

Choruses for Dionysus:
Studies in the History of Dithyramb and Tragedy

By

Matthew C. Wellenbach

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This dissertation by Matthew C. Wellenbach is accepted in its present form
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Date _____

Johanna Hanink, Advisor

Recommended to the Graduate Council

Date _____

Deborah Boedeker, Reader

Date _____

Pura Nieto Hernández, Reader

Date _____

Andrew Ford, Reader

Approved by the Graduate Council

Date _____

Peter M. Weber, Dean of the Graduate School

Curriculum Vitae

Matthew C. Wellenbach was born on June 4, 1987, in Philadelphia, PA. He first began studying Latin during his primary and second education, and in 2009 he earned a B.A. in Classics, *magna cum laude*, and with highest honors, from Williams College, located in Williamstown, MA. In the fall of 2008, he was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. He matriculated at Brown University in Providence, RI, in the fall of 2009 as a graduate student in the Department of Classics. During his time at Brown, he presented a paper on similes in the *Odyssey* at the 2012 meeting of the Classical Association of the Middle West and South and published a review of a monograph on Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women* in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* as well as an article on depictions of choral performance in Attic vase-paintings in *Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies*. In the fall of 2014, he will join the Department of Classical Studies at Wellesley College in Wellesley, MA, as a Visiting Lecturer.

Όταν, κατά το μεσημέρι, βρέθηκε στο κέντρο του αρχαίου θεάτρου
νέος Έλληνας αυτός, ανύποπτος, ωστόσο ωραίος όπως εκείνοι,
έβαλε μια κραυγή (όχι θαυμασμού· θαυμασμο δεν τον ένιωσε διόλου,
κι αν τον ένιωθε σίγουρα δε θα τον εκδήλωνε), μια άπλη κραυγή
ίσως απ' την αδάμαστη χαρά της νεότητάς του
ή για να δοκιμάσει την ηχητική τού χώρου. Απέναντι,
πάνω απ' τα καθετα βουνά, η ηχώ αποκρίθηκε –
η ελληνική ηχώ που δε μιμείται ούτε επαναλαμβάνει
μα συνεχίζει απλώς σ' ένα ύψος απροσμέτρητο
την αιώνια ιαχή του διθράμβου.

When at noon he found himself in the center of the ancient theater,
a young Greek, unsuspectingly as handsome as they were,
let out a cry (not one of amazement; he had not felt amazement at all,
and had he felt it, certainly he would not have expressed it), a simple cry
perhaps as a result of the untameable joy of his youth
or one with which he could test the acoustics of the place. Across
the horizon over the vertical mountains, the echo answered –
the echo of Greece which does not imitate or repeat
but which propels to an immeasurable height
the eternal shout of the dithyramb.

Yannis Ritsos, “Ancient Theater,” from *Testimonies I* (1963), translated by Minas Savvas
in *Chronicle of Exile* (1977).

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While at Brown, I have had the good fortune and great pleasure to be a member of a welcoming, supportive, and intellectually stimulating and challenging department. For fostering such an atmosphere, I am grateful to the entire faculty in the Department of Classics at Brown. Susan Furtado has always been ready to provide good cheer and administrative assistance, and for both of those I am immensely thankful. I would be remiss if I did not express my gratitude to the wonderful fellow graduate students whom I

have had to privilege to meet and work with over the last six years. While I hesitate to name any of my colleagues individually, for all of them have enriched my time in graduate school in one way or another, I will always recall with particular fondness the times spent, both inside and outside of the seminar room, with the other members of the cohort with which I entered the graduate program in 2009: Scott DiGiulio, Chris Geggie, Melissa Holzhauer, Byron MacDougall, Tara Mulder, Jen Swalec, and Adrienne Troia.

I thank my parents, Andy and Tricia, and my brother, Jeff, for their unstinting support and love.

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Conventions and Abbreviations

All ancient texts are quoted from the most current edition of the authors in the *Oxford Classical Texts* series, with the exception of Pindar and Bacchylides, whose work I cite from the most recent editions for the two poets in the Teubner series. All translations of ancient texts are my own, unless otherwise noted. In preparing my translations, I often consulted the editions for the authors in the Loeb Classical Library series. All dates are BCE, unless otherwise noted. For ancient authors and their works as well as for modern collections and editions of ancient texts, I have largely followed the abbreviations found in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd edition, revised). For names of journals, I have used the abbreviations found in *L'Année philologique*. Special note should be made of the following abbreviations for the listed work:

<i>ABV</i>	Beazley, J.D. (1956). <i>Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters</i> . Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
<i>Addenda</i>	Carpenter, T.H., with T. Mannack and M. Mendonça, (eds.). (1989). <i>Beazley Addenda: Additional References to ABV, ARV² & Paralipomena</i> , Second Edition. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
<i>ARV</i>	Beazley, J.D. (1963). <i>Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters</i> , Second Edition. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
<i>BAPD</i>	<i>Beazley Archive of Pottery Database</i> ; URL: http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/xdb/ASP/default.asp
<i>CVA</i>	<i>Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum</i> (1923-), Paris, et al.
<i>DFA</i>	Pickard-Cambridge, A.W. (1988). <i>The Dramatic Festivals of Athens</i> , Second Edition, revised with a supplement by J. Gould and D.M. Lewis. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
<i>DTC</i>	Pickard-Cambridge, A.W. (1962). <i>Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy</i> , Second Edition, revised by T.B.L. Webster. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
Ieranò	Ieranò, G. (1997). <i>Il Dittirambo di Dioniso: Le Testimonianze Antiche</i> . Pisa; Rome: Istituti editoriali e poligrafici internazionali
<i>Paralipomena</i>	Beazley J.D. (1971). <i>Paralipomena: Additions to the Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters and Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters</i> . Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press

INTRODUCTION

A PROGRAM FOR DIONYSUS

In the last decade of the fifth century BCE, the Athenian comic playwright Aristophanes brought forth a production which had as its primary theme the state of Athens' poetic culture. In the comedy, the poor poetry currently being produced in the city prompts a trip to the Underworld, where the luminaries of a bygone era now reside. The purpose of the trip is to return to earth in the company of someone who can help improve Athens' slate of cultural offerings. Before the travelers depart with their savior, they participate in and observe heated discussions about what makes for good poetry.

The description in the previous paragraph captures the major plot points of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, which premiered at the Lenaea festival of 405 and was one of his most celebrated comedies. According to tradition, *Frogs* was so well received that a special commendation was bestowed upon Aristophanes in recognition of his achievement and it was arranged that the play be given a second production soon after its first, both unusual measures.¹ In the comedy, Dionysus, prompted both by his fondness for the recently deceased Euripides and by his disgust for the tragedians who are still living and producing their work, men such as Xenocles and Pythangelus, descends to the

¹ PCG iii.2 T 1 35-9; Ar. *Frogs*, *Hyp* I.37-40.

Underworld in order to seek out his favorite tragedian.² Once there, he is enlisted to judge a contest between Euripides and Aeschylus for possession of the “Tragic Throne,” which is granted to the best tragedian in the Underworld and entitles whoever holds it to dine in a special section reserved for the god of the dead Pluto and those who hold the thrones in various others fields of endeavor. Aeschylus is the current titlist in tragedy, but Euripides claims that the throne should now be transferred to him. After a long duel between the tragedians, in which each demonstrates his own poetic prowess and ridicules the work of his adversary, Dionysus judges Aeschylus the winner. For his participation in the contest, Dionysus is allowed to bring Aeschylus back to Athens with him, and the play ends as the pair prepares to depart. Before he leaves, Aeschylus orders that Sophocles, who had recently died, should occupy the Tragic Throne in his absence.

Yet *Frogs* is not the only comedy by Aristophanes to which the description in the first paragraph above might be applied. There is also his *Gerytades*, which premiered just a few years before *Frogs* in 408.³ In that comedy, an Athenian assembly dispatches to the Underworld an embassy consisting of three poets: the comedian Sannyrion, the tragedian Meletus, and the dithyrambist Cinesias.⁴ While in the nether region, the trio converses with some of their distinguished deceased predecessors about poetry. The trip culminates in the delegation returning to earth with the goddess Poetry in tow. The comedy exists

² Xenocles, a son of the tragedian Carcinus, is mentioned also at *Thesmo.* 169 and was a frequent target of Aristophanes’ mockery; see Austin and Olson (2004), 113-4. It is reported that he won the competition in tragedy at the Great Dionysia of 415, the year of Euripides’ Trojan trilogy; cf. *TrGF* 2 33 T 3. Pythangelus is unknown except for this reference.

³ On the date, which is an estimate (407 is also possible), see *PCG* iii.2, 101; Sommerstein (2001), 148; Rusten (2011), 298.

⁴ About Sannyrion and Meletus, relatively little is known, see *PCG* vii and Meletus, *TrGF* 1 47 respectively. Cinesias is mocked frequently by Aristophanes and other comedians, see Dunbar (1995), 660-1, and recently Kidd (2014), ch. 3, esp. 90-3.

now only in fragments, but from what can be reconstructed of it on the basis of its remains, its plot seems to have resembled quite closely that of *Frogs*.⁵ Both comedies dramatize a katabasis whose purpose is to remedy the poor quality of poetry in Athens.

As a result of its extensive comments on Euripides' and Aeschylus' tragedies, *Frogs* has been heralded as an important document in the history of poetic criticism, both for what it reveals about the state of such criticism at the end of the fifth century in Athens and for its influence on the subsequent tradition of Greek literary criticism.⁶ Like *Frogs*, *Gerytades* almost certainly contained extensive comments on both contemporary and earlier poetry, and had it survived, either alongside *Frogs* or in its stead, how different our understanding of fifth-century Athenian literary culture and criticism might have been.⁷

Perhaps most significantly, the preservation of *Gerytades* would have provided us with precious information about dithyramb, possibly even poetic fragments, neither of which can be found in *Frogs* on account of its exclusive focus on tragedy. In the context of fifth-century Athens, dithyramb, a choral performance conducted in honor of the god Dionysus, was associated most closely with the city's Great Dionysia.⁸ Every year at that

⁵ Overviews of the comedy can be found in: *PCG* iii.2, 101; Norwood (1931), 298-90; Young (1933), 24-6; Hall (2006), 179-80; Wright (2012), 135-9; Farmer (2013), 133-47. On the longest surviving fragment from the comedy, see below, Ch. 4.

⁶ Recent treatments of the poetic criticism contained in *Frogs* can be found in O'Sullivan (1992); Dover (1993), esp. 10-37; Porter (2006); Hunter (2009), ch. 1; Halliwell (2011), ch. 3; Wright (2012), *passim*; Griffith (2013a), esp. chs. 4, 5, and 7.

⁷ One important difference between *Gerytades* and *Frogs* is the purported quality of the poets involved in the proceedings. Sannyrion, Meletus, and Cinesias are frequently reviled in Attic comedy as bad poets, whereas Aeschylus and Euripides are both presented in *Frogs* as poets worthy of a high estimation. On the bad poets in *Gerytades*, see Kaimio and Nykopp (1997), 33; Wright (2012), 136.

⁸ On dithyramb performed most prominently at the Great Dionysia, but also possibly at other Athenian festivals, see Ieranò, 239-77; Wilson (2000), 27-34, 305-7; Wilson (2007); Kowalzig and Wilson (2013b), 13-8.

festival, one thousand Athenians would perform in dithyrambic choruses. Each of the ten Athenian tribes sponsored two, fifty-member-strong choruses, which would compete for a prize in one of two age groups, men or boys. The Great Dionysia was, of course, also an occasion, the most celebrated and well known one, for the performance of tragedies and comedies, which were both officially, like dithyramb, choral performances dedicated to Dionysus. The poetic embassy in *Gerytades* that consists of a comedian, tragedian, and dithyrambist thus replicates in miniature the Great Dionysia's program of Dionysiac choruses.⁹

It is not a stretch to say that the three major Dionysiac choral performances, that is tragedy, comedy, and dithyramb, are not all created equal, at least in terms of the scholarly attention lavished on each of them. Rather, they are divided according to a two-tiered hierarchy, with tragedy and comedy in one category, and dithyramb in another, inferior one. B. Kowalzig and P. Wilson, the editors of the long-awaited *Dithyramb in Context*, confront directly the disparity in the fortunes of tragedy and comedy, on the one hand, and dithyramb, on the other, when they introduce their volume. The first sentence of their "Introduction" states baldly that "dithyramb is without any doubt the poor relation in the Dionysian family," and in support of that claim they immediately contrast the dearth of recent work on dithyramb with the "explosion of fruitful approaches to her dramatic siblings," namely tragedy and comedy, to which the past fifty years have been witness.¹⁰ While Kowalzig and Wilson do not single out any piece of scholarship in particular as indicative of the trends which they rightly perceive, A.W. Pickard-Cambridge's magisterial *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, which has served since its

⁹ So also Silk (1993), 477-8, and Farmer (2013), ch. 4.

¹⁰ Kowalzig and Wilson (2013a), 1. The collection has its origins in a conference held at Oxford in 2004.

initial publication in 1953 as a frequent point of departure for work on the ancient Greek theater, might be taken as representative of the general state of affairs concerning tragedy, comedy, and dithyramb.¹¹ In the book's first edition, at the end of a section that introduces some of the primary epigraphic evidence for the choral performances at the Great Dionysia there is appended a brief summary of "the main chronological conclusions to be drawn from the inscriptions."¹² Important dates for the history of the Great Dionysia are given, including those of the first performances of tragedy (c. 534) and comedy (486) at the festival, of the introduction of the competitions in tragic (449) and comic (between 329 and 312) acting, and of the formalized practice of restaging old plays from both genres (386 for tragedy; 339 for comedy). The date of dithyramb's introduction to the Great Dionysia (509/8), even though it has been cited just pages before, is altogether omitted from the list.¹³ Without justification, dithyramb is excluded from the Dionysiac program.

The disregard for dithyramb that is evident in Pickard-Cambridge's study is but a modern day vestige of a longstanding bias against the genre, one that can be traced deep into antiquity itself, where dithyramb regularly takes on the role of the Dionysian misfit. In Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*, for instance, one of the participants in the dinnertime conversation remarks that in the past different types of music and performance were

¹¹ The most up-to-date version is a second, revised edition, from 1988, of the 1953 original; unless noted otherwise, all references to the work will be cited from the 1988 edition, which will be abbreviated henceforth as *DFA*. Whether *DFA* should retain its status as the go-to resource for questions relating to the ancient theater is another matter; see Wilson (2008), 88-9; Hanink (2014), 16. E. Csapo and P. Wilson are at work on a multi-volume economic and social history of the Greek theater which, when complete, will enhance and replace in certain respects *DFA*.

¹² Pickard-Cambridge (1953), 73; removed at *DFA*, 74.

¹³ Pickard-Cambridge (1953), 70; cf. *DFA*, 72.

preferred in different geographic areas throughout the Mediterranean world. Whereas the Syracusans favored iambic poetry, the Athenians were particularly fond of “Dionysiac choruses and circular choruses” (τοὺς Διονυσιακοὺς χοροὺς καὶ τοὺς κυκλίους, 5.181c). That somewhat enigmatic phrase constitutes a periphrasis for tragedy, comedy, and dithyramb: the first component, “Dionysiac choruses,” refers to tragedy and comedy, and the second, “circular choruses,” to dithyramb.¹⁴ The claim about the Athenians’ musical preferences demonstrates in particularly clear terms how easily dithyramb can at times fall out of the Dionysiac program. Even though the expression “Dionysiac choruses” would suffice on its own as a means to designate tragedy, comedy, and dithyramb, the three genres are not grouped together under that label. Instead, tragedy and comedy are identified as Dionysiac choruses, while dithyramb is made to forfeit its Dionysiac identity, isolated from tragedy and comedy in its own category as a “circular chorus.”

Approximately half a millennium before Athenaeus, Plato presents another example of dithyramb being sundered from its Dionysiac siblings tragedy and comedy. In Plato’s *Laws*, his last work and a sort of sequel to the *Republic*, the unnamed Athenian who dominates the dialogue imagines a musical festival with an assortment of different performances, including the rhapsodic recitation of epic poetry, performance on the kithara, comedy, tragedy, and even puppetry (658a-c).¹⁵ The hypothetical festival, a pastiche of actual Athenian festivals such as the Greater Panathenaea and Great Dionysia, fails to include dithyramb, even though that genre was, as we have already seen, a central

¹⁴ Olson (2006), 401n.33, “dramatic and dithyrambic choruses, respectively.” But see Ceccarelli (2013), 166n.66. For more on the phrase “circular chorus” used in reference to dithyramb, see below Ch. 4.

¹⁵ For an introduction to the *Laws*, including its place in Plato’s corpus and status as a successor to the *Republic*, see Bobonich (2010). For recent examinations of the work in the context of Greek musical culture, see Peponi (2013a); Prauscello (2014).

component of the Great Dionysia.¹⁶ Dithyramb's absence from the program for a festival that is based in part on the Great Dionysia is a first strike against the genre in the *Laws* in terms of its affiliation with tragedy and comedy, or rather lack thereof. A second comes on the single occasion in the work when dithyramb is mentioned explicitly (700b-d).¹⁷ There, dithyramb is grouped not with tragedy and comedy, as one might expect given the common Dionysiac heritage of the three genres, but with hymns to gods, laments for mortals, and paeans presumably meant for Apollo.

From Pickard-Cambridge in the twentieth century CE to Plato in the fourth century BCE, dithyramb has persistently been excluded from the family of Dionysiac choruses. One aim of the present study is thus to restore dithyramb to its rightful place in the Dionysiac program alongside tragedy and comedy. Nascent steps in that direction are already underway, and this project helps extend them even further. For instance, one of the chapters in the recently published *Dithyramb in Context* begins with the declaration that the performance of dithyrambos “was probably the most important component of the Athenian City Dionysia,” which is a sentiment far different from the one that undergirds the claim, put forth in a chapter that is barely a decade old, that the performance of

¹⁶ Peponi (2013b), 221, also remarks that it is surprising for dithyramb not to be included here. On musical contests (*musikoi agōnes*), including rhapsodic and kitharodic performance, at the Panathenaea, see Wilson (2000), 36-43; Rotstein (2012), esp. 102-6, 113. Folch (2013), 573, notes that the imaginary festival seems to evoke the Panathenaea. Yet because dramatic contests were not a regular part of the Panathenaea – so Wilson (2000), 39 and 325n.152 – the Athenian must be drawing from festivals other than that one. On puppets and choral performance, see recently Kurke (2013).

¹⁷ Although this is the sole explicit reference to dithyramb in the *Laws*, the genre may be evoked elsewhere; see Griffith (2013c), 65n.72. At 664c-71b, the Athenian discusses a “chorus of Dionysus,” on which see recently Folch (2013), 578-93, and Prauscello (2014), 160-73. The fourth major Dionysiac choral performance-genre, satyr-play, is never mentioned, but may be implied in the reference to tragedy; in antiquity, satyr-play was often considered a part of tragedy, so Griffith (2010), 49-50. See also the reference to Bacchic dancing by those who represent “Nymphs, Pans, Silens and Satyrs,” at 815c.

tragedies was “undoubtedly the high point” of the Great Dionysia.¹⁸ In addition, recent scholarly work refers to dithyramb as a “dramatic” or “theatrical” performance-genre, a method of referring to the genre that would seem to rest on the notion that dithyramb was a dramatic and theatrical genre just as much as tragedy or comedy.¹⁹ While the change in taxonomy might seem insignificant, it nonetheless constitutes an important corrective to the longstanding practice of ghettoizing dithyramb.

As a result of the general neglect of dithyramb in modern scholarship, a number of avenues lie open for a study that sets itself the task of affirming dithyramb’s Dionysiac identity. Yet perhaps no approach is as appealing and potentially illuminating as a sustained examination of the relationship between dithyramb and tragedy, for of all of the Dionysiac choruses, dithyramb and tragedy have long been understood as particularly close to one another. Indeed, in her recent monograph devoted to examining tragedy’s pervasive engagement with lyric forms of performance, L.A. Swift justifies her exclusion of dithyramb on the grounds of the genre’s closeness to tragedy.²⁰ Labeling dithyramb a “special case,” she argues that because dithyramb, like tragedy, was a competitive choral performance conducted at festivals such as the Great Dionysia, references to the genre that might be found in tragedy would constitute “an allusion to another art-form, not an allusion to a culturally embedded ritual,” by which latter phrase Swift means performance-genres such as paeon, epinician, partheneion, hymenaeus, and threnos, each

¹⁸ Quotations from, respectively, Ceccarelli (2013), 153, and Seidensticker (2005), 38.

¹⁹ Csapo (2003), 70; Kowalzig and Wilson (2013b), 18; Nagy (2013), 227n.1, 234, 240.

²⁰ Swift (2010), 22-6.

of which receives a separate chapter in her book.²¹ Before she banishes dithyramb from her study, however, Swift remarks that “the relationship between tragedy and *dithyrambos* is undoubtedly a subject on which interesting scholarship could be written,” and the present project takes up Swift’s call by presenting a series of studies that examine tragedy and dithyramb side by side.²² This is not to say that there is not work to be done on dithyramb’s relationship with comedy or even satyr-play, not to mention still other, non-Dionysiac forms of performance, but rather that such explorations fall outside the scope of this dissertation.²³

Any modern account of the relationship between tragedy and dithyramb falls under the long shadow cast by Aristotle’s comments about the two genres in his *Poetics*. Early in that work, he declares that tragedy arose “out of those leading the dithyramb” (ἡ [τραγωδία] μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐξαρχόντων τὸν διθύραμβον, *Poetics* 1449a10-1), and much work continues to be dedicated to probing Aristotle’s claim for its accuracy.²⁴ Yet those efforts run up against certain problems, not the least of which is a paucity of evidence by which to either corroborate or discredit Aristotle’s theory.²⁵ More problematic still is the very premise of many projects that undertake a search for origins, whether of Greek

²¹ Quotation from Swift (2010), 25. For criticism of Swift’s division between an “art-form” and a “culturally embedded ritual,” see Uhlig (2011b).

²² Swift (2010), 26.

²³ On dithyramb and comedy, see Kugelmeier (1996), and Kowalzig and Wilson (2013b), 18n.86, who note that the relationship between the genres merits further examination. On dithyramb and satyr-play, Griffith (2013b). On all three genres together, Shaw (2014), ch. 2. And on dithyramb and *kitharoidia*, Power (2013).

²⁴ See, recently, many of the essays collected in Csapo and Miller (2007), and in particular the editors’ “General Introduction,” 8-11, with references to earlier work. Leonhardt (1991) argues that Aristotle makes dithyramb the forerunner to comedy, but his theory has not gained much acceptance; cf. Seaford (1993).

²⁵ Rusten (2006), 37, describes the “early stages of tragedy and dithyramb” as “murky.”

tragedy or any other cultural practice.²⁶ Such efforts can at times adopt the stance that the meaning of a particular phenomenon lies only in its origins, and they tend to discount whatever evidence falls outside of the penumbra of the early period. In the case of Greek tragedy, Aristotle's statement has succeeded in directing inordinate attention to a particularly early stage in the history of the relationship between tragedy and dithyramb, a period for which there is little direct evidence. While his reconstruction of tragedy's origins may be correct, it is not my direct concern in this study to either uphold his theory or supplant it with a new one, although some of the findings presented here will undoubtedly bear on our ability to continue to subscribe to Aristotle's claims about tragedy and dithyramb.

At the same time that Aristotle trains our focus on the earliest moments in the history of the relationship between tragedy and dithyramb, he also presents that relationship as one that is marked very much by the idea of progress. After making his claim that tragedy arose "out of those leading the dithyramb," he immediately goes on to detail subsequent developments in the history of tragedy, which lead ultimately to the genre assuming its fully mature form (1449a13-5), a state which Aristotle associates closely, here and elsewhere in the *Poetics*, with the work of Sophocles, whose career spanned a large portion of the fifth century.²⁷ Dithyramb's worth for Aristotle in this section of his *Poetics* is limited to the genre's ability to elucidate some aspect of tragedy, namely its origins, and, after fulfilling that purpose, dithyramb becomes irrelevant and expendable, superseded by the new artistic form which it has helped spawn. Aristotle's

²⁶ Halliwell (1993), 197, with respect to the use of theatrical masks in ancient Greece; Feeney (1998), ch. 2, on myth in Roman literature.

²⁷ For the exalted position which Sophocles occupies in Aristotle's conception of tragedy, see Lucas (1968), 82; Janko (1987), 72; and recently Hanink (2014), 207-9.

account of tragedy's history and development takes on an unabashedly teleological narrative shape.²⁸ Tragedy is very much the end point of that trajectory, and dithyramb is relegated to role of tragedy's accessory. One consequence of the teleological perspective which Aristotle adopts in the *Poetics* is that tragedy comes to be promoted in that work as the superior genre to dithyramb.²⁹ Another is that the relationship between the genres is construed in terms of influence flowing from the one to the other, from dithyramb to tragedy, according to Aristotle, but of course the influence could move in the opposite direction.³⁰ While those premises may have served Aristotle's purposes in his *Poetics*, they do not inform my approach to the relationship between tragedy and dithyramb here, and, in fact, one aim of my project is to interrogate such teleological accounts of the history of theatrical and dramatic performance in ancient Greece by considering the ways in which tragedy and dithyramb, far from influencing one another, co-existed with each other as two Dionysiac choruses within the same poetic and performative landscape.

Aristotle thus belongs on the roster, alongside Pickard-Cambridge, Athenaeus, and Plato, of those who have demoted dithyramb to a position below its Dionysiac relatives, and in Aristotle's case, below tragedy in particular. For further confirmation of dithyramb's status as the Dionysian misfit, one need not look only in ancient prose writings or modern scholarship, but can consider the stature of both tragedy and dithyramb in the modern imagination. Tragedy is widely recognized as an important part of the patrimony left by Greek antiquity, ancient tragedies are reprised on modern stages

²⁸ Janko (1987), 77; Halliwell (1989), 159-62; Csapo and Miller (2007b), 30-1; Depew (2007).

²⁹ Halliwell (1986), 279.

³⁰ See Battezzato (2013) for instances where tragedy may have influenced dithyramb, an opposite relationship from that presented by Aristotle. Despite his revision of Aristotle's position, Battezzato still adheres to the framework of influence that is set by Aristotle in his *Poetics*.

frequently, and the very term “tragedy” is still used to designate a whole class of theatrical and dramatic performance.³¹ By contrast, dithyramb is no longer an active form of performance, even in name, and, in modern English, the noun “dithyramb” and the adjective “dithyrambic” are now-outmoded terms for referring, often pejoratively, to an overly excited or agitated state.³²

We have thus far traced the unequal fortunes of dithyramb and tragedy as far back as the fourth century BCE. Yet if we move just a little deeper into antiquity, we will find a vastly different attitude to dithyramb and its relationship with tragedy. A primary contention of this dissertation is that in the fifth century, dithyramb, far from being relegated to an inferior status as compared to tragedy, was regularly recognized as the equal of that genre, and an essential member of the Dionysiac program. In that century, the relationship between the genres was still in its infancy. While Aristotle tells us that tragedy developed out of dithyramb, other sources suggest that the development to which Aristotle alludes may have occurred sometime in the last third of the sixth century, perhaps as a result of efforts undertaken by Thespis.³³ This study thus focuses on the relationship between tragedy and dithyramb from that time through the end of the fifth century, for it would be only a short time from the end of that century until the dominant lens through which we still tend to view the relationship between tragedy and dithyramb began to exert its influence in earnest. It is in part a result of the lenses imposed by Plato,

³¹ Goldhill (2004) represents one scholar’s take on the important legacies bequeathed by Greco-Roman antiquity; he counts tragedy among them. On the ever-growing demand for modern productions of ancient plays, see the work of the “Archive of Performance of Greek and Roman Drama” (<http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/>). On the continued use of the term “tragedy,” see *OED*, s.v. 2.

³² *OED*, s.vv. The adjective διθυραμβικός has a similar meaning in modern Greek. In his introductory lecture of 1892 upon assuming the professorship in Latin at University College, London, A.E. Housman decried scholarship that is produced by those with “a dithyrambic mind”; Housman (1937), 19.

³³ See the testimony of the Marmor Parium (*FGrH* 239a F 43) and *Suda*, s.v. Thespis (θ 282 Adler).

Aristotle, and their intellectual heirs that still today we celebrate tragedy at the expense of dithyramb. Over the course of this dissertation, I argue, however, that in the fifth century tragedy had not yet claimed its status as the “top-genre” of ancient Greece, as it was to do subsequently, and that therefore the relative positions of dithyramb and tragedy in the hierarchy of ancient Greek performance-genres had not yet been cemented.³⁴

We have, in fact, already encountered one piece of evidence, Aristophanes’ *Gerytades*, which supports the principal argument of this dissertation. The embassy that is sent to the Underworld in that comedy consists of three poets, Meletus, Sannyrion, and Cinesias, who each represent one of the three choral performances at the Great Dionysia, tragedy, comedy, and dithyramb respectively. Evidently, dithyramb’s rejuvenation was considered at least as consequential for Athens’ poetic and cultural life as the rejuvenation of either tragedy or comedy. In his play from the end of the fifth century, Aristophanes places dithyramb on equal footing with tragedy as part of the program of Dionysiac choruses, and over the course of this dissertation we will examine other fifth-century sources which indicate that, at least at that time, dithyramb belonged alongside tragedy in the Dionysiac program and its place there was widely acknowledged.

A Note on Sources and Methods

A particular difficulty in studying fifth-century dithyramb and tragedy beside each other is the state of the evidence for the two genres. Among the essential sources are the

³⁴ On tragedy as the so-called “top-genre,” see Kurke (1997), 157; also Scodel (2001). At Plut. *De glor. Ath.* 5.348b, it is said that Athens never produced a great melic poet, with the dithyrambic Cinesias representing the city’s failure in this regard, but that the city’s tragedies were universally acclaimed. Recent scholarship has focused on the fourth century as a seminal period in the promotion of tragedy as a major cultural achievement: see Csapo, et al. (2014); Hanink (2014).

poetic remains. There survive today thirty-one mostly complete fifth-century tragedies, attributed to Aeschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides.³⁵ All of them seem to have had their premieres in Athens, mostly at the Great Dionysia, but possibly also at other festivals, such as the Lenaea or even less prestigious and more poorly documented local ones.³⁶ While those thirty-one plays constitute a small percentage of the many hundreds of tragedies that were composed and staged over the course of the fifth century, both in Athens and elsewhere, they are a treasure trove of material compared to the remains of dithyrambic poetry.³⁷ Of fifth-century dithyramps, only a few hundred lines and no more than four fully preserved poems survive. To put those numbers in perspective, two thousand dithyramps were performed at just the Great Dionysia over the course of the fifth century. The bulk of the textual evidence for dithyramb comes in the form of poems by Pindar and Bacchylides, both of whom composed dithyramps as well as many other types of choral poetry in the first half of the century.³⁸

The meager state of the textual evidence for dithyramb constitutes just the beginning of the difficulties that plague the study of the genre. Whereas we can be

³⁵ Seven either by or attributed to Aeschylus (on *Prometheus Bound*, which is unlikely the work of Aeschylus, but may be a tragedy by his son Euphorion, see Griffith (1977) and Sommerstein (2008), 433-4); seven by Sophocles; and seventeen by Euripides, excluding both his *Cyclops*, which is a satyr-play, and *Rhesus*, which is likely from the fourth century, so recently Liapis (2012), lxxvii-lxxii. Kovacs (2005) is a good overview of the process by which the surviving fifth-century tragedies have been preserved down to the present day.

³⁶ For performance of tragedies outside of the Great Dionysia, and in particular at local, deme festivals in Attica, see Csapo (2010), 89-96.

³⁷ According to their biographical traditions, Aeschylus produced tragedies in Sicily, and Euripides in Macedon. The late fifth-century tragedian Agathon also worked in Macedon; cf. Ar. *Frogs* 83-5, with Dover (1993), 201.

³⁸ Recent commentaries on Pindar's dithyramps: van der Weiden (1991); Lavecchia (2000). On Bacchylides': Maehler (1997) and (2004). Bacchylides 16-19 are the mostly intact fifth-century dithyramps.

relatively certain that the tragedies we have were intended for performance in Athens, and more often than not at the Great Dionysia, the performance contexts for the dithyrambs we have are, by comparison, both much more variable and much less secure. In the case of Pindar's dithyrambs, the one that is most substantially preserved is reported to have been performed in Thebes, demonstrating that Athens was not the only location for dithyrambic performance in the fifth century.³⁹ To consider just the dithyrambs of Bacchylides that will receive the most attention in this dissertation: Bacchylides 15 may have been performed originally at the Panathenaea in Athens,⁴⁰ Bacchylides 17 at a festival on Delos,⁴¹ and Bacchylides 18 at the Thargelia in Athens.⁴² As a result of the various performance contexts for Bacchylides' dithyrambs, we cannot be entirely sure as to whether or not the poems should be considered genuine examples of dithyrambs, which were supposed to take place at festivals for Dionysus, such as the Great Dionysia.⁴³ For instance, paean was the genre of choral performance traditionally dedicated to Apollo, and there has been a long debate about whether Bacchylides 17, a poem seemingly performed at a festival for Apollo on Delos, should be considered a

³⁹ fr. 70b; on its Theban context, see Lavecchia (2013).

⁴⁰ Zimmermann (1992), 69; Maehler (1997), 129-30, and (2004), 157-8; Fearn (2007), ch. 5.

⁴¹ Zimmermann (1992), 83; Maehler (1997), 167, and (2004), 172; Fearn (2007), 242-56, and (2013).

⁴² Maehler (1997), 212, but cautious at (2004), 189; Wilson (2007), 172-5. For other performance contexts, see Zimmermann (1992), 99-100, with references to previous scholarship.

⁴³ On the basis of the reference to Dionysus at the end of Bacchylides 19, some have proposed that the poem is an example of a dithyramb from the Great Dionysia; Zimmermann (1992), 102-3; Maehler (1997), 241, and (2004), 205. But that conclusion, however appealing, is not certain: Fearn (2007), 237. Furthermore, the ancient proverb "Nothing to do with Dionysus," was applied to dithyramb as well as tragedy, suggesting that dithyrambs, either at the Great Dionysia or elsewhere, did not need to refer explicitly to Dionysus; cf. Ierànò, 205-6.

paean or a dithyramb, even though it has been passed down to us under the label “dithyramb.”⁴⁴

That Bacchylides’ “dithyramps” are possibly not even genuine examples of actual dithyramps would seem to present considerable hurdles to a project which sets out to examine dithyramb and tragedy by using the evidence provided by those poems. Those hurdles are not insuperable, however, if one adopts the position that Bacchylides’ “dithyramps” are representative of the compositions he might have created for performance in the dithyrambic competitions at the Great Dionysia. In that case, a poem such as Bacchylides 18, which will be examined in detail in Chapter 2, may not technically be a dithyramb because it was intended for performance at the Thargelia, a festival for Apollo, but, for our purposes, it can serve as a stand-in for a dithyramb that would have taken place at the Great Dionysia. Furthermore, the poems labeled as dithyramps in Bacchylides’ corpus share a number of features, and that degree of coherence among them does suggest that he used similar techniques whether he was composing for choral performance at the Thargelia, Panathenaea, Dionysia, or still other festivals.⁴⁵ Fortunately Pindar’s dithyramps do seem to be genuine examples of the genre, yet, none can be connected definitively with the Great Dionysia’s competitions in dithyramb, so they too must be understood as representative of the dithyramps which Pindar might have composed for such occasions.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Recent overview of the question in Pavlou (2012). On paeans in general, see Rutherford (2001), and on the difficulty in defining the genre, Ford (2006). Harvey (1955) is an important and still influential work on the classification of the Greek lyric genres.

⁴⁵ Fearn (2007), 221-5; Calame (2013).

⁴⁶ Fr. 75-7 seem intended for performance in Athens, but not necessarily as part of the competitions in dithyramb at the Great Dionysia. See Zimmermann (1992), 53-4, and (2007-09), 15-8, and for fr. 75, the longest of the three, see now Neer and Kurke (2014).

Another type of evidence relevant for the study of dithyramb is Greek vase-painting, and Chapter 1 focuses exclusively on that corpus, which requires its own methodological orientation. The connection between ancient vase-paintings and ancient performance has been hotly contested, with the debate on the matter tending to concentrate on the issue of whether or not a particular image betrays the influence of a particular theatrical work in performance. For instance, an image in which a female figure labeled “Medea” flies off in a chariot, leaving behind a man and dead children, seems to evoke Euripides’ *Medea*, whose final scene involves Medea leaving Corinth in a chariot supplied by her grandfather Helios after having killed the two children she bore to her husband Jason.⁴⁷ That conclusion might be challenged, however, by asserting that ancient artists worked within their own traditions and that therefore the details of a painting should be understood in terms of the practices of ancient visual art, and not with reference to staged performance.⁴⁸ The two positions just outlined, the one optimistic about the relationship between ancient visual art and ancient performance, the other pessimistic, are representative of the two predominant approaches, commonly labeled “philodramatism” and “iconocentrism” respectively, in the study ancient vase-paintings and ancient performance.⁴⁹

The gulf between the philodramatists and iconocentrics becomes its widest when those in the former camp argue that an image in effect illustrates a particular scene from a

⁴⁷ Trendall and Webster (1971), 97; Taplin (1993), 16-7, 22-3, and (2007), 117-23.

⁴⁸ Small (2003), 47-52, and (2005), 106-9.

⁴⁹ On the labels, see Giuliani (1996), 72-5. There has been much recent work, usually initiated by those who might be seen to incline more to a philodramatic approach, attempting to find common ground between the two positions: see Taplin (2007), especially 22-6; Lada-Richards (2009); Coe (2013).

particular performance.⁵⁰ In my examination of ancient visual art, I never propose a connection between an image and performance along these lines, for instance, between a vase-painting that shows men summoning a ghost from a tomb and the moment in Aeschylus' *Persians* when such a scene occurs. Yet I do maintain that some ancient vase-paintings are related to ancient performance, and in making this claim, I follow the work of scholars such as M. Steinhart and, in particular, E. Csapo, who have argued persuasively for a phenomenon in ancient art which might be called "performance-realism."⁵¹ An image that has been painted with "performance-realism" depicts an event in a manner so that the event might be recognizable to someone who had experienced it. To cite a hypothetical parallel, we can imagine a modern painting of a theatrical scene that appears to us as if it could happen in the manner depicted – it is consistent with the conventions of modern performance – but the image does not replicate or refer to any particular performance or single production. The scene, wholly imagined, is nonetheless painted with realistic detail. Some ancient vase-paintings depict tragic and dithyrambic performance in a similar manner, and they are therefore an important resource for studying the two genres.

Direct evidence such as the texts and vase-paintings just discussed constitute only one type of source that helps illuminate the relationship between tragedy and dithyramb in the fifth century. Another is the indirect testimony for the two genres, the comments and observations about tragedy and dithyramb that are found, for instance, in the works

⁵⁰ The term "illustration" has long been associated with the philodramatic school, thanks in part to work such as A.D. Trendall's and T.B.L. Webster's *Illustrations of Greek Drama* (1971). For a defense of the term, see Green (2007b).

⁵¹ Steinhart (2004); Csapo (2010), ch. 1, esp. 1-2.

of Plato, Aristotle, and Athenaeus, whose views have already been quoted above. We have already seen the contributions which such sources often make to the perceptions of the two genres, both in antiquity and today. They have been instrumental in setting tragedy at at least a few slots above dithyramb in the hierarchy of Greek performance-genres. There is no shortage of this sort of indirect evidence for dithyramb and tragedy, yet the bulk of it, including the statements offered by Plato, Aristotle, and Athenaeus, postdates the fifth century. As a result of that chronological gap, the later testimony must be used with caution as evidence for the relationship between dithyramb and tragedy in the fifth century, if that testimony is to be used at all for such a project. M. Griffith has spoken recently of “the critical blinkers” imposed by the theories of Aristotle and called for their removal.⁵² In that spirit, this study will examine only fifth-century sources as evidence for the relationship between dithyramb and tragedy in that time period. That testimony, found in works such as the comedies of Aristophanes and the histories of Herodotus, offers a crucially contemporary window onto the fifth-century perceptions of fifth-century tragedy and dithyramb.

Finally, mention must be made of the role that Athens has played in filtering what fifth-century evidence survives for tragedy and dithyramb and also how that evidence is often perceived. Athens’ influence bulks large both in our record and in this dissertation. The vase-paintings, tragedies, and comedies which I examine here are all Athenian. So too are the later sources that set the stage for this study above with their tendency to segregate dithyramb and tragedy from each other. Moreover, those later sources have made their own contribution to our understanding of the earlier fifth-century material.

⁵² Griffith (2008), 61.

This becomes evident especially in the case of tragedy, which, thanks to efforts which began in earnest in the last third of the fourth century, came to be conceptualized as a pinnacle of artistic achievement that was inextricably connected to fifth-century Athens, a particular vision of tragedy that holds more or less intact still today.⁵³

Despite Athens' imposing presence, the city and its cultural products do not attract all of the energies of this dissertation. Many of the dithyrambs which we will consider were destined for their first performances in places other than Athens, although that city was of course the site for numerous dithyrambic premieres every year, and Herodotus, whose *Histories* provides the material for one of the following chapters, hails from Halicarnassus on the western coast of what is now Turkey, although even he is supposed to have spent considerable time at Athens and to have been familiar with the city's cultural practices. Nonetheless, a study of dithyramb and tragedy can perhaps go some way to overcoming the persistent Athenocentrism of both our sources and much scholarship on those sources.⁵⁴ In regard to the two genres which lie at the heart of this project, it is telling that, although disputes arose in antiquity about which Greek city could rightfully claim to be the birthplace of both tragedy and dithyramb, Athens was one of the disputants in the case for tragedy, but not, as far as we can tell, in the case for dithyramb.⁵⁵

Summary of the Chapters

⁵³ See, now, Hanink (2014).

⁵⁴ Thomas (2000), 9-16, is a recent warning against an Athenocentric perspective with regard to Herodotus.

⁵⁵ Claims, Athenian or otherwise, for tragedy: Arist. *Poet.* 1448a29-31; Them. *Or.* 27.337B; Suda, s.vv. Thespis (θ 282 Adler) and Nothing to do with Dionysus (ο 806 Adler). For dithyramb: Pi. *Ol.* 18-9, with schol. ad loc. (Drachmann p. 361). See also Kowalzig and Wilson (2013b), 13.

This dissertation is divided into two halves, each of which consists of two chapters and examines the relationship between dithyramb and tragedy from a different perspective. The approach adopted in the first half is rooted in performance. Although tragedy and dithyramb shared a number of performance features, such as the delivery of lines composed in meter and dancing to the accompaniment of music, it has long been common to claim that there is a fundamental difference between the performance of dithyramb and tragedy in terms of the two genres' respective modes of performance, or the manner in which their performance was enacted. Tragedy's mode of performance was mimetic, which means, in part, that the performers in a tragedy impersonated fictional characters.⁵⁶ For instance, while we know that the actor who played the title character in Euripides' *Orestes* was a certain Hegelochus, for the purpose of the performance of that tragedy Hegelochus represented Orestes.⁵⁷ In the performance of dithyrambs, the performers did not impersonate fictional characters, or so is suggested by the many comments, from antiquity to today, that claim that dithyramb's mode of performance was non-mimetic.⁵⁸ The first two chapters interrogate the assumption that tragedy was mimetic and dithyramb not by building a case that performers impersonated fictional characters not just in tragedy, but also in dithyramb.

The first chapter contributes to that argument by examining sixth- and fifth-century Attic vase-paintings that depict the performance of the two genres. Drawing on recent research on the iconography of dithyramb, I demonstrate that a number of images

⁵⁶ On impersonation as a one component of mimetic performance, see Halliwell (1986), 113-4; Duncan (2006), 2; Peponi (2013c), 364.

⁵⁷ On Hegelochus' performance in *Orestes*, see Ar. *Frogs*, 303-4, with Dover (1993), 231.

⁵⁸ In antiquity, see Plato *Republic* 394b8-c5; modern scholarship: Seidensticker (2005), 38 and 49.

which have only recently been identified as representations of dithyramb present the genre as a mimetic performance by showing dithyrambic performers who wear costumes in order to assume new identities for the sake of performance. At the center of the chapter is a vase-painting that has in the past been regularly identified as a representation of tragic performance. It shows a chorus whose members sing and dance while wearing masks, a detail that has been understood as an indication of tragic performance because masks have traditionally been considered fundamental to the mimetic performance of tragedy, and therefore absent from dithyrambic performance, which is supposed to be non-mimetic. I argue that this supposed representation of masked tragic performance should in fact be classified as a representation of dithyrambic performance given the previously unrecognized similarities between it and other vase-paintings showing dithyramb. The vase is thus the strongest evidence to date that dithyramb was a mimetic performance-genre in which performers could wear masks, exactly as occurred in tragic performance. In a short concluding section, I trace the beginning of the process by which the mask, and hence mimetic performance, comes to be associated in the iconographic record with tragedy, at the expense of dithyramb.

In Chapter 2, I turn to the surviving texts of dithyrambs and tragedies from the first half of the fifth century while still investigating the performance modes of tragedy and dithyramb. Through close examination of the works of Bacchylides, Aeschylus, and Pindar, I demonstrate that there was no single model for how a chorus' mimetic impersonation of a fictional character could be enacted in tragedy or dithyramb. In some cases, a chorus could assume a precise and full-bodied identity, as occurs in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, where the chorus impersonates the Danaids, the Egyptian daughters of

Danaus who flee proposed marriages with their cousins the Aegyptids and arrive in Argos because a distant ancestor of theirs is from that city. In other cases, a chorus might have a fictional identity, but that identity is presented in broad and generic, rather than specific terms, such as in Bacchylides 18, where the chorus represents a group who are loyal to Athens, but it is never specified who exactly makes up that group. Bacchylides' dithyrambs also present instances where a chorus' identity fluctuates. At times the chorus impersonates a fictional character, but elsewhere in the same poem the chorus seems to perform without a fictional identity, resulting in a mode of performance that is partly mimetic and partly non-mimetic. Still another variety of mimetic performance is for a dithyrambic chorus to represent non-human beings, in particular satyrs, the half-horse half-man mythical followers of Dionysus. There is evidence that the choral performers of some of Pindar's dithyrambs impersonated those creatures. In its totality, Chapter 2 argues for a fluid understanding of mimetic performance as undertaken by tragic and dithyrambic performers in the first part of the fifth century, and, in tandem with Chapter 1, it further demonstrates that tragedy did not have an exclusive claim on that mode of performance.

The second half of the dissertation considers what the definitions of tragedy and dithyramb that are supplied by fifth-century sources can tell us about the stature of the two genres in relation to each other. No fifth-century source offers a formal definition of either genre (nothing like the definition of tragedy that Aristotle articulates in the *Poetics* in the fourth century). Nonetheless, many explicit references to tragedy and dithyramb from the fifth century compensate for that absence by supplying informal and implicit

definitions of the genres, and those definitions in turn give a sense of the extent to which dithyramb and tragedy were considered equal members of the same poetic landscape.

Chapter 3 focuses on the sole explicit reference to tragedy, perhaps the earliest such reference in all surviving Greek literature, found in Herodotus' *Histories*. In Book 5 of that work, Herodotus reports on "tragic choruses" which were performed in sixth-century Sicyon. While it is possible that those choral performances were called "tragic" in that time and place, it seems more likely that Herodotus uses the term as a means to aid his audience's understanding of unfamiliar choral performances by relating to them something readily familiar, namely tragedy. The reference must therefore be understood in its fifth-century, Herodotean context, and two hypotheses are adduced to explain why "tragic" would be particularly fitting as a description of the choruses: first, that the choruses are dedicated to the god Dionysus, just as tragic choruses are; and second, that the content of the songs sung by the choruses involve catastrophic events of human suffering, the very events that supply the plots of many fifth-century tragedies. At the same time that I place Herodotus' reference in its fifth-century context, I also point to reasons why "dithyrambic" would have been equally appropriate as "tragic" as a description for the choruses. In labeling the choruses "tragic," Herodotus seems to prioritize that genre, over dithyramb, as the foremost example of a Dionysiac choral performance that tells stories full of suffering. Herodotus' reference to tragedy thus marks an early moment where tragedy supersedes dithyramb.

Chapter 4 investigates the implicit definitions of tragedy and dithyramb in Aristophanes' comedies, the fifth-century source that supplies by far the most references to the two genres. While such an undertaking runs the risk of becoming unruly because of

the sheer volume of references, I limit my investigation by focusing on a subset of the terms which Aristophanes uses in reference to the two genres: *trugōidia*, *tragikos*, and *tragōidikos* for tragedy, and *kuklios* for dithyramb, each of which appears in the longest fragment from Aristophanes' *Gerytades*, the comedy discussed above at the outset of this introduction, in a scene in which tragedy and dithyramb are directly juxtaposed with each other. Throughout Aristophanes' corpus, those terms are used to refer to tragedy's and dithyramb's language, plot, choreography, poetic structure, ethical aims, and still other features. In short, in Aristophanes' comedies the definitions of dithyramb and tragedy are articulated in a similarly comprehensive manner, with attention paid to numerous aspects of the two genres. I suggest that this moment of parity between tragedy and dithyramb in terms of their respective definitions is fleeting, for while tragedy continued to be defined by the sum of its parts, there is a tendency in ancient discussions of dithyramb to define the genre by a single, identifying feature. Nowhere is dithyramb's definition fuller than in Aristophanes' comedies, and nowhere are the definitions of dithyramb and tragedy closer in terms of their respective scopes.

The epigraph to this dissertation is a short work, titled "Ancient Theater," written by the twentieth century Greek poet Yannis Ritsos. In it, Ritsos describes the experience of a young, modern Greek man who, standing in the middle of an ancient Greek theater, directs a cry outward, toward the seats from which an audience would have watched an ancient performance. In introducing his English translation of the poem, A.K. Petrides has summed up its main theme as "the laboured issue of Greek historical and cultural continuity."⁵⁹ Among the ways that Ritsos explores that theme is by questioning what

⁵⁹ <https://antonispetrides.wordpress.com/2014/09/22/yannis-ritsos-ancient-theatre-translated-by-a-k-petrides/>. Accessed 6 April 2015.

should be considered the essential parts of the legacy left by ancient Greece. A young man crying forth while standing in an ancient Greek theater might seem to evoke the performance of an ancient tragedy, yet when the echo of Greece responds, it does so with “the eternal shout of the dithyramb.” Ritsos elevates dithyramb to a place normally reserved for tragedy.

B.M.W. Knox once remarked that poets often “unconsciously anticipate...future developments” in scholarship.⁶⁰ Knox made that claim in reference to Louis MacNeice’s “Autum Journal” which, published in 1938, seemed to Knox to presage the increased attention paid on the part of scholars of Greco-Roman antiquity in the second half of the twentieth century to “the dark underside of what the Victorians hailed as the Greek Miracle.”⁶¹ Knox’s observation, however, could easily have been made in reference to Ritsos’ “Ancient Theater,” which was published almost exactly a half century ago in 1963. Scholarship is only now beginning to absorb and respond to Ritsos’ simple, elegant, and prescient observation that dithyramb deserves to have its voice heard and that we might hear “the eternal shout of the dithyramb” call forth from unsuspecting places. Like Ritsos’ “Ancient Theater,” this study will help give the now mostly forgotten and silenced dithyramb its voice.

⁶⁰ Knox (1993), 31.

⁶¹ Ibid.

PART ONE

Dithyramb, Tragedy, and Mimesis

CHAPTER 1

MASKS AND MIMETIC PERFORMANCE IN ATTIC VASE-PAINTING*

Introduction

In Book 3 of Plato's *Republic*, Socrates, in the course of a conversation with Adeimantus about poetry's form (*lexis*), distinguishes between tragedy and dithyramb on the basis their respective modes of delivery (394b8-c5).¹ In tragedy (and comedy), the characters of the story speak for themselves in their own voices, a mode of delivery that Socrates describes as mimetic. Dithyramb, by contrast, is conducted "through the narration of the poet himself" (δι' ἀπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ τοῦ ποιητοῦ, 394c2-3). The poet's voice prevails over the voices of his characters, and Socrates describes that mode of delivery as diegetic.² Socrates' pronouncements, including the very terms he uses to label each mode of delivery, have proven immeasurably influential for later analyses of poetry and literary work, both within the Greek tradition and beyond it.³ The opposition between

* Images of many of the vase-paintings which I discuss in this chapter can be found on the *BAPD* (<http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/xdb/ASP/default.asp>). The *BAPD* number is provided in the initial citation for a vase. In cases where I examine closely the details of a vase, I provide the *BAPD* number also in parentheses in the body of the text.

¹ On the translation of *lexis* as "form," see Murray (1996), 169. Socrates introduces the topic at 392c6-8, and he and Adeimantus do not abandon it until 398b8.

² Socrates also discusses a mode that mixes mimetic and diegetic delivery; he associates it with epic.

