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FIFTH-CENTURY TRAGEDY AND COMEDY: A *SYNKRISIS*

At the very end of Plato's *Symposium* our narrator awakes to find Socrates still hard at it, and making Agathon and Aristophanes agree that the composition of tragedy and comedy is really one and the same thing: . . . προσαναγκάζειν τὸν Σωκράτη ὁμολογεῖν αὐτοὺς τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀνδρὸς εἶναι κωμωιδίαν καὶ τραγωιδίαν ἐπίστασθαι ποιεῖν, καὶ τὸν τέχνηι τραγωιδοποιὸν ὄντα καὶ κωμωιδοποιὸν εἶναι. ταῦτα δὴ ἀναγκαζομένους αὐτοὺς . . . the two playwrights succumb to sleep, leaving Socrates triumphant. Socrates had to 'force' his case; and it is a fact that, though we know of well over 100 fifth-century playwrights, we do not know of a single one who produced both tragedy and comedy.[1] In a famous fragment the comedian Antiphanes (*fr.* 191K) complains that the tragedians have an easy time—familiar stories, the *deus ex machina* etc.—ἡμῖν δὲ ταῦτ' οὐκ ἔστιν . . . It is a matter of 'them' and 'us'. Furthermore, there was an entire separate genre besides tragedy and comedy. As Demetrius put it (*de eloc.* 169), τραγωιδία χάριτας μὲν παραλαμβάνει ἐν πολλοῖς, ὁ δὲ γέλως ἐχθρὸς τραγωιδίας· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐπινοήσειεν ἄν τις τραγωιδίαν παίζουσαν, ἐπεὶ σάτυρον γράψει ἀντὶ τραγωιδίας.[2]

Socrates' proposition does not seem to us at all perverse, because we live in the post-Shakespearean era. As Dr Johnson observed in his *Preface*, 'Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature . . .'. Victor Hugo was more rapturous: 'Shakespeare, c'est le drame; et le drame qui fond sous un même souffle le grotesque et le sublime, le terrible et le bouffon, la tragédie et la comédie'. Since then, Chekhov and Brecht are two masters who have further submerged the dichotomy, and so made it hard for us to assimilate. None the less the generic separation held good in accounts of ancient drama until recently. Brilliant articles by R. P. Winnington-Ingram and Bernard Knox weakened the barrier,[3] and now it seems to be collapsing in several places at once. For example, Berndt Seidensticker has argued for the widespread use of comic or tragicomic elements to intensify Greek tragedy, explicitly invoking comparison with Shakespeare.[4] Froma Zeitlin regards 'comic and melodramatic elements' and 'the illusion-reality game' as typical of Euripides, while claiming that *Orestes* goes 'beyond any formal definitions and limitations, beyond parody . . . to a new level of self-consciousness and authorial extravagance . . .'.[5] Going one stage further, some critics regard *all* literature, tragedy not least, as playful or 'ludic'.[6]

This movement to diminish the distinction between the two genres might claim solid ancient support. There is the formation of the very words τραγωιδία and κωμωιδία (let alone τρυγωιδία); both were put on in exactly the same theatre, as part of the same festival; both have a chorus, which sings; both have actors who mainly speak in iambic trimeters; both employ

[1] The nearest thing to a counter-example is the scholion on Ar. *Peace* 835 which says that Ion of Chios wrote comedies as well (see *TrGF* 19T2b). Athenaeus ix 407d says the same of a fourth-century Timocles (86T1). It is worth note that actors also seem to have been split exclusively between the two genres.

[2] The distinctive middle ground of satyr-play is well discussed in the Introduction IIIA (pp. 10 ff.) to R. Seaford's *Cyclops* (Oxford 1984). Of special interest for this discussion is his suggestion (18, 32) that satyr-play stood outside τὸ πολιτικόν, the sphere of both tragedy and comedy though in very different ways.

[3] R. Winnington-Ingram, 'Euripides, *poietes sophos*', *Arethusa* ii (1969) 127 ff., B. Knox, 'Euripidean comedy', *Word and action* (John Hopkins 1979) 250 ff. (first published in 1970).

[4] *Palintonos Harmonia. Studien zu komischen Elementen in der griechischen Tragödie*, Hypomnemata lxxii (Göttingen 1982).

[5] F. Zeitlin, 'The closet of masks: role-playing and myth-making in the *Orestes* of Euripides', *Ramus* ix (1980) 51 ff. This virtuoso piece is evidently becoming a classic.

[6] This position is approached by S. Goldhill, *Language, sexuality, narrative: the* Oresteia (Cambridge 1984). It may be epitomised by his attempt (119) to improve on a *bon mot* of Vernant: 'tragédie . . . ne reflète pas cette réalité; elle la met en question': Goldhill adds '"En jeu", he might have said'.

masks, the *aulos*—and so on. But these very similarities might cut both ways: they might be the basis for a polarity. It might be argued that, from their shared setting, the two genres oppose each other, and even to some extent build up mutually exclusive characteristics. And this is what I shall maintain: that to a considerable degree fifth-century tragedy and comedy help to define each other by their opposition and their reluctance to overlap.

There have of course been many sorts of *synkrisis* in both ancient and modern times: much of the material is usefully surveyed by Seidensticker (n. 4) in his first section (14–20) and two Appendices (249–71). These are usually put in terms of propriety and plot: noble versus vulgar, sad versus happy, the insoluble versus resolution etc.[7] My *synkrisis* is going to be put in rather different terms: it is based on the *relation of the world of the play to the world of the audience*. The thesis is that this relation is fundamentally different in the two genres. It may be worth observing that any such distinction would be obliterated by those who posit a uniform 'textuality' in all literature. My polarity depends on going beyond the text to the work and the audience in the theatre; and, once in the theatre, it posits two quite different modes of interplay between stage and auditorium.[8]

In pursuing this *synkrisis* I shall look especially, though with excursions, at theatrical self-reference, or 'metatheatre'[9]—at the ways in which plays may, or may not, draw attention to their own 'playness', to the fact that they are artifices being performed under special controlled circumstances. Clearly the nature and degree of self-reference has great bearing on the relation of the world of the play to that of the audience. Old Comedy is ubiquitously self-referential: Aristophanes is probably the most metatheatrical playwright before Pirandello.[10] The world of the audience is never safe from invasion, even appropriation, by the world of the play. The question is how far tragedy is similar—or different. How true is it that 'there are many instances of self-reference in Greek tragedy'?[11] (I should add that any approach which holds that all literature is necessarily self-referential is, of course, using the term in a different sense.)

