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'NOTHING TO DO WITH DIONYSUS': TRAGEDY MISCONCEIVED AS RITUAL

There are perhaps two basic questions to be posed about the relationship between Greek tragedy and the cult of Dionysus. The first is whether tragedy originated in Dionysiac cult. It is of course the case that very few scholars have doubted that the answer is yes, but the question is worth asking—even if we cannot on the available evidence answer it with certainty—if only to remind ourselves that it is an open question.[1] The almost universal assumption that tragedy arose from the Dionysiac cult does not cease to be an assumption merely because a large community of faith has grown up around it. Many articles of faith get perpetuated because, as they say, there is no reason to doubt them. I shall attempt here to make out a convincing case for doubting this one; I make no claim to *prove* that tragedy did not originate in the cult of Dionysus, but merely suggest that this is a credible alternative view, and at least as likely as the traditional one.

The second basic question is whether we can detect in the tragedies themselves any sign that their form or content was affected by the fact that they were performed on the occasion of Dionysiac festivals—or to put it another way, whether we would detect such signs if we were not looking at the plays with the eyes of faith. For of course our way of answering this question is liable to be affected by our answer to the first, and the prevailing view nowadays is that even in its developed form tragedy remained an essentially ritual activity.

I. ARISTOTLE ON THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF TRAGEDY

Our most important evidence for the origins of tragedy comes from the *Poetics*; these are the key passages:

γενομένη δ' οὖν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτοσχεδιαστικῆς—καὶ αὐτὴ καὶ ἡ κωμῳδία, καὶ ἡ μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐξαρχόντων τὸν διθύραμβον, ἡ δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν τὰ φαλλικὰ ἃ ἔτι καὶ νῦν ἐν πολλαῖς τῶν πόλεων διαμένει νομιζόμενα—κατὰ μικρὸν ηὐξήθη προαγόντων

[1] Gerald F. Else, *The Origin and Early Form of Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, MA, 1967) is the only scholar I am aware of who has denied the Dionysiac origin of tragedy in as thoroughgoing a way as I do here, but his arguments are quite different from mine, and rely to a very considerable extent on taking seriously traditions about Thespis and others I have elsewhere suggested are totally unreliable (see n. 5 below). Without calling the Dionysiac origin of tragedy into question, some scholars have been rightly sceptical or cautious about the claim that it is essentially Dionysiac and a form of ritual: see especially Brian Vickers, *Towards Greek Tragedy* (London, 1973), 33–41; Oliver Taplin, *Greek Tragedy in Action* (London, 1978), 13, 23, 162; and Rainer Friedrich, 'Drama and ritual', in J. Redmond (ed.), *Drama and Religion* (Cambridge, 1983), 159–223, and id., 'Everything to do with Dionysos? Ritualism, the Dionysiac, and the tragic', in M. S. Silk (ed.), *Tragedy and the Tragic* (Oxford, 1996), 257–83. P. E. Easterling's chapter 'A show for Dionysos', in ead. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1997), 36–53 is in the traditional line of interpretation, but stands out among recent discussions for its caution and good sense. Jean-Pierre Vernant, in his brief essay 'The god of tragic fiction' in id. and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* (New York, 1988), 181–8, is rightly sceptical about the tradition, though in the end he reconstitutes a Dionysiac essence for tragedy based on confusion of the boundaries between illusion and reality.

ὅσον ἐγίγνετο φανερὸν αὐτῆς· καὶ πολλὰς μεταβολὰς μεταβαλοῦσα ἡ τραγῳδία ἐπαύσατο, ἐπεὶ ἔσχε τὴν αὑτῆς φύσιν. καὶ τό τε τῶν ὑποκριτῶν πλῆθος ἐξ ἑνὸς εἰς δύο πρῶτος Αἰσχύλος ἤγαγε καὶ τὰ τοῦ χοροῦ ἠλάττωσε καὶ τὸν λόγον πρωταγωνιστεῖν παρεσκεύασεν· τρεῖς δὲ καὶ σκηνογραφίαν Σοφοκλῆς. ἔτι δὲ τὸ μέγεθος· ἐκ μικρῶν μύθων καὶ λέξεως γελοίας διὰ τὸ ἐκ σατυρικοῦ μεταβαλεῖν ὀψὲ ἀπεσεμνύνθη, τό τε μέτρον ἐκ τετραμέτρου ἰαμβεῖον ἐγένετο. τὸ μὲν γὰρ πρῶτον τετραμέτρῳ ἐχρῶντο διὰ τὸ σατυρικὴν καὶ ὀρχηστικωτέραν εἶναι τὴν ποίησιν, . . .

. . .

ἔτι δὲ ἐπεισοδίων πλήθη. καὶ τὰ ἄλλ' ὡς ἕκαστα κοσμηθῆναι λέγεται ἔστω ἡμῖν εἰρημένα· πολὺ γὰρ ἂν ἴσως ἔργον εἴη διεξιέναι καθ' ἕκαστον.

. . .

αἱ μὲν οὖν τῆς τραγῳδίας μεταβάσεις καὶ δι' ὧν ἐγένοντο οὐ λελήθασιν, ἡ δὲ κωμῳδία διὰ τὸ μὴ σπουδάζεσθαι ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἔλαθεν· καὶ γὰρ χορὸν κωμῳδῶν ὀψέ ποτε ὁ ἄρχων ἔδωκεν, ἀλλ' ἐθελονταὶ ἦσαν. ἤδη δὲ σχήματά τινα αὐτῆς ἐχούσης οἱ λεγόμενοι αὐτῆς ποιηταὶ μνημονεύονται. τίς δὲ πρόσωπα ἀπέδωκεν ἢ προλόγους ἢ πλήθη ὑποκριτῶν καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα, ἠγνόηται.

(Aristotle *Poetics* 1449a–b)

When it came into being from an improvisational origin (that is, both tragedy and comedy: the former from the leaders of dithyramb, the other from the leaders of the phallic songs which remain even now a custom in many cities), it was gradually enhanced as poets developed the potential they saw in it. And after going through many changes tragedy ceased to evolve, since it had achieved its own nature. Aeschylus innovated by raising the number of actors from one to two, reduced the choral component, and made speech play the leading role. Three actors and scene painting came with Sophocles. A further factor was grandeur: after a period of slight plots and ludicrous diction, owing to development from the satyric, it was at a late stage that tragedy acquired dignity, and its metre became the iambic trimeter instead of the trochaic tetrameter. To begin with they used the tetrameter because the poetry was satyric and more associated with dancing.

. . .

. . . Further changes concerned the number of episodes. And we shall take as read the ways in which other features of tragedy are said to have been embellished; it would no doubt be a large task to discuss them individually.

. . .

. . . Now, tragedy's stages of development, and those responsible for them, have not been forgotten, but comedy's early history was forgotten because no serious interest was taken in it: only at a rather late date did the archon grant a comic chorus; previously performers were volunteers. It is from a time when the genre already had some formal features that the first named poets of comedy are remembered. Who introduced masks, prologues, numbers of actors, and everything of that kind, has been lost. (trans. S. Halliwell [Loeb edition], adapted)

The first thing we ought to note here is that although it is of course true that Aristotle says tragedy arose from the leaders of the dithyramb, he also says that it started with slight plots and ludicrous diction and acquired dignity late because it developed ἐκ σατυρικοῦ, that is from some kind of satyric performance, and again that the poetry was originally satyric and more closely related to dance. It was once the fashion to find a way of combining these two derivations from dithyramb and from 'the satyric', the usual result being the claim that dithyrambic choruses were originally performed by satyrs, or even by goat-like satyrs, to explain the name 'tragedy' or 'goat-song'. But Burkert has made a convincing case that the ancient interpretation of τραγῳδία as the song for which a goat was the prize is the correct one, and nobody seems to believe

in goat-satyrs and practically nobody in satyric dithyrambs anymore.[2] Because the phrase ἐκ σατυρικοῦ is rather vague, many scholars in effect ignore it altogether and proceed as though the derivation from dithyramb stood alone.[3] This produces a more plausible account of the origins, but one that ceases to be Aristotle's account.

Most readers will be familiar with the main lines of interpretation of this passage, and the view of it taken here is only a radically sceptical version of Pickard-Cambridge's,[4] so let us focus on a few new or key points. One urgent question suggests itself immediately: on what sort of evidentiary basis did Aristotle's and other ancient accounts of the origin and early development of tragedy rest? I discuss elsewhere the very limited evidence that was available for pre-fifth-century drama, and it is reasonable to conclude that there was next to none for the history of tragedy at any time before 502, when a new system of *choregia* may have been set up by the Athenian democracy. One cannot safely assume that any post-Aristotelian account of the history of tragedy is accurate, even when it deals with matters Aristotle had treated reliably, but Aristotle himself had very little to go on for the early period.[5] If we fully register that fact we should be ready to accept as beyond reasonable doubt Pickard-Cambridge's conclusion that in deriving tragedy from the satyric and the dithyramb, and comedy from the phallic processions, Aristotle is merely theorizing, and that, as he puts it, this 'unhappily robs his statements of all historical value'.[6]

Aristotle's archival evidence for the early history of tragedy probably consisted of a list of victors beginning about 502 and full 'didascalic' records of competitors and play titles beginning in the early 470s—and not much more than that.[7] What about actual plays? The remains of the earliest tragedians are exiguous indeed; our fragments of Thespis and Choerilus are few and those of Thespis suspect.[8] We have a few more of Phrynichus and Pratinas, but they were active after the Persian War; perhaps play texts, like the names of also-ran poets and the titles of plays, only began to be archived after

[2] Walter Burkert, 'Greek tragedy and sacrificial ritual', *GRBS* 7 (1966), 87–121. Belief in satyric dithyrambs is still to be found in T. B. L. Webster's additions in his second edition of A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy* (Oxford, 1962), 20, 96–7, 98, 129 (Pickard-Cambridge himself in the first edition of 1927 having opposed this conclusion), and in a number of studies by Richard Seaford: see *Reciprocity and Ritual* (Oxford, 1994), 267–9 with the references to earlier discussions in nn. 147–8.

[3] See e.g. A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus' Supplices: Play and Trilogy* (Cambridge, 1969), 98–9 with references in 98, n. 2.

[4] In the first edition of *Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy* (see n. 2 above), 121–31, abbreviated in the second edition at 89–95 with Webster's comments added at 95–7.

[5] See Scott Scullion, 'Tragic dates', *CQ* 52 (2002), 81–101, sections I and II, meant to supplement M. L. West, 'The early chronology of Attic tragedy', *CQ* 39 (1989), 251–4.

[6] Pickard-Cambridge (n. 2), 1st edn 128 = 2nd edn 95.

[7] See Scullion (n. 5), section I.

[8] The evidence for the four early tragedians is in Snell, *TrGF* I² pp. 61–84; for doubts about the fragments of Thespis, see also e.g. Pickard-Cambridge (n. 2), 1st edn 117–18 = 2nd edn 85–6. At 117 in the first edition, Pickard-Cambridge maintains that Heraclides Ponticus, who was accused by Aristoxenus of forging plays of Thespis (Diog. Laert. 5.92 = fr. 181 Wehrli), 'is likely to have followed tradition as regards their titles'; commenting that Heraclides 'was a historian of literature', Seaford (n. 2), 276, n. 186 endorses Pickard-Cambridge's view. Why a forger should be moved by his conscience as a historian to forge plays only under traditional titles is hard to understand—and on Heraclides' qualities as a historian see West (n. 5), 252. Few Thespian titles, if any, seem to have been known—the four we have may well be those of Heraclides' forgeries— and if one were attempting to pass off whole plays as new-found works of Thespis, why would one blanch at inventing titles for them? It would indeed be safer to *avoid* forging works known to have existed. The whole matter is very murky, but trust should be reposed neither in the titles nor in the fragments.

the war, or perhaps an earlier archive had gone up in smoke during the Persian occupation of Athens in 479. There is no likelihood at all that Aristotle had even a very lacunose record of tragic productions in the sixth century; he may indeed have read no tragedy composed earlier than 500, or even 478. Nor is there justification for believing that any earlier writer had significantly better material to work with, though of course there will already have been plenty of theory and pseudo-history in circulation by Aristotle's day.[9]

Aristotle is remarkably unforthcoming about the historical development of tragedy. He says we must take as read 'how the number of episodes and the other features *are said* (λέγεται) to have been embellished', on the ground that 'it would perhaps be a large task to discuss them individually'. He must be referring here to the developments he says have been forgotten in connection with comedy—who was responsible for the use of masks and prologues and increased the number of actors—and he himself mentions Aeschylus' addition of the second actor and Sophocles' of the third. Aristotle can hardly mean that it would be a 'large task' merely to *catalogue* these various developments, and it seems likely that his reticence arises rather from some such scruple as may account also for the absence of the name Thespis from his discussion.

Even the statements that Aeschylus added the second actor and Sophocles the third are problematic. Aristotle manifestly claims that the second and the third actor were in each case the invention of a single poet; in the context of a state dramatic competition, what can this possibly mean? However the actors may originally have been paid, it was surely always the case that the number of actors a poet could use was limited. How, then, can some single poet be credited with introducing an extra actor? One poet might claim to have had the idea first, or to have been instrumental in convincing the state to raise the limit, but surely none of them, simply on his own say-so, could have written for and shown up at the competition with a second or third actor. This statement must be either pure schematization or based on the first occurrences of second and third actors in whatever early plays Aristotle or his source could still read.

One fears we have to do here with the sort of schematic pseudo-history that confronts us on every side in ancient literary scholarship. Diogenes Laertius would later say:

> Just as in ancient times in tragedy the chorus first performed the drama alone and later, in order to give the chorus a break, Thespis instituted a single actor, Aeschylus a second, and Sophocles filled up the complement of tragedy with a third, so too the subject of philosophy was formerly simply physics, later Socrates added ethics, and Plato added dialectic as a third and brought philosophy to its ultimate state of perfection.[10]

Aristotle does not write anything as foolish as this, but he was up against the unknown and resorted to a scheme of the same general type. Accurate information on early tragedy, as of course on the ultimate origins of the genre, was in very short supply from the outset, and so the guesswork began straightaway. Aristotle himself laboured mightily over the didascalic records available to him, but it looks as though in sketching the earlier period he is passing on, with apparent reluctance to retail

[9] We know, for example, of Glaucus of Rhegion's work περὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων ποιητῶν καὶ μουσικῶν, probably published *c.* 400: see Jacoby, *RE* 7.1 (1910), 1417–20 s.v. Glaukos 36.

[10] 3.56. Translation by Eric Csapo and William J. Slater, *The Context of Ancient Drama* (Ann Arbor, 1994), 226.

many of the particulars, 'what they say' about the development of tragedy who have next to no hard data at their disposal.

The methods employed in the enterprise of generating history from minimal or misinformation are familiar. We are perhaps reluctant to recognize that even the earliest Greek scholars engaged in this sort of thing, but the problem starts—or perhaps we might say the fun begins—as soon as inquisitive Greeks encounter an interesting question without an answer. If they have the materials to answer it accurately they will of course attempt to do so; where they differ from us—or, more accurately, from our notion of ourselves—is in their willingness to make the best of a lack of evidence. From our point of view particularly good, if rather silly examples are the stories about Sophocles' death: that he choked on a grape seed, or that he lost his breath, his voice, and his life reciting *Antigone*, or that he finished reciting it, was declared winner, and, overcome by joy, expired. The grape has to do with the patron god of Athenian tragedy, and recitation and victory likewise with the poet's profession, and these struck the third-century B.C. scholars Ister, Neanthes, and Satyrus as suitable deaths for a tragedian.[11]

When an important question occurred to Aristotle and his contemporaries they too were loath to leave it unanswered. Tragedy is for Aristotle the greatest of all literary forms, and although content to conclude that the history of comedy, a less serious form, cannot be recovered, he did his best to recover the history of tragedy. We have seen that what he says about the invention of additional actors is highly dubious, and that he chooses not to mention those reputed to be the inventors of masking or prologues or additional episodes.