³ Genette (1992) explores the long afterlife of this passage in subsequent literary theory. On the centrality of *mimēsis* to the Greek literary tradition, see Halliwell (2002).

tragedy and dithyramb enshrined in Plato's *Republic* still holds great currency, and it is has long been axiomatic to declare that tragedy is mimetic whereas dithyramb is not.⁴

Socrates' tidy binary of mimetic tragedy, on the one hand, and non-mimetic dithyramb, on the other, is not foolproof, however, as ample evidence from antiquity indicates that dithyramb was, at times, a mimetic performance-genre. Dithyrambic performers could engage in the sort of dramatic impersonation that Socrates labels as mimetic in Book 3 of the *Republic*.⁵ Furthermore, in antiquity, just as today, the meaning of *mimēsis* was not restricted solely to impersonation, but the term could be used to designate other components of a performance.⁶ In that vein, there are ancient reports about dithyrambic performances in which instruments were used to mimic certain sounds, or dancers would move in a way that was evocative of the actions that were being described in a song, and these and similar effects were described as mimetic.⁷ Even as sources attest to a variety of mimetic elements that were found in dithyramb, they consistently present *mimēsis* as a late addition to the genre, a view represented by the statement made about mimetic dithyramb in one of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problems*. There, it is said that "dithyramps became mimetic" (οἱ διθύραμβοι, ἐπειδὴ μιμητικοὶ ἐγένοντο, 918b17), implying that the mimetic dithyramb constitutes a change from the

⁴ Pickard-Cambridge (1927), 135, with respect to Arion's non-mimetic dithyramps, removed at *DTC*, 100-1. Recently and more generally, Seidensticker (2005), 38 and 49.

⁵ See the testimony for Philoexnus' *Cyclops*, esp. *PMG* 815-24. Cf. Sutton (1983); Hordern (1999) is skeptical of the dramatic elements.

⁶ On the various understandings of *mimēsis* in antiquity, see Halliwell (1986), ch. 4, esp. 109-16 for focus on the period before Plato, and (2002), *passim*; more recently LeVen (2014), 189-92, who mentions many of the testimonia cited in both the previous and following note.

⁷ Mimicking sounds on an instrument in Timotheus' *Birthpangs of Semele*: *PMG* 792 = *Ath.* 8.352a. Physical gesticulation in Timotheus' *Scylla*: *PMG* 793, with *Arist. Poetics* 1461b30-2. Cf. Csapo (2004), 213-4, and Power (2013), 245. Other mimetic dithyramps: Melanippides' *Marsyas*, on which see Boardman (1956), 19; Csapo (2004), 213; Kowlazig and Wilson (2013b), 21; Power (2013), 241.

genre's earlier, non-mimetic state. The passage makes that assumption clear by associating the non-mimetic dithyramb with genre's "old" form (τὸ παλαιόν, 918b18), in contrast to its new, mimetic one. Modern scholars have largely followed the outlook of the ancient sources with regard to the relationship between dithyramb and *mimēsis*. They too tend to present *mimēsis* as a late development in the history of the genre, one associated most strongly with the rise of New Music in the latter part of the fifth century.⁸

On the formulations of most critics both ancient and modern, *mimēsis* has no natural place in dithyramb, but invades the genre from without. The opening two chapters of this study question that common conviction by examining evidence that suggests that already at a relatively early date, certainly earlier than most ancient and modern accounts admit, dithyramb was a mimetic performance-genre. Following on Socrates' definition of *mimēsis* as impersonation in *Republic* 3, I focus on that aspect of the multifarious concept.⁹ In describing mimetic impersonation, Socrates isolates the contribution of voice – how a performer can impersonate a character by assuming that character's voice and, consequently, identity – and in the next chapter I will investigate in detail whose voices dithyrambic performers adopted and, by extension, whom those performers impersonated. To begin, however, I focus on another component of dramatic impersonation in ancient Greece, the use of masks and costumes. In mimetic performances like tragedy, these items, in particular the mask, were considered essential

⁸ *DTC*, 51; Zimmermann (1992), 127-8; Murray (1996), 172 and 180; Csapo (2004), 213ff.; Battezzato (2013), 96; LeVen (2014), 189-93. For a long time, it was common to understand *mimēsis* as a degenerating influence on dithyramb; see especially *DTC* and Zimmermann (1992). Even the recent, important work that takes a more sympathetic approach to New Music still considers *mimēsis* a late addition to dithyramb; see Csapo (2004) and LeVen (2014).

⁹ In Book 10, the definition of *mimēsis* is altered, on which see Belfiore (1984); Ferrari (1989), 108-41; Murray (1996), 5-6 and 186-7.

for the ability of performers to adopt new identities as characters.¹⁰ Thespis is supposed to have made a decisive contribution to tragedy's development when he introduced the use of masks to the genre, and whether that tradition is accurate or not, it attests to the perceived centrality of the mask in tragic performance.¹¹ If dithyramb was a non-mimetic genre, as many claim, then dithyrambic performers had no need for masks, and it is quite common to encounter statements to the effect that masks were not used in dithyramb.¹² By the same logic, proof that dithyrambic performers did wear masks would suggest that the genre was mimetic.

The literary record is for the most part silent about the use of masks in dithyramb, necessitating a turn to a different set of evidence. Various sixth- and fifth-century Attic vase-paintings, which are believed to be related to dithyramb, show performers who wear costumes and masks and so assume new identities as characters in performance.¹³ In short, this iconographical evidence indicates that dithyramb was mimetic.

The Traditional Image of Dithyramb

After a fallow period, the iconography of dithyramb has attracted renewed interest, and that new work, in the course of making many important contributions to our understanding of dithyramb, has provided an alternative to what I call dithyramb's

¹⁰ There has been much work on the use of masks in various spheres of activity in Greek antiquity, with particular attention paid to their place in tragic performance. See *DFA*, 189-96; Calame (1986); Halliwell (1993); Marshall (1999); Scullion (2002), 114-6; Wiles (2007).

¹¹ Suda, s.v. Thespis (θ 282, Adler). Cf. *DTC*, 79ff.; Podlecki (1972), 188; Adrados (1975), 344-5; Green (2007), 102; Hart (2010), 9.

¹² Pickard-Cambridge (1927), 50, abridged and modified at *DTC*, 34; *DFA*, 77; Halliwell (1993), 198-9; Foley (2003), 7; Fearn (2007), 192; Rothwell (2007), 62; Meineck (2011a), 152n.1; Hedreen (2013), 181.

¹³ On the use of ancient vase-paintings as evidence for ancient performance, see Introduction, above, pp.17-8.

“traditional image,” which is a representation of dithyramb that shows unmasked performers who wear long, decorated cloaks and often have garlands of ivy in their hair.¹⁴ Now, however, a number of vases have been newly connected with dithyrambic performance, and these do not adhere to dithyramb’s traditional image. In what follows, I offer a critical overview of the arguments that underpin the traditional image of dithyramb, as a means to both set the new work on dithyrambic iconography in context and point to certain problems in the old approach that led to dithyramb’s tradition image.

In general, the traditional image of dithyramb has derived its strongest support from two assumptions about the genre, but each of those notions can be challenged. Firstly, it is often argued that vase-paintings that depict dithyrambic performance evoke in some way a certain tone that is evident also in the surviving texts of the genre. Texts and images are made to collude with each other such that they together attest to a single, particular style of dithyrambic performance. Yet, it is possible to imagine a different style of dithyrambic performance by emphasizing different aspects of the evidence for dithyramb. In that case, the neat parallelism between texts and images collapses. Secondly, and more germane to our interest in mimetic performance, the traditional image of dithyramb is predicated on the assumption that the genre was an unmasked, non-mimetic performance, and for proof of that assumption, recourse is made to a few ancient literary sources that seem to indicate that dithyrambic performers did not wear masks, and hence the genre was non-mimetic. Yet the testimony of those sources is at best inconclusive, despite the consensus to the contrary. From the textual record alone, it is impossible to claim that dithyramb either was or was not a masked performance. To

¹⁴ Csapo (2003); Rusten (2006); Csapo (2010b); Hedreen (2013); Heinemann (2013); Kowalzig (2013).

affirm or deny the matter, evidence be sought elsewhere, and will be after we examine dithyramb's traditional image.

An Attic red-figure bell krater now in Copenhagen offers a prime example of dithyramb's traditional image and the sort of reasoning on which it rests (*BAPD* 215175).¹⁵ K. Friis Johansen, in the first modern publication of the vase in the 1950s, argued that the vase shows the performance of a dithyramb, and his identification has persisted with little resistance ever since.¹⁶ The krater portrays on one of its sides six male figures, all identified by name, standing on either side of a pole set in a tripod-base.¹⁷ Four of the men stand in two groups of two on either the pole. They face inward to it and wear patterned cloaks over long tunics, wreaths of ivy, and white headbands accented with gold. At least two of them hold a sprig of ivy.¹⁸ In the center, flanking the pole, the remaining two men stand. On the right is an aulete, playing his instrument, and on the left a man who, while dressed similarly to the others, faces outward such that he confronts the viewer. All of the figures except for the aulete have their mouths open to indicate that they are singing.¹⁹ The playing musician, the similarity of the figures' dress

¹⁵ Attic red-figure bell krater, c.425, Kleophon Painter. Copenhagen, National Museum of Denmark 13817. *ARV* 1145.35; *Paralipomena* 456; *Addenda* 335 *BAPD* 215175.

¹⁶ Friis Johansen (1959). In recent scholarship, his stance has been repeated by Csapo and Slater (1995), 57-8; Fearn (2007), 192n.90; and Hedreen (2013), 175-8. Doubts have been expressed by Wilson (2000), 76, Csapo (2010b), 84n.25, and Heinemann (2013), 307n.101, but always in abbreviated form, with Csapo and Heinemann confining their reservations to footnotes, and Wilson merely inserting a question mark in his description of the vase as "a (?) dithyrambic *khōros*."

¹⁷ For the names, see *CVA* Copenhagen 8, 267.

¹⁸ The two figures closest to the pole. The sprig held by the figure on the left is clearly visible in most reproductions, the one held by the figure on the right less so, but see *CVA* Copenhagen 8, 267.

¹⁹ Csapo and Slater (1995), 57-8, suggests that the central, outward looking figure, identified by name as Phrynichus, "appears not to be singing." Friis Johansen (1959), 6, observes that his lips are open and teeth visible, a detail that is not detectable on reproductions of the vase, but can be seen by autopsy. He is clearly distinguished from the others due to his frontward-facing stance, and he has been identified variously as the poet of the song, Friis Johansen (1959), 10-13; the chorus leader, *DFA*, 17; and the chorus producer, Hart

such that they form a coherent unit, and their open mouths suggest that the image represents a choral performance of some kind.²⁰

Friis Johansen argues that the vase depicts a dithyrambic performance on the basis of two observations.²¹ First, the predominance of Dionysiac themes on the vase suggests that the chorus sings for Dionysus. The strongest Dionysiac element is the ivy that appears everywhere, overwhelming the base of the tripod, extending part way up the pole, crowning the hair of all of the figures, and recurring in the sprigs carried by two of the choreuts.²² The image on the opposite of the vase reinforces the Dionysiac context of the entire pictorial program.²³ There, two maenads with *thyrsos* (long stalks with bunches of ivy leaves affixed at their tops) flank a male figure, who has been described as a satyr, carrying a torch.²⁴ After Friis Johansen has established a Dionysiac context for the image, he sets out to assign the chorus on the vase to one of the varieties of choral performances conducted in Dionysus' honor. Of tragedy, comedy, satyr-play, and dithyramb, all of which are Dionysiac *choroi*, he judges dithyramb the most likely and correct choice because the image lacks "masks, theater costumes and any indication" of drama.²⁵

(2010), 30. Hedreen (2013), 175-7, interprets the unique stance of Phrynichus as a means by which the artist indicates a circular formation for the chorus. On his interpretation, Phrynichus need not be an individual who is marked as exceptional within the chorus, but merely another member of the chorus. Csapo (2006/7) does not include the vase in his study of the *exarchos*.

²⁰ On the combination of these elements in images of choral performance, see Green (1991), 22, 24 and 27, and Hedreen (2007), 162.

²¹ Friis Johansen (1959), 7-8.

²² On the association between Dionysus and ivy in visual art, Carpenter (1986), 50-1.

²³ Little attention is paid to the reverse. Friis Johansen (1959), 42, devotes only a short paragraph to it.

²⁴ Although the identification of the figure as a satyr is consistent in modern scholarship, the top of his head, where his identifying ears would be, is missing. Cf. *CVA* Copenhagen 8, 267.

²⁵ Friis Johansen (1959), 8.

Dithyramb's traditional image is integral to Friis Johansen's interpretation of the image of choral performance on the Copenhagen krater. In order to cinch his proposal that the krater depicts the performance of a dithyramb, Friis Johansen assumes that the genre was not mimetic and therefore an iconographic representation of it would not contain items like masks.

After arguing that the image on the vase should be identified as a representation of dithyramb, Friis Johansen considers various festival contexts in which that dithyrambic performance could have taken place, and concludes that the image shows a dithyramb that occurred at the Anthesteria.²⁶ Although his conclusion is now largely discredited (that there were dithyrambic performances at the Anthesteria is doubted), his argumentation is important because it attests to a fundamental component of dithyramb's traditional image, namely the idea that iconographic representations of dithyramb should be compatible with the tone or mood that is perceived in the surviving texts of the genre.²⁷ One of the principal pieces of evidence Friis Johansen cites in support of his theory that the dithyramb shown on the Copenhagen krater took place at the Anthesteria is a fragmentary dithyramb composed by Pindar for performance in Athens (fr. 75).²⁸ In the poem, the gods are summoned to the "much-trodden, incense-rich navel of the city" (πολύβατον οἷ τ' ἄστεος ὀμφαλὸν θυόεντ', 3) and its "famed, bedecked agora" (πανδαίδαλόν τ' εὐκλέ' ἀγοράν, 5) in order to receive "wreaths twined with violets" (ιοδέτων..στεφάνων, 6) and to hear "songs plucked in spring" (τᾶν τ' ἐαριδρόπων αἰοιδᾶν,

²⁶ Friis Johansen (1959), 14ff.

²⁷ On Friis Johansen's proposal: *DFA*, 16-7; Simon (1983), 98-9. On dithyramb at the Anthesteria: Wilson (2000), 32.

²⁸ Friis Johansen (1959), 37ff.

6) at the time of year when “nectar-bearing flowers bring in the fragrant spring” (εὐοδμον ἐπάγοισιν ἔαρ φυτὰ νεκτάρεια, 15). According to Friis Johansen, the verdant language of Pindar’s dithyramb accords with a performance at the Anthesteria, which occurred in late February, and moreover that poetic imagery finds a visual analogue in the lush vegetation shown on the Copenhagen krater. Dithyrambic text and dithyrambic image ordain the same dithyrambic ambiance.

Discussions of the Copenhagen krater in the wake of Friis Johansen’s publication have continued to promote the vase’s association with dithyramb, often by claiming, as Friis Johansen does, that the image of choral performance somehow accords with the aura of dithyrambic poetry. The painting has been described as “solemn,”²⁹ “religious”³⁰ and “stately,”³¹ and the performers as “muffled”³² in their “festal”³³ and “ceremonial”³⁴ outfits. Such descriptions align with assessments of dithyrambic poetry that emphasize its “quiet language,” “sobriety” and the genre’s inclusion in an “orderly civic festival.”³⁵ A.D. Trendall and T.B.L. Webster claim with regard to the Copenhagen krater: “This dithyramb was clearly a stately song like the preserved dithyramps of Pindar and Bacchylides.”³⁶ And in proposing the Great Dionysia, instead of the Anthesteria, as the festival at which the dithyramb on the vase was performed, those two scholars rely on

²⁹ Friis Johansen (1959), 8 and 41, “feierlich.”

³⁰ *DTC*, 35.

³¹ Webster (1970), 133.

³² *Ibid*, 29 and 32.

³³ *DTC*, 35.

³⁴ *DFA*, 17.

³⁵ *DTC*, 31-2.

³⁶ Trendall and Webster (1971), 25 (I.17).

logic similar to that which led Friis Johansen to his conclusion. They prefer the Great Dionysia on account of that festival's own associations with springtime. Furthermore, they allow the connection between the vase and Pindar's dithyramb, which was crucial to Friis Johansen's argument, to remain. They reassign the image and text together to the new festival, but do not divorce them from each other.

Other vases that have been identified as representations of dithyramb attest to the strong pull exerted by dithyramb's traditional image. On the inside bowl of an Attic red-figure cup from the first part of the fifth century are thirteen pairs of male figures, which alternate between two beardless youths together and a youth combined with a bearded adult.³⁷ The figures wear hairbands and cloaks, which have colored borders around their bottom edges, and are oriented in the same direction, clockwise around the cup. At the head of their line are two additional figures, a fluting aulete, who has the same forward orientation as the men, and another man, who faces the oncoming parade.³⁸ Dionysus is painted in the tondo of the cup. A Dionysiac choral performance by men who do not don masks has suggested dithyramb to many scholars, and some of those scholars detect in the image the same dithyrambic aura that is often perceived in the Copenhagen krater.³⁹ The singers move "in order and harmony" and "reverently" and wear their clothing "with

³⁷ Attic red-figure cup, c. 480-70, Triptolemos Painter. Paris, Louvre G 138. *ARV* 365.61; *Addenda* 223; *BAPD* 203853.

³⁸ Hedreen (2013), 183, claims that the man who faces the procession while gesturing with his right arm "lead[s] the event." His position at the head of the procession is not absolutely certain, however, as one of the youths in the last pair turns his head to look at this figure, suggesting that the supposed leader stands behind him. Knauer (1996), 226n.10, says that the youth with his head turned "thus bridges the gap between the concluding couple and the marshal." Or, positioned neither at the front nor the end of a procession, the man next to the aulete is the center point of a circle, reinforced by the roundness of the cup's shape. For representations of circular choral performances on vases, see Hedreen (2013), although he does not tackle the circularity of this vase.

³⁹ Ghiron-Bistagne (1974) and (1976), 265; Hedreen (2013), 183; contra, Knauer (1996), 232-3.

care.”⁴⁰ When viewing the scene, “one seems to hear the dithyramb composed by Pindar for Athens,” that is, the dithyramb in which Pindar praises Athens as “shining and violet-crowned and celebrated in song” (λιπαράι καὶ ἰοστέφανοι καὶ ἀοίδιμοι, fr. 76.1). Similar statements could be made about two other vase-paintings, one on a sixth-century cup-krater,⁴¹ and the other on a fifth-century kylix,⁴² that show choruses consisting entirely of male figures who perform in honor of Dionysus and wear long, decorated cloaks and headbands, adorned with ivy in one case, but not masks. Both have been identified as representations of dithyramb.⁴³

Combined, the four vases, which span the middle of the sixth century to the last quarter of the fifth, offer a clear, consistent, and particular image of dithyramb as a reverential performance by choruses of unmasked men who wear appropriately decorous garb and sing and dance in Dionysus’ honor. Of those various elements, some seem relatively trustworthy as indicators that a vase-painting depicts dithyrambic performance, whereas others do not. Consistently throughout antiquity, dithyramb is considered the preserve of Dionysus, and, at least in Athens, which is the origin of the vases considered

⁴⁰ Quotations in this and the next sentence from Ghiron-Bistagne, (1974), and (1976), 265.

⁴¹ Attic black-figure cup-krater, c. 550. Paris, Louvre CA 2988. *CVA* Louvre 12, 140, pls. 193-4; *BAPD* 8656.

⁴² Attic red-figure kylix, c. 480-70, Briseis Painter. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 27.74. *ARV* 407.18; *Paralipomena* 371; *Addenda* 232; *BAPD* 204417.

⁴³ For the sixth-century cup, see Csapo (2003); Kowalzig (2013), 35-7; Hedreen (2013), 182-4. For the fifth-century kylix, see *ARV* 407.18; Webster (1967), 44; Froning (1971), 28; Trendall and Webster (1971), 26-7 (I.19); Wilson (2000), 339n.103; Bieber (1941) argues that the image shows a rehearsal for a tragic chorus after ruling out dithyramb because an aulete is present instead of a kitharist, who, according to her, should be the normal accompanist for lyric poetry. Besides that detail, she claims that the image “would fit very well with the dithyramb,” 532. She also suggests that the device depicted on the inside of the vessel is a machine by which the trainees’ attendance could be taken.

here, only men or boys participated in dithyrambic choruses.⁴⁴ Paintings of choruses of male figures who perform in a Dionysiac context would seem legitimate candidates as representations of dithyrambic performance. Yet, the notions that dithyrambic performers should be unmasked and that dithyrambic performance should be solemn or stately rest on insecure foundations, and compelling arguments can be put forth against both positions. Dithyramb's traditional image is not the only possible image of the genre.

Those scholars who insist that a vase-painting of dithyramb should show a dignified performance often appeal to the surviving literary testimony about the genre and claim that it presents dithyramb as stately, solemn, reverential, reserved, dignified, decorous, and the like. Yet, much testimony related to dithyramb can be construed in a different way, so that a very different impression of the genre emerges. In a fragment of Archilochus, which is the earliest testimony for dithyramb, the speaker professes knowledge of how to lead a dithyrambic performance while his "mind has been thunder-struck by wine" (οἶνῳ συγκεραυνωθείς φρένας, fr. 120 W²). Intoxication, seemingly anathema to a reverential performance, is a persistent theme in discussion of dithyramb throughout antiquity.⁴⁵ The *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus* (7) recounts the story of how, after being captured by Tyrrhenian pirates, Dionysus caused wine to flow over the ship's deck, vines of ivy to sprout from the mast, and the god himself to change into the form of a lion, frightful happenings that induced the god's captors to leap off their boat into the sea where they transformed into dolphins. The myth, usually understood as an aetiology

⁴⁴ Ieranò, 23-5, collects testimony about dithyramb's status as a song for Dionysus. For men and boys as the exclusive performers of dithyramb at Athens, see Kowalzig and Wilson (2013b), 18. Battezzato (2013) shows that in Sparta women performed dithyramps.

⁴⁵ Ieranò, 28-9.

for dithyramb, suggests an association between dithyramb and wine, similarly to the Archilochus' fragment, while also adding new dimensions to the genre, such as terrifying experiences, divine epiphanies, and physical transformations.⁴⁶ Lastly in this brief review, a dithyrambic fragment of Pindar's (fr. 70b) describes the din that arises from the "whirling of drums" (ρόμβοι τυπάνων, 9), "castanets" (κρόταλα, 10), "thumping groans" (ἐρίγδουποι στοναχαί, 12), "wild shrieks" (μανίαι ἀλαλαί, 13), and the "hissing of myriad snakes" (μυρίων κλαγγαῖς δρακόντων, 18). The same poem also mentions a "tribe of lions" (φῶλον λεόντων, 21) and "dancing herds of beasts" (χορευοίσασι θηρῶν ἀγέλαις, 22-3). As these few ancient testimonia attest, and to them others could be added, dithyramb can be characterized as energetic and ecstatic rather than stately and reserved.

With regard to the supposed absence of masks in dithyramb, ancient literary sources that seem to refer to the clothing worn by dithyrambic performers are often taken as decisive proof that dithyramb was an unmasked performance, because none of them mention masks. The testimony of the literary record is less definitive than is usually acknowledged, however, as no source either explicitly confirms or denies the use of masks in dithyramb, and many of the sources that are usually understood as proving that dithyrambic performers did not wear masks can be interpreted in other ways.

Demosthenes' *Against Meidias* has been perhaps the most influential ancient source in modern debates about the use of masks in dithyramb. The speech was delivered in 346 BC in the aftermath of events that occurred during the Great Dionysia of 348 BCE when Demosthenes served as the *chorēgos* of a men's dithyrambic chorus for his

⁴⁶ On the relationship between the myth and dithyramb, see Csapo (2003); Hedreen (2013); Kowalzig (2013).

Pandionid tribe.⁴⁷ According to Demosthenes, his opponent Meidias attempted to sabotage his liturgy in various ways, including by destroying cloaks and crowns embellished with gold that Demosthenes had commissioned a goldsmith to make for use at the festival.⁴⁸ It is usually assumed both that the cloaks and crowns in the goldsmith's shop were to be worn by the members of Demosthenes' dithyrambic chorus, and they thus constituted a sort of uniform that was regularly worn for dithyrambic performance,⁴⁹ and furthermore that masks were not a part of standard dithyrambic attire because Demosthenes does not mention them.⁵⁰ Yet there are problems in extracting from the speech evidence for the regular dress of dithyrambic choruses, including the use of masks by those choruses.

In the first place, Demosthenes discusses only the dithyrambic chorus he sponsored at the Great Dionysia of 348, one of twenty dithyrambic choruses that would have performed at that festival, in addition to however many dithyrambic performances took place at other festivals during the same year.⁵¹ It seems unlikely that Demosthenes' description of a single dithyrambic chorus in the middle of the fourth century attests to an unvarying practice over dithyramb's long history, during which the genre underwent

⁴⁷ On the speech in general and the circumstances behind the trial, see MacDowell (1990) and Wilson (2000) 156-68.

⁴⁸ Dem. *Meid.*, 16, 22 and 25.

⁴⁹ MacDowell (1990), 7, 239, and 246.

⁵⁰ Froning (1971), 24.

⁵¹ Other potential occasions for dithyramb include the Thargelia, the Hephaestea, the Prometheia, and the Panthenaea: *DTC*, 4. Recently, scholars have questioned whether the choral performances at those festivals should be considered dithyramps: Kowalzig and Wilson (2013a), 16. For dithyramb in the demes, see Wilson (2000), 305-7.

many changes.⁵² Even if Demosthenes' chorus did not wear masks, that does not mean that all of the many thousands of choruses that performed in the dithyrambic competitions at Athens also did not wear masks.

Furthermore, the speech itself never provides a clear statement about the intended use of the cloaks and crowns, which may not have served as the chorus' performance costume. Instead, the chorus may have worn the items at other moments during the Great Dionysia. Testimony quoted from the goldsmith who made the items indicates that Demosthenes ordered the cloaks and crowns so that he and his chorus could wear them during the procession (*pompē*) (22). Even if the testimony is inauthentic, as is now commonly accepted, it may still give evidence, from a later time, that *choregoi* and choreuts appeared together in the *pompē* while wearing matching cloaks and crowns.⁵³ Use of the items was not restricted to or even expressly intended for performance. At another part of the speech, Demosthenes refers to the practice of the members of all choruses, as well their *chorēgoi*, wearing crowns each day of the festival and seems to include tragic and comic choruses in his prescription (55), a view supported by a fragment of Duris of Samos that describes a "gold crown" as "tragic."⁵⁴ Demosthenes may have had this practice in mind when he asked a goldsmith to make gold crowns. Nowhere does the speech connect the crowns and cloaks expressly with performance, and it seems that in the case of the crowns, many participants in the festival wore them, not exclusively choruses.

⁵² On dithyramb's penchant for change, see Kowalzig and Wilson (2013b), *passim*.

⁵³ On the testimony as an interpolation, see MacDowell (1990), 245-6; Harris (2013), 209, who promises an extended analysis in the future.

⁵⁴ *FGrHist* 76 F 14 = Ath. 12.525e.

With respect to Demosthenes' silence about masks supposedly constituting proof that dithyrambic choruses did not wear masks, it is perhaps sufficient to note the pitfalls of any such argument from silence. Demosthenes' failure to mention masks is not tantamount to a statement that masks were not used. Moreover, there are potential explanations that would account for why Demosthenes does not refer to masks even if his chorus was to wear them. The masks may not have been at the goldsmith's house for Meidias to vandalize. In the fifth century, Aristophanes uses the term *skeuopoios* to refer to the craftsman who made masks for comic performances in his era, and most research indicates that, at least in the fifth century, the masks used in dramatic performances were constructed out of materials like linen.⁵⁵ There is little reason to think that a goldsmith had any involvement or expertise in mask-making. Furthermore, in focusing on the cloaks and crowns, Demosthenes seems to have had certain rhetorical aims in mind, and mentioning masks may not have been as rhetorically effective as mention gold cloaks and crowns.⁵⁶ In order to vilify Meidias, Demosthenes emphasizes his own generosity in specially commissioning a goldsmith to make cloaks and crowns for his chorus, presumably at no small expense, thereby heightening the sense that Meidias has committed a truly outrageous and depraved act. If Demosthenes ignored the masks, perhaps because they were not as extravagant as the other items, his choice does not prove that the masks did not exist.

Dithyramb's traditional image is built in large part on two notions about the genre – that dithyrambic performances should be stately and solemn and that dithyrambic

⁵⁵ Cf. *Knights* 232. On the materials for masks, see Wiles (2007), 15, and Wyles (2011), 40-4, who also discusses possible divisions of labor in making the masks, costumes, and props for tragedy.

⁵⁶ On Demosthenes' heightened rhetoric at this moment of the speech, see MacDowell (1990), 239; Wilson (2000), 160-1.

performers should not wear masks – that have at best precarious support. Accordingly, in searching for vases that depict dithyrambic performance, we should be willing to look beyond paintings that adhere to dithyramb’s not unassailable traditional image. A vase-painting of dithyrambic performance need not show unmasked performers nor evoke a reverential tone. In what follows, we turn to a number of vase-paintings that fail to conform to dithyramb’s traditional image, yet nonetheless have been connected recently with the genre. They present a new image of dithyramb, and that new image in turn revises longstanding assumptions about dithyramb’s supposed non-mimetic performance mode.

A New Image of Dithyramb on Old Vase-Paintings

Nearly two-dozen vase-paintings, spanning in date from the middle of the sixth century to the first third or so of the fifth, have been judged, in the eyes of many scholars, representations of dithyrambic performance.⁵⁷ The vases present similar scenes: groups of male figures who are dressed similarly to each other and arranged with a high degree of regimentation, so as to suggest that they perform as a chorus.⁵⁸ On one of the vases, the men have words written next to their mouths, and their utterances are likely the content of their song and a further indication that the paintings depict choral performance.⁵⁹ On a number of the vases, an aulete accompanies the chorus’

⁵⁷ Csapo (2003); Rusten (2006); Hedreen (2013); Kowalzig (2013).

⁵⁸ On these features as indications of choral performance, see above n.22.

⁵⁹ Attic red-figure psykter, c. 510, Oltos. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 1989.281.69. *ARV* 1622.7bis; *Paralipomena* 326; *Addenda* 163; *BAPD* 275024. See Sifakis (1971), 88-9. Rusten (2006), 49n.42 observes that another of the vases, also with dolphin-riders, shows nonsense letters next to the mouths of one figure. Cf. Attic black-figure lekythos, c. 490-80, Athena Painter. Palermo Regional Archaeological Museum CAT 2816. *BAPD* 4638.

performance. All of the choruses wear costumes of some sort. Many sit as riders atop various animals, most frequently dolphins, but also ostriches and horses. Some of the choruses are dressed as birds, bull, and soldiers on foot, while still others have eluded secure identification. The vases have long been recognized as a group and studied together, and their interpretive history is important in that it prepares for the conclusion that the paintings present dithyramb as a mimetic performance.

Until very recently, the vase-paintings were considered representations of a proto-comic performance that was presumably the primary predecessor to Attic Old Comedy.⁶⁰ One consideration that recommends that conclusion is that some of the figures depicted on the vases presage precisely some of the choruses from Aristophanes' comedies. One vase shows men who ride on horses, that is, the vase shows knights, the same identity as the group that formed the chorus of Aristophanes' *Knights* (BAPD 320396).⁶¹ Two vases show choral performers dressed as birds, which comprised the chorus of Aristophanes' *Birds*.⁶² The vases seem to provide a precedent for the use of theriomorphic choruses in fifth-century comedy, not just in *Knights* and *Birds*, but also *Wasps*, *Frogs*, and many now lost comedies, as much as a century before the literary evidence for the practice.⁶³ The conclusion that those vases are proto-comic has been extended to the rest of them, even those whose figures are not known to have formed a chorus in an actual comedy.

⁶⁰ Sifakis (1971); Green (1985), which offers the fullest overview of the eighteen vases, with two additions at (1991), 22n.19; Rothwell (2007).

⁶¹ Attic black-figure amphora, c. 540-30, Painter of Berlin 1686. Berlin, Antikensammlung F 1697. *ABV* 297.17; *Paralipomena* 128; *Addenda* 78; BAPD 320396.

⁶² Attic black-figure oinochoe, c.480, Gela Painter. London, British Museum B 509. *ABV* 473; *Paralipomena* 214; BAPD 330555. Attic black-figure amphora, c. 480, Dot-Ivy Group. Berlin, Antikensammlung F 1830. *CVA* Berlin 5, 55-6, pls. 43.1-2, 47.5.

⁶³ For animal choruses in Aristophanes' lost comedies and the work of other fragmentary comedians, see Rothwell (2007), 104.

For instance, Trendall and Webster argue that the choruses of men who ride dolphins “may perhaps be Attic Knights who have taken to dolphins for a naval expedition.”⁶⁴ The images suggest that the formal genre of Old Comedy inherited the use of animal choruses from an older tradition of comic performance that is represented on the vases.

As further proof that the vases depict a precursor to Old Comedy, scholars have regularly appealed to the paintings’ supposedly humorous and ridiculous subject matter: men riding unusual animals, walking on stilts, standing on their heads, etc. The humor of the vases has been cited as a means to both classify them as proto-comic and deny that they could represent any other type of performance, including dithyramb. In this vein, K. Rothwell tempers the “serious and ceremonial feel to the movement” of a chorus of dolphin-riders on a black-figure skyphos with the “outlandish ostrich-riders” on the reverse of the vase and concludes that the juxtaposition of the two types of riders “might imply that both sides were meant to be humorous and hence comic, not dithyrambic.”⁶⁵ Rothwell states, “Surely it is difficult to imagine that a procession of ostrich-riders would be a serious subject suitable for dithyramb” (72). Humorous performances must be comic, or proto-comic, and at the least cannot be dithyrambic.

The two principal arguments for interpreting the performances depicted on the vases as proto-comic are unfortunately beset by problems. In the first place, more than one hundred years separate the earliest vases from the earliest direct literary evidence for Old Comedy, i.e., Aristophanes’ surviving work, and even the latest vases predate Aristophanes by the better part of a half-century. The record between is quite sparse, and

⁶⁴ Trendall and Webster (1971), 23 (I.14).

⁶⁵ Rothwell (2007), 60-2, in discussion of Attic black-figure skyphos, c. 500-490, Heron Group. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 20.18. *BAPD* 4090.

it is difficult to sustain a connection over that period.⁶⁶ Moreover, early or proto-comedy should perhaps not be expected to resemble too closely Aristophanes' comedies given how much the genre changes from that poet's era to Menander, a period not much longer than what stands between the vases and Aristophanes.⁶⁷ Furthermore, those who identify the paintings as evidence for a proto-comic performance presume that only comedy could be humorous, as Rothwell's arguments about the vase with dolphin-riders on one side and ostrich-riders on the other demonstrate. Even if we accept that ostrich-riders are humorous, that fact in itself should not preclude dithyramb, unless it is also assumed that humorous elements did not belong in the genre, far from a forgone conclusion.⁶⁸ The influence of dithyramb's traditional image lurks in statements to the effect that only a "serious" subject matter is suitable for the genre. Many different types of performance could support the label of proto-comic, so long as that label simply indicates humorous content. The performances depicted on the vases would seem to call for an identification that is more precise than proto-comic and is based on closer attention to the paintings' context in the sixth and fifth centuries.

Recent work, in particular chapters and articles by E. Csapo and J. Rusten, has reinterpreted the paintings while addressing many of the shortcomings inherent in claiming that they show proto-comic performances. That work argues that the vases depict dithyrambic performance. Csapo first made this argument in connection with the

⁶⁶ The early comedian Magnes is said to have written works with titles like *Frogs*, *Birds*, and *Fig-flies*, and his oeuvre, if accurately reported, would help bridge the gap between the vases and later comedy. Cf. *PCG* V.626-32 and Rothwell (2007), ch. 4.

⁶⁷ Rusten (2006), 54.

⁶⁸ Recent work has suggested that riddles and other entertaining, even humorous, world play found their way into dithyrambs frequently. Cf. Porter (2007) for an early example, and LeVen (2012), for later ones.

vases that show dolphin-riders, a particularly large sub-group of the vases, consisting of seven examples.⁶⁹ He documents the tendency in Greek art, literature, myth, and cult for dolphins to be prototypical Dionysiac dancers and concludes that the dolphin-rider vases draw on the cultural matrix of Dionysus, choral dancing, and dolphins in order to portray dithyrambic performance.

Rusten extended Csapo's conclusion to the vases that portray riders on mounts other than dolphins.⁷⁰ He interprets all the rider-vases as evidence for a neglected strand of dithyrambic performance that entailed non-serious subject matter and humorous elements. For further evidence of his proposed humorous version of dithyramb, he adduces the tradition about the semi-mythical, sixth-century poet Susarion, who was the inventor of Attic comedy according to one prominent tradition.⁷¹ Susarion's name is strikingly similar to Arion's, another semi-mythical figure who was celebrated as either the creator or reformer of dithyramb and was saved from drowning by dolphins.⁷² Rusten proposes that if Arion and his career suggest a connection between dithyramb and dolphin-riders, then Susarion, with his modification of Arion's name, does the same for dithyramb and riders of other animals. Moreover, Rusten points out that designating Susarion as a composer of dithyrambes instead of comedies makes better sense of his traditional date sometime in the sixth century, for the formal genre of comedy is not attested in Athens until the early fifth century, but there is evidence for dithyramb at the time when Susarion is supposed to have worked.

⁶⁹ Csapo (2003).

⁷⁰ Rusten (2006).

⁷¹ *FGrHist* 239a F 39 = Susarion test. 1 *PCG*.

⁷² Hdt. 1.23-4.

More recently still, Csapo has classified all of the vase-paintings – the dolphin-riders, the riders on other mounts, and the figures not riding anything but dressed as birds and other beings – as representations of dithyrambic performance.⁷³ As part of his claim, Csapo offers a new account of Dionysiac choral performance in sixth- and fifth-century Athens. He identifies the dithyrambic performances to which the vases refer as one variety of a broader category of Dionysiac choral performance, which can be grouped under the all-encompassing term *kōmos*. The vases that show choruses of animal-riders, beasts, and other creatures present *kōmoi* in trappings that are suggestive of dithyramb. Other vases show dancers with phalluses, a different variety of *kōmos*. According to Csapo, this visual evidence suggests that in the very latter part of the sixth century and into the fifth, the Great Dionysia featured performances of at least two types of *kōmoi*, dithyrambic and phallic.⁷⁴

Csapo and Rusten make a convincing case that the formerly ‘proto-comic’ vases in fact portray dithyrambic performance. In contrast to the previous treatments of the vases, their accounts do not attempt to create a clearly defined trajectory that links two distantly separated points – the vases and later Attic comedy. Instead, Csapo and Rusten study the vases in their immediate contexts in the late sixth and early fifth centuries. The two scholars also allow the visual evidence to guide their theories, rather than treat it as a source that corroborates what otherwise can be gleaned from textual testimony, which is

⁷³ Csapo (2013a).

⁷⁴ The exact date of the institution of the Great Dionysia is disputed. Connor (1989) proposes that the festival was not formalized until the very end of the fifth century, after the overthrow of the Peisistratid tyranny. Others propose an earlier date, during the time of the tyranny; cf. Csapo (2013a), 65n.91.

often of a rather late date.⁷⁵ In the interpretations of Csapo and Rusten, the dithyrambic performances portrayed on the vases still have an influential role in the early history of Attic comedy, but the nebulous designation of ‘proto-comedy’ can be shed for the more precise one of ‘dithyramb’. In addition, the relationship between the dithyrambic performances depicted on the vases and later Attic comedy is not marked by exclusivity. The performances attested to by the vases likely contributed to the development of other Dionysiac choral performance in the fifth century besides comedy, and Attic comedy arose under the influence of choral performances other than the dithyrambs depicted in the paintings.

While some debate will inevitably persist, the conclusions of Csapo and Rusten are gaining acceptance, and scholars have taken up the work of considering what new insight the evidence provides about the state of dithyramb around the turn from the sixth century to the fifth.⁷⁶ B. Kowalzig has proposed that the frequency with which the figures are either presented as soldiers or appear on vases that elsewhere show soldiers is an indication of dithyramb’s role in fostering civic cohesion, something that hoplite training and warfare accomplish as well.⁷⁷ G. Hedreen has examined what the vases might reveal about different types of choreographic forms, linear and processional or circular, that were used in contemporary dithyrambic performance at a time when, according to one prominent theory, the genre was transitioning from a processional format to one in which

⁷⁵ Cf. the opening comments in Rusten (2005) and the reference to “more strictly evidence-based conclusions” at Csapo (2013a), 64.

⁷⁶ Steinhart (2004), published between the appearance of the first article by Csapo and Rusten’s, offers alternative interpretations for many of the vase-paintings. Osborne (2008) contextualizes some of the vases within the oeuvre of their respective artists.

⁷⁷ Kowalzig (2013). See also Rusten (2006), 51, and Rothwell (2007), 244n.230, both of which discuss the possible connection with and contain further bibliography on the dance in armor, *pyrrhichē*.

the performers sang and danced while standing in a circle.⁷⁸ Thanks to the work of Csapo and Rusten, our understanding of dithyrambic performance is undergoing a substantial overhaul.

Little attention has yet been paid to what the vases indicate about dithyramb's mode of performance, in particular whether they uphold or upend the orthodoxy that dithyramb was a non-mimetic genre whose performers did not impersonate characters. The vases suggest that dithyramb was in fact mimetic because they demonstrate that it was possible for the members of a dithyrambic chorus to dress up in costume so as to impersonate a character in performance. Not only do the vases indicate that mimetic impersonation was possible in dithyrambic performance, they make it an integral part of the genre by taking the act of impersonation of their main theme. The images lack background or ancillary details and do not seem to relate the events of a narrative, although other contemporary and earlier vase-paintings do show an interest in narrative.⁷⁹ Instead, the dithyrambic vases focus almost exclusively on the figures who are represented, and the identities of those figures come to define the vases, quite literally when one observes that many of the vases have acquired modern short-hand titles that combine either their present location or painter and the figures depicted on them, such as "Berlin Knights" or "Oltos' Dolphin-Riders" or "Christchurch Stiltwalkers."⁸⁰ The vases show performers who assume a new identity – whether knights, or birds, or soldiers, or dolphin-riders, or bulls, or still others – as a part of their performance.

⁷⁸ Hedreen (2013). On the change in dithyramb's form in the late sixth and early fifth century, see D'Angour (1997).

⁷⁹ See Steinhart (2007) on the depiction of narrative in sixth-century vase-painting.

⁸⁰ See references to the vases in Rusten (2006) and Hart (2010).

Furthermore, it had already been acknowledged that the performances on the vases are mimetic as part of the long-held, but now revised interpretation of the images of depictions of ‘proto-comedy’.⁸¹ The theriomorphic choruses of Aristophanes’ comedies consisted of performers who dressed up as and impersonated beasts, and the choruses on the vases do the same. It is not necessary to abandon the idea that the vases depict mimetic performances now that there exist compelling arguments for associating the paintings with dithyramb. The previous observations about the mimetic nature of the performances shown in the paintings are still valid. What has changed is that the vases inform us no longer about the performance of comedy, but about the performance of dithyramb.

Not only do the vases indicate that dithyramb was mimetic, but the artists who painted the images took pains to show the means by which dithyrambic performers were able to impersonate characters, namely by wearing costumes. If the vases are defined by the identities of the characters whom the performers impersonate, then those characters can be identified by the costumes that the performers wear. The performers’ costumes have been painted with a great amount of detail. On one of the two vases with a chorus of performers dressed as birds, it is possible to see individual feathers on their wings.⁸² The members of one of the choruses of dolphin-riders carry shields that are each decorated with a different, elaborate emblem.⁸³ On the breastplates of the chorus of knights there

⁸¹ Csapo and Slater (1995), 93.

⁸² Attic black-figure oinochoe, c. 480, Gela Painter. London, British Museum B 509. *ABV* 473; *Paralipomena* 214; *BAPD* 330555.

⁸³ Attic red-figure psykter, c. 510, Oltos. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 1989.281.69. *ARV* 1622.7bis; *Paralipomena* 326; *Addenda* 163; *BAPD* 275024. Three shields carry the image of vessels used at a symposium (kylix, kantharos, and volute krater). The three other shields have various symbols: a swirl

are painted lines and dots, suggesting texture (*BAPD* 320396). The closest attention to detail has been expended on the costumes worn by a chorus of men who walk on stilts (*BAPD* 340567).⁸⁴ The five stilt-walkers each wear a top that resembles a breastplate, and it is possible to identify the materials out of which they are all made, from left to right: animal skin; animal skin or scales; feathers or scales; metal; and animal skin or scales.⁸⁵ It has been suggested on multiple occasions that the paintings convey the experience of watching performers make an impressive entrance and that the performers' costumes contribute more than any other single element to that effect.⁸⁶ The paintings' primary theme might also be summarized as: dithyrambic choral performers wear costumes and impersonate characters.

Even though the vase-paintings seem to depict clearly an important mechanism by which dithyrambic performers were able to impersonate characters, that is by the use of costume, there is need of some caution in order to take account of the possibility that the images do not convey the realities of performance. In other words, how can we determine that the costumes shown in the paintings reflect actual performance practice and are not embellishments or even inventions attributable to the artist and with no basis in reality? While it is impossible to answer that question beyond all doubt given the state of our documentation, it does seem that in many cases the painters have attempted to furnish representations of actual dithyrambic performance. They include in their paintings details

of dolphins, a triskeles of three connected human legs, and another swirl with the foreparts of a horse, lion and griffin. See Hart (2010), 25, for descriptions.

⁸⁴ Attic black-figure amphora, c. 540-30, Swing Painter. Christchurch, Univ. of Canterbury, James Logie Memorial Collection 41/57. *Paralipomena* 134.31bis; *Addenda* 81; *BAPD* 340567.

⁸⁵ For the identifications, see CVA New Zealand 1, 7, and Hart (2010), 23.

⁸⁶ Sifakis (1971), 92-3. See also Green (1991), 23-4, and Rusten (2006), 52.

that ground the images in actual performance, achieving an effect that we might call ‘performance-realism’.⁸⁷

The vase with the chorus of knights exhibits performance-realism in especially clear terms (*BAPD* 320396).⁸⁸ The knights’ steeds are not actual horses, but men who wear bodysuits and horse-heads so that they look like and fulfill the function of horses. In the same way that the horse-men are human performers who wear costumes so that they can act like horses, the knight are actually performers who wear costumes so that they can impersonate knights. They are not actual knights. The realism of the scene becomes all the more apparent when it is compared to the scene shown on the other side of the vase, where another chorus is depicted, this one consisting of nymphs and satyrs who stand before an aulete (*BAPD* 320396). All of the figures in that chorus are presented as mythical beings, not as human performers. The satyrs are all nude and the nymphs wear short tunics that are a common element of their mythical iconography.⁸⁹ The aulete’s legs are those of a horse or goat. Nothing in the scene suggests that it depicts human performers who wear costumes so as to impersonate nymphs and satyrs. The lack of performance-realism in the image of nymphs and satyrs throws into even sharper focus the presence of performance-realism in the image of knights. On account of its performance-realism, it is thus possible to conclude that the chorus of knights gives

⁸⁷ Csapo (2010a), ch. 1, articulates the concept of “theater-realism,” in regard to fifth-century Attic tragedy and comedy, but does not attempt to apply it to dithyramb (he also leaves out satyr-play, although he addresses and justifies that omission; cf. 5-6). Predecessors to his concept can be found in Beazley (1955), 305-19 and Green (1991), 15-50.

⁸⁸ See discussions of the vase in Hedreen (2007) and (2013), to which my discussion is indebted.

⁸⁹ Hedreen (2007), 163.

evidence for the practice of actual performance. Dithyrambic performers could wear costumes so as to impersonate horses and knights.

Other paintings, although not as explicit as the chorus of knights, nonetheless seem to be based in performance-realism. A sixth-century black-figure hydria presents a chorus of four bearded men who wear long dresses, belted high above the waists, and headaddresses with ear-like protrusions (*BAPD* 12278).⁹⁰ The figures have been identified variously as “part-horse part-female beings”⁹¹ and “nymph satyrs.”⁹² Yet these fantastical creatures are in fact characters whom human male performers impersonate, an impersonation they achieve by wearing costumes. That the figures shown on the vase are not really “nymph satyrs” or other fantastic beings is clear from the fact that their beards are still visible. They are men who dress up so as to impersonate characters in their choral performance.

The chorus of stilt-walkers affords yet another example of a realistic representation of dithyrambic performance in which it is clear that performers wear costumes and impersonate characters (*BAPD* 340567). The stilt-walkers are fitted out for a military engagement. It was already noted both that they wear tops that resemble soldiers’ breastplates and that the breastplates are painted so that they give the impression of being composed of various materials, such as animals skins, scales, feathers and metals. While breastplates were made of a variety of materials in ancient Greece, the tops worn by the stilt-walkers hardly seem to be the protective gear that would be worn by

⁹⁰ Attic black-figure hydria, c. 550, manner of Lydos. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 1988.11.3. *BAPD* 12278.

⁹¹ Hedreen (2013), 179.

⁹² Brijder (1991), 403.

actual soldiers.⁹³ Instead, the breastplates are items of costuming worn by performers who impersonate soldiers. Adding to the sense that the stilt-walkers are performers and not actual soldiers are their beards, which have been described as “false-looking,” and are thus another part of the performers’ costume.⁹⁴ Finally, the figures’ stilts also suggest that the image is painted with performance-realism. There is evidence for performances by stilt-walkers in ancient Greece, and the vase may show such a performance.⁹⁵ Yet, the stilts may not be part of an acrobatic display, but instead a means by which to augment the height of the performers, who are supposed to impersonate giants of some kind.⁹⁶ Still further, the stilts may be meant to represent a particular means of locomotion that is not evident on the image but which was perhaps indicated by some other aspect of the performance. In all three cases, whether the stilt-walkers are simply stilt-walkers, or giants, or something else entirely, the stilts are a realistic detail of the image. The vase shows the realities of performance and presents dithyramb as a mimetic performance in which performers dressed up to impersonate characters.

Even when a painting does not contain the type of realistic details found in the previous three examples, it may still convey the message that dithyramb is an inherently mimetic performance. This is the case in particular with the vases showing dolphin-

⁹³ Homer attests to linen corselets. LSJ s.v. *θώραξ* and *λινοθώραξ*. By the fifth century, linen was the dominant material in the construction of corselets. See Wyles (2011), 7.

⁹⁴ Hart (2010), 23. See also Trendall and Webster (1971), 21 (I.10).

⁹⁵ Ancient terms for stilt-walker include *γύπωνες*, found at Pollux 4.104 and *καδαλίων* and *κολοβαθριστής*, both in Hesychius.

⁹⁶ Trendall and Webster (1971), 21 (I.10), suggest Titans.

riders, which are largely devoid of performance-realism.⁹⁷ The dolphin-riders are always actual dolphin-riders, that is, they are men who ride real dolphins, not humans who dress up as dolphins, unlike the chorus of knights, whose horses are horse-men. Choral performers did not ride dolphins, and there is therefore no sense that the images of dolphin-riders are painted with performance-realism. Adding to that sense is the riders' attire. On every vase, the dolphin-riders are dressed as soldiers, and their helmets, shields, spears, breastplates, cloaks, tunics, and greaves appear to be the equipment of actual soldiers. The dolphin-riders cannot be described as human performers who wear the costume of dolphin-riders. They are dolphin-riders, plain and simple.

The paintings of dolphin-riders seem to admit no indications of performance-realism, except for one detail that occurs on four of the seven vases.⁹⁸ In those paintings, an aulete accompanies the chorus' performance. When the aulete appears on other dithyrambic vases, he often accompanies a chorus that has been painted in a realistic manner. The chorus of knights and the chorus of "nymph satyrs" both perform to the accompaniment of an aulete, and both paintings are depicted with performance-realism. The aulete thus seem to serve as an iconographic symbol that contributes to the performance-realism of a painting, but on the four vases with dolphin-riders, he stands

⁹⁷ (1) Attic red-figure psykter, c. 510, Oltos. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 1989.281.69. *ARV* 1622.7bis; *Paralipomena* 326; *Addenda* 163; *BAPD* 275024. (2) Attic black-figure lekythos, c. 490-80, Theseus Painter. Athens, Kerameikos 5671. *ABV* 518.2; *Addenda* 125; *BAPD* 330667. (3) Attic black-figure lekythos, c. 490-80, Athena Painter. Palermo Regional Archaeological Museum CAT 2816. *BAPD* 4638. (4) Attic black-figure cup fragment, c. 490-80. Basel, H.A. Cahn Collection 849. *BAPD* 14650. (5) Attic black-figure cup, c. 490-80, near the Theseus Painter. Paris, Louvre CA 1924. *Paralipomena* 259; *Addenda* 130; *BAPD* 351585. (6) Attic black-figure skyphos, c. 500-490, Heron Group. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 20.18. *BAPD* 4090. On the reverse of this vase is a chorus of ostrich-riders. (7) Attic black-figure kylix, c. 500. Dechter Collection. cf. Green (1991), 22n.19.

