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The Role of Ritual in Aristophanic Comedy

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Introduction

Ritual practices of the ancient Greeks included sacrifices, libations, purification, supplication, divination, and dancing, "including dancing in the orchestra" (Henrichs 1994, 69). Aristotle says that tragedy develops from the choral dances performed for Dionysus. Theater, then, comes from one kind of ritual and morphed in a new celebration to continue honoring Dionysus. Drama's highly contested origin has some connection to a ritualistic use. Associated with revelry and drunken mayhem, Dionysus was the patron god of theater. "Impersonation in drama, like wine, and ecstatic dance and song, over which Dionysus also presides, effects a kind of liberation in both spectators, and performers, a temporary escape from their restrictive everyday identities" (Bacon, 7). The dramas were eventually performed in the great dramatic festivals of Athens, the City Dionysia and the Lenaea. They retained their ritualistic elements through their performance in the context of a religious celebration. The first recorded City Dionysia was in 534 BCE, when Thespis won the prize for best tragic actor (Pickard-Cambridge, 72). Comedies eventually became part of the competition in 486 BCE (Pickard-Cambridge, 72). While the origin of drama is not essential to my discussion, it is useful to see the interconnectedness between drama and ritual.

Drama's connection to festival can also be seen in Aristpohanes' use of rituals in his comedies. For example, nearly each of his comedies concludes with a comic wedding. While he does use these rituals, he tends to reshape as he dramatizes them on stage. For example, an almost wedding occurs in the *Thesmophoriazusae* between a foreigner and a slave girl. In the *Lysistrata*, a woman's body is divided among men

as a promise of peace. Aristophanes also incorporates some of the great Athenian festivals in his plays. In the *Acharnians*, Dicaeopolis performs his own Dionysia in celebration of being granted peace. The *Thesmophoriazusae* takes place during the Thesmphoria, a women's only festival to promote fertility. The *Frogs* incorporates several kinds of rituals, such as the Eleusinian mysteries, a dramatic competition, as well as the different kinds of Dionysiac worship.

I will be discussing precisely the reasons why Aristophanes incorporates these rituals. I will examine the *Frogs* and the *Thesmphoriazusae* because they have some compelling similarities. Euripides appears as a central character in both plays, brought forth in different ritual contexts. In the *Frogs*, he is seen as an unconventional tragedian in comparison to traditional Aeschylus. In the *Thesmophoriazusae*, Euripides is a crafty poet who orchestrates an almost successful plan to send a spy in the Thesmophoria. Partly through both plays' use of Euripides, I also will look at the use of self-referentiality and self-awareness of the plays' context as part of a dramatic competition. Each play also incorporates different festivals in honor of Demeter. In the *Frogs*, the Eleusinian mysteries are a running theme throughout the play. They are based on the myth of Demeter and Persephone' abduction. In the *Thesmophoriazusae*, the women are in the midst of the Thesmophoria, a festival in honor of Demeter and Persephone as goddesses of agriculture. Both plays use the festivals of Demeter but in different ways.

I will begin with an analysis of the *Frogs*. I will look at the events of each festival and their portrayal in the play to understand their purpose and reason for inclusion. I attempt to show that each ritual suggests a traditional way of thinking and

that they all share a common goal in improving life through acquisition of knowledge and wisdom. I will then take a close look at the dramatic competition between Aeschylus and Euripides to examine the conflict between tragedy and comedy. In the *Thesmophoriazusae*, the Thesmophoria forms the setting for the play. I have chosen to explore the play through the lens of mimesis rather than as part of the dramatic competition. Thus, rather than assessing what elements of the festival were incorporated into the play, I will examine the resulting social aspects which resulted from the festival's occurrence. First, I will define mimesis in order to compare the different characters' success. I will see how effectively men and women can imitate each other in their social roles once mimesis has occurred. Then, I will examine each character's imitation and comment on how it fits into the gender dynamic. Like the *Frogs*, I will also look at the Euripidean tragedies to understand the tension that is depicted between tragedy and comedy.