This last item deserves more attention. Aristotle apparently regards the addition of episodes as one of the ways in which tragedy developed toward its natural form—and we note the teleological scheme of development everywhere characteristic of his thought. The idea seems to be that an entirely choral genre was turned into tragedy as Aristotle knew it by the insertion of passages of monologue and dialogue, which coheres with his statement that Aeschylus diminished the role of the chorus and made the spoken part the most important. On this reckoning the further tragedy moves from its choral origins the more it becomes itself, for there is no reason to think that Aristotle would have been unhappy with the great diminishment of the choral component in some later plays of Sophocles and Euripides. In one brief comment he makes on the proper use of the chorus, Aristotle says that it should be treated as one of the actors and integrated into the plot, and complains that later poets treated choruses as *embolima* or interludes (*Poetics* 1456a25). The point here is that the choruses should be of a piece with the spoken episodes, should, that is, conform as closely as possible to the non-choral component that makes tragedy what it is, not that they should not be reduced in size or number. If this is roughly right, it becomes a little easier to see what Aristotle has in mind when he says that tragedy was originally improvisational and arose from the leaders of the dithyramb. If tragedy began when the leader first improvised a solo and developed through the addition and scripting of solo parts and gradual reduction of the choral parts, then the essence of the genre is in the episodes rather than the choruses. This is pretty clearly what Aristotle thought, and it has important implications when we consider whether he regarded tragedy as an *essentially* Dionysiac genre.

We have already noted that alongside what he says about the origin of tragedy in

[11] *Vit. Soph.* 14 = *TrGF* IV T A 1.55–62.

dithyramb, Aristotle speaks of it as passing through a satyric phase of short plots and ludicrous diction before it acquired dignity. This scheme of development is incoherent; since there is no reason to believe that dithyramb was ever satyric in nature, it is hard to imagine how or why what began as dialogue between a dithyramb-leader and his chorus should have turned into a satyric genre on the way to becoming what we know as tragedy. Yet this is evidently what Aristotle believed, and we must ask ourselves why.

Aristotle's account of the origin of tragedy is a vague teleological scheme based, as Pickard-Cambridge put it, on 'theorizing'. Where I differ from Pickard-Cambridge is only in regarding the Dionysiac aspect of Aristotle's theory as possibly quite wrong; and we must bear in mind that those who inform us that tragedy is a ritual act are ultimately relying on the authority of Aristotle and his derivation of tragedy from dithyramb, or from 'the satyric'—at any rate from some sort of Dionysiac phenomenon.

How did Aristotle come to the conclusion that tragedy arose from the dithyramb and went through a satyric phase before achieving its natural form? In his translation of the *Poetics*, Janko accounts for the oddity of the juxtaposition of dithyrambic and satyric thus: 'Tragedy apparently shared with satyr-play and dithyramb a common ancestry in Dionysiac ritual, and this is surely what Aristotle means.'[12] Unless I misunderstand Janko's point, this amounts to saying that the one thing Aristotle was sure of was that tragedy arose out of Dionysiac ritual, and that it followed from this that it was a congener of both satyr-play and dithyramb. This is probably exactly right, though not in the sense Janko intends.

Aristotle had very little evidence to go on even for the early years of tragedy at Athens, let alone the ultimate origins of the genre; he makes no attempt to dispute what 'is said' about the historical development of tragedy, and we must suppose that he endorses the little of what is said that he specifically mentions, but this is clearly not his focus. Aristotle is not attempting to fill out such evidence as he had for the development up to Aeschylus; we must go to later sources for that sort of thing, and we find there far more of speculation, guesswork, and free invention than of genuine tradition going back to the sixth century.

The key with which Aristotle attempts to unlock the origins of tragedy is the assumption that they are connected with the cult of Dionysus. The one manifest fact he had to work with was that at Athens tragedy was performed only in the context of Dionysiac festivals and at a theatre in a sanctuary of Dionysus. And not only tragedy: comedy and satyr-play too were performed in that context, and in general spirit they clearly have a lot in common with aspects of the worship of Dionysus. The Dionysiac context and the analogy with comedy are central to Aristotle's theory of origins, and provide the only adequate explanation of the difficulties in it, which are particularly on the tragic side. Aristotle starts from the premise of Dionysiac origins. The developed forms, tragedy and comedy, each derive from a Dionysiac original: tragedy from dithyramb, comedy from phallic songs.[13] Indeed, Aristotle's theory involves the oddity

[12] Richard Janko, *Aristotle: Poetics* (Indianapolis, 1987), 79.

[13] Jürgen Leonhardt, *Phalloslied und Dithyrambos: Aristoteles über den Ursprung des griechischen Dramas. Abh. Heid.* 4 (Heidelberg, 1991) suggests that the phrase καὶ αὐτὴ καὶ ἡ κωμῳδία, καὶ ἡ μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐξαρχόντων τὸν διθύραμβον, ἡ δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν τὰ φαλλικὰ may be a chiasmus. This is, of course, linguistically possible, but the general existence and any given use of that linguistic possibility is premised on the sequence of reference being obvious from the sense—confusion not being among the goals of the evolution of language—and there can be little doubt that Leonhardt's reading would have been as counter-intuitive for a contemporary as it is for us; certainly it makes a worse nonsense of the passage than the traditional reading. The fact that the matter cannot be settled by reference to other passages in the *Poetics* is a useful

of two precisely parallel but independent developments: in both cases the leader began to improvise solos, and by the reduction of the choral component and the gradual addition of masks, prologues, episodes, and actors by two series of individual poets both became fully dramatic genres. A little too neat? Aristotle tells us that comedy's early history was forgotten, but assumes nevertheless a precise parallel with tragedy. Clearly the appeal of the scheme is here outweighing historical probability. How to fit satyr-play into the scheme? It clearly belongs there: what these five genres—tragedy, comedy, phallic song, dithyramb, and satyr-play—have in common is that in classical Athens they were all associated with Dionysus. Satyr-plays were performed with tragedies, and so must belong to the tragic side of the scheme. Thus they show up as a historically incomprehensible phase in the development of tragedy. There is no doubt that for Aristotle tragedy is the queen of these genres, and from his teleological perspective satyr-play is a halfway house on the road to tragedy; he would perhaps have been happier to classify it as a predecessor of comedy, but it was inescapably connected with tragedy and the phenomena must be preserved.

There are signs elsewhere of this Dionysus-principle at work in the ancient tradition. Both Thespis and Susarion, the alleged creator of comedy, are in some sources described as Icarians. These sources are anxious to make drama an Athenian rather than a Peloponnesian creation, but Icaria is not only an Attic deme, it is the most Dionysiac of Attic demes, and the god is here introduced into the history of drama absolutely arbitrarily.[14] Aristotle employs, if less crudely, the same sort of principle. Tracing genres of literature—like families, dynasties, and other social groupings—back to divine roots was also a well-established practice. We are particularly well informed about the contributions of the Peripatetic school to this species of history; in his work *On Music*, Heraclides Ponticus attributed the origin of all the musical and poetic genres to particular gods and Muses.[15] Here again, then, Aristotle was probably influenced by a hermeneutic method of a very familiar type.

By way of speculation, it is possible to go a step further.[16] There is no doubt that Aristotle knew far more about the history of monodic and choral poetry than of tragedy, and one passage he will certainly have known is Archilochus fr. 120 West: *ὡς Διωνύσοι' ἄνακτος καλὸν ἐξάρξαι μέλος | οἶδα διθύραμβον οἴνῳ συγκεραυνωθεὶς φρένας*. The related noun *ἔξαρχος* is clearly used by Demosthenes (18.260) in the sense 'chorus-leader'. Aristotle will also have known Bacchylides 18, the so-called 'Theseus', a dithyramb consisting of lyric dialogue of a mimetic type between someone speaking as Aegeus and a group speaking as Athenians. Doubtless there were other dithyrambs

reminder of how glancingly Aristotle deals with the history of the genres and how little general significance he attaches to it. See H. Patzer's review of Leonhardt in *Gnomon* 67 (1995), 289–310, and cf. n. 40 below.

[14] Thespis: *Suda* θ 282 Adler s.v. *Θέσπις*. Susarion: Marmor Parium (*FGrHist* 239) ep. 39; Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 1.79. This seems also to be the implication of Athen. 2.40a–b: *ἀπὸ μέθης καὶ ἡ τῆς κωμῳδίας καὶ ἡ τῆς τραγῳδίας εὕρεσις ἐν Ἰκαρίῳ τῆς Ἀττικῆς εὑρέθη καὶ κατ' αὐτὸν τῆς τρύγης καιρόν*. Neither Thespis nor Susarion is mentioned by name here, but they are presumably the inventors in question. The explicit link with the vintage in this passage makes it clear that Icaria was chosen as hometown for drama because of its Dionysiac associations. Thespis and Susarion are often elsewhere said to be (mere) Athenians; few will wish to believe that both were really Icarians. Cf. Else (n. 1), 52–3.

[15] See frs. 157–63 in Fritz Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles* VII: *Herakleides Pontikos* (Basel, 1953), esp. frs. 157–60 with the commentary ad locc.; cf. H. B. Gottschalk, *Heraclides of Pontus* (Oxford, 1980), 133–8.

[16] I here develop further what is essentially the approach of Pickard-Cambridge (n. 2), 1st edn 128 = 2nd edn 94.

of this type,[17] and it would be perfectly natural to assume that in them the ἔξαρχος impersonates the mythical character who is in dialogue with a group represented by the chorus. We may well have here the whole basis of Aristotle's theory of the emergence of tragedy from solos by leaders of the dithyramb. Dithyramb was older than tragedy, and there was evidence for mimetic representation in dithyramb, which stands side-by-side with tragedy in the context of the Athenian festivals of Dionysus: thus an organic theory of development was ready to hand. That Archilochus led the dithyramb while 'blitzed in the head with wine' perhaps suggested and certainly supported Aristotle's assumption of a raucous, pre-dignified stage in the development of tragic drama which would account for the existence of satyr-play and its association with tragedy. It is not unlikely that Archilochus' poem was Aristotle's earliest evidence for dithyramb, as it is ours. Is it mere coincidence that the metre of Archilochus' poem is trochaic tetrameter, the metre Aristotle suggests was typical of tragedy in its original, satyric form?

Surely this is a far more plausible reconstruction of Aristotle's thinking than that offered by those scholars who assume he somehow had knowledge of a remote cultic past when Dionysiac myth was the exclusive subject of dithyramb, and who assume further that proto-tragedy started then, not after dithyramb had become a medium for the narration of myth in general, which is what it was for fifth-century Athenians and in Aristotle's day.[18] When he tells us that tragedy began in *improvised* solos by the chorus-leader, Aristotle is by definition talking about a phenomenon for which he had no written evidence. One might, of course, suggest that an unbroken chain of reliable oral testimony led back to the day when it first occurred to the leader of a Dionysiac dithyramb to improvise a solo, but it would to say the least be difficult to muster much confidence in that sort of conclusion. It is infinitely more probable that Aristotle noted the points of similarity linking tragedy and satyr-play with such dithyrambs or evidence for dithyramb as he could still read, and then projected their relationship into the past as a schema of historical development, a diachronic schema based on the synchronic realities of the Athenian festival.

All that said, it must be stressed that we have no reason to conclude that Aristotle regards the origin of tragedy in dithyramb as particularly significant. His little sketch of its development is highly schematic and teleological: tragedy is the more itself the further removed it gets from its choral roots, and nothing he says suggests that its ultimate origin is essential rather than accidental.[19] This is abundantly illustrated by the analysis of tragic drama which is the central undertaking of the *Poetics*, and where

[17] Cf. Martin West, *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford, 1992), 339–40 with nn. 48–9. Garvie (n. 3), 115, with references in nn. 3–4, notes that 'it is disputed whether this dithyramb is a survival of a pre-tragic form of dithyramb with exarchon, or, as is more likely, it shows the influence of developed tragedy and is the forerunner of the new mimetic dithyramb'. Aristotle, given his organicist approach, is likely to have regarded all such dithyramb as a survival.

[18] See Pickard-Cambridge (n. 2), 1st edn 48–9, 80–2 = 2nd edn 32, 58–9; Bernhard Zimmermann, 'Das Lied der Polis: Zur Geschichte des Dithyrambos', in A. H. Sommerstein, S. Halliwell, J. Henderson, and B. Zimmermann (edd.), *Tragedy, Comedy and the Polis* (Bari, 1993), 39–54, esp. 43, summarizing findings laid out in more detail in *Dithyrambos: Geschichte einer Gattung. Hypomnemata* 98 (Göttingen, 1992).

[19] See e.g. S. Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (London, 1986), 250 on Aristotle's 'devaluation' of the chorus. The issues get a thorough airing in the matched papers of John Gould, 'Tragedy and collective experience', and Simon Goldhill, 'Collectivity and otherness—the authority of the tragic chorus: response to Gould' in M. S. Silk (ed.), *Tragedy and the Tragic: Greek Theatre and Beyond* (Oxford, 1996), 217–43, 244–56.

we hear not a word about Dionysiac themes or ritual. For Aristotle Dionysiac cult is relevant to tragedy merely as historical point of origin; beyond that context he has nothing to say about Dionysus, and even there he never mentions the god by name. For him, tragedy is a species of poetry, not of ritual, and its principal congener is epic, not cultic hymns. It never occurs to him to suggest that one of the developments tragedy went through was a shift from Dionysiac to general mythological subject matter, and he probably assumed that from the beginning tragedy dealt with myth in general, as the dithyramb at the City Dionysia also did. Modern scholars who feel sure that tragic drama is a form of Dionysiac ritual have discovered a quintessential characteristic of tragedy that escaped Aristotle's notice altogether. Perhaps, though, we *ought* to second-guess Aristotle. Hall has called his apolitical approach to tragedy into question; that is a matter we seem in a better position to control, but perhaps he was blind to a cultic essence of tragedy we can perceive.[20]

II. TRAGEDY AND DIONYSUS

What, then, are the extra-Aristotelian arguments modern scholars offer for their view that tragedy is by origin and essentially Dionysiac? The most important are six: Dionysiac themes, it is claimed, are specially prominent in tragic drama; tragedy was performed at festivals of Dionysus, who was generally reckoned the god of drama; actors and chorus wore masks, which are taken to be markedly Dionysiac things; tragic drama, along with comic and satyric drama, is taken to be markedly Dionysiac in spirit, and is derived in particular from Dionysiac ecstasy; the prize for tragedy was a billygoat, taken to be a markedly Dionysiac animal; and tragedy contains choruses, which are regarded as an inheritance and perpetuation of its ritual origin. Let us consider these arguments in turn.

Dionysiac themes in tragedy

It is often claimed that Dionysiac themes are especially prominent in Athenian tragedy. Reliable lists of plays, including fragmentary plays, certainly or possibly drawn from Dionysiac myth have been compiled.[21] Thespis is said to have produced a *Pentheus*; Polyphrasmon produced a Lycurgus trilogy in 467, Aeschylus a *Lykourgeia* and a second Dionysiac trilogy including the Pentheus story, Sophocles or Mesatos a *Bacchae*,[22] these in the first half of the fifth century; Iophon a *Bacchae*, Xenocles a *Bacchae* in 415, Euripides his *Bacchae c.* 406, and Spintharus a *Semele*, this last still perhaps late fifth century; in the fourth century Diogenes of Athens a *Semele*, Carcinus a *Semele*, Chaeremon a *Dionysus*, Cleophon a *Bacchae*; and, probably in the third century, Lycophron a *Pentheus*. This amounts to three trilogies and a *Bacchae*, or ten tragedies, in the first half of the fifth century; four tragedies in the second half; four in the fourth century; and one in the third, for a total of nineteen plays. These are, of course, only the titles of Dionysiac tragedies that have been preserved in the tradition that has come down to us—but that same tradition has given us the titles of something on the order of five hundred tragedies. Dionysiac plays constitute less than 4 per cent of this reasonably large sample, which hardly yields an argument in favour

[20] Edith Hall, 'Is there a *polis* in Aristotle's *Poetics*?', in Silk (n. 19), 295–309.

[21] Recently Anton Bierl, *Dionysos und die griechische Tragödie. Classica Monacensia* 1 (Tübingen, 1991), 11–12; Seaford (n. 2), 276 with n. 186.