⁹⁸ Nos. 2, 3, 5, and 6 in previous note.

beside decidedly unrealistic choral performers.⁹⁹ The juxtaposition hints that an actual performance underlies the representation of the dolphin-riders. The vases that show dolphin-riders accompanied by auletes still indicate that dithyramb was a mimetic performance, only they emphasize a different aspect of that performance mode. Rather than show the means by which performers impersonate characters such as dolphin-riders, the paintings convey the illusion of watching men ride dolphins, the result of the process of mimetic impersonation. The performers and their costumes are erased in favor of the characters and their gear.

These twenty vase-paintings, newly associated with dithyramb after long being considered representations of ‘proto-comedy’, have the potential to contribute to a radical reformulation of the standard accounts of Athenian dithyramb and dithyrambic performance. They present a totally new image of dithyramb, as an inherently mimetic performance-genre in which choral performers wore costumes in order to impersonate characters, in contradiction of the long-held belief, evident from antiquity to modern times, that dithyramb was not, by nature, mimetic. Whether the paintings present dithyrambic performance with a high degree of realistic detail or obscure any realism, they consistently make *mimēsis* a part of dithyramb.

(Tragic) Masks on a Dithyrambic Vase: the Basel Krater

The vases just examined underscore that dithyramb was a mimetic performance, yet none shows dithyrambic performers who wear masks. The paintings instead highlight the mimetic nature of dithyramb by showing performers who dress up in costume. It was

⁹⁹ For the convention whereby the aulete represents a realistic detail of performance, see Beazley (1955) and Green (1991), 22, 24 and 27.

observed earlier that the mask is the symbol *par excellence* of mimetic performance, in particular in its connection with performance-genres like tragedy, and also that most denials of dithyramb's mimetic nature are usually paired with a statement to the effect that dithyrambic performers did not wear masks.¹⁰⁰ The two ideas are understood as corollaries of one another. The absence of masks means the absence of mimesis, and a non-mimetic performance mode signals that masks were not needed for performance.

When the use of masks in dithyramb is not rejected outright, it is entertained only cautiously and considered mainly as a hypothetical proposition that is in need of corroborating evidence. For instance, J. Gould and D.M. Lewis, in the "Select Addenda" of their second, revised edition of A.W. Pickard Cambridge's *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, remark that "even though there is as yet no clear evidence for masks in dithyramb, the question is perhaps more open than is normally thought."¹⁰¹ Gould and Lewis do not attempt to substantiate their claim with an extended argument, instead inviting others to find the evidence that supports their position and thereby resolves their "open" question.¹⁰²

In the paragraph before the one in which they open the possibility of masked dithyramb for consideration, Gould and Lewis in fact discuss at some length a vase-painting, on an early fifth-century Attic red-figure column krater now held in a museum

¹⁰⁰ See above, pp. 28-31.

¹⁰¹ *DFA*, 363.

¹⁰² Gould and Lewis offer their statement in the course of casting doubt on the "universally held opinion that the Pronomos Vase refers to satyr-play," suggesting that it perhaps refers to dithyramb instead, and thus provides evidence for dithyrambic choruses dressing up in costumes and masks and impersonating characters, in this case satyrs. The possibility raised by the pair has usually not been taken too seriously, see Griffith (2010), 52n.22, although some seem to have adopted the caution of expressed in *DFA*, see Wilson (2000), 340n.120, and Carpenter (2005), 225. We will return to the question of whether dithyrambic performers ever dressed and performed as satyrs at the end of the next chapter, see pp. 112ff.

in Basel, that furnishes an affirmative answer to the question they pose about whether or not dithyrambic choruses could wear masks (*BAPD* 260).¹⁰³ Gould and Lewis do not draw that conclusion, however, because common opinion at the time when they wrote maintained that the vase presents the performance of tragedy and thus that the masks shown in the painting are an attribute of that genre; that general consensus about the vase remains today.¹⁰⁴ Yet the vase-painting shares many features with the dithyrambic paintings previously examined, the ones that provide evidence for the mimetic performance of dithyramb, and on the basis of those iconographic similarities, it is possible to reclassify the image on the Basel krater as a representation of dithyramb, rather than of tragedy. The Basel krater provides the evidence for masked dithyramb that has until now proven elusive.

The painting shows six beardless youths, arranged in a rectangle of three columns and two rows and all dressed similarly. They wear short tunics, tops that are flayed at the bottom and which resemble breastplates, and diadems on their heads. Save for a few minor details in the patterning of their outfits, the six youths are nearly indistinguishable from each other.¹⁰⁵ They are all oriented from right to left across the vase and look as if they are marching, or rather dancing, for the young men clearly comprise a chorus. Their

¹⁰³ Attic red-figure column krater, c. 480, Mannerist Style. Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig BS 415. *CVA* Basel 3 21-3, pls. 6.3-4, 7.3-5; *BAPD* 260.

¹⁰⁴ A representative but not exhaustive list: Simon (1969), 273-6; (1972), 16-7; (1982), 8-9; (1983), 103-4; Froning (1971), 23-5; (2002), 72-3; Green (1991), 34-7; Csapo and Slater (1995), 57; Taplin (1997), 70; Csapo (2010a), 6-8; Wyles (2011), 6-8.

¹⁰⁵ The breastplates are decorated with variations on a “maeander,” a flipped L-shaped pattern, and palmettes. The choreut on the farthest left has a man or satyr shown on the shoulder of his top. On their attire, see Wyles (2011), 11.

mouths are open and letters are inscribed on the vase as if they are singing.¹⁰⁶ They mirror each other exactly in their postures, leaning back slightly at the waist, extending their right legs forward, left legs backward, and stretching their arms in front of themselves. Their uniform appearance, coordinated movement, and open mouths indicate that the six youths perform as a chorus.¹⁰⁷ On the left side of the painting and in the background behind the chorus is a structure consisting of three steps leading up to a large block, which is adorned with leafy boughs and strands of fabric. Another male figure, bearded and older than the youths, is positioned either behind or on top of this structure so that only his upper half is visible.

A number of details in the painting have been cited as evidence that it depicts the performance of tragedy. Most importantly, the members of the chorus seem to wear masks, as a few details indicate. The expressions on their faces are identical, their mouths are open, and their hair is rendered in a way that gives it an artificial appearance. In addition, they have clearly marked lines that run along the side of their face, from their chins to their hairlines, and these also contribute to the sense that the choreuts wear masks. While there is no detail that proves beyond doubt that the choreuts wear masks, that conclusion is likely.¹⁰⁸ In the light of the assumption that masks were worn in dramatic performances like tragedy, comedy, and satyr-play, the painting is deemed a representation of tragic performance (for it certainly does not show a comic scene, nor satyrs). The figure in the background can also be integrated with the interpretation of the

¹⁰⁶ For the letters, not visible on most reproductions, see *CVA* Basel 3, 22.

¹⁰⁷ See above, n.20, for indications of choral performance in vase-painting.

¹⁰⁸ Taplin (1997), 70; Csapo (2010a), 7; and Meineck (2011b), 161-2, all favor masks even while noting reservations. Others are much more definitive on the issue, see most of the sources cited above in n.104.

vase as a representation of tragedy. He is an actor. Given the prevalence of necromancies in tragedies contemporary with the vase, some have proposed that the actor plays a ghost who is being raised from his grave, which is represented by the structure in front of him.¹⁰⁹ The Basel krater thus seems to document a quintessential tragic scene from the early history of the genre.

The Basel krater might never have become an emblem of tragedy if not for an early and decisive shift in its interpretation. In the first modern scholarly publication of the vase, M. Schmidt argued that the painting depicts a dithyrambic performance, yet within two years of her proposal scholars began to identify it as a representation of tragedy, and the new, tragic attribution has persisted with few dissenters.¹¹⁰ While Schmidt's ultimate claim that the vase shows a dithyrambic performance is appealing, the arguments she offers in support of it are problematic because they rely to a great extent on dithyramb's traditional image. It will therefore be necessary to review her arguments before advancing new ones that nevertheless support her conclusion, namely that the vase depicts dithyrambic performance.

After dismissing as inconsequential the issue of the masks, noting correctly that no ancient source states that dithyramb was performed without masks, Schmidt turns to the other elements of the choreuts' attire in order to substantiate her claim that the

¹⁰⁹ First proposed by Karouzou (1972), 199n.2, expanded on by Schefold (1974), 13-4, and largely accepted since. Previously, scholars had suggested that the structure is an altar on the male figure a statue of Dionysus, before which the chorus performs a dance of mourning. See Simon (1969), 273-6; Froning (1971), 23-5. Simon accepted the ghost-raising explanation in (1982), 8-9. On necromancies in early tragedy, see Taplin (1977), 447-8.

¹¹⁰ Schmidt (1967), followed by Melchinger (1974), Tölle-Kastenbein (1977) and Gasparri (1986), whose arguments are outlined at *CVA* Basel 3, 23. Schmidt acknowledges that the vase was published earlier, with a brief description and illustration, in *Masterpieces of Greek Vase Painting, 7th to 5th Century B.C.*, André Emmerich Gallery, New York (April 22 to May 30, 1964), no. 25.

painting shows dithyrambic performance, and here she evokes the traditional image of dithyramb.¹¹¹ She claims that the choreuts' tunics and tops constitute "cultic" attire and are proof that the vase shows dithyramb rather than tragedy because the former was "more strongly cultic" than the latter.¹¹² Yet, she never explains in what way dithyramb is "more strongly cultic" than dithyramb or how that condition would be manifest in the clothing worn by dithyrambic performers as opposed to their tragic counterparts.¹¹³ She also claims that the choreuts' diadems were part of the standard attire worn by dithyrambic choruses, yet this idea cannot be sustained, as we have already seen in the discussion of *Against Meidias*, the very source that Schmidt cites in support of her position.¹¹⁴ Schmidt's arguments for dithyramb bear the imprint of dithyramb's traditional image which presents the performance as a solemn affair and looks to evidence like *Against Meidias* for confirmation of that view.¹¹⁵

While Schmidt's proposal that the Basel krater depicts dithyramb founders on the evidence she adduces, it can be reclaimed by appealing to new evidence, namely the vases that show dithyrambic choruses participating in mimetic performance. The Basel krater has never been paired with those vases, even though its depiction of choral

¹¹¹ Schmidt (1967), 73 and 75, on the silence about masks and dithyramb in ancient sources. She also is skeptical that the figures wear masks anyway.

¹¹² Schmidt (1967), 75.

¹¹³ Bremer (2000) has proposed a distinction between cultic songs and songs which occurred as part of competitions, but his division has met resistance; see Ceccarelli (2013), 154, and D'Alessio (2013), 122n.39.

¹¹⁴ Schmidt (1967), 75.

¹¹⁵ Schmidt refers to the "solemnity" of the performance shown on the vase at 70-1.

performance resembles the depictions of choral performance found on them.¹¹⁶ The paintings that have been only recently identified as representations of dithyrambic performance show choruses of men who wear elaborate costumes and move in a straight line with a high degree of regimentation and uniformity.¹¹⁷ That description could be applied with ease to the image of choral performance on the Basel krater. In regard to costume, the chorus on the krater finds many parallels among the choruses on the dithyrambic vases, many of which show performers who wear the gear of soldiers.¹¹⁸ The chorus on the Basel krater too wears items that identify its members as soldiers. In particular, their tops look like breastplates. The costumes worn by the chorus of stilt-walkers provide an especially close parallel for the attire of the chorus on the Basel krater (*BAPD* 340567). Like the choreuts on the Basel krater, the stilt-walkers wear decorated tops that look like breastplates and short tunics. The stilt-walkers wear elongated caps and are bearded men, whereas the members of the chorus on the Basel krater wear diadems and are beardless youths, but otherwise both groups are dressed almost identically to each other.

¹¹⁶ Wiles (2007), 20, briefly connects the Basel krater with the vase showing a chorus of knights, but does not undertake an extensive analysis, and in fact denies that either vase depicts performance.

¹¹⁷ Csapo (2013b), 17-18, provides a similar list of defining attributes for the dithyrambic vases, although he does not mention that the choruses consist invariably of male performers.

¹¹⁸ Two vases, outside of the group of sixth- and fifth-century depictions of dithyrambic performance, show choreuts who are dressed almost identically to the choreuts on the Basel krater: Attic red-figure hydria, c. 490-80, Pan Painter. St. Petersburg, Hermitage B 201. *ARV* 555.95; *Paralipomena* 387, 388; *Addenda* 258; *BAPD* 206338; and Attic red-figure chous fragment, c. 450-400, Manner of the Meidias Painter. Boston Museum of Fine Arts 10.206. *ARV* 1323.37; *Addenda* 364; *BAPD* 220590. Given the similarity in the choreuts' appearance on the hydria and Basel krater, it is often assumed that the vases show performers from the same type of performance, usually understood to be tragedy. See Green (1995). But the chous fragment clearly alludes to dithyramb, given the victory tripod which the partly visible choreut clutches; see Csapo (2010b), 129 (no.24).

Another area where the Basel krater and the dithyrambic vases rely on the same conventions for depicting choral performance is the way in which they balance the unity of the choral unit and individuality of its various members. For instance, the men dressed as knights (*BAPD* 320396) wear identical breastplates and tunics, but a different shape crowns each of their helmets. The members of one of the choruses of dolphin-riders replicate each other precisely save for different emblems on their shields.¹¹⁹ And the chorus of stilt-walkers all wear tops that are of the same general style, but painted so as to suggest that they are made of different materials. These three images of dithyrambic performance, representative of the rest, suggest that an important consideration in depicting the performance of dithyramb was using the choreuts' attire to create a cohesive choral unit made up of members who can be differentiated from each other, primarily through details in their clothing. The Basel krater achieves the same effect with its choreuts, who all wear attire that is of the same general type, but which features individual differences.

The Basel krater matches the dithyrambic vases also in the way its chorus' movement and dance is articulated. The choreuts all face left, with right leg thrust forward, left leg backward, and arms extended and upraised in front of their bodies. They give the impression that they move across the surface of the vase in a procession. This sense of movement is evident on the dithyrambic vases, where the choreuts are always oriented in one direction so that they seem to process from one side of the vase to the other. The posture of choreuts on the Basel krater also is consistent with the other representations of dithyrambic performance. In any single dithyrambic painting, the

¹¹⁹ Attic red-figure psykter, c. 510, Oltos. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 1989.281.69. *ARV* 1622.7bis; *Paralipomena* 326; *Addenda* 163; *BAPD* 275024.

choreuts are depicted with identical poses, thereby giving the impression that they engage in the same moment of the same dance. The choreuts on the Basel krater too dance in the same way with the same posture. On the basis of its iconographic affinities with other representations of dithyrambic performance, the painting of choral performance on the Basel krater can be deemed a depiction of dithyrambic performance.

Not only does the Basel krater draw on the same conventions as the other dithyrambic vases in presenting dithyrambic performance, it, like those others, suggests that dithyramb is a mimetic performance. Although the young men on the vase look like soldiers who wear breastplates, they are hardly actual soldiers. Instead, they are performers who impersonate those characters, and their act of impersonation is shown with a great amount of realistic detail.¹²⁰ Their breastplate-tops, seemingly made of linen, a common material used for breastplates in ancient Greece, are the only component of their attire that suggests that these figures could be actual soldiers.¹²¹ Everything else in the scene points to their identity as performers who impersonate soldiers. They wear no additional armor on their bodies, carry no weapons or shields, and have as protection for their heads diadems instead of helmets. Finally, the choreuts seem to wear masks, an item that had no place in battle but did in performance. Like the paintings of choruses of knights, stilt-walkers and “nymph-satyrs,” the one on the Basel krater shows a dithyrambic chorus whose members impersonate characters by donning costumes, and even masks. While almost two-dozen vases from the sixth and fifth centuries attest to the mimetic nature of dithyrambic performance, the Basel krater adds masks to the mix of dithyramb’s mimetic performance mode.

¹²⁰ Csapo (2010a), 6-8, examines the realism in the scene.

¹²¹ Wyles (2011), 7, and see above n.93.

The Beginnings of Tragic Iconography in the Fifth Century: Masks and Maenads

To claim that the Basel krater offers proof that dithyrambic performers wore masks is admittedly to invest an immense amount of value in a single source. But given the general pattern on the part of other ancient sources to be silent on the issue of masks and dithyramb, there is little choice but to look to exceptional pieces of evidence, such as the Basel krater, that address in a relatively direct way the question of whether or not masks were used in dithyrambic performance. The association between masks and dithyramb that is attested to on the Basel krater pales, however, in comparison to the association between masks and performance-genres that are traditionally understood as mimetic, namely tragedy and comedy. Even today, masks are considered emblems of the two genres. In the Western theater tradition, a frowning mask symbolizes tragedy, a smiling one comedy, and the two together the theater and dramatic performance at large.¹²² To conclude this discussion of masks and mimesis, I trace the early history whereby tragedy monopolized the mask's iconographic power in fifth-century Athens. Whereas at the beginning of that century it was possible for masks to appear on vases that depict dithyrambic performance, by its end it seems that tragedy had wrest the mask from the domain of dithyramb. Not only does the mask come to be associated with tragedy over the course of the fifth century. In settling into that exclusive affiliation, the mask also becomes the primary iconographic symbol of mimetic performance.

Four vases from the fifth century show masks in contexts which suggest tragic performance. All of them share an additional detail besides the presence of masks. On

¹²² Griffith (2008), 62n.12, speaks of "the ubiquitous symbolic pair of theater masks, one tragic, one comic," and Meineck (2011b), 150, observes that the paired masks serve as the logo for many modern theater companies and associations.

each vase, a female figure appears, and in at least two instances that figure is a maenad. A red-figure pelike in Boston demonstrates the intertwining of masks and maenads in fifth-century vases that are associated with tragedy (*BAPD* 214224).¹²³ On the left side of the painting stands a female figure, wearing a long cloak over her body and a wrap in her hair. She extends her right arm over her head and holds a bolt of fabric in her left hand. Across from this woman is a male figure, who is dressed very similarly to his counterpart: the two match in both their footwear and long cloaks. In the middle of the two figures, on the ground, there is a head, identical to the head of the female figure. The head is positioned so that it faces the male figure and gazes up at him while he puts on one of his shoes.

It has long been recognized that the painting on the Boston pelike portrays two members of a chorus of women, likely maenads, preparing for a tragic performance.¹²⁴ The female figure on the left is not really a woman, but a male performer dressed up as and impersonating a woman. The other figure in the scene prepares to adopt the same dramatic role as his counterpart and is depicted as in the midst of putting a boot on his right foot. He is not a maenad yet, however, as his face is still that of a young man. After fastening his footwear, he must still put on the mask that lies on the ground between him and the other performer. Only then will he assume the same identity as the other maenad. The mask divides the scene in two, with a fully-embodied character, being impersonated by a performer, on the left side, and a performer who is in the process of preparing to

¹²³ Attic red-figure pelike, c. 440, Phiale Painter. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 98.883. *ARV* 1017.46; *Paralipomena* 440; *BAPD* 214224.

¹²⁴ Caskey and Beazley (1931), i.56, suggest “maenads or Thracian women.” Since then, some scholars have simply mentioned a chorus of women: *DFA*, 182, and Csapo and Slater (1995), 69. Wiles (2007), 25, and Wyles (2011), 14, specify maenads.

impersonate a character, but has not yet, on the right. The mask's placement in the middle reinforces its essential contribution to the impersonation. It is the final and decisive piece of costume that must be worn in order for impersonation, and consequently mimetic performance, to occur. Without it, the transformation of performer into character is partial, and mimetic performance is thwarted.

Images similar to the one that is found on the Boston pelike occur on two other fifth-century vases. Other 'genre-scenes' occur on a bell krater in Ferrara and likely also on an oinochoe fragment from the Athenian Agora. On a bell-krater in Ferrara, a maenad stands on the right of the painting, facing a man on the left who holds a mask in his hand.¹²⁵ Like in the painting on the Boston pelike, the maenad on the Ferrara krater is a male performer who is dressed as a maenad, impersonating a character as if participating in a performance, while the male figure on the left will join the performance once he dons the mask he holds. A single fragment of an oinochoe found in the Athenian Agora seems to show a boy who holds a mask and stands among amidst a number of taller figures, some of whom wear long tunics.¹²⁶ It is possible that the boy holds the mask for a performer who is dressing for performance.

The type of image shown on these three vases has been called a 'genre-scene' by some.¹²⁷ Instead of depicting performance itself, the paintings depict events that are peripheral to performance, usually either preparations for performance or its aftermath. Although the 'genre-scenes' do not present tragic performance *per se*, they nonetheless

¹²⁵ Attic red-figure bell krater, c. 450. Ferrara, Museo Nazionale di Spina 20299/T173 C VP. *BAPD* 5039.

¹²⁶ Attic red-figure oinochoe fragment, c. 470-60. Athens, Agora Museum P 11810. *ARV* 495, 1656; *Paralipomena* 380; *Addenda* 250; *BAPD* 205573.

¹²⁷ Csapo and Slater (1995), 53.

are useful as sources that provide evidence about performance.¹²⁸ Showing tragic performers in the process of putting on costumes in order to impersonate characters, they indicate that tragic performance is mimetic. They make explicit what is left implicit in the paintings of choruses of knights, stilt-walkers, nymph-satyrs, and the young soldiers of the Basel krater. Whereas those vases present performers who are already in costume and impersonating various characters, the genre-scenes present performers who are in the midst of assuming the identities they will have during performance. They pay particular attention to the importance of costume for mimetic performance, and of all the items that comprise a performer's costume, the mask is singled out for its essential contribution to mimetic performance. It is the single piece of costume that turns the performer into a character. A performer may wear every other component of his costume, as he does on the Boston pelike and Ferrara krater, but without his mask he remains a performer, not a character. The mask encapsulates mimetic performance.

The artists who have painted these genre-scenes have for the most part chosen the figure of the maenad to convey their message about masks, mimetic performance, and tragedy. On the Boston pelike there are two maenads. The Ferrara krater shows one maenad certainly and possibly a second depending on the identification of the dressing male performer; while his costume is consistent with a female role, the gender of his mask is difficult to determine.¹²⁹ The mask on the Agora oinochoe belongs to a female character, perhaps a maenad.¹³⁰ Although they make for a small sample size, the genre-

¹²⁸ Csapo and Slater (1995), 69.

¹²⁹ Meineck (2011b), 164, claims the mask is for a female character. *DFA*, 182: "Certainly a mask for a young man."

¹³⁰ *DFA*, 180-181.

scenes show a preference for using the maenad as the primary representative of masked and mimetic tragic performance. At the least, they always choose a female identity for the character whom a performer will impersonate, thereby accentuating the difference between the performer's identity outside of performance and in the midst of it. In a mimetic performance like tragedy, the mask can make a man temporarily a woman.¹³¹

The only other fifth-century vase-painting related to tragedy that shows masks also suggests that they are an essential component of tragedy's mimetic performance mode. Furthermore, like the genre-scenes, the image also expresses that particular conception of mimetic performance through a female figure, possibly a maenad. The painting is preserved in a single shard of a bell krater now held in Kiev.¹³² Unlike the genre-scenes, the Kiev fragment presents a scene of performance, two dancing choreuts who are dressed as women, a male aulete, and his young, male assistant. The faces of the two female figures are painted in bright white so as to stand out against the darker skin of the rest of their bodies and signify that they wear masks. Their masks are the single most conspicuous item of their costume and identify them clearly as women, for performers who impersonated female characters regularly wore light-colored masks. A specific identity for the women is not clear, although it is possible that they are maenads.¹³³ Despite that uncertainty and the inability to put the painting in its larger context, the

¹³¹ Foley (2003), 12-14, discusses the seeming preference for female choruses in fifth-century tragedy. Earlier (5), she suggests that tragic choruses were likely judged on their ability to "represent the Other in performance."

¹³² Attic red-figure bell krater fragment, c. 430-20. Kiev, Archaeological Museum of the Academy of Sciences AM 1097/5219. *BAPD* 9020329. First published by Froning (2002), 72-3. Discussion in Csapo (2010a), 8-9, and Braund and Hall (2014).

¹³³ Froning (2002), 73; Wiles (2007), 28; Braund and Hall (2014), 9.

fragment shows tragic performers who wear costumes, most obviously masks, in order to impersonate female character, possibly maenads.

Other contemporary evidence attests to both the maenad's status as a symbol of tragedy and the association between maenad, mask, and mimetic performance. When artists began to represent Tragedy (*Tragōidia*) as a personified figure in vase-painting around the middle of the fifth century, they chose to identify the genre as a maenad.¹³⁴ The relationship between the maenad and tragedy extended to other artistic media as well. A sculpture relief from Peiraeus presents a scene in which three members of a tragic chorus of maenads approach a couch on which Dionysus reclines in the company of another maenad, who is labeled with a name ending in IA, possibly [*Tragōid*]ia.¹³⁵ Two of the three chorus members carry their mask in their hands, while the other dons his. He holds up a tympanum as if he is playing it, that is, as if he is still performing. Because he wears his mask, he maintains his identity as a maenad and acts accordingly. The other two choreuts, who have both removed their masks, revert to their identities as male performers and leave the realm of performance. It seems that by the end of the fifth century, masks and maenads had become the primary iconographic symbols of tragic performance, and they were regularly combined in order to allude to the genre's mimetic mode of performance.

Conclusion

¹³⁴ Hall (2007).

¹³⁵ Pentelic marble relief, c. 400. Athens, National Museum 1500. The figures have in the past been identified as actors, but see now Csapo (2010b), 94-96, who also points out that the now faded label of the maenad sitting with Dionysus was added well after the relief was initially made. Its later addition points to the continuing appeal of the maenad as the symbol for tragedy.

A fourth-century sculptural program from Thasos suggests that tragedy's hold over both the mask and its ability to symbolize mimetic performance would only strengthen with time. The monument included five statues, one of Dionysus, and four allegorical representations of different performance-genres, Tragedy, Comedy, Dithyramb, and the *Nykterinos*, "Night-song."¹³⁶ What remains of the monument includes inscriptions identifying participants in the various contests – "Tragedy: Theodorus acted"; "Comedy: Philemos acted"; "Dithyramb: Ariston of Miletus played the aulos"; and "*Nykterinos*: Batalos played the aulos" (cf. *IG XII Suppl.* 400) – and parts of the statues representing Dionysus (his head), Tragedy, and Comedy.¹³⁷ Most of Comedy's body survives, showing the torso of a woman draped in voluminous robes. From the statue of Tragedy, a mask of a blind old man is preserved. The statues of Comedy and Tragedy were likely similar to each other, such that it is possible to imagine two female figures who represent the two genres by each holding a different mask. Nothing is preserved of the statue of Dithyramb (or of *Nykterinos* for that matter), but it seems unlikely that the allegorical representation of dithyramb carried a mask. In Greek iconography, the mask had already been assigned to comedy and tragedy, but not to dithyramb.

Yet at a much earlier date, masks did not belong to tragedy (and comedy) exclusively. Rather, on an early fifth-century vase-painting, the Basel krater, there is depicted a dithyrambic chorus whose performers wear masks. And that particular representation of a dithyrambic performance with masks belongs to a larger iconographic

¹³⁶ According to a fragment of Eupolis (149 K-A), the fifth-century poet Gnesippus invented the *nykterinos*. On Gnesippus and his works, see recently Prauscello (2006).

¹³⁷ Recent discussion in Hall (2007), 243-8, with bibliography.

tradition that shows dithyrambic performances in which performers wore costumes and impersonated characters. All of this is to say that dithyramb was a mimetic performance-genre. While it is usually acknowledged that dithyramb could be mimetic, that possibility is almost always connected with the rise of New Music in the last part of the fifth century. On the basis of evidence provided by sixth- and fifth-century vase-paintings, it becomes necessary to recognize that *mimēsis* was a part of dithyrambic performance as much as a century before the advent of New Music, and also that mimetic performance may not be quite as alien to the genre as is often assumed. The visual evidence makes *mimēsis* integral to dithyramb.

CHAPTER 2

CHORAL VOICE, IDENTITY, AND MIMETIC PERFORMANCE IN DITHYRAMB AND TRAGEDY

Introduction

The iconographical evidence examined in the previous chapter suggests that dithyrambic choruses could wear masks and costumes, just as their counterparts in tragedy did. One purpose of dressing up, including wearing a mask, was to facilitate adopting a new persona for the sake of performance, and the custom of wearing a mask has been considered, from antiquity to today, a fundamental component of the mimetic performance of ancient Greek tragedy.¹ Yet, the use of a mask was only one part of a suite of practices by which tragic performers assumed fictional identities in the course of their mimetic performance. They also spoke and sung while taking on the voices of the characters whom they impersonated. The words they uttered were imagined as coming not from the mouths of male Athenian citizen performers, but from the mouths of people with a different identity. We have already seen that in Plato's *Republic* Socrates isolates the contribution made by voice to tragedy's (and comedy's) mimetic performance, and in what follows we will consider whether the members of dithyrambic choruses ever

¹ See above, pp. 28-31.

delivered their verses in the voices of fictional characters and therefore partook in mimetic performance, like the members of tragic choruses always did.²

By examining the voices in which dithyrambic performers sang, we will be able to attend more closely than we had in the previous chapter to the fictional identities those performers adopted in their mimetic performance. Due to the limitations of vase-painting as a body of evidence, it is impossible to conclude that images related to dithyrambic performance document faithfully the performance of actual dithyrambos.³ On the basis of vase-paintings which show dithyrambic choruses of men dressed as stilt-walkers, dolphin-riders, knights, bird, and the like, it cannot be extrapolated that actual dithyrambic performers ever dressed as those types of characters. All that can be concluded from the iconographic evidence is that dithyrambic performers could participate in mimetic performance by impersonating characters. In order to answer the question of whom exactly did dithyrambic choruses impersonate when they performed mimetically, one must turn to the textual evidence, which is considered a more trustworthy witness than vase-painting to ancient performance practice, although it has its limitations.

Close study of the surviving texts of ancient poetic genres that were originally intended for performance, such as tragedy, lies at the heart of a recent turn to performance studies in Classics. O. Taplin inaugurated this productive strand of scholarship with his monograph *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (1977), which was followed

² Peponi (2013c), 357-9, observes that Plato does not acknowledge the dithyrambic chorus' voice in his taxonomy of modes of delivery; he speaks only of "the poet himself." As Peponi notes, even if a poet did take part in the performance of a dithyramb he composed, he would have done so as a member of the chorus.

³ See above, pp. 17-8.

soon after by *Greek Tragedy in Action* (1978). One of Taplin's main insights is that clues about the performance and staging of Greek tragedies are embedded in tragic texts, which must be treated as scripts. He applies his approach with great reward to the function of characters' entrances and exits in Aeschylus' tragedies, and since his seminal studies, work in the model of Taplin's has proliferated.⁴ Texts are considered the principal repositories of information about the realities of ancient performance practice.⁵ They will be used in what follows as a means to examine the interrelated questions: in whose voices did dithyrambic performers sing, and what identities did they adopt through their use of voice?⁶

The most common answers to those questions are that the members of dithyrambic choruses did not speak in the voices of fictional characters and that they therefore maintained in performance their identity as "themselves," either Athenian adult male citizens or boys.⁷ That notion is predicated on the assumption that dithyramb is an inherently non-mimetic genre of performance and that, as a consequence, the identity of a member of a dithyrambic chorus participating in a performance was identical to his identity outside of that performance. For dithyrambic performers to represent someone other than themselves would undermine the genre's normal, non-mimetic performance modum, so hold the normal logic. Yet the iconographic evidence has already weakened

⁴ In the immediate aftermath of Taplin's monographs, see Segal (1980), on Sophocles, and Halleran (1985), on Euripides. Taplin (2009) presents an overview of prior trends and future prospects in the scholarly study of tragedy, with attention paid to the usefulness of an approach based in performance; see also Goldhill (1999) on the place and fortunes of performance studies in the discipline. The turn to performance has influenced work on lyric poetry as well: Peponi (2004); Kurke (2007).

⁵ But see Gamel (2002), 321ff., for sensible cautions against over-reliance on texts in studying ancient performance.

⁶ Taplin (1977), 5, includes the identity of a speaker in a tragedy among the details that can be recovered from a tragic text.

⁷ Pickard-Cambridge (1927), 42; Griffith (2013b), 264.

that position, and the textual evidence only strengthens the conclusion that dithyrambic performers could impersonate characters and that dithyramb could feature a mimetic mode of performance.

As a result of detailed examination of surviving texts of dithyramps from the first half of the fifth century, it will become evident that dithyrambic performers often were not simply “themselves” in performance, but adopted new identities as fictional characters. A dithyramb by Bacchylides will provide the starting point for investigating the characters whom the members of dithyrambic choruses impersonated, and Aeschylus’ tragedies will supply an important point of comparison for the mimetic performance of dithyramb, insofar as tragedy is acknowledged without controversy as a mimetic performance-genre.⁸ We will also consider a contentious question in the literary and performance history of dithyramb: did the members of dithyrambic choruses ever perform while representing satyrs, the mythical half-beast, half-human attendants of Dionysus? The question is often dismissed as ludicrous before it is given proper due, but if it does admit an affirmative answer, it adds yet more positive evidence for the mimetic performance of dithyramb. The poets of tragedy and the other traditionally dramatic Dionysiac choral genres of comedy and satyr-play were not the only ancient authors who composed works in which performers represented fictional characters. Their counterparts who worked in the genre of dithyramb, too, exploited the possibilities inherent in mimetic performance.

⁸ On the classification of Bacchylides’ poems transmitted with the title “dithyramb,” see “Introduction,” above. pp. 13-6. As I explain there, I consider the poems representative of Bacchylides’ style of composing for choral performance at state festivals, including dithyramps at the Athenian Great Dionysia. In other words, if we cannot conclude with certainty that any of Bacchylides’ ‘dithyramps’ were in fact performed as dithyramps at the Great Dionysia, we can depart from the assumption that for performances in that genre at that festival he would have used techniques similar to those found in his extant poetry.

Bacchylides 18: the Mimetic Dithyramb

It is often commented that Bacchylides' dithyrambs are marked by a certain "dramatic" quality, by which it is meant that they resemble tragedy in that they are vivid poems whose contents are easily visualized and furthermore they often explore themes, such as human fortune and suffering and the psychological motivations underpinning human action, that are central to tragedy.⁹ Despite observations that Bacchylides is a particularly "dramatic" or "tragic" poet, the resemblance between his poems and tragedy is usually considered only in terms of style, theme, or outlook, not in terms of form and mode of performance. In other words, the commonalities between Bacchylides' dithyrambs and fifth-century tragedies are assumed not to allow for the possibility that he wrote poems in which performers, speaking directly in the voices of characters, impersonate those characters and adopt their identities, the type of mimetic performance mode that holds in tragedy.

There is one exception to the general consensus that Bacchylides did not compose poems in a mimetic performance mode, that is Bacchylides 18, a dithyramb which consists entirely of a conversation between Aegeus, king of Athens, and another interlocutor (whose identity we will return to below). The poem lacks any third-person narrative frame. The speeches by Aegeus and his interlocutor are not introduced with phrases such as "and Aegeus said," but are delivered directly by the performers in the characters' voices. By speaking in the characters' voices, the performers assume the characters' identities and impersonate them as part of a mimetic performance, and

⁹ For Bacchylides' dithyrambs as "dramatic," see, recently, Calame (2013), 346-9, and Hadjimichael (2014), 196. His vividness: Kirkwood (1966), 98-101; Segal (1998), 251-80. Human suffering: Burnett (1985), 114-28, in a chapter entitled, tellingly, "The Tragic Muse." Psychological motivations: Carey (1999).

scholars readily admit that the performance mode of Bacchylides 18 is mimetic, identical to the mode of performance found in tragedy.¹⁰ Yet, even while scholars recognize that Bacchylides 18 is mimetic in the same way as tragedy, they often betray their unease with that conclusion by attempting to explain the poem's performance mode as an anomaly that is the result of tragedy's influence.¹¹ It is proposed that Bacchylides settled on a dialogic form for his poem after observing its use in tragedy, and particular passages from various tragedies are even offered as more likely than others to have influenced Bacchylides.¹² At the same time that scholars reconstruct a prehistory for Bacchylides 18, they also look ahead to its influence on the subsequent development of dithyramb. Later in the fifth century, dithyramb as a whole would come to resemble Bacchylides 18 more and more, with performers adopting fictional identities in performance and speaking in the voice of characters, and Bacchylides 18 is understood as the earliest evidence for the trend.¹³ The poem is afforded a middle position in the history of dithyrambic performance, at a place where the genre has been able to absorb tragedy's innovations, in particular a dialogic form and mimetic mode of performance, but has not yet turned them to inappropriate or excessive ends.

Yet what happens when Bacchylides 18 is liberated from the expectations imposed on it by a teleological view, so that it no longer need bear the mark of tragedy nor predict the future course of dithyramb? The poem offers unparalleled insight into

¹⁰ Select list: *DTC* 28; Herington (1985), 211-2; Burnett (1985), 117; Zimmermann (1992), 95-6, and (2007-09), 21; Hutchinson (2001), 325.

¹¹ Zimmermann (1992), 96; Maehler (2004), 193; Garvie (2006), 115; Battezzato (2013), 96.

¹² Maehler (2004), 193: the parodos of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*

¹³ Jebb (1905), 234, and Zimmermann (1992), 95-6. Hadjimichael (2014), 194-202, compiles a number of examples from Bacchylides' work that, she claims, anticipate the 'new style' of the later fifth century.

how Bacchylides composed a dithyramb which entailed mimetic performance, and if some of the techniques on display in the text of Bacchylides 18 occur in Bacchylides' other dithyrambs, they may point to other occasions of mimetic performance which are not as obvious and not regularly acknowledged. Bacchylides 18 affords a model to assess the mimetic performance of other dithyrambs. But before a close examination of how the mimetic performance mode of Bacchylides 18 is indicated in the text of the poem, a brief summary of its structure and contents is in order. Bacchylides 18 is divided into four stanzas of identical meter and length.¹⁴ It begins with a series of questions posed to Aegeus about why the trumpet which normally signals war has sounded (1-15). Aegeus responds that a formidable man (who is Theseus, unbeknownst to Aegeus and his questioner) approaches Athens from the countryside after having vanquished various rogues and monsters (16-30). The new knowledge leads to another set of questions about the stranger's deportment and purpose (31-45), which Aegeus answers (46-60). Some scholars have proposed that upon the conclusion of the text as we have it, a young man who was dressed as Theseus appeared, in fulfillment of his expected arrival from the countryside.¹⁵

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Bacchylides 18 is that it is exceedingly difficult on the basis of the text to determine the identity of the characters who participate in the dialogue.¹⁶ The text's disinterest in specifying the identity of the two characters is evident at the poem's opening (1-15):

¹⁴ For the meter, see Maehler (1997), 214-5.

¹⁵ Merkelbach (1973); Ieranò (1987); Maehler (1997), 211-4, and (2004), 189-90.

¹⁶ I make this claim on the basis solely of the information contained in the text. In the actual performance, the performers may have worn costumes and other visual cues that indicated their identities.

Βασιλεῦ τᾶν ἱερᾶν Ἀθανᾶν,	
τῶν ἀβροβίων ἄναξ Ἰόνων,	
τί νέον ἔκλαγε χαλκοκῳδῶν	
σάλπιγξ πολεμῆϊαν αἰοιδάν;	
ἦ τις ἀμετέρας χθονὸς	5
δυσμενῆς ὄρι' ἀμφιβάλλει	
στραταγέτας ἀνὴρ;	
ἦ λησταὶ κακομάχανοι	
ποιμένων ἀέκατι μῆλων	
σεύοντ' ἀγέλας βίᾱ;	10
ἦ τί τοι κραδίαν ἀμύσσει;	
φθέγγευ· δοκέω γὰρ εἴ τι βροτῶν	
ἀλκίμων ἐπικουρίαν	
καὶ τὴν ἔμμεναι νέων,	
ὦ Πανδίωνος υἱὲ καὶ Κρεούσας.	15

King of holy Athens	
lord of the luxuriously-living Ionians,	
Why did the bronze-mouthed trumpet blare	
recently the song of war?	
Does some evil-minded man,	5
an army leader, surround	
the boundaries of our land?	
Or are evil-devising robbers	
driving off the flocks of sheep by force	
against the shepherds' will?	10
Or what mangles your heart?	
Speak, for I believe that if the aid of brave	
young men exists for anyone,	
it exists for you,	
son of Pandion and Creusa.	15

The speaker of the passage opens with two direct addresses which, while seeming to identify the recipient of the questions, in fact leave that person's identity uncertain. A number of people could be called both "king of Athens" and "lord of the luxuriously-living Ionians," and only at the end of the passage when the speaker refers to his addressee's parentage does it become clear that the questions are intended for Aegeus, who satisfies all three labels:¹⁷ (1) he is a "king of Athens"; (2) he is rightly called a

¹⁷ Maehler (2004), 193 and 195, notes that only with line 15 is Aegeus' identity "finally" established.

“leader of Ionians” because he postdates Ion in mythical chronology; and (3) he is the child of Pandion and Creusa.¹⁸ Aegeus’ identity emerges in a piecemeal manner.

Although by the end of that section of the poem it is made clear that Aegeus is one participant in the dialogue, the text delays as much as possible the full revelation of his identity.

If Aegeus’ identity becomes clear only gradually, the identity of the person (or persons) who address(es) him is left almost entirely unspecified. In his reply, Aegeus never names his interrogator. The vocative direct addresses that identify Aegeus are absent in the case of his partner in the conversation. Nearly the only piece of information about the identity of Aegeus’ interlocutor is contained in line 5, when the speaker declares allegiance to Attica as “our land.” Many people could make that claim, however, and the reference has led to multiple theories about who speaks with Aegeus. An early commentator proposed Medea, Aegeus’ wife, because the speaker seems to converse with Aegeus as if he is an equal, not as a superior, and thus the speaker should not be a servant or someone of similarly low status.¹⁹ Another early commentator insisted that if the speaker were Medea, Aegeus certainly would address her, and on the basis of his failure to do so that commentator concluded that the speaker is likely a group of young Athenian males. In support of the theory, he interprets the mention of the “aid of strong

¹⁸ (1) Lists of Athens’ kings are found in the Marmor Parium (*FGrHist* 239a) and the work of Kastor of Rhodes (*FGrHist* 250 F 4). (2) The Athenians were widely recognized in antiquity as related to the Ionians living in Asia Minor: Hdt. 1.56.2 and 1.147.2; Thuc. 1.2.6 and 1.12.4. They promoted the relationship in particular through the mythical figure Ion (cf. Eur. *Ion.*), whom was a political and military leader at Athens. The mythological tradition places Ion’s activity after Athens’ first kings, and for the speaker to emphasize the city’s connections with the Ionians suggests that he addresses a king who comes after Ion’s time, precluding the very earliest kings. On Ion in Athens’ mythological history, cf. Parker (1987), 205-7. (3) Aegeus’ mother varies according to different traditions, and only here is she Creusa; cf. Maehler (2004), 223.

¹⁹ Kenyon (1897), xli-xlii and 176.

young men” in lines 13-14 as a self-reference on the part of the youths.²⁰ This has been by far the most widely accepted theory about the identity of the speaker, that it is a group of young male Athenians who are training for military service.²¹ Yet, to confirm that position, there would need to be additional evidence, for the text does not allow a certain conclusion on the matter of who speaks with Aegeus.

In Bacchylides mimetic dithyramb, little attention is paid to the emotional states and personal attitudes of the two participants in the dialogue, and the absence of characterization is another means by which Bacchylides deflects attention away from each participant’s identity. Identity and characterization are closely intertwined, as becomes evident when one attempts to determine the tone of the portions of the poem delivered by the anonymous speaker. Many scholars have proposed that the questions in the first and third strophe are delivered with anxiety and apprehension, reflecting unease in anticipation for the stranger’s arrival.²² Yet, the common identification of the speaker as a squadron of young men seems to contradict the notion that the questions are

²⁰ Robert (1898), 148. Other early commentators against Medea: Wilamowitz (1970), 341, and Comparetti (1970), 400, both originally published in 1898.

²¹ Jebb (1905), 231; *DTC* 28; Burnett (1985), 117; Zimmermann (1992), 95, but at 96 he airs the possibility that they could be councilors of the king; Maehler (2004), 193, only “Athenian citizens.” To my knowledge, no one has ever suggested that a group of young Athenians of mixed-gender addresses Aegeus, and the possibility should not be ruled out. Regardless of whom the performers represented, there is also the question of how the speaking parts were divided between the performers, although it is a question that does not bear directly on the concerns of this chapter. Kenyon (1897), xlii, proposes two half-choruses; cf. Zimmermann (1992), 96n.5, who inclines to Kenyon’s view. In the bracketed section at *DTC*, 29, Webster seems to propose that the entire chorus sang both parts, alternating between roles; Currie (2013), 253, entertains but does not espouse the arrangement. A number of scholars claim that a single performer takes the role of Aegeus, and the full chorus his interlocutor: *DTC*, 28; Burnett (1985), 117; Herington (1985), 211. Some have proposed that Aegeus converses with a single representative of the group of Athenians: Jebb (1905), 231-2; Merkelbach (1973), 65; Maehler (1997), 211, but see (2004), 193, where he seems to assume the full chorus.

²² Burnett (1985), 121-3; Zimmermann (1992), 96-7. Both comment on the ‘tragic irony’ in Bacchylides 18. The spectators of the performance would know that the stranger is the hero Theseus, returning home, but the characters in the performance are unaware of his identity.

delivered by someone who dreads what might happen when the stranger reaches Athens. Young Athenians could adopt a confident and eager tone, relishing the possible confrontation.²³ On the other hand, if the speaker is the king's wife Medea, she may adopt the frightened and apprehensive tone which is normally perceived in the questions. The tone of the questions, and hence the characterization of the character who delivers them, depends on the identity of that character. Yet because the text leaves the identity of the speaker unclear, it is impossible to conclude definitively that the questions are asked in one manner or another.

More attention is paid to Aegeus' characterization than his interlocutor's. He is granted a single dominant emotion, fear, which is alluded to multiple times in the text. In the first strophe, the speaker inquires about what "mangles" Aegeus' heart (ἀμύσσει, 11). The verb has both a physical and an emotional dimension and is especially provocative as a description of Aegeus' state. In literal terms, it means to tear something apart into tatters.²⁴ When applied to someone's heart, it signals metaphorically that the person's emotional state has been altered violently.²⁵ For the speaker to describe Aegeus in this way implies that the king is extremely upset, and moreover that his anguish manifests itself physically. Aegeus confirms the speaker's impression when he confesses: "I fear the outcome of these events" (ταῦτα δέδοιχ' ὅπα τελεῖται, 30). Fear characterizes the Athenian king.

²³ The possibility is rarely entertained, but see Maehler (2004), 195, who notes that the questions transition from a perspective of relative "detachment" in the first strophe to "optimism" in the third, and also that the speaker in the first strophe is "confident." Kenyon (1897), xlii, seems to suggest that the first set of questions betrays little emotion; he describes only the second set as full of "anxiety and apprehension."

²⁴ *Il.* 1.19.284; *Hdt.* 3.76.3 and 108.4.

²⁵ *Il.* 1.243; *A. Pers.* 161; *Bacch.* 17.19.

Because Aegeus' emotional state is established clearly, if briefly, in the text, it seems possible to invest his parts of the dialogue with a tone of delivery that would both contribute to and be consistent with his characterization as fearful. We can imagine Aegeus answering the questions posed to him in the manner of a ruler who fears a possible approaching threat. Yet, Bacchylides seems to frustrate such attempts to assign Aegeus' statements with a particular tone by means of a narrative device which is evident in the text of the poem. Even though Aegeus speaks in his own voice, he for the most part relays information originally delivered by someone else. He functions in effect as a conduit for another's voice, that of a messenger. Aegeus' voice is therefore subordinate to the messenger's, and it is unclear to what extent Aegeus' evident terror tinges his words. Even though the text indicates both Aegeus' identity and state of mind, it frustrates attempts to combine those details in interpreting the poem.

In his first reply, Aegeus relies entirely on the report he has received from the messenger about the happenings in the countryside (16-30):

Νέον ἦλθε<v> δολιχὰν ἀμείψας κᾶρυξ ποσὶν Ἰσθμίαν κέλευθον· ἄφατα δ' ἔργα λέγει κραταιοῦ φωτός· τὸν ὑπέρβιον τ' ἔπεφνε	
Σίνιν, ὃς ἰσχυρὴ φέρτατος θανάτων ἦν, Κρονίδα Λυταίου σεισίχthonος τέκος· σὺν τ' ἀνδροκτόνον ἐν νάπαις Κρεμ<μ>υῶνος ἀτάσθαλόν τε Σκίρωνα κατέκτανεν·	20
τάν τε Κερκύονος παλαίστραν ἔσχεν, Πολυπήμονός τε καρτερὰν σφυραν ἐξέβαλεν Προκόπ- τας, ἀρείονος τυγῶν φωτός. ταῦτα δέδοιγ' ὅπα τελεῖται	25
	30

Recently a herald came having traversed
the long Isthmian road by foot,

and he speaks of the indescribable deeds	
of a powerful man: "he slaughtered the wanton	
Sinis, who was utmost of mortals	20
in strength, the child of Cronus' son	
the earth-shaker, the loosener;	
and he destroyed the man-killing sow	
in the glens of Cremmyon	
and also reckless Sciron.	25
And he put a stop to Cercyon's wrestling school	
and Procroptes has cast down	
the mighty hammer of Polypemon	
after he met a better	
man." I fear the outcome of these events.	30

Aegeus' questioner hears exactly what Aegeus already heard from the messenger, as from line 19 onward Aegeus quotes the messenger directly. He does not stop quoting the messenger until line 30, at which point he reveals that he is frightened by what he has heard. Aegeus' tone when quoting the messenger's words may have anticipated his admission that he is terrified, but nowhere in the text is it prescribed that Aegeus must speak in a fearful tone. In fact, the text, with its ambiguity, leaves open other possibilities. The content of the quoted messenger's speech is not obviously terrifying, for the approaching stranger is ridding the area around Attica of its scourges, and an excited, thankful tone is imaginable given the circumstances. Moreover, Aegeus could reproduce the tone in which the messenger delivered his report to Aegeus. Although that tone is not indicated, we might imagine that the messenger reported his findings in a dispassionate manner. None of those options are required by the text, nor are they excluded by it. The only indication of emotion is reserved for the end of the speech, where it does not impinge on Aegeus' quotation of the messenger.

Aegeus' second set of answers (46-60) relies on the messenger to a lesser degree than his first and may allow for more of his personal feelings to seep through his

statements. Aegeus puts the messenger's words into indirect discourse instead of quoting them, and the change grants Aegeus some autonomy to inflect his words with his own perspective, more so than when he spoke previously.²⁶ Even in this case, however, Bacchylides includes details in the text that curtail Aegeus' latitude. Aegeus' interlocutor asks specifically that Aegeus provide more information about the stranger by relating not his opinion, but more of what the messenger had told him: "who does he [i.e., the messenger] say this man is, and from where, and what equipment does he have?" (τίνα δ' ἔμμεν πόθεν ἄνδρα τοῦτον/λέγει, τίνα τε στολὰν ἔχοντα;, 31-2). Aegeus obliges, answering the queries in reverse order, and the correspondence between the questions posed by the anonymous speaker and Aegeus' answers restricts Aegeus' ability to deviate from the messenger's report, in terms of both fact and tone.²⁷ Aegeus' voice again yields to that of the messenger, who does not necessarily share the Athenian king's perspective. Because Aegeus reports a messenger's speech, first in direct quotation and then in indirect discourse, the fear he feels receives a diminished outlet. Except for line 30, it is unclear where Aegeus' voice dominates and where the messenger's prevails.

The text of Bacchylides' mimetic dithyramb does not draw conspicuous attention to the features that make the poem, from our perspective, unique. There is little character development and the identity of one of the participants in the dialogue cannot be established with any greater precision than that the character, either an individual or group, is in some sense loyal to Athens. Some scholars have framed Bacchylides 18 as a

²⁶ The mood of his verbs changes from indicative in direct quotation (ἔπεφνε, 19; κατέκτανεν, 25; ἔσχε, 27) to infinitive in indirect quotation (ἔχειν, 48; στίλβειν, 55; ἔμμεν, 56). Maehler (2004), 195, speaks of Aegeus' "growing alarm in 46-60."

²⁷ See Maehler (2004), 200, on the ring composition in the questions and answers.

failure on the author's part to adapt dithyramb in an adequate manner to a new, mimetic mode of performance.²⁸ According to that view, Bacchylides may borrow tragedy's dramatic form, but he neglects character development, decision, and action, three elements which are supposedly essential to a tragic performance. Yet, if anything, Bacchylides 18 proves that mimetic choral performances in the first part of the fifth century need not adhere to a standard set by tragedy. To expect that a mimetic dithyramb should approximate tragedy risks misjudging the poem. Bacchylides 18 does not fail as a mimetic dithyramb because it deviates from the model of tragedy. Rather, it devotes its energies elsewhere, such as to creating anticipation for the stranger's arrival, and the unclear identities of the participants and their lack of characterization further the goal of directing attention toward the approaching stranger. Despite the apparent faults on the part of Bacchylides 18 in the eyes of modern critics with anachronistic expectations, the poem's mimetic mode of performance remains incontrovertible.