With this methodology, I hope to show that there is more than a simple reason for Aristophanes' use of the rituals. Through these festivals, Aristophanes has been able to assess the current political and social situation in Athens. It has been said that in his plays, Aristophanes participated in "political journalism" (Halliwell 1990, 322). Partly through his use of rituals in his plays, Aristophanes can express his critique and criticisms of the polis with the art of his comedy. He also uses the rituals to help portray his genre of comedy as being better than tragedy. Comedy can do more for the polis than tragedy can, making Aristophanes a more effective teacher to the audience than his tragic contemporaries.

Chapter 1: The *Frogs*

The end of the fifth century was a dark time for Athens. The city had just suffered great defeat in the Peloponnesian war. The most recent catastrophes included the naval defeat of Athens at the battle of Aegospotami and the subduing of the oligarchic revolution. By 431 BCE, Athens was also struck with an epidemic of the plague, wiping out a huge percentage of the population. Needless to say, Athenian morale must have been at an all time low. Thucydides describes the 430s BCE as a time when Athenians neglected their customs and traditions, and therefore, chaos ensued. The period of the plague is relevant in the discussion of the *Frogs*, performed almost thirty years later in 404 BCE, because both time-periods were some of the most taxing for Athens. As I will demonstrate in this paper, Aristophanes highlights the importance of ritual activity as a means of keeping the spirit of community and bonding alive. References to festivals and celebrations suggest the need of retaining these communal rituals in order to persevere after the war.

In the *Frogs*, Dionysus travels with Xanthias to Hades in order to return the best poet to Athens. During his journey to Hades, Dionysus encounters initiates, monsters, gets a beating, and judges a great competition between Aeschylus and Euripides. The *Frogs* was performed during the Lenaea. As is often the case in dramas, the plot line may reflect on the political situation in Athens. Because the Lenaea took place during the winter and mainly Athenians attended, the *Frogs* would have been topical and applicable to the Athenians. Aristophanes does in fact deliver some advice to his audience. Aristophanes is known for his parabases where the chorus openly addresses the faults of the city. With freedom of speech on the stage,

the poets could present criticism of society. This did not always happen so successfully. For Cleon attacked Aristophanes for his portrayal of the city in the lost play *Babylonians* (Sommerstein, 2). Even with Cleon's remarks, Aristophanes continued to speak his opinion on the affairs of Athens. "The theatre was a deeply social and political experience for the Greeks, suggesting that the plays addressed of concern to the community as a whole" (Watson and McKernie, 20). The significance of the *Frogs* directly relates to Athens during the end of the fifth century.

Through the action of the play Aristophanes presents to the audience the way of saving the city after its postwar decline. In this dark time period, perhaps the Athenians welcomed the teachings from the poets. Aristophanes' advice is clear: the survival and success of Athens can by accomplished by returning to a traditional way of thinking through keeping alive the old habits and customs. In the *Frogs*, Aristophanes uses rituals that create a bonding experience of the participants and that promise some kind of knowledge to improve life. The traditional religious ceremonies establish opportunities for the Greeks to come together and recognize themselves as members of a community. The Greek ideal was based not on an individualistic mindset, but on a communal one. In order to make this message clear, Aristophanes incorporates elements of several religious celebrations into the play.

I will demonstrate how the Eleusinian mysteries, Dionysiac cult practices, and the dramatic festivals can all be found in the play and enrich Aristophanes' recommendation to Athens. Dionysus experiences an initiation like the initiates at the Eleusinian mysteries; this teaches him the importance of the community. Dionysus' participation in some of his own cult practices calms his wildness and brings him

back to Athens as a civilized member of society. While judging the dramatic competition between Aeschylus and Euripides, Dionysus comes to understand the role the poets play in teaching and advising the city.

The Eleusinian mysteries

I will examine how references to the Eleusinian mysteries flood the plays. In order to do so, I will discuss what is known about the mysterious festival. It is possible first to trace some evidence of the mysteries within the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* through Demeter's journey to find Persephone. The hymn, dating between the seven and sixth centuries, demonstrates that worship of Demeter had already been present in Eleusis before the Classical period. Archaeological evidence shows continuous occupation since the Mycenaean period, sighing that worship of Demeter had been happening for quite some time. The long-standing traditional of Demeter's celebration can clearly be seen as an old custom celebrated in Greece.