I am purposely avoiding the traditional language of 'the dramatic illusion' that can be 'maintained' or 'broken', which has accumulated its own burden of controversy, not least because 'illusion' is a badly ambiguous term to use of a highly non-naturalistic theatre. At the same time, it is my own experience as a spectator that on the whole, when it works well for me, Greek tragedy binds a spell; that my 'knowledge' that I am watching a play is temporarily charmed away. I am reassured by the way this tallies with what Gorgias and others have to say about the ἀπάτη and ψυχαγωγία of tragedy.[12] Moreover this spell-binding is quite fragile; it can be dispelled in all sorts of ways, and it can be difficult to restore. And the enthralment is liable to be broken by any prominent theatrical self-reference—that is my experience at least. It does

[7] Seidensticker 245 n. 33 quotes George Bernard Shaw: 'the popular definition of tragedy is heavy drama in which everyone is killed in the last act, comedy being light drama, in which everyone is married in the last act'.

[8] This way of approaching 'theatrical texts' may be becoming the focus of some contemporary theoretical work. Nothing much is to be found in K. Elam, *The Semiotics of theatre and drama* (London 1980)—see his index s.v. 'transaction performer–audience'—but rather more in the last few pages of M. Carlson, *Theories of the theatre* (Cornell 1984). He writes (p. 508): 'the relatively minor attention given to the audience's contribution by the first generation of modern theatre semioticians is demonstrated by the fact that Elam's book devotes only 9 of 210 pages to this subject, but more recent work suggests that this may develop into one of the major areas of theoretical investigation of the 1980's'. In its concern with the stage–auditorium relationship my approach looks to the school of 'Rezeptionsästhetik' rather than to that of Derrida and de Man which is trapped within the framework of 'text-reader'.

[9] Although not entered in *Supplement* II to the *OED* (1976), this term, presumably formed by analogy with 'metalanguage', goes back to at least 1963, when it was used as the title of a book by Lionel Abel.

[10] For recent studies of self-reference in Greek comedy see C. F. Russo, *Aristofane autore di teatro*[2] (Firenze 1984) 85, D. Bain, *Actors and audience* (Oxford 1977) 208 ff., F. Muecke, *Antichthon* xi (1977) 52 ff., G. A. H. Chapman, *AJP* civ (1983) 1–23. Chapman contrasts comedy with tragedy, but without going into detailed discussion of tragedy. (The wide-ranging study by W. Görler, *A und A* xviii (1973) 41 ff. does not say much about fifth-century comedy.)

[11] P. Easterling, 'Anachronism in Greek tragedy', *JHS* cv (1985) 6. I am most grateful for an advance view of this valuable article.

[12] See, for example, J. de Romilly, *JHS* xciii (1973) 155 ff.

not, then, seem to tally altogether with Dr Johnson later in his *Preface to Shakespeare*: 'The truth is, that the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players . . .'. I would agree that I do not mistake the play for reality outside the theatre; my responses as I sit in my seat are crucially different both internally and externally from those which would be provoked by similar events in reality. But we must beware of being forced into a false dichotomy between the artifact's pretending that it is reality and the artifact's positive proclamation that it is 'only' artifice. In what sense do I 'know' all the time that the play is an artifice? How active a part of my experience is that 'knowledge'? Similarly I would question Coleridge's phrase 'suspension of disbelief'. I suspend disbelief in so far as I respond in a way appropriate to the theatre and inappropriate to 'brute reality': but how far are either 'belief' or 'disbelief' part of my experience during the play? It seems to me that fifth-century tragedy and comedy invite different answers to all these questions by setting up different relationships between the two worlds within the theatre.

The periods for which we can make these comparisons are not entirely synchronous. We can survey tragedy from 472 BC to the end of the century, while our comedy only begins, sufficiently preserved for these purposes, in the 420s. Within this time-span the polarisation which I shall be proposing is not constant. It seems to have been at its most marked during the middle careers of Sophocles and Euripides. The ways in which it is diminished before and after this central period (approximately 440 to 415 BC) are different; and it may be best to introduce the earlier and later convergences now since they will crop up throughout this paper.

First, some of the characteristics of later comedy are to be found in Aeschylus, though not in Sophocles or Euripides. For example, the business of knocking at the door is common in comedy, while the only definite instance in tragedy is in *Choephoroi*. Or, more substantially, Aristophanic comedy seems free to shift around in time and place. Thus in *Acharnians* the scene can move from the ekklesia to Dicaeopolis' house, and the time from the Rural Dionysia to the festival of the Choes; at one point in *Lysistrata* several days or weeks of sexual privation pass by; the scene in *Frogs* can change from Earth to Styx to the Palace of Hades. It is doubtful whether tragedy ever admits explicit lapses of time without the departure of the chorus. And this kind of shifting of place is to be found in Aeschylus, but not in Sophocles or Euripides—for example from council chamber to tomb in *Persae*, or from tomb to palace in *Choephoroi*.[13] Phenomena such as these might be explained by the late growth and definition of comedy. Although admitted to the dramatic festivals in the 470s, it seems to have been still a minor element in the lifetime of Aeschylus, leaving little or no textual or pictorial trace. It seems to have been with the rise of Cratinus and Crates in the 430s that comedy really made its mark at Athens, and, I suggest, defined its territory.