Choral Identity in Aeschylus' Choral Openings

The notion, espoused by some, that Bacchylides 18 constitutes a failure as a dithyramb put into a mimetic mode can be challenged further by means of comparison with Aeschylus' tragedies. Because they are uniformly recognized as mimetic performances in which performers adopted fictional identities as characters, Aeschylus' tragedies offer a model for a chorus' mimetic impersonation of a character, and in particular how a chorus' fictional identity is indicated in the surviving texts on which the performance of a poem was based. That model can then be set against what is found in Bacchylides 18 with regard to its mimetic mode of performance. To examine each of

²⁸ Burnett (1985), 117-23, and Zimmermann (1992), 96.

Aeschylus' surviving tragedies while pursuing the question of how they indicate their choruses' fictional identities would be too large an undertaking for our present purposes.²⁹ Instead, two of them, *Persians* and *Suppliants*, offer particularly fitting *comparanda* for Bacchylides 18 from the perspective of choral identity. Each play begins with its chorus rather than an actor speaking, meaning that the information in the text that relates to the chorus' identity is delivered by the chorus itself.³⁰ By contrast, in other plays such as *Libation Bearers* and *Eumenides*, the chorus' identity is announced before the chorus appears on stage.³¹ When the choruses of *Persians* and *Suppliants* initiate the performance of those tragedies, they fulfill an almost identical function to that fulfilled by the choruses of Bacchylides' mimetic dithyramb, for dithyrambic performance likewise begins with the chorus, not with an actor delivering a prologue. The choral openings of *Persians* and *Suppliants* suggest a chorus' fictional identity in a tragedy was as fluid and variable as the identity of the two characters in Bacchylides 18. At times, an Aeschylean tragic chorus could be granted a quite specific and well developed identity. At other times, its identity could be sketched in only the barest of outlines.

The chorus of Aeschylus' *Persians* consists of elderly advisors of the Persian royal family who have been appointed by king Xerxes to oversee his empire while he wages war in Greece, and many commentators on the tragedy include a remark affirming that particular identity for the chorus upon introducing the play.³² Yet, statements to the effect that the chorus is a group of old and wise Persians affiliated with the royal house

²⁹ Gruber (2009) is a recent thorough treatment of the choruses of Aeschylus' tragedies.

³⁰ For Aeschylus' lost tragedies which may have featured a choral opening, see Taplin (1977), 63.

³¹ See lines 10ff. and 34ff. respectively in the plays.

³² Hall (1996), 106; Garvie (2009), 43.

fail to acknowledge that not every aspect of the chorus' identity receives the equal attention in the text of the tragedy, and in particular in the course of the chorus' opening. By the conclusion of the choral opening of *Persians*, it is difficult to know anything certain about the chorus' identity other than the group's Persian ethnicity.

To begin *Persians*, the chorus presents itself as the representative of the Persian people, conceived of in the broadest possible terms.³³ The first half of the tragedy's choral opening is dominated by a catalogue listing the various contingents that make up Xerxes' army (21-56), and as a result of the plethora of details – the names of seventeen commanders as well as the geographic origins of the forces each leads, which hail from Persia, Media, Egypt, Lydia, and Mysia – there is the impression that the chorus has omitted no place that has contributed to the expedition.³⁴ Moreover, at the beginning and end of the catalogue, the army is equated with “the entire strength of the Asian race” (πᾶσα γὰρ ἰσχὺς Ἀσιατογενῆς, 12) and “the whole land of Asia” (πᾶσα χθὼν Ἀσιῆτις, 61), further indicating that every region of the Persian empire has a stake in the outcome of the campaign against Greece. The chorus serves as the mouthpiece of the many different peoples in Persia who fret about the army and its safe return. At two moments, the soldiers' parents and wives, spread across the entirety of the empire, are singled out as particularly distressed by army's absence (63, 134-70), and the chorus sympathizes with them as if it feels the same anxiety, as if it too awaits news about relatives of its own who are on the campaign. The chorus' primary allegiance is to the people of Persia as a whole, not to any particular subgroup of that large population.

³³ Garvie (2009), xxxiv, comments on the chorus' ability to represent the people of Persia, but he does not examine how this is articulated in the text of the tragedy's opening.

³⁴ On the possible Greek sources, in particular Hecataeus, for Aeschylus' knowledge of Persia, see Hall (1989), 74-8, and (1996), 14-5.

Of the entire choral opening of *Persians*, only the first two lines possibly indicate that the chorus is made up not only of Persians, but also of old men who have been chosen by Xerxes for their ability to provide sage advice to him (1-2):

Τάδε μὲν Περσῶν τῶν οἰχομένων
Ἑλλάδ' ἐξ αἴαν πιστὰ καλεῖται

These are the trusted of the Persians
who have departed for the land of Hellas.

The statement is commonly understood as a self-reference on the part of the chorus and a clear statement about its identity, even though the chorus refers not to “we” or “us,” but to “these things,” a neuter plural pronoun. Commentators have explained the construction as a “neuter abstract collective,”³⁵ which “lends a solemn tone to the opening line,” consistent with the “self-conscious formality of the Persia court.”³⁶ They have further noted that other characters reprise the chorus’ use of the adjective “trusted” (πιστά) when referring to the group’s role as advisors to the king.³⁷ Atossa beseeches the chorus “be advisors, Persians, old trusty fellows” (σύμβουλοι λόγου/τοῦδὲ μοι γένεσθε, Πέρσαι, γηραλέα πιστώματα, 170-1), and Darius appeals to them as “trusted of the trusted, my age mates, elderly Persians” (ὦ πιστὰ πιστῶν ἡλικές θ’ ἤβης ἐμῆς/Πέρσαι γεραιοί, 681-2). Many translations and commentaries supply “we” in the first two lines of the tragedy to make it clear that the opening sentence refers to the chorus.³⁸

³⁵ Garvie (2009), 50. Cf. also Kaimio (1970), 182.

³⁶ Hall (1996), 106. See also Broadhead (1960), 37-8.

³⁷ Herodotus (1.108) and Xenophon (*An.* 1.5.15; *Oec.* 4.6, 4.8; *Cyr.* 5.4.1) suggest that “trusted” (Πιστοί) was almost an official title for the Persian royal advisors. Cf. Hall (1989), 94, and (1996), 106; Garvie (2009), 50.

³⁸ Hall (1996), 39; Sommerstein (2008), 15; Garvie (2009), 49.

The common explanation of the first two lines overlooks, however, their intentional vagueness, as a result of which it may not have been apparent to the spectators that the chorus speaks about itself. The resonance between the chorus' terminology and that used elsewhere by other characters is a result primarily of hindsight. Nothing signals the importance of the adjective "trusted" initially. In addition, the literary history that underlies *Persians*' opening line compounds the uncertainty about whether the chorus refers to itself. The hypothesis to *Persians* reports, on the authority of a Glaucus (possibly Glaucus of Rhegium, the fifth-century literary scholar), that Aeschylus "modeled" (παραποῦσθαι) *Persians* on Phrynichus' *Phoinissae*. As part of that modeling, Aeschylus adapted ever so slightly for the first line of *Persians* the first line of *Phoinissae*, which the hypothesis preserves as "these are the things of the Persians who have departed long ago" (Τάδε ἐστὶ Περσῶν τῶν πάλαι βεβηκότων).³⁹ If any spectators watching *Persians* were familiar with Phrynichus' play and recognized Aeschylus' allusion to it, they likely would not have expected the chorus to speak about itself. In that tragedy, again according to the hypothesis to *Persians*, a eunuch delivered the first line while reporting on the downfall of the Persian army and arranging chairs for magistrates.⁴⁰ He seems to have been alone, and the third-person neuter pronoun he uses must have referred to inanimate objects, perhaps the chairs he was tending. Aeschylus, however, uses the pronoun in

³⁹ *TrGF* i.3 F 8. For the significance of Aeschylus' changes, in particular the different participle, see Garvie (2009), 50. Scullion (2002), 98, questions whether the line is genuine or a later forgery, "an exercise in verse composition." Garvie (2006), xv, defends the hypothesis.

⁴⁰ There is some uncertainty about whether the information in the hypothesis, including the quotation, comes from *Phoinissae* or another play by Phrynichus, perhaps one from the same trilogy. The title *Phoinissae* suggests a chorus of Phoenician women, but the scenario outlined in the hypothesis suggests a chorus of Persian councilors. Phrynichus is credited with writing another tragedy with three alternative titles, *Dikaioi* (*Just-men*), *Persae* (*Persians*), and *Sunthōkoi* (*Assessors*) (cf. *TrGF* i.3 F 4a), and the hypothesis may contain information from that play but identify *Phoinissae* mistakenly. On the debate, see Taplin (1977), 63n.2; Hall (1989), 64n.27; Garvie (2009), x; and Sommerstein (2010), 33.

reference to a group of people. By borrowing Phrynichus' language but altering his sense, Aeschylus creates a confusing and disorienting effect. It is not obvious at first that the chorus refers to itself as the "trusted," and confirmation of their self-reference is delayed until only after it has been established that the chorus' Persian ethnicity is their defining, and in some respects sole attribute. The indications provided in the choral opening of *Persians* about the chorus' identity are restricted to the chorus' 'Persianness'.

In contrast to the choral opening of *Persians*, the choral opening of *Suppliants* affords a multi-dimensional identity for the tragedy's chorus, who are the Danaids, the Egyptian daughters of king Danaus who, having fled their homeland in order to avoid marrying their cousins, the sons of Aegyptus, have arrived in Argos to seek asylum upon the advice of their father because an ancestor of theirs hailed from that city. Within the first eighteen lines of the play, each of those various aspects of the chorus' identity is flagged (1-18):

Ζεὺς μὲν ἀφίκτωρ ἐπίδοι προφρόνως στόλον ἡμέτερον νάιον ἄρθέντ' ἀπὸ προστομίων λεπτοψαμάθων Νείλου· Δίαν δὲ λιποῦσαι	1
χθόνα σύγχορτον Συρίαί φεύγομεν, οὔτιν' ἐφ' αἵματι δημηλασίαν ψήφωι πόλεως γνωσθεῖσαι, ἀλλ' αὐτογενῇ φυξανορίαν, γάμον Αἰγύπτου παίδων ἀσεβῆ τ' ὀνοταζόμεναι < >.	5
Δαναὸς δὲ πατήρ καὶ βούλαρχος καὶ στασίαρχος τάδε πεσσονομῶν κύδιστ' ἀχέων ἐπέκρανεν φεύγειν ἀνέδην διὰ κῦμ' ἄλιον, κέλσαι δ' Ἄργους γαῖαν, ὅθεν δὴ γένος ἡμέτερον τῆς οἰστροδόνου βοὸς ἐξ ἐπαφῆς καὶ ἐπιπνοίας Διὸς εὐχόμενον τετέλεσται.	10
May Zeus, god of suppliants, look favorably	1

upon our band, which was furnished with a ship
 from the fine-grained mouth of the Nile.
 And after we have left the land of Zeus
 which borders upon Syria, we are in flight, 5
 not because he have come to know public banishment
 as a result of a decree of the city against bloodshed,
 but a self-imposed flight from wedlock,
 despising a marriage with the
 sons of Aegyus and profane < > 10
 And our father Danaus, our advisor and
 leader, has set the pieces in motion,
 the summit of woe, and enjoined us
 to flee unmoored over the salty sea,
 and to reach the land of Argos, whence truly 15
 our tribe has come about, claiming descent
 from Zeus' touch and breath upon
 the heifer driven on by the gadfly.

The next section of the choral opening reaffirms what can be gleaned about the chorus' identity from the first part. It is again stated that the chorus are a group of female suppliants (21, 28) who come to Argos (20) in order to avoid having to marry the Aegyptids (30, 37), who are their cousins on their father's side (38). As a result of the choral opening of *Suppliants*, it is clear that the chorus must be the Danaids. The abundance of specific details leaves no ambiguity, nor alternative options.

Nearly the entirety of *Suppliants*' choral opening is dedicated to affirming that the chorus consists of the Danaids, with all of the consequences which that identity entails. In the opening of the play, the chorus undertakes certain actions that make sense only in the context of their particular identity as Danaids. On multiple occasions, the chorus expresses mourning, which in each case is motivated by the circumstances in which the Danaids find themselves. Initially, the chorus mourns because of its refugee status (69-76), and invokes as a relevant mythical exemplum Procne, "who, shut off from her green river-banks/utters a grieving lament for her familiar haunts" (ἄ τ' ἀπὸ χόρων ποταμῶν τ'

ἐργομένα/πενθεῖ μὲν οἶκτον ἡθέων, 63-4).⁴¹ Later, the chorus grieves not for its current predicament, being unable to remain in its homeland, but for the future possibility that it will commit suicide if its pleas for sanctuary are not accepted. Anticipating its death, the chorus declares, “I honor myself with laments even while living” (ζῶσα γόοις με τιμῶ, 116), it claims twice, “many times I inflict upon my Sidonian veil rents that tear apart its linen” (πολλάκι δ’ ἐμπίτνω ξὺν λακίδι λινοσινεῖ/Σιδονία καλύπτρα, 120-1 and 131-2), and it pledges that it will honor the god of the dead “with suppliant boughs while dying by the noose” (σὺν κλάδοις/ἀρτάναις θανοῦσαι, 159-60).⁴² Even though the cause of the chorus’ grief has shifted, in both cases the resultant mourning remains inextricably connected to the situation faced by the Danaids. Only the Danaids could feel the unique mixture of emotions that is the result of being forced to flee one’s home in order to avoid marrying one’s cousins and in addition being so opposed to those marriages that suicide is a preferable alternative to them.

Still other details contained in *Suppliants*’ choral opening both contribute to and seem included as a result of the chorus’ identity as the Danaids. This is the case particularly for the indications about the chorus’ appearance, including the costumes and props which the members of the chorus may have used. It is stated that the Danaids are dark-skinned (70, 154-5) and that they carry suppliant rods entwined with wool (21-2), and each of those details emphasizes a different, contrasting aspect of the chorus’ identity

⁴¹ There are a number of alternative readings in the two lines: see Friis Johansen and Whittle (1980), 59-62; Sandin (2005), 83-5. Fortunately, they do not affect the sense, namely that Procne lamented because she was forced to flee from her home. I follow the text and translation of Sommerstein (2008). For more on the relevance of the Procne myth for the Danaids, see Papadopoulou (2011), 59-60.

⁴² Although the text states that the Danaids are currently in the process of tearing their veils, most interpreters propose that they do not in fact do so: Wyles (2011), 3; Bowen (2013), 173-4. On the act of rending one’s veil as a sign of mourning, see Sommerstein (1977), 68, who adds that the destruction of the veils may also symbolize the Danaids’ rejection of marriage, and Friis Johansen and Whittle (1980), 107.

as the Danaids. Some of them construct a non-Greek identity for the chorus. On the Greek stage, Greek women were represented with a light complexion, and the chorus' darkened skin tone marks the women as non-Greek and alludes to their Egyptian origin.⁴³ Furthering the sense that the chorus is made up of non-Greek foreigners is the repeated claim that the chorus speaks in a "barbarian tongue" (καρβᾶνα αὐδάν, 118 and 130).⁴⁴ While the chorus' physical appearance may indicate that the chorus is not from Greece, the props carried by the chorus suggest a Greek identity. According to ancient sources such as Herodotus, wool was not permitted in Egyptian sanctuaries, and for the chorus to use boughs adorned with wool shows that it is aware of the customs that govern supplication in Greece, where suppliant boughs regularly had wool on them.⁴⁵

The amalgam of non-Greek and Greek elements is fitting for the Danaids, who are Egyptian women who profess descent from a Greek matriarch.⁴⁶ The chorus even acknowledges its unique identity and the conflicting claims made by the various aspects of its appearance when it states that it will offer "reliable proofs" about its Argive ancestry which are "nevertheless unexpected" (πιστὰ τεκμήρια...ἄελπτα περ ὄντα, 55). In other words, the chorus recognizes that its claim that it descends from the Argive priestess Io will likely stretch credulity given its dark-skin and foreign tongue. The entire choral opening of *Suppliants* is informed by the fact that the chorus is made up of the

⁴³ See the representation of male tragic performers who wear white female masks on the fragment from a bell krater now held in Kiev, discussed above at p. 71-2, with references. Friis Johansen and Whittle (1980), 128, propose that the chorus not only wear masks that are of dark color, but some of their skin is also visible and of dark complexion; see also Papadopoulou (2011), 83.

⁴⁴ On the meaning of the rare καρβᾶνα, see Friis Johansen and Whittle (1980), 106-7; Sandin (2005), 105; Bowen (2013), 173.

⁴⁵ Cf. Hdt. 2.81.1 for the prohibition on wool in Egyptian holy spaces. On the use of wool in Greek supplication: Friis Johansen and Whittle (1980), 22; Sandin (2005), 48.

⁴⁶ On the Danaids' dual-identity as both Greek and non-Greek, see recently Mitchell (2006).

Danaids, from the clear indications about the chorus' identity to ancillary details which support that conclusion. Were the chorus to be someone other than those particular women, the beginning of the tragedy could no longer stand in its current form, but would need to be altered.

Aeschylus' *Persians* and *Suppliants* present two contrasting models for how a chorus' identity can be established through clues contained in a tragic text. The chorus of *Persians* might be described as a type, a chorus whose identity is one-dimensional, and all the indications about the chorus' identity that are contained in the choral opening of that tragedy are directed to that single aspect of the chorus' identity. The chorus of *Suppliants*, by contrast, has a multi-dimensional identity to which many details in the choral opening of that tragedy point, not just explicit references, but still other indications about the chorus' actions and appearance. Each of those models is evident in Bacchylides 18, even if that poem in general contains far fewer indications than Aeschylus' tragedies about its characters' identities.

On the one hand there is Aegeus, a character with a well-defined, if at times obscured, identity, who, in that regard, is similar to the Danaids. Furthering the parallels between Aegeus and the Danaids is the fact, noted by many scholars, that the chorus of *Suppliants* serves as the tragedy's protagonist.⁴⁷ As a result of that role, the Danaids' identity is akin to the identity of an individual, like Aegeus, for individual characters, not the chorus, are the usual protagonists in tragedy.⁴⁸ On the other hand there is Aegeus' interlocutor, either an individual or group who professes allegiance to Athens. The

⁴⁷ Taplin (1977), 206-9; Scullion (2002), 94-7; Garvie (2006), 106; Sommerstein (2010), 109-11.

⁴⁸ While I do not address the assignment of parts in Bacchylides 18, *Suppliants* suggests that it was possible for a chorus to speak as if it were an individual, providing some basis for the view that either the chorus as a whole, or in part, played the role of Aegeus in Bacchylides 18. On this issue, see, above, n. 21.

inability to assign to this character an identity more precise than simply “Athenian” makes the character like the chorus of Aeschylus’ *Persians*. In both cases, a one-dimensional identity allows the character to serve as the representative of a broad group, either Athenians in Bacchylides 18, or Persians in *Persians*. The comparison of Bacchylides 18 with Aeschylus’ *Suppliants* and *Persians* suggests that there was no standard which governed either the type of fictional identity a chorus assumed in a tragedy or dithyramb or how that identity was to be indicated in a tragic or dithyrambic text. Given the similarities in Bacchylides’ and Aeschylus’ handling of choral identity, if Bacchylides is accused of incompetence in composing a mimetic choral performance, then Aeschylus would have to face the same charge.

The Mimetic Dialogues of Bacchylides 15 and 17

The possibility for mimetic performance in Bacchylides’ dithyrambs is usually limited to his poem 18. In this section, I will argue for some more speculative instances of mimetic performance in Bacchylides’ dithyrambs on the basis of similarities between those poems and Bacchylides 18. The mimetic mode of performance found in Bacchylides 18 is ensured by a combination of two formal features: first, the absence of any framing third-person narration, and second, speeches delivered directly in the voices of fictional characters. While no other Bacchylidean dithyramb lacks a third-person narrative frame, many of them contain substantial direct speeches by characters, and it is possible that when the choral performers delivered those portions of the poem, they did so while they adopted the voice of the speaking characters and thus impersonated them. During the speeches, the non-mimetic mode of performance may have shifted

temporarily to a mimetic one. In a recent article, B. Currie has remarked in passing that it can be “assume[d]” that “extensive passages of direct speech would have been delivered mimetically by the chorus impersonating the speaking character,” yet because his concerns lie elsewhere, Currie does not pursue in detail the position he espouses.⁴⁹ In what follows, we will examine evidence which supports Currie’s assumption, that at moments of direct speech, Bacchylides’ dithyrambs shifted to a mimetic mode of performance.

The speeches put directly into the voice of characters in Bacchylides’ dithyrambs often occur as part of a dialogue, and this supports the theory that during them the choral performers impersonated the characters. In the admittedly meager remains of Greek lyric poetry, both contemporary with Bacchylides’ work and preceding it, plenty of poems feature speeches put directly into the voice of characters, but few of those speeches seem to have occurred in the course of a dialogue between characters.⁵⁰ Pindar, the best attested of the lyric poets, whose career overlapped with that of Bacchylides, tends to limit his characters’ direct speeches to single, isolated events.⁵¹ By contrast, of the only twenty poems by Bacchylides that are preserved in a reasonably intact state, three, poem 5, an epinician, and poems 15 and 17, both dithyrambs, contain at least one dialogue between characters, and other poems may have as well.⁵² The instances of dialogue in

⁴⁹ Currie (2013), 252-3.

⁵⁰ Cf., e.g., Danae’s speech in Simonides, fr. 543 *PMG*. Stesichorus may have contained dialogue; see Griffith (2008), 66.

⁵¹ Uhlig (2011a), 51-7, with a list at n.53 of the few exceptions, the most notable of which is *Pythian* 4. Fearn (2012), 324, with the table at 342-3, demonstrates that Bacchylides was fonder than Pindar of character speech overall, whether in isolation or dialogue.

⁵² Bacchylides 24 might have contained a dialogue between characters; see Fearn (2012), 342.

Bacchylides' dithyrambs 15 and 17 provide opportunities where the performance mode of the poems could have shifted from non-mimetic to mimetic.

Bacchylides 17, which tells the story of a confrontation between Minos and Theseus on a voyage from Athens to Crete, before the Athenian hero kills the Minotaur and frees his city from its obligation of contributing sacrificial victims for the beast, demonstrates the blending of non-mimetic and mimetic modes of performance that is possible in Bacchylides' dithyramb.⁵³ The poem begins with third-person narration as the chorus tells of how Minos harasses a young Athenian girl named Eriboea, provoking Theseus to defend her (1-13):

Κυανόπρωρα μὲν ναῦς μενέκτυ[πον Θησέα δις ἐπτ[ά] τ' ἀγλαοὺς ἄγουσα κούρους Ἰαόνω[ν Κρητικὸν τάμνε πέλαγος· τηλαυγεῖ γὰρ [έν] φάρεϊ βορήϊαι πίτνο[ν] αὔραι κλυτᾷς ἑκατι π[ε]λεμαίγιδος Ἀθάν[ας· κνίσεν τε Μίνω κέαρ ἡμεράμπυκος θεᾶς Κύπριδος [ά]γνὰ δῶρα· χεῖρα δ' οὐ[κέτι] παρθενικᾷς ἄτερθ' ἐράτυεν, θίγεν δὲ λευκᾷν παρηΐδων·	1 5 10
The dark-prowed ship, while leading Theseus steadfast in the battle din and twice seven splendid Ionian youths, cut the Cretan sea, for northerly winds were falling on the far-shining sail thanks to renowned, shaking-of-the-aegis Athena. And in Minos' heart did stir the sacred gifts of the Cypria, goddess with the lovely diadem. And he was no longer able to keep his hands away from the maiden, but touched her white cheeks.	1 5 10

⁵³ For the myth, see Maehler (1997), 174-84, and (2004), 175-7.

The third-person perspective persists throughout as the chorus narrates how Theseus threatens Minos on account of his inappropriate act (14-46), Minos challenges Theseus to prove his divine parentage (47-80), and Theseus dives into the sea to retrieve a gold ring which Minos had cast there (81-129). At each stage of the story, the chorus refers to the participants in the third-person: “and Theseus saw it and rolled his eyes darkly under his brows” (ἶδεν δὲ Θησεύς,/μέλαν δ’ ὑπ’ ὀφρύων/δίνα[σ]εν ὄμμα, 16-8); “and the son-in-law of Helios [Minos] grew angry in his heart and weaved a fresh plan” (Ἀλίου τε γαμβρῷ χόλωσεν ἦτορ,/ὕφαινε τε ποταινίαν/μῆτιν, 50-2); “but he [Theseus] stood on the well-built half-deck and leapt, and the expanse of gentle sea welcomed him” (ἀλλ’ εὐ-/πάκτων ἐπ’ ἱκρίων/σταθεὶς ὄρουσε, πόντιόν τέ νιν/δέξατο θελημὸν ἄλσος, 83-5).

Even though Bacchylides 17 has an overarching third-person frame, well over a third of it consists of speeches delivered by characters, and on these occasions the chorus may abandon the dominant non-mimetic mode of the poem adopt a mimetic one. Theseus chastises Minos (20-46), Minos invokes his father Zeus and belittles Theseus (52-66) and then goads him to descend into the waves (74-80), and finally the Athenian youths on the boat rejoice when Theseus emerges from the sea unscathed (130-2).⁵⁴ Even though the chorus introduces and concludes the speeches with third-person statements, which are consistent with a non-mimetic mode of performance, within the speeches themselves the performers shed the third-person frame.⁵⁵ They no longer sing about Theseus or Minos or a band of Athenians, but speak in the voice of Theseus, Minos and the young Athenians

⁵⁴ Fearn (2012), 130-2, omits the speech of the Athenian youths.

⁵⁵ Third-person verbs of speaking at lines 20, 47, 74, 81, and 129.

and impersonate the characters as part of a mimetic performance.⁵⁶ The length of some of the speeches – Theseus’ spans twenty-six lines, and the longer of Minos’ occupies fifteen – increases the likelihood that the performers embodied the characters when speaking in their voices. A large amount of direct speech intercedes between the reminders about the narrative, and a mimetic mode of performance temporarily prevails over a non-mimetic one. Although it is impossible to verify, while eliminating all objections, that for each speech the chorus impersonates the speaking character, scholars have entertained the possibility since the initial publication of Bacchylides’ poetry in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁷

The prospects for mimetic performance in Bacchylides 17 are strongest for the speeches by Theseus and Minos, for they occur as part of a dialogue and moreover share important features with the speeches found in the mimetic dialogue of Bacchylides 18. In Bacchylides 18, the first strophe contains three vocative direct addresses which identify Aegeus as the recipient of the speaker’s questions and one of the participants in the dialogue. Similarly to the first strophe of Bacchylides 18, the speeches by Theseus and Minos in Bacchylides 17 each begin with a vocative direct address which identifies to whom the speech is delivered. Theseus calls Minos “son of utmost Zeus” (Διὸς υἱὲ φερτάτου, 20), and Minos in reply first cries out “father Zeus of great strength” (μεγαλοσθενές/Ζεῦ πάτερ, 52-3) before challenging “Theseus” (Θησεῦ, 74). In Bacchylides 18, the vocatives addressed to Aegeus prompt him to respond, and the speakers in Bacchylides 17 act with the same expectation, as if they participate in a

⁵⁶ The question of how the parts are assigned among the choreuts is difficult to answer. See above n.21 on Bacchylides 18. Kenyon (1897), xlii, asserts that the chorus in full impersonated each character.

⁵⁷ Kenyon (1897), xl-xlii; Burnett (1985), 22-3; Schmidt (1990), 27; Zimmermann (1992), 80; Currie (2013), 253.

dialogue with another character. It is as if a mimetic performance between two characters breaks out part way through a non-mimetic poem with third-person narration.

The three speeches by Theseus and Minos also share structural features with the speeches in Bacchylides 18. In that poem, the beginnings and endings of major structural units, namely the strophes and antistrophes, mark the beginnings and endings of the character's speeches. The strophic boundaries punctuate the speaking parts, lending a sense of finality to the one character's speech while priming the next. In Bacchylides 17, Theseus' speech (20-46) extends from the last few lines of the first strophe to the end of the first antistrophe, and the longer of Minos' two speeches (52-66) begins part way into the first epode and takes up the rest of it.⁵⁸ If poem 18 can serve as a sort of model for how Bacchylides arranged his characters' speeches when they were delivered mimetically by performers, then its standard indicates that Bacchylides 17 also could have been mimetic.

A final comparison between Bacchylides 17 and 18 demonstrates that, as a result of its combination of non-mimetic and mimetic sections, the former poem is exempt from the sorts of criticism to which the latter is often submitted. As we have already observed, the text of Bacchylides 18 contains few clues about the characters' moods or attitudes, and Bacchylides has been faulted for his lack of attention to characterization. By contrast, in the case of Bacchylides 17 it is possible to draw the sorts of conclusions about the characters in the performance that are frustrated in the case of the characters from Bacchylides 18. Every speech in Bacchylides 17 is preceded by a statement, in non-mimetic, third-person narration, which establishes the mood of the character about to

⁵⁸ See Führer (1967), 67, for other examples in Bacchylides of coincidence between the end of characters' speeches and strophe. Of the seven he lists (with poem 18 not included in his count), two occur in poem 17.

speak. Before Theseus rebukes Minos, the chorus comments that he “rolled his eyes darkly beneath his brows and wretched pain mangled his heart” (μέλαν δ’ ὕπ’ ὀφρύων/δίνα[σ]εν ὄμμα, καρδίαν τέ οἱ/σχέτλιον ἄμυξεν ἄλγος, 17-19), and Minos, when responding, “grew angry in his heart” (χόλωσεν ἦτορ, 50). Later Minos is described as a “hero staunch in battle” who “stretches out his hands” before he demands that Theseus jump off the ship into the water (χεῖρα πέτασε...μενεπτόλεμος ἦρωος, 72-3). And when Theseus reemerges, the Athenian youths are said to cry out “with newly-born joy” (σὺν εὖ-/θυμίαι νεοκτίτῳ, 125-6) and a “lovely voice” (ἔρατ᾽ ὀπί, 129). The text of the poem supplies the cues for how its performers should deliver their lines. Bacchylides 17 proves a surer guide than Bacchylides 18 to certain details of its performance, such as the manner in which its speeches are supposed to be delivered. If, in the eyes of some, the lack of such supplementary details in the text of Bacchylides 18 gives the poem an ‘untragic’ style which is incompatible with its mimetic structure and form, making for an unsuccessful work, then Bacchylides 17 strikes a satisfying middle ground.

Bacchylides 15, the other of Bacchylides’ dithyrambs that contains substantial direct speeches by characters, resembles Bacchylides 17 in mixing non-mimetic and mimetic modes of performance. It tells the story of Odysseus and Menelaus coming to Troy to try to broker a deal for Helen’s return without the violence and destruction of a war.⁵⁹ In the city, they are first hosted at the house of Antenor, who relays their proposal to Priam before the Trojan people assemble to hear the visitors and deliberate. While the first forty or so lines are preserved in poor condition, the final third exists in its entirety. It contains the part of the story where Odysseus and Menelaus present their case to the

⁵⁹ For the story, see Maehler (1997), 131-3, and (2004), 158-9.

Trojans. The poem ends without revealing the outcome of the embassy, which would have been widely known. Menelaus and Odysseus had to fail so that the Trojan War could occur and Troy could fall.

While there were as many as three direct speeches in Bacchylides 15, each of which could have been delivered by performers who impersonated the speaking characters, only Menelaus', during which he moralizes on topics like justice and hubris before the assembled residents of Troy, is preserved intact (50-63).⁶⁰ His speech exhibits parallels in both structure and content with the mimetic speeches from Bacchylides 17 and 18. In the first place, the speech corresponds exactly to the strophic structure of the poem. Menelaus begins speaking as the antistrophe starts and ends with the conclusion of the poem in the epode. Like Menelaus' speech, the four mimetic speeches in Bacchylides 18 all begin and end at major structural breaks, and two of the mimetic speeches in Bacchylides 17 conclude in concert with either the antistrophe or the epode. Furthermore, Menelaus begins his speech with a vocative direct address to the "Trojans, lovers of Ares" (ὦ Τρῳεὺς ἀρηΐφιλοι, 50), which identifies his audience and invites a dialogue. While no one responds to Menelaus, because his speech comes at the end of the poem, he nonetheless leaves the possibility open. Vocative direct addresses appear at the beginning of most of the mimetic speeches from Bacchylides 17 and 18, yet another point of similarity recommending the conclusion that Menelaus' speech was performed mimetically.

The two other possible speeches in Bacchylides 15, although hardly preserved as part of the lacunose beginning of the poem, would seem to be prime candidates for

⁶⁰ On the issue of part-divisions, not treated here, see above n. 21. See also Maehler (2004), 158, who mentions "the chorus, or the singer who recited Menelaus' speech." For an extensive analysis of the speeches' themes and their relevance for a possibly Athenian audience, see Fearn (2007), ch. 5.

mimetic performance on account of their inclusion in a dialogue between characters.

According to the common reconstruction of the opening of Bacchylides 15, Odysseus and Menelaus are at Antenor's house where his wife Theano, a priestess of Athena, speaks with the pair.⁶¹ In line 9, a verb meaning "to address" (προσήνεπεν) occurs, which in other poems introduces direct speeches, and in Bacchylides 15 it likely introduces a direct speech by Theano.⁶² It also seems likely that Odysseus replies to Theano with a direct speech of his own, although none of it is preserved, not even a verb that could possibly introduce his speech.⁶³ Nonetheless, consistent with other moments of dialogue in Bacchylides' dithyrambs, the dialogue between Theano and Odysseus would have afforded the choral performers an opportunity to impersonate those characters. At the same time, the characters whom the performers may have represented in their mimetic performance, both at the beginning of the poem and its end, are elsewhere referred to in the third-person. Theano is mentioned in line 7 and Menelaus in lines 6 and 48.

Bacchylides 15 is not wholly mimetic in the same way as Bacchylides 18, but like Bacchylides 17, it blends non-mimetic and mimetic modes of performance.

Evidence external to the poem suggests that the chorus of Bacchylides 15 may have adopted the personae of characters other than Theano, Odysseus, or Menelaus. The T scholion to *Iliad* 24.496b compares the number of progeny attributed to Hecuba in Homer and to Theano in Bacchylides:

πιθανὸν μίαν τεκεῖν ἑννεακαίδεκα, οὐχ ὥς Βακχυλίδης πεντήκοντα τῆς Θεανοῦς
ὑπογράφει παῖδας.

⁶¹ Maehler (2004), 158-9.

⁶² Cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 4.97 and 9.29.

⁶³ Jebb (1905), 363, and Maehler (2004), 159.

That one woman could have born nineteen sons is credible, but fifty is not, so Bacchylides indicates that there were fifty sons of Theano.

The comment implies that Bacchylides numbered Theano's sons at fifty in one of his poems, yet nowhere in his surviving corpus is that information reported. Bacchylides 15 is the mostly likely source given the poem's subject matter, the story of how Theano and her family assisted Menelaus and Odysseus on their embassy to Troy, and one recent editor of Bacchylides' text has proposed a supplement to line 12 which would account for the reference. In her speech, Theano may have instructed Menelaus and Odysseus to "meet my fifty sons" ([τῶν δὲ πεντήκοντ' ἐμῶν παίδων τυχόντες) who would accompany the Greek ambassadors to the assembly of Trojans.⁶⁴

The reported number of fifty is significant in light of the performance context of the poem. Fifty was the standard number of choreuts who performed in a circular chorus in Athens, and Bacchylides 15 was one such performance.⁶⁵ It seems that Bacchylides increased the number of sons attributed to Theano from ten in Homer to fifty so that there would be as many sons of Theano as there were choreuts.⁶⁶ Given the similarity in the number of sons and the size of the chorus, scholars have proposed that the fifty members of the chorus represented the fifty sons of Theano in performance, and another piece of evidence supports that conclusion.⁶⁷ In the papyrus which preserves Bacchylides' dithyrambs, poem 15 is given two titles, one of which is *Antenoridae*, "The Sons of Antenor," suggesting that the group played a major role in the poem. Yet in the surviving

⁶⁴ Maehler (1997), 138.

⁶⁵ On fifty choreuts in Athenian circular choruses, see *DTC*, 32. On the Athenian performance context of Bacchylides 15, see Zimmermann (1992), 69; Maehler (1997), 129-30, and (2004), 157-8; and Fearn (2007), ch. 5.

⁶⁶ For the ten sons of Theano mentioned over the course of the *Iliad*, see Jebb (1905), 221.

⁶⁷ Jebb (1905), 221; Zimmermann (1992) 68-9; Maehler (1997), 129, and (2004), 157; Fearn (2007), 240-1.

parts of the poem, the sons of Antenor barely appear, serving the minor function of escorting Menelaus and Odysseus from their parents' home to where the Trojans have assembled. Instead, their importance must derive from another aspect of Bacchylides 15. Antenor and Theano's sons, although mentioned hardly at all in Bacchylides 15, were present throughout the performance because the chorus represented them.

That the fifty choreuts who performed Bacchylides 15 may have represented the fifty sons of Antenor and Theano introduces a number of complications to the mimetic performance of the poem. In the first place, how did the chorus balance its constant representation of the Antenoridae with its temporary impersonation of other characters such as Theano and Menelaus? Perhaps the fifty-strong chorus was divided into groups which each individually represented a different character, the Antenoridae, Theano, Odysseus, and Menelaus, but the *Iliad* scholion reports that Theano had fifty sons, giving the impression that the full complement of choreuts impersonated them. In the face of this difficulty, perhaps individual choreuts temporarily abandoned their identity as sons of Antenor and Theano in order to speak as Theano, Odysseus, or Menelaus, or other performers, not members of the chorus, took on the roles. Equally as problematic is a third-person reference to the sons of Theano. After Theano instructs Menelaus and Odysseus to "meet my sons," it is reported that "they led them" (ἄγον, 37), that is, the sons of Antenor and Theano led the Greek pair toward the assembled Trojans. The comment seems to be delivered in the voice of the narrator of the story, who is the chorus. This would mean that the members of the chorus, impersonating the sons of Antenor and Theano, refer to themselves in the third-person.⁶⁸ The events narrated by the

⁶⁸ Zimmermann (1992), 68-9. Pickard-Cambridge (1927), 42, uses the difficulty of the chorus representing the Antenoridae but also speaking about them to argue against "the dramatic character" of the chorus in

chorus are put into the past (the verb is in the imperfect tense), and perhaps the chorus of Antenoridae speaks from the perspective of a later time, but it is still unsettling for the chorus to refer in the third-person to the characters whom it represents throughout the entire poem. One would expect a first-person reference.

The peculiarities that arise when it is proposed that the chorus of Bacchylides 15 represented the Antenoridae are not sufficient reasons to deny that the poem entailed mimetic performance. Rather, they suggest that Bacchylides 15 amounted to a performance that required a high degree of coordination among different component, even if it is nearly impossible to recover the original disposition of those elements. Alternatively, given that the evidence attesting to the chorus' impersonation of the Antenoridae comes from sources, a scholion to Homer and the title to the poem, neither of which is likely to date to the fifth century, it might be reasonable to conclude that their testimony should not bear on the original performance of the poem. But even in that case, the argument for the mimetic performance of Bacchylides' dithyramb, rather than weakened, finds new allies in ancient sources. The ancient critics who added the title *Antenoridae* to the poem and commented on Theano's fifty sons as assigned to her by Bacchylides did not hesitate to make claims which imply an unusual performance scenario for Bacchylides 15. They assume that Bacchylides 15 could accommodate their statements and, as a consequence, that Bacchylides wrote dithyrambs which featured a mimetic mode of performance.

Whereas Bacchylides 18 offers a fairly straightforward, if unparalleled, example of a dithyramb which features a mimetic mode of performance, Bacchylides 15 and 17

dithyramb, both this particular one and the genre more broadly. His remarks have been deleted at *DTC*, 27-8.

complicate our understanding of the mimetic performance of a dithyramb. In the third-person narrative sections of the two poems, the members of the chorus sing as “themselves,” male, Athenian citizen-performance, while in the portions of direct speech delivered by fictional characters, the members of the chorus adopt the identity of whatever character is speaking. The poems shift back and forth between a non-mimetic mode of performance and a mimetic one, and the chorus’ identity shifts accordingly.

While the ability of dithyrambic choruses to sing at times as themselves, male Athenian citizens, and at others as fictional characters, might seem unusual, they were not the only type of ancient chorus which enjoyed such flexibility. In an influential article, A. Henrichs has argued that tragic choruses could do the same thing which it has been argued here that dithyrambic choruses did, that is, sing in different voices and assume different identities at different moments of a performance.⁶⁹ Henrichs suggests that when a tragic chorus refers to its own singing and dancing, that chorus inhabits two identities at once, one identity as the fictional characters of the dramatic, mimetic performance, and another as the citizen performers of a non-mimetic, ritual performance.⁷⁰ The shift in identity that, according to Henrichs, the members of a tragic chorus undergo, from characters to performers, is the opposite of that which their dithyrambic counterparts undergo when they temporarily abandon their identities as male, Athenian citizens and assume fictional identities as a character, yet the principle is the same in both cases. A chorus’ identity in performance, whether dithyrambic or tragic, was fluid and always dependent on whatever voice the chorus adopted at a particular moment of a performance.

⁶⁹ Henrichs (1994/5).

⁷⁰ Ibid, esp. 67-8, 90.

Pratinas and Pindar, Satyrs and Dithyramb

In the introduction to this chapter, it was observed that the most common answer to the question who did dithyrambic performers represent is that dithyrambic performers represented “themselves.” While the discussion of Bacchylides’ dithyrambs above has given us new reason to doubt the tenability of that common refrain, in the past there has been one exception, considered with somewhat regular frequency, to the consensus that dithyrambic performers always represented themselves, and that is the possibility that dithyrambic performers represented satyrs, the half-animal, half-human followers of Dionysus. Satyr is thus another potential fictional identity which the members of a dithyrambic chorus may have assumed as part of the mimetic performance of dithyramb, to be counted among the other fictional identities we have seen dithyrambic performers adopt, such as Aegeus, Minos, Theseus, Menelaus, Theano, Odysseus, the sons of Antenor, and a group of people, perhaps young men, or individual loyal to Athens.

The existence of ‘satyric-dithyramb’ is a contentious issue that has been dismissed out of hand just as often as it has been taken seriously. For those who propose that dithyrambic performers did dress up as satyrs and impersonate those creatures in performance, Aristotle’s statements in his *Poetics* about the historical development of tragedy offer some of the strongest support for their position. In quick succession, Aristotle identifies the origins of tragedy in both dithyramb and satyric-performance (1449a11-20), and by combining those two influences on tragedy it is possible to arrive at the conclusion that dithyrambic performers dressed up as satyrs.⁷¹ Sixth- and fifth-

⁷¹ In twentieth-century scholarship, see Kranz (1933), 13; Webster in *DTC*, 96. R. Seaford has long advocated for the existence of satyric-dithyramb; see a recent expression of his position, with specific

century vase-paintings which show choruses of satyrs performing in contexts which suggest dithyramb seem to confirm the conclusion that dithyrambic performers could dress up as and so impersonate satyrs.⁷²

Those who would deny that dithyrambic performers ever represented satyrs discredit much of the evidence just cited, proposing different interpretations for the vase-paintings, and arguing that Aristotle's claims represent his own, idiosyncratic theories as much as actual performance history, even if he had access to a richer store of sources than modern scholars do.⁷³ One of the main hurdles to widespread endorsement of the existence of satyric-dithyramb is thus a lack of trustworthy corroborating evidence. What might alleviate that problem are dithyrambic texts which indicate that their performers spoke in the voice of satyrs and impersonated the creatures, and in what follows we will analyze texts from the very early part of the fifth century which may point to such a conclusion.⁷⁴ The case for satyric-dithyramb can now draw support from a type of evidence that has been largely missing thus far from discussion of the issue.

reference to Aristotle's statements, at (2007), 380-1. In the nineteenth century, Nietzsche was a proponent of satyric-dithyramb; on his views, see Silk and Stern (1981), esp. 142-50.

⁷² See especially Attic red-figure bell krater, c. 425, Polion. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 25.78.66. *ARV* 1172.8; *Paralipomena* 459; *Addenda* 339; *BAPD* 215506, with discussion in *DTC* 20, 34, and 301. For sixth-century vase-paintings, see Shaw (2014), 33-9. Some have suggested that the chorus of satyrs shown on the so-called Pronomos Vase might be from a dithyramb rather than a satyr-play, which is the most common interpretation of the image; cf. *DFA*, 363; Wilson (2000), 340n.120; Carpenter (2005), 225; *contra*, Griffith (2010), 52n.22.

⁷³ Else (1939), 140-1; *DTC*, 89-95; Lucas (1968), 84; Scullion (2002), 103-4; Cingano (2006), 35-6. Halliwell (1986), 256, calls the position seemingly espoused in the *Poetics* "abstract cultural and literary theory, supported by a network of Aristotelian assumptions at least as much as by uncited reserves of evidence (though these too may have existed)." See Kárpáti (2012), on the vase-painting cited in previous note.

⁷⁴ From a slightly later time, the title character in Melanippides' dithyramb *Marsyas*, who was a satyr, may have been impersonated by the performers of the dithyramb. See Boardman (1956); Csapo (2004), 213; Power (2013), 241.

The strongest candidate for such a satyric-dithyramb is a fragment which is preserved by Athenaeus (14.617c-f):⁷⁵

τίς ὁ θόρυβος ὅδε; τί τάδε τὰ χορεύματα;
τίς ὕβρις ἔμολεν ἐπὶ Διονυσιάδα πολυπάταγα θυμέλαν;
ἐμὸς ἐμὸς ὁ Βρόμιος, ἐμὲ δεῖ κελαδεῖν, ἐμὲ δεῖ παταγεῖν
ἀν' ὄρεα σύμενον μετὰ Ναϊάδων
οἷά τε κύκνον ἄγοντα ποικιλόπτερον μέλος. 5
τὰν αἰοιδὴν κατέστασε Πιερίς βασίλειαν· ὁ δ' αὐλὸς
ὕστερον χορευέτω· καὶ γάρ ἐσθ' ὑπηρέτας.
κώμῳ μόνον θυραμάχοις τε πυγμαχίαισι νέων θέλοι παροίνων
ἔμμεναι στρατηλάτας.
παῖε τὸν φρυγνεοῦ ποικίλου πνοὴν ἔχοντα, 10
φλέγε τὸν ὀλεσισιαλοκάλαμον
λαλοβαρύοπα παραμελορυθμοβάταν
ὑπαὶ τρυπάνῳ δέμας πεπλασμένον.
ἦν ἰδοῦ· ἄδε σοι δεξιᾷς καὶ ποδὸς διαρριφά·
θρίαμβε διθύραμβε κισσόχαιτ' ἄναξ, 15
<ἄκου> ἄκουε τὰν ἐμὴν Δώριον χορείαν.

What is this clatter? What are these dance steps?
What arrogance runs to the altar of Dionysus, full of uproar?
Mine, mine is Bromios, it is for me to sing, for me to clatter,
rushing up the mountains with the Naiads
like a swan leading the wonderfully-feathered song. 5
The Pierian has set the poem as queen, and let the aulos
perform in accompaniment; for it is a servant.
May it wish to be the leader only for the komos
and for the door-beating brawls of young drunkards.
Strike the one who has the varied voice of the toad, 10
burn the one with the spittle-wasting reed, with the deeply
babbling voice, trampling the rhythm and song,
he has a body moulded by the drill bit.
Look at this! This tossing of my right hand and foot,
for you, *thriambos*, *dithyrambos*, ivy-haired lord, 15
<hear,> hear my Dorian performance.

There are many uncertainties about the fragment, beginning with the documentation that Athenaeus provides for it. He introduces it as a *hyporchēma* composed by Pratinas of Phleious, yet that poet is not otherwise known to have worked that genre. To remedy the inconsistency, there have been two primary approaches, which are not mutually

⁷⁵ Pratinas *TrGF* i.4 F 3 = *PMG* 708.

exclusive. Some scholars argue that Athenaeus misidentifies the author and propose either that the fragment is the work of another poet named Pratinas, otherwise unattested, or that it belongs to an anonymous poet whose work came to be associated mistakenly with Pratinas of Phleious.⁷⁶ In support of the change in authorship, scholars observe that many of the fragment's features, in particular its concern with musical criticism and its vocabulary, are indicative of a date in the fifth century later than when Pratinas of Phleious was active; his career is traditionally dated to the very beginning of the century.⁷⁷ According to both of these theories, the *hyporchēma* is not the work of the poet who is identified by Athenaeus, but belongs to someone else, likely from a later period.

On the other hand, it is possible to maintain the attribution to Pratinas of Phleious if the genre label that Athenaeus applies to the fragment is changed. The term that Athenaeus uses, *hyporchēma*, appears for the first time in Plato's *Ion* (534c4), casting doubt on its applicability to a poetic fragment that comes from at least one-hundred years earlier.⁷⁸ Given that Pratinas of Phleious was renowned for his satyr-plays, the fragment may belong to that genre.⁷⁹ At the same time, some scholars have detected affinities with dithyramb in the fragment and assigned it to that genre.⁸⁰ In either of these interpretations, that Athenaeus preserves a fragment from a satyr-play or dithyramb by

⁷⁶ Lloyd-Jones (1990), 227-30.

⁷⁷ Zimmermann (1986) and (1992), 124-6. Csapo (2004), 214 and 218; Franklin (2013), 216.

⁷⁸ It is also unclear whether *hyporchēma* in Plato signifies an independent genre of performance, or a style of performance which could be incorporated in multiple genres. On the term, see Dale (1969), 39-40; Seaford (1977/8), 87-8; Lloyd-Jones (1990), Napolitano (2000), 115-8; Csapo (2004), 214n.30.

⁷⁹ Becker (1912), 29-30; Seaford (1977/8); Ieranò, 218-26; D'Alessio (2007); Griffith (2013b), 273-4.

⁸⁰ Wilamowitz (1913), 131-6; *DTC*, 20; Sutton (1980), 11, but differently at (1989), 111; Zimmermann (1986); Napolitano (2000).

Pratinas of Phleious makes better sense of what is known from sources besides the Roman author about that poet and the period in which he worked.

While debates about the fragment seem destined to persist, some consensus concerning its dating at least is beginning to emerge. It is now recognized that its commentary on musical matters and its language are not inconsistent with poetry from the early fifth century.⁸¹ The fragment can remain in that early period, and there is no need to posit either another, later Pratinas, or a later, anonymous poet.

There is somewhat less consensus about the genre to which the fragment belongs, and the disagreement stems in part from uncertainty about the chorus' identity. If the fragment comes from a satyr play, then it is unavoidable that the chorus is a group of satyrs, and scholars have drawn attention to details in the fragment that support the conclusion that the chorus consists of satyrs.⁸² Declaring its allegiance to Dionysus and defending its role as the proper overseer of his brand of music, the chorus asserts its right to partake in Dionysiac revelry with the Naiads in the mountains, presenting itself as part of the Dionysiac *thiasos*, among whose ranks were counted Naiads as well as satyrs. The masculine participles in lines 4 and 5 ensure that the speaker is a male member of Dionysus' band and thus suggest that while the Naiads remain in the mountains, the chorus, made up of satyrs, has come to the "altar of Dionysos" to rehabilitate Dionysiac *choreia*.

The claim that the chorus consists of satyrs poses considerable obstacles to arguments that the fragment is a dithyramb because of the prejudice against satyric-

⁸¹ Hedreen (2007), 184; D'Angour (2013), 202-3; Griffith (2013b).

⁸² Becker (1912), 29-30; Pohlenz (1989) (originally 1927), 49-50; Seaford (1977-8); D'Alessio (2007); Hedreen (2007), 150.

dithyramb, and with few exceptions, those scholars who would classify the fragment as a dithyramb argue against the identification of the chorus as a group of satyrs.⁸³ The two positions, a satyric identity for the chorus and dithyrambic genre-affiliation for the fragment, are seemingly incompatible. The scholars who believe that the fragment comes from a dithyramb, and thus reject that the chorus consists of satyrs, point out that, even though the chorus align themselves with Dionysus' *thiasos*, it is not necessary to conclude from that fact that the members of the chorus are satyrs. All that can be claimed with any certainty about the identity of the speaker in the Pratinas fragment is that he identifies himself with the worshippers of Dionysus. To conclude that he is a satyr goes beyond what is indicated.

The identity assigned to the chorus is usually treated as subsidiary and dependent on the genre of the fragment. The proposal for satyr-play demands that the chorus be a group of satyrs, while that for dithyramb prohibits the same conclusion. Any reconciliation between the positions, such that the fragment is a dithyramb performed by satyrs, is typically not afforded serious consideration. Yet, some of Pindar's dithyrambs offer evidence which suggests both that the Pratinas fragment is from a dithyramb and also that its human performers could represent satyrs.

Pindar's *Second Dithyramb* (fr. 70b) provides a number of close parallels for various features which are found in Pratinas' fragment.⁸⁴ Pindar's fragmentary

⁸³ Wilamowitz (1913), 134n.1; Zimmermann (1986); Napolitano (2000). Exceptions at *DTC*, 20, and Sutton (1980), 11, although revised substantially at (1989), 111. Hedreen (2007) and D'Angour (2013) seem to hedge. They assert that the chorus is made up of satyrs, but never come down on the question of genre, and thus seem to leave open the possibility of a dithyrambic chorus of satyrs, although they never declare this outright.