The Eleusinian mysteries were a ritual of initiation; the participants celebrate the festival in order to gain something at the conclusion. They undergo a kind of initiation that teaches certain knowledge to make the next stage of life better. To this day, the events of the mysteries have remained a secret. The initiates of the festival were promised a happier afterlife than the uninitiated.

> Wandering astray in the beginning, tiresome walkings in circles, some frightening paths in darkness that lead nowhere, then immediately before the end all the terrible things, panic and shivering and sweat, and bewilderment. And then some wonderful light comes to meet you, pure regions and meadows are there to greet you, with sounds and dances and solemn, sacred words and holy views, and there the initiate, perfect by now, set free and loose from all bondage, walks about crowned with a wreath, celebrating the festival together

> with the other sacred and pure people, and he looks down on the uninitiated, unpurified crowd in this world in mud and fog beneath his feet. (Bowden, 40)

In this passage, Plutarch describes the experience of initiates at the Eleusinian mysteries. The festival at Eleusis, in honor of Demeter and Persephone, was based on the myth of Hades' kidnap of Persephone. Because the mysteries were kept sacred by their secrecy, it is impossible to reconstruct the events of the festival, but a brief summary can be made. In preparation for the mysteries, which occurred in either September or October, a procession of young Athenian men escorted holy objects from Athens to Eleusis. A few days later, the official festival began. The soon to be initiates gathered in the agora for the "*prorrhêsis*, the proclamation made by the *hierokeryx* that 'those impure in hands or incomprehensible in speech'" would be unable to participate in the Mysteries (Foley 1977, 67). This great festival to Demeter and Persephone was a rare occasion in which both women and slaves could partake. The only people who were excluded were those who carried bloodguilt and those who could not speak Greek. On the next day of the festival, the initiates carried a pig to the bay of Phaleron to be cleansed and purified, possibly to prepare the pig for sacrifice upon arrival at Eleusis. Finally two days later, they left for Eleusis.

Along the way, they stopped for sacrifices and took part in praying, singing, and dancing. At one point, the initiates crossed over a bridge near Eleusis where insults and curses were hurled at them. Once they arrived at Eleusis, the initiates broke their fast and celebrated that evening with singing and dancing, perhaps as a culminating experience of their initiation, and watched something in the Telesterion, a sacred building in Eleusis. A presentation of the secret objects and a reenactment of Persephone's abduction are possible suggestions of the performance that occurred

within the Telesterion. The festival concluded with much more sacrificing, dancing and celebrating (Foley 1977, 66-69).

The festival focused on the abduction myth of Persephone. It is vital to examine the myth of Persephone as it forms the basis for understanding the mysteries. The Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* is one of the few pieces of literary evidence that concerns the festival at Eleusis. The celebration of the ritual death and rebirth of Persephone was one of the focuses of the festival. The hymn begins with Persephone's frolicking in the meadows before Hades snatches her.

> ἄνθεά τ᾽αἰνυμένην ῥόδα καὶ κρόκον ἠδ᾽ ἴα καλὰ
> λειμῶν᾽ ἂμ μαλακὸν καὶ ἀγαλλίδας ἠδ᾽ ὑάκινθον
> ναρκισσόν θ᾽, ὃν φῦσε δόλον καλυκώπιδι κούρῃ
> Γαῖα Διὸς βουλῇσι χαριζομένη πολυδέκτῃ
> θαυμαστὸν γανόωντα. (lines 6-10)
>
> Plucking flowers in the lush meadow- roses, crocuses,
> and lovely violets, irises and hyacinth and the narcissus,
> which Earth grew as a snare for the flower-faced maiden
> in order to gratify by Zeus' design the Host-to-Many,
> a flower wondrous and bright.[1]

At the start of the hymn, Persephone is at the peak of her maidenhood. Her playing in the meadows represents her youth. Once Hades kidnaps her, however, Persephone's initiation has begun. Persephone's journey to Hades and back marks her change from a young girl into a grown woman and into a wife. It is important to note the rich and vivid description of the meadow given at the beginning of the hymn. The meadow is an important aspect of the mysteries. As the location of Persephone's abduction, the image of the meadow would play a central role in the festival. While it is impossible to know what happened exactly during the culminating moment of the mysteries, it is

[1] Translated by Helene P. Foley, 1977.

speculated that a reenactment of Persephone's abduction was presented. "Spoken words and sounds certainly played some role in the ceremony as well" (Foley 1977, 68). The performance of Persephone's ritual death and rebirth when returned to her mother represents the rebirth of the initiates after death into their happier afterlife. The mysteries celebrate this continual cycle of life and death.