Secondly, some of the characteristics of comedy 'infiltrate' tragedy towards the end of the century. It is now orthodox to detect comic touches in later Euripides. Although I would myself not accept all of those alleged by Knox, Seidensticker and others in *Electra*, *Helen* etc., I would not wish to deny at least some of those elements in the plays composed after 415 BC, though they are there as often as not in order to accentuate tragic tone elsewhere in the play. A good example is the contrast between the two 'recognition scenes' in *Ion*, the first, between Ion and Xuthus, amusing and mistaken, the second, between Ion and Creusa, true and dangerous.[14] I think, however, that Euripides takes this generic 'interference' to a new degree in the first two thirds of *Bacchae*, where the unsettling use of Dionysus 'denies us', as it has been put, 'clear access either to the comic laughter or to the tragic pity by which we control our theatrical experience'.[15] There are, for example, the absurdities of the maenadism of Cadmus and Tiresias, the fussy transvestism of Pentheus, and the smiling mask of Dionysus. Such contraventions of the generic

[13] On knocking at the door see Taplin, *Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford 1977) 340–1; on time *id.* 291–4, 377–9; on place *id.* 103–7, 377–9.

[14] See Knox (n. 3) 260–3, Taplin, *Greek tragedy in action* (London and Berkeley 1978) 137–8.

[15] H. Foley, *TAPA* cx (1980) 107 ff. (the quotation is from p. 122); see now *Ritual irony. Poetry and sacrifice in Euripides* (Cornell 1985) 205 ff.

boundaries are, no doubt, all part of the crisis in the last years of the fifth century which produced fascinating innovative plays—I think particularly of *Orestes* and *Philoctetes*—but which also marked the end of growth for classical tragedy. In that case, this confirms rather than weakens the distinction between the two genres before this last brilliant breakdown.

I shall roughly group the material under five headings: audience, poet, theatre, disguise and parody.

(i) Consider first audience address and explicit references to the presence of the audience. εἴπω τι τῶν εἰωθότων, ὦ δέσποτα, | ἐφ' οἷς ἀεὶ γελῶσιν οἱ θεώμενοι; (*Frogs* 1–2). The audience of Old Comedy is never safe from being pointed to, addressed, and implicated in the play. For tragedy, on the other hand, there has been controversy whether the audience is *ever* addressed or directly alluded to; and I agree with David Bain that it never was.[16] In many ways the strongest candidate (not discussed by Bain) is Athena at *Eumenides* 681 ff. She begins

κλύοιτ' ἂν ἤδη θεμόν, Ἀττικὸς λεώς, . . .

but the idea that she turns to the Ἀττικὸς λεώς assembled in the theatre is surely contradicted by the next line, where she explicitly glosses her vocative as addressed to the jurors at the trial of Orestes: . . . πρώτας δίκας κρίνοντες αἵματος χυτοῦ. And yet if there was any audience address in tragedy, it would surely have been at such crucial moments (and not in passing second-person plurals like σκέψασθε at *Ajax* 1028 or εἴδετε at *Orestes* 128).

Along the same lines, we might expect the physical line between stage and auditorium to be breached by comedy yet not by tragedy, whether the breach is made by members of the audience being taken into the *orchestra* or by actors going out into the auditorium. In fact we have no evidence of any such physical 'interference' in either genre (nor in satyr play). What we do find, however, is nuts and figs thrown by the actors out into the audience. Aristophanes take a supercilious attitude to such pantomime gimmicks (*Wasps* 58–9, *Wealth* 797–9), though it is more than possible that the 'sacrificial grain' which he has thrown out among the spectators at *Peace* 962 was really edible goodies. In any case comedy breached the stage-auditorium barrier ballistically if not corporeally: tragedy presumably did not.

Comedy also feels free to refer to the Dionysia (though it does not do so often), and to the judges, priests etc. present at the performance. The nearest tragedy comes to this is the brief address to Νίκη in the closing words of *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, *Orestes* and *Phoenissai*. Even supposing these are authentic,[17] they are still the exception which proves the rule, since they come outside the play proper. But, while there are no allusions in tragedy to the Dionysia or its appurtenances, there are plenty to Dionysus. Are these automatically metatheatrical? Any answer to this question should be reached in the light of the whole issue of the relation of the world of the tragedy to the world of the auditorium. Was the audience expecting self-reference of this sort, on the look-out for it? At least it should not be taken for granted without argument that any reference to 'the god of tragedy' (whatever that means) is thereby self-reference.[18]

Even those who think that the audience as a whole is sometimes addressed or that the setting at the Dionysia is sometimes explicitly brought to mind do not argue, so far as I know, that any individual member of the audience is ever alluded to by name. In Old Comedy, of course, however fantastical the plot, individuals who are sitting in the auditorium are named, and even replicated as *dramatis personae*. It is, I suggest, a curious and neglected pointer to the different

[16] D. Bain, 'Audience address in Greek tragedy', *CQ* xxv (1975) 13 ff.; also *cf.* Taplin (n. 13) 130–32, 394–5. I am inclined to agree with Bain 23–5 that Astydamas 60F4 is wrongly attributed to satyr-play rather than comedy (i.e. the author is wrong also); but D. F. Sutton, *The Greek satyr play* (Meisenheim am Glan 1980) 82–3 prefers the explanation that comedy and satyr-play were losing their generic distinctions in the fourth century. For illustrations from Old Comedy see, for instance, Chapman (n. 10) 3, 8–9.

[17] Against authenticity see Barrett on *Hipp.* 1462–6; he is followed by Diggle *OCT* ad *IT* 1197–9.

[18] As it is in chapter 7, 'Metatragedy', of C. Segal, *Dionysiac poetics and Euripides' Bacchae* (Princeton 1982).

relation of the world of the audience to that of tragedy that fifth-century Athenians did not share their names with the characters of heroic myth (unlike modern Greeks). I have not yet found a single Athenian name in Aristophanes which is also the name of a character in tragedy.[19] Surveying Kirchner's *Prosopographia Attica*, there is not a single example of an Aias, Agamemnon, Hector, Hippolytos, Odysseus, Oidipous, Orestes, Polyneikes, or Teiresias. There are a few instances, mainly post fifth-century, of some of the names which people have in tragedy, for example Aeneas, Menelaos, Neoptolemos, Kreon, Pelops. The only tragic name I have yet found which is actually common is Alexandros; Iason and Lykourgos are not rare.