⁸⁴ Napolitano (2000), 119-20, comments on many of them, and my discussion is indebted to her analysis, although I draw a conclusion different from hers.

dithyramb, like Pratinas' fragment, contains extensive commentary on musical matters. It begins by addressing, and seeming to criticize, an earlier arrangement for dithyrambic performance, and goes on to contrast that inferior model with an improved version employed in the present (1-5).⁸⁵ Criticism of poetry and performance along the lines of what is contained in Pindar's dithyramb seems to have been a recurrent feature of dithyramb throughout its long history, and Pratinas' fragment, in which the speaker rails against practices that he deems abhorrent, stands squarely in that tradition, supporting the conclusion that it too is a dithyramb.⁸⁶

A further similarity between the poems is the relationship which the speaker in each constructs between himself and Dionysus' rites as enacted by various gods, goddesses, and other mythical beings. Both poems refer to such rites, Pratinas' in the mention of the Naiads on the mountains, and Pindar's in a lengthy description of an Olympian Dionysiac festival attended by Kybele, Naiads, Ares, Athena, and Artemis (6-23). The speakers of both poems share a similar distanced perspective with regard to the rites, which are located in a place which neither speaker currently inhabits, but both clearly want to join. It is even suggested that it would be sanctioned for the speakers to participate in Dionysus' rites. The speaker in Pratinas' poem declares unequivocally that he belongs with the Naiads in the mountains, even while he stands near the "altar of Dionysus," apart from where the Naiads are. In Pindar's dithyramb, the Dionysiac festival occurs on Mount Olympus while the speaker remains on earth, where the Muse has appointed him "herald of wise words for Hellas of the beautiful choruses" (ἐμὲ δ'

⁸⁵ On the critical stance adopted in the lines, see van der Weiden (1991), 62-3, and especially D'Angour (1997).

⁸⁶ So Power, (2013), 240, calls the Pratinas fragment "the meta-musical *pièce de résistance*" of dithyramb.

ἐξαίρετο[ν/κάρυκα σοφῶν ἐπέων/Μοῖσ' ἀνέστας' Ἑλλάδι κα[λ]λ[ι]χόρῳ, 23-5).⁸⁷ The revelation of his earthly role occurs immediately after the lengthy description of the heavenly rites, and the quick transition between locales suggests that he belongs equally in both spheres. The speaker in both Pratinas' fragment and Pindar's dithyramb presents himself as the advocate for Dionysus and Dionysiac performance, a persona that, as Pindar's poem demonstrates, is appropriate for a dithyramb.

While Pindar's *Second Dithyramb* provides evidence that many features which are found in Pratinas' fragment are consistent with an identification of the fragment as part of a dithyramb, it is not able to settle the issue of whether men dressed as satyrs could perform dithyrambs. No one has ever proposed that the identity of the speaker in Pindar's dithyramb is that of a satyr, although it might be worth asking: if the fragment of Pindar had been preserved in contexts similar to those in which the Pratinas fragment finds itself, would a consensus have developed that a group of satyrs speaks in Pindar's poem? Nonetheless, there is evidence that satyrs had a role in other Pindaric dithyrambs and also that the members of a dithyrambic chorus may even have represented the mythical creatures. A third-century CE papyrus preserves what seems to be a treatise on

⁸⁷ I assume that the first-person accusative pronoun in the Pindar fragment (ἐμὲ, 23) refers primarily to the speaking and performing chorus, not to the poet. *Pace* van der Weiden (1991) 78-9, and Lavecchia (2000), 169-70. The "first-person problem" – whether first-person statements in Pindar refer to the poet, performer (chorus or soloist), or someone else entirely – has been studied largely in the context of Pindar's epinician poetry; see recently Currie (2013) for an overview of the controversy and extensive bibliography. Little attention has been paid to the first person in his dithyrambs, and it is difficult to apply to dithyramb the findings derived from examination of epinicians; cf. Peponi (2013c), 364. There is good reason to think that, at least at Athens, a prominent reference to a poet in a dithyramb would be unconventional. The commemorative practices in the city erase the poet while promoting the chorus. The poet's name is not recorded in the official records of victors, but the tribe from which the performers were selected is (an exception to the otherwise silent dithyrambic poet is the epigram possibly by the dithyrambic *didaskalos* Antigenes, *Anth. Pal.* 13.28 = *FGE* Antigenes 1).

the history of dithyramb (*P.Berol.* 9571v).⁸⁸ In the midst of the discussion, the writer addresses dithyramb's contribution to the genesis of tragedy (col. ii 38-41):

κ(αι) τήν τρα[γωιδίαν
ἐκ τοῦ διθυράμβου διὰ κ[
αὐτοῦ μετήγαγεν ἐπὶ τή[ν
σατυρογρ[α]γίαν

and tra[gedy
from dithyramb through [
of it led over to th[e
satyr-play

The fragmentary state of the papyrus leaves much of the discussion uncertain, but it seems that the writer proposes a prehistory of tragedy that involved both dithyramb and satyr-play. Scholars have noted that the papyrus' account is similar to that put forth by Aristotle in his *Poetics*, where he identifies a dual origin for tragedy in dithyramb and performance by men dressed as satyrs, and the writer of the treatise may have subscribed to Aristotle's theory.⁸⁹ While neither Aristotle nor the anonymous writer declares outright that choruses of satyrs performed dithyrambes, they both seem to leave the possibility open with their suggestion that interactions between dithyramb and performances by choruses of men dressed as satyrs contributed to the development of tragedy.

Immediately before offering its history of tragedy, the papyrus seems to cite a dithyramb that supports its claims about the close relationship between dithyramb and satyr-performance. The dithyramb selected is one by Pindar that tells the story of Orion's blinding by Oinopion (frr. 72-4). That poem may have been particularly pertinent to the

⁸⁸ First published in Schubart (1941). See also Ieranò, 129-31.

⁸⁹ del Corno (1974), 106-7; Lavecchia (2000), 273-4.

discussion in the papyrus for a few reasons.⁹⁰ First, according to some accounts of the Orion myth in antiquity, satyrs assisted Oinopion in his punishment of Orion by tracking down the hunter, getting him drunk so that he would fall asleep, and then bringing the sleeping Orion back to Oiniopion, and it is possible that they served a similar role in Pindar's dithyramb.⁹¹ Secondly, Pindar's poem may have outlined a history of dithyramb as a genre, and while the particulars of that history are unknown, it seems likely that it somehow involved satyrs, or at least could be interpreted in that way, because the papyrus uses the poem as evidence in support of its theory that tragedy originated in both dithyramb and satyr-play. Dithyramb and satyr-performance come into contact yet again in Pindar's dithyramb about Orion, satyrs, and the history of dithyramb.

Unfortunately, on account of the scanty remains of both the papyrus and Pindar's dithyramb about Orion, it is perhaps incautious to conclude that a chorus of satyrs sang about their role in blinding Orion while also commenting on their contribution to the history of dithyramb as a performance-genre, even if the scenario is appealing. Yet, from another of Pindar's fragments, it seems that he did at times require his performers to speak in the voice of satyrs and so to impersonate the creatures. A scholion to *Clouds* 223 claims that Aristophanes borrowed the term "creature of the day" (ἐφάμερε), which Socrates addresses to Strepsiades in a dismissive tone, from a poem of Pindar's in which the satyr Silenus chastises Olympus (Pindar, fr. 157):⁹²

ὁ γάρ τοι Πίνδαρος διαλεγόμενον παράγων τὸν Σειληνὸν τῷ Ὀλύμπῳ τοιούτους
αὐτῷ περιέθηκε λόγους: "ὦ τάλας ἐφήμερε, νήπιε βάζεις χρήματα μοι

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Servius ad *Aen.* 10.763.

⁹² On the semi-mythical aulete Olympus, see the testimony compiled at Campbell (1988), 273-85.

διακομπέων”

For when Pindar brings on Silenus conversing with Olympus, he puts in his mouth such words as these: “O wretched creature of the day, you babble nonsense, boasting to me about possessions”

The scholiast indicates that he has excerpted the fragment from a dialogue between Silenus and Olympus, and the dialogic form of the fragment suggests the possibility of mimetic performance, even if the fragment does not come from a performance-genre that is traditionally recognized as mimetic.⁹³ We have already seen in the case of Bacchylides’ dithyrambos that dialogic exchanges afford opportunities for choral performers to impersonate characters, as a result of which a mimetic mode of performance emerges temporarily in what is otherwise non-mimetic performance. Perhaps the same thing occurred in the poem from which this fragment has been taken.⁹⁴ In at least some of Pindar’s poetry, it was possible for performers adopt the voice of and represent satyrs in the course of a mimetic performance.

It is unlikely that the previous discussion will satisfy all of the objections of those who consider the existence of satyric-dithyramb in antiquity a fanciful and unsubstantiated theory concocted by modern scholars. And to proceed from the problematic Pratinas fragment, to a dithyrambic fragment of Pindar’s beset by its own interpretive difficulties, to a meagerly attested dithyramb by Pindar which is incorporated into a learned discussion of dithyramb that is itself preserved in only the barest of outlines, and finally to a single fragment of Pindar’s which is unassigned to a particular

⁹³ This fragment should be added to Uhlig’s list of examples of dialogue in Pindar’s poetry; see above, n.51.

⁹⁴ Pindar was a versatile poet who composed for many different genres of performance. On the basis of the work of Alexandrian scholars, his poetry is usually divided among nine genres: hymns, paeans, dithyrambos, prosodia, partheneia, hyporchemata, encomia, threnoi, epinikia. The *Suda* (s.v. π 1617 Adler) offers a suggestive, if idiosyncratic list of his poetic activities, which include “tragic dramas.”

genre and whose only witness is a scholarly comment on a comedy by Aristophanes, admittedly requires a good amount of imaginative reconstruction.⁹⁵ Nonetheless, in making a case that dithyrambs could be performed by choruses whose members dressed up as and impersonated satyrs, I hope to have shown that the field of evidence on which the position in favor of satyric-dithyramb stands is not barren to the extent that is often assumed, in particular by those who wish to discount that position. The pertinent evidence includes not just technical treatises and vase-paintings, but actual fifth-century poetic works intended for performance.

Conclusion

Over the course of our discussion, we have examined choruses that represented in performance an Athenian king, an anonymous individual or group who calls Attica “our land,” an Athenian hero, a Cretan king, a Trojan priestess, Greek heroes from the Trojan War, Persian men who are wise and old, female refugees from Egypt, and satyrs. These examples are but a small sample of the many identities which Greek choruses assumed in mimetic performances during the first half of the fifth-century BCE. Just in the case of Aeschylus’ tragedies, it was possible for those choruses to impersonate humans of historical times, mortal figures of mythical times, and even divine beings.⁹⁶ While the evidence for dithyramb is comparatively scanty, what does exist suggests that dithyrambic choruses could assume a similar variety of identities. Recently, M. Griffith

⁹⁵ Griffith (2013b), 257, characterizes his attempt to use satyr-play as a resource for illuminating the history of dithyramb as “*obscurum per obscurius*.”

⁹⁶ For lists of the identities of Aeschylus’ tragic choruses, see Foley (2003), 25-7, and Gruber (2009), 532-8, who notes Aeschylus’ penchant, compared to Sophocles and Euripides, for having his choruses represent divinities.

has called for us “to appreciate better what a wide range of dramatic enactments and choral impersonations could be found all over Greece,” and in response to his prompt we might reply that, when dithyramb and tragedy are compared from the dual perspectives of the identities that their choral performers adopt and their respective performance modes, the two genres lie much closer to each other in the landscape of choral performance than is often acknowledged.⁹⁷

Towards the beginning of the previous chapter, I remarked that there is a relatively common belief evident in both ancient and modern discussions of dithyramb that the genre became mimetic at some point relatively late in its history due to the influences of tragedy, and furthermore that such a transformation is usually assumed to have occurred towards the end of the fifth century, in the era of the so-called New Music. One of the most well known examples of such a newly mimetic dithyramb from either the late-fifth or early-fourth century is Philoxenus’ *Cyclops*.⁹⁸ The poem, preserved only in fragments, seems to have focused on the meeting between the Greek hero Odysseus and the Cyclops Polyphemus during the former’s journey home after the Trojan War. Evidently, while Odysseus was trapped in Polyphemus’ cave, the mythical creature pined for his beloved Galatea. The dithyramb called for those involved in its performance to impersonate Odysseus, Polyphemus, Galatea, and possibly Odysseus’ companions. Philoxenus’ *Cyclops* is typically considered an innovative work. About the poem M.L. West has said that “it clearly bursts the traditional bounds of dithyramb,” and E. Csapo has claimed that it supplies an example, the most notable one, of dithyramb “becom[ing]

⁹⁷ Griffith, (2008), 61.

⁹⁸ *PMG* 815-24; see discussions in Sutton (1983); Zimmermann (1992), 127-8; Hordern (1999); Power (2013).

fast-clip operatic drama.”⁹⁹ Yet in whatever other ways Philoxenus experimented with the form of dithyramb in his *Cyclops*, having performers impersonate various mythical figures, including both a hero and a fantastical, non-human creature, was not one of the poem’s revolutionary and unprecedented features. Such mimetic impersonations had long been a part of dithyrambic performance, dating back to at least the time of Bacchylides and Pindar in the early fifth century, and, as the previous chapter’s examination of vase-painting suggests, likely even earlier.

⁹⁹ West (1992), 365-6; Csapo (2004), 215.

PART TWO

The Beginnings of Tragedy: Discourse and Definitions

CHAPTER 3

HERODOTUS' TRAGIC CHORUSES

Introduction

Towards the beginning of his *Poetics*, Aristotle defines tragedy in the follow way (1449b24-28):

ἔστιν οὖν τραγωδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἐκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας, δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν.

Tragedy is therefore a representation of an action, which is both serious and complete and has magnitude; it is in embellished language and with each of its elements used separately in the various parts; it is a representation of men doing, not by means of narration; and through pity and fear it effects the catharsis of such emotions.

As part of his project of explaining the nature of poetry, Aristotle divides tragedy into discrete components, which comprise the foundation of his definition. He identifies tragedy's content (a serious and complete action with magnitude), its form (embellished language, i.e. metrical verses, sometimes in the form of song, sometimes in the form of dialogue), its mode of presentation (dramatic, not narrative) and its ideal effects (catharsis of pity and fear).¹ It is remarkable that this, the earliest comprehensive definition of a poetic genre to have survived from ancient Greece, has managed to retain currency and

¹ Aristotle discusses epic at length at *Poetics* 1459a17ff., but he never defines the genre in the same way as he does tragedy. For his treatise on comedy, which has been mostly lost, see Janko (1984). For Aristotle's treatment of both genres, see Halliwell (1989).

has proven so enduringly influential, still providing a model for interpreting ancient tragedy and also shaping modern theories of tragic and dramatic performance.²

Even though Aristotle's definition of tragedy in the *Poetics* stands, from our perspective, at the head of a long, subsequent tradition, which is still ongoing, it certainly did not appear *ex nihilo*. Many before Aristotle had discussed the nature of poetry and the particular properties of different genres, and Aristotle must have looked to and relied on their insights as he formulated the theories that found their way into his *Poetics*.³

Aristotle's predecessors include other prose writers who discussed not only poetry, but also poets and the contexts in which poetry was presented to a consuming public. Among their ranks were counted near contemporaries like Alcidas, Isocrates, and Plato, and also figures from the sixth and fifth centuries like Theagenes of Rhegium, Hecataeus of Miletus, Hellanicus of Lesbos, Damastes of Sigeum, Glaucus of Rhegium, Gorgias of Leontini, and others, who wrote treatises with titles such as *On Poetry*,⁴ *Victors at the Karnea*,⁵ *On Poets and Sophists*,⁶ *On Poets*,⁷ and *On Old Poets and Musicians*.⁸ Both contemporary with and still antecedent to sixth- and fifth-century prose writers were

² On the continued relevance of the *Poetics* for analysis of ancient tragedy, see as an example, recently, Munteanu (2012), which investigates how various fifth-century tragedies bear out Aristotle's claims about the function of pity and fear in tragedy. Important collections on Aristotle's *Poetics* that attend to the work's afterlife include Rorty (1992) and Andersen and Haarberg (2001), both of which also contain numerous essays explicating the meaning of the treatise in its ancient context.

³ The topics of poetic criticism and literary theory, whether nascent and inchoate or developed and systematic, have long attracted scholarly attention. Recent important monographs include Ford (2002), Hunter (2009), and Halliwell (2011), all with further bibliography. The chapters collected in Kennedy (1989) offer an excellent orientation to the field.

⁴ Hecataeus: *FGrH* 1; see Ford (2002), 139, and Wright (2012), 142.

⁵ Hellanicus: *FGrH* 4 F 86.

⁶ Damastes: *FGrH* 5 T 1.

⁷ Glaucus: Plut. [*X orat.*] 833d, where it is said that some wrongly ascribe the work to the orator Antiphon.

⁸ Glaucus: Plut. [*De mus.*] 4.1132e.

poets, who regularly made their compositions a vehicle for implicit and explicit commentary on poetry. This tendency is evident as early as the Homeric epics. In the opening book of the *Odyssey*, Telemachus defends the poet Phemius against complaints leveled at the bard by Penelope, Telemachus' mother. The passage that has been called "the earliest literary criticism in Greek literature."⁹ As these examples attest, the practice of commenting on poetry in the Greek tradition was well established by the time Aristotle made his contribution to that effort.

Even with such a wealth of outlets for opinions about poetry to be expressed, there survives no definition of an ancient genre that approaches Aristotle's definition of tragedy in terms of concision, comprehensiveness, or rigor, whether because earlier critics never offered definitions like Aristotle's, or because whatever definitions did exist were not preserved. Nonetheless, many genres assumed *de facto* definitions on account of the comments made about them in various sources. Dithyramb was one such genre, and it attracted a great deal of attention on the dual fronts of both poetry and prose. Much explicit commentary about dithyramb is contained in dithyrambs themselves, including the earliest evidence for the genre, Archilochus' famous dithyrambic fragment: "Thus I know how to lead off the wonderful song of lord Dionysus, the dithyramb, while my mind has been thunder-struck by wine" (ὥς Διωνύσου ἄνακτος καλὸν ἐξάρξαι μέλος οἶδα διθύραμβον οἴνωι συγκεραυνωθείς φρένας, fr. 120 W²). The eleven words articulate a particular vision for dithyramb as an alcohol-infused song for Dionysus that is led by

⁹ S. West in Heubeck, et al (1988), 119; Ford (2002), 5-8 introduces his concept of the 'critical scene,' "social occasions in which one person offered a musical performance and another the judgment upon it" (3), with this passage.

someone who possesses special knowledge about the correct way to celebrate the god.¹⁰

Comments on dithyramb can be found in genres beside dithyramb itself. In a *thrēnos* of Pindar's that mentions a number of different types of songs (*aoidai*), one brand is associated with "Dionysus' crowns made from flourishing ivy" (θῆ ἄλλοντος ἐκ κισσοῦ στεφάνων {ἐκ} Διο[νύσου]) and is described as "being struck by Bromius" (βρομι<ο>παιόμεναι), another name for Dionysus that emphasizes the gods thunderous nature.¹¹ Although dithyramb is not specified, it must be intended. The *thrēnos* echoes at least two dithyrambic characteristics found in the Archilochus fragment, the close association between dithyramb and Dionysus, and the idea of being "struck" by some external force, in this case the god himself. In the medium of prose writing, both Lasus of Hermione and Hellanicus may have discussed dithyramb, the former in his treatise "On Music" and the latter in his "Victors at the Karnea."¹² Commentary on dithyramb does not seem to have abated with time and probably only intensified. Two fourth-century poets, Lycimnius and Amphis, each working in a different genre, dithyramb and comedy respectively, wrote poems with the title "Dithyrambs."¹³ Almost nothing of either work remains, but both must have contained ample amounts of commentary on dithyramb.

Tragedy represents something of an exception in the history of ancient Greek poetic commentary, in that for a relatively long period in its history it seems to have avoided being subjected to critical assessments, whether overt or implied, in the same

¹⁰ For the fragment as a précis of dithyrambic poetry, see Kowalzig and Wilson (2013b), 4.

¹¹ On the reading βρομι<ο>παιόμεναι, see the text in Cannatà Fera (1990).

¹² Lasus: Suda s.v. (λ 139 Adler). Hellanicus: *FGrH* 4 F 86.

¹³ Licymnius: *PMG* 768; Amphis: fr.14-15 K-A.

way that other genres, including dithyramb, were. Over the course of most of the fifth century, little commentary on tragedy can be found in either prose works or poetry.¹⁴ Sophocles is said to have written a treatise “On the Chorus,” but other than its reputed name, nothing else is known about it, including its contents or date.¹⁵ Tragic poetry is frustratingly devoid of the sorts of self-conscious and self-referential comments that are found in other genres, such dithyramb and, in particular, comedy.¹⁶ The wall surrounding commentary about tragedy may be due to an accident of survival. Early references to the genre were made but have been lost. Nonetheless, the state of the evidence as it is, if the tradition about Thespis as the first tragedian is believed, then tragedy assumed a recognizable form sometimes in the 530s but no source acknowledges its existence for the better part of a century.¹⁷

The silence about tragedy ends suddenly in the final third of the fifth century. Comedians train their ridiculing faculties on the genre, and tragedy remains a recurrent source of material for them.¹⁸ Prose writers too show interest in tragedy and related topics. Gorgias comments on the deception inherent in tragedy (82 B 23 DK), Thucydides refers to the antiquity of the Anthesteria compared to other Dionysia in Athens (2.15.4), and Herodotus dips into the history of the genre to comment on the

¹⁴ Hall (2007), 241-2, on commentary on tragedy in prose; contra, Most (2000), 18-19. Neither discusses the poetic evidence in detail.

¹⁵ Suda, s.v. (σ 815 Adler).

¹⁶ Taplin (1986), with particular attention to difference between tragedy and comedy. But see now Torrance (2013), which explores ‘meta-poetry’ in Euripides.

¹⁷ On the date of Thespis’ activity see the Marmor Parium (*FGrH* 239a F 43) and Suda s.v. (θ 282 Adler).

¹⁸ On Cratinus and tragedy, see recently Bakola (2010), esp. ch. 3.

Athenians' response to Phrynichus' *Sack of Miletus* (6.21.2).¹⁹ If the record is wholly silent about tragedy for the genre's first century or so, over the course of its second, there is near constant interest on the part of critics and commentators, such that by the time when Aristotle composed his *Poetics* in the second half of the fourth century, he was able to articulate such a full definition of tragedy.

In what follows, we will examine the earliest definitions of tragedy as they are articulated in the commentarial tradition about the genre. By "commentarial tradition," I mean not the types of formal discussions one finds in a source like the *Poetics*, but rather explicit references to tragedy that occur in passing and do not belong to a large, purposeful, systematizing project. The biggest contributor to the early discourse on tragedy, Aristophanes, is saved for the next chapter. Immediately we will analyze instead the sole, explicit reference to tragedy in the *Histories* of Herodotus while paying particular attention to both the implicit definition of tragedy that is articulated by the reference and also how that definition stands in an antagonistic relationship with the definition of dithyramb. For when a definition of tragedy first emerges in the last third of the fifth century, it enters a landscape crowded with the definitions of many other genres, and dithyramb is the genre whose definition occupies the space that might be claimed most naturally for tragedy's definition. Given the many similarities between tragedy and dithyramb, it was perhaps inevitable that there would be overlap in the two genres' definitions, and the contact and even conflict between them is evident as soon as tragedy's definition begins to be articulated in sources like Herodotus.

¹⁹ On possible choral performances at the Anthesteria, see Wilson (2000), 32.

Herodotus the Translator: 5.67 Reconsidered in Its Fifth-Century Context

Herodotus' single reference to tragedy in his *Histories*, by which I mean the one time he uses a word related linguistically to *tragōidia*, is ostensibly not even concerned with fifth-century Athenian tragedy itself.²⁰ In Book 5 he records a number of interventions that Cleisthenes, tyrant of Sicyon in the early sixth century, made in his city's religious and cultural practices (67). The changes stemmed from his animosity toward the city of Argos, against which we was at war at the time. Particularly irksome to Cleisthenes were the many cultic events conducted in honor of Adrastus, for although Adrastus was worshipped in Sicyon as a hero of the city, he was a native of Argos. On account of Adrastus' Argive heritage, Cleisthenes desired to eradicate all positive reference to him in Sicyon. Herodotus reports that the Delphic oracle prohibited Cleisthenes from banishing outright Adrastus from Sicyon, the option which the tyrant preferred, and that Cleisthenes was forced to devise a solution that satisfied the Pythia's injunction while still accomplishing his goal of diminishing Adrastus', and by extension Argos', standing. He introduced to Sicyon worship of the Theban hero Melanippus, who had killed Adrastus' brother and son-in-law during Argos' mythological first expedition against Thebes. While permitting Adrastus to remain in Sicyon, Cleisthenes attempted to make the hero's residency as unpalatable as possible by importing a hated enemy.

As part of his reorganization of Sicyon's cultic landscape, Cleisthenes built in a prominent area of the city a new precinct where the worship of Melanippus would be based. After the construction was complete, Cleisthenes reassigned to Melanippus a

²⁰ I do not examine in detail Herodotus' reference to Phrynichus' *Sack of Miletus*, which he calls a "drama," not a tragedy; cf. 6.21.2.

number of events that had been reserved for Adrastus. According to Herodotus (5.67.4-5):

Ἐπεῖτε δὲ οἱ τὸ τέμενος ἀπέδεξε, θυσίας τε καὶ ὀρτὰς Ἀδρήστου ἀπελόμενος ἔδωκε τῷ Μελανίπῳ. Οἱ δὲ Σικυῶνιοι ἐώθεσαν μεγαλωστὶ κάρτα τιμᾶν τὸν Ἀδρήστον· ἡ γὰρ χώρα ἦν αὕτη Πολύβου, ὁ δὲ Ἀδρήστος ἦν Πολύβου θυγατριδέος, ἅπαις δὲ Πόλυβος τελευτῶν διδοῖ Ἀδρήστῳ τὴν ἀρχήν. Τὰ τε δὴ ἄλλα οἱ Σικυῶνιοι ἐτίμων τὸν Ἀδρήστον καὶ δὴ πρὸς τὰ πάθεα αὐτοῦ τραγικοῖσι χοροῖσι ἐγέραιρον, τὸν μὲν Διόνυσον οὐ τιμῶντες, τὸν δὲ Ἀδρήστον. Κλεισθένης δὲ χοροὺς μὲν τῷ Διονύσῳ ἀπέδωκε τὴν δὲ ἄλλην θυσίην Μελανίπῳ.

And when Cleisthenes had dedicated the precinct for Melanippus, he took away the sacrifices and festivals of Adrastus and gave these to Melanippus. The Sicyonians were accustomed to honor Adrastus greatly, for this land once belonged to Polybus, and as he was dying, he gave the rule to Adrastus, son of his daughter, because he was without heir. Among other things, the Sicyonians used to honor Adrastus by celebrating his sufferings in tragic choruses, not honoring Dionysus, but honoring Adrastus. Cleisthenes transferred the choruses to Dionysus, and the remainder of the rite to Melanippus.

The transference of Adrastus' worship to Melanippus was total in its scope except for one element, which Herodotus highlights: Cleisthenes gave the "tragic choruses" that the Sicyonians usually performed in honor of Adrastus to Dionysus instead of Melanippus. Herodotus' phrase, "tragic choruses," is among the earliest references to tragedy in antiquity, yet it also seems to evade addressing the genre directly. As will become clear, the sixth-century Sicyonian choral performances mentioned by Herodotus likely had no formal relationship with tragedy as Herodotus and his contemporaries in the fifth century knew the performance-genre. They are something else entirely, and for that reason Herodotus does not invoke "tragedy" per se, but instead uses the adjective "tragic," suggesting that the choral performances resemble tragedy in some way but are not identical to the genre.

In effect, Herodotus engages in an act of cultural translation. In particular, he translates sixth-century Sicyonian musical practice into the language of fifth-century

tragedy, using the latter as an aid for understanding the former. For his act of translation to be intelligible and effective, his contemporary audience must be well acquainted with fifth-century tragedy, which serves as the starting point for understanding much earlier and likely unfamiliar Sicyonian choruses. A comparison between two unknown things would be futile. In the past, Herodotus' active role in likening sixth-century Sicyonian choruses and fifth-century tragic choruses has been downplayed. For instance, in analyzing Herodotus' motivation for using the phrase "tragic choruses," A.W. Pickard-Cambridge claims:²¹

What Herodotus' expression probably means is that he found evidence of choruses at Sicyon, relating to the sufferings of Adrastus, 150 years or so before his own time, and observing that they were more or less like the choral odes of tragedy in his own day, naturally called them 'tragic choruses'.

Yet to insist that Herodotus' phrasing arose "naturally" from the evidence he observed threatens to rob him of his narratorial autonomy, making it seem as if he had no choice but to repair to the adjective "tragic" when discussing sixth-century choral performances from Sicyon. Instead of natural, Herodotus' decision to label the choruses "tragic" should be treated as carefully considered. Other terms were available to him, but Herodotus settled on "tragic" because it helped illuminate some aspect of those choruses for his fifth-century audience.

Like Herodotus' reasoning for choosing the adjective "tragic," the particular meaning of "tragic" in its fifth-century context has tended to be treated in a cursory manner and taken as self-evident. Pickard-Cambridge, in a different part of the same analysis that was quoted from above, asserts:²²

²¹ *DTC*, 103.

²² *DTC*, 102.

...it seems also very improbable that Herodotus, the friend of Sophocles, living in the great period of Greek tragedy, should have used the word in any sense but 'tragic', or should have meant by 'tragic choruses' anything but 'choruses like those of tragedy'.

In a similar vein, B. Kowalzig has, in a recent article that uses the passage from Herodotus as a springboard for exploring the social function of Dionysiac choral performance in ancient Greece, referred in passing to "'tragic choroi' in the fifth-century Athenian sense," and long before her A. Lesky claimed that "it is quite natural to think of a concept taken from that genre [tragedy] in his use of the word."²³ None of those scholars explains any further, however, what exact aspect of fifth-century tragedy Herodotus means to evoke when he calls the choruses tragic. Would a performance garner the description "tragic" because it happened at a festival of Dionysus, or because it blended sung sections in lyric meters with spoken parts in trimeters and tetrameters, or because its narratives focused on the stories of mythological heroes, or because its performers impersonated and embodied those heroes and other characters? What did the phrase "tragic choruses" mean in the fifth century? This, I believe, is a question to which we can begin to formulate an answer by attending to some of the reasons why Herodotus deems "tragic," and not a different adjective, the most fitting description of the Sicyonian choruses.

Musical Culture and Choral Performance in Sixth Century Sicyon

Before delving into the resonance of "tragic" in a fifth-century, Herodotean context, it is important to consider what the reference to "tragic choruses" reveals about the sixth-century Sicyonian choral performances that were performed at one time for

²³ Kowalzig (2007), 221; Lesky (1983), 21.

Adrastus but later transferred to Dionysus. Among scholars, this has been one of the most frequent uses to which the mention of “tragic choruses” has been put, namely, as a point of departure for discovering what exactly were these sixth-century Sicyonian choral performances that Herodotus judged like, but not quite the same as tragedy. Although many appealing hypotheses about the choruses in their sixth-century, Sicyonian context have been formulated, I suggest that the efforts to reconstruct the choruses are misplaced, for ultimate responsibility for the phrase “tragic choruses” rests with Herodotus, and accordingly the phrase must be investigated first and primarily in that context.

Much evidence indicates that Sicyon was a center for various types of musical activity around the time when the choral performances that Herodotus mentions were occurring, and many scholars have attempted to locate the “tragic choruses” in Sicyon’s cultural landscape. The city seems to have bred superb, successful musicians, who excelled particularly at the two primary instruments of ancient Greece, the aulos and kithara. It is reported that in the middle of the sixth century a Sicyonian aptly named Pythocritus won six consecutive competitions in playing the aulos at the Pythian games.²⁴ He was the only musician to accomplish the feat, surpassing Sacadas’ impressive three successive victories earlier in the same century. Pythocritus also competed in musical contests at Olympia, and a statue of him was still visible in the second century CE for Pausanias to report on it. In the realm of the kithara, Lysander is credited with introducing a number of innovations to the style of playing that instrument toward the latter part of the sixth century.²⁵ A virtuoso, he is supposed to have been the first kitharist

²⁴ Paus. 6.14.9-10.

²⁵ Philochorus *FGrH* 328 F 23 = Ath. 14.637f-38a. See also Barker (1982) for Lysander’s activities.

to play his instrument while not singing and to have compensated for the loss of human voice with a number of additional changes. He raised by an octave the tone emitted by a kithara, he achieved a fuller sound than previous kitharists had, and he devised the *enaulos kitharisis*, an enigmatic phrase that suggests that Lysander either made his kithara sound like an aulos, or played the kithara in a style normally associated with the aulos. Lysander was associated with another skilled musician named Epigonos, who, though a native Ambraciote, became a Sicyonian resident.²⁶ While the reason for Epigonos' migration is not mentioned, perhaps people like him gravitated to Sicyon because of the city's reputation as a training ground for excellent musicians. A fragment of the sixth-century poet Asius indicates that Sicyon had acquired such a reputation by the sixth century at the latest. He reports that Epopeus, a mythical ruler of Sicyon, was the father, with Antiope, of Amphion, who was noted for his prowess on the kithara.²⁷

Sicyon also had a thriving industry of rhapsodic performances, and these are connected quite closely with the "tragic choruses" in Herodotus' account. We have already noted the measures Cleisthenes took to reapportion honors for the Argive hero Adrastus to Melanippos and Dionysus. According to Herodotus, Cleisthenes, prompted by the same anti-Argive policy, also prohibited rhapsodes from reciting portions of the Homeric poems because those works tended to heap praise on Argos.²⁸ His hostility toward Argos drove Cleisthenes to eradicate all vestiges of pro-Argive sentiment from Sicyon's cultural events. The changes to both the epic recitations and the choral

²⁶ Athen. 4.138d.

²⁷ Asius fr. 1 Davies, *EGF*. For more evidence about Amphion's importance as a figure in musical history and possibly his association with Sicyon, see Plut. [*De mus.*] 1132a.

²⁸ Hdt. 5.67.1.

performances not only stemmed from the same enmity for Argos, they may have required similar efforts on Cleisthenes' part. Although Herodotus provides only the barest of details about Cleisthenes' intervention in the rhapsodic performances, other sources suggest that Cleisthenes did not simply abolish them but also created a replacement for them, in effect transferring events from one festival to another, as Herodotus reports Cleisthenes did with the tragic choruses.²⁹ The original rhapsodic performances may have been dedicated to Apollo, and when Cleisthenes put a stop to them, he organized a new Pythian festival for the god which featured other types of musical performances. Scholia to Pindar's *Nemean* 9, an ode in celebration of a victor at the Pythian Games held at Sicyon, report that Cleisthenes founded the competitions, and scholars have dated the activity to the same time as when he ended the rhapsodic performances and transferred the tragic choruses.³⁰ Creating a Pythian festival at that time also provided a way for Cleisthenes to exact some measure of revenge on Delphi, for, as we have already seen, the priestess of Apollo there had forbade him from simply expelling Adrastus when he asked about that plan of action. The Pythian festival at Sicyon rivaled Delphi's version. As a result of his falling out with Argos, Cleisthenes not only changed Sicyon's cultural practices, but used those alterations as a means to further enhance his city's prominence as a hub of Pan-Hellenic activity, musical and otherwise.

The tragic choruses were likely not the only choral performances that occurred in Sicyon at that time, although the evidence for the others is preserved in somewhat late

²⁹ Cingano (1985) investigates what parts of the Homeric epics, or other epic poems, these rhapsodes may have performed. Marincola (2006), 26n.5, describes them as "the Homeric Hymns."

³⁰ Schol. *Nemean* 9 inscr. and 20 (Drachmann 3). Cf. Hornblower (2013), 200; Griffin (1982), 53-4, 158. McGregor (1941), 282-4, offers a slightly different account.

sources. The Hellenistic writer Semos of Duris reports on performances in Sicyon by *phallophoroi* (phallus-bearers).³¹ These performers, wearing thick cloaks, visors made out of native plants named *herpyllon* and *paideros*, and on top of that a thick garland of ivy and violet, would enter the theater from all directions, the side-entrances as well as the middle doors, while singing a short hymn to Dionysus. Once finished with their song, from their position in the middle of the theater they would mock people in the audience as one member of their group carried about a large phallus.³² Pausanias reports about a Sicyonian group performance of a different nature. Once a year in the city, two statues, cult images of Dionysus in the guise of Baccheios and Lysios, were brought out from a storage place called the *cosmētērion*, perhaps a “dressing-room,” and carried at night to the temple of Dionysus in a torch-lit procession featuring “native hymns” (ὕμνων ἐπιχωρίων).³³ Although Pausanias attests to the event in the second century CE, he suggests that it is of ancient pedigree when he credits Androdamas and Phanes, two mythical figures, with introducing the statues to Sicyon. Both types of choral performances, the *phallophoroi* and the processions accompanied by “native hymns,” celebrated Dionysus, the very god who received the tragic choruses after Cleisthenes’ changes to them.

Musical culture in Sicyon seems to have been characterized by an accommodating attitude to innovation, an outward-facing, international perspective, and a persistent strand of different types of Dionysiac choral performances. On the theories of numerous

³¹ *FGrH* 396 F 24 = Athen. 622a-d; cf. Suda, s.v. (φ 58 Adler).

³² For recent discussions of the performances, see Csapo (2013a), and especially Bierl (2009), 280-310.

³³ Pau. 2.7.5-6.

scholars, the sixth-century tragic choruses to which Herodotus refers bear those three hallmarks of Sicyonian musical culture. Because Herodotus is frustratingly laconic on most matters of the performances other than that they were “tragic” and transferred from Adrastus to Dionysus, other sources have been pressed into service to supplement his silences. One such source is Aristotle’s *Poetics*, which offers a compelling lead with its claim that tragedy arose from dithyramb.³⁴ If Aristotle’s account is credible, Herodotus’ story about choral performances that were similar to tragedy but nonetheless not exactly equivalent to the genre may present a history of tragedy that is similar to the one recorded in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. Herodotus calls what were actually dithyrambic choruses tragic as a way to signal the important role of dithyramb in the development of tragedy. One Herodotean commentator has interpreted the phrase in precisely this way, saying that the sixth-century choruses were “presumably dithyrambic.”³⁵

The possibility the dithyrambic performance lurks beneath the reference to “tragic choruses” has led some scholars to detect the influence of Arion, a poet whose career is associated with the tyranny of Periander in Corinth and was thus roughly contemporary with the performance of the tragic choruses in Sicyon. Arion’s poetic activities may have predated slightly Cleisthenes’ reforms.³⁶ In antiquity Arion was recognized as one of the greatest musicians of his age, and Herodotus presents him as a seminal figure in the history of the dithyramb, even suggesting that he should be considered the founder of the genre.³⁷ According to other sources, Arion was a versatile poet, and even composed

³⁴ Arist. *Poetics* 1449a9-11.

³⁵ Macan (1895), 209.

³⁶ On the dates of Arion’s career, see *DTC*, 10.

³⁷ Hdt. 1.23-24.

poetry that could be described as tragic. The *Suda*'s entry on him suggests that Arion was noted in antiquity for the breadth of his accomplishments (*Suda* α 3886 Adler):

λέγεται καὶ τραγικοῦ τρόπου εὐρετῆς γενέσθαι καὶ πρῶτος χορὸν στῆσαι καὶ διθύραμβον ᾄσαι καὶ ὀνομάσαι τὸ ἀδόμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ χοροῦ καὶ Σατύρους εἰσενεγκεῖν ἔμμετρα λέγοντας

He [Arion] is said to have been the founder of the tragic manner and the first to have set up choruses, to have sung the dithyramb, to have named his compositions sung by the chorus, and to have introduced satyrs speaking verses.

Other ancient sources lend credence to at least some of the claims made in the *Suda*, in particular the notice regarding Arion and tragedy. A fragment from Solon's *Elegies*, as recorded by John the Deacon in his Byzantine-era commentary on Hermogenes, mentions that Arion "first introduced the drama of tragedy" (τῆς δὲ τραγωδίας πρῶτον δρᾶμα Ἀρίων ὁ Μηθυμναῖος εἰσήγαγεν, fr. 30a W²).

In the ancient statements about Arion, dithyramb, tragedy, and his other poetic activities, scholars have seen varying degrees of relevance for the Sicyonian tragic choruses. For instance, T.B.L. Webster adduces in addition to these notices the evidence of Corinthian vase-paintings, which show dancers wearing padded suits:³⁸

I think that padded dancers probably were Arion's satyrs and sang Arion's dithyrambs. It is certainly possible that they also sang the sufferings of Adrastus in Sicyon. They seem therefore to be the beginnings of tragedy, comedy and dithyramb.

In a different, later work the same scholar says:³⁹

If we suppose that the choruses in Sicyon represented fat men or satyrs like the neighboring Corinthian choruses of Arion's 'tragedy' according to our supposition, is it really inconceivable that men dressed as fat men or satyrs should perform choruses 'relevant to the sufferings of Adrastus'?

³⁸ Webster (1954), 587n.1.

³⁹ *DTC*, 103

There are other ways to understand the nature of the tragic choruses in their sixth-century Sicyonian context. The *Suda* again provides some guidance by attesting to alternative versions of the history of tragedy. While the Athenian Thespis is most often credited as the first tragedian, according to the *Suda*'s entry on the poet, some claim that a Sicyonian named Epigenes in fact scooped Thespis, who imported an originally Sicyonian form of performance to Athens sometime after Epigenes had established himself as the first poet who wrote tragedies.⁴⁰ Other sources provide additional support for Sicyon's claim as the birthplace of tragedy. Themistius states in one of his fourth-century CE orations that "the Sicyonians were the inventors of tragedy, but the Attic poets its perfecters" (καὶ τραγωδίας εὑρεταὶ μὲν Σικυώνιοι, τελεσιουργοὶ δὲ Ἀττικοὶ ποιηταί, *Oration* 27.337B). Aristotle reports in his *Poetics* how Dorians from the Peloponnese, a group that included the residents of Sicyon, contested Athens' claim on the paternity of tragedy.⁴¹ Armed with the tradition about early tragedy in Sicyon, R.C. Flickinger stresses how *tragōidia*, the Greek word for tragedy, is related to *tragos*, the word for goat, and concludes:⁴²

I believe that Herodotus, Eusebius (Jerome), and Suidas [sic] all refer to the same event: that Clisthenes [sic] of Sicyon established the goat prize about 590 B.C. when he surrendered to Dionysus the dances which had previously been performed in honor of Adrastus, that Epigenes was the poet whom Clisthenes employed to initiate this innovation, and that non-satyrical-choreutae and the terms *tragikos*, *tragodos*, etc., arose in this manner, time, and place.

⁴⁰ *Suda*, s.v. Thespis (θ 282 Adler). Cf. also *Suda*, s.v. Nothing to do with Dionysus (ο 806 Adler).

⁴¹ Arist. *Poet.* 1448a28ff. On Sicyon as a Dorian city, see Griffin (1982), 35ff.

⁴² Flickinger (1922), 14.

According to Flickinger's theory, from Arion's satyrs and dithyrambs Epigenes progressed one step closer to tragedy as it existed in the fifth century with his "non-satyrlic-choreutae" and a performance that was called "tragic" by Herodotus.

For those scholars whose main interest in the passage is its worth as evidence about choral performances in sixth-century Sicyon, the sources on which Herodotus may have drawn in his discussion of Sicyon are of utmost importance, as his fidelity to or deviance from them determine to what extent Herodotus can be trusted to provide accurate testimony about sixth-century Sicyonian activities. Both Webster and Flickinger assume that the description of the choruses as "tragic" conveys something essential about their nature and form, although they disagree about what exactly the term signals. Given what is known about Herodotus' research practices, both generally and in this part of his *Histories*, it is possible that in mentioning "tragic choruses" he preserves the exact wording that was originally applied to the performances in sixth century Sicyon. F. Jacoby, the father of Herodotean source criticism, claims that Herodotus used a Sicyonian source in his section on Cleisthenes' tyranny in Sicyon, and this fact would make Herodotus a possibly accurate witness to sixth-century Sicyonian terminology, bolstering the efforts of scholars like Flickinger and Webster.⁴³

But Jacoby also observes that Herodotus does not name his Sicyonian source, making it difficult to assert that the phrase "tragic choruses" goes back to early sixth-century Sicyon. And for reasons that will become clear, it is in fact extremely unlikely that Herodotus preserves the exact phrase that Sicyonians would have used to describe these performances in the early sixth century. Most pertinent, lexicographic

⁴³ Jacoby (1913), col. 439. For recent overviews of Herodotus' use of sources, see Hornblower (2002) and Luraghi (2006).

considerations suggest that only one half of the phrase “tragic choruses” would have been available at that time. As early as the Homeric epics, the term *choros* is applied to musical performances featuring song and dance, both of which were presumably components of the Sicyonian choruses.⁴⁴ The adjective *tragikos*, on the other hand, is not attested before this passage of Herodotus. Indeed, Herodotus’ description of the choruses as “tragic” is among the earliest surviving attestations, if not the single earliest instance of any word related to *tragōidia*.⁴⁵ Whereas the Sicyonians may have referred to the performances for Adrastus or Dionysus as “choruses” in the sixth century, they almost certainly did not describe them as “tragic.” This description of them occurred at some later time.

Who was responsible for first describing the sixth-century Sicyonian choruses as tragic is another question that should be explored, for its answer affirms that the reference should be understood primarily in a fifth-century Herodotean context, and not as evidence for earlier practices. Given the alternative, pro-Sicyonian tradition about the origins of tragedy, it is possible that at some point between the time when the choruses were transferred to Dionysus in the early sixth century and when Herodotus composed his *Histories* in the fifth century, another source, likely inclined to side with Sicyon in the debate over the history of tragedy, chose to identify the performances as “tragic.” In that case, Herodotus could be following accurately a Sicyonian source which itself had

⁴⁴ *Od.* 8.248ff.: Alcinous claims that the Phaeacians excel in their “choruses,” and then calls on Demdocus to sing while the best dancers dance. See also Cingano (1993) and Richardson (2011).

⁴⁵ *Tragōidia* itself appears at line 400 in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians*, “the earliest attestation of the word,” according to Olson (2002), 178, who presumably refers only to use of the noun *tragōidia*, and not of any other word related to it. The noun *tragōidia* is found also in a fragment of Cratinus’ *Hōrai* (fr. 276 K-A), which probably premiered around the time of *Acharnians*, perhaps even earlier in the 420s than Aristophanes’ play. On the dating of *Hōrai*, see Storey (2011), 394. Roughly contemporaneous with these is a reference to *tragōidos* in Crates’ *Paidiai* (fr. 28 K-A).

anachronistically applied the term “tragic” to the choruses. Herodotus’ mention of “tragic choruses” in Sicyon would then provide the earliest evidence for the dispute between Athens and Sicyon over which city was tragedy’s true birthplace.⁴⁶ Yet no such source readily presents itself, and what is perhaps the most compelling one, the so-called *Sikyonsche Anagraphe*, a Sicyonian inscription that recorded various events in the musical histories of both Sicyon and other cities, can be dated no earlier than the last part of the fifth century, that is, exactly the same time period during which Herodotus worked, even possibly later than the historian.⁴⁷

Whatever Herodotus’ knowledge of Sicyon’s claims concerning tragedy, and despite the uncertainty about when, where, and by whom the adjective “tragic” was applied to the choruses, Herodotus bears ultimate responsibility for describing them in the way that is found in his *Histories*. Even if he borrowed the term from another source, whether sixth-century Sicyonian, later-era Sicyonian, or other, he still chose to maintain it in his narrative, and likely was aware of the anachronism that would result from doing so. By describing sixth-century Sicyonian choruses as “tragic,” Herodotus’ furnishes his narrative with a fifth-century veneer that must be the starting point for interpreting the phrase “tragic choruses.”

Herodotus on Poetry and Choral Performance

The meaning of the phrase “tragic choruses” in its fifth-century, Herodotean sense is best assessed in the context of Herodotus’ other references to poetry and performance,

⁴⁶ Hornblower (2013), 204.

⁴⁷ For the surviving fragments from the *Sikyonsche Angagraphe*, see *FGrH* 550 and *BNJ* 550 for updated discussion. See also Griffin (1982), 159-60, for its date.

particularly choral poetry and performance. Much important work has illuminated the various ways in which Herodotus is indebted to poetry, whether in terms of poetic diction, theme or structure.⁴⁸ Yet, instead of searching out the implicit mark that poetry has left on Herodotus' *Histories* with regard to formal elements, it is possible to move outward from the *Histories* to the world of contemporary poetic activity by means of the many explicit references to poetry contained in the work.⁴⁹ By attending closely to the categories and frameworks that structure Herodotus' discussions of poetry through the *Histories*, it will be possible to appreciate the places where the reference to "tragic choruses" fits into a larger pattern of poetic engagement on Herodotus' part, where that reference fails to do so, and thus what is exceptional about the reference and Herodotus' reporting on it.

Simply to list the types of poetry that Herodotus mentions outright is to glimpse the richness and diversity of contemporary poetic culture in the ancient Mediterranean. Epic, especially Homeric epic, looms large in Herodotus' poetic landscape. Herodotus refers to "Homer" ten times in the *Histories*, by far the most of any poet, mentions both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* by name, indicates that a passage of the *Iliad* comes from "The Aristeia of Diomedes," and alludes to the tradition of rhapsodic performance spawned by the Homeric epics.⁵⁰ But alongside Homeric epic are other brands of epic, including the works of Hesiod, the *Cypria* and *Epigonoï* from the epic cycle, and the *Arimaspea* of Aristeas, hymns to gods, including the Delian hymns attributed to Olen, drama,

⁴⁸ Boedeker (2002); Saïd (2002); Griffin (2006); Marincola (2006); Pelling (2006).

⁴⁹ See especially Ford (2002), 146-52, and (2007). Hadjimichael (2011), ch. 3 adopts both approaches.

⁵⁰ Homer: 2.23.1, 2.53.2-3 (twice), 2.116.1, 2.117.1 (twice), 4.29.1, 4.32.1 (twice), 7.161; *Iliad*: 2.116.2, 2.117.1; *Odyssey*: 2.116.4 (suspected as an interpolation, on which see How and Wells (1928), 224), 4.29.1; Aristeia of Diomedes, 2.116.1; rhapsodic performance of "Homeric epic": 5.67.1.

dithyramb, epigram, threnos, and the broad category of melic poetry, and other types of songs, given general names.⁵¹ Herodotus also mentions many poets by name: Aeschylus, Alcaeus, Anacreon, Archilochus, Arion, Phrynichus, Pindar, Sappho, Simonides and Solon, in addition to the poets already cited.⁵² Herodotus provides a compendium of fifth-century poetic activity, and were our knowledge of Greek poetry to begin with him, we would still be able to go a long way to reconstructing a rich picture of poetic practice.

Herodotus is no mere compiler of poetic miscellanea. Rather, he regularly relies on a few categories to help shape his discussions and indicate that he is sensitive to important issues regarding poetry and its interpretation. He pays particular attention to poetry's content, both its formal and technical elements, as well as the contexts in which poetry is presented and consumed. Perhaps the most famous instance where he examines closely a poem's content is his investigation into the accuracy of Homer's account about Helen's whereabouts during the Trojan War (2.113-20). In opposition to Homer, Herodotus claims that Helen never arrived in Troy, but was kept in Egypt by its king Proteus when Paris' ship was forced to stop there because of unfavorable sailing conditions. He reports that he learned about the alternate version from priests in Egypt and implies that his account is superior to Homer's because it is based on direct research. He even cites passages from the Homeric epics where Homer intimates that he knows the true version as preserved by the Egyptian priests and recorded by Herodotus, but ignores

⁵¹ Hesiod: 2.53.2-3, 4.32.1; *Cypria*: 2.117.1; *Epigono*i 4.32.1; Aristeeas: 4.13-15; hymns of Olen: 4.35.3; drama: 6.21.2; dithyramb: 1.23.1; epigram: 4.88.1, 5.59.1, 7.228.1-4; threnos: 1.198.1, 2.79.3, 2.85.1; melic poetry: 2.135.6, 5.95.2; song (*aeisma*): 2.79.3.

⁵² Some overlap with the list in the previous note. Aeschylus: 2.156.6; Alcaeus: 5.95.1-2; Anacreon: 3.121.1; Archilochus: 1.12.2; Arion: 1.23.1; Phrynichus: 6.21.2; Pindar: 3.38.4; Sappho: 2.135.6; Simonides 7.228.4; Solon: 5.113.2 (specifically as poet; see also 1.29-34 for his role as lawgiver and wise-adviser).

it due to the exigencies of his poetry. The plot of the *Iliad* would be preposterous if Helen never arrived at Troy. Finally, Herodotus uses his interpretation of Homer to argue that the *Cypria*, one of the cyclic epic poems, cannot be the work of the same poet because the version of events found in that poem does not match that found in the *Iliad*.