Demeter's journey to find Persephone also plays a significant role during the mysteries. The initiates reenact many of the actions of Demeter as she searches for her daughter. The hymn does not act as a definitive source for the events of the mysteries, it is an aetiological myth of the foundation of these rites. The initiates fast along their journey perhaps because Demeter was too upset to eat anything in her mourning. Demeter carried torches to guide her and as a result, the initiates were led by torchbearers. The torch becomes an important symbol of the mysteries and is mentioned often in the *Frogs*. The final, physical, destination for the initiates was Eleusis, where Demeter instructed the men to begin her sacred rites.

Thus we see that Demeter and Persephone's journeys are the basis for the Eleusinian mysteries. While Demeter and Persephone's actions cannot be replicated, it is thought that the mysteries are meant to invoke similar emotions the goddesses went through. "The initiands would only *empathically* participate in the *dromena*, by way of identifying with the protagonists' emotions, as they would pass from the sorrow of the Mother's loss through the turbulations of the search to the supreme joy of Persephone's recovery" (Lada-Richards, 83). Rather than a physical imitation of the myth, the participants would have experienced the same feelings and emotions. They would have recreated the feelings of suffering and joy in reenacting the death

and rebirth of Persphone. The ultimate goal of the initiate, to gain a better afterlife, comes from Persephone's continual rebirth as she symbolically dies in her descent to Hades and is reborn when she returns to earth (Lada-Richards, 81).

In the *Frogs*, elements of the mysteries can be found throughout the play. It is not the aim of this paper to prove the events of the mysteries as dictated by the *Frogs*, but rather to demonstrate Aristophanes' advice that the best way to save Athens is through continuous participation of the rituals that define the city. The climactic moment of the play is the discussion between Aeschylus and Euripides about how to save Athens. While each tragedian gives his opinion, perhaps Aristophanes too has something to say to the audience. As a teacher to the city, Aristophanes may have been giving advice in order to rescue Athens from collapse at the end of the war. Aristophanes' use of the Eleusinian mysteries helps to display Dionysus' understanding of what is best to help the city. The Eleusinian mysteries act as a symbol of traditional thinking. This festival that has been celebrated for centuries represents an established method of thinking and. Dionysus chooses Aeschylus who represents this old-fashioned mentality. Thus the two together, the use of the Eleusinian mysteries and the victory of Aeschylus, emphasize Aristophanes' suggestion.

Dionysus undergoes a symbolic initiation throughout the *Frogs*. The initiate of the Eleusinian mysteries and the character of Dionysus go through a comparable experience. The initiate learns how to have a happier afterlife while Dionysus learns how to care about the city, demonstrated by choosing Aeschylus. Dionysus participates in his own initiation ritual to gain understanding of what is necessary to

save and improve the city. Dionysus' original plan is to rescue Euripides from Hades. Once he is in the underworld, Dionysus changes his mind and declares that he will return with Aeschylus. At the end of the Peloponnesian War, when the *Frogs* was presented, the state of the future of Athens was questionable. At a time when everyone must have been concerned with his or her safety, Aristophanes' emphasis on a return to traditional thought may have been reassuring. Because the Eleusinian mysteries had been a well-established celebration by the end of the fifth century, Aristophanes uses the mysteries as an example of a traditional ritual that represents a customary way of behaving.