[22] *TrGF* I² DID C 6 = P. Oxy. 2256 fr. 3.

of the Dionysiac essence of tragic drama. We know the names of something like 140 tragic poets; thirteen are said to have produced one or more Dionysiac plays. Can anyone seriously maintain that the fact that Aeschylus went to the well of Dionysiac myth twice—that of roughly seventy Aischylean tragedies known to us by title, six in two trilogies were on Dionysiac topics—is an argument that Dionysiac myth is specially prominent in early tragedy? It would appear to be the case that many or even most Greek tragic poets wrote no Dionysiac play, that those who did wrote two or three at most, and that Aeschylus twice chose to dramatize Dionysiac myth in a connected trilogy, a form to which he was given.

Another fact scholars point to is the frequency with which Dionysus is mentioned, or Dionysiac metaphors for madness employed, in the texts of the extant tragedies. Here too, however, they fail to put their findings in a comparative context. Bierl counts one explicit mention of Dionysus (Bromius, Iacchus, vel sim.) in Aeschylus, seven in Sophocles (four times in *Antigone*), and twenty in Euripides (outside the *Bacchai*). These figures indicate that the god is a very rare presence in Aeschylus, is prominent in Sophocles only in the choral odes of *Antigone*, and shows up more frequently in Euripides. This corresponds very well to Bierl's count of words connected with Dionysiac cult (βακχεύω and the like), which are employed in five passages of Aeschylus, four of Sophocles (three in *Trachiniae*), and thirty-three of Euripides (again outside the *Bacchae*).[23] The increased presence of Dionysus in Euripides, and his modest presence in the other poets as well, can be accounted for largely as a reflection of the metaphorical association, which goes back to Homer, between madness and frenzy (whether homicidal, erotic, or martial) and the god of madness κατ' ἐξοχήν. That this usage is metaphorical is shown by the fact that madness explicitly said to be sent by some other divinity can be described as 'Bacchic'.[24] Both in music and in plot Euripides likes to explore varying kinds of intense emotional state, and correspondingly makes rather more frequent use of the kind of Bacchic metaphor we find in *Antigone* and *Trachiniae*.

Do these figures constitute any sort of argument for the Dionysiac essence of tragedy? Here again, once they are put into perspective, it is clear that they constitute no argument at all. Using the standard indices of Italie, Ellendt, Allen and Italie, and Todd, I have counted references in the tragedians and Aristophanes to Zeus, Apollo, and Athena to set alongside Bierl's count for Dionysus, like him leaving fragmentary plays out of account. The results are striking: in *Aeschylus* there are 174 mentions of Zeus, 18 of Apollo/Phoebus (outside *Eumenides*), 4 of Athena/Pallas (outside *Eumenides*), and 1 of Dionysus/Bromius/Iacchus; in *Sophocles* 114 of Zeus, 46 of Apollo, 16 of Athena (about half in *Aias*) and 7 of Dionysus; in *Euripides* 163+ ('et

[23] Bierl (n. 21), 12–13 with n. 28.

[24] Renate Schlesier, 'Mixtures of masks: maenads as tragic models', in T. H. Carpenter and C. A. Faraone (edd.), *Masks of Dionysus* (Ithaca, 1993), 89–114 discusses a number of these passages. Schlesier (100) notes that madness explicitly sent by Ares, Hera, Aphrodite, Apollo, and the dead is described as 'Bacchic', which to my mind is very clear evidence that we are dealing here with ordinary metaphor. Schlesier argues rather that 'The tragedians . . . attempted to demonstrate that Dionysus, on the tragic stage, exerts his transforming power even on the great many figures and myths from which, outside the theatrical sphere, he is usually excluded.' Her refusal to accept a straightforward metaphorical explanation is, however, based on a prior commitment to the Dionysiac model of tragedy: 'The maenadic model [of madness] has thus to be perceived as a specific device of tragedy that further shows that tragedy is a Dionysiac genre. This model connects tragic plots to the god who institutionally presides over Greek tragedy in its civic and ritual environment' (101).

passim' in Allen and Italie) of Zeus, 152 of Apollo, 77 of Athena, and 20 of Dionysus; in *Aristophanes*, where large numbers of oaths have to be taken into account, 505 of Zeus, 70 of Apollo, 48 of Dionysus (Todd's number, not counted by Bierl), and 15 of Athena. Raw numbers as remarkable as these surely require no subtleties of interpretation; they make it clear that Dionysus is not specially prominent or present in the texts of the Greek dramatists.

Tragedy and festival

As for the second argument, there is of course no doubt that tragedies were performed at festivals of Dionysus, and that to Greeks generally he was the patron of drama; it was natural, for example, that the guild of dramatic performers organized in the late third century should call themselves the 'Artists of Dionysus'.[25] What seems to be less commonly realized or fully reckoned with is the fact that the connection between tragedy and Dionysus is above all an *Athenian* phenomenon. In Athens, no doubt about it, Dionysus was the god of tragedy; when a second occasion for the performance of drama was wanted, the Lenaia, another festival of Dionysus, was chosen, and such evidence as we have for the performance of tragedies in the demes makes it clear that there too a Dionysiac festival regularly provided the occasion. If, on the other hand, we look *beyond* Athens, the situation is quite different. We have a considerable number of inscriptions from the third and second centuries B.C. attesting dramatic performances thoughout the Greek world at festivals or in honour of gods other than Dionysus. An inscription from Amorgos, for example, decrees a crown for the comedian Nicophon of Miletus, who produced three dramas 'for the god'; the decree is to be recorded in the temple of Delian Apollo, who must therefore be the god in question. Similar tragic performances are attested for Delphi and, under the aegis of Athena, at Coronea in Boiotia.[26] The most illuminating document is the list of victories of a third-century tragic actor found at Tegea in Arcadia:

I *Διονύσια* | [*τὰ*] *μεγάλα* | [*ἐν*] *Ἀθήναις* | [*Ὀρ*]*έστηι* | [*Εὐ*]*ριπίδου.*
II [*Σωτ*]*ήρια* | [*ἐν*] *Δελφοῖς* | *Ἡρακλεῖ* | [*Εὐ*]*ριπίδου,* | [*Ἀν*]*ταίωι* | *Ἀρχεστράτου.*
III [*Πτο*]*λεμαῖα* | *ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείαι* | [*ἄν*]*δρας* | [*πυ*]*γμήν.*
IV *Ἡραῖα* | *Ἡ*[*ρ*]*ακλεῖ* | *Εὐριπίδου,* | *Ἀρχελάωι* | *Εὐριπίδου.*
V *Ναΐα* | *ἐν Δωδώνηι* | *Ἀρχελάωι* | *Εὐριπίδου,* | *Ἀχιλλεῖ* | *Χαιρήμονος.*
VI *καὶ τοὺς κατὰ* | *πόλεις ἀγῶνας* | *σκηνικοὺς* | *Διονύσια καὶ εἴ τι*|*νας ἄλλας ἑορτὰς* | *αἱ πόλεις ἤγοσαν* | *ὀγδοήκοντα* | *ὀκτώ.* (*SIG*[3] 1080)

There are six headings: five festivals and a miscellaneous category. This was a man of parts, and at the third festival he lists, the Ptolemaia in Alexandria, he won not in tragedy but in boxing. The miscellaneous rubric, number six, tells us that he won a total of eighty-eight victories 'at the theatrical contests in the cities, Dionysia and whatever other festivals the cities hold'. This indicates, as we would expect, that Dionysia were the commonest of dramatic festivals; the prestige of Athens and the City Dionysia in tragic drama of course had its effect. But the remaining four festivals, which our man highlights, and for which he provides specifics of his

[25] See A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, rev. J. Gould and D. M. Lewis, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*[2] (Oxford, 1968), 279–321.
[26] Amorgos: *IG* XII.7, 226; Delphi: *SIG*[3] 659; Coronea: *TrGF* I[2], DID B 12.

individual victories, are obviously those he regarded as the most prestigious. They are first, naturally first, the Dionysia at Athens; second the *Soteria* at Delphi, a festival of Apollo Pythius, Zeus Soter and Nike; third the *Heraia*, the famous festival for Hera at Argos; and fourth the *Naïa*, a festival of Zeus Naïos at Dodona.

Tragedy, then, could be and was associated with a range of Greek divinities other than Dionysus. The situation at Delphi is especially striking: Dionysus had a prominent cult there, and the dramatic festival might easily have been connected with him, or at least with him alongside Apollo, Zeus, and Nike; his total exclusion is therefore very telling. The implications of all this are worth reflecting on. If those scholars are right who claim that performances of tragedy must be conceived as part of the ritual of the Athenian Dionysia, as a species of cultic worship, what are we to make of the performances of tragedy at, for example, the Delphic *Soteria*? Did they there constitute ritual acts in the cult of Apollo, Zeus, and Nike?

Our actor won at Delphi in a revival of Euripides' *Heracles*, and many Athenian classics will have been staged there. Bierl has written of Creon in *Antigone* as having characteristics of a Dionysiac θεομάχος, and of Antigone, whose behaviour is abnormal for a woman, as having structural similarities with Dionysus, the god of total Otherness. 'Behind her', he says, 'there is working a hidden divine power, which in the cultic context of the dramatic production takes on strongly Dionysiac accents.'[27] If *Antigone* was revived in the cultic context of the *Soteria*, would this hidden power take on Apollonian accents? Again, Bierl claims that when tragic choruses mention Dionysus in his role as god of choral dancing, the choristers are metatheatrically referring to themselves and thereby breaking the dramatic illusion.[28] Would this happen at Delphi when they mention Apollo, who is also invoked by tragic choruses as god of choral dancing?

I do not mean to play a silly game here. If it is objected that the Athenian poets were writing for the Athenian production and cannot have foreseen productions in non-Dionysiac contexts, my reply is this: if by origin and at Athens the connection between tragedy and Dionysus was so absolute and essential that the cultic context as such could contribute to the production of meaning, could condition the interpretation of the texts, why then were other Greeks perfectly happy to revive old and create or tour new plays in quite different cultic contexts? One must suppose that they saw Dionysus as the patron god of tragedy at Athens, and therefore often, but by no means invariably, elsewhere, in the same sense in which Zeus was the patron god of athletics at Olympia and Nemea, but Apollo Pythius was at Delphi and Poseidon at Corinth. Wherever Greeks institute wine festivals they dedicate them to Dionysus; if tragedy could be dedicated to practically any of the gods it cannot have been felt to be Dionysiac in the same way wine was. We ought to take it as a working hypothesis that events common to the festivals of various divinities were not felt to be the inalienable cultic property of one of them.

Perhaps a chronological objection might be hazarded. Perhaps by the third and second centuries Greek religion was in decline, or the effects of a sort of creeping syncretism or secularization were already being felt. None of these generalizations seems sound, and in any case we have some earlier evidence. Herodotus matter-of-factly tells us (5.67) that in early sixth-century Sicyon τραγικοὶ χοροί were transferred

[27] Bierl (n. 21), 66–7.

[28] A. Bierl, 'Was hat die Tragödie mit Dionysos zu tun?', *Würzb. Jahrb. f. d. Altertumswissenschaft* 15 (1989), 43–57, at 45.

to the cult of Dionysus from that of the hero Adrastus, which presumably means that Herodotus did not consider tragic genres essentially Dionysiac. We also have very illuminating evidence for a non-Dionysiac dramatic festival instituted around the end of the fifth century, the Olympia festival in honour of Zeus founded by the Macedonian king Archelaus, which was probably held at Dion, where a theatre and a huge sanctuary of Zeus have been uncovered.[29] Now Archelaus was a man anxious about his standing and hungry for culture; he brought Euripides to Macedon, commissioned a play about his namesake ancestor from him, and in general sought to rival the Athenians at their own game. Will Archelaus, of all people, have made himself look a gauche provincial by having tragedies performed at a festival of *the wrong god*? No doubt he hired a cultural consulting firm; did they advise him to grab Euripides, but neglect to tell him about the hidden power of Dionysus? Nor does Archelaus' foundation stand alone; perhaps as much as a century earlier still a theatre was built at Syracuse in a sanctuary of Apollo, as were the fourth-century theatres at Cyrene and Delos. Other non-Dionysiac fourth-century theatres are those of Poseidon at Isthmia, of the hero Amphiaraus at Oropus in Boeotia, and of Hera on Samos, to mention only the secure cases.[30]

Masks and the origins of comedy

The third alleged extra-Aristotelian witness to the Dionysiac nature of tragedy is the mask. Such evidence as we have, for what it is worth, does not bear out the assumption that masking characterized tragedy from the outset. Aristotle implies that the use of masks was one of the *developments* of tragedy, not therefore an original component, and the *Suda* tells us that Thespis experimented first with white lead and then with plant material before coming up with a plain linen mask. However that may be, the idea that tragic masks or masks in general are essentially Dionysiac is simply incorrect. The article always cited on this question is Wrede's 'Der Maskengott' of 1928, but Wrede says 'the use of masks, as it is familiar to us from drama, was not by origin confined to Dionysiac cult'.[31] The so-called Lenaia vases depict a cultic idol of Dionysus consisting of a representation of his head and a garment affixed to a pole; these heads of Dionysus are always called 'masks', but there is no evidence whatsoever for anyone wearing them, or any reason to regard them as masking anything: they reveal or represent Dionysus rather than concealing someone. There is later evidence for Dionysiac revellers wearing masks, but we know of many other and many earlier cultic masks, above all those worn at Sparta in the cult of Artemis Orthia. Among the grotesque masks found at the Orthia sanctuary, some are in fact satyr-like.[32]

For those who insist on a cultic origin for comedy, let me develop an alternative

[29] Diod. 17.16.3, Σ Dem. 19.192.

[30] Up-to-date and convenient discussions and bibliographies on classical Greek theatres are contributed by H. P. Isler to P. C. Rossetto and G. P. Sartorio (edd.), *Teatri greci e romani* (Turin, 1994).

[31] Walther Wrede, 'Der Maskengott', *AM* 53 (1928), 66–95, at 87. I find that Stephen Halliwell, 'The function and aesthetics of the Greek tragic mask', *Drama* 2 (1993), 195–211 puts forward arguments against seeing masks as necessarily Dionysiac not dissimilar to my own.

[32] For an up-to-date study of the masks with an improved typology and good illustrations, see Jane Burr Carter, 'The masks of Ortheia', *AJA* 91 (1987), 355–83; Carter links the masks with Near Eastern predecessors, and disposes of the old idea that the 'grimacing' masks are female (356). Satyr-like masks: Wrede (n. 31), 88 with n. 3; Carter, 358.

theory. We have a number of notices about a Spartan tradition of miming by so-called δεικηλίκται, 'imitators' or perhaps 'mask-wearers', who are said to have represented, among other things, people committing thefts.[33] Pollux notices a Spartan mimetic dance which represented people caught stealing stale meat, and Plutarch speaks of the Spartan custom of young men committing thefts and being beaten if they did it unskilfully.[34] Now all this sounds very much like what we know of the rites of Artemis Orthia: young men attempting to get hold of cheeses from her altar were beaten back with switches by others.[35] Pickard-Cambridge concluded that there was a good case to be made for a Peloponnesian component in the origins of both tragedy and comedy, and Aristotle himself notes that tragedy was claimed by the Peloponnesians and comedy by the Megarians in particular.[36] 'Megarian comedy' is known to the comic poets, and Megara had a cult of Artemis Orthosia, whose worship must have resembled that of Artemis Orthia.[37] So far as I can see, no one has connected the Spartan δεικηλίκται with the masked rites there for Artemis Orthia, but when we do the result is a perfectly coherent theory of the origin of comedy in the cult of Artemis, with whom mummery in masks is also of course connected at Brauron in Attica.[38] Nor is Artemis cult lacking in the songs and dances, ritual liminality, tension between individual and community, or problematics of self-identity that figure so prominently in the Dionysiac interpretation of drama.

