

Chapter Two

The Politics of Metrical Variety in the Classical Athenian Theater

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1. *Vocal performance and society*¹

Greek poetry in the fifth century before Christ was a highly developed and complex art. Greek poets had begun to sing in the remote past. Their successors in the age of Aristophanes had inherited from many singers in many lands—the coast of Asia, the islands of the Aegean and the Continent—a great treasure of rhythmical phrases that had gradually been developed and perfected during centuries of practice amid a song-loving people . . . The poets of the later age, guided by that intuitive apprehension and appreciation of beauty of form which characterized their race in all ranges of creative art, combined these phrases into harmonious periods and symmetrical strophes with extraordinary skill, but they were only vaguely conscious of historical relations.²

So John Williams White opened his study of the verse of ancient Greek comedy two years before the First World War. This was at a moment in history when the

¹ In this chapter, the following abbreviations are employed: *PMG* (= D. L. Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci*, Oxford 1962); *Consbruch* (= M. Consbruch, *Hephaestionis Enchiridion, cum commentariis veteribus*, Leipzig 1906); *Kassel-Austin* (= R. Kassel and C. Austin, *Poetae Comici Graeci*, 8 vols., Berlin 1983–).

² J. W. White, *The Verse of Greek Comedy*, London 1912, vii.

performance of ancient Greek drama, on both the professional and the pedagogical stages, in both ancient Greek and modern language translations, had awakened scholars to the *aural* impact of ancient drama's metrical variety.³ The appreciation of form through performance was a crucial complement to the more abstract science of ancient Greek dramatic metrics pioneered a century earlier in the seminal books published by Gottfried Hermann between 1796 and 1816.⁴

White's point was primarily aesthetic. He was at a loss to express his admiration for the diversity of verse forms that the fifth-century dramatists inherited, and the artistry with which they integrated them into their plays. But his final point—that the ancient Greeks were “only vaguely conscious of historical relations”—reveals that he was dimly aware that verse forms carried more than aesthetic weight. Another century later, an additional dimension of these verse forms has begun to attract scholarly attention, and that is the manner in which their formal aspects might relate to the Athenian *polis* society that produced them—that is, “politically.”⁵ This chapter is intended to be a “think piece,” which explores, tentatively, some avenues of approach to the sociopolitical dynamics underlying the varied metrical and musical shape of Athenian drama. In the final section, I argue that an important factor, by the time of the Persian wars and

³ See P. Easterling, “The Early Years of the Cambridge Greek Play,” in C. Stray (ed.), *Classics in 19th and 20th Century Cambridge: Curriculum, Culture, and Community* (= *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* suppl. 24), Cambridge 1999, 27–47; E. Hall, “Aristophanic Laughter across the Centuries,” in E. Hall and A. Wrigley (eds.), *Aristophanes in Performance, 421 BC–AD 2007: Peace, Birds, and Frogs*, London 2007, 14, 17–18; E. Hall, “The English-speaking Aristophanes, 1660–1914,” in Hall and Wrigley 2007, 85–6; A. Wrigley, “Aristophanes Revitalized! Music and Spectacle on the Academic Stage,” in Hall and Wrigley 2007, 136–54. It is in this context that T. Goodell (“Structural Variety in Attic Tragedy,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 41 [1910], 71) wrote in passing that he could not explain why scholars had failed to notice the remarkable shifts both in meter and in mode of delivery from speech to song in tragedy, lending the genre its “really extraordinary variety of formal structure,” although his main point is that each *play* differed metrically from every other one.

⁴ G. Hermann, *De metris poetarum Graecorum et Romanorum libri III*, Leipzig 1796; G. Hermann, *Handbuch der Metrik*, Leipzig 1799; G. Hermann, *De usu antistrophicorum in Graecorum tragoediis dissertatio*, Leipzig 1810; G. Hermann, *De metrorum quorundam mensura rhythmica dissertatio*, Leipzig 1815.

⁵ E. Hall, “Actor's Song in Tragedy,” in S. Goldhill and R. Osborne (eds.), *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy*, Cambridge 1999, 96–122; P. Wilson, “The Musicians among the Actors,” in P. Easterling and E. Hall (eds.), *Greek and Roman Actors: Aspects of an Ancient Profession*, Cambridge 2002, 33–68; E. Csapo, “The Economics, Poetics, Politics, Metaphysics, and Ethics of the ‘New Music,’” Chapter 4 here.

our first extant drama, is the Athenian use of the ideology of Panhellenism to underpin its imperial aspirations and activities.

Around the turn of the second century AD, Epiktetos thought about the disappearance of the actor's real "self" behind a costume and mask, and insightfully commented that the only part of his physical presence which was not disguised or erased was his voice (*Discourses* 1.29.6). Yet the material, empirical reality of real-life performance space, inhabited by real-life Athenians dressed in costumes, could only become fully *transformed* into the imaginative world conjured by the play at the moment when disembodied sound was produced from the actor's fleshly body; he expressed air physically through his torso, throat, and head, at which point it entered the communal space of the atmosphere and mutated into language, poetry, ideology, and culture. It was the actor's voice that turned matter into things of the mind, thus allowing the biological body to meet the metaphorical body politic.⁶

By Epiktetos' day, the sociopolitical roles played by theatrical performances, along with the relationship between actors and their audiences, were different from those that pertained in classical Athens when the original dramas were first produced. The varied verses that actors and choruses delivered at the Athenian festivals of Dionysos under the democracy had a political dimension if for no other reason than that the ears that heard them were largely those of fellow *politai*.⁷ The simple act of attending the theater, or performing in a play either as an individual actor (*hypokritēs*) or chorusman (*choreutēs*), was to discharge one of the functions of a citizen and to define and reinforce identification with that social role. Many of the spectators had once performed in dramatic choruses themselves; a large proportion would have been watching the participation of their own sons, nephews, and grandsons—as well as neighbors and fellow demesmen.⁸ Moreover, at least in the fifth century, the plays were written and performed by poets and actors who were almost exclusively all Athenian citizens (Ion of Chios is an exception). Athenian acting families, poets, and amateur chorusmen collaboratively created fictions in the communal space of

⁶ E. Hall, *The Theatrical Cast of Athens: Interactions between Ancient Greek Drama and Society*, Oxford 2006, 288.

⁷ See S. Goldhill, "The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 107 (1987), 58–76; J. J. Winkler, "The Ephebes' Song," in J. J. Winkler et al. (eds.), *Nothing to do with Dionysos? Athenian Drama in its Social Context*, Princeton, NJ 1990, 20–62.

⁸ See M. L. West, *Ancient Greek Music*, Oxford, 1992, 17; E. Hall, "The Singing Actors of Antiquity," in P. E. Easterling and E. Hall (eds.), *Greek and Roman Actors: Aspects of an Ancient Profession*, Cambridge 2002, 5–6 and Hall 2006 (see above, n. 6), 2.

the theater that affected their whole community—the real, social beings who gathered together to watch them in the theater. Moreover, that citizen audience had a chance to contribute its own vocal performance, since its *thorybos* (noisy performance of applause or denigration) was an element in the total experience at the drama competitions that could affect the judges' decisions determining the victor.⁹

Yet the sociopolitical ramifications of ancient Greek theatrical verse forms have been neglected, partly as a result of the activities undertaken historically by classical scholarship itself. During the twentieth century there was an estrangement between formal analysis of tragedy and anthropologically inflected studies promoting the erasure of the distinction between what used to be called “art” and “reality.” The German-speaking philological tradition long produced important books about the formal and metrical elements of tragedy; the French (and Americans, at least since the 1980s), on the other hand, wrote about gender, *polis* group identity, democracy, myth, and the interpenetration of cultural artifacts such as plays and vase-paintings with the more overtly civic discourses. But recent scholarly work, especially in the area of the so-called New Music associated with Timotheos, has meant that ancient theater studies are beginning to benefit from a dialogue between the “formalist” school of literary analysis, of which the metrical tradition of criticism is an important constituent, and the society-oriented synthetic approach, at least in the case of the drama of the last two decades of the fifth century.¹⁰ It is increasingly accepted that both form itself and the codes by which dramatists selected formal structures were conditioned by social and political factors.

When it comes specifically to the variety of meters in which the actors could communicate with their spectators, there are in fact several ways of looking at the question politically. One method is to examine the casts of plays—the personnel who inhabit the fictive worlds represented in the theater—from a perspective that combines sociological taxonomy with metrical analysis. That is, which social classes are given which meters to utter, either as individuals or chorally, and what might this imply? I have argued in detail elsewhere that in

⁹ See Hall 2006 (see above, n. 6), 363–66.