Reference to the Eleusinian mysteries is first explicitly stated when the chorus of initiates comes to Dionysus during his journey to Hades. This famous choral passage is full of Eleusinian vocabulary. In the first section, the chorus says,

> Ἴακχ᾽, ὦ πολυτίμητ᾽ἐν ἕδραις ἐνθάδε ναίων,
> Ἴακχ᾽, ὦ Ἴακχε,
> ἐλθὲ τόνδ᾽ἀνὰ λειμῶνα χορεύσων
> ὁσίους εἰς θιασώτας,
> πολύκαρπον μὲν τινάσσων
> περὶ κρατὶ σῷ βρύοντα
> στέφανον μύρτων, θρασεῖ δ᾽ἐγκατακρούων
> ποδὶ τὴν ἀκόλαστον
> φιλοπαίγμονα τιμήν,
> Χαρίτων πλεῖστον ἔχουσαν μέρος, ἁγνήν, ἱερὰν
> ὁσίοις μύσταις χορείαν. (lines 324-335)
>
> Iacchus, dwelling exalted here in your abode,
> Iacchus, Iacchus,
> come to this meadow to dance with your reverent followers,
> brandishing about your brow a fruitful,
> a burgeoning garland of myrtle,
> and stamping with bold foot in our licentious,
> fun-loving worship, hat is richly endowed by the Graces, a dance pure and holy

to pious initiates.[2]

Χορεύσων (dancing), στέφανον μύρτων (crown of myrtle), and ἱερὰν ὁσίοις μύσταις χορείαν (a dance pure and holy to pious initiates) are some of the usual vocabulary associated with the mysteries and that the audience would hear throughout the rest of the play. Iacchus, whom the chorus first invokes, is considered a manifestation of Dionysus and connects Dionysus and the *Frogs* to the Eleusinian mysteries. "Iacchus, mentioned fourteen times in one hundred lines, was the deity whose statue, crowned with myrtle (330) and accompanied by torches (313, 340), was in the procession that went from Athens to Eleusis" (Bowie 1993, 229). In Eleusinian myth, Iacchus was a guide to and from Hades and was characterized as the torchbearer during the Eleusinian procession (Foley 1977, 67). The initiates invoked Iacchus along their procession to Eleusis (Dover, 31). That the chorus calls out to Iacchus to join them in the meadow is a further indication of the Eleusinian mysteries. As the location of Persephone's abduction, "the meadow (326) is a standard piece of Eleusinian infernal geography" (Bowie 1993, 229). This choral passage highlights the connection of the *Frogs* to the Eleusinian mysteries.

In addition to direct references of the mysteries, such as the chorus of initiates, parts of initiation can be seen throughout the course of the play. Lada-Richards categorizes Dionysus' journey into three aspects of initiation: separation, liminality, and reintegration. Separation is the initiate's detachment, symbolically and physically, from his normal way of life. Liminality is the transitional stage between starting and finishing the initiation. It is represented in the journey the participant

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[2] All translations of the *Frogs* cited by Jeffrey Henderson, 2002.

undertakes in order to complete this rite of passage. Reintegration is when the initiate returns to his normal day life having undergone his initiation (Lada Richards, 46-47). Dionysus' adventure to the underworld leads him to a foreign land- his separation, he goes through a series of ordeals- his stage of transition, and is eventually led back up to reality escorted by the torch bearing chorus of initiates- his reintegration into Athens.

Dionysus and Xanthias open the play with a reminder that they are very much in the city and a part of the community. They situate themselves as actors on the Athenian stage in front of the audience. The first line of the play, said by Xanthias, is a reaffirmation of their present physical location. "εἴπω τι τῶν εἰωθότων, ὦ δέσποτα, / ἐφ᾽ οἷς ἀεὶ γελῶσιν οἱ θεώμενοι" (lines 1-2) (Shall I make one of the usual cracks, master/ that the audience always laugh at?) Xanthias' reference to the type of crude humor that the audience always laughs at is an example of metatheater, self-awareness of the play's theatrical setting. Xanthias shows the audience that he is very conscious that he is a character within a play. The characters and chorus "who draw attention to their ritual role as collective performers of the choral dance-song in the orchestra invariable locate their performance self-reflexively within the concrete dramatic context and ritual ambience of a given play" (Henrichs 1994, 58). The joking about what the audience likes to hear creates his awareness of the current reality. In order for Lada-Richards' idea of separation to be applicable, the present location must be established. Once it is clear that the audience and the characters are in the context of a play, reality and normalcy have been determined. Thus Dionysus may start his journey.