Having reached these conclusions independently, I now find that they cohere very closely with some suggestions of Seeberg, who in a fine article has drawn together a line of speculation about the masks of the Orthia sanctuary, their possible Eastern background and ritual employment, and the so-called 'padded dancers' on Corinthian and Laconian vases. Seeberg sees no necessary or original connection between the padded dancers and Dionysus; some 'padded komasts', however, he very plausibly regards as 'mock-foreigners' who should probably be connected with a ritual context, and who are best suited to rituals in the cult of Artemis Orthia at Sparta. With great caution and very tentatively Seeberg makes a connection between padded dancers—who sometimes appear with masks, and who have always been seen as precursors of the performers of comic drama—and the Orthia cult, with its many and varied masks.[39] If we add to Seeberg's mix of evidence the traditions about the Spartan

[33] Athen. 14.621d–f; Plut. *Agesilaus* 21.2; Hesych. δ 1821 Latte s.v. δίκηλον· φάσμα. ὄψις. εἴδωλον. μίμημα. ὅθεν καὶ ὁ μιμολόγος παρὰ Λάκωσι δικηλίκτας.; Σ Ap.Rh. 1.746; δείκηλα occurs at Hdt. 2.171 in the sense of 'representations' in Egyptian mystery cult. There is a full discussion of these and related notices in Pickard-Cambridge (n. 2), 1st edn 229–37, 253, 271 = 2nd edn 135–44, 163, 175.

[34] Pollux 4.104; Plut. *Lycurgus* 17.3–18.1.

[35] The passages attesting the earlier practice are Xen. *Lac. Pol.* 2.9 and Plut. *Aristeides* 17.8. Plut. *Lycurgus* 18.1 mentions the later practice of simply lining young men up and flogging them as confirmatory evidence for the seriousness with which Spartan youths took their thieving; this is the closest we come to an explicit link between the thieving and the cultic practices for Artemis Orthia. On the cult in general, see S. Wide, *Lakonische Kulte* (Leipzig, 1893), 97–102; R. M. Dawkins, *The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta* (London, 1929), esp. 399–407 (H. J. Rose, 'The cult of Artemis Orthia'); Fritz Graf, 'Das Götterbild aus dem Taurerland', *Antike Welt* 4 (1979), 33–41 and id., *Nordionische Kulte* (Rome, 1985), 86–90.

[36] Pickard-Cambridge (n. 2), 1st edn 142–8, 225–84 = 2nd edn 107–12, 132–87; Aristotle *Poetics* 1448a29–1448b4.

[37] Megarian Comedy: Aristoph. *Wasps* 57 with Σ ad loc.; Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 4.2 1123a20 with the scholiast Aspasius ad loc. Artemis Orthosia at Megara: *IG* VII 113.

[38] See in particular the studies of the new finds from Brauron by Lily Kahil, *AK Beiheft* 1 (1963), 5–29, *AK* 8 (1965), 20–33, *AK* 20 (1977), 86–98.

[39] Axel Seeberg, 'From padded dancers to comedy', in A. Griffiths (ed.), *Stage Directions:*

δεικηλίκται we can feel fairly confident that we have here the most plausible context for the emergence of comic drama from ritual. Seeberg raises the possibility, and the δεικηλίκται evidence strengthens it, but his admirable caution is justified. Among hypotheses about the origin of comedy that assume a ritual origin, this is much the likeliest; but comic drama may have arisen from partly or wholly non-ritual origins.

Two final points about masks. Leonhardt has suggested on linguistic grounds that Aristotle may have derived tragedy from the phallic songs and comedy from dithyramb, and Lloyd-Jones has recently expressed his inclination to accept this on the ground that the phallic songs may have been performed in masks.[40] This is pure surmise, but is presumably meant to meet a very real difficulty in the usual theory, namely that masks were *not* worn in dithyramb, the alleged ritual precursor of tragedy.[41] We would therefore have to assume that masks came into tragedy not by organic ritual inheritance but by transference from some ritual other than dithyramb. Aristotle himself clearly did not regard the mask as a cultic inheritance; his assumption that it was an addition within the parallel but distinct developments of tragedy and of comedy means that he regarded the mask as a step forward on the teleological road to perfection, in other words as serving a specifically dramatic purpose, rather than as a remnant of a cultic past. Of course Aristotle was making assumptions, but on this question one may well be inclined to follow his instinct rather than that of those moderns for whom the mask serves to put a cultic face on dramatic representation. All this makes it doubly difficult to justify passing over as unexciting what seems the obvious and sufficient reason for wearing masks in drama, namely that they help performers look less like themselves and more like the characters they are representing.

The Dionysiac spirit and satyr-play

The fourth argument, often connected with the convention of masking, is that drama is a manifestation of Dionysiac ecstasy, a 'standing outside of the self' and exploration of otherness. As a fuzzy general metaphor this seems vaguely plausible, but Dionysiac ecstasy is really about escaping from individuality as such—conforming one's soul to the *thiasos*, emptying it to be filled by the god, *enthusiasmos*—not about representing or entering into a particular individuality other than one's own. The verbatim delivery from memory of highly stylized language requires an intense concentration and self-possession inimical to the techniques used in Greek cult to induce ecstasy. Engaging in actual maenadism and representing a maenad in a tragedy are radically different things, and ritual ecstasy is very far from being the obvious source of dramatic acting. The playing of roles seems in fact to be a human universal, and hardly requires special explanation. It is worth reminding ourselves

Essays in Ancient Drama in honour of E. W. Handley. BICS Suppl. 66 (London, 1995), 1–12. No necessary connection with Dionysus: 2–3 with n. 9, 7 with n. 33 (citing A. Greifenhagen and T. H. Carpenter for the view that 'borrowing in Dionysiac contexts from the iconography of padded dancers does not amount to "replacement" and does not imply that the dancers are Dionysiac in origin'), 9; 'mock-foreigners': 9; cautious connections: 10–12 (citing the reconstruction of the Orthia ritual by Graf [n. 35, 1985]); padded dancers with masks: 12, n. 67. I am very grateful to *CQ*'s referee for drawing my attention to this article.

[40] Leonhardt (n. 13, q.v.); Hugh Lloyd-Jones, 'Ritual and tragedy', in F. Graf (ed.), *Ansichten griechischer Rituale: Geburtstags-Symposium für Walter Burkert* (Stuttgart, 1998), 271–95, at 274–5.

[41] See e.g. Pickard-Cambridge (n. 2), 1st edn 50 = 2nd edn 34.

too that this association of cultic ecstasy, ritual licence, and 'otherness' with drama in general and the tragic mask in particular is a creation of modern scholarship that has no basis in any Greek text.

We are dealing here with the origins of tragedy, but there is a general feeling that comedy and satyr-play are markedly Dionysiac in spirit, so let us address that issue briefly. I have given reasons for believing that mummery and hilarity are not confined to the cult of Dionysus; they are at least as prominent in that of Artemis, and persistent traditions linked the origin of comedy with the Peloponnesus, where 'padded dancers' turn up on Corinthian vases far earlier than in Athens.[42] But what about satyr-play? Surely this must have arisen from Dionysiac cult? Both literary tradition and, much more importantly, depictions on vases, show that satyr-play was much the latest of the three genres to develop—the depictions only begin in the second quarter of the fifth century—and so it is hard to believe that satyr-play developed directly from ritual and independently of the tragic and comic drama that pre-existed it.[43] In his splendid paper 'Why satyrs are good to represent', Lissarrague shows that in vase-painting satyrs are sometimes amusing antitypes of men and gods in a quite general way, without reference either to satyr drama or to Dionysus: the satyr Heracles or the satyr Perseus, for example, or satyrs engaged in fishing, athletics, or sacrifice. Satyrs, that is to say, have a role of their own, independently of Dionysus and cult, as inhabitants of a world of 'displacement and parody'—and it is this role that corresponds best to what we know of satyr-play.[44] As Parker puts it, 'Like the Satyrs and Silens, not "country gods" these, but wholly mythological beings, Pan lives on the imaginative boundary between man and beast.'[45] Satyr-drama, then, whether in point of origin or of function, is surely about satyrs as general antitypes rather than satyrs as some sort of remnant of a Dionysiac ritual. Athenians may well have felt that satyr-play was an appropriate feature of a festival of Dionysus, but that in itself would tell us nothing about the origins of satyr-play, let alone about those of tragedy.

The billygoat prize

The fifth claim we have to deal with is that the prize of a goat points to Dionysus, and we can deal with it briefly. Billygoats are well-established offerings not only to Dionysus but also to Pan and Apollo, who are both closely connected with choral performance in tragedy and elsewhere; in Theocritus billygoats are sacrificed to Apollo and the Muses and are the prizes in song-contests. Goats as such are among the commonest sacrificial victims in the Greek world, and are frequently offered to Artemis in particular.[46] On the assumption that tragedy originated in Dionysiac cult,

[42] Ibid., esp. 1st edn 261–70 = 2nd edn 169–74.

[43] Ibid., esp. 1st edn 92–5 = 2nd edn 65–7. F. Brommer, *Satyroi* (Würzburg, 1937), 36 concluded that satyr-play was 'keine Vorform der Tragödie, sondern eine neue Erfindung'. See also Burkert (n. 2), 89–90. Paintings of or inspired by tragic drama are harder to detect than those inspired by comic drama and its precursors (see e.g. Richard Green and Eric Handley, *Images of the Greek Theatre* [London, 1995], 25–6). We have many sixth-century depictions of pre- or proto-comic choruses; it is hard to understand why, if satyr drama was comparable in antiquity to comedy, we have no early depictions of satyr choruses.

[44] François Lissarrague, 'Why satyrs are good to represent', in J. J. Winkler and F. I. Zeitlin (edd.), *Nothing to Do with Dionysos?* (Princeton, 1990), 228–36; quotation: 232. The standard collection of material is F. Brommer, *Satyrspiele*[2] (Berlin, 1959).

[45] Robert Parker, *Athenian Religion: A History* (Oxford, 1996), 167.

[46] See Will Richter, *RE* II 19 (1972), 398–433 s.v. 'Ziege', at 422–3, 426.

Burkert equated the goat as contest prize with the goat as sacrifical offering to Dionysus, and this has become a sort of orthodoxy.[47] But all the name really entitles us to conclude is that sometime, somewhere a billygoat was the prize, and this in itself is no argument that tragedy originated in cult, let alone cult of Dionysus.

Some tragic choruses

This brings us to the sixth and final principal contention, that choral dance-and-song are distinctively Dionysiac, and also to the issue of whether we can detect anything especially Dionysiac about the plays themselves. Here I find myself in disagreement with some of the conclusions of Henrichs, whose articles on choral self-referentiality and the Dionysiac nature of the tragic chorus are perhaps the most influential statements of an approach to tragedy that has been taken up by many other scholars.[48] What one might roughly call the ritual interpretation of Greek tragedy has in the last decade or so been in a kind of boom period, and Henrichs expresses the result of this work as follows:

> From now on, students of tragedy will have to reckon with the fact that in their efforts to connect tragedy more directly with its cultic context (and to revitalize the Dionysiac roots of Attic drama?), the tragic poets set individual characters, entire plays, and indeed the tragic genre as a whole in a distinct Dionysiac ambience.

Focusing in particular on references by choruses to choral activity, Henrichs argues that

> More than any character onstage, the tragic chorus in the orchestra collectively embodies . . . continuity of ritual performance; it does so not as a voice in the drama, nor as a citizen of the *polis*, but as a self-conscious performer of the Dionysiac dance in the orchestra and as an active ritual participant in the festival of Dionysos.[49]

Henrichs then, like Bierl, takes the view that the chorus has an ever-present Dionysiac and ritual identity, and that this constitutes an opportunity for metatheatricality the poets regularly avail themselves of, sometimes breaking or straining the dramatic illusion in the process.

The *locus classicus* for this interpretation is the second stasimon of *Oedipus Tyrannus*. The chorus, in part reacting to Jocasta's rejection of oracular prophecy, ask:

[47] Burkert (n. 2), 93.

[48] Albert Henrichs, '"Why should I dance?": choral self-referentiality in Greek tragedy', *Arion*, Series 3, 3:1 (1994/5), 56–111. See also id., *'Warum soll ich denn tanzen?': Dionysisches im Chor der griechischen Tragödie. Lectio Teubneriana* 4 (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1996) and 'Dancing in Athens, dancing on Delos: some patterns of choral projection in Euripides', *Philologus* 140 (1996), 48–62. I confine my discussion to the earlier article, which has been the most influential; the later lecture and article are full of good things, but from our present point of view rather employ Henrichs's general mode of interpretation than justify it with arguments different from those in the earlier article. It should be made clear that Henrichs ([1994/5], 56–7, cf. 'Dancing in Athens', 48) is very cautious about the *origins* of tragedy; he attributes a ritual role to the tragic chorus on the basis not of the Dionysiac origin of tragedy but of its context in a Dionysiac festival.

[49] Henrichs (n. 48, 1994/5), 57, 69–70. Henrichs provides very full references to 'ritualist' interpretations; among other and more recent studies that are ritualist (or in Goldhill's case rather 'collectivist') in their general orientation, I focus below on the articles of Nagy (n. 74) and Goldhill (n. 19), but see also e.g. Paul Cartledge, '"Deep plays": theatre as process in Greek civic life', in *Cambridge Companion* (n. 1), 3–35, and especially David Wiles, *Greek Theatre Performance* (Cambridge, 2000), ch. 2.

'If such actions are held in honour, why should I dance?' (*εἰ γὰρ αἱ τοιαίδε πράξεις τίμιαι, | τί δεῖ με χορεύειν;*, 895–6). The metatheatrical issue really hangs on this one line, but it is important to note that, as often, the corresponding lines in the antistrophe echo these, making a similar point: 'And Apollo is nowhere manifest in honours; the divine order is perishing' (*κοὐδαμοῦ τιμαῖς Ἀπόλλων ἐμφανής· | ἔρρει δὲ τὰ θεῖα*, 909–10).

The question 'Why should I dance?' has been the subject of a long-standing debate, many scholars hesitating to follow Wilamowitz, Dodds, and others in concluding that it breaks the dramatic illusion.[50] Dodds says:

> If by this they mean merely 'Why should I, a Theban elder, dance?' the question is irrelevant and even slightly ludicrous; the meaning is surely 'Why should I, an Athenian citizen, continue to serve in a chorus?' In speaking of themselves as a chorus, they step out of the play into the contemporary world, as Aristophanes' choruses do in the *parabasis*.

From a different point of view, Rusten comments that this is 'an odd question coming from the old men of Thebes, who as characters in this play (rather than performers) are not really dancing at all'.[51] Henrichs himself prefers not to speak of an outright break in the dramatic illusion. He takes the view that the line works both theatrically and metatheatrically, so to speak, but goes on to say that 'the dancing to which the Theban elders refer is more properly, and more immediately, a function of their choral identity than it is of their dramatic character'.[52]

My own conclusion is that there is no break of any kind in the dramatic illusion here, indeed none anywhere in the tragic texts, and that this issue reveals some interpretive pitfalls awaiting Dionysiac interpreters of tragedy. Rusten's comment appears to imply, as Dodds's certainly does, that it is odd or unseemly for old men to dance. There is as far as I can see no justification for this; we have for example the wonderful parodos of the chorus of initiates in the *Frogs*:

> *Ἴακχ' ὦ Ἴακχε,*
> *νυκτέρου τελετῆς φωσφόρος ἀστήρ.*
> *φλογὶ φέγγεται δὲ λειμών·*
> *γόνυ πάλλεται γερόντων·* 345
> *ἀποσείονται δὲ λύπας*
> *χρονίους τ' ἐτῶν παλαιῶν ἐνιαυτοὺς*
> *ἱερᾶς ὑπὸ τιμᾶς.*

It would be a mistake to concoct from the fun Euripides pokes at Cadmus and Teiresias in *Bacchae* a Greek axiom that for senior citizens dancing is *infra dig*. What about Rusten's notion that 'Why should we dance?' is an odd thing to be said by characters who are not dancing? A first response is that it does not matter whether as characters they are dancing at this moment: they do not ask 'Why *am* I dancing?' but 'Why *should* I dance?' The linguistic pragmatics here are the same as in English. Were one to say: 'If that's the sort of stupid thing the government's doing, why should I pay

[50] U. von Wilamowitz on *Heracles* 685–6 (2.148); E. R. Dodds, 'On misunderstanding the *Oedipus Rex*', *G&R* 13 (1966), 37–49, at 46 = *The Ancient Concept of Progress* (Oxford, 1973), 64–77, at 75. Further bibliography in Henrichs (n. 48, 1994/5). *Contra*, see most recently Lloyd-Jones (n. 40), 289–90.