¹⁰ E. Csapo, “Later Euripidean Music,” in M. Cropp et al. (eds.), *Euripides and the Tragic Theatre in the Late Fifth Century*, Champaign, IL, 2000, 399–436, P. Wilson, “Athenian Strings,” in P. Murray and P. Wilson (eds.), *Music and the Muses: The Culture of “Mousikē” in the Classical Athenian City*, Oxford 2004, 269–306, E. Csapo, “The Dolphins of Dionysus,” in E. Csapo and M. Miller (eds.), *Poetry, Theory, Praxis: The Social Life of Myth, Word and Image in Ancient Greece*, Oxford 2003, 69–98; Csapo, Chapter 4 here (see above, n. 5).

Athenian tragedy, at any rate, there are important ideological structures underlying the choices that the playwrights made about meter: characters of certain social status are far more likely than others to be given lyrics to sing, as opposed to iambic trimeters to speak: tragic lyricists are predominantly either distraught females or male barbarians.¹¹

In fifth-century tragedy, individual slaves from birth (as opposed to aristocrats who have become enslaved) scarcely ever sing, with the exception of the quintessentially barbarian eunuch from Phrygia in Euripides' *Orestes*. Neither do gods or Athenian middle-aged men (again, with an interesting exception: Theseus in *Hippolytos*, who is given some rather half-hearted lyric lines).¹² But the rules change completely, of course, when the slaves or supernatural beings or Athenian men form a chorus (see, e.g., *Oidipous at Kolonos*). In the case of the distinction between individuals and choruses in drama, one ancient critic was quite clear that in "the old days" of theater, class hierarchies could certainly be signified by formal means—if not by particular meters, then certainly by specific musical modes. The Hypodorian and the Hypophrygian modes were the preserve of the individual characters on stage, because they were ruling class (*hégemonēs*) and therefore socially superior to the collective populace being represented in the chorus (*hoi de laoi*, [Aristotle], *Problems* 19.48).¹³

A second way of looking at the question of the political connotations of verse form in classical Greek drama is to think about what specific meters might have signified, whether emotionally or in terms of generic and ritual associations. Here the problem identified by White becomes pressing: since the Athenians themselves may often only have been "vaguely conscious of historical relations" between metrical form and the contexts that had originated and developed those forms, it becomes all too easy to indulge in speculation about how the audiences would have "heard" a particular rhythmic formation, especially in the almost complete absence either of the accompanying music or even basic information about the musical modes employed.¹⁴ There is no way to achieve

¹¹ Hall 1999 (see above, n. 5), revised version in Hall 2006 (see above, n. 6), 288–320.

¹² Hall 2006 (see above, n. 6), 314–15.

¹³ Hall 2006 (see above, n. 6), 289.

¹⁴ For an edition of almost all the extant musical papyri, including those relating to the theater, see E. Pöhlmann and M. L. West, *Documents of Ancient Greek Music: The Extant Melodies and Fragments*, edited and transcribed with commentary, Oxford 2001. An exciting new papyrus fragment with music composed for Karkinos' fourth-century *Medea* has subsequently been published by A. Bélis, "Un nouveau papyrus musical au Louvre: Identification, transcription et interprétation musicale," in *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* fasc. 3, 1305–29 = *C.Acad.* 90 (2004): fasc. 3 (Jul–Oct), 2004.

an “archaeology of ears” and scrape away the barnacles of our culturally determined emotional and aesthetic responses in order to replace them with those of an ancient audience.¹⁵ One amusing example of entirely different scholarly reactions to both the prosody and the words of a song embedded within an ancient playscript is provided by the song at *Ekklesiazousai* 960–76, which has been identified by different scholars, according to their subjective responses to it, as both a charming “love duet” and as a thoroughly lewd *paraklausithyron*.¹⁶

Yet in a few cases the associations of a particular metrical form can be partially established, and can indeed illuminate the total experience of the play in performance. The evidence of comedy suggests that iambic songs, as opposed to spoken iambs, sounded somewhat primitive and demotic in tone, partly because the iambic itself was the meter least distanced from elevated, colloquial speech, as Aristotle twice insists (*Poetics* 4.1449a 19–28; *Rhetoric* 3.1408b24–6).¹⁷ Generic associations may sometimes be detected: when the Underworld chorus introduces the great debate between the tragedians in *Frogs*, it sings a strophic prelude largely composed of dactylic hexameters (814–29), which “contribute to the portrayal of the contest as a heroic combat.”¹⁸ The dochmiac rhythm is intimately bound up with the history of tragedy itself as a genre—it never appears before tragedy and scarcely ever afterward. But its associations are fundamentally psychological rather than “political:” it appears at moments of extreme mental agitation, especially when highly resolved into strings of consecutive short syllables, which created a twittering effect that seems to have invited comparison with birdsong.¹⁹ But some meters obviously had at least broadly sociopolitical associations. The Ionic *a minore* meter, for example, which is such a conspicuous feature of both *Persians* and *Bacchai*, clearly had Asiatic connotations as well as ritual, Dionysiac ones, and helped to create what would now

¹⁵ On the ease with which modern Western-centered aesthetic and artistic concepts and judgments can creep into the study of the music of other cultures see the ethnomusicologist A. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music*, Chicago 1964, chap. xiii, 259–76.

¹⁶ See S. D. Olson, “The ‘Love Duet’ in Aristophanes’ *Ecclesiazusae*,” *Classical Quarterly* n.s. 38 (1988), 238–39.

¹⁷ See White 1912 (see above, n. 2), 26, on *Frogs* 416–38 and *Acharnians* 1008–17 = 1037–46.

¹⁸ K. J. Dover, *Aristophanes’ Frogs*, edited with an Introduction and Commentary, Oxford 1993, 291.

¹⁹ Most famously, of course, in the Hoopoe scene in Aristophanes’ *Birds*, on which see A. Barker, “Transforming the Nightingale: Aspects of Athenian Musical Discourse in the Late Fifth Century,” in P. Murray and P. Wilson (eds.), *Music and the Muses*, Oxford 2004, 185–204. On tragic singing, the dochmiac, and birdsong, see Hall 2002 (see above, n. 8), 8.

be called an “Oriental” atmosphere that cannot have failed to mean something political in Athens ever after the Persian Wars.²⁰

Thinking about the connotations of verse forms and their juxtaposition and arrangement within a particular playscript can help to develop a critical practice in which the choice of form is understood to contribute to the meaning created in performance. If art is to be understood as a product of a particular society at a particular time, criticism must involve “illuminating some of the ways in which various forms, genres, and styles . . . come to have value ascribed to them by certain groups in particular contexts.”²¹ In the case of comedy, particular verse forms and their generic connotations are sometimes marshaled in support of discrete political positions. In Aristophanes’ *Peace*, as I have argued elsewhere, the battle for peace is formulated as a battle between poetic genres, and heroic epic is identified with the enemy (i.e., supporters of the foreign policies of the recently deceased Kleon). Even Ionian *iambos* and Aesopic fable are, within the opening sequence, enrolled at least by allusion in the service of Trygaios’ mission, along with tragedy, satyr play, Stesichorean choral lyric, Alkaios’ *symposium* poetry and above all Hesiod’s agricultural verses.²²

2. *The poikilia of theatrical form*

There is, however, a third way of looking at the question of classical Greek dramatic and metrical form “politically.” This approach is more holistic, since it considers, from the visual perspective of the reader looking at the printed page, the *phenomenon* of the rhythmically variegated entity that was the total aural experience of ancient Greek drama and which is an obvious feature of the text, even today. The word “phenomenon” is particularly appropriate: to insist that the visible surface manifested by a text offers vital clues that must not be ignored in favor of the analysis of deep structures, is indeed, methodologically speaking, to take a “phenomenological” approach.

The heterogeneity of ancient Greek theatrical verse forms would instantly attract the attention of any phenomenological analyst of theater, for whom playscripts have a special claim to truth value. Such critics, who trace their approach to Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, stress the importance of visible manifestations or symptoms of underlying social structures, the forms

²⁰ E. Hall, *Aeschylus’ Persians*, edited with Introduction, Translation and Commentary, Warminster 1996, 113.

²¹ J. Wolff, *The Social Production of Art*, London 1981, 7.

²² Hall 2006 (see above, n. 6), ch. 11.

taken by their instantiations on the *surface* of cultural life. To Bruce Wilshire, an influential phenomenological theorist of theater, theater is a “disciplined use” of the imagination that can “discover . . . aspects of actuality.”²³ Theater is a privileged source for documenting psychosocial “reality” precisely because it is so obviously artificial, its poetic languages and media of communication (including, of course, musical accompaniment to speech) so estranged from everyday life, and its characters so unreal. This results in a potential to reveal the truth entirely unshackled from the mendacious tendency of discourses, genres, and media that stake false claims to veracity. Untrue, partial, or distorted historiography, oratory, funerary monuments, and medical textbooks can all “masquerade” as truth, but theater can never masquerade as the truth because it *is* masquerade.