Even though Herodotus excuses Homer's errors, in exposing them he demonstrates his willingness and ability to scrutinize a poem's content closely and purposefully. Whether or not the stories contained in poems are to be believed, they are at least to be reckoned with. Poetry is a vital vessel of information, both storing information and conveying it elsewhere. For that reason, Herodotus can give a full report on the activities of a courtesan named Rhodopis: how she was manumitted in Egypt by a man named Charaxus, the brother of Sappho, how she acquired great wealth there, how she dedicated a number of iron ox-spits at Delphi, but not the pyramid in Egypt often attributed to her benefaction, and how she became well known throughout Greece (2.135). The evidence that forms the backbone of Rhodopis' story includes the ox-spits in Delphi, Rhodopis' reputation, and Sappho's mockery of her brother for giving Rhodopis her freedom. Sappho's poetry, commonly held knowledge, and the physical remains of a dedication are each considered equally valid as sources of information.

Herodotus also pays close attention to formal elements of poetry, including the metrical structure of verses. He acknowledges that meter is an important component of poetry in some of the terms he uses to designate different poems. Herodotus applies the term *epea*, meaning "orally delivered, metrical verses," most often to epic, but also to a poem of Solon's that is recorded elsewhere as in elegiacs.⁵³ At times, a poem's meter

⁵³ Epic: 2.116.3 and 6; 2.117.1; 4.13.1; 4.32.1; 5.67.1. Solon elegy: 5.113.2 and Plut. *Solon* 26 = Solon fr. 19 W².

serves as its defining characteristic. This is regularly the case for oracles, whose verse form is almost always reported with various terms, *hexametros tonos*,⁵⁴ *epea hexametra*,⁵⁵ *hexametros*,⁵⁶ and *trimetros tonos*.⁵⁷ Once, Herodotus provides the verse form of a poem by Archilochus, and although the passage has been suspected as an interpolation on account of the particular phrase used to designate the meter (*iambos trimetros*), its interest in the technical matter of meter is not inconsistent with Herodotus' other references to poetry in the *Histories*.⁵⁸ Meter is an important component of poetry that Herodotus frequently addresses.

Finally, Herodotus recognizes that poetry is always experienced in a particular setting whose atmosphere helps determine the reaction to a work. The importance of performance context is made evident by the famous case of Phrynichus' *Sack of Miletus*. The Athenians punished Phrynichus for the debut, fining the poet and prohibiting future productions of it, because it reminded them of their "native troubles" (οἰκία κακὰ, 6.21.2). If the play had been put on someplace other than Athens, which had been closely involved in the failed Ionian revolt, it would have elicited a different, possibly more favorable reaction. Herodotus's sensitivity to a poem's context is also evident in his discussion of the Linus song (2.79). He reports that the song of mourning began in Egypt but thereafter spread quickly, with the result that every different group of people sings the

⁵⁴ 1.47.2, 1.62.4, 5.61.1.

⁵⁵ 7.220.3.

⁵⁶ 5.61.1.

⁵⁷ 1.174.5.

⁵⁸ 1.12.2. Rotstein (2010), 188ff., presents good arguments for keeping the transmitted text. She also discusses the references to meter in the previous few notes.

song, but under a different name in each locale. Even though the song's original form can be traced to Egypt, its variants, each with a different name, are all legitimate in their immediate context. Herodotus does not seek to discredit the places that have borrowed the Linus song from Egypt, but to explain the song's history and dissemination to different places.

Herodotus' references to choral performance – five in total outside of the reference to “tragic choruses” – all share some of the same concerns evident in his other references to poetry. Above all, Herodotus pays close attention to the context in which a performance by a chorus occurs, although he also touches on the content of the performance and its formal elements. To summarize Herodotus' five other references to choral performance: In Book 1, during the narrative of Cyrus' siege of Babylon, Herodotus reports that, when Cyrus finally invaded the city, some residents were unaware of the breach because the city was so large (1.191.6). While the Babylonians closest to the walls were overcome by the attacking Persians, those in the center of the city were still celebrating a festival which involved activity that Herodotus describes with the infinitive “to partake in a chorus” (χορεύειν). In Book 2, Herodotus, in the course of documenting the Egyptian worship of Osiris, who was the Egyptian equivalent to the Greek Dionysus, remarks that the only major difference between the Egyptian and Greek practice of worshipping this god is that the Egyptians do not perform choruses (2.48.2). In Book 3, Herodotus mentions the performance of choruses of young men and young women at a festival in Samos, which was instituted when the Samians granted asylum to 300 youths from Corcyra who were being sent by the Corinthian ruler Periander to the Lydian leader Alyattes as a sacrifice (3.48.3). When the youths sought sanctuary in a

temple of Artemis on Samos and were barricaded there without food, the Samians created a new festival, part of which involved choruses of young men and women carrying sesame and honey to the Corcyran youths for them to eat. Herodotus makes a special note that the festival and its choruses were celebrated still in his day in the same manner as they had been when instituted. In Book 5, Herodotus recounts the origins of an Aeginetan cult that featured choruses (5.83.3). Some Aeginetans stole statues of Damia and Auxesis, two female fertility goddesses, from Epidaurus, and installed them on their island. To honor the newly introduced deities, the Aeginetans established sacrifices and female choruses, the participants of which would mock the women of the island while sparing the men. Herodotus further notes that ten male “producers” (*chorēgoi*) were appointed for each deity and that the Epidaurans practiced the same rites. Finally, in Book 6, Herodotus records that the Chians sent a chorus of 100 young men to perform at Delphi, but of this group only two returned, the other 98 boys having died as a result of an unnamed illness (6.27.2).

In reporting on performances by choruses throughout the Mediterranean world, Herodotus pays particular attention to how those events are embedded in and often a substantial part of a broader festival context. In every example mentioned by Herodotus save one, there appears a term somehow connected with the celebration of a festival: “festival” itself (ἑορτή) at 1.191.6, 2.48.1-2 and 3.48.3, and “sacrifices” (θυσίαι) and “rites” (ἱεουργίαι) at 5.83.3. The only instance of choral performance in Herodotus that is not connected explicitly with a festival is the chorus of 100 youths sent from Chios to Delphi, but it is surely implied that they performed at a religious festival, although a

particular one is not specified.⁵⁹ The festivals at which choruses performed could vary in scope and purpose. Most of them had the ostensible aim of honoring a god, but a religious purpose could function as a sheen that masked an ulterior motivation. For example, the female choruses on Aegina were officially dedicated to the goddesses Damia and Auxesis, but in celebrating those divinities, the choruses likely called attention to the island's successful efforts to extricate itself from Epidaurus' control; the deities were welcomed to Aegina in the course of the island's revolt from Epidaurus. A similar dual purpose likely led the Samians to institute their choruses. It is reasonable to conclude that the festival was dedicated to Artemis, because the youths sought asylum in a Samian sanctuary of that god and the choruses are said to have performed there. But at the same time, the festival and its choruses served as a pretext for the Samians to provide sustenance to the starving youths, and, given Herodotus' comment that the festival was conducted in his day in the exact same way as when it began, it is interesting to consider how the Samians preserved that double motivation: honoring Artemis and assisting the youths. While it is impossible to consider that question on the basis of the evidence provided by Herodotus, in his narrative choral performance always belongs to a festival and regularly sits at the intersection of religious, social, and political affairs.

Herodotus pays attention to aspects of choral performance besides its regular festival setting. He both comments on the identity of those who participated in choruses and even gives some sense of the content of their song and dance. The choruses instituted on Samos consisted of a mixture of boy and girls, while the chorus sent from Chios to Delphi was made up entirely of boys. Only women performed in the choruses for Damia and Auxesis on Aegina, and their song evidently involved a great deal of mockery

⁵⁹ On choral performances at religious festivals for Apollo on Delphi, see Rutherford (2001), 27-29.

directed exclusively at other women. In the case of the Aiginetan choruses, Herodotus notes that, for each group that performed in honor of one of the goddesses, ten men were appointed as sponsors (*choregoi*). Herodotus' approach to discussing choral performance is multifaceted, in line with his broader engagement with poetry in the *Histories*. He invariably indicates the broader context in which choral performances take place and frequently alludes to the members of the chorus as well as the nature of their song.

Tragic Choruses or Dithyrambic Choruses?

To a large extent, Herodotus' description of the Sicyonian tragic choruses is unexceptional, containing most of the elements that are found in his other references to choral poetry in the *Histories*. Most importantly, the choruses occur during a festival, although one that is dedicated to a mythical hero, Adrastus, rather than a deity.⁶⁰ Moreover, the choruses are deeply entwined in the political and social life of the city.⁶¹ Herodotus hints that in their original form, the choruses celebrated Adrastus particularly in his role as an important ruler of Sicyon. When discussing the choruses, he explains how the natively Argive Adrastus came to be so closely identified with Sicyon by inheriting rule of the city from his grandfather Polybus. The political dimension of the tragic choruses becomes even more apparent in the actions Cleisthenes takes to reform them. He is unabashedly motivated by political concerns when he attempts to rid Sicyon of Argive influences while at war with Argos, and the transference of the choruses to Dionysus is part of a larger program of reorganizing the city's cultural and religious

⁶⁰ Herodotus specifies that the celebration of Adrastus involved a sacrifice (θυσία) and a festival (ἑορτή), 5.67.4.

⁶¹ Kowalzig (2007) begins and concludes her analysis of the social and political dimension of tragic choruses by appealing to this passage of Herodotus.

events so that they align with its foreign policy. And in Cleisthenes' re-assignment of the choruses, we see again an association of choral performance with religious worship of the gods. While Cleisthenes gives almost all of the components of Adrastus' festival to Melanippus, another mythological, non-divine hero, he transfers the choruses to Dionysus. As for the other components that Herodotus at times includes in his discussions of choral performance, in the case of the Sicyonian tragic choruses, he does give some hint of their content, stating that they related the "sufferings" (*ta pathea*) of Adrastus, but he fails to indicate anything about the performers who participated in the choruses.

The adjective "tragic" is presented as a blanket description of the choruses, not connected to any particular component of them, making it difficult to determine with what element precisely of the choruses' nature the term "tragic" should be most closely associated. Because Herodotus pays no attention to those who performed in the tragic choruses, it seems unlikely that he uses the adjective as a way to reveal something about the performers' identity. The choruses are not "tragic" on account of their performers, although if the term was to refer to the performers, it might indicate that the choruses consisted of adult men. On the other occasions when Herodotus mentions something about the identity of choral performers, he focuses on their gender or age, and, at least in fifth-century Athens, tragic performers were invariably adult men.

There are surer grounds for detecting a connection between the choruses' description as "tragic" and their performance context and content, and in the case of each category, there is reason to suspect that the adjective "dithyrambic" would have been

equally fitting for the choruses, if not more so. Yet, in Herodotus' account, "tragic" has prevailed over "dithyrambic."

If Herodotus' description of the Sicyonian choruses as "tragic" is in some way related to their performance context, then the adjective likely refers to the fact that the choruses were conducted, after Cleisthenes' reforms, in honor of Dionysus. Tragic choruses regularly occurred at festivals dedicated to that god, the most well known instance of that arrangement being Athens' annual Great Dionysia. By the end of the fifth century, tragic choral performances had spread to other Dionysia in the Attic demes, only providing a stronger basis for the possible perception on Herodotus' part that there existed a natural and close association between Dionysus and tragic choral performance.⁶² In the light of the passage where Herodotus comments that the only difference between the Egyptian festival for Osiris and the Greek festival for Dionysus was the former's absence of choruses, it seems that Herodotus already considered choral performance an essential, unvarying part of Greek worship for Dionysus. Even though there were numerous festivals for Dionysus throughout the Greek world and these honored the god in various ways, Herodotus writes as if every Greek festival for Dionysus included choral performances.⁶³ And of all of the Dionysiac choral performances in cities throughout Greece, Herodotus may have been best informed about those in Athens. It has long been assumed that Herodotus was well acquainted with Athens, beginning with an ancient tradition that attests to a friendship between the

⁶² On the spread of tragic choral performances in Attic deme festivals for Dionysus, see Csapo (2010a), 89-96.

⁶³ Just at Athens, there was variation in the events of a Dionysiac festival. For instance, the Anthesteria acquired tragic choral performances at a relatively late date and may not have had choruses previously, or if it did, they were insignificant and those at the Great Dionysia would have dwarfed them in importance and attention; see Wilson (2000), 32.

historian and Sophocles, and continuing with modern studies that have paid close attention to Athens' prominence in Herodotus' narrative and even suggested that some parts of the *Histories* presuppose an Athenian audience.⁶⁴ While it may never be provable that Herodotus was an intimate of Sophocles or that he spent considerable time in Athens, he seems knowledgeable about many Athenian affairs, and it seems likely that he was aware that, in Athens, tragic choruses were Dionysiac choruses.

The structure of Herodotus' narrative in 5.67 suggests further that he assumed that tragic choruses should normally honor Dionysus. When discussing the Sicyonian choruses, Herodotus first describes them as "tragic" and then comments that they are performed "not in honor of Dionysus, but in honor of Adrastus," a phrase that is somewhat awkward, with Dionysus placed before Adrastus, even though the choruses were dedicated originally to the latter. The potential inelegance of expression that results from mentioning Dionysus before Adrastus functions as a prolepsis, anticipating Cleisthenes' reassignment of the choruses even before that event is narrated fully. While the choruses had multiple honorands at different points in their history, they are destined for Dionysus and as a result are appropriately described as "tragic." Any choruses for Dionysus must be "tragic," or so Herodotus seems to assume. Herodotus has already described the choruses as "tragic," and from that description it is natural to assume that the choruses should be in honor of Dionysus, but they in fact are not, and Herodotus takes special care to mention that fact. Herodotus is shocked that a city could perform tragic choruses for any being other than Dionysus.

⁶⁴ Plutarch reports on a song that Sophocles is supposed to have composed for Herodotus at *Mor.* 785b (= Sophocles, fr. 5 W²). On "Herodotus and Athens," see Moles (2002); Fowler (2003); Welser (2009).

Herodotus may also be attempting to naturalize the interventions made by Cleisthenes of Sicyon when he describes the choruses as “tragic.” If tragic choruses should be performed in honor of Dionysus, then Cleisthenes’ decision to transfer tragic choruses from Adrastus to Dionysus suddenly becomes corrective, rather than disruptive. The Sicyonian ruler was returning choruses to their rightful honorand, rectifying an aberration wherein tragic choruses were mistakenly granted to Adrastus. The Adrastian choruses are labeled, inappropriately, tragic, only so that they can be converted, or rather restored to Dionysus. Other details of the section seem to support the view that Herodotus commends Cleisthenes for transferring tragic choruses from the inappropriate recipient Adrastus to the normal one Dionysus. To describe Cleisthenes’ action of transferring the choruses from Adrastus to Dionysus, Herodotus uses a verb (*apodidōmi*) which means “to give back” or “to return,” instead of simply “to give,” and some commentators see in his choice of vocabulary an acknowledgment that tragic choruses belong rightfully to Dionysus.⁶⁵

Yet not all Dionysiac choruses were a part of tragic performance, and it would have been possible to describe the Sicyonian choruses differently while still maintaining the focus on Dionysus. Indeed, one such alternative, “dithyrambic,” in many ways fits even better than “tragic” with the scenario outlined by Herodotus. The entire section on Cleisthenes of Sicyon comes by way of a digression. Beforehand, Herodotus had been discussing the actions of Cleisthenes’ grandson, Cleisthenes of Athens. He temporally suspends that narrative and turns to Cleisthenes of Sicyon, who is presented as a model whom his grandson Cleisthenes of Athens deliberately followed. Herodotus claims that

⁶⁵ Macan (1895), 210, and How and Wells (1928), 35.

the Athenian Cleisthenes drew inspiration for his re-organization of Athens' tribal system from his grandfather, who undertook similar measures in Sicyon, changing the old names of the tribes so that they no longer matched the names of the tribes in Argos (5.68). The Sicyonian Cleisthenes' tribal reforms are the culmination of the digression on the ruler and represent the most extensive measure in his campaign to reduce the influence of Argos in Sicyon. The alterations to the cult of Adrastus, including the reassignment of his choruses to Dionysus, are another way that Cleisthenes advanced the same goal.

The collocation of a ruler named Cleisthenes, tribal reform, and choral performances for Dionysus is strikingly similar to the history of dithyramb in Athens, for the younger Cleisthenes is credited with instituting the choral competition in dithyramb at the Great Dionysia in the late sixth-century as a component of his own changes to Athens' tribal system.⁶⁶ In the light of dithyramb's history in Athens, Herodotus seemingly could have described the choruses in Sicyon as "dithyrambic."⁶⁷ He knew of dithyramb and moreover discussed its practice by Arion in Corinth, a city near Sicyon, around the time of the Sicyonian Cleisthenes' rule.⁶⁸ In many respects, "dithyrambic" is the obvious choice for the Sicyonian choruses given Herodotus' stated purpose of

⁶⁶ On Cleisthenes of Athens introducing the dithyrambic competition to the Great Dionysia and its connection with his tribal reforms, see Kowalzig and Wilson (2013b), 15-17.

⁶⁷ Whether Herodotus knew of the history that modern scholars have reconstructed for the dithyrambic performances at the Athenian Great Dionysia is another question, which is difficult to answer. At the least, Wilson (2000), 13-4, argues that a source contemporary with Herodotus, the *Constitution of Athens* attributed to the "Old Oligarch," recognizes the reforms undertaken in the Cleisthenic period as decisive for the practice of Dionysiac choral performances in fifth-century Athens.

⁶⁸ One may object that the adjective *dithyrambikos* does not appear until relatively late, first attested in Aristotle *Poetics* 1447b26. But, *tragikos* is not attested before Herodotus, and there is no reason to assume that he would have been incapable of using an adjective based on the noun *dithyrambos*, which he clearly did know; cf. 1.23.1.

drawing parallels between the homonymous rulers of Sicyon and Athens. Nonetheless, he chooses “tragic.”⁶⁹

Another possible explanation for why Herodotus calls the choruses tragic may be the subject about which the choruses sing. Herodotus reports that the choruses “celebrated the *pathea* of Adrastus.” The term *pathos* is multivalent, ranging from neutral to negative in connotation. It could signify the totality of one’s experiences in life, or in particular the bad, painful experiences, and therefore a chorus who performed the *pathea* of Adrastus could sing about all of the events of his life, or that chorus could focus on calamitous events which involved suffering. In the case of Adrastus, the sole survivor of the first assault on Thebes whose son then died in the second, the two spheres of *pathos* intersect. The events of his life are events full of misfortune, and his name even served as a byword for suffering in antiquity. Adrastus’ sufferings during the successive expeditions against Thebes seem to have been a major theme in the part of the epic cycle that dealt with those events, and the content of the choral performances may have overlapped with those mostly lost poems.⁷⁰

Pathos has a close association with tragedy, which may have influenced Herodotus in his decision to describe choruses that celebrate the *pathea* of Adrastus as tragic. Aristotle offers a concise overview of the relationship between tragedy and *pathos*.

⁶⁹ E. Cingano (through personal correspondence) suggests that Herodotus is being fastidious in associating only one genre with one city, perhaps wanting to avoid contamination and confusion about where different genres originated. The paternity of genres was often contested, as we have seen in the case of tragedy. For the issue as it pertains to dithyramb, see Kowalzig and Wilson (2013b), 7-9.

⁷⁰ Cingano (1985). Herodotus does not indicate how or even if the content of the choruses’ song changed when the performances were transferred to Dionysus. For varying positions on the question, see Griffin (1982), 158; Lesky (1983), 20; and Seaford (1994), 326.

He identifies *pathos* as the third part of plot, or *muthos*, alongside reversal, or *peripeteia*, and recognition, or *anagnōrisis*. He defines *pathos* as follows (1452b11-13):

πάθος δέ ἐστι πρᾶξις φθαρτικὴ ἢ ὀδυνηρά, οἷον οἷ τε ἐν τῷ φανερῷ θάνατοι καὶ αἱ περιωδυνίαι καὶ τρώσεις καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα.

pathos is a destructive or painful action, such as deaths in full view, moments of extreme pain, wounds, and many other such things.⁷¹

Aristotle indicates that, in the context of tragedy, he views *pathos* in its negative light, as an unfortunate event, rather than any action or experience in one's life. On the basis of the examples of *pathos* which Aristotle adduces, he seems to have in mind physical suffering, but it is made clear elsewhere in the *Poetics* that *pathos* need not be restricted to physical events; it can apply to emotional suffering as well.⁷² Whether *pathos* manifests itself physically or emotionally, Aristotle imbues it with its most negative connotation and places that version of *pathos* in his theory of what constitutes a proper tragic plot.

Aristotle wrote many decades after Herodotus and thus could not have influenced Herodotus' description of choruses that sang Adrastus' *pathea* as tragic. Despite the chronological hurdle, there is reason to believe that the tradition concerning *pathos* and tragedy likely was available to Herodotus. While Aristotle contributed many new insights to the study of tragedy, he often codified ideas which had long existed. Furthermore, he frequently derives the terminology that he uses to describe tragedy in the *Poetics* from fifth-century tragedies themselves. One example of this is his use of the term *metabolē*, or a change in fortune, from either good to bad or bad to good. Such a change is an

⁷¹ On the translation "deaths in full view," see Janko (1987), 97. Contra, Lucas (1968), 134.

⁷² See Lucas, *ibid.*

important part of Aristotle's tragic plot, and it has recently been demonstrated how Euripides' use of *metabolē* and related words anticipates Aristotle.⁷³

Something similar may be happening in the case of *pathos*. The types of events, "deaths, moments of extreme pain, and wounds," which Aristotle describes as examples of *pathos* were commonplace in tragedy of the fifth century. Tragedies themselves even use the language of *pathos* to refer to those events.⁷⁴ Aristotle may have concluded that the suffering was an integral part of tragic plot after canvassing many tragedies that included suffering, and, moreover, he may have chosen *pathos* as his term for suffering because he observed this being done by tragedians. There is therefore good reason to suspect that the close association between *pathos* and tragedy predates Aristotle, although it is he who articulates it succinctly and definitively.

There is still further evidence that the connection between *pathos* and tragedy, emblemized in Aristotle's *Poetics*, was in fact in circulation well before he wrote that work. Plato, in his *Republic*, summarizes a number of potential topics for a tragedy, including stories about Niobe, the Pelopids, and the fall of Troy, as *pathē* (2.380a). Herodotus too shows his own awareness of the tradition about *pathos* and tragedy when he comments on the Athenians' reaction to Phrynichus' *Sack of Miletus* in the 490s: they fined the poet and banned his tragedy because its subject matter caused them too much grief and pain (6.21.2). Herodotus' reference to "tragic choruses" that commemorate the

⁷³ Torrance (2013), 44-45.

⁷⁴ Cf. Aesch. *Pers.* 254 and *Ag.* 176ff.

pathea of Adrastus may be another early member of the pre-Aristotelian practice of connecting *pathos* and tragedy.⁷⁵

Yet again, as was the case for the association between Dionysus and the Sicyonian choruses, they could be labeled as “dithyrambic” instead of “tragic” and there would be nothing discordant about using that new adjective to describe choruses that sing about *pathea*. Dithyramb’s relationship with *pathos*, although under appreciated in comparison to the attention paid to tragedy and *pathos*, nonetheless is evident in many ancient testimonia. Plutarch, in introducing the sole occasion when Aeschylus uses the word “dithyramb,” comments that “dithyrambic songs are full of *pathos* and change” (διθυραμβικὰ μέλη παθῶν μεστὰ καὶ μεταβολῆς, *De E apud Delphos* 9.389a).⁷⁶ The idea of suffering is embedded in the very word *Dithyrambos* as a cult title of Dionysus. In antiquity there circulated at least three etymologies for the name. One explained *dithyrambos* as a reference to the cave with double doors (*dithyros*) on Mount Nysa where Dionysus was raised in his infancy; another takes *dithyrambos* from Zeus’ action of “undoing the stitching” (*luthi rhamma*) to release Dionysus from his thigh; and the final etymology looks to Dionysus’ double birth (*dis*), first from his mother Semele, then from Zeus, as an explanation for the name *dithyrambos*.⁷⁷ The different etymologies are united in their focus on Dionysus’ birth, an event that was full of suffering, with Dionysus’ mother Semele perishing in a conflagration caused when his father Zeus

⁷⁵ From a later time, Plutarch refers to *pathea* when introducing Gorgias’ statement about the righteousness of the deceiver and the deceived in tragedy. Cf. Plut. *De glor. Ath.* 5.348c = Gorgias, fr. 23 D-K. In his *Helen* (fr. 11.57-9 DK), Gorgias argues that poetry (words in meter) has the ability to effect an experience (*pathēma*) on the part of those who hear the “fortunes and misfortunes that occur to others and their affairs.”

⁷⁶ Cf. A. *TrGF* 3, 355.

⁷⁷ Procl. *Chrest.* apud Phot. *Bibl.* 239, 320a25-31. See Ieranò, 17.

revealed himself in his true form as thunder and lightning. The theories about the origin of Dionysus' cult title in the god's birth make *pathos* innate to dithyramb. The source that records the etymologies goes on to claim that dithyramb is “arranged to the *pathē* which are most native to the god” (εἰς πάθη κατασκευαζόμενος τὰ μάλιστα οἰκεῖα τῷ θεῷ, Phot. *Bibl.* 239, 320b12-14), namely Dionysus. According to this statement, events in Dionysus' life constitute the proper subject for dithyrambs. Many of these events, including Dionysus' birth, or his terrifying and destructive epiphanies to various humans, are marked by *pathos*, in the way that Aristotle defined the term, as suffering both physical and emotional. Although no specific events involving Dionysus are designated as most befitting a dithyramb, there is a sense that, so long as Dionysus is involved, suffering will be present. That the topics for dithyramb are described as *pathē* at this moment reinforces the point. The relationship between *pathos* and dithyramb is pervasive.

A more explicit notice about the place of *pathos* in dithyramb is preserved in a papyrus that dates from the first century CE. The papyrus, which was likely either a commentary on several dithyrambs or a treatise on the genre, unfortunately is quite lacunose. At one point it seems to comment on how a dithyrambic poet handled a particularly troublesome moment in his composition (*P. Vindob.* 19996a fr. a I):⁷⁸

(col. 1)

[. . .] τὸ | μὲν | πάθος οὐκ ἄγνο | [ῶν], ὅτι θρηῆνόν τινα | ἀπα[ι]τεῖν δόξειεν ἄ(ν), |
τὸν δὲ διθύραμβον | εἰδῶς, ὅτι πάντα μᾶλ[λον] ἢ θρηῆνον δέχεται]

(col. 2)

— | νησε . [. .] . φ . ος α[λ]λό | τριον ἢ[γ]οῦμενος εἶ | ναι τῷ | πάθει,

(col. 1)

⁷⁸ Battezzato (2013), 99ff., provides a text, translation, and further bibliography.

since he [the poet] was not unaware that *pathos* could seem to call for some sort of *thrēnos*, but he knew that dithyramb could encompass all things rather than *thrēnos*

(col. 2)

and he believed that it [the dithyrambic genre?] was adverse to *pathos*

The topic of the dithyramb evidently called for a dirge, or *thrēnos*, but the poet, aware that a *thrēnos* was inappropriate for a dithyramb, hesitated to include the standard features of one in his dithyramb. He seems to have found a compromise so that the dithyramb was deemed, at least in the judgment of this commentator, acceptable. The commentator uses two words to designate the subject matter that required special attention from the dithyrambic poet: *thrēnos* and also *pathos*. It is unclear whether *pathos* refers to a particular emotion, in this case likely mourning, with *thrēnos* and *pathos* functioning as synonyms of one another, or whether *pathos* as a whole category is foreign to dithyramb and thus *thrēnos*, one type of *pathos* does not belong in the genre. In either case, the papyrus includes *pathos* in the critical vocabulary associated with dithyramb, although as a means to deny its propriety for the genre.

L. Battezzato has recently suggested that the dithyramb to which the papyrus refers is the *Persephone* of Melanippides, who is mentioned later on in the commentary.⁷⁹ The story of how Persephone was taken to the underworld by Hades, and how her mother Demeter sought her return at great cost to mortals on earth, is one full of mourning and suffering, in short, *pathos*. The single surviving fragment, which etymologizes the name of Acheron as the river that “goes on, pouring forth pains” (ἄχε' εἶσι προχέων Ἀχέρων, *PMG* 759), confirms the impression that the song must have dealt with events that could be described rightly as examples of *pathos*. If Battezzato's hypothesis is correct, then a

⁷⁹ Battezzato, *ibid.*

fifth-century dithyrambist saw fit to compose a dithyrambic song infused with *pathos*. That fact should override the protests of the commentator, who does not explain, at least in the preserved sections of the papyrus, why he deems *pathos* inappropriate for dithyramb. The poetic evidence suggests, to the contrary, that *pathos* was suitable for a dithyramb.

Conclusion

The reasons why Herodotus described sixth-century Sicyonian choruses, originally performed in honor of Adrastus but transferred to Dionysus on Clesithenes' orders, as "tragic" are only a little less opaque than what was the original nature of those choruses, the question that has attracted the greatest amount of attention in modern investigations of Herodotus' reference. A number of considerations likely motivated Herodotus to choose "tragic" as the most fitting description for the choruses, and two possibilities have been adduced here: first, that the choruses occurred as part of a festival dedicated to Dionysus, and second, that the choruses sang about *pathea*. In attending to the fifth-century, Herodotean resonance of the phrase "tragic choruses," it has been possible to delineate some of the contours of tragedy's definition in the earliest period during which that definition can be observed through explicit comments made about the genre. In the last third of the fifth century, tragedy was, among other things, a choral performance dedicated to Dionysus that related stories full of catastrophe and suffering.

What is remarkable about Herodotus' fifth-century definition of tragedy is its endurance. Although Herodotus was a particularly early participant in a still ongoing conversation about the nature of Greek tragedy, the salient features of the genre that he

seems to have seized upon continue to attract interest, for instance, in the work of modern scholars who examine tragedy both in its Dionysiac context (and in particular recently, for its ability to transcend that environment) and for its tendency to relate *pathos*-infused stories.⁸⁰ At the same time, I have suggested that tragedy was not the only example in antiquity of a Dionysiac choral performance-genre with a flavor for the pathetic. Dithyramb too could be described accurately in nearly the exact same terms as tragedy, yet already in Herodotus' *Histories* tragedy seems to have preempted, and maybe even supplanted dithyramb as the foremost representative of a certain brand of choral performance.

Even if Herodotus seems scarily prescient about the future of criticism on tragedy and dithyramb, the parameters of that criticism were not inalterably set with his pronouncement about the Sicyonian tragic choruses. After him, Aristotle, the witness with whom this chapter began, would acknowledge the claims of both tragedy and dithyramb on *pathos*. In his discussion of the four requirements for a tragic character in the *Poetics*, he prescribes that a character must be “appropriate” (ἁρμοττοντα, 1454a22), by which he means that a character's actions should be consistent with that character's identity. For instance, women who are “manly” (ἀνδρεῖαν) are an inappropriate character. When he subsequently cites an example of unsuitable behavior on the part of an actual character from a poetic work, Aristotle mentions the *thrēnos* uttered by Odysseus in Timotheus' *Scylla* (1454a29-31). It is important to recognize the precise object of Aristotle's criticism here, as he does not actually propose that Timotheus remove the *thrēnos* from his poem. Rather he faults Timotheus' decision to put the lament in

⁸⁰ Recently, on tragedy and Dionysus, Winkler and Zeitlin (1990) and Scullion (2002), and on tragedy and *pathos*, Hall (2010).

Odysseus' voice, for heroes like him should not speak such things. Were Timotheus to transfer the *thrēnos* to someone else, presumably a woman, Aristotle would have no grounds for censuring it. A *thrēnos* can remain in a tragedy, as long as it is deployed in an appropriate manner. Except Timotheus' *Scylla* is not actually a tragedy, but is in fact a dithyramb.⁸¹ To provide a negative exemplum of the type of character to be avoided in tragedy, Aristotle selects a character from a dithyramb. The lesson to be derived from the dithyramb, about ensuring that characters are made to act appropriately, is nonetheless applicable to tragedy. Both genres are potential poetic homes for a *thrēnos*, and by extension *pathos*. Here, however, dithyramb has preempted and supplanted tragedy in the two genres' commentarial traditions.

⁸¹ Cf. *PMG* 793-4.

CHAPTER 4

ARISTOPHANES: TRUGIC, TRAGIC, KUKLIC

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we examined the implicit definition of tragedy that can be gleaned from the only explicit reference to the genre in Herodotus' *Histories*. We also considered how that definition intersects with certain perceptions of dithyramb as a genre. In this chapter, we will attend to the same issues, namely the relationship between tragedy's definition and that of dithyramb, focusing now on how they are articulated in Aristophanes' comedies. Attic Old Comedy contributes more than any other genre to the emerging definition of tragedy in the late fifth century, and no comedian holds a more conspicuous and influential place in our record than Aristophanes. His engagement with tragedy is extensive and has been well documented, the same for his engagement with dithyramb.¹ To attend to all of the diverse ways in which Aristophanes comments on the genres and thereby offers *de facto* definitions of them will fall outside the ambit of the

¹ For an introduction to Aristophanes and tragedy, see Rau (1967); Silk (1993), (2000), ch. 2; Wright (2012). On Aristophanes and dithyramb, see further Zimmermann (1992), esp. ch. 7; Kugelmeier (1996), ch. 6. Pöhlmann (2011) examines Aristophanes' treatment of the two genres beside each other in the context of New Music in the late fifth century. Recent work has investigated how comedians other than Aristophanes engaged with tragedy in particular, but also other genres. See Bakola (2010), 118-79, on Cratinus and tragedy, and 43-9, on Cratinus and dithyramb. Two recent dissertations, Miles (2009) and Farmer (2013), have dealt at length with parody of tragedy in Old Comedy. Miles collects a large number of Old Comic fragments that exhibit paratragedy before focusing on the phenomenon in Strattis. Most of Farmer's dissertation examines Aristophanes' engagement with tragedy, although his final chapter considers Aristophanes and dithyramb, and his first analyzes the use of paratragedy in Aristophanes' contemporaries.

present chapter; instead, a single passage from a fragmentary comedy by Aristophanes will orient our investigation.

The passage comes from Aristophanes' *Gerytades*, the comedy that was discussed in the Introduction of this dissertation.² An Athenian assembly dispatches to the Underworld a delegation of three poets, a tragedian, a comedian, and a dithyrambist, and the longest surviving fragment from the play provides details about the selection and composition of the poetic embassy. In the scene, the group has likely just arrived in the Underworld and encountered some sort of gatekeeper figure (Speaker A), who guards the entrance to Hades' domain, confronts the travelers, and compels one of them (Speaker B), perhaps a guide for the poets, to identify themselves (fr. 156):³

(Speaker A) καὶ τίς νεκρῶν κευθμῶνα καὶ σκότου πύλας
 ἔτλη κατελθεῖν; (Speaker B) ἓνα † δ' ἀφ' ἐκάστης τέχνης
 εἰλόμεθα κοινῇ γενομένης ἐκκλησίας,
 οὓς ἦσμεν ὄντας ἄδοφοίτας καὶ θαμὰ
 ἐκεῖσε φιλοχωροῦντας. (A) εἰσὶ γὰρ τινες 5
 ἄνδρες παρ' ὑμῖν ἄδοφοῖται; (B) νῆ Δία
 μάλιστά γ'. (A) ὥσπερ Θρακοφοῖται; (B) πάντ' ἔχεις.
 (A) καὶ τίνες ἂν εἶεν; (B) πρῶτα μὲν Σαννυρίων
 ἀπὸ τῶν τρυγῳδῶν, ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν τραγικῶν χορῶν
 Μέλητος, ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν κυκλίων Κινησίας 10
 (A) ὡς σφόδρ' ἐπὶ λεπτῶν ἐλπίδων ὀχεῖσθ' ἄρα·
 τούτους γάρ, ἦν πολλῶ ξυνελθῇ ξυλλαβῶν
 ὁ τῆς διαροίας ποταμὸς ἐξοιγήσεται.

(Speaker A) And who has dared descend to the realm of the dead
 and the gates of darkness? (Speaker B) Together in an assembly,
 we chose one from each craft, those whom
 we knew were Hades-goers
 and loved traveling there often. (A) So there are some 5
 Hades-going men among you? (B) Yes indeed,
 there certainly are. (A) Just like Thrace-goers? (B) You got it.
 (A) And who would these people be? (B) First Sannyrion

² Cf. pp. 1-4 above.

³ Norwood (1933), 290, argues that Speaker B cannot be one of the three poets. Farmer (2013), 134, suggests that Speaker A is a gatekeeper or other such character; Conti Bizzarro (1994), 158, Hades.

from the comedians, then from the poets for tragic choruses
 Meletus, and then from the poets for dithyrambic choruses, Cinesias. 10
 (A) Well then you ride on exceptionally slender hopes.
 For the river of diarrhea will take these men
 and carry them away, if it comes together all at once.

The terms that Speaker B uses to label the three genres represented by the members of the embassy are telling. For tragedy, Speaker B draws from the common practice in antiquity of discussing the poetic genres at the Great Dionysia as choral performances; he states that Meletus is the representative of the “tragic choruses” (*tragikoi choroi*), meaning that he composes poetry for the tragic choruses and is, in other words, a tragedian.⁴ Speaker B uses a similar formulation to refer to the dithyrambist Cinesias, who is called the representative of the “circular” (*kuklioi*), to which “choruses” (*choroi*) must be supplied. Sannyrion is the representative of the “tragedians” (*trugōidoi*), which, a noun, is a name for poets who write comedies, or comedians. The fragment thus coordinates comedy, tragedy, and dithyramb as tragedy, tragedy, and the circular chorus.

That Aristophanes elects to identify comedy, tragedy, and dithyramb respectively as *trugōidos*, *tragikos*, and *kuklios* in *Gerytades*, a comedy that likely contained much commentary on poetic matters, at a moment when he places the three genres in such closely proximity to one another suggests that the terms convey an important idea of how Aristophanes conceives of the genres both individually and in relation to each other. Without the rest of *Gerytades*, it is impossible to determine the significance of the terms in that comedy. Yet, Aristophanes recurs to those three genre-terms and others related to them elsewhere, and the fragment from *Gerytades* therefore seems belong to a broader Aristophanic discourse on comedy, tragedy, and dithyramb. By examining instances

⁴ On the prevalence of choral terminology used in reference to the genres of tragedy and comedy, see Wilson (2000), 6.

where Aristophanes uses terms that are identical or similar to those found in the *Gerytades* fragment, it is possible to develop a sense of his definitions of dithyramb and tragedy.

From the first impressions provided by the fragment, it would seem that Aristophanes' definitions of the two genres are asymmetrical. In most ancient sources, the phrase *kuklios choros*, when applied to a dithyramb, is used to refer to the genre's characteristic dancing formation wherein the members of a dithyrambic chorus were arranged in a circle. Where *kuklios* is restricting, *tragikos* is capacious, not associated exclusively with a single component of tragedy, but used in reference to any number of the genre's elements, from its language, to its choreography, to its political content, to still others. The information conveyed by the fragment suggests that, in Aristophanes' comedies, dithyramb is defined by a single element, tragedy by the totality of its various elements.

Our investigation will support one part of that conclusion, the second one, while revising the other, the first. The first two sections of this chapter will demonstrate that, by means of explicit references to tragedy in his comedies, Aristophanes grants tragedy an expansive definition. The final section will argue that dithyramb too enjoys a broadly conceived definition in Aristophanes' comedy, even though Aristophanes regularly refers to the genre with a term, *kuklios*, that, with its usually circumscribed meaning, would not seem capable of supporting a multidimensional definition. Nonetheless, in Aristophanes' hands, *kuklios* takes on the sort of expansive range of reference that is found in case of the adjective *tragikos*. Aristophanes' definition of dithyramb as the circular chorus is equivalent in its scope to his definition of tragedy as, well, tragedy.

The Tragedy of Tragedy

Before we turn to Aristophanes' use of *tragikos* and *kuklios*, it is necessary to examine his use of *trugōidos*, because even that term for a comedian which appears in the *Gerytades* fragment is relevant to Aristophanes' definition of tragedy. *Trugōidos* belongs to a family of words all related to the noun *trugōidia*, "tragedy," and Aristophanes uses nouns, adjectives, and even compounds from that group in place of words related to *kōmōidia*, "comedy," nine times, out of a total of ten fifth-century attestations.⁵ Tragedy is thus a particularly Aristophanic way of referring to comedy. It is also a particularly tragic way of referring to comedy, for tragedy and its cognates make an obvious pun on tragedy (*tragōidia*), and it is common now to understand Aristophanes' use of tragedy as a means to mark comedy's emulative and antagonistic relationship with tragedy.⁶ Comedy, in its guise as tragedy, is a genre that somehow attempts to encroach upon

⁵ The tenth appears in a fragment from Eupolis' *Demes* (fr. 99.29), but only *τρυγωῖδο-* is legible. The rest of the word is not preserved, and the passage is beset by other textual as well as interpretive difficulties; recent discussion in Storey (2003), 142ff, esp. 152-3. In general discussion throughout this chapter, I use *trugōidia* as a blanket term for all of the variants from the family of cognates. When discussing specific examples, I use the exact term found in a particular passage. Ghiron-Bistagne (1973) would add two more instances of *trugōidia* by emendation at *Acharnians* 400 and *Birds* 787; they are left out of the discussion here.

⁶ Taplin (1983), 333, senses a "word-play," "verbal association," or "homeophonic point" connected with tragedy in nearly every example of *trugōidia*; contra Edwards (1991), 157-63, who claims that *trugōidia* does not always constitute "paratragedy" but can often "refer to comedy in general," presumably without specific reference to tragedy. On the question of whether the first part of *trugōidia* (*trug-*) is related to the verb *trugaō*, meaning "to harvest," or the noun *trux* (gen., *trugos*), meaning both "new, unfiltered wine" and also "dregs," see Chantraine (1968-77), s.v., *τρύξ*, and Taplin, *ibid*, who inclines toward *trugāo*. The question seems to have been debated in antiquity, as is made evident by attempts to claim that the use of *trugōidia* as a replacement for *kōmōidia* conveyed something about comedy's historical development, either the practice of actors smearing their faces with the dregs of wine, or the custom of winners receiving new wine as a prize, or the performance of comedies during the harvest season; see scholia ad *Acharn.* 499, and *Ath.* 2.40a-b. On *trugōidia* in general, see, besides the works already cited, Foley (1988), 34-5; Zanetto (2006); Telò (2010), 297; Wright (2012), 17-20.

tragedy's domain and claim for itself features that are normally associated with its close relative.⁷

When Speaker B in *Gerytades* states that Sannyrion is a tragedian, he signals that the poet is a comedian who in some way resembles a tragedian, although the precise nature of Sannyrion's tragic resemblance alluded to in the fragment cannot be determined without more of *Gerytades*.⁸ The fragment presents therefore two avenues by which to access Aristophanes' definition of tragedy. There is the adjective *tragikos*, a direct reference to tragedy that can be tracked throughout Aristophanes' comedies in order to consider what its use reveals about his conception of the genre. There is also the noun *trugōidia*, which can be examined not with an eye toward what the term indicates about comedy, its explicit referent, but toward what it indicates about tragedy. When comedy is designated as tragedy, tragedy always stands behind the reference, and we will now examine the notion of tragedy that lurks beneath tragedy.

In a short study of *trugōidia*, O. Taplin has illustrated how *trugōidia* appears frequently at moments where a character in a comedy is trying to claim that comedy is capable of addressing politics and other serious topics, and it is thus implied that tragedy is expected to do such things.⁹ Taplin devotes particular attention to Dicaeopolis' self-

⁷ Olson (2002), 201, and Rosen (2005), 257-61, caution against using references to *trugōidia* as a means to determine the actual state of comedy or tragedy in fifth-century Athens. Their reservations are sensible, and in what follows, I neither claim that the Aristophanic definitions of tragedy and dithyramb are an accurate representation of the two genres in practice, nor look for confirmation of that position in the remains of tragedy and dithyramb. Despite the limitations advanced by Olson and Rosen, Aristophanes' references to the dithyramb and tragedy still shed light on the sorts of categories that were considered relevant to the genres' definitions.

⁸ For paratragedy in Sannyrion's work, see Miles (2009), 87-9, and Farmer (2013), 136-7.

⁹ Taplin (1983).

defense speech in *Acharnians*, where the term appears twice, its earliest attestations (497-501):¹⁰

μή μοι φθονήσῃτ', ἄνδρες οἱ θεώμενοι,
εἰ πτωχὸς ὢν ἔπειτ' ἐν Ἀθηναίοις λέγειν
μέλλω περὶ τῆς πόλεως, τρυγῳδίαν ποιῶν.
τὸ γὰρ δίκαιον οἶδε καὶ τρυγῳδία. 500
ἐγὼ δὲ λέξω δεινὰ μέν, δίκαια δέ.

Do not begrudge me, dear spectators,
if, although a beggar, I nevertheless intend
to speak about the city while making *trugōidia*.
For *trugōidia* too knows what is right. 500
The things I say will be shocking, but right.

After listing the nine other fifth-century occurrences of *trugōidia*, Taplin argues that Dicaeopolis refers to comedy as *trugōidia* because he wants to claim for comedy the prerogative to speak about “what is right,” which in normal circumstance is considered the preserve of tragedy and anathema to comedy. Taplin has stressed that the adverbial use of *kai* in line 500 reinforces, on top of the use of *trugōidia*, the notion that comedy should not deal with serious subjects, but tragedy can. He proposes that the line should be rendered “for *trugōidia* too knows what is right,” instead of its frequent translation, “for even *trugōidia* knows what is right.” The change is slight, but significant. It indicates both that comedy’s foray into politics constitutes a new endeavor for the genre and that it joins other genres, namely tragedy, in that mission. If *kai* is translated as “even,” all that is conveyed in Dicaeopolis’ statement is the idea that it is exceptional for comedy to address “what is right.” If it is translated as “too,” the line conveys both a sense of

¹⁰ Given that there are no attestations of *trugōidia* earlier than these, it is uncertain whether Aristophanes coined the term for *Acharnians*, or it had already been in use, either popularly or in literary works particularly. Ghiron-Bistagne (1973), 286, and Taplin (1983) 333, favor Aristophanes’ invention; Sommerstein (2007) is suspicious.

novelty and territorialism. Comedy that addresses “what is right” is doing something new and something that normally belongs to other literary forms, in particular tragedy.

In Taplin’s interpretation, *trugōidia*, at least at this moment of *Acharnians*, defines tragedy as a genre that is capable of addressing politics, and is even expected to do so. Taplin claims that the same understanding of *trugōidia* is evident later in *Acharnians* when the chorus begins its parabasis (628-9):

ἐξ οὗ γε χοροῖσιν ἐφέστηκεν τρυγικοῖς ὁ διδάσκαλος ἡμῶν,
οὐπω παρέβη πρὸς τὸ θέατρον λέξων ὡς δεξιός ἐστιν·

From the time when our director put on his *trugikoi* choruses,
not yet has he come forward to the audience to say that he is skilled.

The chorus immediately goes on to explain that its poet, Aristophanes, feels compelled to make the sort of statement he had in the past avoided because some have now accused him of contributing to the demise of the city and its inhabitants through his comedies.¹¹ To the charges, the chorus counters that, in fact, the poet has strengthened the city by using his comedies to give its citizens good political guidance. That the chorus refers to the genre as *trugōidia* implies that such political guidance is under normal circumstances to be found in tragedy.

A passage from *Wasps*, still according to Taplin, may also indicate that tragedy is concerned with politics, for it too presents *trugōidia* as comedy that advances a political agenda. Bdelycleon begins a speech, in which he attempts to convince his father, Philocleon, to abandon his life as an inveterate juror, by lamenting his prospects for success (650-1):

χαλεπὸν μὲν καὶ δεινῆς γνώμης καὶ μείζονος ἢ ’πὶ τρυγωδοῖς

¹¹ See Olson (2002), xl ff. for the literary and political history behind the charges.

ιάσασθαι νόσον ἀρχαίαν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐντετακυῖαν.

It is difficult, something requiring exceptional thought, greater than what occurs among the *trugōidoi*, to cure an old sickness innate in the city.

Although Bdelycleon is concerned most immediately with his father's behavior, he does not speak of curing him, but rather of curing the city at large. Philocleon's jury-mania is one manifestation of a disease that afflicts many citizens, and Bdelycleon accordingly conceives of his project in the broadest political and societal terms possible, not strictly as a personal and familial matter.¹² In that context, Bdelycleon compares his task to the work of the *trugōidoi* and suggests that he faces a more daunting challenge than they typically do. Even comedians who direct their work to political matters would find it difficult to overhaul Athens' jury system.¹³ If *trugōidia* is comedy that adopts a political stance, then tragedy must be a genre which already does the same thing.

From a total of nine Aristophanic uses of *trugōidia*, four can thus be connected with the idea that tragedy is the customary literary medium through which to address politics or other consequential matters. That dimension of the term has attracted by far the most attention in modern scholarship, and there is a sense that *trugōidia* is strictly comedy that adopts a political purpose, and hence tragedy is inherently political. Yet, *trugōidia* appears in other contexts, where claims about comedy and its relationship to politics are not advanced. With politics absent from these moments, it seems that *trugōidia* is used as a label for comedy in order to seize upon other, non-political components of tragedy.

¹² For the political ideology of the play, see Konstan (1985) and Olson (1996).

¹³ MacDowell (1971), 219; Sommerstein (1983), 196.

Dicaeopolis' double reference to comedy as tragedy in *Acharnians*, which has been instrumental for the political interpretation of *trupōidia*, also demonstrates one of the non-political features of tragedy that can be alluded to through the use of that term. Dicaeopolis hopes to ensure the success of his speech by modeling himself on a tragic character who happened to face circumstances similar to those now confronting Dicaeopolis. He chooses Telephus, whose story had been told in Euripides' homonymous tragedy about the hero.¹⁴ Both protagonists were required to defend themselves before a hostile crowd, in Dicaeopolis' case a group of Acharnians, in Telephus', who was king of Mysia and ally of the Trojans, enemy Achaeans. In preparation for his own speech, Dicaeopolis goes to Euripides' house to ask the tragedian if he can borrow the costume worn by the actor who played the tragic character (393-479). Euripides grants Dicaeopolis' request, so that as the comic hero speaks, he resembles physically the tragic hero. The resemblance between Dicaeopolis and Telephus exceeds their circumstances and physical appearance, for Dicaeopolis borrows some of the very language that Telephus had used in Euripides' tragedy.¹⁵ A scholion to *Acharnians* preserves the opening of Telephus' speech (Euripides, fr. 703):

μή μοι φθονήσῃτ', ἄνδρες Ἑλλήνων ἄκροι
εἰ πτωχὸς ὦν τέτληκ' ἐν ἐσθλοῖσιν λέγειν.

Don't begrudge me, my audience of Greek men,
if, although a beggar, I have dared to speak among noble people.

Dicaeopolis too begins his speech by presenting himself as a beggar and asking for his audience's indulgence and leniency. He repeats Telephus' words verbatim with his plea

¹⁴ Cf. *TrGF* 5.2, 680-718.

¹⁵ On the extensive paratragedy of *Telephus* in *Acharnians*, see Rau (1967), 19ff.; Foley (1988); Olson (2002), liv-lxi.

of “don’t begrudge me.” Given the extensive tragic backdrop of the scene in *Acharnians* where Dicaeopolis twice calls comedy *trugōidia*, that term need not allude only to tragedy’s penchant for containing political material. *Trugōidia* also signals Dicaeopolis’ engagement with the language, appearance, and circumstances of a tragic hero.

Another reference to *trugōidia* in *Acharnians* promotes further the term’s association with the sort of language and types of scenarios that are typical of tragedy. A merchant from Boeotia, who has arrived at the private market which Dicaeopolis instituted after he secured his private peace, offers for sale a Copaic eel, which Dicaeopolis very much desires, exclaiming (885-6):

ὦ φιλότατη σὺ καὶ πάλαι ποθουμένη,
ἦλθες ποθεινὴ μὲν τρυγωδικοῖς χοροῖς

O, you most beloved and long desired,
you have come as an object of desire to *tragic* choruses

Dicaeopolis’ outburst is characterized by multiple nods toward tragedy, none of which depend on a notion that the genre is inherently political. His effusive tone in addressing the eel would be fitting for one of the many recognition scenes that occur in tragedy.¹⁶ He welcomes the culinary delight, which has been unavailable in Athens due to the war, as if it were a long-lost relative who has returned home unexpectedly. Not only does the general situation of a recognition evoke tragedy, but Dicaeopolis uses tragic language as well. As they barter over the eel, both the Boeotian merchant and Dicaeopolis quote, modify, and redeploy entire lines from Aeschylean and Euripidean tragedies, while also

¹⁶ Rau (1967) 146; Olson (2002), 295-6.

using language that can be identified as characteristically tragic.¹⁷ Tragedy is at the forefront of the scene, but politics is nowhere to be found. Instead, tragedy is present in the atmosphere and vocabulary, and it is to those elements of tragedy that Dicaeopolis' reference to "trugic choruses" seems to allude. Because Dicaeopolis behaves like a tragic hero, the comic chorus that accompanies him resembles the chorus from a tragedy and is, as a result, a trugic chorus.