[51] Jeffrey Rusten, *Sophocles, Oidipous Tyrannos: Commentary* (Bryn Mawr, 1990), 46.

[52] Henrichs (n. 48, 1994/5), 67.

my taxes?', it would not be implied that one is paying one's taxes at the moment, merely that one occasionally does so. Since older Greek men do in fact dance, and since they do not have to *be* dancing in order to wonder whether dancing is any longer appropriate, the question is whether ceasing to dance is a comprehensible reaction to injustice and impiety being honoured, which in this context stands for 'the divine order perishing'. Can dancing be employed to typify human response to the divine order flourishing? There is no doubt that in the Greek world it can. The privative adjectives ἄχορος and ἀχόρευτος, 'danceless', are used as general adjectives for 'joyless' or 'wretched', and Sophocles applies the one to death at *Oedipus at Colonus* 1223 and the other to the situation in the house of Atreus in the context of a prayer at *Electra* 1069. The most illuminating, indeed to my mind decisive parallel for our passage was first noticed by Ehrenberg.[53] It is a fragment of Phrynichus the comedian (9 KA):

> ἀνὴρ χορεύει καὶ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ καλά.
> βούλει Διοπείθη μεταδράμω καὶ τύμπανα;
>
> The man is dancing and all's well with the god.
> Do you want me to run and get Diopeithes and the drums?

As Ehrenberg points out, this is the positive way of expressing the same correlation of dancing with the prosperity of the divine order that Sophocles expresses negatively here, where 'Why should I dance?' corresponds to 'the divine order is perishing'. Another excellent parallel for the correlation of dancing, including by old men, with general prosperity in a religious context is a passage from Aristophanes' *Ploutus* (757–61):

> οἱ δ' ἠκολούθουν κατόπιν ἐστεφανωμένοι
> γελῶντες εὐφημοῦντες· ἐκτυπεῖτο δὲ
> ἐμβὰς γερόντων εὐρύθμοις προβήμασιν.
> ἀλλ' εἶ' ἁπαξάπαντες ἐξ ἑνὸς λόγου
> ὀρχεῖσθε καὶ σκιρτᾶτε καὶ χορεύετε·

I conclude that, far from being an oddity, the elders' correlation of their dancing with the prosperity of the divine order is practically a topos of Greek poetry.[54]

What of the fact that the chorus, as characters, are not dancing when they say this, but, as performers, are? This is surely a question of fundamental dramatic convention; of course Greeks no more spoke in iambic trimeters than Elizabethans in blank verse, and groups of Theban elders will seldom have broken spontaneously into choral effusions on the order of the universe. If we can take it for granted that only a very dim spectator indeed would be constantly wondering how on earth these fellows could be singing extemporaneously and in unison about something that had just happened, or why they were pretending to be women, we can surely assume likewise that a chorus's reference to dancing does not in itself suffice to transform the normal discourse situation of tragic drama, which regularly excludes direct address of the audience by

[53] Victor Ehrenberg, *The People of Aristophanes*[3] (Oxford, 1962), 23, n. 7; Henrichs (n. 48, 1994/5), 99, n. 58 refers to Ehrenberg, whose observation, however, makes against Henrichs's reading of the *O.T.* passage. See now William Slater, *GRBS* 41 (2001), 99–121.

[54] Cf. also Eur. *Ba.* 206–9, Pl. *Laws* 665–6.

performers. There is nothing in the tragic texts that can only be explained on the hypothesis that Athenians were always simultaneously conscious of tragic choruses as both characters and performers.

Henrichs has analysed from a ritual point of view the choral odes in Sophocles known by a traditional misnomer as hyporchemes; one of the criteria the ancient scholars used to identify this sort of ode was explicit reference by the chorus to dancing, and it is on this aspect that Henrichs focuses. He detects in these odes a persistent Dionysiac quality, which he sees as instrumental in collapsing the distinction between the chorus within the dramatic illusion and the choristers at the festival of Dionysus. Henrichs's analysis is incisive and illuminating, and the Dionysiac quality he finds seems to me really to be there. The only misleading aspect of his argument is precisely the assumption that the choristers' role as participants in a Dionysiac ritual fundamentally conditions interpretation of the odes. The main result of this is that he consistently privileges Dionysus and Dionysiac themes over other, often more prominent divinities and themes. The third stasimon of *Oedipus Tyrannus* (1086–1109) is Henrichs's first case:

εἴπερ ἐγὼ μάντις εἰμὶ καὶ κατὰ γνώμαν ἴδρις,
οὐ τὸν Ὄλυμπον ἀπείρων, ὦ Κιθαιρών, οὐκ ἔσηι τὰν αὔριον
πανσέληνον μὴ οὐ σέ γε τὸν πατριώταν Οἰδίπου
καὶ τροφὸν καὶ ματέρ' αὔξειν,
καὶ χορεύεσθαι πρὸς ἡμῶν, ὡς ἐπίηρα φέροντα τοῖς ἐμοῖς τυράννοις.
ἰήϊε Φοῖβε, σοὶ δὲ ταῦτ' ἀρέστ' εἴη.

τίς σε, τέκνον, τίς σ' ἔτικτε τᾶν μακραιώνων ἄρα
Πανὸς ὀρεσσιβάτα πατρὸς πελασθεῖσ', ἢ σέ γ' εὐνάτειρά τις
Λοξίου; τῷ γὰρ πλάκες ἀγρόνομοι πᾶσαι φίλαι·
εἴθ' ὁ Κυλλάνας ἀνάσσων,
εἴθ' ὁ Βακχεῖος θεὸς ναίων ἐπ' ἄκρων ὀρέων <σ'> εὕρημα δέξατ' ἔκ του
Νυμφᾶν Ἑλικωνίδων, αἷς πλεῖστα συμπαίζει.

Here the chorus express the hope that whatever story lies behind Oedipus' being picked up as a foundling on Mount Cithaeron will prove to be a matter for celebration. They predict that on the morrow they will be honouring Cithaeron in choral dance, and then speculate about Oedipus' paternity: was Pan the father, or Loxias, or Hermes, or Dionysus? I have called these odes 'euphoric', because in each case the chorus is ecstatically happy, but their happiness is premature. It seems to me that the Dionysiac ambience of these odes has very specifically to do with their role in the drama: Dionysiac choruses above all were associated with madness, and at these crisis points the choruses are temporarily mad with a kind of euphoric frenzy. This suggests that Sophocles viewed this sort of ritual with a certain ironic distance, but however that may be, these choruses certainly fulfil an ironic function in the drama. For Henrichs, by contrast, their role is more properly and more immediately ritual than dramatic, and in the process of interpreting them in cultic terms Henrichs plays up the Dionysiac and downplays other components—which, since a cultic focus is naturally narrower than a literary, makes sense in his terms. Thus in this ode Henrichs identifies Mount Cithaeron as 'the personified Dionysiac mountain', despite the fact that Sophocles is exclusively treating it as the putative birthplace of Oedipus and placing three other potential divine fathers on it, in an ode whose sole divine

addressee is Phoebus Apollo. When the truth about Oedipus' birth emerges in the following episode, according to Henrichs, 'Instantly, the Dionysiac mountain appears in a different light, as a place of grief rather than choral celebration, and reminds us of the polarities inherent in the tragic perception of Dionysos.'[55] The fact is, however, that not a word is said about Dionysus in the episode, and I conclude that this interpretation is based entirely on the choristers' alleged ritual status rather than on any textual prompt.

So similarly in the second stasimon of *Aias* (693–718):

ἔφριξ' ἔρωτι, περιχαρὴς δ' ἀνεπτάμαν.
ἰὼ ἰὼ Πὰν Πάν,
ὦ Πὰν Πὰν ἁλίπλαγκτε, Κυλλανίας χιονοκτύπου
πετραίας ἀπὸ δειράδος φάνηθ', ὦ
θεῶν χοροποί' ἄναξ, ὅπως μοι
Μύσια Κνώσι' ὀρχήματ' αὐτοδαῆ ξυνὼν ἰάψῃς·
νῦν γὰρ ἐμοὶ μέλει χορεῦσαι.
'Ικαρίων δ' ὑπὲρ πελαγέων μολὼν ἄναξ Ἀπόλλων
ὁ Δάλιος εὔγνωστος
ἐμοὶ ξυνείη διὰ παντὸς εὔφρων.

ἔλυσεν αἰνὸν ἄχος ἀπ' ὀμμάτων Ἄρης.
ἰὼ ἰώ, νῦν αὖ,
νῦν, ὦ Ζεῦ, πάρα λευκὸν εὐάμερον πελάσαι φάος
θοᾶν ὠκυάλων νεῶν, ὅτ' Αἴας
λαθίπονος πάλιν, θεῶν δ' αὖ
πάνθυτα θέσμι' ἐξήνυσ' εὐνομίᾳ σέβων μεγίστᾳ.
πάνθ' ὁ μέγας χρόνος μαραίνει,
κοὐδὲν ἀναύδητον φατίσαιμ' ἄν, εὖτέ γ' ἐξ ἀέλπτων
Αἴας μετανεγνώσθη
θυμοῦ τ' Ἀτρείδαις μεγάλων τε νεικέων.

Here the chorus are ecstatic about the apparent good news of Aias' change of mind and invoke the god Pan as 'dance-master of the gods' to lead their euphoric dancing; at the end of the strophe they invoke Delian Apollo, who is also regularly associated with dancing, and in the antistrophe mention Ares and Zeus. Dionysus is not mentioned at all, but according to Henrichs 'the Pan of this stanza also represents the realm of Dionysos and Dionysiac enthusiasm in the same way that Mt. Kithairon stands for the Dionysiac world and its tensions in . . . *Oidipous Tyrannos*'.[56] I would agree that Dionysus is 'present' in this ode in the sense that he is so much *the* god of euphoric dance that such a context brings him to mind more or less willy-nilly. But Henrichs's formulation comes perilously close to effacing the gods Sophocles has actually had his chorus invoke in favour of the god who *ought* to be invoked by choristers engaging in Dionysiac ritual.

Much the same is true of Henrichs's interpretation of the hyporchematic lyric in *Trachiniae* (205–21) celebrating the announcement of Heracles' homecoming:

[55] Henrichs (n. 48, 1994/5), 72 (both quotations).
[56] Henrichs (n. 48, 1994/5), 75, cf. 102, n. 84.

ἀνολολυξάτω δόμος
ἐφεστίοις ἀλαλαγαῖς
ὁ μελλόνυμφος, ἐν δὲ κοινὸς ἀρσένων
ἴτω κλαγγὰ τὸν εὐφαρέτραν
Ἀπόλλω προστάταν,
ὁμοῦ δὲ παιᾶνα παι-
ᾶν' ἀνάγετ', ὦ παρθένοι,
βοᾶτε τὰν ὁμόσπορον
Ἄρτεμιν Ὀρτυγίαν ἐλαφαβόλον
ἀμφίπυρον γείτονάς τε Νύμφας.
αἴρομαι οὐδ' ἀπώσομαι
τὸν αὐλόν, ὦ τύραννε τᾶς ἐμᾶς φρενός.
ἰδού μ' ἀναταράσσει,
εὐοῖ,
ὁ κισσὸς ἄρτι βακχίαν
ὑποστρέφων ἅμιλλαν.
ἰὼ ἰὼ παιάν.

Apollo and Artemis are invoked by name, and as the chorus's euphoria peaks they sing of ivy and a Bacchic contest, but do not name Dionysus. Here, according to Henrichs, 'choral self-referentiality acquires a distinct polytheistic dimension as non-Dionysiac rituals, and divinities other than Dionysos, enter to play subsidiary roles in defining choral performance'.[57] 'Acquires a distinct polytheistic dimension' and 'subsidiary roles' are telling phrases, as though attending the festivals of various Greek gods were a sort of serial monotheism, or as though the named gods here were pushy intruders without choral credentials into the realm of song-and-dance owned by the unnamed god. *All Greek gods are connected with song-and-dance*, a fact as relevant to our speculations about the origins of tragedy as to our interpretation of the tragic texts. *Dionysus is not invoked in any of these choruses*, unless in a cryptic or Masonic-handshake sort of way. Surely we should be wary of a mode of interpretation that subordinates the immediate experience of carefully differentiated

[57] Ibid. 79; cf. 106, n. 107, where Henrichs notes (after Renate Schlesier) that 'the most conspicuous maenadic implement, the *thyrsos*, is not mentioned. Unlike the pipe and the ivy, the *thyrsos* had no place in the convention of choral competition. Had Sophocles introduced the *thyrsos* here, he would have jeopardized the delicate balance between the overall dramatic identity of this chorus and their fleeting Dionysiac aspirations.' The last phrase captures the Dionysiac aspect of the ode very well. It seems doubtful that the chorus here holds or wears ivy; if they do not, there is no reason for them not to *refer* also to the *thyrsos*; if they do, there is no reason for them not to carry a *thyrsos* as well; certainly the *thyrsos* is both carried and referred to in other plays. The constraint of the 'convention of choral competition', which is presumably a rather loaded equivalent of 'tragic competition' (for Henrichs is surely not suggesting that the conventions of dithyramb applied also to tragic choruses), does not really come into it, and Sophocles must have *chosen* not to mention the *thyrsos* here. It is in any case clearly a chancy enterprise to imply (as Henrichs seems to) that Sophocles would probably have mentioned the *thyrsos* if convention allowed. The 'delicate balance' Henrichs speaks of seems more to the point, but this kind of internal dramatic constraint counts against rather than for the claim that the ode in some measure transposes us from the dramatic to the cultic realm.

I pass over Henrichs's discussion of the fifth stasimon of *Antigone*, as he himself acknowledges that 'the members of this chorus . . . do not refer directly to their actual performance in the orchestra' (79); for an analysis of the Dionysiac aspect of this ode, laying special emphasis on dance, see Scott Scullion, 'Dionysos and katharsis in *Antigone*', *CA* 17 (1998), 96–122.

poetry both to an abstract essence of Dionysus that recurs with a certain sameness and to the straitening confines of a single, narrowly defined ritual context.

In a valuable recent discussion of 'Later Euripidean music', Csapo insists on the Dionysiac quality of Euripidean and other 'New Music'; this too is based largely on a prior commitment to the Dionysiac essence of drama, and Csapo's identification of tragic passages as Dionysiac is far more arbitrary than that of Henrichs. Csapo collects references to instrumental music and to dance in Euripidean choruses; it is only a slight oversimplification to say that in the interpretation of his data Csapo assumes that all references to pipes and Panpipes, and all references to circular dancing, may be regarded as Dionysiac.[58] Of the thirty-two references to instrumental music (including seven to lyre music) he counts, Csapo classifies twenty-three as Dionysiac. It is not entirely clear how he makes up the twenty-three, but they must include some combination of what I would describe as two references to the pipe used to give the beat for rowers, five to pipes played by Pan himself or by shepherds, two to piping in the context of the cult of Cybele; six to piping in general contexts of celebratory dance, weddings, and feasts, sometimes in connection with the Muses, Aphrodite, and perhaps Athena; and three metaphorical uses with no connection to Dionysus; as well as seven references to specifically Dionysiac piping, one of which involves syncretism with Cybele and four of which come from *Bacchae*.[59] Pipe music, like choral music, is confined neither to Dionysiac nor to cultic employment, and there is no reason to connect any of the passages I have classified as 'general' with Dionysus. Pan and the Great Mother Cybele have perfectly good cults, myths, and worshippers of their own. Nothing in the Pan passages here elicits a connection with Dionysus; and though Cybele (like Pan) sometimes, as in the *Bacchae*, joins the equally ecstatic Dionysus in a great syncretistic *thiasos*, there is no justification for treating her as a mere stand-in for Dionysus, particularly in such a context as the second stasimon of the *Helen* (1301–68), where she is dominant. In sum, only seven of Csapo's thirty-two passages may legitimately be described as Dionysiac; it is, however, clearly preferable to leave the four passages from *Bacchae* out of account, giving a ratio of three Dionysiac references to instrumental music out of a total of twenty-eight.