The exceptional nature of ancient drama’s formal heterogeneity was expressed by the Byzantine Greek scholar Michael Psellos, when he described ancient tragic poetry (*tragikê poiêsis*) as “adorned [*kosmoumenê*] with a variety of rhythms, and encompassing variegated [*poikila*] meters.”²⁴ The term *poikila* here very likely reveals the connection that Psellos drew, perhaps consciously, between the patterned nature of Dionysiac clothing and animal skins and his figurative Tragic Poetry, semipersonified by being decked out with meters metaphorically construed as her theatrical costume and *skeuê*.²⁵ For words with this *poikil-* stem are used by the dramatists in reference to textiles or clothes of varied patterns (Aischylos *Choephoroi* 1013, Aristophanes *Wealth* 530) or animals with dappled or mottled hides (Euripides *Iphigeneia at Aulis* 226). In Isokrates, the poets in general are said to have more resources than some other writers, because they can “embroider” (*diapoikillein*) their poetry by using not only conventional expressions but exotic terms, neologisms, and all kinds of figures of speech (9.9). This sort of metaphor is used in Sokrates’ denigration of democracy in the *Republic* (8.557b–c), where he characterizes it as a system made up of “all sorts” of people (*pantodapoi*), which may seem very lovely, especially to women and boys, “in the same way as a patterned [*poikilon*] mantle, variegated in its embroidery [*pepoikilmenon*] with all kinds of flowers,” since it

²³ B. Wilshire, *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor*, Bloomington, IN, 1982, 11; see further E. Hall, “Towards a Theory of Performance Reception,” *Arion* 12 (2004), 67–68.

²⁴ A. R. Dyck, *Michael Psellos: The Essays on Euripides and George of Pisidia and on Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius*, Vienna 1986, 21–24.

²⁵ On the classical Greek and Roman precedents for the personification of Tragedy or Tragic Poetry, see E. Hall, “Tragedy Personified,” in C. Kraus et al. (eds.), *Visualizing the Tragic*, Oxford 2007, 221–56.

is likewise “variegated” (*pepoikilmenê*) through the diversity of characters within it. One of the problems with democracy, at least radical democracy, is precisely the “unlikeness” of one citizen to another. In Plato’s *Laws*, the Athenian uses the same stem to create words applied specifically to our chief interest here: the Athenian condemns the sort of elaborate music in which there is a “divergence” (*heterophônia*) and “variety” (*poikilia*) marking the relationship between the notes of the lyre on the one hand and the melody of the song on the other, leading to a combination of pitch, speed, tonality, “and all sorts of rhythmical variations” (*tôn rhuthmôn pantodapa poikilmata*, 7.812d–e).²⁶

Despite Plato and Psellos, there is of course no reason to imagine (with the exception of some passages in Aristophanes, above all the explicit discussions of meter in the debate between the tragedians in *Frogs*), that any ancient Greek dramatist composing in his *poikila* or *diapepoikilmena* rhythms ever himself had “principles of pure metric” uppermost in his mind, or was even conscious of them.²⁷ He certainly did not have at his disposal the classifications applied by the assiduous metrician Hephaestion in his *Encheiridion* (summary handbook) on meter (ca. 200 AD), which even today forms the basis of the terminology used by specialists in ancient Greek prosody, despite the assault Paul Maas launched against ancient metrical theory.²⁸ Yet it was indeed one of the most remarkable innovations of the ancient Greek dramatists, comic as well as tragic, that they produced forms of poetry that include several types of song, in the genres and meters that had for the most part been standardized and canonized in the archaic period.²⁹ With one signal exception—the *Margites*—no work with a claim to an earlier date than drama, in any genre, juxtaposes within its overarching structure even two blatantly contrasting metrical schemes, let alone several entirely different ones, delivered in such a variety of performance styles. Nor is there is any evidence (again, besides the *Margites*) that dactylic hexameter episodes

²⁶ On the precise meaning of the passage from the *Laws* on lyre accompaniment, see A. Barker, “*Heterophonia and Poikilia: Accompaniments to Greek melody*,” in B. Gentili and F. Perusino (eds.), *Mousikê: Metrica, ritmica e musica greca*, Pisa 1995, 41–60. The stem does appear in Mycenaean, where it appears to refer to textiles, its primary meaning in classical Greek: see P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, new edition with a supplement by A. Blanc, C. de Lamberterie, and J.-L. Perpillon, Paris 1999, 923.

²⁷ A. M. Dale, *The Lyric Metres of Greek Drama*, 2nd ed., Oxford 1968, 1–2.

²⁸ P. Maas, *Griechische Metrik*, in A. Gercke and E. Nordern (eds.), *Einleitung in die Altertumswissenschaft*, 3rd ed., Leipzig and Berlin 1927, 2; see J. M. van Ophuijsen, *Hephaestion on Metre: A Translation and Commentary*, Leiden 1987, 3–4.

²⁹ J. Herington, *Poetry into Drama: Early Tragedy and the Greek Poetic Tradition*, Berkeley, CA 1985, 3–10.

from epics were ever made to alternate with other types of musical performance, as is the case with some North African indigenous epic traditions.

The comic narrative poem *Margites* is a fascinating and important exception, since it interspersed iambs into its dactylic hexameters (Hephaestion *On Poems* 3.4 = *Encheiridion* p. 65, 10–11 Consbruch). But in a sense it may be the exception that proves the rule. Although it went in antiquity under the name of Homer, the actual poem to which Hephaestion refers, and which may well be constituted by the mixture of hexameters and iambs in P.Oxy. 2309, is of uncertain date.³⁰ It postdates Archilochos, despite a misleading reference,³¹ and is very likely to be placed as late as the sixth century (in the second half of which drama was invented) or even the fifth or fourth. One author of a specialist study has argued that the author was the Presocratic philosopher Xenophanes;³² others have argued, rather more plausibly, that the conjunction of different meters stems from a *parody* of the original, “Homeric” *Margites* by a poet of Old Comedy, Kratinos.³² In a study of the evolution of verse forms in ancient Greece, A. M. Dale remarked that she was “quite unable to take seriously the claim” that the *Margites* antedated Archilochos; she therefore approved the association with Kratinos, since “the perpetrator of that farrago was himself no metrical inventor—the whole joke assumes familiarity with the iambic line and its normal uses—and we should be given to postulate a considerable body of iambic poetry already in existence before the seventh century.”³³

In its article under “Pigres,” the *Suda* attributes the poem to this fourth-century Halicarnassian poet, as well as claiming that he had produced a metrically variegated work that interpolated not iambs but elegiacs into the *Iliad*.³⁴ Needless to say, the confused ancient references to the *Margites* have always presented a challenge to theorists and classifiers of epic as a genre, whether Aristotle (*Poetics* 4.1448b30), Renaissance readers of Aristotle,³⁵ or modern

³⁰ When Edward Lobel published P.Oxy. 2309 in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 12 (London 1954, 1–2), he regarded it as “a reasonable conclusion” that it contained the *Margites* (p. 1).

³¹ M. L. West, “The Invention of Homer,” *Classical Quarterly*, n.s., 49 (1999), 377.

³² F. Bossi, *Studi sul Margite*, 1986. Cf. T. Bergk, *Poetae Lyrici Graeci Tertius Curis* Pt. 2, *Poetas Elegiacos et Iambographos Continens*, Leipzig 1846, 153; S. D. Olson and A. Sens, *Matro of Pitane and the Tradition of Epic Parody in the Fourth Century BCE*, Atlanta, GA 1999, 5–6. On Kratinos’ adaptation of preexisting verse forms, see, above all, E. Bakola, *Cratinus and the Art of Comedy*, Oxford and New York 2010.

³³ A. M. Dale, “Stichos and Stanza,” *Classical Quarterly*, n.s., 13 (1963), 47.

³⁴ See J. A. Davison, “The Oxyrhynchus Papyri,” review in *Classical Review*, n.s., 6 (1956), 13.

³⁵ R. C. Williams, “Metrical Form of the Epic, as Discussed by Sixteenth-Century Critics,” *Modern Language Notes* 36.8 (December 1921), 451.

papyrologists.³⁶ It is conceivably possible that the metrical experimental *Margites* preceded the invention of drama, but it is far more plausible that parodying epic by interspersing iambs into hexameters only became possible as a result of the experience of comic parody.

Whether the formal metrical variety of theatrical performances was the result of an aesthetic decision taken consciously at the points that tragedy and comedy were respectively invented, or a teleological consummation of an organic process that by gradual increments assimilated additional genres to an ancient tradition of choral dancing, is a question as unanswerable as the origin of drama itself. The sociological dimension of the polymorphic form of Athenian drama is, however, surely better understood if approached *synchronically*, in an attempt to understand its effect and function during the decades from which we have extant examples, rather than diachronically in terms of etiology in an earlier period—Peisistratean Athens—about which we know desperately little.

