τὸ δέρμα τῆς ἱερείας γίγινεται.

INLAW This girl will have her throat cut immediately. WOMAN No, I beg you. Do what you intend to do with me instead of the baby. INLAW You are child-loving by nature. But this girl will have her throat cut nonetheless. WOMAN Alas! My child! Give me the blood-bowl, Mania, so that at least I could collect the blood of be child. INLAW Hold it underneath. I shall grant you this one favour. WOMAN May you perish! How envious and evil you are! INLAW This skin will go to the priestess.

Again, as in the *Lysistrata*, a bowl is used to collect the wine and the 'skin' of the animal goes to the priestess as it would in a real sacrifice.

The Akharnians

The paratragic sacrifice with the focus on slaughter is present also in the *Akharnians*. Disguised as Euripides' character Telephos, Dikaiopolis offers his neck

⁶⁰The whole scene clearly imitates tragic models and the vocabulary is recognised as paratragic; see Olson 1998, 264.

to the city over a butcher's block (317-318):

ΔΙ. Κἄν γε μὴ λέγω δίκαια μηδὲ τῷ πλήθει δοκῶ,
ὕπερ ἐπιζήνου ἕελήσω τὴν κεφαλὴν ἔχων λέγειν.

DIKAIOPOLIS And if I'm not saying right things nor seem to be saying those to the people I'll be willing to speak with my head upon a butcher's block.

The passage alludes to Eur. *Teleph.* fr.706:⁶¹

Ἄγάμεμνον, οὐδ' εἰ πέλεκυν ἐν χεροῖν ἔχων
μέλλοι τις εἰς τράχηλον ἐμβαλεῖν ἐμόν,
σιγήσομαι δίκαιά γ' ἀντειπεῖν ἔχων.

Agamemnon, even were someone holding an axe in his hands and ready to strike it on my neck, not even then will I keep silent; for I have a just reply to make. (Tr. Collard, Cropp, Lee)

The word ἐπιζηνός is used in Aesch. *Ag.* 1275-1278 in a highly metaphorical context:

ΚΑ. καὶ νῦν ὁ μάντις μάντιν ἐκπράξας ἐμὲ
ἀπήγαγ' ἐς τοιάσδε θανασίμους τύχας
βωμοῦ πατρώου δ' ἀντ' ἐπίζηνον μένει
θερμὸν κοπέντος φοινίῳ προσφάγματι

KASSANDRA And now the prophet, having undone me, his prophetess, has brought me to this lethal pass. Instead of my father's altar a block awaits me, where I am to be butchered in a hot and bloody sacrifice.

The substitute of an altar for a chopping block visualises the murderous slaughter which awaits the prophetess. The sacrifice itself is described with a tragic word πρόσφαγμα meaning also 'a sacrificial victim offered for others'.⁶²

⁶¹Cf. cutting the neck as sacrificial act in Eur. *Or.* 51, *Alc.* 429, *Hec.* 564, *Phoen.* 1457.

⁶²Eur. *Hec.*41, *IT* 243, *Tro.* 628, *Alc.* 845.

These tragic contexts are at play in the reference to a butcher's block in the comedy.

The Peace

In the *Peace* we can see Trygaios saying a long prayer to the goddess Eirene about shopping and trading at the agora which suddenly ends with a paratragic passage about a tragedian Melanthios. Trygaios sings three lines of Eur. *Med.* (1012-1015). The sacrifice follows immediately after that – Trygaios orders the slave to take a knife and to slaughter the sheep in a way a professional priest-cook would do (1017-1018):

λαβὲ τὴν μάχαιριαν· εἴθ' ὅπως μαγειρικῶς
σφάζεις τὸν οἶν.

Take the knife. Then see that you slaughter the sheep masterly.

He uses tragic vocabulary of blood animal sacrifice σφαγαῖς, αἱματοῦται.⁶³ However, this attempt of blood sacrifice is stopped as inappropriate for the goddess Peace. The slave says (1018-1019):

οὐχ ἤδεται δῆπουθεν Εἰρήνη σφαγαῖς,
οὐδ' αἱματοῦται βωμός.

The goddess Peace certainly does not take pleasure in slaughter nor the altar is bloodied.

Trygaios accepts this and changes the vocabulary of the killing-type of sacrifice, σφαγαῖς, to the verb (θύσας, 1021) that indicates normal and more standard type of sacrificial ritual (See above 2.3). There is a link between the lyric aria quoted from tragedy and Trygaios intention to perform a tragic type of sacrifice.

⁶³Aesch. *Ag.* 1656, *Eum.* 187, *Soph. El.* 37, *Eur. Andr.* 266, 399, *El.* 123, *Ion* 616, *Phoen.* 1149, *Bacch.* 1135.