Much the same is true of Csapo's classification of Euripidean choral references to dancing. Rather than providing numbers, Csapo here confines himself to the statement that 'a great many . . . are of an archetypal Dionysiac cultic variety' (418). Of the twenty-eight references he collects, however, fourteen are associated with divinities other than Dionysus (Athena, a Delphic god/goddess, Hera, Artemis, Pan, Demeter and Kore, Zeus); six are metaphorical, referring to stars, Nereids, and dolphins and eliciting no association with Dionysus; and four are general references to wedding and celebratory dances; this leaves eight Dionysiac dances, of which four are in *Bacchae*.[60]

[58] Eric Csapo, 'Later Euripidean music', in M. Cropp, K. Lee, and D. Sansone (edd.), *Euripides and Tragic Theatre in the Late Fifth Century* = *Illinois Classical Studies* 24–5 (1999–2000), 399–426, esp. 418–22.

[59] Ibid. 420–1. Csapo (418) speaks of thirty examples rather than the thirty-two he tabulates. My classification: Lyre: *Alc.* 446–7, *Med.* 422ff., *Hipp.* 1135, *H.F.* 350, *Hyps.* P. Oxy. 852, *Ph.* 823–4, 1028; Rowing: *El.* 435, *I.T.* 1124–9; Pan/shepherds: *Phaethon* 71, *El.* 702, *Ion* 489–501, *Or.* 145–6, *I.A.* 576ff.; Cybele: *Hel.* 1308, 1346ff.; General: *Hcl.* 892, *El.* 716, *H.F.* 683–4, *Tro.* 543 (which I would interpret as a general celebratory dance rather than a cultic dance for Athena), *I.A.* 1036, 1085–6; Metaphorical: *El.* 879, *I.T.* 431–2, *Hel.* 1483; Dionysiac: *H.F.* 878ff., *Hel.* 1362ff. (in close connection with the Cybele passages preceding it in the same ode), *Ph.* 791, *Ba.* 124ff., 156ff., 380, 561.

[60] I give no list as my classification corresponds very closely to the descriptions on Csapo's table 3a (n. 58, 420–1); *Ion* 495–6, however, clearly refers to a dance not for Athena but for Pan.

If we again leave the *Bacchae* passages out of account, it turns out that a modest four of twenty-four Euripidean choral references to dance are to Dionysiac dance. It is interesting to compare with all this Csapo's count for Sophocles of three references to Dionysiac music out of a total of fourteen: Sophoclean music is not very Dionysiac, but it is as Dionysiac as that of Euripides.[61]

Here again then we see that there is no firm basis for the view that tragic choruses are markedly Dionysiac, and also that the *interpretatio Dionysiaca* can be a highly arbitrary mode of reading tragic drama.

III. TRAGEDY, CHORUSES, AND ATHENS

'Nothing to do with Dionysus.'[62] This phrase is not a piece of evidence one wants to put any weight on, but it seems to me to capture succinctly a basic truth about Greek tragedy. Whoever coined it was doubtless aware that at Athens tragedy was under the patronage of Dionysus and performed at his festivals, and the phrase must be based on the observation that the *form and content* of tragic drama had no real connection with Dionysiac cult.

Tragedy obviously owes a good deal to choral tradition, but choruses are common to all the gods, and are not confined to ritual employment or cultic themes. Tragedy owes far more to epic, lyric, and elegy, as Aristotle clearly thought, and these are not inherently cultic at all. There is far more evidence for the sort of development sketched in Herington's *Poetry into Drama* than for the emergence of tragedy from dithyramb by a kind of spontaneous ritual generation.[63] The nature and development of

Csapo speaks on the one hand of 'traditional Dionysiac cultic dance' (418), but on the other hand, noting that some circular dances are explicitly paians, says '. . . this is perfectly consistent with the rule. The label itself emphasizes the traditional, cultic nature of the dance. Indeed the choral imagery of tragedy allows no easy opposition between Apollonian and Dionysiac music' (419). The last point, which is certainly true, indicates the degree to which the tragedians, and especially Euripides, are interested in music as such, and willing to blur precisely its 'traditional cultic nature' for literary effect; this hardly provides justification for treating any and all references to dancing as evidence that the poets were concerned primarily with the traditional or the cultic, or for treating the traditional and cultic as equivalent to the Dionysiac.

[61] Csapo (n. 58), 418, n. 36. I would classify *Aias* 1202 as general rather than Dionysiac, giving a total of two out of fourteen, a slightly lower percentage than that of Euripides. The material Csapo presents from monody in his table 3b (423) is even less Dionysiac than the choral, and provides a number of further examples of the blending of musical genres and blurring of cultic distinctions.

[62] *Οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον*: Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 1.1.5; Apostol. 13.42; *Suda* o 806 Adler; Phot. 357.5; Zenobios Gott. 1.137 on 5.40. See Pickard-Cambridge (n. 2), 1st edn 166–8 = 2nd edn 124–6.

[63] John Herington, *Poetry into Drama: Early Tragedy and the Greek Poetic Tradition* (Berkeley, 1985). 'A kind of spontaneous ritual generation': Nagy (n. 74) employs an explicitly evolutionary model of 'splits in function' (49) with 'actors playing roles differentiated out of the ranks of the chorus' (46). See also B. M. W. Knox in *CAH*^{2} V (1992), 269: 'By the fifth century the cult of Dionysus was widespread in Greece, but it was only at Athens that it *gave birth to* the theatre' (my emphasis). Knox (270) goes on to retail the old canard that 'the origins of modern European drama offer a striking parallel: the key role played by the dramatic presentation of the Easter service, the trope known as *Quem quaeritis* . . .' (The trope is a very brief dialogue about the seeking of Jesus at the tomb used at the Easter vigil, Easter matins or Easter mass, sometimes in the form of a representation, sometimes as a processional.) Knox goes on to make the classic distinction between the Christian religion of the book and paganism, but this amounts to putting a veneer of anthropological circumspection on an untenable theory of the origins of modern drama, itself based on an analogy with Greek tragedy and first put forward by Charles Magnin,

Athenian tragedy and dithyramb should become clearer through an attempt to place the issues we have been discussing so far in their broader cultural and political contexts.

Athenian poetry, Athenian religion, and Athenian politics

In a well-known passage of the *Laws*, Plato complains of the emergence of ἄρχοντες μὲν τῆς ἀμούσου παρανομίας ποιηταὶ . . . ἀγνώμονες δὲ περὶ τὸ δίκαιον τῆς Μούσης καὶ τὸ νόμιμον, who mix up the εἴδη or 'genres' of μουσική, which were once kept rigidly separate. Among these genres he mentions 'prayers to the gods, which were called "hymns" ', the opposite genre of 'lamentations', 'paians', and 'the origin (γένεσις) of Dionysus, I suppose, called the dithyramb'. Formerly, those in charge of παίδευσις enforced order and silence at such performances, but nowadays there prevails 'the mob's unmusical cries' and 'the hand-clappings that show approval'; thus ἀντὶ ἀριστοκρατίας ἐν αὐτῇ (sc. τῇ μουσικῇ) θεατροκρατία τις πονηρὰ γέγονεν, where θεατροκρατία is clearly meant as a manifestation of δημοκρατία. In a later passage, Plato proposes to rectify the situation by 'consecrating (καθιερῶσαι) all dances and all songs', that is by prescribing the singing of particular hymns for particular gods at particular sacrifices according to a fixed calendar; here too he takes a swipe at what he sees as the βλασφημία of Athenian public sacrifices, with their crowds of choruses.[64]

Les origines du théâtre moderne ou Histoire du génie dramatique depuis le ier jusqu'au xvie siècle (Paris, 1839). This theory should have been given up long ago; the key works are E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage* (Oxford, 1903); Karl Young, *The Drama of the Mediaeval Church* (Oxford, 1933); and Benjamin Hunningher, *The Origin of the Theater* (New York, 1961). O. B. Hardison, Jr's *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore, 1965) has been very influential, but begs the question; it is essentially an elaborate work of liturgical antiquarianism and Roman Catholic apologetics, and Hardison's principal means of criticizing Chambers, Young, Hunningher, and others is by smearing them with imputations of 'paganism', 'Darwinism', 'Aryanism', and other scare-words (11–18). (See n. 89.)

[64] Plato, *Laws* 3, 700a–701b; quotations: 700d, 700a–b, 700c, 701a. *Laws* 7, 799a–802e; quotations: 799a, 800c–d. Plato is often taken to be criticizing the so-called 'New Music' in particular, but he places the 'good old days' as far back as the Persian war (698b, cf. 699c), and, as Csapo (n. 58) rightly stresses, the 'New Music' included dramatic music. Csapo detects a pronounced shift towards the 'professionalization' of music, as measured by the amount of singing in the plays and the proportion of it sung by actors, commencing in the late 420s. The data Csapo collects, however, show no very pronounced difference between Euripides and Sophocles on this score, so that Sophocles too ought to be counted a new musician. On his tables 1a–b, columns 3–4 (410–11) Csapo calculates the amount of lyric sung by chorus and actors together and by actors alone; if one takes these two modes of song together it emerges that the average amount of lyric sung by actors and chorus together as well as by actors alone averages 10.77 per cent in all of Euripides' plays, 12.92 in those from *El.* (*c.* 420 B.C.) onwards, whereas for Sophocles the figure for all plays is 11.08, for the last three plays (which everyone dates post-420) 16. This indicates that Sophocles is rather more given to these two modes of song than Euripides. It is clear that Sophocles prefers the combination of chorus and actors to actors singing without choral accompaniment, but the data on Csapo's tables 2a–b (413–14), which measure the percentage of all song given to actors, show that there is only a very marginal difference between the two poets on this score as well. Csapo suggests that there is a steady increase in this figure for Euripides (412); the figures, however, show no steady pattern of increase but rather great fluctuation. Csapo gets his result by isolating a seven-year 'decade' that includes the low-percentage *H.F.* but leaves the high-percentage *Ion* to be counted with the following 'decade', and by excluding altogether the data of both *Bacchae* and *I.A.* The only clear development is between the three plays preceding *Hipp.* and all the others; if we take the fourteen plays from *Hipp.* onward and divide them into two groups of seven, the percentages I calculate for the two groups are 37.28 for the first and 38.12 for the second. This corresponds very well to the average for Sophocles' last three plays, which is 38. The average for all Euripides is 32.45, that for all

There are several points to be made about these passages. Plato describes a set of parallel developments: separate genres are confounded; clear functional goals connected with gods, and an educational function monitored by authorities and based on tradition, give way to the purpose of mere entertainment of a harmful sort which is ignorant of and confounds tradition. As with all such lamentations by conservatives, it is unlikely that the golden age conjured up ever really existed, but the depiction of how things are nowadays is likely to reflect contemporary realities even as it caricatures them.

In this case we have other evidence that coheres with Plato's account. Of the six dithyrambs of Bacchylides we know, some of which probably belong to the first half of the fifth century, only one (19) even mentions Dionysus, two (16–17) seem intended for performance in Apolline contexts, and all six are essentially narratives of heroic myth. Pindar's dithyrambs more often give evidence of being connected with Dionysiac occasions, but they too narrated heroic myth. This primary evidence tends to be confirmed by Plato, who, when he speaks of narrative poetry, thinks first of dithyramb.[65]

So too dithyrambs were connected not only with festivals of Dionysus, but, even in Athens, with those of other gods. Athenian choruses probably performed dithyrambs for Apollo at Delos, and they certainly formed part of the program of the Athenian Thargelia, a festival of Apollo, and of the Lesser Panathenaia, Prometheia, and Hephaisteia—and as it happens in each of these cases we have fifth- or early-fourth-century evidence.[66]

It may well be relevant here that κύκλιος χορός comes to be used as equivalent to 'dithyramb' in the fifth century.[67] *Thriambos* and *dithyrambos* are used by Pratinas as epithets of Dionysus, and popular etymology too gave these terms a Dionysiac flavour, whereas κύκλιος χορός puts the accent on a formal component of a choral genre common to many festival competitions.[68] Moreover, as D'Angour has shown in a splendid article, the term κύκλιος χορός reflects a revolutionary change made in the 'shape' of the dithyrambic chorus in order to enhance the euphony of the choristers' singing by reducing the incidence of trailing sibilants—not a priority Plato would have

Sophocles (some of whose plays are of course much earlier than *Alc.*) 29.75. The conclusions seem clear that on this measure of 'professionalization' Sophocles is as much a 'new musician' as Euripides and that the development in this direction began well before the mid-420s (as the figures for Sophocles show). Plato's criticisms are in any case directed at trends he sees as characteristic of drama in general, and of Greek cult as well (as the last passage I cite in the text indicates), not at 'New Music' alone.

[65] *Rep.* 3.394c: ἡ δὲ δι' ἀπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ τοῦ ποιητοῦ· εὕροις δ' ἂν αὐτὴν μάλιστά που ἐν διθυράμβοις.

[66] Delos: Thuc. 3.104 combined with Str. 15.728, Call. *H.Delos* 300ff., *IG* XI 2.105–33. Thargelia: Antiph. *Choreut* 11; Lys. 21.1–2; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 56.3; *Suda* π 3130 Adler s.v. *Πύθιον*; *IG* II^2 1138–9, 3063–72. Lesser Panathenaia: Lys. 21.1–2. Prometheia and Hephaisteia: *IG* II^2 1138.10–11: Webster in Pickard-Cambridge (n. 2), 2nd edn, 4, n. 4 reports that 'D. M. Lewis suspects these references only refer to gymnasiarchs and torch-races', but this seems an impossible conclusion. The text honours a citizen of the tribe Pandion for winning a victory in his *choregia* of boys at the Dionysia and men at the Thargelia, and orders that further names be inscribed εἴ τις ἄλλος νενίκηκεν (in the same year) παισὶν ἢ ἀνδράσιν Διονύσια ἢ Θαργήλια ἢ Προμήθια ἢ Ἡφαίστια. In his commentary in *IG* II^2, Kirchner compares [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 3.4, which includes all these festivals among those involving *choregia*, and rightly rejects the interpretation going back to Böckh which Lewis seems to have favoured.

[67] On the currency of the term κύκλιος χορός, see e.g. Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos* (n. 18), 25.

[68] Pratinas fr. 1, *PMG* 708. On the etymology of διθύραμβος, see Pickard-Cambridge (n. 2), 1st edn 14–18 = 2nd edn 7–9.

approved of.[69] Lasos of Hermione, who made this change, belongs to the later sixth century, and is credited in the ancient tradition with instituting dithyrambic competitions at Athens.[70] It seems highly probable that the euphonic improvement for the sake of which Lasos succeeded in sacrificing the traditional shape of the chorus was motivated by the desire to gain a competitive edge in the performance of dithyrambs before an audience. One does not want to press the point, but all of this coheres with our other evidence for a trend of the sort Plato objects to beginning at a quite early date. Pickard-Cambridge tried to account for the Apolline dithyrambs on the basis of the association of Apollo and Dionysus at Delphi.[71] The evidence for performance at other festivals, however, coheres with the actual dithyrambs of Bacchylides to make it clear that the link between dithyramb and Dionysus had been broken by the fifth century, and at bottom the rather lame argument Pickard-Cambridge and many others make seems to be driven by the preconception that dithyramb had once been exclusively and continued in the fifth century to be predominantly Dionysiac, or as nearly so as to justify treating it as such. In fact, there is no reliable evidence that dithyramb was ever exclusively Dionysiac either in theme or in cultic context, let alone that its subject-matter was ever confined to Dionysiac myth. Certainly Plato's highly tendentious statement about dithyramb as 'the origins of Dionysus' is not such evidence, and is contradicted by every actual dithyramb we can read. The fact that Archilochus (120 West) calls dithyramb 'the song of Lord Dionysus' need not mean more than that it was so conceived in the particular cultic context on Paros Archilochus refers to, and tells us nothing about its content. At Athens Dionysiac festivals were probably the earliest, and certainly the most prestigious, but not the only context of dithyramb. The references to Dionysus in some of Pindar's dithyrambs only show that those dithyrambs were performed in Dionysiac contexts. The remains of Bacchylides, on the other hand, prove that dithyrambs have no necessary connection with Dionysus, may be connected with other gods, consist of heroic narrative, and are generally only briefly and parenthetically linked with the patron god of the particular festival.