We do not know whether individuals in the audience were named in the early dramatisations of recent history by Phrynichus and others. If they were, that might be because, as I suggested earlier, the dichotomy with comedy did not yet exist. Note, however, that, while Aeschylus does not name any Greek in *Persai*, he feels free to accumulate Persian names: few if any of them were shared with anyone in the audience. It is, in any case, worth remembering that Phrynichus was fined by the Athenians ὡς ἀναμνήσαντα οἰκήϊα κακά (Herodotus vi 21.2)—that was not the function of tragedy.[20]

It would not be sensible, in this context, to get deeply entangled in the never-ending controversy over topical, and especially political, reference in fifth-century tragedy; but a passing brush with it is hardly avoidable. I would strongly maintain that Greek tragedy is through and through political, in the sense that it is much concerned with the life of men and women within society, the *polis*; but that this concern does not necessarily involve any direct reference to the immediate politicking of the Athenian audience at any one particular time. Anyone who wishes to argue that tragedy does make particular topical incursions across the stage/auditorium line has, at least, to concede that they are cryptic; they have to be decoded behind the façade of a distant world of the past. The point should then be made that some of the topical allusion in comedy is cryptic. It is a particular loss that we do not have one single old comedy of mythological burlesque, such as Cratinus' *Nemesis* and *Dionysalexandros*. Our papyrus hypothesis to *Dionysalexandros* ends, however, κωμωιδεῖται δ' ἐν τῶι δράματι Περικλῆς μάλα πιθανῶς δι' ἐμφάσεως ὡς ἐπαγηοχὼς τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις τὸν πόλεμον.[21] This very probably means that the application to Perikles had to be worked out from clues in the quasi-mythological setting. Even in *Wasps* there are the thin disguises of Labes and the κύων Κυδαθηναιεύς, and in *Knights* the slaves are not directly identified as Demosthenes and Nicias, nor even Paphlagon as Cleon. Are we to credit that tragedy used very much the same technique, and thus set up a similar interplay between the play and the world of the audience? I am inclined to go to the other extreme and say that, just because this was comedy's method, no-one in the audience would be at all inclined to search for such encoding in tragedy. In other words, I suggest that, for example, the only years which we can exclude with confidence as the date for the first performance of *Oedipus Tyrannos* were the years of the plague.

It is significant that fifth-century satyr-play has been combed in vain for Athenians and for topical allusions to the world of the audience. Nothing has been found more topical than *kottabos* or Corinthian prostitutes.[22] In the next century, however, when comedy had banished topicality from its essence to mere fringe jokes, satyr-play began to allegorise the affairs of the audience, most notoriously in Python's *Agen*.[23]

[19] At first sight Orestes the highwayman looks like an exception (*Acharn.* 1167, *Birds* 712, 1482 ff.); but that is in fact a nickname.

[20] On this see C. Macleod, *JHS* cii (1982) 131–2, reprinted as *Collected essays* (Oxford 1983) 27–8.

[21] *POxy* 663 col. ii = *PCG* iv p. 140 lines 44–8. For a discussion of ἔμφασις see R. Janko, *Aristotle on comedy* (London 1984) 202–3, 206.

[22] Seaford (n. 2) 18–19. Sutton (n. 16) 162–3. Sutton 10 writes 'Satyr play was rarely if ever a vehicle for the expression of opinion about contemporary events in the arts or in any other sphere, and even veiled personal attacks are not found'. I am not sure what to make of Sophocles *fr.* 887R which contains the coined epithets νικόμαχον and παυσανίαν. See Radt, *Fondation Hardt, Entretiens* xxix (1983) 210, 227 (where I suggested it might come from satyr-play).

[23] B. Snell, *Scenes from Greek drama* (Berkeley 1964) 113 ff., Sutton (n. 16) 77 ff.

(ii) The *poietes* of Old Comedy may refer to himself, and to his own activity of producing comedy. This occurs above all in the parabasis, but not exclusively so, as is shown by *Acharn.* 497 ff.:

> μή μοι φθονήcετ', ἄνδρεc οἱ θεώμενοι,
> εἰ πτωχὸc ὢν ἔπειτ' ἐν 'Αθηναίοιc λέγειν
> μέλλω περὶ τῆc πόλεωc, τρυγωιδίαν ποιῶν.

This simply does not happen in tragedy. That should also warn us against ever saying (as, for example, Wilamowitz did about *Herakles* 637 ff.) that in some particular passage the poet himself is speaking as an individual through his play.[24] In Cratinus *Pytine* of 423 BC, on the other hand, it seems that Cratinus himself was a *dramatis persona*.[25]

Closely related to self-reference by the author would be reference to his act of writing or to the text produced. This might be of special significance for those theories which hold 'textuality' as a central concept, and those which hold that all writing is essentially about writing (and/or reading essentially about reading). But, so far as I know, no *explicit* self-reference to the writing or text of tragedy has been claimed. In fact references to any kind of writing or reading, or even literature, are not thick on the ground. It might be claimed that the playwright would not in any case be associated with written texts rather than the oral instruction of actors and chorus; but 'orality' can be overemphasised.[26] Even so, references in tragedy to writing and poetry tend to be put in rather high-flown and epic terms.[27] The closest that any tragedy comes to textual self-reference is probably *Troades* 1242–5.[28] Diggle's text reads:

> εἰ δὲ μὴ θεὸc
> ἔcτρεψε τἄνω περιβαλὼν κάτω χθονόc,
> ἀφανεῖc ἂν ὄντεc οὐκ ἂν ὑμνηθεῖμεν ἂν
> μούcαιc ἀοιδὰc δόντεc ὑcτέρων βροτῶν.