Despite all the problems with the evidence, it is clear that a powerful difference was felt in antiquity between sung lyric and spoken iambic verse. An ancient grammarian named Diomedes even recommended that we should sing ancient Greek lyric poetry when we read it, regardless of whether or not we know or can remember the tune.³⁷ It is not clear how this should be done, beyond raising the pitch of our voice on accented syllables.³⁸ But Diomedes' recommendation suggests that the difference between sung and spoken verse was so powerfully perceived that even an invented melody would help the reader to recover the experience of a sung lyric poem. Taking into account the perceived difference in effect, it must be stressed that regardless of what happened in the half century preceding our earliest extant drama, Aeschylus' *Persians* (472 BC), the difference between its metrical constituents and those of any earlier ancient Greek poem is astounding.

Besides the use of iambic trimeters and trochaic tetrameters, simply *staging* a story means that the marching anapaest comes into its own as a meter reflecting

³⁶ See H. Langerbeck, "Margites—Versuch Einer Beschreibung und Rekonstruktion," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 63 (1958), 33–63.

³⁷ *dei meta melous anagnōskein*, 21.19–21 Hilgard (*Grammatici Graeci*, Leipzig 1878–1910). Diomedes' advice appears in his commentary on a passage in Dionysios of Thrace's *Ars Grammatica*, where it is recommended that lyrics be read *emmelōs*, and laments in an abandoned and dirge-like manner: p. 6, par. 2.8–11 Uhlig (*Grammatici Graeci*, Leipzig 1878–1910).

³⁸ So suggests Lionel Pearson in his *Aristoxenus, "Elementa Rhythmica": The Fragment of Book II and the Additional Evidence for Aristoxenean Rhythmic Theory*, edited with Introduction, Translation and Commentary, Oxford 1990, xlix.

physical movement. Anapaests regularly kick off choral odes in *Persians*, including the *parodos*, which is itself a strophic structure more complicated than any surviving archaic poem or epinician, and includes passages that are dominantly Ionics *a minore* (see above), lyric iambics, and lecythia. Other choral passages incorporate further elements such as lyric dactyls and lyric anapaests. There is an *epirrhêma* in which the messenger's spoken iambic trimeters alternate with the chorus's lyric iambics, and a fifteen-stanza *kommos* concludes the play.

The point of the last paragraph is not to blind the reader with metrical science but simply to underline what White expressed so well in the quotation that began this chapter, and that is just what a different beast dramatic poetry was from anything that had gone before it. The audience was exposed, in *Persians* alone (itself only one in a group of four plays performed sequentially), to a large number of aural "gearshifts." I say "aural" rather than "metrical" because many of these gearshifts marked not only a shift from spoken verse unaccompanied by the *aulos* to accompanied verse, but a shift in the nature of the vocal delivery from speech to recitative or song. Even discounting the modulations within choral odes between dominantly dactylic and dominantly iambic or Ionic passages, and counting only the transitions between anapaest, lyric meters, iambic trimeters, and trochaics, there are no fewer than twenty-one shifts (counting conservatively) in basic verse form in the course of this tragedy, which consists of fewer than eleven hundred lines. That means approximately one gearshift every fifty lines.

A sole, precious piece of evidence suggests that tragic audiences did not simply appreciate the pleasure that comes from diversity but found emotive the precise moments of change, within a single performance, from one type of meter and delivery to another—the actual gearshifts. The pseudo-Aristotelian *Problem* 19.6 says that the form of delivery in tragic songs called *parakatalogê* (i.e., some kind of recitative) is effective "because of the contrast involved [*dia tèn anômalian*] . . . Contrast is emotive in situations of great misfortune or grief; regularity [*to homales*] is less conducive to lamentation." The effect of contrast or sudden gearshift within an individual speaker or singer's delivery, described in this *Problem*, can perhaps be illuminated by the use of the cognate term *anômalos* in Aristotle's account of an adolescent male voice, when in the process of breaking (*hotan anômalos êi hê phônê*), swerving suddenly from the childhood register to the adult male's (*Generation of Animals* 5.7.788a1–2). Such striking transitions are not necessarily only appropriate to tragedy, by being conducive to lamentation: metrical and vocal *anômalia* is also a fundamental principle of comedy, as

can be seen from the earliest extant example, Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, as well as all the fragments of plays that were first performed before 425 BC.³⁹

3. *The politics of form*

It is puzzling how reluctant scholars of Greco-Roman societies have been to enquire into the relationship between these societies and the formal, genre-based characteristics of the literature in ancient Greek and Latin that they produced. This reluctance contrasts sharply with the serious consideration that has been given to, for example, the relationship between the emergence of capitalism and the form of the English, French, or Russian novel, certainly ever since Lukacs' seminal discussion of Lawrence Sterne in *Die Seele und die Formen* (1911). It is, admittedly, *easier* to see how subject matter and content can be involved in discussions of the social role of literature than issues of meter and form. This must be why there have been so very few attempts to explain, for example, why the dactylic hexameter dominated narrative poetry and indeed the educational canon in both Greek and Latin during the whole of the classical period, which was also polytheistic, slave-holding, patriarchal, and grounded in particular types of economic relationship and agricultural practice.⁴⁰ Although the ways that the form of the epinician and the tragic form of tragic theater related to their social contexts have indeed been thoughtfully discussed by Peter Rose,⁴¹ virtually no attention has ever been paid to sociopolitical ramifications of the centrality of aural "gearshifts" to the classical Athenian theatrical experience.

This is particularly surprising given the very widespread respect that has been accorded by classical scholars to the ideas of Michael Bakhtin. If we think about the consequences of his work for ancient Greek dramatic genres, as genres they look increasingly revolutionary: any genre, he wrote, "enters life and comes into contact with various aspects of its environment. It does so in the process of its actual realization as something performed, heard, read at a definite time, in a definite place, under definite conditions. . . *It takes a position between people organized in some way.*"⁴²

³⁹ The term *anómalia* signifies not only "variety" or "diversity" in the more material application in which Aristotle regularly uses it (e.g., *Generation of Animals* 788a24), but of inconsistency of abstract entities such as character (Aischines 2.7) or political constitution (Plato, *Menex.* 238e).

⁴⁰ One outstanding exception is P. Rose, *Sons of the Gods, Children of Earth: Ideology and Literary Form in Ancient Greece*, Ithaca, NY 1992, 43–46.

⁴¹ Rose 1992 (see above, n. 40), 27–29, 141–43, 159–65, 185–94.

⁴² P. N. Medvedev and M. Bakhtin, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*, trans. A. J. Ehrle, Baltimore, MD 1978, 131 (my emphasis).

The assembled citizens between whom ancient drama took its position when it was performed were certainly people organized in a very distinctive, and actually revolutionary way, at least after the reforms of Kleisthenes. But to Bakhtin, genre also has an internal aspect as a force that shapes consciousness: every significant genre “possesses definite principles of selection, definite forms of seeing and conceptualizing reality, and a definite scope and depth of penetration.”⁴³ In other words, genres are viewpoints on the world, and, as Vernant and Vidal-Naquet dedicated much of their lives to arguing, Athenian tragedy constituted heroic myth inspected from the viewpoint of the fifth-century citizen. But they focused on content rather than form: Bakhtin would include the organization of verse forms in his definition of genre, which always “develops and generates in the process of ideological social discourse. Therefore, a genuine poetics of genre can only be a sociology of genre.”⁴⁴ The “poetics” of genre involves looking at not only the development of individual genres but also their “inclusiveness”—ways they integrate, oppose, synthesize, or hierarchically organize material from other genres. The idea of an “included” intergeneric dialogue could scarcely be more suggestive for the analysis of the form of ancient Greek drama.

It is also an area in which Russian Formalism and Western Marxism have a good deal in common. In a famous assault on some previous Marxist definitions of the relationship between form and content, Terry Eagleton argued that they are existentially inseparable but methodologically distinct. Of course, in literary practice, when a text is being written or read, form and content are inevitably impossible to pry apart. But they have been *historically* distinguished, and are therefore distinguishable in the practice of critical and historical *theory*: “such a recognition must precede debate as to whether their theoretical relationship is harmoniously reciprocal, interactive but asymmetrical, or whatever.”⁴⁵ Now, one of the fundamental ways in which the Marxist tradition Eagleton was criticizing had looked at form was as a dimension of a text that, by imposing shape and order on experience and its representation in language, can be seen as a phenomenon that attempts to *resolve* the social and psychological contradictions raised and exposed by content. According to this view, form is a repressive force that effectively beats material reality into shapes that are ideologically acceptable to

⁴³ Medvedev and Bakhtin 1978 (see above, n. 42), 131.

⁴⁴ Medvedev and Bakhtin 1978 (see above, n. 42), 135.