We also have no warrant for assuming that Aristotle must have had evidence no longer available to us that led him to regard dithyramb as markedly Dionysiac. For his purposes it was sufficient that dithyramb was connected with Dionysus in the sense that it formed part of the programme of the Dionysia at Athens, that is of the specific context in which tragedy achieved its natural form. No doubt Aristotle, like Plato, saw dithyramb primarily as a narrative choral genre, and therefore as a natural pre-form in the organic growth of tragedy. It is clear that dithyramb had a 'special connection' with Dionysus, but Aristotle's use of it in his teleological history of tragedy is based on its contingent connection with Dionysus at the Athenian Dionysia, not, or at any rate not necessarily, on any assumption about its essential nature.

When Plato attacks democratized music—music uprooted from its cultic contexts and functions, divorced from its 'educational' purpose, and subjected to competition for popular approval—he is attacking what his proposal to 'consecrate' all dance and song indicates he thinks of as 'secularized' music, music that has come to resemble the other dangerously autonomous kinds of imaginative literature he wants to control,

[69] Armand D'Angour, 'How the dithyramb got its shape', *CQ* 47 (1997), 331–51.

[70] For Lasos as creator of the circular dithyramb, see ibid., 334–9, 346–50; for his establishment of the dithyrambic competition *Suda* λ 139 Adler s.v. *Λάσος*, cf. Ar. *Wasps* 1409–11; Pickard-Cambridge (n. 2), 1st edn 22–5 = 2nd edn 12–15.

[71] Pickard-Cambridge (n. 2), 1st edn 10 = 2nd edn 4.

and to be less like a tradition-bound ritual, an ideology-laden instrument of social cohesion, a musical training suitable for the totalitarian state. By 'ideology' here I mean a roughly systematized set of propositions or 'beliefs', practices and symbols used by a group possessing or seeking power to legitimize and foster acceptance of its exercise of coercive general authority. Plato is in these terms an 'ideologist', and his 'aristocratic' model of music is a feature of his ideology. Plato's totalitarianism is worked out very thoroughly and comprehensively, but his basic ideology is broadly compatible with the views of the Athenian 'right wing', and is totally at odds with the views of, and conditioned by the desire to control, those who are comfortable with the θεατροκρατία.[72] The importance of this for our purposes is that it makes clear that the aspects of music Plato talks about, which are very much relevant to tragic drama, were subject to political contestation in classical Athens. Many right-wingers will, like Plato, have objected on ideological grounds to the mixing of genres, or loosening of tradition-bound ritual functionality, and to the replacement of 'education' or passive social conditioning by competition for the approval of a popular and 'uneducated' audience. We can name one very prominent mid-fifth-century exponent of something like Plato's view, Damon of Athens,[73] and middle- and lowbrow equivalents of these attitudes are of course commonly expressed in comedy; the widespread ancient hostility to the 'New Music' rests in part on the same ideological basis.

Plato was surely not wrong to see the developments that produced the θεατροκρατία as a political agenda working itself out by the effecting of fundamental changes in the cultic and ritual constraints on music. As early as the 470s Themistocles built the Odeion to house the musical displays of the Great Panathenaia, and that building's name and its dissociation from any cultic site of Athena make it our first secular 'Hall of Song'. It is suggestive, is it not, that it was built next to the theatre? The cultural showpieces of democratic Athens are here spatially associated in a way that makes no sense from a cultic point of view.

It seems reasonable to describe the developments in choral practices attacked by Plato as a systematic loosening of music from its traditional ritual forms and cultic contexts and a reconception of music as primarily a means of entertaining human audiences, the success of which is measured by popular approval, rather than as a means of mediating between worshippers and divinities, or of effecting social cohesion on an authoritarian model. Again, it is not safe to conclude that Plato's golden age ever existed, but we have noted the other evidence for the general sort of development he describes, and it is not unreasonable to set up as a basis for comparison the proposition that a chorus for cultic use should clearly invoke and demonstrate some thematic focus on its divine recipient. In the seventh book of the *Laws* Plato desiderates a very restrictive regime based on this sort of premise, and we have many examples of cultic hymns of this type.

These developments in the politics of music and cult seem to go back at least as far as the Athenian democracy, and it is natural to associate them with the general social movements that produced and conditioned it. Tragedy, in the earliest form of it we are in a position to draw any conclusions about, manifests the choral component of its inheritance more obviously than it would do later, but there is really nothing ritualistic

[72] I am happy with the definition of the right and left wing in Athenian terms of A. H. Sommerstein, 'The theatre audience, the *demos*, and the *Suppliants* of Aeschylus', in Christopher Pelling (ed.), *Greek Tragedy and the Historian* (Oxford, 1997), 63–79, at 68–9, n. 36.

[73] On Damon, see West (n. 17), 246–9.

about it, and it looks as though its choral inheritance was already very mixed. The general process of 'secularization' was surely well underway before the democracy got itself established, but, as Plato's 'aristocratic' model of music may serve to indicate, the democratic side will have had a strong political motivation for maintaining and extending the results of that process. Cultic functionality was residual in fifth-century dithyramb, which was not confined to Dionysiac cult and which is the only kind of dithyramb we really know, and tragedy gives no sign even of a fossilized subordination to Dionysiac ritual. Most tragedies contain no invocation of Dionysus, and in those that do such invocations are not in principle distinguishable as cultic from the notional, intra-dramatic invocations of other divinities. The special significance we tend to find in references to Dionysus in tragedy is at bottom nothing more than the echo of our traditional assumptions.

The ritualist trend in recent scholarship on tragedy blurs the distinctions between aristocratic and democratic politics and their conflicting approaches to ritual and music by linking democratic ideology with cultic ritual, Dionysiac ritual in particular, and by pressing Plato's model of choral education into the service of its conception of democratic ritual drama. One or other (or both) of two underlying assumptions seems to be at work here. The first would be that the socially cohesive effect of choral ritual is *necessarily* indifferent ideologically: not only that it can as well serve right-wing as left-wing, extremist as moderate ends, but that no struggle between such opposed political positions can have the effect of altering in essence or degree its 'culticness' or 'rituality'. On this view, Plato *was* wrong to connect democratization in music with the alteration of traditional ritual models; and some of those who hold this view, as we shall see, regard drama in democratic Athens as operating on Plato's model of choral education. The other underlying assumption would be that Dionysiac cult in particular is inherently democratic, and that, without its cultic, ritual, or Dionysiac essence needing to be altered in nature or degree in the process, or in other words without any need for intentional political activity, it therefore spontaneously generates democratic drama. Both notions seem to me clearly incorrect, and they have brought great confusion into the study both of drama and of Athenian politics; in what follows we will say more about the appropriateness of the Platonic model to the dramatic chorus and the relationship between tragedy and democracy.

It will be helpful however to discuss first the problems created here by conflicting conceptions of 'ritual'. If we operate with such a broad definition of ritual as Tambiah's, 'a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication', we will inevitably be unable to capture even the sort of general political contestation played out in the realm of cult as that between Plato and his opponents, since both the 'aristocratic' and the 'theatrocratic' modes will be equally 'ritual'.[74] Moreover, the questions I have posed here about whether, or the degree to which, tragic drama is cultic or ritualistic can on such a broad definition be dismissed out of hand. If the generality of the definition prevents the consideration of such issues, however, the definition is either faulty or so inclusive as to fail in key respects to be useful. More helpful would be some such refinement of the definition as, for example: a culturally constructed system of symbolically communicative practices that are repeated at regular intervals in essentially the same form and with a strong orientation of any

[74] S. J. Tambiah, *Culture, Thought, and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge, MA, 1985), 128, quoted by Gregory Nagy, 'Transformations of choral lyric traditions in the context of Athenian state theater', *Arion*, Series 3, 3:1 (1994/5), 41–55, at 44.

verbal component toward the practice itself, its occasional setting and professed functionality, and whose primary function is to be productive of social cohesion in a group defined as distinctive. This at least has the advantage of allowing us to distinguish between, say, Shakespearean drama and the mass, and of capturing degrees of rituality, as for example between the functionally closed corpus of Anglican hymns and the open corpus of Greek, or between the openness of Greek hymnography and the highly prescriptive and repetitive practices of Greek sacrifice.[75] Looked at in this light, which has the advantage of bringing out what most of us instinctively perceive as fundamental differences, the question of whether and how far tragedy is the same sort of thing as Greek practices most of us could agree to classify as cultic ritual is perfectly legitimate.

Choral 'mediation' and 'collective authority'

An influential recent variant of the ritualist approach to tragedy is the claim that the chorus 'mediates' the audience's response to the passions and sufferings of the actors.[76] Some of those who take this approach apply Plato's 'educational' model of the function of music to the chorus of fifth-century tragedy as though this were an unproblematic procedure; as we noted above, the underlying assumption seems to be that this model is a prepolitical or non-political universal of Greek culture. Plato's loaded employment of it sufficiently indicates that this is not so, and what he says suggests that he is trying to re-establish an educational model that has been abandoned in the theatre, not trying to redefine or reassert an accepted model.[77]

The educational function of drama we hear about in Aristophanes is not tied to the chorus. The *coryphaeus* of *Frogs* begins the parabasis proper with the words τὸν ἱερὸν χορὸν δίκαιόν ἐστι χρηστὰ τῇ πόλει | ξυμπαραινεῖν καὶ διδάσκειν (686–7). The immediately preceding lyric introduction began Μοῦσα, χορῶν ἱερῶν ἐπίβηθι καὶ | ἔλθ' ἐπὶ τέρψιν ἀοιδᾶς ἐμᾶς (674–5), and such invocations of a Muse at the beginning of Aristophanic parabaseis are common.[78] Invoking the Muse puts the emphasis on

[75] None of this is meant to deny that it might be useful or illuminating from some points of view to classify all these phenomena under the same heading.

[76] Nagy (n. 74), 50 is very emphatic about the chorus's mediating role.

[77] See Nagy (n. 74), 49–50, who presumably has Plato in mind; Goldhill (n. 19), 251: 'The chorus as an educational institution does not disappear with democracy and the *polis*. Indeed, even Plato in the *Laws* [654a] says that the standard view of education (*paideusis*) can be summed up as *achoreutos apaideutos*, "no chorus, no education". . . . Since the performance of tragedy is assimilated to the scenario of the *sophos* . . . speaking to the *polis*, it is hard not to see the chorus of tragedy drawing on such an educational tradition.' The rub comes a few lines on in Plato (654b–c): ΑΘ. Καλῶς ᾄδει, φάμεν, καὶ καλῶς ὀρχεῖται (sc. ὁ καλῶς πεπαιδευμένος)· πότερον εἰ καὶ καλὰ ᾄδει καὶ καλὰ ὀρχεῖται προσθῶμεν ἢ μή; ΚΛ. προσθῶμεν.

[78] *Ach.* 665–6, *Peace* 775 (in this case a lyric continuation of the parabasis rather than an introductory lyric), *Birds* 737; cf. *Knights* 504–6. The invocation of the Muse sits ill with the claim (see e.g. Sommerstein on *Frogs* 686) that the chorus of *Frogs* calls itself 'holy' because it is participating in a Dionysiac festival. Dover's conclusion (in the introduction to his edition of *Frogs*, 68–9) is that this chorus is called 'holy' (as three other choral and monodic hymns in Aristophanes are) to reinforce the seriousness of the message of the parabasis. Dover also cites Dem. 21.51ff. (where Demosthenes, in the course of claiming that an assault on a *choregos* is *ipso facto* an act of impiety, reminds the Athenians that they have 'choruses and hymns' performed 'for the god' in accordance not only with the laws governing the *Dionysia* but with oracular authority), and says that any song performed in a festival context might be represented as an offering to the god of the festival, though songs in comedy are in fact rarely so represented. In *Frogs*, however, the connection with the Muse is explicit, and should not be overridden by a notional reference to Dionysus; I would add (and Dover may be implying) that what

the poet's inspiration and authority rather than on that of the chorus as such, and of course most parabaseis explicitly or implicitly consist of the advice of the poet.[79] We note too that the 'advice' and 'teaching' go outward from the chorus, or more accurately from the *coryphaeus*, to the polis, which does not correspond at all to the traditional model of education of choristers by choral training. Moreover, the debate later in *Frogs* about the relative merits of Aeschylus and Euripides gives abundant evidence that the 'teaching' function of drama is conceived as operating through the medium of the play as a whole, not the chorus in particular, and the poet's advice conceived as embodied in the whole play and communicated directly to the audience. Aeschylus says that Euripides' *Hippolytus* is a true myth, but should not have been put on stage: *ἀλλ' ἀποκρύπτειν χρὴ τὸ πονηρὸν τόν γε ποιητήν, | καὶ μὴ παράγειν μηδὲ διδάσκειν. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ παιδαρίοισιν | ἔστι διδάσκαλος ὅστις φράζει, τοῖσιν δ' ἡβῶσι ποιηταί. | πάνυ δὴ δεῖ χρηστὰ λέγειν ἡμᾶς.*[80] Here the poet is educator of young men in particular, but of young men viewing whole tragedies as spectators, not young men as choristers (or ephebes or initiates) receiving a traditional ritual 'education' of the Platonic type.[81] Even in these politically and culturally conservative remarks of Aeschylus, then, there are embedded some lasting results of the *θεατροκρατία*.

The claim that the chorus mediates the audience's response almost amounts to treating tragedy as a purely choral genre. In narrative choral poetry it is by definition true that the chorus is the medium of whatever is communicated, but one of the most obvious motivations for the creation of drama is that it becomes possible for the audience to react 'directly' to the characters in the story. The way to ensure that the chorus 'mediates' between the audience and the characters is to stick to totally non-mimetic choral poetry.

At *Republic* 3.394b–c Plato distinguishes genres according to their use of mimesis and narrative: *τῆς ποιήσεώς τε καὶ μυθολογίας ἡ μὲν διὰ μιμήσεως ὅλη ἐστίν, ὥσπερ σὺ λέγεις, τραγῳδία τε καὶ κωμῳδία, ἡ δὲ δι' ἀπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ τοῦ ποιητοῦ—εὕροις δ' ἂν αὐτὴν μάλιστά που ἐν διθυράμβοις—ἡ δ' αὖ δι' ἀμφοτέρων ἔν τε τῇ τῶν ἐπῶν ποιήσει, πολλαχοῦ δὲ καὶ ἄλλοθι, εἴ μοι μανθάνεις.* It is clear then that at least in Plato's mind drama is all mimesis, and this coheres with Aristotle's view that the chorus's role ought to be dramatically coherent with those of the actors to suggest that the ancient audience perceived the chorus as among the various agents

Demosthenes says is *ad hoc* and tendentious, as his tactical coupling of choruses with hymns and the laws governing the festival with oracular authority indicates. Dionysus is mentioned at the beginning of a parabasis only at *Clouds* 518–19, there (as sometimes elsewhere) clearly in connection with the poet's claim to be victorious in the contest. In sum, it seems clear that the comic poet's inspiration rather than the Dionysiac context or the status of the chorus as such lends the parabasis whatever authority it has.

[79] Explicitly in *Clouds* (518ff.) and in the parabasis-equivalent in *Ecclesiazusae* (1155ff.); in *Knights* (507ff.), *Wasps* (1015ff.), and *Peace* (729ff.) the poet is said to be speaking through the agency of the chorus; in the other plays with a parabasis it is delivered 'in character'.

[80] *Frogs* 1053–6, cf. 1008–10.