The Birds

In the *Birds*, the violent animal slaughter also alludes to tragic contexts. Iris, a paratragic figure, who appears on stage on a tragic theatrical crane, μηχανή, uses high style, tragic vocabulary and tragic (unresolved) trimeters speaking about her mission to tell people to resume sacrifices (1230-1233):

IP. ἐγὼ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους πέτομαι παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς
φράσουσα θύειν τοῖς Ὀλυμπίοις θεοῖς
μηλοσφαγεῖν τε βουθύτοις ἐπ' ἐσχάραις⁶⁴
κνισᾶν τ' ἀγυιάς

IRIS I am flying to the people from my father to tell them to sacrifice to the Olympian gods and to slaughter sheep at sacrificial altars and to fill with smoke the streets.

The word σφάγια occurs in another paratragic passage in the *Birds* (1552-1564) where the *choros* describes a sacrifice to the underground gods in a parody of the tragic scene from Aesch. *Psykhagogoi* (fr. 273a Radt). Perhaps, Prometheus, an Aeschylean figure himself, prompts the *choros* to pick a scene from this tragedy. The *choros* use the tragic pattern of throat cutting to describe the sacrifice (1552-1564):

πρὸς δὲ τοῖς Σκιάποσιν λί-
μνη τίς ἐστ', ἄλουτος οὐ
ψυχαγωγεῖ Σωκράτης·
ἔνθα καὶ Πείσανδρος ἦλθε
δεόμενος ψυχὴν ἰδεῖν ἢ
ζῶντ' ἐχεῖνον προὔλιπε,
σφάγι' ἔχων κάμηλον ἀ-

⁶⁴Probably borrowed from Euripides' *Pleisthenes* fr.628 μηλοσφαγεῖ τε δαυμόνων ἐπ' ἐσχάραις, Dunbar 1995, 623.

μνόν τιν', ἧς λαιμοὺς τεμῶν ὄσ-
 περ Οὐδυσσεὺς ἀπῆλιθε,
 καὶ τ' ἀνῆλιθ' αὐτῷ κάτωθεν
 πρὸς τὸ λαΐτμα τῆς καμήλου
 Χαιρεφῶν ἡ νυκτερίς.

*And near the Shadefeet there is a lake not used for washing where Socrates raises spirits. There also Peisandres came asking to see the soul which had left him when he was still alive. He made a sacrifice of a camel-lamb whose throat he cut and just like Odysseus went away. And then there came to him from underneath to the throat of the camel Khairephon the Bat.*⁶⁵

To summarise, the words of the stem σφάγ- are used in comedy to mark the tragic style reflecting the metaphoric and symbolic representations of sacrifice as bloody slaughter in tragedy⁶⁶. Outside these paratragic contexts, the aspect of killing is not emphasised in the comic representations of sacrifice.

Concluding observations

The general pattern of the comic sacrifice, as represented in the scenes analysed, includes the verbal announcement, the preparation consisting of orders to bring in the sacrificial equipment, the performance of preliminary procession, offerings and the prayers. The post-kill phase of the preparation of the meat is present only in the *Peace* and offstage in the *Wealth*. Communal feasting

⁶⁵Cf. The choral song in fr.273a, 1-6:

ἄγε νυν, ὦ ξεῖν', ἐπὶ ποιοφύτων
 ἴστω σηκῶν φοβεράς λίμνης,
 ὑπὸ τ' αὐχένιον λαμὸν ἀμήσας
 τοῦδε σφαγίου ποτὸν ἀψύχοις
 αἷμα μεθίει
 δονάκων εἰς βένθος ἀμαυρόν
Come now, stranger, take your stand on the grass-grown borders of the fearsome lake, slit the windpipe in the neck of this sacrificial beast, and let the blood run for the dead to drink, down into the dim, reedy depths.(Tr. Sommerstein)

⁶⁶The killing is stressed outside paratragic context in comedy only once, for the reasons of humour. In *Av.* 569 the verb σφαγιάζειν is used to make a joke of the mismatch of the sacrificial animal chosen (gnat) with the idea of solemn throat cutting.

and consumption of sacrificial meat is not the primary idea which the comic sacrifices evoke. The meaning essential for the representations is the correct performance of the rites in order for them to be efficacious.

Old Comedy does not just reflect the existing religious attitudes and practices but also transforms them adjusting them to the comic reality. Sacrifices mark the success of the hero's great plan to change the world. They are not part of the established order of Athens but rather of the new, transformed universe portrayed in comedies. The representation of sacrifice endows the comic hero with ritual authority which makes his enterprise beneficial for the society.

Comedy also suggests a theoretical interpretation of sacrifice which is to provide the gods with alimentation which shifts the relationship with the gods from reciprocity to economic exchange. As I have argued, this approach to sacrifice reflects (and relieves) the anxiety of the Greeks about the outcome of the sacrificial ritual – whether the gods will accept the offering or reject it.