⁴⁵ T. Eagleton, “Marxism and Form,” *Poetry Nation* 1 (1973), 59–60.

ruling-class interests.⁴⁶ But the problem with this somewhat reductive model, as Eagleton stresses, is that historical “content” does not come without itself being preformed by social and productive forces. When literary change happens, it is indeed, as Fredric Jameson argues in his landmark study *Marxism and Form*, essentially a function of content seeking “its *adequate expression* in form.” Jameson of course goes on to insist that all “content” also has its “inner logic,” of which adequate literary form is the articulation.⁴⁷ On this basis one could see the Athenian invention of theatrical presentations of myth as *partially* preformed content seeking a form of articulation adequate to the drastic social and epistemic changes that produced the Kleisthenic revolution.

Leon Trotsky is not an author often cited in classical philology, but since he asked questions about the relationship between meter and social experience, it is worth considering his dazzling *Literature and Revolution*, written in the early 1920s. When analyzing the relationship of literature to social change, he argued that rhythms are related to society in embodying the *parameters* of the forms taken by *consciousness* in a historical society.⁴⁸ Consciousness is framed by and instantiated in the very shape taken by the serial pulses in which language is organized in a rhythmic text, most demonstrably in poetry. These forms of historical consciousness are fragile and subterranean and emerge in the “pulse” because they are far too delicate and submerged to be explicitly articulated:

The poet can find material for his art only in his social environment and transmits the new impulses of life through his own artistic consciousness. Language, changed and complicated . . . gives the poet a new verbal material, and suggests or facilitates new word combinations for the poetic formulation of new thoughts or of new feelings, which strive to break through the dark shell of the subconscious. If there were no changes in psychology produced by changes in the social environment, there would be no movement in art.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Eagleton’s (1973; see above, n. 45) major targets here were two “classics” of Marxist criticism in English, both published in 1937 (both men died in the Spanish Civil War): Ralph Fox, *The Novel and The People* and Christopher Caudwell, *Illusion and Reality*.

⁴⁷ F. Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, Princeton, NJ 1971, 311.

⁴⁸ L. Trotsky, *Literatures and Revolution*, reissue of English translation by R. Strunsky, London 1991 [1925], 173–75, and 195–96; the passage begins thus: “Though individual shadings of poetic form correspond to individual make-up, they do go hand in hand with imitation and routine, in the feeling itself, as well as in the method of expression.”

⁴⁹ Trotsky’s concept was later reworked by R. Williams in his influential idea of “structures

This approach to form can be integrated with Vernant's insistence that scholars need to examine the processes whereby Athenian tragedy *transformed* reality while assimilating it into its own medium—what Raymond Williams would call the processes of artistic “mediation:” as Vernant influentially put it, “No reference to other domains of social life . . . can be pertinent unless we can also show how tragedy assimilates into its own perspective the elements it borrows, thereby quite transmuting them.”⁵⁰ Vernant proposed that scholars need not only to be aware of the particular codes and conventions conditioning such processes of transformation, but also to ask what those codes reveal about the society operating them. The expression, in the theater, of Athenian civic consciousness in metrical art is one such process of transformation, and the codes informing that process of transformation or “mediation” need to be investigated since they can potentially illuminate far more than mere metrical habit.

It might be argued that classical Greek dramatic genres were remarkably “inclusive” genres in the Bakhtinian sense. Bakhtin's central examples were epic and the novel, “global” linguistic structures that not only included but thoroughly assimilated preexisting genres of speech and literary discourse: Homeric epic presents all its songs and speeches in the same overarching meter, and the nineteenth-century novel (although not Petronius' *Satyricon*) assimilated nearly every form of human expression to the same prose form. Tragedy and comedy were indeed inclusive in that they incorporated so many previously discrete poetic genres, from lament, wedding song, sacrificial ululation, parthe-neion, hymn, encomium, and the narrative lyrics of Stesichoros in tragedy to work songs, drinking songs, dithyrambs and vituperative lampoon in comedy. Sometimes, as in the delicate generic shifts *within* some choral odes, the preexisting genres have been fused into a new metrical entity embedded within the total structure of the play. Often they are used ironically: L. P. E. Parker has shown in her magisterial *The Songs of Aristophanes* how Euripides uses the hymeneal associations of the glyconic, an old Aeolic meter, when it appears inserted into Cassandra's perverted wedding song in *Trojan Women* (308–40).⁵¹ On the other hand, in comparison with other ancient poetic media, tragedy and comedy leave the discrete genres, which in combination constitute them, accommodated

of feeling,” which he first used in *Culture and Society: 1780–1950*, London 1959, and in which he included poetic rhythms as well as modes of sensibility and semantic figures (R. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford and New York 1977, 133).

⁵⁰ Vernant in J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, trans. J. Lloyd, Cambridge, MA, 1988, 31.

⁵¹ L. P. E. Parker, *The Songs of Aristophanes*, Oxford 1997, 292–93.

but unassimilated, their traditional meters relatively unaltered, in a spectacularly uneven (i.e., *anômales*) overall display.

The question of metrical variety and performative gearshifts is impossible, of course, to separate from the issue of theater's apparently unique fusion of choral sections with those delivered by an individual or individuals—monologue, dialogue, solo recitative, monody, duet with another actor, or *kommos* or *epirrhêma* interacting with the chorus. In Aristophanic comedy, the chorus and the actors are two forces who interact in a dynamic ensemble, even though the balance between them differs from play to play.⁵² Acting out narratives in intermissions between choral dancing may have been the way theater began, and when it comes to tragedy, of which we have much earlier examples than comedy, in Aischylos' plays the chorus remains predominant, although the actors assumed greater significance, as the medium developed. Moreover, amongst the actors, with the exception of *Prometheus Bound* (the authorship and date of which are contested), the sense is more of an ensemble than of a star and his supporting actors.

In Aischylos' earlier works, the balance between the size and the significance of the roles remains fairly equal and no one figure, at least until Klytemnestra in *Agamemnon*, stakes a claim psychologically to dominate the action of a single play;⁵³ Klytemnestra, moreover, yields her central position over the course of the trilogy to Orestes. But as tragedy evolved, the individual actor challenged the dominance of the chorus;⁵⁴ what was expected of star actors then affected the way in which plays were composed. It is significant that a tragic actor's prize was not added to the Lenaia festival until the late 430s, and possibly not until 423 BC.⁵⁵ By the 420s, tragedies were more likely to revolve around a titanic personality who rarely leaves the stage, for example in Sophokles' *Oidipous* or Euripides' *Hekabe*.

⁵² See the intelligent study of M. Treu, *Undici cori comici: aggressività, derisione e tecniche drammatiche in Aristofane*, Genova 1999.

⁵³ See further Hall 2006 (see above, n. 6), 22–23, 24. Herington 1985 ([see above, n. 29], 143 and 271, n. 72) is to be commended when failing to be impressed by attempts to make Eteokles in *Septem* commensurate with the towering monolithic heroes of Sophokles or of *Prometheus Bound*.

⁵⁴ See Csapo, Chapter 4 here (see above, n. 5), 52–56, Hall 2007 (above, n. 25), and E. Hall, "Greek Tragedy 430–380 BC," in R. Osborne (ed.), *Debating the Athenian Cultural Revolution*, Cambridge 2007, 264–87.

⁵⁵ The precise date depends on reconciling the evidence from several inscriptions, for a discussion of which see E. Csapo and W. J. Slater, *The Context of Ancient Drama*, Ann Arbor, MI 1995), 227–28.

What this means “politically” is that the fifth-century tragic theater was characterized by an intergeneric tension, even an ongoing confrontation, between the predominantly lyric forms of the poetry sung by choruses and the predominantly iambic forms of poetry spoken by the individual actors. This was manifested in two ways. First, in terms of the amount of airtime composed for the chorus relative to the individual characters, there was a struggle over proportional control of the process of the performance. This could perhaps be seen as an aesthetic mediation, transplanted to the remote and predemocratic mythical past and expressed more in form than in content, of the ongoing encounters between democratic mass and elite in the assembly and law courts; in Raymond Williams’ terms, this mediation would constitute the crucial relationship between the cultural “formation” of tragedy and the social “institutions” of the democratic *polis*.⁵⁶ Second, the struggle for predominance within the genre can be seen in terms of tension between the emerging star actor and his supporting actors, since in time his presence overshadowed the deuteragonist and tritagonist. One way of understanding this tension is to see it as mediating, within the aesthetic realm, the increasing importance of the individual powerful statesman as public figure during and after the years of Perikles’ leadership.