[81] Nagy (n. 74), 48–9 revives a qualified ('notional') version of Winkler's 'ephebic' interpretation of the tragic chorus (J. J. Winkler, 'The Ephebes' song: *tragoidia* and *polis*', in Winkler and Zeitlin [n. 44], 20–62), according to which 'the *ritual* emphasis is on the experience of the [notionally] pre-adult chorus and, through them, of the [notionally] adult audience', and speaks of 'a stylized rite of passage, or initiation, which leads from the marginality of precitizenship into the eventual centrality of citizenship' (50). I take it that in one sense Nagy intends the qualifications 'notional' and 'stylized' as acknowledgements that the application of these ritual models is heuristic rather than necessary.

facing one another on the stage, and as situated between themselves and the actors only in a literal, spatial sense, not in a metaphorical sense as mediators. This and such other considerations as the often marginal social status of choruses and the central dramatic roles taken by such (early) choruses as those of *Suppliant Women* and *Eumenides* make it very difficult to accept the notion of choral mediation.

We can, of course, speak of a kind of 'mediation' that happens in some choruses. Such choruses as the Sophoclean hyporchemes, with their intense dramatic (and perhaps cultic) irony, or choruses that are more obviously lyrical components of the poet's conjuration of a tragic world than the thoughts of a chorus 'in character' can seem a *comparatively* immediate form of communication between poet and spectator. This is not a matter of detecting 'the voice of the poet' and privileging such passages as specially authoritative or 'true', but an intensification of the constant awareness that one is hearing poetry, and of the concomitant awareness of a mind producing the poetry and in that sense mediating the myth to the audience. This is a form of mediation by the poet between the spectator and the cultural inheritance they both participate in, but it is only one form of it, and not different in kind from the mediation that is going on constantly in every part of every tragedy. Mediation of this kind has nothing to do with the fact that the chorus is or represents a collectivity. The claim that the collective chorus mediates between the collective audience and the individual characters, who on this view would seem to be set apart in a special heroic realm not directly accessible to common democratic man, is the mere assertion of a trendy anthropological model that clearly reflects the hierarchical, aristocratic views of Plato and his anti-democratic predilection for traditional cultic norms; it seems not only a very arbitrary but a rather crude way of reading tragic drama.

Equally dubious on similar grounds is the related claim that the tragic chorus carries a special collective authority.[82] An Athenian theatre audience is certainly a collective, but it is a collective of persons whose political, emotional, and intellectual reactions to tragic drama, as to other things, will be very various. The chorus of a tragic drama is a collective, a collective trained to sing and dance in unison; the characters and the chorus together, however—let us call them the *dramatis personae*—also form a collective, though in this case a collective embodying political, emotional, and intel-

[82] Goldhill (n. 19), 252–3 cites Gould's view (233) that the chorus brings with it 'the sense of a social group, with roots in a wider community, which draws on the inherited stories and the inherited, gnomic wisdom of social memory and of oral tradition, to "contextualize" the tragic', and comments that 'it is hard to imagine disinvesting such wisdom of all authority. To recognize the authority of such collective, inherited wisdom is not to deny that such wisdom can be shown in tragedy to be insufficient, uncomprehending, and trivial: the chorus often misunderstands the action, and offers generalizations that scarcely account for the actors' torments and violence.' From our point of view, the issues here seem to be the nature of the 'authority' of gnomic wisdom, the question whether such authority makes any group that cites it in some sense authoritative, and the relationship between the 'collective' nature of any group, including a tragic chorus or, for example, a group of Theban elders, and the 'collective' nature of gnomic wisdom in general. We are hardly required to describe collective wisdom that can be and is shown to be 'insufficient, uncomprehending, and trivial' as in any strong sense 'authoritative'. There is clearly no reason to conclude that any group that cites traditional gnomic wisdom, even with regularity, necessarily becomes politically authoritative by doing so. Individual tragic characters also frequently cite traditional gnomic wisdom, and there is certainly no clear internal indication in the plays that choral gnomic wisdom by definition trumps any individual's; 'collective' after all signifies as a predicate of the wisdom, not of those who cite it. I therefore see no grounds here for turning whatever authority inheres in gnomic wisdom into a justification for privileging choral citation of such wisdom, let alone for privileging the very various choruses in tragic drama as necessarily 'representing' the collectivity of the theatre audience or the Athenian citizenry.

lectual differences and tensions. If we leave Platonic choral 'education' out of it, it is not obvious that the chorus rather than the *dramatis personae* must correspond to or 'represent' the audience, except in the uninteresting sense that the chorus by convention sing as a body and an attentive audience mostly keep silent as a body.

On general grounds, then, as on the specific grounds of the assumptions operative in *Frogs*, the pertinent collectivity in drama is the *dramatis personae*, the world conjured up by a given play, which is set over against the collectivity of the audience and their world; the pertinency derives most obviously from the fact that both collectives are various and full of tensions. No doubt the sort of lockstep training that goes into producing a well-drilled chorister, or the notion that the theatre audience ought to see itself as a mass of common men contemplating their heroic and aristocratic betters from a respectful remove, made an appealing social and educational model for totalitarians and aristocrats, but it seems a little bizarre to assume that training citizens on such a model was the essential function of drama in democratic Athens.

Tragedy and democracy

The ritualist approach to tragedy runs the risk of dulling our perception of the remarkable autonomy of discourse granted by the Athenians to dramatic poets. This discourse was, of course, importantly conditioned in all sorts of ways: by the civic and agonistic context as such, the process of being 'granted a chorus' by a state official, the necessity of working with a *choregos*, and so on—but these are all civic and political rather than cultic constraints. The truism that religion and politics overlap in Greece should not lead us to make the mistake of regarding them as always and everywhere indistinguishable, and the constraints on the tragic poet are far more obviously political than religious. This is not, of course, to say that in principle there were no religious constraints on drama, but that in the dramatic component of the Athenian dramatic festivals the specific cultic context of the festival was largely irrelevant, the general civic context, including all manner of religious issues and cultic and ritual themes and motifs, centrally relevant.[83]

Democratic reformers can manipulate ritual, or let it fossilize, but by nature it produces persistence rather than reform, answers rather than questions; ritual cohesion and ritual licence under authority are in the gift of Dionysus, democratic aspirations and values as such are not.[84] Just as the motivation for the introduction of the tribal system has primarily to do with breaking traditional aristocratic power-bases rather than with the worship of the ten heroes chosen from among a hundred candidates by Delphic Apollo,[85] so too the fifth-century dramatic and choral contests are audience-oriented events characterized by an astonishing artistic sophistication and an intellectual openness one is happy to call democratic; they are not cultic worship of the

[83] In 'Tradition and invention in Euripidean aitiology', in Cropp et al. (n. 58), 217–33, I make a case that many of the aitiological stories in tragedy, and even some of the cults they 'refer to', were invented by the poets *ad hoc* to suit their literary purposes. It would reinforce the case that the tragic poets enjoyed a high degree of autonomy if they could by convention invent cults. See now also F. M. Dunn, 'Euripidean aetiologies', *Classical Bulletin* 76 (2000), 3–27.

[84] Cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* 1319b24, who regards concentration on a few public cults as the effective religious strategy of a democracy. This of course means that Aristotle too recognizes that approaches to religion vary according to political goals; he is surely thinking primarily of such Athenian festivals as the Panathenaia and Dionysia in the spectacular form given them by the democracy (cf. n. 86 below).

[85] Not entirely at random, it would seem: see Parker (n. 45), 118.

god Dionysus as some kind of inherently democratic liberator or saviour.[86] Hypostasizing the development of tragic drama or the hard-won and constantly threatened openness of fifth-century Athenian intellectual culture as a manifestation of the god of masks who puts identity in question through ritual ecstasy is really the merest mystification, a late bloom, fertilized by Nietzsche, of Romantic *Symbolik*, with its notion of a divine revelation through symbols of religious profundities too occult for syntax. Political struggle and intellectual ferment produced fifth-century drama, and politics and Hellenistic intellectual retrenchment produced the comedy of Menander, and the one is no more inherently Dionysiac than the other. Greek cultic ritual persisted in essentially the same form throughout this whole period; Greek thought about the gods went through major upheavals, but they were played out elsewhere than in ritual, not least on the tragic stage.

Mystery cult and ecstatic worship, like ritual in general, are powerful and deeply conservative mechanisms of social cohesion and control, aspects of which can be put to liberating political ends only metaphorically or by conscious manipulation. Progressive Athenians of the sixth and fifth centuries engaged in manipulation to the extent that they superimposed on some divine festivals intellectual and cultural events of a sort that infuriated Plato and his ilk, and in the course of which the justice and nature of the gods might be searchingly scrutinized in a way hardly consonant with the function and atmosphere of ordinary cultic ritual. Metaphor they largely left to modern scholars, who during the last two hundred years in particular, for their own various and sometimes curious reasons, got very carried away with it.

IV. CONCLUSION

My own hunch is that Athenian tragedy was connected with Dionysus for a very simple reason. The first requisite for a dramatic festival is a theatre, and the best location for a theatre in Athens was the south-east slope of the Acropolis, in the sanctuary of Dionysus Eleuthereus. The old temple of Dionysus is almost certainly a sixth-century structure, and the strange, cramped spatial relationship between it and the first orchestra makes it fairly clear that the orchestra and auditorium were squeezed into a site of which the temple was already a feature. In other words, this was already a sanctuary of Dionysus when it suggested itself also as an excellent site for a theatre.[87] It followed naturally that the dramatic contest should be instituted at

[86] Parker (n. 45), 67–101 gives an excellent synthesis of sixth-century developments in politics and religion, and is rightly very chary of attributing to the Pisistratids grand religious policies connected with particular gods; at 92–5 he rightly concludes that 'the question about tragedy's first patrons must remain tantalizingly unresolved'. At 79–80 Parker addresses the question of the degree to which the events of 'spectacular festivals' should be considered religious, and concludes that 'the distinction between "religious" and "secular" aspects of festivals which comes so naturally to modern observers was not one drawn by the Greeks'. He is speaking here primarily of torch-races, grand processions, and the like; tragedy, with its extensive thematic engagement with theology and ritual, is a more complicated matter. I should place the accent somewhat differently by stressing that the attitudes of Greeks toward the combination of 'cultic' and 'spectacular' in festivals may have varied considerably and will have been conditioned by struggles among conflicting political, intellectual, and religious interests in particular places over time. Athenian festivals were notably 'spectacular', it seems reasonable to connect this with the democratic movement, and there are potential implications here for our view at least of the *degree* of 'religiosity' of the spectacles that seem important (cf. n. 84 above).

[87] See Scott Scullion, *Three Studies in Athenian Dramaturgy. Beiträge zur Altertumskunde* 25 (Stuttgart, 1994), 9–10, 26–8.

a festival of the god of the sanctuary. This may seem a banal conclusion, but on the evidence it is at least as likely as any other. The match between sanctuary and theatre site was not just an impressive coincidence, and it was surely sometimes the same consideration that led to the association of theatre with other gods in other places. From then on, naturally, Dionysus was the patron god of drama in Athens, as also in places influenced by or emulating Athens—but by no means everywhere. The Psalter (147:10) tells us that the Lord 'hath no pleasure in the strength of an horse: neither delighteth he in any man's legs', but the Greeks attributed their own pleasure in a good runner to their gods, and tragedy, like other cultural and athletic events in festival contests, was welcome to all of the Greek gods rather than ritually bound to the cult of one. Osborne has perhaps shown the way forward here by emphasizing the competitive aspect of festivals in general rather than abstract notions connected with the figure of Dionysus in particular.[88]

In the end, the best reason for adopting the straight 'nothing to do with Dionysus' approach to tragedy is that it coheres with what we find in the plays themselves. If there were no tradition of the Dionysiac origin of tragedy we would hardly feel the need to invent one. Tragedy is, of course, deeply engaged with religious issues, including some that have to do with Dionysus, but many recent ritual interpretations seem so lacking in a sense of proportion that they remind one of the very favourable review of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* alleged to have appeared in the American periodical *Field and Stream* and to have ended with the words: 'unfortunately one is obliged to wade through many pages of extraneous material in order to discover and savor these sidelights on the management of a Midlands shooting estate'.

Study of the relationship between tragic drama and Athenian politics and religion can only benefit by abandonment of the *interpretatio Dionysiaca*. Here again the Sophoclean hyporchemes are an excellent test case. I have suggested that the regularity with which Sophocles employs ecstatic odes to manifest the deluded euphoria of the chorus suggests that he viewed orgiastic cult with a certain ironic distance. Whether this conclusion appeals or not, however, there is no doubt that the ironic function of these odes in the plays distinguishes them very clearly from the ecstatic rituals of real-world cult, which can hardly have been designed to elicit an ironic response. Far from collapsing the distinction between dramatic representation and cultic ritual, these odes depend on that distinction for their literary effect. We are clearly in the world of 'as if', and it would be very special pleading to claim that the caricature of ecstatic ritual Sophocles regularly resorts to for literary purposes would be uncontroversial or inoffensive to those who took ecstatic cult seriously. Ecstatic ritual is associated above all with Dionysus, and for those who adopt the ritual interpretation of tragedy these odes are therefore among the most intense links between tragedy and its ritual context. To sustain this view, however, it is necessary either to deafen oneself to the irony inherent in their dramatic employment, in other words to ignore their literary function, or to hypothesize a real-world cult of Dionysus perfectly happy to be represented persistently as a forum for the euphoric celebration of deluded hopes. In fact this issue has never been squarely faced, largely because the traditional view both of tragedy and of Sophocles has tended to close down our sense of irony on any matter having to do with the gods in general and Dionysus in particular.

Tragedy is full of ritual, rituals of all sorts, rituals connected with the full range of

[88] Robin Osborne, 'Competitive festivals and the polis: a context for dramatic festivals at Athens', in Sommerstein et al. (n. 18), 21–38.

Greek divinities. It parodies, distorts, subverts, and probably even invents rituals as well as reflecting them. But it is not itself ritual, unless by a very broad definition that would classify any form of theatre as ritual, and it is not a form of cult for the god Dionysus or for any of the other gods in connection with whose festivals it was produced. In this sense the Greek gods are all on the same footing in tragedy, and earn their keep in it by fulfilling a dramatic function. Politics and religion and the politics of religion all come within the tragedians' compass, but the ritual approach often narrows and distorts our view of these things rather than opening them up to scrutiny, and these days it bids fair to distort our understanding not only of drama but of the politics of Greek religion and the civic discourse of democratic Athens.

Why is the ritualist approach to tragedy in the midst of a great revival? One answer is that many of those concerned, and rightly concerned, to situate tragic drama in its social context and explore its relationship with Athenian democracy have hitched their wagon to cult and ritual, which are certainly eminently social but on the whole very conservative things. A second answer is that as heirs of Frazer and Freud and Burkert we are too inclined to look for answers to *cultural* questions in origins and early forms, and too shy of recognizing the transcendence of origins. 'Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged' is an excellent piece of advice, but we have to be careful to look in the right place, and what we find there is never the whole story.[89]

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[89] Isaiah 51:1. I am grateful to those who heard earlier versions of this paper at Bryn Mawr, Dublin, Stockholm, Oxford, and Cambridge for their helpful questions and comments, and in particular to Armand D'Angour, Pat Easterling, Leofranc Holford-Strevens, Barbara Kowalzig, Michael Lloyd, John Marincola, Robin Osborne, Christopher Pelling, Robert Parker, Richard Rutherford, William Slater, Martin West, and Peter Wilson for their comments, suggestions, and encouragement. Dean Willmar Sauter of Stockholm University kindly directed my attention to an important unpublished article on the origins of modern theatre (see n. 63) by Professor Eli Rozik of Tel Aviv University; one looks forward to Professor Rozik's forthcoming book, *The Roots of Theatre*, to be published by Iowa University Press, and his article, 'Ritual and theatre', to appear in D. Kennedy (ed.), *The Oxford Encylopedia of Theatre and Performance*. I am indebted too to Christopher Collard for his painstaking editorial help, to *CQ*'s referee for helpful comments, and above all to my Doktorvater Albert Henrichs, who with characteristic open-mindedness has encouraged this cheeky project from the beginning. None of these scholars should be assumed to endorse my general argument.