Both ὑμνηθεῖμεν and ἀοιδάc distance the passage from tragedy. Contrast the explicit theatrical language of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*:

> Cassius: *How many ages hence*
> *Shall this our lofty scene be acted over*
> *In states unborn and accents yet unknown!*
> Brutus: *How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport . . .*

(iii) Probably the most obvious kind of self-reference in Old Comedy is reference to its own theatricality and to its own performance in the theatre. One thinks of Dikaeopolis telling Euripides ἀλλ' ἐκκυκλήθητι (*Acharn.* 407); of Trygaios calling out to the μηχανοποιόc (*Peace* 174 ff.); or the chorus' warning later in *Peace* (729 ff.) not to leave property lying around ὡc εἰώθαcι μάλιcτα | περὶ τὰc cκηνὰc πλεῖcτοι κλέπται κυπτάζειν καὶ κακοποιεῖν. There are many varied examples of this sort of metatheatre in Old Comedy.[29] Plenty of examples in

[24] This point is well discussed in Bain (n. 16) 14–17; see also M. Kaimio, *The chorus of Greek drama within the light of the person and number used*, Soc. scient. Fenn. comm. hum. litt. xlvi (Helsinki 1970) 92–103.

[25] For evidence see *PCG* iv p. 219.

[26] I now feel that in Taplin (n. 13) 12–16, where my prime purpose was to argue that reading plays was only a secondary substitute for seeing them, I underrated the literacy of the dramatists, and indeed of the fifth century as a whole. For a better balance see B. Knox in *The Cambridge history of classical literature* I (Cambridge 1985) 6–12. Bear in mind also that in *Acharnians* Euripides' plays are presented as texts which are equated with his ragged costumes (see C. Macleod, *Essays* [n. 20] 47–8); and that on the 'Pronomos vase', where the *auletes* is the centre of attention, the playwright is shown sitting with a finished roll of papyrus in his hand. This is unique, but for allied material see H. R. Immerwahr, *Studies in honour of B. L. Ullmann*, ed. C. Henderson I (Rome 1964) 17 ff.

[27] See Easterling (n. 11) 4–6.

[28] Cited by R. Rutherford, *JHS* cii (1982) 160 n. 69 as refuting the contention that 'no case of theatrical self-reference can be found in Greek tragedy'.

[29] For a full, if rather rough, collection see Chapman (n. 10) 4–10.

tragedy have been alleged; but I suggest that we should not be too hasty in joining the hunt for metatheatre here, there and everywhere.

One problem is that we do not know how highly developed the technical terms of the theatre were in the fifth century. There are many Greek words whose primary association for us is theatrical, while in the fifth century this application may have been minor, or even have not yet existed. It would be a mistake to regard σκηνή, for example, as metatheatrical in *Ajax* 3—καὶ νῦν ἐπὶ σκηναῖς σε ναυτικαῖς ὁρῶ . . . —or in its many other occurrences in tragedy. What, then, of ἄγγελοι at Euripides *Electra* 759, which is widely regarded as a self-referential joke?[30] The counter-argument is best made by reproducing the full typography of Diggle's *Oxford Classical Text* of lines 757–61:

Ηλ. σφαγὴν ἀυτεῖς τῆιδέ μοι· τί μέλλομεν;
Χο. ἔπισχε, τρανῶς ὡς μάθηις τύχας σέθεν.
Ηλ. οὐκ ἔστι· νικώμεσθα· ποῦ γὰρ ἄγγελοι;
Χο. ἥξουσιν· οὗτοι βασιλέα φαῦλον κτανεῖν.
ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ
ὦ καλλίνικοι παρθένοι Μυκηνίδες . . .

For us ἄγγελος is primarily theatrical, especially familiar from the editorial attributions of parts; but we should not necessarily read that back into Euripides. On the contrary, it might be maintained (as with the date of *Oedipus* and the plague) that the occurrence of a word in tragedy—κομμός or μηχανή for example—is evidence that at that time the word did *not* have theatrical associations, or at least that they were not irrepressibly prominent.

An interesting case is χορός. In the fifth century this word had, of course, many other applications as well as to the chorus of drama. Aristophanes could make it metatheatrical by means of context, as when Dikaeopolis instead of telling Euripides that he must address the Acharnians says δεῖ γάρ με λέξαι τῶι χορῶι ῥῆσιν μακράν (*Acharn.* 416). But that does not make its use in tragedy automatically metatheatrical. On τί δεῖ με χορεύειν; at *Oedipus Tyrannos* 896, E. R. Dodds wrote 'The meaning is surely "Why should I, an Athenian citizen, continue to serve in a chorus?". In speaking of themselves as a chorus they step out of the play into the contemporary world, as Aristophanes' choruses do in the *parabasis*'.[31] But he failed to see the breadth of application of χορεύειν: 'Why should I participate in religious occasions?'

There is a particularly interesting occurrence of χορός in the Cassandra scene in *Agamemnon*. At 1178 ff. Cassandra speaks of being on the track of ancient evils:

τὴν γὰρ στέγην τήνδ' οὔποτ' ἐκλείπει χορὸς
ξύμφθογγος οὐκ εὔφωνος . . . (1186–7).

She then goes on to describe this χορός in terms which fit the chorus of the *Eumenides* closely:

καὶ μὴν πεπωκώς γ', ὡς θρασύνεσθαι πλέον,
βρότειον αἷμα κῶμος ἐν δόμοις μένει,
δύσπεμπτος ἔξω, συγγόνων Ἐρινύων.
ὑμνοῦσι δ' ὕμνον . . .

Before this is claimed as a prize example of tragic metatheatricality—which so far as I know has not happened yet—I suggest that would be a mistake. Surely the identity of the chorus of the third play of the *Oresteia* was a closely-guarded secret, to be released as an astonishing surprise. The audience of *Agamemnon* did not know that there would be a χορός Ἐρινύων.[32] So this passage is not a flash of ludic self-consciousness: it is much more effective and Aeschylean than

[30] See especially W. G. Arnott, *G and R* xx (1972) 50–2.