Yet whatever the balance of formal power (defined through type and extent of poetic self-expression) within individual plays, theatrical performances all remained examples of a fundamentally ensemble medium, in which the total effect was far greater than the sum of the parts, a fitting fictional world in which a democracy (where thousands of individuals shared power, and their contributions to the success of the *polis* were equally important if qualitatively different) could inspect itself. Homeric epic, originally the product of an age of monarchs and tyrants, was performed by the master-singer, the storyteller, the bard, who knew all things, however the god might impel him to sing (*Odyssey* 8.44–45), and in whose authoritative solo voice all the speaking characters of the epic were effectively ventriloquized. Drama was different. It put the people on the stage, each to be ventriloquized by an individual actor, or a group ventriloquized by a chorus. The physical presence of a group that dances also affects metrical practice: rhythms that are designed for dancing have, for example, an immanent tendency toward resolution into multiple short syllables, a tendency that is clear in Aristophanes’ use of paeonics within trochaic verse systems.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Williams 1977 (see above, n. 49), 119–20.

⁵⁷ White 1912 (see above, n. 2), 84–85.

The fundamentally agonistic nature of the plots enacted in Aristophanic comedy (a feature that can scarcely be divorced from comedy's political role in the democracy) is metrically instantiated in this poet's widespread use of the catalectic anapaestic tetrameter in every part of his debate scenes—the distichs in which the chorus exhorts a debater to launch his case, in the debate itself, and occasionally in the rendering of the verdict.⁵⁸ This agonistic meter seemed to the metrician Hephaestion to be so typical of Aristophanic comedy that he gave it the name *to aristophaneion* (*On the Anapaest* 8.2 = *Encheiridion* p. 25, 1–9 Consbruch).⁵⁹ White points out that the *embatêria* that the Spartan infantry sang on the march and when joining battle were anapaestic, with a spondaic ending (a verse that was itself used by Aristophanes' rival Kratinos to open his *Odysseis*—see fragment 143.1 Kassel-Austin). Although the “recitative tetrameter” of Aristophanes' adversarial scenes was not itself a march verse, “its employment in the debate is in felicitous accord with its military use,” and the distichs that kick off debates “may be a reminiscence of the exhortation with which the leader once incited his men to battle.”⁶⁰

One of the consequences of writing poetry for delivery by a socially diverse cast of characters, impersonated directly by actors in painted masks denoting age, ethnicity, gender, and status, was that the notion of *êthos* became more important for the dramatic poets than for those of preexisting genres. In tragedy, there were conventions governing the allocation of spoken and sung verses to characters of different ethnicity and status (see above); in comedy, it begins to be possible to see how even individual meters are handled to represent particular types of character in particular situations. In *Wasps*, for example, Aristophanes gives the elderly chorus trochaic rhythms for rapid delivery before and after their fight with Bdelykleon (403–29, 463–87), in order to convey their excitement and activity. But there is a further peculiarity: in their longer speeches, the number of reduced metra increases significantly toward the end, conveying the unmistakable impression that these old men who have exerted themselves are running out of breath (403–14, 463–70).⁶¹ Such characterization may not represent an instance of the “politics” of metrical variety, but it certainly exemplifies its “sociology.”

⁵⁸ White 1912 (see above, n. 2), 181–82.

⁵⁹ On the rather different meaning of the *metron* called “Aristophaneion” in modern metrics, see the qualifying remarks of van Ophuijsen 1987 (see above, n. 28), 86.

⁶⁰ White 1912 (see above, n. 2), 121–22.

⁶¹ See D. M. MacDowell, *Aristophanes: Wasps*, edited with Introduction and Commentary, Oxford 1971, 28–29.

4. *Poikilia as sympotic and as Panhellenic: Two homologies*

Part of the reason for the variety of versification in all classical drama may, on a broad conceptual level, have something to do with Dionysos, a god whose very essence involves mutation, alternation, and *alterité*.⁶² Indeed, the only surviving rival as shape-shifter of either Proteus or Kirke in archaic literature is the god Dionysos, one of whose own so-called *Homeric Hymns* (7.38–53) relates the myth of his escape from pirates who had abducted him in his true shape—that of a handsome youth. Dionysos first made the ship sprout vines and ivy, and then himself changed into a lion and a bear, before turning his adversaries into dolphins. It is no coincidence that this shape-shifting god, once theater was invented at Athens in the sixth century BC, became its tutelary deity and the patron of the acting profession.⁶³

Dionysos wears patterned clothes made from textiles displaying complex combinations of colors, is attended by maenads in dappled fawnskins, and his ritual servants—masked actors—were themselves Protean shape-shifters, required to assume serial outward forms, identities, and voices during the plays performed in his worship. The music of the theatrical *aulos* is itself fluid and sinuous, with an inherent polytonality that incurred criticism and suspicion.⁶⁴ Following the example of the dramatists, at the height of the Athenian empire the composers of the Dionysiac genre of the dithyramb also began to include astrophic and irregular, polymorphic metrical schemes within their performances.⁶⁵

One of the numerous types of song that appear in Old Comedy is the traditional drinking-song (the *skolion*, in the form *a a b c*). A skolion by Timokrates is parodied in our earliest extant comedy, Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (see 532), and another skolion appears in *Ekklesiazousai* (938–41). Of course, one place where Athenians had long encountered the juxtaposition, or at least serial performance, of different types of song had been a more ancient institution of which Dionysos was the presiding and attendant deity—the *symposion*. Variety (indeed, the Greek term *poikilia*) is one of three key terms of sympotic approba-

⁶² Cf. F. I. Zeitlin, "Staging Dionysus between Thebes and Athens," in T. H. Carpenter and C. A. Faraone (eds.), *Masks of Dionysus*, Ithaca, NY 1993, 152.

⁶³ See the remarks of C. Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Archaic Greece: An Understanding through Images*, trans. W. G. E. Watson, Leiden 2007, 174–76, and E. Hall, *The Return of Ulysses: A Cultural History of Homer's Odyssey*, London 2008, ch. 3.

⁶⁴ P. Wilson, "The *Aulos* in Athens," in Goldhill and Osborne 1999 (see above, n. 5), 96–122.

⁶⁵ See Csapo, Chapter 4 here (see above, n. 5).

tion that a study has identified in Athenaios' *Deipnosophistai*; praise is bestowed for the display of *poikilia* both in foodstuffs and types of poetry and entertainment, both within quotations and within the "frame" narrative.⁶⁶

The importance of poetry to the *symposion* had not been missed by the classical vase-painters, who included many images of singing.⁶⁷ It has been suggested that a prototypical form of acting out roles in a collective, celebratory ritual context was to be found in the sympotic songs composed by such poets as Alkaios.⁶⁸ By the sixth century, the musical entertainments on offer at *symposia* had changed, and were as likely to be performed by guests as by hired performers. New genres of poetry had arisen to be performed in these contexts: choral lyric narratives, monodic love songs, and elegiac poetry, as well as popular songs. As Rossi succinctly put it, "la storia della lirica è la storia del simposio."⁶⁹ By the later fifth to early fourth centuries, the entertainments on offer at *symposia* could also include iambic passages from drama, victory songs from the games, *aulos*-recitals, competitions in epideictic rhetoric, and sexy mythological mime (Xenophon *Symposion* 9.2–7).⁷⁰ The perceived affinity—what the critic Lucien Goldmann would have called a *homology*—between enjoying performances of *mousikê* in the presence of Dionysos at the *symposion* and in the theater is given its paramount expression, of course, in Plato's *Symposion*, where the host is the tragedian Agathon and the occasion for the party his victory in a dramatic competition at Athens.⁷¹ *Symposia* celebrating theatrical victories must have had

⁶⁶ See 1.35a, 3.107c, 4.132c, 4.139d, 5.187b, 15.665a and Lukinovich (1996), 267–68. ==(not in bibliography)

⁶⁷ F. Lissarrague, *The Aesthetics of the Greek Banquet: Images of Wine and Ritual*, trans. A. Szegedy-Maszak, Princeton, NJ 1990, 124–39, and D. Yatromanolakis, *Sappho in the Making: The Early Reception*, Cambridge, MA, 2007, ch. 2.

⁶⁸ G. Nagy, *Pindar's Homer*, Baltimore, MD 1990, 384–404.

⁶⁹ L. E. Rossi, "Il simposio Greco arcaico e classico come spettacolo a se stesso," in *Atti del VII Convegno di studio: Spettacoli conviviali dall' antichità classica alle corti italiane del 400*, Viterbo 1983, 49.

⁷⁰ See M. Vetta, "Introduzione: Poesia simposiale nella grecia arcaica e classica," in M. Vetta (ed.), *Poesia e simposio nella Grecia antica: Guida storica e critica*, Bari 1983, xxxi–xxxv; E. Pellizer, "Outlines of a Morphology of Sympotic Entertainment," in O. Murray (ed.), *Sympotica: A Symposium on the Symposium*, Oxford 1990, 177–84. On ancient Greek *symposia*, see, most recently, D. Yatromanolakis, "Symposia, Noses, Πρόσωπα," in D. Yatromanolakis (ed.), *An Archaeology of Representations: Ancient Greek Vase-Painting and Contemporary Methodologies*, Athens 2009, 414–64.