Trugōidia can mark, in addition to tragedy's language, style, and stock scenes, its choreography. At the end of *Wasps*, the chorus declares (1536-7):

τοῦτο γὰρ οὐδεὶς πω πάρος δέδρακεν,
ὀρχούμενον ὅστις ἀπήλλαξεν χορὸν τρυγῳδῶν.

For no one has ever done this before,
to take off a chorus of *trugōidoi* in dance.

According to the chorus, *Wasps* is an unprecedented comedy because it concludes with its chorus of *trugōidoi* dancing while exiting the performance area. The chorus' self-identification as a chorus of *trugōidoi* seems motivated at least in part by repeated allusions, immediately prior to their claim, to the type of dancing that is found in tragedy. Not much earlier, Philocleon, inebriated and rambunctious after a dinner party, had challenged the tragedian Carcinus and his sons, who themselves are all either tragedians or actors who perform in tragedy, to a competition in tragic dancing (1497ff.).¹⁸ Philocleon proposed that he would reprise the style of dancing that was in vogue during

¹⁷ *Acharnians* 883, cp. Aesch. *TrGF* fr. 174; *Acharnians* 893-4, cp. Eur. *Alc.* 367-8. Rau (1967), 145-7 on the tragic language.

¹⁸ The choreography and staging of the finale has been much debated, see Borthwick (1968); MacDowell (1971), 329-321; Vaio (1971); Wright (2013). On Carcinus and his sons, see MacDowell (1971), 326-7, and Sommerstein (1983), 246.

the era of Thespis and Phrynichus, two venerated tragedians from the genre's early period in Athens, and that Carcinus and his sons would represent modern tragic dancing. The contest is already underway when the chorus joins in and remarks that no comedy has ever ended with a "chorus of *trugōidoi* dancing." As M. Wright has recently argued, the chorus' claim about the novelty of *Wasps*' finale should be understood in the light of its statement that it is a chorus made up specifically of *trugōidoi*, participants in a comic performance who somehow resemble participants in a tragic performance.¹⁹ In other words, the dancing undertaken by the chorus of *trugōidoi* at the end of *Wasps* is tragic in style, and it is that particular feature that has prompted the chorus' comment. Although some comedies have concluded with comic dancing, none has done so with tragic dancing. The chorus' self-designation as a group of *trugōidoi* encapsulates perfectly their dual identity as members of a comic chorus who dance in the manner of a tragic chorus.

The final two occurrences of *trugōidia* in Aristophanes' corpus feature the term as part of a compound word, and in both cases, as in the examples from *Acharnians* and *Wasps* just analyzed, there is no sense that tragedy's ability to address politics informs the use of *trugōidia*. Instead, Aristophanes' new formulations draw their effect from aspects of tragedy besides its ethical agenda. One of the compounds, from *Clouds*, demarcates boundaries between tragedy and comedy in terms of the categories of speech that are supposed to be contained in each genre. After Socrates has summoned the chorus of *Clouds* and they begin to appear, he asks Strepsiades if he notices their thundering. Strepsiades answers affirmatively and adds that he would like reply to the *Clouds* with

¹⁹ Wright (2013), 224-5.

his own flatulence and defecation, which are compelled by a combination of the awe and fear he feels. To this, Socrates retorts (296-7):

οὐ μὴ σκώπει, μηδὲ ποιήσεις ἅπερ οἱ τρυγοδαίμονες οὔτοι;
ἀλλ' εὐφήμει· μέγα γάρ τι θεῶν κινεῖται σμῆνος ἀοιδαῖς.

Stop being a fool, don't do the things which the wicked *trugōidoi* do.
But keep holy silence; for some great flock of gods is on the move, in song.

The term that Socrates uses for the group of people whom Strepsiades resembles, *trugodaimones*, has been explained as a combination of *trugōidos*, the synonym for comedian, and *kakodaimōn*, a disparaging way to describe a wicked, evil person.²⁰ According to Socrates, Strepsiades acts in the same way as “accursed comedians.”²¹ Socrates glosses what exactly he finds reprehensible about Strepsiades, and by extension the *trugodaimones*, with his injunction for Strepsiades to “stop being a fool.” The verb he uses, *skōptō*, encompasses comedy's most general aims of mockery and jest, and Socrates indicates that this sort of foolish behavior is to be avoided at present.²² The *trugodaimones* are then comedians who use scatological humor and generally act in a foolish manner, behaviors that cause Socrates to condemn Strepsiades as their representative.

The common understanding of *trugodaimones* in *Clouds* just outlined surprisingly fails to take any account of the ever-present relationship between *trugōidia* and tragedy. While the appearance of *trugōidia* in the compound indicates that it refers in some way to tragedy, Strepsiades' behavior is entirely untragic, and that seems to be the point. If

²⁰ Dover (1968), 141.

²¹ *LSJ*, s.v., “a poor-devil poet.”

²² On *skōmma*, Edwards (1991), 168-9, with examples from Aristophanes.

anyone in the scene acts in a manner that is indicative of tragedy, it is Socrates. He has summoned the Clouds by means of a prayer, complete with the standard call for silence, the invocation and enumeration of the deities, a plea for epiphany, and other elements standard for such pronouncements.²³ Socrates' prayer lends the chorus' arrival a tragic atmosphere, as prayers are frequent occurrences in tragedy.²⁴ Strepsiades' comic buffoonery undermines Socrates' tragic solemnity, however, and for that reason, Socrates groups Strepsiades with the *trugodaimones*. The emphasis in the compound rests especially on the notion of badness that is conveyed by the second of its elements, *kakodaimōn*.²⁵ The true *trugōidos*, that is, a comedian who composes works that have a tragic bent, would be able to adhere to the tragic tone that Socrates has established. The bad, wicked, accursed *trugōidos*, like Strepsiades, clings to his comedic sensibilities and scatological foolishness, which are incompatible with tragedy.

The final example of *trugōidia* indicates that tragic language should be drawn from a high register, in contrast to comedic language that is typically much lower. A compound with *trugōidia* appears in a fragment from the lost, second version of Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousai* which, on account of its meter and context, seem to come from the chorus' parabasis (fr. 347):²⁶

ἢ μέγα τι βρῶμ' ἐστὶ ἢ τρυγωδοποιουσική,

²³ Dover (1968), 134.

²⁴ Sourvinou-Inwood (2005), 11-2. Dover (1968), 137, notes that the repetition of certain words between Socrates' invocation and the Clouds' response is a phenomenon found commonly in tragedy, thus adding to the sense that Socrates means to infuse the arrival of the Clouds with a tragic atmosphere.

²⁵ Although the part of the term *kakodaimōn* that conveys the sense of badness (*kakos*) has fallen out in the compound, being replaced by *trugo*-.

²⁶ Recent treatments of the fragments and play in Austin and Olson (2004), lxxvii-lxxxix, and Karachalios (2006).

ἦνίκα Κράτης τό τε τάριχος ἐλεφάντινον
λαμπρὸν ἐνόμιζεν ἀπόνως παρακεκλημένον,
ἄλλα τε τοιαῦθ' ἕτερα μυρί' ἐκιγλίζετο

Indeed the making of tragic poetry was some great fare,
when Crates considered his salt-fish “ivoried,”
“shining,” “summoned without effort,”
and made myriad other such gags.

The chorus reminisces on a bygone state of comedy from the era when poets such as Crates were still practicing their craft.²⁷ The art of comedy in the age of Crates is called *trugōidopoiomousikē*, a compound that combines three different words, each of which is related to artistic creation: *trugōidia*, the synonym for comedy; *poiēma*, or some other word related to the idea that poetry is something “manufactured,”²⁸ and *mousikē*, which encompasses the entire range of activities associated with ancient performance culture as overseen by the Muses.²⁹ While *poiēma* and *mousikē* are applied to many types of literary artistry in antiquity, including comedy, they are associated especially with genres such as tragedy, and for comedy to be identified as *trugōidia* in close connection with those terms reinforces their association with tragedy.³⁰ That genre is thought of most naturally as the brand of poetry that belongs to the Muses.

These lines may also advance a specific claim about the comedies of Crates, in particular that they engaged in the sort of appropriation of tragic elements that would qualify a comedy to be labeled *trugōidia*. This possibility becomes all the more likely in

²⁷ Fr. 348, from the same play, suggests that the chorus traced a history of comedy as a genre. The parabasis of *Knights* addresses the same topic; Crates is mentioned there at lines 537-40.

²⁸ On poetry as a “made” object, see Ford (2002), 131-9.

²⁹ Murray and Wilson (2004).

³⁰ Ford (2002), 134, notes that Aristophanes makes much use of the suffix *-poios* to mock tragedy and tragedians. By contrast, he applied it sparingly to comedy; κωμωδοποιητής, *Peace* 734.

light of the history of the phrase “ivoried salt-fish,” which is identified in the fragment as an expression typical of Crates and is in fact found in one of his fragments. A character from his lost *Samians* declares (fr. 32):

σκυτίνη πότη' ἐν χύτρῳ τάριχος ἐλεφάντινον
ἦψε ποντιάς χελώνη πευκίνοισι κύμασιν,
καρκίνοι ποδήγεμοί τε καὶ τανύπτεροι λύκοι
ὑσοριμαχεῖν ἄνδρες οὐρανοῦ καττύματα.
παῖ' ἐκεῖνον, ἄλλ' ἐκεῖνον. ἐν Κέῳ τίς ἡμέρα;

Once in a leather cooking pot a sea turtle
boiled an ivoried salt-fish with pine-wood waves,
and wind-swift crabs and long-winged wolves...
...[corrupt]...men bits of the sky.
Strike that one, throttle that one. What is the day in Ceos?

This amounts to a series of nonsensical expressions and phrases. Crabs are rather slow, wolves do not have wings, and Ceos lacked a standardized calendar, making it impossible to determine the day on the island.³¹ In the case of the “wind-swift crabs” and “long-winged wolves,” the adjectives’ epic tone adds to the mismatched and riddling nature of the pairings.³² The phrase “ivoried salt-fish” too contains language seemingly lifted from the Homeric epics, in which ivory symbolizes the type of luxurious wealth that is associated with aristocratic life.³³ Yet a salt-fish is stereotypical of comedy, being mentioned a number of times by Aristophanes.³⁴ Part of the absurdity of the phrase “ivoried salt-fish” stems from pairing an adjective from epic with an item from comedy.

³¹ Cf. Eupolis fr. 288, for the lack of a calendar on Ceos.

³² ποδάνεμος; *Il.* 2.786; τανύπτερος; Hes. *Th.* 523. For the closely related τανυσίπτερος, see *Od.* 5.65 (with J.B. Hainsworth in Heubeck, et al. (1988)..262); 22.468; Hes. *WD* 212.

³³ On ivory in Homer, see Heubeck, et al. (1988), 197; Russo, et al. (1992), 62.

³⁴ “Salt-fish” in Aristophanes: *Knights* 1247; *Frogs* 558; *Acharnians* 967 and 1101; *Wasps* 491; *Peace* 563; fr. 207 and 639.

Although in its original context, Crates' expression "ivoried salt-fish" appears to parody epic language, Aristophanes labels it an example of *trugōiodopoiomousikē*, which would suggest parody of tragedy. The misnomer may not be a fatal error, however, but rather an intentional move on Aristophanes' part to fashion Crates as a comedian who engaged extensively with tragedy, in particular by appropriating tragic language. A fragment from another lost play by Crates, *Paidiai*, suggests that he did pay close attention to tragic language (fr. 28):

τοῖς δὲ τραγωδοῖς ἕτερος σεμνὸς πᾶσιν λόγος ἄλλος ὅδ' ἔστιν.

For all the tragedians, there is this whole other elevated style.

A character, perhaps the chorus, mocks tragedians for their stereotypical diction, which is described as an "elevated style."³⁵ This description, and in particular the adjective *semnos*, while presented in the fragment as befitting of tragic language, could easily be applied to the language that is characteristic of epic as well. Many ancient writers recognized that tragedy and epic shared an "elevated style," which is considered essential to the identity of both genres.³⁶ The two are, in effect, interchangeable as examples of genres that traffic in the same type of refined language. Aristophanes exploits that flexibility when he associates Crates' "ivoried salt-fish" with *trugōiodopoiomousikē*. Although Crates had borrowed markedly epic language for the phrase "ivoried salt-fish," Aristophanes recasts his predecessor's intergeneric engagement as tragic. And it seems that Crates, who mentioned tragedy's "elevated style" in his *Paidiai*, might not have

³⁵ For the focus on tragic language in the phrase "elevated style," see Miles (2009), 42-4 and Farmer (2013), 31.

³⁶ In his *Poetics*, Aristotle traces the genealogy of tragedy back through epic and to the inclination of "rather elevated people" (σεμνότεροι, 1448b25) to represent fine deeds in poetry. Aristotle comments on the "elevated diction" (λέξις σεμνή) of poetry in general at *Poetics* 1458ba21 and *Rhetoric* 1404b8. On tragedy's elevated style, see also Hunter (2009), 29-36; Rutherford (2012), esp. ch. 1.

objected to the revision. Even if *trugōidopoiomousikē* misrepresents Crates' engagement with the diction of other genres in the particular case of the "ivoried salt-fish," the compound nonetheless relies on the notion that different genres are governed by different standards with respect to their vocabulary. It suggests that tragedy, and through its allusion to Crates epic as well, favor an elevated register.

Most previous studies of *trugōidia* have focused on a few of its occurrences, especially its two earliest attestations as found in *Acharnians*, and as a result have emphasized how the family of words related to *trugōidia* seems to be connected quite closely with tragedy's ability to address political matters. Yet by adopting a comprehensive approach, we have been able to appreciate how *trugōidia* marks numerous facets of tragedy, not only the genre's tendency to contain political content, but also its language, choreography, and still other features. The nine references to *trugōidia* in Aristophanes' comedies reveal that the comedian had an expansive conception of tragedy, and this sense of expansiveness will only be strengthened as we turn now to investigate Aristophanes' use of terms, such as *tragikos*, directly related to tragedy.

Tragedy Unbound

Given the incessant attention that Aristophanes pays to tragedy in his comedies, it is impractical to document and discuss his every use *tragōidia* and related terms.³⁷ The fragment from *Gerytades* offers in the adjective *tragikos*, which Speaker B uses in reference to Meletus, the poet of "tragic choruses" (*tragikoi choroi*), a reasonable and

³⁷ *tragōidia*: *Ach.* 400, 412, 464; *Knights* 401; *Wasps* 1511; *Peace* 147; *Birds* 101, 1444; *Lys.* 138; *Thesm.* 450; *Frogs* 90, 95, 798, 800, 834, 862, 913, 935, 1120; *Wealth* 423. *tragōidos*: *Wasps* 1480, 1498, 1505; *Peace* 531, 806; *Birds* 512, 787; *Thesmo.* 391. *tragōideō*: *Clouds* 1091; *Thesmo.* 85. *tragōidopoiōs*: *Thesm.* 30. *tragōididaskalos*: *Thesm.* 88.

manageable approach, and in what follows we will examine the occurrences of *tragikos* and the closely related *tragōidikos* in Aristophanes' comedies as a means to gauge his definition of tragedy.³⁸ We will discover that the implicit definition of tragedy which emerges from Aristophanes' use of *tragikos* and *tragōidikos* overlaps to a large extent with the definition of tragedy that can be glimpsed through his use of *trugōidia*.

Nonetheless, *tragikos* and *tragōidikos* appear in contexts where characters direct attention to features of tragedy that are nowhere associated with the genre by means of references to *trugōidia*. The two adjectives confirm the impression gained from examining Aristophanes' use of *trugōidia*. That is, that in discussion of tragedy, any facet of the genre is a possible candidate for comment, and accordingly in Aristophanes' corpus the genre is defined in the broadest terms possible.

Tragedy in Frogs: A Political, Technical Art

Perhaps unsurprisingly, among Aristophanes' comedies *Frogs* contains the greatest concentration of the adjectives *tragikos* or *tragōidikos*, three of the seven occurrences. The definition of tragedy that becomes evident from the use of *tragikos* and *tragōidikos* in *Frogs* resembles quite closely the genre's definition that is established by the use of *trugōidia*. Like *trugōidia*, *tragikos* and *tragōidikos* appear in *Frogs* in contexts where either tragedy's engagement with politics or its aesthetic properties, in particular the distinctive style of its language, are being emphasized. In fact, in *Frogs* those two elements of tragedy are often twinned with one another at moments when tragedy is referred to as either *tragikos* or *tragōidikos*.

³⁸ *LSJ*, s.v., τραγικός, "generally, like τραγικός."

Tragedy's political dimension and artistic elements are presented as integral to the definition of the genre at the conclusion of *Frogs*, after Dionysus has selected Aeschylus as the best tragedian resident in the Underworld and the chorus reflects on the outcome of the competition. After first commenting on why Aeschylus won, the chorus turns to why Euripides lost (1491-9):

χαρίεν οὖν μὴ Σωκράτει
 παρακαθήμενον λαλεῖν,
 ἀποβαλόντα μουσικὴν
 τὰ τε μέγιστα παραλιπόντα
 τῆς τραγωδικῆς τέχνης.
 τὸ δ' ἐπὶ σεμνοῖσιν λόγοισι
 καὶ σκαριφησμοῖσι λήρων
 διατριβὴν ἄργον ποιεῖσθαι,
 παραφρονοῦντος ἀνδρός.

1495

So it is not pleasing to sit
 beside Socrates and chatter,
 tossing aside the arts
 and neglecting the most important
 parts of the *tragōidikē technē*.
 And to spend one's time lazily
 with highfalutin discussions
 and petty quibbles is the mark
 of a deranged man.

The list is not small and includes a mixture of both general and particular faults on Euripides' part. Among the former category might be grouped his "tossing aside the arts" and "neglecting the most important parts of the *tragōidikē technē*," and among the latter his sitting and chattering beside Socrates and spending his time engrossed in "highfalutin discussions" and "petty quibbles." Although Euripides' shortcomings manifest themselves in various ways, the chorus lumps them under the expression "it is not pleasing" (χαρίεν οὖν μὴ). With that phrase, the chorus indicates that Euripides' failings as a tragedian are a direct consequence of his inability to make poetry that pleases in

terms of its artistry.³⁹ Euripides' tragedies are simply bad, of poor artistic quality, and tragedy as a genre is defined in terms of its aesthetic components.

Even as the chorus focuses most explicitly on the artistic side of tragedy, it still alludes to the political. The dual nature of tragedy becomes clear when the chorus' comments about Euripides' faults are set against the backdrop of Dionysus' judgment in favor of Aeschylus. Pluto eventually compels Dionysus, who had put off making his decision and was seemingly willing to allow the contest to go on indefinitely, to render a verdict. He first tries to judge between the poets on the basis of the political guidance each gives, yet he fails in his attempt, thereby suggesting that both give good political advice (1418ff.).⁴⁰ After the impasse, he allows his "soul" (ψυχή) to decide and chooses Aeschylus (1467ff).⁴¹ In allowing his personal opinion rather than considerations of utility to be the ultimate guide for his decision, Dionysus implies that both tragedians demonstrate competence in writing about political matters but only Aeschylus combines a useful political perspective with pleasing poetry. When the chorus lists the reasons that Euripides lost, including his neglect of *tragōidikē technē*, it recapitulates Dionysus' assessment. A political agenda is presumed to be essential to tragedy even while distinctions are drawn between tragedians on the basis of artistic criteria.

An earlier use of *tragōidikos* in *Frogs* attests to a nearly identical conception of tragedy, as a genre expected to meet certain high standards of artistic merit while also containing content that is relevant to political life. Towards the middle of the play an

³⁹ Dover (1993), 20-1.

⁴⁰ Dover (1993), 19-20.

⁴¹ For a recent treatment of Dionysus' change in approach, see Hunter (2009), 36-8, with further bibliography.

unnamed slave of Pluto explains to Xanthias, the servant of Dionysus, the custom in the Underworld whereby the best practitioners of certain fields receive a special seat, or throne, which they occupy while dining with Pluto in a reserved area (761-9):

Slave: νόμος τις ἐνθάδ' ἐστὶ κείμενος,
ἀπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν, ὅσαι μεγάλαι καὶ δεξιαί,
τὸν ἄριστον ὄντα τῶν ἑαυτοῦ συντέχνων
σίτησιν αὐτὸν ἐν πρυτανείῳ λαμβάνειν
θρόνον τε τοῦ Πλούτωνος ἐξῆς—

Xanthias: μανθάνω. 765

S: ἕως ἀφίκοιτο τὴν τέχνην σοφώτερος
ἕτερός τις αὐτοῦ· τότε δὲ παραχωρεῖν ἔδει.

X: τί δῆτα τουτὶ τεθορύβηκεν Αἰσχύλον;

S: ἐκεῖνος εἶχε τὸν τραγωδικὸν θρόνον,
ὥς ὢν κράτιστος τὴν τέχνην

Slave: There is a certain custom established here,
that among the crafts, those that are important and worthy,
the one who is best among his fellow practitioners
takes his meal in the dining hall and
has a throne beside Pluto's...

Xanthias: I get it. 765

S: until another one more skilled in the craft
arrives. Then it is necessary to vacate.

X: So why has this stirred up Aeschylus?

S: That one used to have the *tragōidikos* throne,
as he was the most accomplished in his craft.

The slave goes on to explain that the recently deceased Euripides has challenged Aeschylus' possession of the "tragic throne" (*tragōidikon thronon*), necessitating the competition between the poets that will determine who is the best tragedian in the Underworld. As we have just seen, Aeschylus is the victor, although he does not get to

continue to enjoy the perquisites that come with the title he has won because Dionysus returns to Athens with the poet in tow. Aeschylus, before departing, commands Sophocles to hold the throne in his stead and prohibits Euripides from ever ascending to it (1515-23). The existence of a tragic throne and its concomitant privileges is noteworthy insofar as it indicates that tragedy is a particular type of activity. The slave reveals that not every activity has a throne reserved for its foremost representative, but only those that are considered *technai* (crafts), and in a further division, only a particular subset of all *technai*, those that are also “important and worthy” (*megalai kai dexiai*). Only because tragedy falls into that select group is there a tragic throne whose occupancy is in question.⁴² In explaining the origin of the quarrel between Aeschylus and Euripides, the slave delimits ever more precisely and narrowly a set of associations for tragedy.

The slave offers a particular vision of tragedy that maps almost perfectly onto the conception of the genre that the chorus offers when it explains why Euripides lost the contest to Aeschylus. In the first place, the slave claims that tragedy is a *technē*, and we have already seen that the chorus speaks of the *tragōdikē technē*. Tragedy’s designation as a *technē* associates the genre with number of other pursuits, including carpentry, metal-working, weaving, cobbling, farming, administering medicine, delivering prophecies, practicing politics, composing speeches, and others.⁴³ Identifying poetry as a *technē* seems to have become ever more popular over the course of the fifth century.⁴⁴

⁴² The fragment from *Gerytades* also designates tragedy, comedy, and dithyramb as *technai*, but does not refer to them as “great and skillful.”

⁴³ On the varieties of *technai* in antiquity, see Kube (1969), ch. 1; Pollitt (1974), 32-7; Roochnik (1996), ch.1.

⁴⁴ Verdenius (1983), 23-4.

What unites the various activities deemed “crafts” is the expectation that their practice requires expertise. Only those who have precise knowledge about a particular *technē* can produce the desired result of that craft. For instance, only a poet can make a poem, which is the result of possessing an understanding of what are the various components of a poem and the proper methods by which they are to be combined so that they form a poem. For tragedy to be included among the ranks of *technai* indicates that the genre was understood as a specialized field with its own set of rules and conventions, which, when adhered to, led to the production of a specific result, a tragedy.⁴⁵

Not only do the slave and chorus share an understanding of tragedy as a *technē*, they both associate tragedy’s identity as a craft with the same two elements, namely tragedy’s political usefulness and artistry. The slave alludes to these two dimensions of tragedy when he specifies that tragedy is, beyond just any *technē*, one that is also “important and worthy” (*megalē kai dexia*). The two parts of his expression refer respectively to tragedy’s inclusion of political content and its artistic qualities. The particular sense of “important” as used by the slave in *Frogs* is made clear by comparison with a moment from Aristophanes’ *Peace* where the chorus refers to dramatic poetry, in this case comedy, as a *technē* and describes it as “important” (748-50):

τοιαῦτ’ ἀφελὼν κακὰ καὶ φόρτον καὶ βωμολοχεύματ’ ἀγεννῇ
ἐποίησε τέχνην μεγάλην ὑμῖν κάπύργωσ’ οἰκοδομήσας
ἔπεσιν μεγάλοις καὶ διανοίαις καὶ σκώμμασιν οὐκ ἀγοραίους

Having removed such terrible things, trash, and ignoble buffoonery
he made our craft important by building it up to towering heights
with great words and thoughts and uncommon jokes.

⁴⁵ The tendency to conceive of tragedy as a *technē* seems only to have increased over time. In later periods, theater practitioners such as actors were called “Artists (*Technitai*) of Dionysus,” on which see *DFA*, 279ff., and recently Hanink (2014), 231-4

The surrounding parts of the parabasis explain in more detail the changes that have been wrought by Aristophanes and have elicited the chorus' praises (739ff.).⁴⁶ Before Aristophanes, comedians had relied on cheap and inconsequential humor, jokes about rags or lice or food-crazed Heracles or misbehaving, beaten slaves, but Aristophanes has transformed the genre by redirecting its focus to political matters. While still full of jokes, gags, and other humorous elements, Aristophanic comedy mocks corrupt politicians instead of common people. In recognition of Aristophanes' new approach, the chorus credits him with making comedy, identified as a *technē*, "important" (*megalē*). The chorus suggests that comedy's "importance" is a new quality for the genre and locates its origin in the shift from an apolitical to a political brand of comedy that has been inaugurated by Aristophanes. The comedy of Aristophanes' predecessors could not support the chorus' description because it did not concern itself with political topics. According to the chorus of *Peace*, for comedy to be an "important *technē*," it must address political matters. The same applies for tragedy and its status as an "important *technē*" in *Frogs*.⁴⁷

The adjective "worthy," used by the chorus of *Frogs* to describe the particular subset of crafts to which tragedy belongs, brings into the fold alongside tragedy's political dimension its artistic side. *Dexios* is a term that is applied to someone or something as a result of one's personal judgment, as a passage from early in *Frogs*

⁴⁶ *Wasps* 1025ff. contains similar claims on behalf of Aristophanes, and *Wasps* 1029-37 and *Peace* 751-60 are nearly identical. Olson (1998), 220-1, notes the few major differences.

⁴⁷ To describe a literary genre as "important" may also make a joke on the idea that it is fat, for the adjective *megalē* can indicate physical size. See Hunter (2009), 10. Later in *Frogs*, Euripides complains that upon inheriting tragedy from Aeschylus, he had to take it on constitutionals in order to reduce its heft (939-44), and at one point the two tragedians' phrases are weighed in comparison with one another, with Aeschylus' being judged heavier (1363ff.); cf. Wright (2012), 137.

indicates.⁴⁸ Dionysus, who has come to Heracles to seek advice for how to complete a successful trip to Hades, reveals that he plans to descend to the Underworld because he is “in need of a worthy poet” (δέομαι ποιητοῦ δεξιοῦ, 71), namely Euripides. When Dionysus quotes a few brief selections to support his claim that Euripides is “worthy” (98-102) Heracles balks, dismissing as worthless rubbish the very phrases that Dionysus had just praised.⁴⁹ The merits of their respective positions are less important than the mere existence of disagreement between Heracles and Dionysus, for their differing opinions show that the debate about whether or not Euripides is *dexios* depends on subjective assessments. Personal taste in judging poetry also plays a role in the chorus’ claim at the end of *Frogs*, already examined, that Euripides’ poetry is “not pleasing” (1491-99). The chorus’ and Heracles’ adverse reactions to Euripides’ poetry stem from a common source, the notion that Euripides makes tragedies that are artistically inadequate. To claim that a tragedy is *dexios* is to express approval of the work’s artistry.⁵⁰ To say the same about a poet, as Dionysus does of Euripides, is to commend that poet for making poetry that is *dexios*. And to apply the adjective to a whole field of activity, as the slave in *Frogs* does when he describes tragedy as a *technē* that is *dexia*, is to indicate that the products made in that field, namely tragedies, are subject to personal assessments of their artistic merits.

Frogs in its entirety can be understood as a comedy that affirms tragedy’s identity as an “important and worthy *technē*,” in that tragedy is a craft that adopts a political

⁴⁸ On the semantic range of *dexios*, see Dover (1993), 13-4.

⁴⁹ For the Euripidean originals, and Dionysus’ misremembering of them, see Dover (1993), 203, and Hunter (2009), 132.

⁵⁰ Cf. Strattis fr. 1 for Euripides’ *Orestes* as his “most worthy drama” (δρᾶμα δεξιότατον), with Miles (2009), 121-6.

stance and admits subjective evaluations about its artistry.⁵¹ While the political dimension of tragedy seems fairly straightforward – tragedy is supposed to provide political guidance – its artistic dimension is rather nebulous, if only because neither the slave nor Dionysus identifies what particular aspect of tragedy they considered is essential to its artistry. Despite their silence, on the one occasion when the adjective *tragikos* is used in *Frogs*, it is suggested that tragedy’s language is an essential part of the genre’s artistry. Towards the beginning of the contest between Euripides and Aeschylus, the chorus attempts to induce Aeschylus to respond to Euripides’ taunts (1004-5):

ἀλλ’ ὃ πρῶτος τῶν Ἑλλήνων πυργώσας ῥήματα σεμνὰ
καὶ κοσμήσας τραγικὸν λῆρον, θαρρῶν τὸν κρουνὸν ἀφίει.

But you who were first of the Hellenes to have erected towers of lofty phrases
and to have adorned tragic babble, take courage and release your torrent

The claim recalls, even repeating exact words from, the statement made by the chorus of *Peace* about Aristophanes, and the meaning of the two passages is similar.⁵² According to the chorus of *Frogs*, Aeschylus marks an important watershed in the history of tragedy. Coincident with and because of Aeschylus’ career, the genre entered a new phase in which it was radically different from its old form. Regardless of the historicity of the claim, the construction of a history of tragedy is meaningful in its own right. It recognizes that tragedy has certain elements which are distinct to it and whose genesis requires explanation. In this case, the chorus lays out a brief history of one specific element of tragedy: its diction. Aeschylus is credited with both elevating tragedy’s “phrases” to lofty heights, presumably in contrast to their former pedestrian quality, and adorning “tragic

⁵¹ Dover (1993), 10-24.

⁵² *Peace* 749. Cf. also Pherecrates fr. 100, with Hanink and Uhlig (forthcoming).

babble” so that it no longer elicited this disparagement.⁵³ Of all of the various components of tragedy that might be considered part of its artistry, such as its plot construction, character development, dramaturgy, and others, the chorus isolates tragedy’s language, in particular the style and tone of that language, which is now refined instead of quotidian.

New Directions in the Definition of Tragedy: Tragic Emotions and Events

The definition of tragedy that can be derived from examining the uses of *tragikos* and *tragōdikos* in *Frogs* adheres quite closely to the definition of the genre that we have already seen in our investigation into Aristophanes’ use of the family of words related to *trugōidia*. The three terms tend to appear in contexts where there is an evident interest in tragedy’s political commentary and artistic elements, above all its language. Yet, our discussion of the three remaining uses of the adjectives *tragikos* and *tragōdikos* in Aristophanes’ corpus will demonstrate that tragedy’s definition exceeds the strictly political or artistic.⁵⁴ On two occasions, it is suggested that the experience of watching a tragedy causes pain and fear. On another, tragedy is associated closely with the types of stories it relates, in particular mortals’ ambitious attempts to challenge the immortals. To tragedy’s definition is added new components: the emotional responses it engenders on the part of its spectators and the hubristic events that form the bulk of its content. While

⁵³ The lemma of the scholium to the line in manuscript *V* records τραγικὸν κληρὸν, “tragic inheritance,” which is printed in the current *OCT*. I do not follow the *OCT* in this instance, its reading does not alter the chorus’ focus, which is still on tragic diction. Aeschylus “adorned the tragic inheritance” by “building up towers of lofty phrases.” On the two readings, see Dover (1993), 317-8, who keeps λῆρον, and Wilson (2007), 176-7, where he justifies κληρὸν as printed in his *OCT*.

⁵⁴ A reference to τραγωδικοὶ χοροὶ may occur at *Thesmo.* 391, but the most recent *OCT* prints τραγωδοὶ καὶ χοροί, a reading which I follow. The passage is therefore not discussed. See also Austin and Olson (2004), 391.

these dimensions of tragedy have assumed a prominent place in the tradition of commentary on the genre, especially in the wake of Aristotle's *Poetics*, Aristophanes presents a notably early articulation of their relationship with tragedy.

In *Acharnians*, Dicaeopolis suggests that, although a number of different feelings and emotions might occur in the course of watching a tragic performance, pain is essential to that experience. At the start of the comedy, he claims that his life has been littered by many unfortunate events, which have been balanced by too few genuine joys. Among the calamities he has suffered, he includes one that coincided with his attendance of a tragic performance (9-12):

ἀλλ' ὠδυνήθην ἕτερον αὖ τραγῳδικόν,
ὅτε δὴ 'κεχήνη προσδοκῶν τὸν Αἰσχύλον,
ὁ δ' ἀνεῖπεν, "εἴσαγ', ὦ Θεόγνι, τὸν χορόν".
πῶς τοῦτ' ἔσεισέ μου δοκεῖς τὴν καρδίαν;

But I felt still another pain, a tragic one,
when I was waiting with mouth agape for Aeschylus,
but the announcer declared, "Theognis, bring on your chorus."
How do you think this shook my heart?

According to Dicaeopolis, the moments before a tragedy begins induce anticipation, excitement, and even anxiety. Yet he singles out pain, which he felt when he learned that a tragedy of Theognis, not of Aeschylus, would be performed that day, as the response that is most closely aligned with the experience of watching a tragedy.⁵⁵ It is his pain, and not any other emotion or feeling, that Dicaeopolis labels as "tragic" (*tragōidikon*). The description of the pain as "tragic" is fitting in a literal sense, in that Dicaeopolis felt it while awaiting a tragedy. But it seems that, beyond the strictly literal explanation for Dicaeopolis' use of *tragōidikos*, he means to suggest that there is a special relationship

⁵⁵ Elsewhere in Aristophanes, Theognis is noted for his "frigid" style; cf. *Ach.* 138-40, *Thesm.* 170. For other testimony about the poet, cf. *TrGF* 28.

between tragedy and pain. Along with the disappointment of having to watch a tragedy by Theognis, Dicaeopolis mentions a few other painful and joyful experiences in his life, each of which involves a musical performance of some kind.⁵⁶ Yet only for the tragic performance does Dicaeopolis describe his response with an adjective, *tragōidikos*, that signals the genre in question. For instance, the torture of having to endure Chaeris' performance of what is known as the Orthian nome is called neither "Orthian" nor "nomic" (15-6). The pain felt while watching a tragedy warrants a genre-specific description as "tragic."

Ancient commentators, when they have tried to explain why Dicaeopolis has described his painful experience as "tragic," seem to have recognized that Dicaeopolis' use of the adjective *tragōidikos* in this context attests to pain's centrality for tragedy as a genre. The *Suda*, relying on the Aristophanic scholion to the line, suggests that *tragōidikos* means (τ Adler 900, cf. schol. ad *Ach.* 9a, Koster p. 8):

ἐμπαθές. ἐπεὶ περ καὶ ἡ τραγωδία ἐμπαθῶν πραγμάτων ἀπαγγελτική, ἢ ἐπειδὴ περὶ τραγωδίας μέλλει λέγειν

emotional. [The term is used] since tragedy is expressive of emotional events, or since he intends to speak about tragedy

The explanation presented in the *Suda* recognizes that Dicaeopolis has used *tragōidikos* for a reason other than that he simply refers to an event that occurred while waiting to watch a tragedy. The adjective cannot be explained solely in literal terms. Its resonance runs more deeply, and the *Suda* suggests that *tragōidikos* is appropriate as a description for pain because pain itself is a common component of tragedy. Moreover, a third resonance of *tragōidikos* may be added to the two that the *Suda* has identified.

Dicaeopolis' pain seems to be a stereotypical tragic pain. Its manifestation is similar to

⁵⁶ Olson (2002), 67-71.

the ways that tragic characters feel pain. Dicaeopolis' "tragic" pain is simultaneously mental and physical. Brought on by his expectations of an Aeschylean tragedy being overturned, it causes his heart to shake. Many of the painful events experienced by characters in tragedies entail the same sort of dual response, both mental and physical. In tragedy, an unexpected revelation that affects a character's emotional state often leads to physical suffering.⁵⁷ Dicaeopolis, by using the adjective *tragōidikos* to describe his pain, has captured a quintessential element of tragedy.

A use of *tragōidikos* in *Wealth* adds fear to the set of responses available to a spectator who watches a tragedy. Moreover, it also becomes clear from this example that one of the means by which tragedy causes fear is through terrifying visual effects. Just as the protagonist of the comedy, Chremylus, and his friend Blepsidemus are about to enter the former's house, where the god Wealth awaits to be taken to the Sanctuary of Asclepius so that he can be cured of his blindness and disperse his benefits more justly and evenly throughout society, the goddess Poverty appears on stage to halt the pair (415ff.).⁵⁸ Although Poverty does not in the end dissuade Chremylus and Blepsidemus from proceeding with their plan, she does delay them for a time, in large part because she is a character marked by tragic attributes.⁵⁹ Her sudden appearance on stage has been compared to a *deus ex machina* as is commonly found in tragedy.⁶⁰ And as typically

⁵⁷ See the case of Oedipus, who learns that he has killed his father and married and fathered children with his mother. In his mental anguish, he gruesomely stabs out his eyes. Aristotle cites Oedipus when discussing "reversals" and "recognitions" in tragedies at *Poetics* 1452a21ff. Dicaeopolis' pain in many ways fits Aristotle's model.

⁵⁸ On the worship of Asclepeius in Athens, see Sommerstein (2001), 8-13.

⁵⁹ Poverty remains on stage for nearly 200 lines, not departing until 610. The merits of the two sides' arguments have been much discussed; see Konstan and Dillon (1981); Olson (1990).

⁶⁰ Revermann (2006), 284.

occurs when a divine being appears unannounced to the characters of a tragedy, the mortals who witness Poverty's epiphany experience momentary paralysis, stopping whatever they are doing and directing all their attention to the deity.

As soon as Poverty appears, Chremylus and Blepsidemus venture a few guesses about who exactly this figure is. Their hypotheses reaffirm Poverty's status as a tragic character while also associating that identity most closely with her terrifying appearance. The companions look in particular to their adversary's physical traits for clues about her identity (422-5):

Chremylus: σὺ δ' εἴ τίς <ῶ γραῦ;> γραῦς γὰρ εἶναί μοι δοκεῖς.

Blepsidemus: ἴσως Ἐρινύς ἐστὶν ἐκ τραγωδίας·
βλέπει γέ τοι μανικόν τι καὶ τραγωδικόν.

Ch: ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔχει γὰρ δᾶδας

Chremylus: But who are you <old woman?> For you look like an old woman to me.

Blepsidemus: Perhaps she is a Fury from tragedy,
at the least she has a certain mad and tragic look.

Ch.: But she doesn't have torches.

The two adjectives that Blepsidemus uses to describe Poverty's appearance, "mad and tragic," are appropriate given his surmise that she is a Fury. Furies were something of a tragic stock figure, serving as the chorus and one of the principal characters of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, being invoked in numerous other fifth-century tragedies, and becoming "something of a cliché in fourth-century tragedy."⁶¹ It is possible that Blepsidemus, having in mind a specific tragedy that featured Furies as characters,

⁶¹ Cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 1186ff., *Cho.* 1048ff., *Eum.* passim; Eur. *Or.* 316-23. Quotation from Sommerstein (2001), 168, with reference to this passage and also Aeschin. *In Tim.* 1.190, on which see also Fisher (2001), 348-9.

imagines that a single Fury has escaped from that production in order to confront him and Chremylus.⁶² His claim that this Fury looks “mad” redoubles the associations with tragedy, for Furies are regularly characterized as mad in the genre.⁶³ In addition, their own madness tends to induce the same state in those whom they afflict.⁶⁴ The two elements of Blepsidemus’ description thus coincide. Furies are quintessential tragic characters who are quintessentially mad and maddening.

While Poverty, misconstrued as a Fury, does not make Blepsidemus and Chremylus go mad, she does frighten them. When she first enters, she shocks the friends into paralysis so that Blepsidemus shrieks in fright (417), and slightly later Chremylus must stop the cowardly Blepsidemus from fleeing in terror (439-40). The men’s frightful response points to another of the primary attributes of the Furies in tragedy. They were renowned for the terrifying impression they made on those who saw them. In Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*, the Pythia can barely express her horror upon seeing the creatures in the sanctuary of Apollo, and the later *Life of Aeschylus* reports that, according to some people, when the chorus of Furies finally appeared on stage in that tragedy they stunned the audience, causing young children to faint and pregnant women to have miscarriages.⁶⁵ Even if the claims of the *Life* are dubious, they nonetheless attest to a widespread notion

⁶² Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* is the natural candidate for the tragedy to which Blepsidemus refers, given its popularity and influence throughout the fifth century, but it is impossible to determine if Blepsidemus refers specifically to this or any other representation of the Furies in tragedy. See Sfyroeras (1995), 242-3; Sommerstein (2001), 168; Farmer (2013), 156-7. Cantarella (1965) argues on the basis of these lines that sometime soon before *Wealth* Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* had been restaged; this suggestion has been generally discredited. See Olson (1990), 233n.36, followed by Sfyroeras (1995), 243n.35.

⁶³ Aesch. *Eum.* 67, 499-502.

⁶⁴ Aesch. *Cho.* 1021ff., *Eum.* 328-33; Eur. *Or.* 34-8.

⁶⁵ Aesch. *Eum.*, 34ff.; *Vita Aeschyli* 9.

that Furies are supposed to be scary in terms of their physical appearance.⁶⁶ Poverty, in her role as a tragic Fury, is no exception. While she may not actually be a Fury, she is as terrifying as one as a result of her physical attributes.⁶⁷

With regard to Poverty's terrifying, tragic appearance, it is important to note that even when Poverty reveals that she is not a Fury at line 437, her physical traits remain just as Blepsidemus has described them, that is "mad and tragic." Given the particular resonance of "mad and tragic" in the context of Blepsidemus' identification of Poverty as a Fury, it might seem reasonable to conclude that he chooses the two adjectives because he thinks the unknown woman a Fury from a tragedy. The order of the clauses, with the claim about the woman's identity as a Fury occurring before the observation about her appearance as made and tragic, certainly gives that impression. Yet Blepsidemus' description and identification have the opposite relationship. He sees a woman whose appearance seems to him "mad and tragic," and as a result of the impression he concludes that she must be a Fury. The relative confidence with which Blepsidemus makes his two statements supports that hierarchy. He qualifies his claim that the woman is a Fury with the adverb "perhaps," but he declares with certainty that she has a "mad and tragic look." The particles used by Blepsidemus make clear that his statements move logically from description to identification and not vice versa. The combination of $\gamma\epsilon$ and $\tau\omicron\iota$ "impl[ies] that the assertion is the least that one can say."⁶⁸ In other words, Blepsidemus feels that

⁶⁶ On the doubtful authenticity of many of the notices in ancient lives, see Lefkowitz (2012).

⁶⁷ Whether Furies in tragedy were ugly or beautiful, they were unquestionably terrifying. The same applies for Poverty in *Wealth*, regardless of whether she wore attractive tragic or grotesque comic costume. For the physical attributes of the Furies in tragedy, see Garvie (1986), 344-7; Sommerstein (1989), 91, 93, 271; Revermann (2005), 11. On Poverty, Sfyroeras (1995), 242-5; Revermann (2006), 286; Farmer (2013), 157.

⁶⁸ *LSJ*, s.v., $\gamma\epsilon$ I.5. Cf. also Denniston (1954), 550-1.

he and Chremylus can agree that the old woman looks “mad and tragic,” even if they can not say with certainty who exactly she is. When confronted with a terrifying sight, Blepsidemus resorts to “tragic” as the most fitting description of what he sees, whether or not the terrifying thing actually belongs, in formal terms, to tragedy. He indicates that fear is a common response when presented with a tragic sight and, by extension, when viewing a tragedy.

The final use of *tragikos* in a comedy by Aristophanes reveals that certain events comprise the store of stories from which poets should draw for the contents of their tragedies. Moreover, the types of events that are most suited to tragedy are out of place when they appear in other genres. As tragedy’s natural contents are defined by this use of *tragikos*, they are associated quite closely with interactions between mortals and immortals. Stories about the divine are a natural part of tragedy.

In Aristophanes’ *Peace*, Trygaeus’ daughter advises her father to fly to heaven on the horse Pegasus instead of the dung-beetle he has chosen for the trip (127-36):

Daughter: τίς δ’ ἡ ’πίνοιά σου σὲ τὴν ὥστε κύνθαρρον
ζεῦξαντ’ ἐλαύνειν εἰς θεοὺς, ὦ παππία;

Trygaeus: ἐν τοῖσιν Αἰσώπου λόγοις ἐξηυρέθη
μόνος πετηνῶν εἰς θεοὺς ἀφιγμένος. 130

D: ἄπιστον εἶπας μῦθον, ὦ πάτερ πάτερ,
ὅπως κάκοσμον ζῶον ἦλθεν εἰς θεοὺς.

T: ἦλθεν κατ’ ἔχθραν αἰετοῦ πάλαι ποτέ,
ὦ’ ἐκκυλίνδων κύντιτιμωρούμενος.

D: οὐκ οὐκ ἐχρῆν σε Πηγάσου ζεῦξαι πτερόν,
ὅπως ἐφαίνου τοῖς θεοῖς τραγικώτερος; 135

Daughter: What is your intention in yoking
a dung-beetle and riding it to the gods, daddy?

Trygaeus: In the stories of Aesop this winged beast
alone has been found to be able to reach the gods. 130

D: Your story is incredible, dear father, father,
of how this smelly beast came to the gods.

T: Once long ago it came in enmity against an eagle,
avenging itself by rolling the eagle's eggs out of the nest.

D: Well then shouldn't you have yoked the wings of Pegasus, 135
so that you would have appeared more tragic to the gods?

To his daughter's final query about why he has not chosen Pegasus as his steed, Trygaeus responds that the dung-beetle costs less to maintain than Pegasus. Unlike a horse such as Pegasus, the dung-beetle does not require its own supply of food, but can subsist on whatever bodily waste Trygaeus produces. Regardless of those practical, humorous considerations, Trygaeus and his daughter frame his decision in terms of affiliations with different genres. On the one side, Trygaeus' preference for a dung-beetle aligns him with the fables of Aesop, and Trygaeus cites an episode from those stories as a precedent for the insect's ability to ascend to the gods.⁶⁹ His daughter counters with a proposal on behalf of tragedy in the form of Pegasus, who famously carried Bellerophon toward the gods in heaven before the hero was cast back down to earth. Pegasus and Bellerophon are particularly apt symbols for tragedy in light of Euripides' tragedy on the subject, which Aristophanes parodies extensively in *Peace*.⁷⁰ Due to the literary background, when Trygaeus' daughter says that Trygaeus would appear "more tragic" were he to ride Pegasus, her statement carries a quite literal meaning: Trygaeus would be like Bellerophon, a hero in tragedy. She even reinforces the literal meaning when she later warns Trygaeus not to fall off his dung-beetle, for if he did, he would resemble

⁶⁹ For the Aesopic precedent see Olson (1998), xxxiv-xxxv.

⁷⁰ Rau (1967), 89-97 and Olson (1998), xxxii-xxxiv.

Bellerophon even more closely and provide Euripides with material for making a tragedy (146-8). As he prepares to ascend to heave, Trygaeus has two options, a tragic, Euripidean one and a non-tragic, Aesopic one.

Although the dung-beetle and Pegasus are both potential means of conveyance, Trygaeus' daughter implies that the latter one, which is associated with tragedy, is the more proper choice because it is consistent with Trygaeus' aims of flying through the air to meet the gods. That such a plan is inherently tragic is made clear as a result of the daughter's claim that if Trygaeus were to ride on Pegasus, he would appear "more tragic." The comparative degree of the adjective is important. It indicates that Trygaeus is already tragic in some way, namely, because of his imminent departure for the sky. The addition of Pegasus will only add to the tragic aura of the event. Trygaeus' activity is, at base, tragic, and his daughter therefore reacts with shock when her father claims that he found inspiration for yoking the dung-beetle in the fables of Aesop. She dismisses his claim as "unbelievable," condemning both its absurdity and untrustworthiness. From what she knows of the proper means to ascend to heaven, where only sweet aromas are welcome, a malodorous animal like a dung-beetle should not be able to accomplish that feat, and for Aesop's fables to declare otherwise is misleading.⁷¹ While the daughter seems to accept eventually that a dung-beetle can make the journey, and that such a story might plausibly be contained in an Aesopic fable, her insistence that Trygaeus should take Pegasus indicates that tragedy is the most appropriate home for such events. Certain

⁷¹ The stench of the dung-beetle is repeatedly stressed; cf. 39-40. Its smell stands in contrast to the sweet aroma associated with the arrival of Peace, described by Trygaeus at 530ff. It is worth noting that Trygaeus likens Peace's odor to "the Dionysia, *auloi*, tragic poets, songs of Sophocles, thrushes, the *epyllia* of Euripides." Genres like comedy or Aesop's fables have no place among such aromatics.

types of events are characteristic of particular genres, and communing with the gods, even the simple attempt to do so, belongs to tragedy.

Conclusion

The case of Trygaeus and his tragic attempt to ride a dung-beetle to heaven brings our examination of tragedy's definition in Aristophanes' comedies back to where it began, that is, to the use of the noun *trugōidia*, the replacement for *kōmōidia* that presumes an implicit definition of tragedy. Trygaeus' name sounds very much like tragedy and it has been suggested that Trygaeus is the prototypical hero of comedy in its tragic guise, in other words, *trugōidia*.⁷² In our discussion of *trugōidia*, we saw that, although *trugōidia* is often understood as alluding to tragedy's political aims, it is necessary to modify that common understanding of the term in order to take account of all of the occasions when Aristophanes uses it. *Trugōidia* also marks tragedy's language, choreography, modes of speech like prayers, as well as other elements of the genre. The project of expanding tragedy's definition has continued with our analysis of the adjectives *tragikos* and *tragōidikos*, thanks to which tragedy's definition has come to encompass the emotions and events that are characteristic of the genre. The definition of tragedy that is articulated by Aristophanes is multifarious and nearly without boundaries.

Dithyramb, the Circular Chorus

If the previous discussion has given the the impression that tragedy's definition is ever expanding in Aristophanes' comedies, it would seem that dithyramb's definition is stunted before it can begin any growth. "Circular chorus" (*kuklios choros*), the phrase

⁷² Olson (1998), 105; Hall (2006), 328-35.

which Speaker B in the fragment from *Gerytades* uses to describe the work of the dithyrambic poet Cinesias, was a common synonym for dithyramb in antiquity. In most ancient sources, the phrase refers to the regular dancing formation of the members of the dithyrambic chorus, who were supposed to have formed a circle around the aulete who accompanied their singing and dancing. Aristophanes too uses *kuklios choros* in that usual sense. Yet he does not restrict its meaning to matters of choreography, but uses the phrase also to refer to the type of poetic language found in a dithyramb, its structure, the meaning of its contents, and still other features of the genre. Aristophanes' comedies are thus unlike other ancient sources in that in them dithyramb's identity as a "circular chorus" is defined not solely in terms of the dancing formation typical of the genre. Rather, Aristophanes' use of the expression *kuklios choros* is akin to his use of the terms *tragikos*, *tragōidikos*, and *tragōidia*, which attest to an expansive and multifaceted definition of tragedy. The definitions of tragedy and dithyramb that emerge in Aristophanes' comedies are articulated along similar lines, with attention paid to numerous aspects of each genre, and that similarity in the definitions of tragedy and dithyramb is possible only because Aristophanes radically redefines the meaning of the phrase "circular chorus," at least compared to its use in most other ancient sources.

The Circular Chorus before and after Aristophanes

In order to appreciate how Aristophanes articulates his particular definition of the dithyrambic "circular chorus," it is necessary to dwell at some length on the history, both ancient and modern, of the relationship between the performance-genre dithyramb and the phrase "circular chorus." That "circular chorus" served in antiquity as a synonym for

dithyramb is made clear by a scholion to Aeschines' *Against Timarchus* which expands on a comment made by Aeschines about training boys for performance in "circular choruses."⁷³ The scholiast sets Aeschines' reference within the framework of the choral competitions held at Athens in honor of Dionysus. Each of the ten Athenian tribes provided one chorus of men and one of youths, and within the two classifications, the choruses of each tribe contended with one another in the competition in "dithyramb" (διθύραμβος).⁷⁴ While the scholion refers specifically to "dithyramb," Aeschines had mentioned "circular choruses," and in order to account for the apparent discrepancy in terminology a comment is added to the effect that "the dithyramps are called *choroi kuklioi* and *choros kuklios*" (λέγονται δ' οἱ διθύραμβοι χοροὶ κύκλιοι καὶ χορὸς κύκλιος). The term and phrase are simply two ways to refer to the same performance.