[31] *The ancient concept of progress* (Oxford 1973) 75, reprinted in *Oxford readings in Greek tragedy* ed. E. Segal (Oxford 1983) 186. (Dodds' article was first published in 1966.)

[32] If this is right, it is in itself evidence that the audience did not know the titles of the plays in advance.

that, planting in the mind of the audience an image, a fantastic metaphor, which later becomes terribly real.

(iv) Costume is only a further type of possible theatrical self-reference. It is, however, particularly blatant, since the actors have disguised themselves to assume their roles. And, above all, the women are men in costume. So in Old Comedy there is much play with costume, with putting it on and taking it off on-stage; and especially with the *failure* of disguise, since this comically shakes the whole undertaking, and threatens to return the actors to the world of the audience. Tragedy is generally wary of using disguises and avoids putting them on or taking them off on-stage. In her recent article Frances Muecke generally makes more of disguise in tragedy than I would; but even in *Helen*, her chief example before *Bacchai*, she observes an important difference from Aristophanes: 'in Euripides, play with the theatrical illusion is for the sake of the play with ideas in the drama, while in Aristophanes contrast between reality and illusion is used for the sake of reflecting upon theatrical illusion itself'.[33] It is in *Bacchai*, and especially in the transvestism scene, that Euripides finally breaks down this distinction.

On the other hand I am not convinced by Charles Segal (n. 18) 248 ff. that we have a metatheatrical use of πρόσωπον—face/mask—at *Bacchai* 1277 where Cadmus asks his daughter τίνος πρόσωπον δῆτ' ἐν ἀγκάλαις ἔχεις; Five lines later Agave sees the truth: ὁρῶ μέγιστον ἄλγος . . . The time for Dionysus' conjuring tricks is over; the play has moved on from its metatheatrical juggling with illusion and reality, tragedy and comedy. It has returned, with fresh power, to the grip of tragedy: this is no mere flimsy mask (even if the mask was used as a matter of stage management); it is the heavy head of Agave's own son. This passage shows how resistant tragedy was to ludic infiltration, in that Euripides is able so completely to repair the great breaches made earlier in the play. It is interesting that there is, in fact, no clear case in surviving Aristophanes of a metatheatrical use of πρόσωπον.[34] There are, however, references to masks in comedy, as we might expect. The most prominent is at *Knights* 230–33 where 'Demosthenes' refers to the appearance of the 'Paphlagonian':

> καὶ μὴ δέδιθ'. οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἐξηικασμένος·
> ὑπὸ τοῦ δέους γὰρ αὐτὸν οὐδεὶς ἤθελεν
> τῶν σκευοποιῶν εἰκάσαι· πάντως γε μὴν
> γνωθήσεται· τὸ γὰρ θέατρον δεξιόν.

In view of this it is all the more implausible that any of the many other uses of πρόσωπον in tragedy should be self-referential.[35]

(v) The last of my five headings is 'parody'. On the ubiquitous parody of tragedy in Old Comedy it is worth observing that, as well as indicators such as metrics and diction, there were almost certainly indications in performance which it is less possible for us to document. There was surely a tragic timbre to the voice, and a tragic poise to physical movement and posture, which comedy would also exploit. I suspect that a single gesture or a single syllable was often sufficient to indicate paratragedy. The many common features of the two genres make it easy to indicate parody by means of the differences; and this helps to account for the pervasiveness of paratragedy in Old Comedy.

There was clearly plenty of paratragedy in satyr-play, though it was probably less than in comedy, and there is no place in surviving satyr-play, so far as I know, whose point depends on

[33] F. Muecke, *Antichthon* xvi (1982) 17 ff. (the quotation is from p. 29). For raw material, rather than interpretation, see Chapman (n. 10) 10–22.

[34] Segal (n. 18) 248 n. 33 offers *Acharn.* 990, *Peace* 524, *Frogs* 912.

[35] I have in mind particularly Aesch. *Eum.* 990, where the Erinyes' frightening faces are a permanent feature not a temporary mask; and it would be even less appropriate at Soph. *El.* 1297 where Electra's expression is now habitually grim, as she herself explains at 1309 ff. I am not even persuaded by Seaford (n. 2) *ad loc.* that there is a reference to Silenus' mask at Eur. *Cyclops* 227.

knowing a certain passage of tragedy which is being parodied. Here again we cannot know the extent of performative paratragedy. The new illustration of Aeschylus' *Sphinx* on the Würzburg hydria indicates parody of tragedy by means of costume and demeanour: the satyrs are posing as solemn elders of the city.[36] So satyr-play also exploits the generic differences.

The parody of tragedy *by tragedy* would, then, be a very different matter, since all these intergeneric resources would not be available. (It would, by the way, be easy for tragedy to parody comedy, if that were desirable.)[37] In keeping with my overall thesis I am sceptical about allegations of parody in tragedy. Explicit parody would signal an acknowledgement to the audience that they have seen other tragedies, and thus subvert, in the manner of comedy, the independence of the world of the drama. Of course, a tragedy may be influenced by earlier works, and may build them into its fabric; but how often does a tragedy draw attention to a predecessor as such? The notorious instance is the parody of *Choephoroi* in Euripides' *Electra*. Assuming these 30 or so lines to be genuine Euripides—and I do not think the case against their authenticity should be lightly dismissed[38]—it must be conceded that they do not have much point without the explicit recognition by the audience of their parodic relationship to *Choephoroi*. Yet it is not easy to see how this was signalled without the indicators at the disposal of comedy—diction, gesture, direct quotation, not to mention actual citation.

There is no surviving example even in comedy of a fully fledged play within a play; but the use of *Telephus* in *Acharnians*, or of *Helen* and *Andromeda* in *Thesm.*, is half way there. The nearest that tragedy approaches to this is in certain uses of contrived disguise such as the 'merchant' in *Philoctetes* and the escape scene in *Helen*. Such scenes seem to occur in the 'outer' periods of fifth-century tragedy.