Conclusions

In my thesis I have attempted to clarify the relationship between comic drama and religion in fifth-century BCE Athens. As the main result of the study, I argue that comedy consciously manipulates elements of historical cult rather than unconsciously reproducing archaic patterns. Representations of cultic performances are embedded in fictional situations and are functionally equivalent to their role in real life. Their functions include: responding to a particular practical issue or challenge (to establish one's leadership and authority, to launch a new project, to set right an injustice), constructing the sense of collective participation, establishing communication with the supernatural – all of these were characteristic of rituals at actual cultic events. From the formal point of view, comic representations of rituals are constructed using many familiar elements of authentic cultic performances which makes comic rituals recognisable and relatable for the audience.

The representations activate the personal ritual experience of the spectators and involve them emotionally in the make-believe of ritual performances enacted on comic stage. However, comedy does not just imitate real-life events but in fact creates a system of comic ritual. The major aim of the creative reproduction of ritual practices is, of course, to generate humour by contrasting them with overtly comic, often obscene and absurd elements of performance. A less obvious meaning behind the representation of cult is that when performing rituals on stage, characters pretend that they are performing real rituals so that the audience deceived by this assertion consciously or unconsciously start to perceive comedy as religiously important. The borderline between comedy pretending to be a ritual and actually being a ritual is especially subtle in the *parabasis*. In this special environment within a play, the *khoros* pretends that

they are singing a religious hymn in honour of the gods asking to grant them victory in the dramatic competition of the City Dionysia. Despite some earlier studies, the *choros* in this role of a body of ritual performers do not abandon their dramatic identity. On the contrary, they assume a sort of double identity in which the imaginary world of dramatic performance meets the real world of Athenian religion. The *parabasis* deliberately draws the attention of the public to the ritual dimension of the theatrical representations.

Why is it important for the comic playwright to present his work as religiously relevant? I have suggested one answer to this question within the scope of this study. It is because he wants to win the favour of the audience and the judges at the dramatic contest and manipulates their decision by presenting himself and the performance as the most pleasant for the gods and the patron god of the theatre in particular. However, this conclusion has implications for the wider social history of Athens. Does this tendency to boast of one's ritual authority and religious significance reflect some genuine religious revival in the society at that time or is it just a fashionable trend of the intellectual elitist milieu? Did ritual performances have the potential of constructing religious and political authority for whoever organised and carried them out also outside the theatrical context, for example, in politics or law court? Is it a more general cross-cultural practice to employ ritual (understood as ritualisation) for producing authority in the society? The present study has pointed the way to these areas of future research of cultural and literary processes that took place in Athens at that time.

Within the limits of the present study my main conclusion about 'ritual originating from drama' (to rephrase the theory of the Cambridge ritualists) comes down to two things: 1) the representations of ritual in comedy, although they do not imitate real life in every detail, follow some fundamental patterns in order to create fictional ritual in a realistic way. These patterns are inherent in Greek cult in general and should be examined as evidence for the history

of Greek religion. 2) The representations of ritual in comedy also follow some particular dramatic principles which have been discerned and discussed in this work shedding light on the literary techniques of the genre of Old Comedy. While the first observation contributes to the critical assessment of comedy as a source for the study of Greek religion, the second one will be of interest for literary critics as it can be compared also to other, non-religious, aspects of Old Comedy. I would like now to concentrate on these two outcomes of my thesis separately.

Old Comedy as a source for Greek religion

Although it is often taken for granted that comedy reflects contemporary religious practices and reports the standard normal practices and beliefs of Greek religion, in fact comic representations of cult practices are a blend of real elements and fantasy which are usually difficult to separate. If we do not apply a special perspective to comic plays it is easy to start looking for the remains of the temple of the Thesmophorion on the Pnyx (3.2.3); to get an impression that a foundation sacrifice was obligatory at the start of a new colony (4.3.1); or that the Greeks believed that they literally were feeding their gods with every burnt sacrifice (4.3.2). These misconceptions do not automatically mean that comedy is in any sense a less useful source for Greek religion than any other type of evidence. On the contrary, I have demonstrated throughout my thesis that this dramatic genre has unique advantages in that respect thanks to its performative aspects. Among our sources, only dramatic genres recreate rituals as performances that are happening in space and time as part of social situations even though these situations are fictional. The genre of Old Comedy is more direct in its representations of cult than tragedy or satyr play, and, therefore, is a valuable source that can help us reconstruct how various aspects of ritual coexisted within one event (especially 2.3.1). Plays and fragments of Old Comedy are useful not only for attestations of minor details of

Greek ritual but also reflect fundamental aspects of Greek cultic practices. Corresponding to the functions of religious ritual listed in the beginning of this section, these aspects include: ritual communication (Chapter 2), construction of sacred space and time (Chapter 3), human anxiety about the outcome of the sacrificial procedure (Chapter 4).