Ancient testimony such as the straightforward declaration provided by the scholion to *Against Timarchus* gave rise to the widespread notion in modern scholarship that the phrase "circular chorus" referred in all instances to dithyrambic choruses.⁷⁵ Recently, however, scholars have reassessed the ancient evidence and concluded that "circular chorus" does not always mean dithyramb.⁷⁶ They have demonstrated that the phrase designated a broad category of choral performances, of which dithyramb was a single member. As a result of the recent reevaluation, if a performance is labeled a "circular chorus," that designation is no longer sufficient by itself to prove that the

⁷³ Schol. Aesch. *In Tim.* 1.10 (29 p.15 Dilts).

⁷⁴ At *DTC*, 36, the scholion is interpreted as evidence that there were only ten dithyrambic choruses in total at the Dionysia, five in each age category. The conclusion has been changed at *DFA*, 75, to reflect the current consensus of twenty choruses total, ten in each age category.

⁷⁵ *DTC*, 32: "The name 'circular chorus', which always means dithyramb..."

⁷⁶ Käppel (2000); Fearn (2007), 165ff; Ceccarelli (2013); D'Alessio (2013).

performance was a dithyramb. For instance, the speaker of Lysias 21 cites his sponsorship of a “circular chorus” at the Lesser Panathenaea, and in the past this has been taken as evidence that dithyramps were performed at the festival.⁷⁷ Yet many scholars doubt that choral performances at the Panathenaea would have been classified as dithyramps given the festival’s aim of celebrating Athena, not Dionysus, in whose honor dithyramps were customarily performed.⁷⁸

As a result of the new understanding of the phrase “circular chorus,” there must be other compelling evidence to conclude that a source which mentions a “circular chorus” uses the phrase to refer to the performance of “dithyramb.” For instance, in *Against Ctesiphon*, Aeschines mentions the judging of “circular choruses” that occur at the Dionysia (232), and this seems a likely reference to the performance of dithyramps because dithyramps are attested as part of the program at that festival.⁷⁹ In the context of the Dionysia, circular choruses are dithyramps. On the other hand, the very passage from *Against Timarchus* that prompted the scholiast to explain that “dithyramps are called circular choruses” cannot be taken to refer necessarily to dithyramps. Although the scholiast interprets the passage as a reference to dithyramps at the Dionysia, Aeschines fails to specify the festival and performance context for the circular choruses, thereby leaving open the possibility that he has in mind the broad category of “circular chorus,”

⁷⁷ Lysias 21.2. Cf. *DTC*, 4; Ieranò, 249-50.

⁷⁸ Ceccarelli (2013), 166.

⁷⁹ Pace Ceccarelli (2013) 162n.44, who claims that these “circular dances...[are] not equated with the dithyramb.”

with no special reference to dithyramb.⁸⁰ “Circular choruses” and dithyramb did not enjoy an exclusive relationship in antiquity.

Even though the phrase “circular chorus” could be used to refer to a variety of choral performances, it gained a great deal of traction as a synonym for dithyramb, which became perhaps the most widely recognized type of a “circular chorus” in antiquity.⁸¹ Given that state, it is important to understand when the practice of referring to dithyramb as a “circular chorus” began. Sources, such as *Against Ktesiphon* or the scholion to *Against Timarchus*, give the impression that the relationship exists from time immemorial. But in fact, dithyramb’s identity as a “circular chorus” cannot be traced any earlier than Aristophanes’ use of the phrase, and the few possible forerunners to him are beset by difficulties that vitiate their testimony.

The two likeliest predecessors to Aristophanes which may use of the phrase “circular chorus” in reference to dithyramb are the poet Pindar and historian Hellanicus. Yet in the case of neither author is it possible to claim that they equate the “circular chorus” and dithyramb in the same way as Aristophanes does. In a dithyramb of his that seems to have been composed for performance at Thebes, Pindar may allude to the practice of dancing in “well-centered circles” (εὖο]μφάλ[οις κύ]κλοισι, fr. 70b4-5) as a component of dithyrambic performance. The phrase is only partially preserved in the papyrus, however, and because it is largely restored it is insecure.⁸² In the case of

⁸⁰ Ceccarelli (2013), 163n.49.

⁸¹ D’Alessio (2013).

⁸² D’Angour (1997) first proposed the restoration and calls it “inevitable both lexically and on grounds of sense” at 344. D’Alessio has promised a papyrological refutation of D’Angour; cf. Kowalzig and Wilson (2013b), 10n.45. Ceccarelli (2013), 162, notes that D’Angour’s restoration would make Pindar’s dithyramb exceptional as a particular early reference to dithyramb as a “circular chorus.”

Hellanicus, it is reported in an Aristophanic scholion that in his *Victors at the Karnea* he identified Arion as the first poet to establish “circular choruses.”⁸³ Given that Arion was noted as early as the fifth century for his work in dithyramb, it is possible that Hellanicus, in the course of discussing Arion’s “circular choruses,” associated them with dithyramb.⁸⁴ Unfortunately, the scholion does not provide the surrounding context of Hellanicus’ statement, and all that can be concluded is that he credited Arion with taking action in the realm of “circular choruses.” Arion was a versatile poet, and Hellanicus may have identified poetic forms other than dithyramb as the spur for Arion’s invention of “circular choruses.”⁸⁵ The case for Hellanicus as a predecessor to Aristophanes in referring to dithyramb as the “circular chorus” is as tenuous as it is for Pindar. This is not to say that no author before Aristophanes had referred to dithyramb as a “circular chorus,” nor that the phrase had not already been used in common parlance for the genre, but, if considered with an emphasis on securely attested evidence, dithyramb’s history as a circular chorus begins in effect with Aristophanes.⁸⁶

Regardless of when the phrase “circular chorus” became a popular means for referring to dithyramb, in the course of that development it acquired a specific and consistent connotation. The phrase “circular chorus” was understood widely in antiquity

⁸³ Schol. Ar. *Birds* 1403b (Holwerda p. 206) = Hellanicus *FGrHist* 4 F 86; cf. Ieranò, XXX.

⁸⁴ On Arion and dithyramb, cf. Hdt. 1.23.

⁸⁵ At the same place where Herodotus calls Arion the inventor of dithyramb (see previous note), he claims that the poet was the best *kitharōidos* of his age and reports the story of how he performed an *orthios nomos* on the kithara. Perhaps it was in connection with one of those types of performance, and not dithyramb, that Arion undertook his efforts with the circular chorus; cf. D’Alessio (2013), 113-6.

⁸⁶ The only other candidate of which I am aware is the epigram of Antigenes which mentions separately “choruses at ivy-bearing dithyrambs” and the choregic sponsorship of a “honey-voiced circle.” For commentary on the poem, see Page, *FGE* Antigenes 1 and Wilson (2000), 120-2.

as a reference to choral choreography, in particular to the practice of having choreuts form a circle while they performed. A scholion on Aeschines' *Against Ctesiphon* explains the phrase by describing how choreuts "stood in a circle while they sang songs in honor of Dionysus." (καθὸ ἐν κύκλῳ ἱστάμενοι ἦδον ᾠσματα τῷ Διονύσῳ), and Xenophon recommends the pleasing visual aesthetic of the "circular chorus," with its evenly spaced choreuts ringing an empty center, as a model for the proper order of a household.⁸⁷ While Xenophon imagines a circle which is bare in its center, other sources place various items in the space in the middle of the choreuts. A scholion on the same passage of Aeschines' *Against Timarchus* which led to the explanation of how "dithyrambs are called circular choruses" notes that "in the circular choruses the aulete stood in the middle," presumably the middle of the circle made by the choreuts (ἐν τοῖς χοροῖς δὲ τοῖς κυκλίοις μέσος ἵστατο αὐλητής).⁸⁸ It is also possible that in the middle of the chorus' circle was an altar, or a statue of the god in whose honor the chorus performed, or both together, perhaps even with the aulete.⁸⁹

Choral dancers could certainly be arranged in formations other than a circle, and ancient writers frequently contrast circular choruses with other choruses that took the form of rectangles. Athenaeus quotes the late fourth/early-third century Sicilian historian Timaeus on the practice of choral performers in Sparta, called *Lakōnistai*, who danced in

⁸⁷ Schol. Aesch. *In Ctes.* 3.232 (506 p.156 Dilts); Xen. *Oec.* 8.20.

⁸⁸ Schol. Aesch. *In Tim.* 1.10 (25 p.15 Dilts). *DTC*, 35, "The flute-player...stood in the midst of the dancers."

⁸⁹ Pindar fr. 75 is one dithyramb whose chorus may have danced in a circle around an altar. On this fragment, see recently Neer and Kurke (2013).

rectangular formation.⁹⁰ Immediately after reporting on the Spartan dancers who performed in rectangles, Athenaeus cites the preference for circular dancing in Athens, as if the two arrangements are the dominant varieties in ancient Greece.⁹¹ The difference between circular and rectangular dancing is often articulated by means of a comparison between dithyramb and tragedy, with the two genres serving as the representatives of the two different formations. A scholion to Aristophanes' *Clouds* draws an opposition between the typical rectangular formation of choruses in tragic performance and the circular formation that is customary in dithyramb.⁹² As these examples demonstrate, choreography is deeply ingrained in the phrase "circular chorus."

The overview of the history of dithyramb's identity as a "circular chorus" helps contextualize certain aspects of Aristophanes' use of the phrase. In the first place, it is difficult to identify securely any references to dithyramb as a "circular chorus" that predate those found in Aristophanes' comedies, meaning that he, in effect, inaugurates the practice. Furthermore, because of Aristophanes' position of primacy in the history of dithyramb's identity as a "circular chorus," it should not be assumed that he regurgitates a tradition that is otherwise invisible. As we will see, in Aristophanes' hands, dithyramb in its guise as a "circular chorus" is much more than a choral performance which features choreuts who are arranged in a circle around a central point.

Cinesias the Poet of Circular Choruses and Dithyramps

⁹⁰ Ath. 5.181c = *FGrH* 566 F 140.

⁹¹ It is unclear if the comments on musical practice in Athens are quoted from Timaeus, are an addition by Athenaeus, or come from another source. Cf. *FGrH* and *BNJ*.

⁹² Schol. ad 333aβ (Koster pg.269).

Aristophanes' *Birds* provides the earliest direct evidence for the use of the phrase “circular chorus” as a synonym for dithyramb.⁹³ The poet Cinesias, who seeks admittance to Cloudcuckooland so that he can acquire a pair of wings, discusses and performs examples of his “dithyramps” (τῶν διθυράμβων, 1388) while also identifying himself as a “poet of circular choruses” (κυκλιοδιδάσκαλον, 1403). The two main products of Cinesias’ artistic energies, “circular choruses” and “dithyramps,” are the same. This moment marks the beginning of dithyramb’s life as a “circular chorus.”

Not only does Aristophanes offer the earliest incontestable evidence that the phrase “circular chorus” could be used in reference to dithyramb, he also attests, at this early moment, to the standard use of phrase as a means to mark dithyramb’s choreography. Consistent with the rest of the tradition about dithyramb’s identity as a “circular chorus,” Aristophanes associates the phrase with the practice of dithyrambic choreuts performing while arranged in a circle. As soon as Cinesias appears on stage, Peisetaerus draws attention to the dithyrambist’s pronounced circular movement (1378-9):

ἀσπαζόμεσθα φιλύρινον Κινησίαν.
τί δεῦρο πόδα σὺ κυλλὸν ἀνὰ κύκλον κυκλεῖς;

We welcome lime-wood Cinesias.
Why do you circle your deformed foot here in a circle?

As commentators have noted, Peisetaerus’ question alludes to multiple aspects of Cinesias’ dithyrambic poetry, including a penchant for periphrasis, alliteration, pleonasm

⁹³ In Aristophanes’ comedies, references to dithyramb as a “circular chorus” often occur in conjunction with parody and mockery of the tendencies of New Music. For a recent introduction to the putative movement and an attempt to correct many previous misperceptions of it, see Csapo (2004). On Aristophanes’ treatment of the New Musical dithyramb, Kugelmeier (1996), ch. 6; Pöhlmann (2011); and now LeVen (2014), esp. 152-60.

and even irregular metrical units.⁹⁴ But these concerns are subsidiary to Cinesias' movement and dithyramb's choreography. Circular language dominates the second half of Peisetaerus' question, which is made up almost entirely of words that are either built on the root *kukl-* (*kuklon*, *kukleis*) or share dominant sounds with it (*kullon*). While it is difficult to recreate Cinesias' movements based on Peisetaerus' description of them, the emphasis on their circularity is unambiguous. Cinesias, the poet of dithyrambs, engages in circular dance.⁹⁵

New dimensions of the dithyrambic circular chorus, unrelated to its circular choreography, emerge as Peisetaerus compels Cinesias to explain why he has afflicted Cloudcuckooland with his presence (1381-5):

Peis: παῦσαι μελωδῶν, ἀλλ' ὅ τι λέγεις εἰπέ μοι.

Kin: ὑπὸ σοῦ πτερωθεὶς βούλομαι μετάρσιος
ἀναπτόμενος ἐκ τῶν νεφελῶν καινὰς λαβεῖν
ἀεροδονήτους καὶ νιφοβόλους ἀναβολάς.

Peis: Stop singing, but tell me what you mean!

Kin: Once I've acquired my wings from you, I intend to
ascend up high and snatch from the clouds new
air-rattling and snow-clad preludes.

Motivated by selfish reasons, Cinesias believes that, with the wings granted to him as a citizen of Cloudcuckooland, it will be easier for him to make good dithyrambs because he

⁹⁴ Sommerstein (1987), 290; Dunbar (1995), 667-8.

⁹⁵ Because Cinesias is a soloist, it is somewhat unclear how his circular movements might translate to the circular choreography of a choral group. Elsewhere in Aristophanes, "circular language" refers to both the arrangement of a group in a circle (*Thesm.* 953ff.) and individuals who spin in a circle on their own (*Wasps* 1516ff.). In Cinesias' case, most commentators suppose that he whirls in a circle, but also detect in Peisetaerus' description a reference to circular dance on the part of a chorus; cf. Lawler (1950); Sommerstein (1987); Dunbar (1995), the latter two both cited in the previous note. Could individual dancers, arranged in the circular formation of dithyrambic circular choruses, have performed their own circular dance moves? Dithyramb was noted in antiquity for the energetic style of its dance, which was called the *tyrbasia*: Pollux IV 104; Hesych. s.v. τυρβασία. Cf. *DTC*, 33; Ieranò, 233-4.

will be better able to collect “preludes.” Cinesias’ mention of “preludes” (*anabolai*) implicates dithyramb’s structure, although the exact structural component to which the term refers is unclear. Traditionally, *anabolai* were short, improvisatory instrumental pieces that preceded a formal, longer, sung performance, and it is certainly possible that dithyrambs featured such introductions.⁹⁶ Yet the term seems to have acquired a different meaning in the context of dithyrambic performance at the end of the fifth century. Aristotle reports that the dithyrambist Melanippides employed in his compositions *anabolai* instead of antistrophes, and the notice is usually taken as an indication that his dithyrambs lacked strophic responsion.⁹⁷ Instead of repeating the same metrical structure when moving from one stanza of his dithyramb to the next, Melanippides would devise an entirely new pattern. Cinesias’ reference to *anabolai* may indicate that he too wrote astrophic dithyrambs.⁹⁸ No matter which sense of *anabolai* Cinesias intends, in using the term, he declares that his interest in coming to Cloudcuckooland is to improve some aspect of the structure of his dithyrambs.⁹⁹

From dithyramb’s structural elements, the scene shifts attention to the genre’s poetic style, in particular its language. Language was considered one of dithyramb’s defining features in antiquity, and the genre was noted especially for its fondness of

⁹⁶ Franklin (2013), 222.

⁹⁷ Arist. *Rh.* 1409b25, cf. West (1992), 205.

⁹⁸ Dunbar (1995), 669.

⁹⁹ The longest surviving fragment from Pherecrates’ *Cheiron*, in which Poetry herself decries her treatment at the hands of Cinesias and his contemporaries, associates him with violations of structure and form. Pherec. fr. 155.8-12; recent treatment in Franklin (2013), 229-30, with further bibliography.

compounds, the rarer the better, with neologisms most desirable.¹⁰⁰ One result of the many compounds that appeared in dithyrambs was that the genre became notorious for its general opacity. The rare or even entirely new words that often appeared in dithyrambs threatened to make it difficult to understand the meaning of dithyrambic poems. Cinesias and his dithyrambic poetry are no exception to the trend. He demonstrates how dithyrambic language, including its compounds, contributes to dithyramb's meaning, or lack thereof.

Peisetaerus is suspicious about Cinesias' claim that flying among the clouds is useful for a composer of dithyrambs, yet Cinesias explains that the activity he describes is in fact essential to the dithyrambist's task (1386-90):

Peis: ἐκ τῶν νεφελῶν γὰρ ἂν τις ἀναβολὰς λάβοι;

Cin: κρέματα μὲν οὖν ἐντεῦθεν ἡμῶν ἡ τέχνη.
τῶν διθυράμβων γὰρ τὰ λαμπρὰ γίνεται
ἀέρια καὶ σκότι' ἅττα καὶ κυανανγέα
καὶ πτεροδόνητα· σὺ δὲ κλυὼν εἴσει τάχα

Peis: So someone might snatch preludes from clouds?

Cin: Why, our craft depends on it.
For the dazzling parts of dithyrambs happen to be
misty and somewhat gloomy and dark-gleaming
and wing-propelled. But by listening you'll soon learn.

Even though Cinesias is ostensibly only describing dithyramb in the abstract, not enacting one (he is speaking about the genre, not singing an example of it, something he will do later), his vocabulary is identical to what a dithyrambist himself might include in one of his poems. The dithyrambic tone of Cinesias' language is evident especially in the two compound adjectives he uses, "dark-gleaming" (κυανανγέα) and "wing-propelled"

¹⁰⁰ Recent treatments in LeVen (2014), ch. 4, and Ford (2013), with references to ancient testimony and further bibliography.

(περοδόνητα), the first of which is quite rare and the second found only in *Birds*.¹⁰¹ He claims that these and the other two adjectives are indicative of the “dazzling parts” (τὰ λαμπρὰ) of dithyramb, in an obvious expression of approval.¹⁰² While Cinesias clearly means for the dithyrambic language he uses to illustrate his remark about the “dazzling parts” of dithyramb, three of the four adjectives, “misty” (ἀέρια), “somewhat gloomy” (σκότι’ ἄττα), and “dark-gleaming” (κυανανγέα), stand in contradiction to “dazzling” (λαμπρὰ) with its associations of light and brightness.¹⁰³ Cinesias’ examples of “dazzling” language are in fact far from it. His choices in vocabulary frustrate meaning and understanding, and in the case of “dark-gleaming,” there is even an internal contradiction between the epithet’s two parts that compounds the sense that Cinesias’ statement is unintelligible. This incomprehensibility seems intentional on Cinesias’ part, for if “dazzling” is used primarily as a means to express approval, then other terms like “best” or “most beautiful” could have conveyed the same sense. But they would not have demonstrated how dithyramb’s language often makes the genre unintelligible. “Dazzling” is the ideal term for emphasizing dithyramb’s characteristic obscurity as conveyed through its language.

There is another dimension to dithyramb’s characteristic language which becomes apparent once Cinesias begins to sing a dithyramb, as he has promised he will do so that Peisetaerus can appreciate fully his artwork. Whereas Cinesias focused on the unintelligibility of dithyrambic language when he tried to claim that the “dazzling parts”

¹⁰¹ κυανανγέσι, Eur. *Alc.* 261.

¹⁰² Plut. *Alex.* 29.1 provides another example of λαμπρός used to mark approval of choral performances.

¹⁰³ Sommerstein (1987), 290-1; Dunbar (1995), 669-70, draws attention to only the latter two. On the translation of ἀέρια as “misty,” cf. *LSJ* s.v. A.

of the genre are “misty” and the like, he next suggests that dithyrambic language is meaningless in the sense that it is both incomprehensible and inconsequential. Even if one understands what a dithyrambic poet says, one can ignore his point because it is insignificant. Cinesias begins his song with an apostrophe that, with its two compound epithets, adheres to the principles of proper dithyrambic language (1393-4):

εἶδωλα πετηνῶν
αἰθεροδρόμων
οἰωνῶν ταναοδείρων

O images of winged,
air-coursing,
slender-necked birds

At first glance, Cinesias seems simply to call upon a flock of birds, but it is also possible that he refers to something else given the oblique manner in which he describes the putative birds. He addresses not the birds themselves, but their “images” (εἶδωλα), and the expression “images of birds” may be a periphrasis for “clouds.”¹⁰⁴ Whether Cinesias intends to invoke birds or clouds, in using the term “images” (εἶδωλα) he emphasizes the tenuousness and fragility of the object in question. Even if one understands Cinesias’ reference, the poet himself discounts the significance of his statement by depriving it of solidity. Against that backdrop of dithyramb as a genre whose poetic expressions are insubstantial, it is possible to understand in a new light Cinesias’ earlier claim that he collects the best parts of his dithyrambos from the air. The diffuse sky is a fitting source for a poet who makes diaphanous work. As presented at this moment in *Birds*, dithyrambic language is a poor repository of any sort of meaning. It is unintelligible and unimportant.

¹⁰⁴ Sommerstein (1987), 291; Dunbar (1995), 670, with reservation.

As Cinesias continues to sing, he turns his attention back to and even enacts dithyramb's distinctive circular dance, as he seems to have done when he first appeared and Peisetaerus commented on how he "circles his foot in a circle" (1379). Cinesias' movements become the focus when Peisetaerus chases the poet with the intent of striking him so that he stops singing (1398-1402).¹⁰⁵

Cin: τοτὲ μὲν νοτίαν στείχων πρὸς ὁδόν,
τοτὲ δ' αὖ βορέα σῶμα πελάζων
ἀλίμενον αἰθέρος αὔλακα τέμνων —
χαρίεντά γ', ὧ πρεσβῦτ', ἐσοφίσω καὶ σοφά.

Peis.: οὐ γὰρ σὺ χαίρεις πτεροδόνητος γενόμενος;

Cin: Then bearing toward the southerly track,
then directing my body back northward
cutting a harborless furrow of sky —
Very charming, old man, the trick you've devised.

Peis: But don't you enjoy being 'wing-propelled'?

Cinesias describes his movements as Peisetaerus harries him. While his exact choreography cannot be recovered, it is clear that he moves first in one direction and then towards its opposite. Given the helter-skelter nature of the scene, it seems unlikely that he proceeds linearly and directly from one point to another. Rather, as he makes his way in different directions, he moves obliquely in order to try to avoid Peisetaerus' blows. Cinesias creates at least part of a circle, if not a full one, while he flees Peisetaerus. In the midst of singing a dithyramb, he demonstrates the circular formation for which the genre was noted. Cinesias' dithyrambic performance thus embodies the major elements of dithyramb's identity as a circular chorus that have been emphasized up until this part of the scene, that is its language and choreography.

¹⁰⁵ On the identity of the object with which Peisetaerus may be hounding Cinesias, cf. Dunbar (1995), 671.

Once Cinesias has stopped his performance, Peisetaerus reinforces the importance of choreography for dithyramb's identity by redeploying in a mocking manner a compound epithet, "wing-propelled" (πτεροδόνητος, 1402) that Cinesias had originally used (πτεροδόνητα, 1390). While Cinesias had invented the adjective in order to demonstrate how dithyramb is "dazzling" (τῶν διθυράμβων γὰρ τὰ λαμπρὰ, 1390), Peisetaerus uses it to refer to Cinesias' circular movements. Cinesias is "wing-propelled" literally in the sense that he has motored around the stage as if on wings, and even possibly been chased by a man, Peisetaerus, who threatens to beat him with wings. Even while Peisetaerus uses "wing-propelled" to refer to Cinesias' dithyrambic dancing, the adjective maintains its associations with dithyramb's meaningless language, as Cinesias had used it earlier. The dithyrambic adjective encapsulates the totality of dithyrambic poetry and performance. Dithyrambic language and dance merge and are expressed through a single word.

As he prepares to exit, Cinesias offers a final, explicit reminder about the overlapping categories of "dithyramb" and "circular chorus." Outraged by his abuse at the hands of Peisetaerus, he protests (1403-4):

ταυτὶ πεποίηκας τὸν κυκλιοδιδάσκαλον,
ὃς ταῖσι φυλαῖς περιμάχητός εἰμ' ἀεὶ;

Is this how you treat a poet of circular choruses such as me,
one who is always fought over by the tribes?

Cinesias attempts to reclaim some dignity for himself by reasserting his worth as a dithyrambic poet and claiming that his services are in great demand, even causing discord among the ten Athenian tribes which needed poets to compose dithyrambs for choral competitions. In his act of self-promotion, Cinesias proudly identifies himself as a "poet

of circular choruses” (*kukliodidaskalos*), a phrase that relies on the synonymy between “circular choruses” and “dithyramb.” Cinesias’ boast about his status as a “poet of circular choruses” might seem to identify dithyramb primarily by its distinctive choreography. Yet, in the wake of what has just transpired, dithyramb’s identity as a “circular chorus” cannot be restricted to the genre’s circular dancing formation. The *kukliodidaskalos* creates poetry whose language is opaque, content insignificant, structure irregular, and dance circular.

The (Dithyrambic) Kuklia of the Poet in Birds

Of the three other occasions (the fragment from *Gerytades* excepted) when Aristophanes refers to “circular choruses,” two, one in *Birds* and one in *Clouds*, attest to a comprehensive definition of dithyramb as a “circular chorus” that is similar to the one found in the scene from *Birds* with Cinesias.¹⁰⁶ While neither is as extensive as the Cinesias scene, both demonstrate that the phrase “circular chorus” designated, at least in Aristophanes’ comedies, more than dithyramb’s circular dance formations. In fact, the two examples seem entirely disinterested in dithyramb’s circular choreography, unless the phrase “circular chorus” itself is understood as a reference to it. Rather, Aristophanes defines the dithyrambic “circular chorus” primarily by means of attributes apart from the formation of its dancers. The dithyrambic circular chorus is associated above all with its language, but also with its structure, and still other elements.

¹⁰⁶ The third occurs at *Frogs* 366, where the chorus mentions “circular choruses” in honor of Hecate. Scholia to the line identify Cinesias as their composer, and in light of the poet’s close association with dithyramb, the performances are usually considered of that genre; cf. Dover (1993), 241-2. But, the performances are in honor of Hecate, not Dionysus, and they may belong to the broader category of circular choruses without being dithyramps in particular. In addition, one scholion to the line (366c Holwerda p. 61-2) claims that the performance in question was a “drama.” For these reasons, I do not examine the reference to “circular choruses” in *Frogs*.

In *Birds*, before Cinesias appears, an anonymous poet comes to Cloudcuckooland and proposes to celebrate the recent founding of the city by Peisetaerus and Euelpides. He professes and demonstrates expertise in an astounding number of poetic genres. In his snippets of verse, which he offers as a preview of his work, he invokes or evokes a litany of poets.¹⁰⁷ In addition, he claims (917-9):

μέλη πεποίηκ' εἰς τὰς Νεφελοκοκκυγίας
τὰς ὑμετέρας κύκλιά τε πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ
καὶ παρθένεια καὶ κατὰ τὰ Σιμωνίδου.

I have made for your Cloudcuckooland
many beautiful circular songs, and maiden songs,
and songs in the style of Simonides.

The reference to “circular songs” (*kuklia*) must mean songs performed by circular choruses, and commentators have accordingly concluded that the poet here speaks of dithyrambs, primarily under the assumption that references to “circular choruses” always imply the performance of dithyrambs.¹⁰⁸ Yet, it was observed above that the old orthodoxy that promotes the identity between the phrase “circular chorus” and the genre dithyramb cannot be sustained, and as a result, the reference to “circular songs” need not signal the performance of dithyrambs. The most salient aspect of the poet’s “circular choruses” seems to be their ability to celebrate a city’s foundation.¹⁰⁹ Nothing in the poet’s description of his *kuklia* requires that they be understood as dithyrambs.

Nonetheless, as the poet continues to promote himself by providing examples of his poetry, he suggests that the *kuklia* to which he has referred might be dithyrambs, or at

¹⁰⁷ Dunbar (1995), 521-40.

¹⁰⁸ Sommerstein (1987), 259; Dunbar (1995), 531.

¹⁰⁹ Fearn (2013), 139; Hadjimichael (2014), 187-8.

the least that he could compose dithyrambs if they were commissioned. In a thinly veiled bid to coax from his hosts a tunic (ὁ χιτῶν) after they had already given him a jacket (ἡ σπολάς), the poet quotes a “Pindaric saying” (Πινδάρειον ἔπος, 939) (941-45):

νομάδεσσι γὰρ ἐν Σκύθαις ἀλᾶται στρατῶν
ὃς ὑφαντοδόνητον ἔσθος οὐ πέπαται·
ἀκλεῆς δ’ ἔβα
σπολάς ἄνευ χιτῶνος.
ξύνες ὅ τοι λέγω.

For among the Scythian nomads, he who does not possess
a shuttle-throttled vestment wanders apart from his people;
But he goes unheralded...
a jacket without a tunic.
Know what I say.

The saying amounts to a slightly modified version of a Pindaric fragment which a scholion to the passage preserves, thereby giving a sense of how the poet has reconfigured Pindar’s original.¹¹⁰ Crucially for his cause, the poet adds the phrase “a shuttle-throttled vestment” (ὑφαντοδόνητον ἔσθος) in place of Pindar’s “a wagon-drawn house” (ἀμαξοφόρητον οἶκον). The alteration, besides underscoring his need for a tunic, lends the poet’s song a dithyrambic style, for the phrase exhibits the type of language that is the hallmark of dithyrambic poetry. It is a new compound epithet that has a riddling meaning and is superfluous in the context. While “shuttle-throttled” indicates that the garment is woven and likely refers to the activity of the weaver, it is unclear what part of the weaver’s task the adjective describes.¹¹¹ Furthermore, the second half of the compound, “throttled” (-δόνητον), is marked in *Birds* explicitly as dithyrambic. Cinesias

¹¹⁰ Pind. fr. 105b. The final line of the poet’s “Pindaric expression” (945) belongs to fr.105a according to other sources. It is uncertain whether fr. 105a and b are part of the same poem. For the issues, see Dunbar (1995), 532, 536.

¹¹¹ Dunbar (1995), 537, claims that it “presumably refers to the weaver’s moving the shuttle to and fro along the loom.”

later uses the same suffix to create his own dithyrambic compounds (ἀεροδονήτους, 1385; περοδόνητα, 1390), one of which Peisetaerus mocks because it is representative of dithyramb's language (περοδόνητος, 1402). The anonymous poet inserts characteristic dithyrambic language into his "Pindaric saying."

The dithyrambic bent of the poet's phrase becomes even clearer when it is compared the phrase of Pindar which it has replaced, a comparison that the poet seems to encourage by citing his source. While Pindar's original features the compound "wagon-drawn" (ἀμαξοφόρητον), that adjective does not carry the same dithyrambic undertones as the compound used by the anonymous poet, "shuttle-throttled" (ὕφαντοδόνητον).¹¹² From the perspective of morphology, *amaxophorēton* is not as irregular or as exotic as *hyphantodonēton*.¹¹³ Moreover, in contrast to "shuttle-throttled," which is opaque in its meaning, "wagon-drawn" conveys clearly a somewhat complicated idea. Pindar indicates that the Scythians lived in houses that could easily be moved by wagon, in effect mobile-homes. The adjective serves a particular purpose and has a clear meaning. From a Pindaric precedent which shows allegiance to no particular genre, the anonymous poet moves into the realm of dithyramb.¹¹⁴

The anonymous poet redoubles his poetry's associations with dithyramb in his last poetic excerpt (950-2):

κλῆσον, ὦ χρυσόθρονε, τὰν τρομερὰν κρυεράν· (950/1)
νιφόβολα πεδία πολύπορά τ' ἤλυθον.

¹¹² Ford (2013) and LeVen (2014), esp. 157ff., point out that not all compounds are necessarily dithyrambic.

¹¹³ Dunbar (1995), 537.

¹¹⁴ Pind. fr. 105a is identified as a hyporchema. 105b may be as well, but see above n. 110.

Celebrate, O golden-throned one, the shivering, the chilly;
to snow-clad and many-pathed plains have I come.

Epithets overwhelm the short, two-line adieu to Cloudcukooland, even going so far as to displace the nouns which they ostensibly describe. In an apparent invocation of the Muse, the poet simply mentions the “golden-throned one,” and with the adjectives “shivering” (τρομεράν) and “chilly” (κρυεράν) a feminine noun like “place” (χώρα), “city” (πόλις), “land” (γαῖα), or even “Cloudcukooland” (Νεφελοκκυγία) must be supplied.¹¹⁵ The epithets which the poet uses are all rather rare, occurring almost exclusively in poetry and therefore associating his poem with a variety of genres. Those in line 950-1, “golden-throned” (χρυσόθρονε), “shivering” (τρομεράν), and “chilly” (κρυεράν), have associations with epic, lyric and tragic poetry.¹¹⁶ In line 952, the poet shifts to vocabulary that, while having no literary precedent, is in the context marked as dithyrambic. Both “snow-clad” (νιφόβολα) and “many-pathed” (πολύπορά) are newly invented compounds, the very sort of neologisms that are found often in dithyramb.¹¹⁷ In the case of “snow-clad,” Cinesias later uses the same term as he demonstrates his dithyrambic style (νιφοβόλους, 1385). Thus, very soon after “snow-clad” has been coined as a new poetic epithet by the anonymous poet, it is explicitly connected with dithyramb by Cinesias. “Many-pathed” can be classified as dithyrambic not only because it is new, but also

¹¹⁵ Sommerstein (1987). 260-1.

¹¹⁶ Dunbar (1995), 539.

¹¹⁷ “Snow-clad” during the fifth century only at Eur. *Phoen.* 206, 234 and *IA* 1284, both later than *Birds*. The only other occurrence of “many-pathed” is at Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 650c.

because of its ambiguous meaning and sense.¹¹⁸ Whereas the poet's first line of verse draws from multiple genres, his second is monolithic in its focus on dithyramb.

The poet who boasts expertise in a plethora of genres departs with a final dithyrambic flourish which indicates that the genre belongs in his vast repertoire. While the poet nowhere claims that his verses in dithyrambic style are representative of the *kuklia* in which he professes competence, the coincidence between a term that Aristophanes regularly uses to designate dithyramb and vocabulary that Aristophanes marks elsewhere as characteristic of the genre points in favor of the connection. The sense that the poet's *kuklia* are dithyrambs is made even stronger by the overlap in his poetry and the work of Cinesias, which is identified explicitly as dithyrambic.¹¹⁹ When *kuklia* appear, dithyramb is close. And if the occurrence of *kuklia* refers to dithyramb, the genre is conceived of in board terms, for as much attention is paid to dithyramb's distinctive language as to its dancing formation, the very element of dithyramb which *kuklia* ostensibly describes.

Songbenders of Circular Choruses

In *Clouds*, as in *Birds*, a reference to "circular choruses" leads to a brief reflection on dithyramb that manages to encompass diverse aspects of the genre's poetry and performance. As the chorus of *Clouds* enters, Socrates explains their divine nature to

¹¹⁸ The *LSJ* gives different definitions of the term for each of its only two contexts, and modern commentators tend to differ from the *LSJ* in their explanation of the word. Cf. *LSJ*, s.v., with Sommerstein (1987), 261, and Dunbar (1995), 539.

¹¹⁹ The anonymous poet is typically understood as a representative of an old-fashioned type of poetry in contrast to Cinesias the modernist; Zimmermann (1992), 118; Hadjimichael (2014), 187-8. But the two share language, and so the divide may not be as great as is usually assumed.

Strepsiades and claims that they patronize a host of worthless intellectuals, including sophists, prophets from Thurii, medical experts, idle-long-haired-unkempt men, and, lastly, “song-benders of circular choruses” (κυκλίων τε χορῶν ᾠσματοκάμπτας, 333). While the reference to “circular choruses” itself is not sufficient to demonstrate that Socrates here identifies the “song-benders” with dithyrambic poets, the surrounding context bears out the link. Many of the same features which mark the discussion of dithyramb as a “circular chorus” in *Birds* recur in the scene from *Clouds*.

The very term which Socrates uses to designate the poets, “song-benders,” suggests that he has in mind dithyramb poets. The meaning of “song-benders,” both in the comedy and as it relates more broadly to Greek musical culture, has long been a source of debate, and has recently been treated extensively by J. Franklin.¹²⁰ He shows that the word “bend” (*kampē*) can be applied to at least two different, but interrelated aspects of Greek musical practice and performance. First, a bend is a modulation in musical mode, essentially a change in the key to which a performance is set. Secondly, a bend also marks the barrier between strophe and antistrophe, the moment when a poem, and its attendant performance, turns back to a previous structure as it proceeds to a new section. If both senses are operative in *Clouds* as seems likely, then Socrates defines dithyramb in terms of the type of music that accompanies its performance as well as its poetic and metrical structure.

Strepsiades, by contrast, homes in particularly on dithyramb’s poetic style as embodied in its language. He mentions and mocks a number of dithyrambic expressions

¹²⁰ Franklin (2013), esp. 226-31.

whose genesis he claims to understand now that Socrates has enlightened him about dithyrambists' close relationship with the *Clouds* (335-8):

ταῦτ' ἄρ' ἐποίουν “ὕγρᾱν Νεφελᾶν στρεπταίγλαν δάιον ὀρμάν”,
“πλοκάμους θ' ἑκατογκεφάλα Τυφῶ”, “πρημαινούσας τε θυέλλας”,
εἶτ' “ἀερίας διερᾶς γαμψοὺς οἰωνοὺς ἀερονηχεῖς”,
“ὄμβρους θ' ὑδάτων δροσερᾶν νεφελᾶν”.

So that's why they used to compose these things: “violent, zig-zagged onrush of wet Clouds,” “braids of hundred-headed Typhos,” “hard-blowing gales,” and also “curved air-floating birds of the active sky,” “showers of water from dewy clouds.”

The five phrases are highly characteristic of dithyramb.¹²¹ First, they contain multiple examples of compound epithets which are quite rare. The adjectives “zig-zagged” (στρεπταίγλαν) and “air-floating” (ἀερονηχεῖς) appear only here in extant Greek, and “hard-blowing” (πρημαινούσας) is found elsewhere only in the later Hellenistic-era author Herodas.¹²² Furthermore, the three epithets are obscure in meaning and have provoked numerous attempts, beginning in antiquity, to explain their sense.¹²³ Finally, Strepsiades' phrases all describe some item that is associated with the sky, from lightning, to gales, to rainstorms, and his focus on aerial elements hints that dithyramb is vacuous and insubstantial. The very same associations that characterize dithyrambic language in *Birds* are found also in *Clouds*. The genre is defined by its utterly meaningless neologisms.

Obscure, insignificant compounds are so important for the definition of dithyramb in Aristophanes that even dithyrambists themselves are labeled with a term that is an

¹²¹ There is some uncertainty about how to divide the parts of line 337. For the possibilities, see Dover (1968), 146.

¹²² στρεπταίγλαν, hapax; ἀερονηχεῖς, hapax; πρημαινούσας, cf. Herod. 7.98 (πρήμηνον)

¹²³ Cf. the scholia on the passage and Suda, s.vv.

example of stereotypical dithyrambic language. Socrates calls them “song-benders,” which, like the adjectives in Strepsiades’ dithyrambic phrases, is a neologistic epithet whose precise meaning is obscure even if its general sense and its condemnatory tone are apparent. In a fortuitous convergence, a term which seems to comment on dithyramb’s structure and music also happens to exemplify the confounding and inconsequential language that is typically found in dithyramb. Dithyramb’s appearance in *Clouds*, though fleeting, nonetheless is accompanied by a comprehensive treatment of the genre. Dithyramb’s dancing formation, structure, musical style, language, and meaning are alluded to all at once.

Conclusion

A reference to dithyramb in *Peace* reveals the care that Aristophanes takes to coordinate the phrase “circular chorus” with dithyramb while defining the genre in broad terms, rather than strictly by means of its choreography. The example provides a glimpse of an alternate possibility wherein dithyramb’s identity as a circular chorus is kept isolated from other major attributes of the genre, such as its language. In the comedy, Trygaeus informs a slave about his experience in the heavens (827-31):

Slave: ἄλλον τιν’ εἶδες ἄνδρα κατὰ τὸν ἀέρα
πλανώμενον πλὴν σαυτόν;

Trygaeus: οὐκ, εἰ μὴ γέ που
ψυχὰς δὺ’ ἢ τρεῖς διθυραμβοδιδασκάλων.

Sl: τί δ’ ἔδρων;

Tr: ξυνελέγοντ’ ἀναβολὰς ποτώμεναι
τὰς εὐδιαεριαυρινηγέτους τινάς

Slave: Did you see anyone else besides yourself

wandering in the sky?

Trygaeus: No, unless I guess you'd
count the souls of two or three poets of dithyrambs.

Sl: What were they doing?

Tr: While flitting about they were collecting
preludes, certain swimming-through-the-fair-misty-air ones

In light of the previous analysis of the two passages from *Birds* and the one from *Clouds*, the discussion of dithyramb in *Peace* seems almost predictable, as if there existed a predetermined set of features that any Aristophanic treatment of dithyramb must include. Trygaeus reiterates nearly every salient aspect of dithyramb that is found also in *Birds* and *Clouds*. He alludes to the genre's insubstantial content by presenting the sky as the residence for dithyrambists and by mentioning their "souls" (ψυχὰς) instead of their bodies; its structure with his reference to "preludes" (ἀναβολὰς); its riddling language devoid of meaning with his unprecedented compound "swimming-through-the-fair-misty-air" (εὐδιαεριαυρινηχέτους); and even possibly its dance, with his description of dithyrambists as "flitting about" (ποτόμεναι). In a handful of lines, Trygaeus touches upon nearly every element of dithyramb that is associated with the genre elsewhere in Aristophanes' corpus.

Missing, however, is identification of dithyramb as a "circular chorus." Instead, Trygaeus mentions "poets of dithyrambs" (διθυραμβοδιδασκάλων) a phrase that is almost identical to the one which Cinesias uses of himself in *Birds*, except that the dithyrambic poet identifies himself as a "poet of circular choruses" (κυκλιοδιδάσκαλον, 1403). The two terms designate the same thing, poets who create works for the competitive performances conducted between choruses, divided along tribal lines and grouped

according to age, at the Great Dionysia.¹²⁴ The reference to dithyrambic poets in *Peace* offers a reminder that on all of the occasions when Aristophanes identifies dithyramb by means of the phrase “circular chorus,” he could have used instead “dithyramb.”

Moreover, had Aristophanes chosen to refer to dithyramb with the label “dithyramb” and not “circular chorus,” he would not have had to change the manner in which he treats the genre, for the discussion of dithyramb that occurs in conjunction with the reference to “poets of dithyramps” in *Peace* is as rich and varied as the discussions of dithyramb that occur when the genre is identified as a “circular chorus.”

Yet Aristophanes regularly identifies dithyramb as a “circular chorus” while he also articulates a multi-faceted definition for the genre, one that encompasses numerous aspects of dithyramb, including its characteristic choreography, vocabulary, structure, and modes of thought and expression. Aristophanes’ choice to coordinate dithyramb’s identity as a “circular chorus” with such an expansive conception of dithyramb is without parallel in the tradition subsequent to him, where the phrase “circular chorus” is used primarily as a means to comment on dithyramb’s choreography. In Aristophanes’ comedies, however, the dithyramb’s identity as a circular chorus is not limited to one, specific feature of the genre, but rather is equivalent to the genre writ large.

Conclusion

When, in Aristophanes’ *Gerytades*, dithyramb is identified as the “circular choruses,” and tragedy as the “tragic choruses,” while also being alluded to as a result of comedy’s identification as “tragedy,” what might those labels indicate about the undoubtedly extensive but now lost commentary on tragedy and dithyramb that was

¹²⁴ Cf. schol. Ar. *Birds* 1403a (Holwerda p. 206), which equates *kukliodidaskalos* with *dithyrambopoios*.

contained in the comedy? On the basis of our examination of Aristophanes' uses of *tragōidia*, *tragikos*, *tragōidikos*, and *kuklios*, it seems that very little is communicated about the discussions of the tragedy and dithyramb in *Gerytades* because those labels foreclose no possibilities.¹²⁵ Potential topics include the content, political or otherwise, found in the two genres, their language, choreography, sense and meaning, structure, and intended effects on spectators, for Aristophanes devotes attention to each of these areas and still others when he refers to tragedy as *tragōidia*, *tragikos*, or *tragōidikos*, and dithyramb as *kuklios*. The definition of the two genres that can be inferred from Aristophanes' use of those terms is broad and multifaceted.

Although Aristophanes treats tragedy and dithyramb on equal terms, that practice does not persist. While tragedy's definition remains expansive – one need only look at the definition of tragedy presented in Aristotle's *Poetics*, quoted above at the beginning of Chapter 3, to see that tragedy continues to be defined by the sum of its parts – dithyramb's tends to be limited. It is common in discussions of dithyramb for individual elements of the genre to be used to define it. A papyrus reports on a disagreement, from the century after Aristotle, between the Alexandrian scholars Callimachus and Aristarchus about whether a poem by Bacchylides, his *Cassandra* (23), should be classified correctly as a dithyramb or paean (*P.Oxy.* 2368 col. I, 8-20).¹²⁶ According to the papyrus, Aristarchus favored the former option, Callimachus the latter, and each scholar cited a piece of evidence in support of his position, Aristarchus the extended narrative about Cassandra, Callimachus the refrain *iē iē*. No matter the validity of either

¹²⁵ Pace Fearn (2007), 168, and Ceccarelli (2013), 163, who both presume the point of the juxtaposition in *Gerytades* derives from differences in choreography between the genres.

¹²⁶ Recent discussions in Fearn (2007), 209-10, and D'Alessio (2013), 119-20, both with further bibliography.

scholar's conclusion (Bacchylides' *Cassandra* is today included among his dithyrambs), it is notable that there is an assumption on the part of both that dithyramb could be boiled down to, and hence defined by a single element, such as the presence of a long narrative section. It is difficult to imagine that Aristophanes, who defines dithyramb in a comprehensive, not atomizing manner, like he does tragedy, would agree with that assumption. Nowhere are the contours of dithyramb's and tragedy's respective definitions closer than in Aristophanes' comedies, which constitute a fleeting moment of equality in the two genres' commentarial traditions.

CONCLUSION

THE EMERGENCE OF TRAGEDY

This study began by setting itself the task of reintegrating dithyramb alongside tragedy in the Dionysiac program of the fifth century, and its four chapters have argued that in that context dithyramb and tragedy shared important points of contact when the two genres are viewed from two perspectives, namely that of performance, in particular the mode of performance used in each genre, and also that of the tradition of informal commentary on both genres. That conclusion belies the later tradition that sunders the two Dionysiac choral genres from each other. This of course is not to say that dithyramb and tragedy were either identical to or interchangeable with each other. No one attending the Great Dionysia in the fifth century would have been duped if a dithyramb by Bacchylides had been put on in the place of a tragedy by Aeschylus. Nonetheless, had the attendees been asked to identify the Dionysiac choral performance-genre which presented catastrophic events of suffering experienced by mythical characters who were impersonated by performers who sang and danced to the accompaniment of music while wearing masks and costumes, we might imagine a disagreement arising over whether tragedy or dithyramb should be named.

One of the most pronounced trends in recent scholarship on ancient Greek tragedy has been to emphasize that in antiquity, the genre was perceived predominantly as a brand of choral poetry. As P. Wilson has observed, the average fifth-century Athenian

citizen who was on his way to the tragic performances at the Great Dionysia would probably speak of “going to the choruses.”¹ And according to H. Foley, if that attendee had been selected by lot to be one of the judges for the tragic competitions, he likely would have paid particular attention to the performance of the tragic choruses when deciding in favor of which production he would cast his vote for first place.² This dissertation lends further support to observations such as those two by staking out a shared space for both tragedy and dithyramb in the constellation of Greek choral performance-genres. And in doing so, it has suggested that fifth-century dithyramb and tragedy should be treated, and studied, as equals in the landscape of contemporary poetry and performance.

Yet that state of parity between tragedy and dithyramb would not remain, as eventually tragedy would escape from the orbit of the other choral genres of ancient Greece and come to be recognized as its own unique form of artistic and cultural production that deserved, more so than those it left behind, to be preserved, propagated, and celebrated. In reintegrating dithyramb into the Dionysiac program and pursuing the question of what sets tragedy apart from its closest of Dionysiac congeners, this dissertation has also addressed that development and argued that, at least in the fifth century and when considered from the perspectives of literary, performance, and intellectual history, it was still to come. That conclusion would seem to beg the question of when exactly tragedy did escape from alongside dithyramb and the other choral genres of ancient Greece, and answers to the question might be sought in the same areas on

¹ Wilson (2005), 183.

² Foley (2003).

which this dissertation has focused, namely performance, literary, and intellectual history.³ Yet I would like to point to another area where the relationship between the genres might be studied and where we might discern clearer indications that tragedy's emergence was already underway in the fifth century, even if its full realization had not yet been achieved.

The story of the relationship between dithyramb and tragedy cannot be told without consideration of the festivals, almost always state-sponsored, that provided the occasions for the performance of both genres, and the programs of choral performance at those festivals offer one way to gauge the perceived stature of dithyramb and tragedy both individually and in relation to each other. For instance, that both were included in the slate of performances at the Great Dionysia can be understood as an indication that the two genres were considered largely equal. In that context, the Lenaea, another Athenian Dionysiac festival, which had a more ancient pedigree than the Dionysia, is a telling case.⁴ Little certain information is known about the Lenaea's program of events until the middle of the fifth century, when the festival was reorganized, first with the introduction of a formal competition in comedy around 440 BCE, and soon after a competition in tragedy.⁵ In the wake of its reorganization, the Lenaea quickly became an important yearly occasion for those two Dionysiac choral performances. As many as five of Aristophanes' eleven extant comedies had their premiers at the Lenaea, and the

³ Important in this regard is LeVen's recent study of "late classical lyric poetry" produced between 430 and 323 BCE; cf. LeVen (2014). See also the growing importance of actors in tragic performance, as evidenced by the group receiving its own category of competition in the middle of the fifth century; on the institution of the actors' contest, see Csapo and Slater (1995), 222.

⁴ On the Lenaea in general, see *DFA*, 25-42; Csapo and Slater (1995), 122-4; Wilson (2000), 27-31.

⁵ On the date of these changes, see esp. Csapo and Slater (1995), 123; Millis and Olson (2012), 178.

tragedian Agathon supposedly won a victory at the Lenaea of 416, with a production which, if we believe Plato's reporting, at least 30,000 people attended.⁶ The fifth-century establishment of contests in tragedy and comedy at the Lenaea had long-lasting effects in addition to those more immediate ones, for there is evidence from two centuries later that at least the competitions in comedy were still ongoing.⁷

One performance that never found a regular home in the choral competitions at the Lenaea was dithyramb. There is no evidence for dithyrambic performance at the festival save for a single third-century inscription, the interpretation of which is problematic.⁸ Although the inscription refers to "dithyramps," that term seems to be used to indicate solo performances by men who sang while accompanying themselves on the kithara, not the choral-based performance that is usually signaled by "dithyramb." With choral competitions in tragedy and comedy, but not in the other major variety of Dionysiac choral performance, namely dithyramb, the Lenaea would seem to be Athens' first truly dramatic festival.⁹ At it, tragedy appeared without dithyramb by its side, and at least one scholar has suggested recently that that arrangement was due to tragedy's growing popularity at the time when the measures were taken to add comedy and then

⁶ The hypotheses to Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, *Knights*, *Wasps*, and *Frogs* report that those comedies were first produced at the Lenaea; *Lysistrata* is more than likely from that festival as well. On Agathon's Lenaeian victory: Ath. 217a-b. On the 30,000-strong crowd: Pl. *Symp.* 175e.

⁷ 284 BCE is the last attested date for a competition in comedy; cf. *IG* II² 2319, with *DFA*, 42, and Millis and Olson (2012), 108-10.

⁸ *IG* II² 3779, on which see *DFA*, 42n.2; Wilson (2000), 318n.79; Ieranò, 273; and now Ceccarelli (2013), 156-7.

⁹ Here I deliberately evoke the title of *DFA*, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, which is a bit of a misnomer given the festivals examined in that work. Note the need to justify the inclusion of the Anthesteria, at which dramatic performances do not seem to have taken place (10), with the possible exception of the so-called *agōnes chutrinōi* reported to have been instituted by Lycurgus in the 330s, on which see recently Hanink (2014), 62. A better title for *DFA*, one that represents more accurately the material contained in it, might have been *The Dionysiac Festivals of Athens*.

tragedy to the program at the Lenaea.¹⁰ On that logic, dithyramb was not popular enough to warrant inclusion, but was already beginning to be eclipsed by tragedy. Tragedy (and comedy) were emerging as their own category of performance, one separate from other choral genres such as dithyramb.

¹⁰ Wilson (2000), 28.

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