I have argued that tragedy does not pretend to be reality, but that it does not undermine its own fictionality either. We need not be forced into that dichotomy. Analogously I believe that tragedy may make use of other earlier literature, and be greatly enriched by it, without the kind of specific allusion and quotation which are everywhere in comedy (and Japanese nō, by the way).

It seems to me that recent studies of intertextuality, and especially ludic intertextuality, do not make sufficient distinctions over explicitness and about the relation of the work to the audience. By means of parody comedy openly acknowledges that it is an artefact making play with another artefact. Most tragedy casts its spell in a more exclusive, almost hypnotic, way; to be effective it demands the total concentration of its audience, intellectual and emotional. Explicit self-reference breaks that spell. Recent studies of Euripides, like that of Froma Zeitlin on *Orestes* in relation to the *Oresteia*, *Medea* and other tragedies (see n. 5), raise the questions: how explicit are these allusions; do they call for recognition as such from an audience; if so how is this signalled; do they sacrifice characteristic tragic spell-binding? These are posed as open questions, not merely rhetorical questions.

We read nervously and self-consciously, observing minute correspondences between those few tragedies we have. We should not forget the quite different state of consciousness experienced in the theatre. Similarly we are aware of chronology and historical authenticity, and likely to be sensitive to 'anachronisms'. But how much were these a concern in the fifth century? Easterling (n. 11) writes that the technical terms of the theatre were avoided in tragedy because they 'would be too "modern", just the kind of anachronism that is studiously avoided'. But is this chronographic awareness the explanation rather than the mutual exclusivity of the world of the tragedy and the world of the auditorium? I am doubtful whether there are any anachronisms in Greek tragedy to be noticed *as such*—not even the allusion to Orphics in *Hippolytus* or the demagogic assembly in *Orestes*. The best candidates are probably philosophically avant-garde

[36] See E. Simon, *SHAW* 1981.5.

[37] Tragedy may 'borrow' from comedy, as is argued, for example, by K. J. Dover, *Aristophanic comedy* (London 1972) 148–9 with reference to *Birds* 209 ff. and *Helen* 1187 ff. But this is not parody and does not draw attention to its intertextual relation.

[38] See D. Bain *BICS* xxiv (1977) 104 ff.

notions: on the other hand, we are particularly obsessed with the temporal history of ideas. We must ask how far Euripides and his audience thought of the development of philosophy in chronological terms. *Troades* 884 ff. is as strong a candidate as any: Menelaus comments on Hecuba's prayers τί δ' ἔστιν; εὐχὰς ὡς ἐκαίνισας θεῶν. If we leave aside our awareness of the history of philosophy, it might appear that he is commenting on her unconventional phrasing rather than her anachronistic metaphysics.

Aetiologies are rather different from such alleged anachronisms. Certainly, from Athenian justice in *Eumenides* to the offerings at Brauron predicted by Athena in *Iphigenia*, such prophecies allude to the future beyond the play, to the era of the audience.[39] But this is a far cry from the particular topicality of comedy; far from breaking down the integrity of the distanced setting of tragedy, it reinforces it. The aetiology is part of the 'antiquity' of the world of the play.

This *synkrisis* of tragedy and comedy has looked at only some aspects, leaving others virtually unconsidered. An obvious one, the one which received most attention in antiquity, is decorum: the contrast was put in terms of σεμνόν versus φαῦλον, and in many other similar oppositions. Although Euripides is already accused in Aristophanes of degrading the tone of tragedy, the fact remains that there are many areas open to comedy which were still unthinkable even in Euripides. Some lurid examples are gross physical violence and indignity, and the physical manifestations of excretion and of sex. Comedy revels in those very parts which are unmentionable in tragedy; and the more they are the property of comedy, the more inaccessible they become for tragedy. The Nurse in *Choephoroi* may be the early exception who proves the rule for later. Another, less blatant, area of contrast is staging. In my view at least, the stage action of tragedy was austere but weighty; there were not a lot of movements or props, but those there were were clear and full of dramatic significance. The stage of comedy was evidently much more crowded with activity and business. A good example is Old Comedy's delight in bringing on a clutter of stage properties, as in the courtroom scene in *Wasps*, or the bedroom farce of Kinesias and Myrrhine in *Lysistrata*. There may be an analogous contrast in structure. On the whole the formal construction of tragedy is measured, well articulated and syntactic. The construction of comedy tends to be uneven, unpredictable and paratactic. Contrast with tragedy, for instance, the string of characters in *Birds* who turn up trying to gain access to Nephelokokkygia. On the other hand we should set against this looseness, comedy's rigid, and apparently conservative, large-scale epirrhematic *agones*.

Endings may be another divergence. Comedy tends towards a united and celebratory ending, such as a victory or wedding procession. The *Oresteia* has that sort of conclusion; but in 'classical' tragedy, once comedy is established, they are avoided. Euripides' later leaning towards such resolutions in his 'escape-plays' of 414 to 412 BC may have been one of the provocations of *Thesmophoriazousai*.

As I approach a conclusion, I shall attempt a couple of ambitious generalisations, both connected with the role of the chorus. First, it was essential for comedy, if it was to succeed, that the audience should interrupt: it was essential for tragedy, if it was to succeed, that the audience should not interrupt. We do not know for sure whether comedy encouraged shouting, whistling, clapping etc., but obviously it encouraged laughter. It wanted to be stopped by laughter; one of the first things young actors of comedy have to learn is how to accommodate the audience's laughter, leaving enough pause but not too much. The intense concentration of tragedy calls for silence—even your weeping should not disturb your neighbour![39a] It is true

[39] This may also be the point of Hecuba's reference at *Troades* 1242–5 to the ἀοιδὰς ὑστέρων βροτῶν: this is the nearest that *Troades* has to a prediction *ex machina*.