However, the comic evidence regarding these aspects should be handled with caution and not before we establish the main principles of the comic treatment of historical practices. I have shown that there are two main strategies of comedy which should be taken into account: in its representations of cult Old Comedy is a) selective and b) distorting. The selectiveness of comedy reveals itself in the representation of the sacrificial procedure. It is well-known that comedy does not enact the act of the killing itself but it is also significant that the post-kill phase of cooking the meat is represented only in one sacrificial scene in the *Peace* out of four scenes that stage sacrifice. On the contrary, the preparation for the sacrifice, the so called pre-kill phase, appears in every sacrificial scene in much detail. The selectiveness in this particular case can be explained by the preoccupation of comedy with the correctness of cultic performance – every small thing must be right so that the sacrifice is successful and the gods are pleased. The preliminary procedures – the choice of an appropriate offering, the procession, the preparation of the paraphernalia, the hymn, the libation, the prayer – are prominent in comedies because they display the best intentions of the human performers and their best effort to prepare everything to please the deity at the same time avoiding the difficulty of killing on stage. No less important is the strategy of distorting the normative religion in comedy. As I have shown in 4.3.2 the reversed sacrificial hierarchy allows comic poets to address human anxiety about the negative outcome of a ritual and alleviate the fear that the gods will not accept the offering as well as making the audience happy with the feeling of superiority and control.

Finally, I have shown that representations of ritual in comedy go beyond

their literary mimetic function by pretending to be 'real' rituals. This claim of Old Comedy to actually perform rituals of Greek religion triggers the process of ritualisation of the performance. The ritualisation of the play is achieved by incorporating enacted rituals in the plot and linking them to the existing polis cult and, in particular, to the ritual context of the Athenian theatrical festival in which it is embedded (3.2.1, 3.3.1). The dramatic competition thus becomes an important event of the religious life of the polis (2.2). This aspect of the comic representations of rituals reveals that Attic theatre *is* part of the Greek religious system.

How to perform a ritual in comedy

As my thesis shows, Old Comedy employs a number of techniques to represent rituals as part of the dramatic action. The aims of these techniques are to create the impression of the authenticity of rituals; to please and entertain the audience; and to avoid offence or impiety. First of all, comic poets extensively use verbal references to rituals which are being performed in order to mark and describe them as special religious activities. Self-references, exhortations, instructions, and comments are natural for ritual speech but comedy seems to exaggerate this feature in order to highlight the performativity and to inform the audience about what is happening on the stage (2.3.2, 4.2.1). The visual aspect of rituals is also emphasised as it can be seen through manipulations with physical ritual objects and other embodied ritual actions including movement in the theatrical space (4.2.2, 3.2, 3.3.2). The technical aspect of the sacrificial procedure is very important as I have demonstrated and also increases the 'reality' and credibility of the comic representation (4.2.3).

Secondly, Old Comedy represents rituals as improvised and spontaneous, often as new rites, invented specifically for the dramatic occasion. A sacrifice or a festival is the comic hero's initiative with which he or she wants to succeed in his or her project (3.3.1, 4.3.1). The choice of the gods to whom the

sacrifices are offered in comedies fits the extravagant ideas of the comic plots – they are not standard deities of the Athenian religion. No sacrifice in Old Comedy is performed as part of an established festival or any other familiar ritual framework. Although the comic representations draw on familiar practices, they are usually embedded in a new, comic context, and communicate new meanings. This technique gives comic poets a lot of freedom since they are not obliged to imitate in detail the existing practices to sound authentic and they can avoid being offensive by placing official cultic practices in the inappropriate comic context. Old Comedy in fact constructs its own system of imaginary ritual which is presented to the audience as authentic cultic performance. The ritualisation of performance is achieved by various means: one of them is the opposition with tragic representations in which comedy appears to be authentic cult whereas tragic rituals are represented as artificial and literary (3.2.2, 4.3.3). Thus comic representations reflect on Greek cultic practices both directly and through the mediating literary traditions of tragedy, Homeric poems (4.3.2), oracular poetry (2.5), and literary hymns (2.2).

List of Abbreviations

AJP	The American Journal of Philology
CA	Classical Antiquity
CJ	The Classical Journal
CQ	The Classical Quaterly
GR	Greece and Rome
GRBS	Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies
HSCP	Harvard Studies in Classical Philology
JHS	The Journal of Hellenic Studies
LIMC	Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae
QUCC	Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica
RE	Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft
TAPA	Transactions of the American Philological Association
ThesCRA	Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum
ZPE	Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik

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