⁷¹ See M. D. Usher, "Satyr Play in Plato's *Symposium*," *American Journal of Philology* 123 (2002), 205–28.

a very special status in fusing the two premiere civic haunts of the wine-giving god.

There is no need to enter the almost completely undocumented area of the sixth-century origins of theater in Athens and make a speculative case for the important role played by the symposium in introducing men to the experience of the cumulative emotional and psychological effects of different kinds of musical and poetic performances in relatively concise chunks, although such a picture is indeed suggestive. It is much more important that the symposium in democratic Athens was by no means a preserve of the rich, aristocratic, and powerful elite but a social activity in which less distinguished citizens also participated. The formal *symposion* may have belonged primarily to the wealthier classes (perhaps suggested by *Peace* 839–41), but certainly not to those with antidemocratic persuasions alone (*Ath. Pol.* 34.3).⁷² Although some scholars have argued that Philokleon's stance toward sympotic behavior suggests that it belongs to a world alien to him,⁷³ Angus Bowie points out that Bdelykleon behaves and speaks as though symposia are regular activities in that household (see 1252).⁷⁴ In any case, the widespread sympotic imagery in drama and on pottery suggests good understanding of its features among the citizen population, even if some were too poor or otherwise busy to spend a great deal of time at drinking parties.⁷⁵

In a fascinating discussion of wine and drinking scenes in Old Comedy, moreover, Ewen Bowie stresses that the Athenian festivals for Dionysos at which drama was performed “were characterized themselves by both ceremonial and casual consumption of wine.”⁷⁶ It was almost inevitable, therefore, that the two great forms of drinking party in the democratic period, which were also of course two Dionysiac institutional rituals—the public theatrical competitions and private *symposia*—mutually informed the evolution and aesthetic experience of one another. As Agathon the victorious tragedian says to Sokrates at the most famous symposium of them all, they can have a competition in wisdom, and, just as Dionysos presided over the drama competitions and was to preside

⁷² A. M. Bowie, “Thinking with Drinking: Wine and the Symposium in Aristophanes,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 117 (1997), 3.

⁷³ J. Vaio, “Aristophanes’ Wasps: The Relevance of the Final Scenes,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 12 (1971), especially 337.

⁷⁴ Bowie 1997 (see above, n. 72), 3.

⁷⁵ Bowie 1997 (see above, n. 72), 2–3.

⁷⁶ E. Bowie, “Wine in Old Comedy,” in O. Murray and M. Tecusan (eds.), *In Vino Veritas*, Oxford 1995, 113. On the germination of civic commensality and drinking in archaic social formations, see P. Schmitt Pantel, *La cité au banquet: Histoire des repas publics dans les cités grecques*, Paris and Rome 1992, 107–13.

over the competition between Aischylos and Euripides for the Chair of Tragedy in Hades, at this sympotic *agôn* “Dionysos shall be our judge” (Plato *Symposion* 176a).

When the audiences gathered at the theater to enjoy variegated musical performances, they must therefore have felt as though they had been invited to a huge public party and could anticipate a program of entertainment that had structural affinities with the various forms of fun to be had at a *symposion*. The host was the city of Athens; Dionysos was president. But we need to think about the people who were on the list of invitees. At the smaller Lenaia, the Athenians explored their collective identity together, along with their metics, and without visitors from other ancient Greek states. At the Great Dionysia, when so many of our plays were first performed, the audience included visitors and guests from all over the Greek-speaking world where the Athenians had tributary states and allies.

The second “homology” that I would like to suggest is therefore geopolitical. It has to do with the macropolitical projection of Athenian identity rather than with Athenian social life. It is well known that part of the Athenians’ own self-definition rested on their pride in openness to outside cultural influence and contacts. By the later part of the sixth century Hipparchos welcomed the foreigners Anakreon and Simonides to his court, while Thucydides’ Perikles, decades later, says to the bereaved families of Athens that their city is proud to throw itself open to the world and welcome outsiders (2.38.1). Social and cultural inclusiveness was therefore a central dimension of classical Athenian self-description and collective identity; so was innovativeness. The Athenians not only were involved in a period of intense novelty and creativity, but, as Armand D’Angour has rightly stressed, were well aware of it. They “might reasonably lay claim to having discovered innovation” since they wrote about innovation, and even produced the early known term for it, *kainotomia*, in Aristophanic comedy.⁷⁷

It is possible to see the unprecedented metrical variety of Athenian drama, the generic inclusiveness of which had allowed it to absorb poetic forms associated with other ancient Greek *poleis*, as a formal manifestation of the ideological project of Panhellenism. Athens had no distinctive poetic genre of its own, despite the Peisistratean attempts to hegemonize Homeric epic. The

⁷⁷ A. D’Angour, “What’s New? Some Answers from Greece,” *OECD Observer*, September 14, 2000, summarizing the argument of A. D’Angour, *The Dynamics of Innovation: Newness and Novelty in the Athens of Aristophanes*, Ph.D. diss., London 1998.

Dorians were culturally identified with choral lyric, the Spartans with anapaestic marching songs, the eastern Aegeans with monody, and the Ionians had the strongest claim to dactylic hexameters and of course the *iambos*: in drama the Athenians elaborated inclusive new genres that embraced them all, as well as adding others of less specifically identifiable provenance, such as the trochaic, the dactylo-epitrite, and the dochmiac. A way of looking at theatrical versification could therefore be to see it as *aesthetically* “Panhellenizing” through form.

Yet whatever its archaic origins in joint festivals and cult centers, in the fifth century Panhellenism was not in any sense a neutral ideal. Along with its corollary, the idea of the collective barbarian enemy of the Greeks, it was a crucial element of the Athenian ideology that underpinned the Delian league and subsequently the Athenian empire. It “served as a tool of propaganda for the hegemonial or imperial rule of a *polis*; it served to justify the hegemony and mastery of one *polis* over other states by proposing a common aim, war against the barbarians.”⁷⁸ The *polis* in question, from the moment of the destruction of Naxos in 468 BC, was of course Athens, a position consolidated when the Delian league’s treasury was moved there in the next decade (Thucydides 1.98). The officials appointed to collect tribute from the league were called the *Hellênotamiai*, the “treasurers of the *Greeks*” (Thucydides 1.96).⁷⁹

In this political context, the variegated form of classical Athenian drama can be seen from an ideological perspective as Panhellenism, and therefore Athenian imperialism, performed on the level of genre.⁸⁰ Indeed, it would be surprising if there were no perceptible sign of a “homology” between the Athenian idea of projecting the city as the leader of a Panhellenic community, and the cultural formations that the society effecting that project produced and maintained. The genres that the sponge-like media of Athenian tragedy and comedy took over were drawn from other parts of the Greek-speaking world, before being treated with considerable metrical assurance and often with cavalier *license*.⁸¹ These self-confident acts of aesthetic and cultural appropriation and makeover of form were wholly consonant with the economic, political, and military activities on which the basis of the Athenian empire was founded.

⁷⁸ S. Perlman, “Panhellenism, the *Polis*, and Imperialism,” *Historia* 25 (1976), 5; see also E. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*, Oxford 1989, 17.

⁷⁹ Hall 1989 (see above, n. 78), 59–60, 162–65.

⁸⁰ A suggestion I made briefly in Hall 1999 (see above, n. 5), 122.

⁸¹ Parker 1997 (see above, n. 51), 328.

Moreover, there are several examples of included song-types that raise the question whether the dramatists could use metrical means to make explicit comments on the Athenians' relationships with other communities, in a dazzling form of musical geopolitics. In tragedy, an outstanding example is the inclusion of the heroine's elegiacs in Euripides' *Andromache* (103–116). Long ago Denys Page implicitly argued that in this play, choice of metrical form and sung performance were inextricably bound up with Athenian politics and its imperial program. He suggests that *Andromache* was first produced at Argos at a time when Athens was seeking to secure Argive support against Sparta. He points out that there was a tradition of "Doric threnodic elegy" at Argos, of which the Argive poet Sakadas was the chief representative poet, and that this play was not first produced at Athens (so a scholion on line 445). The inference Page draws is therefore that the elegies sung by *Andromache* strongly suggest an Argive first production and constitute a sung compliment, by inclusion of a genre unusual in tragedy, to the Argive poetical tradition.⁸²

In comedy, a good example is offered by the inclusion of specifically Spartan lyric material in *Lysistrata*. When the herald arrives from Sparta at 980, he launches the concluding sequence in which the two semichoruses are reconciled (1014–42), and act together in the scenes of international peace-making (1076–1188). But for the end of the play, Aristophanes introduces two "Spartan" monodic hymns, with an Athenian one in between. Despite the consistent attempts by scribes to "correct" non-Attic spellings and dialect forms, there are still signs of specifically Spartan diction.⁸³ Parker has pointed out that the first "Spartan" song (1247–72), which is predominantly trochaic, uses together dactylic, trochaic, aeolo-choriambic, and lecythia—a combination that also occurs in the so-called Louvre Partheneion of Alkman (fr. 1 PMG), our only author of surviving Spartan lyric poetry. There are also sequences of three or more longs in the comic monody. These contrast strongly with the high proportion of short syllables in the intervening Athenian song (1279–94), which suggests a much lighter, faster rhythm.⁸⁴

The second "Spartan" song (1296–1321) is basically iambic rather than trochaic, but there are, again, more long syllables, and one sequence praising

⁸² D. L. Page, "The Elegiacs in Euripides' *Andromache*," in *Greek Poetry and Life: Essays Presented to Gilbert Murray on his Seventieth Birthday*, Oxford 1936, 223–28.