[39a] Plato *Ion* 535e portrays a silent and motionless, though highly moved, audience at performances of epic (and humorously alludes to the danger of laughter): καθορῶ γὰρ ἐκάστοτε αὐτοὺς ἄνωθεν ἀπὸ τοῦ βήματος κλάοντάς τε καὶ δεινὸν ἐμβλέποντας καὶ συνθαμβοῦντας τοῖς λεγομένοις. δεῖ γάρ με καὶ σφόδρ' αὐτοῖς τὸν νοῦν προσέχειν· ὡς ἐὰν μὲν κλάοντας αὐτοὺς καθίσω, αὐτὸς γελάσομαι ἀργύριον λαμβάνων, ἐὰν δὲ γελῶντας, αὐτὸς κλαύσομαι ἀργύριον ἀπολλύς.

that we have anecdotes about the noisiness and interruptions of ancient audiences, but these all concern plays that were not liked, and were not succeeding.[40] Theophrastus' character, the βδελυρός is liable ἐν θεάτρωι κροτεῖν ὅταν οἱ ἄλλοι παύωνται, καὶ συρίττειν οὓς ἡδέως θεωροῦσιν οἱ λοιποί. I doubt whether a really effective tragedy even admitted applause except at the end. And laughter is a great threat to this kind of concentrated emotional sequence; anyone who has been concerned with a modern production will witness that it must be most carefully controlled. Those who enjoy seeking jokes in Greek tragedy seldom have much sense of theatre beyond the text.

The inactivity of the audience is, indeed, a vital prerequisite of the tragic experience, and is an important way in which the theatre is quite unlike the 'real world'. The young learn that, however moved, they must not scream or call out, let alone try to intervene physically (like the provincial Chinese spectator who in 1678, so the story goes, stabbed the villain of the piece to death on stage). Emotions urge us to consequential action—fear to flight, joy to celebration, and so forth. But however moved the tragic audience may be, whether by pity towards giving help or by anger towards revenge, or whatever, it knows it must sit quiet. The place of the chorus within the play has strong affinities, though it always remains within the world of the play, never stepping outside it. The chorus becomes emotionally very involved, yet is all but helpless to do anything about it. What the chorus does is to divert its frustrated urge to action into lyric expression, into singing of associations—religious, mythical, ethical—and of ideas arising from their helpless emotion. I suggest that this supplies the audience of tragedy with its model of a response that is both emotional and intellectual.

The audience of comedy is, on the other hand, allowed, and encouraged, to express its response by laughter, and to interrupt the play when it is moved to do so. It may not be coincidence that the chorus of Old Comedy is, generally speaking, more active and more directly involved in the plot than that of tragedy, at least during the first half of the play.[41] (So the rise of comedy may be one reason why 'protagonist-choruses' like those of Aeschylus' *Suppliants* and *Eumenides* are not found in later tragedy.)

This leads me to my second grand generalisation, which was stimulated by Michael Silk's thought-provoking article on 'Aristophanes as a lyric poet'.[42] He argues that Aristophanes' best and most characteristic lyrics are not his pastiches of the high style, but his lively, low, often personal, squibs; and he writes 'traditional Greek lyric, and specifically traditional choral lyric, tends towards the general, the world of myth and timeless truths. Aristophanes' most fundamental instincts go the other way, towards the particular'. I think this notion can be extended to fifth-century comedy and tragedy in general. It is as though they are planets in orbit round two different suns. Comedy may make gestures in the direction of the universal, the more than transient—Aristophanes is already making such moves in the *parabasis* of *Acharnians* (κωμωιδήσει τὰ δίκαια . . .). But it is always pulled back by the gravitational influence of the particular, back to individuals and details. Comedy cannot universalise for long without falling over a heap of dung. Tragedy can pay attention to particulars: indeed it is essential for its effectiveness that the particulars of the plot should be sufficiently concrete to be convincing. But the particulars never dominate, they are always overborne by the gravitational pull of the universal. In the long run the particulars serve the general, the 'timeless truths' as Silk put it.

We are left, then, with two genres which are in essence fundamentally different. On the whole they reject overlap rather than invite overlap. They are fascinatingly related yet opposed ways of approaching through art the world and the truth. This may be why in the *Symposium*, in demonstrating the superior access of Philosophy to the truth, Plato did not give the rival—

[40] For the material see Pickard-Cambridge, *The dramatic festivals of Athens*[2] rev. J. Gould and D. Lewis (Oxford 1968) 272–6. Chapman (n. 10) 1 notes the contrast between the appropriate audience responses to tragedy and comedy.

[41] *Cf.* B. Zimmermann, *Untersuchungen zur Form und dramatischen Technik der Aristophanischen Komödien* (Königstein 1984) chapter I.

[42] *YCS* xxvi (1980) 99–151, esp. 117–24.

drama—only one representative, but included both Aristophanes with his details about genitals and navel-fashioning and Agathon with his high-flown, sweeping generalities.

And, in a sense, Socrates was right in the end. During the fourth century tragedy stagnated, while comedy developed. But it developed from the exuberant topicality of Aristophanes towards the more ethical and restrained Menander. Almost all the distinctions I have been drawing between fifth-century tragedy and comedy do not apply to the New Comedy of Menander.[43] In the terms of Agathon τραγωιδοποιός and Aristophanes κωμωιδοποιός, Menander is, as Socrates insisted was possible, both. Yet Menander was also inferior to both Old Comedy and Old Tragedy, and closer to one than the other. It would be nearly two thousand years before the dichotomy would be fully bridged and transcended by the master of tragical-comical-historical-pastoral.[44]

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[43] For some new discussion of self-reference in New Comedy see R. L. Hunter, *The new comedy of Greece and Rome* (Cambridge 1985) 73–82.

[44] An earlier version of this paper was prepared for the 'Table Ronde' of the Groupe de recherches sur la tragédie grecque held at Paris X-Nanterre in May 1985. I am most grateful to Professors F. Jouan and S. Saïd for the invitation which prompted me to get my ideas down on paper—and to those present for the discussion. I am also indebted to Michael Silk and to the *Journal*'s referee for thought-provoking criticism, not all of which I have been able to meet.