⁸³ See J. Henderson, *Aristophanes: Lysistrata*, edited with introduction and commentary, Oxford 1987, 212, note on *Lys.* 1252–53.

⁸⁴ Parker 1997 (see above, n. 51), 387, 390.

Artemis (1311–14) is in purely spondaic anapaests. Its content is very obviously connected with Sparta, “invoking a Spartan muse, evoking a Spartan locale (the banks of the Eurotas), and listing . . . only Spartan deities: Apollo at Amyklai, Athena Chalkioikos, the Tyndaridai, Helen.”⁸⁵ The matter is confused by the apparent instruction at the end of the *first* song to the chorus telling them to leave singing a song specifically to Athena Chalkioikos (1316–21), the cult title of a specifically Spartan version of the goddess broadly equivalent to the Athenian Athena Polias. No such hymn follows in the manuscripts, but Henderson explains the apparent anomaly by saying that exit-hymns, which were traditional, were not composed by Aristophanes and therefore did not need to be preserved.⁸⁶ Yet in terms of my argument it scarcely matters whether the hymn has dropped out of the manuscript *paradosis* or was omitted because scribes saw it as un-Aristophanic, traditional and familiar. The point is, rather, that the performance seems to have included a hymn that celebrated the goddess closest to the Athenians’ heart in the cult form she took in the center of the city of their historic foe.

The conscious contrast between the handling of the rhythms in the Spartan and Athenian mouths must have connoted more, in 411 BC, than mere ethnic characterization. It raises the question whether the Athenian comic poet is expropriating, welcoming, complimenting, or deriding the ancient Lacedaemonian rhythms of his countrymen’s longstanding enemy. Wilamowitz was rightly struck by the inclusion of these examples of Spartan poetry, to which it is indeed plausible to see the Athenians as having had little recent exposure. But he felt that Aristophanes was soliciting a response of condescension from his audience by comparing what he felt was an uncultivated Spartan idiom and the more sophisticated Athenian monody.⁸⁷ Parker says that there “is little point in speculating on how far the songs are pastiche or parody, or on how the audience was intended to react,” but at the same time suggests that the foregoing choral songs may offer “beneath the humor a sour hint that the revelry of comedy is illusory.”⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Henderson 1987 (see above, n. 83), 218.

⁸⁶ Henderson 1987 (see above, n. 83), 214.

⁸⁷ U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die Textgeschichte der griechischen Lyriker*, Berlin 1900, 94. His analysis of this Spartan song has been criticized in a detailed study by F. Perusino, “La seconda canzone nella *Lisistrata* di Aristofane (vv. 1296–1321),” in B. Gentili and F. Perusino (eds.), *La colometria antica dei testi poetici greci*, Pisa 1999, 207–12, who point out that examples in the other plays of Aristophanes show that the Athenians were rather more familiar with, and able to appreciate, Spartan verse forms than Wilamowitz-Moellendorff suggested.

⁸⁸ Parker 1997 (see above, n. 51), 386, 382.

Lysistrata was performed in 411 BC but we are not in a position to be certain at which festival of Dionysos. In the spring of 411, Athenians with oligarchic aspirations had already begun to silence the democratic opposition and to embark on a campaign of terror (Thucydides 8.66). But we do not know for certain whether or not any Spartans attended the City Dionysia in 411 BC (even though it seems unlikely). If, however, the play was performed at the Lenaia, which was closed to outside visitors, we might expect that the Spartan songs were received rather differently.

Ancient Greek drama is far from the only theatrical tradition that we know, in its early stages, displayed a considerable variety of comparatively undigested meters and performance styles, reflecting a rich and diverse cultural experience of poetry and song. “In the matter of meter, the most striking feature common to English religious plays is the great variety exhibited by them,” explains an influential early twentieth-century encyclopedia article on the subject of the Medieval Mystery plays.⁸⁹ The metrical variety in that tradition is thrown into relief by comparing it with the consistency to which the octosyllabic couplet (occasionally with a triolet interspersed) is adhered in the Miracle and Mystery-Plays written in French,⁹⁰ and indeed with the almost complete monopoly that blank verse was subsequently to gain in the field of English-language verse drama. Yet, over time, the diversity in the early English plays began to give way to what seems to have been an “internal logic,” intuitively driving the genre toward greater uniformity. There is very marked diversity of versification in the early York Plays and in the Chester Plays, a phenomenon that speaks for their “early origin.”⁹¹

These religious plays exhibit what has been called “a combined looseness and ingenuity of metrification,” which was consonant with “the freedom of treatment which, notwithstanding the nature of its main source, and what may be termed the single-mindedness of its purpose, was characteristic of the English mystery- and miracle-drama.”⁹² These words are, to be sure, powerfully suggestive for the relationship between the “source” of ancient Greek tragedies (largely archaic poetry), the purposes to which that source material was being put in the fifth century in the new environment of the Athenian imperial democracy,

⁸⁹ A. W. Ward, “Variety in Dialect and Metre in the English Mysteries and Miracle-plays,” “The Origins of English Drama,” part I.1 sec. 13, in *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, vol. 5, Cambridge and New York 1907–1921, 21.

⁹⁰ G. Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody*, 2nd ed., London 1923, vol. 1, 203–5.

⁹¹ Ward 1907–1921 (see above, n. 89), 21.

⁹² Ward 1907–1921 (see above, n. 89), 21.

and “the freedom of treatment” to which the great dramatists subjected their subject matter. The new medium of drama was required by the new social and political formations, and to appreciate the metrical diversity of the individual dramas—to feel that new rhythmical pulse beating—is to begin to appreciate what Raymond Williams meant by a culture’s “structure of feeling.”

Metrical diversity within the same ancient Greek theatrical performance does not seem to have survived the cultural transformations of the fourth century much better than the original metrical diversity of the Mystery Plays survived the drive to uniformity at the end of the fifteenth century. When Aristotle created a novel theory of tragedy consonant with its new, international status in the second half of the fourth century, when it became divorced not only from Athens but from the ritual context of the Athenian festivals of Dionysos, he simultaneously ignored its political dimension and relegated “song-writing” to second-to-last place, ahead only of spectacle, in the list of the constituents of the genre (*Poetics* 6.1450b15–16).⁹³ The forms of Greek drama that survived as part of the cultural *koinè* of the Hellenistic age lost much of their metrical *poikilia*. In the case of tragedy, the lyric sections disappeared (see Dion Chrysostomos *Or.* 19.5) as the monodies became detached, to be sung separately in recitals by traveling star *tragôidoi*;⁹⁴ correspondingly, the polymetric flamboyance of Aristophanes and his rivals was replaced by the nearly homogeneous sub-tragic iambic dialogue of Menander and his contemporaries. The metrical, poetic, and musical *poikilia* of ancient Greek drama, which drew on genres from the entire Greek-speaking world, emerged and flourished at a very particular sociopolitical moment in the inclusive, open, but profoundly centripetal culture of the Athenian performance context. “A new artistic form, taken in a large historic way, is born in reply to new needs.”⁹⁵

⁹³ See E. Hall, “Is There a *Polis* in Aristotle’s *Poetics*?” in M. Silk (ed.), *Tragedy and the Tragic: Greek Theatre and Beyond*, Oxford 1996, ==[pages missing].

⁹⁴ See Hall 2002 (above, n. 8), 12–24.

⁹⁵ Trotsky 1991 [1925] (above, n. 48), 195. I would like to record my thanks to Armand D’Angour and Eric Csapo for many helpful comments. This chapter has also benefited from several responses when it was orally delivered, once at a conference in honor of Oliver Taplin held at Oxford in September 2008, and once at the conference “Moisa Epichorios: regional music and musical regions” held in Ravenna, October 1–3, 2009. I have particularly benefited from suggestions made on those occasions by Andrew Barker, Ewen Bowie, François Lissarrague, and Marcus Mota. I am very grateful to Dimitrios Yatromanolakis for offering me the opportunity to participate in this exciting book.