It is at this point that Dionysus has begun his initiation. The first one hundred lines of the play "re-enact for the sake of the audience, Dionysus' *detachment* from the intellectual background of 405 BC Athens" (Bowie 1993, 55-56). Dionysus' separation from the polis is based on his despair that there are no more good poets remaining in Athens. He is unhappy in his current situation and seeks to change that. Dionysus tells Xanthias not to tell the usual jokes, because even though they are in the context of a comedy, they make him age quickly (line 16). He tells Herakles of his desire for Euripides and determination to go to Hades and bring him back to the world of the living, "δέομαι ποιητοῦ δεξιοῦ./οἱ μὲν γὰρ οὐκέτ᾽ εἰσίν, οἱ δ᾽ ὄντες κακοί" (lines 71-72) (I need a talented poet, / for some are gone, and those that live are bad.) One of the identifying features of the comic genre is that the hero comes up with some bright idea. Dionysus' great idea is to go in search of Euripides. Dionysus' idea takes him out of his normal way of life and separates him from the community. He moans the loss of tragedians while everyone else is enjoying the comic play. As a latecomer to the Greek pantheon, the cult of Dionysus is said to have come from the east. While Dionysus does become integrated into Greek worship, he is, for the time being in the *Frogs*, separate from the Greeks. While Euripides' *Bacchae* brings Dionysiac worship to Greece, perhaps Aristophanes' *Frogs* has Dionysus return to Athens at the conclusion of the play with a greater sense of unity and community.

The next scene depicts Dionysus and Xanthias talking with Herakles to learn the best way to travel to Hades. Upon their arrival in Hades, according to Herakles, they will first encounter the chorus of initiates. "ἐντεῦθεν αὐλῶν τίς σε περίεισιν πνοή,/ ὄψει τε φῶς κάλλιστον ὥσπερ ἐνθάδε,/ καὶ μυρρινῶνας καὶ θιάσους

εὐδαίμονας/ ἀνδρῶν γυναικῶν καὶ κρότον χειρῶν πολύν" (lines 154-157) (And next a breath of pipes will waft about you,/ and there'll be brilliant sunlight, just like ours,/ and myrtle groves, happy bands/ of men and women, and a great clapping of hands.) The vocabulary Herakles uses, predictably enough, is rich with words associated with the Eleusinian mysteries, such as αὐλῶν (pipes), μυρρινῶνας (myrtle), and θιάσους (bands). In fact, Herakles stands as a symbol of the ideal initiate within the mysteries. Herakles had been "purified by Eumolpus and initiated into the Mysteries before his descent to the Underworld in search of Cerberus" (Bowie 1993, 235). Because of Herakles' connection to the Eleusinian mysteries, Dionysus' visit to him would be the perfect beginning for the god's journey to the underworld. Dionysus tells Herakles that he would like to travel to the underworld along the exact route that Herakles followed. Because Herakles was considered the "mythical archetype of the Eleusinian initiate", Dionysus would want to imitate the same path as Herakles (Bowie 1993, 245). Herakles warns Dionysus that the journey will be difficult, but Dionysus is willing to do whatever it takes to get to Hades, "μή μ᾽ ἔκπληττε μηδὲ δειμάτου,/ οὐ γάρ μ᾽ ἀποτρέψεις" (lines 143-144) (Don't try to shock or scare me off,/ you'll not deter me.) Dionysus must successfully pass through the ordeals to reach Hades and the poets.

In a physical reaffirmation of his journey, the path to Hades requires that Dionysus cross over the endless lake, "ἐπὶ λίμνην μεγάλην/…πάνυ ἄβυσσον" (lines 136-137) (First you'll come to a vast lake,/ quite bottomless.) Thus Dionysus' first ordeal is to row across the lake with Charon. Because Dionysus and Xanthias did not fight in the naval battles of Salamis and Arginusae, Xanthias was forced to walk

around the lake while Dionysus had to struggle to help row the boat. Once he gets into the boat, Dionysus is quick to admit that he does not know how to row. "κᾆτα πῶς δυνήσομαι/ ἄπειρος, ἀθαλάττευτος, ἀσαλαμίνιος/ ὢν εἶτ᾽ ἐλαύνειν" (lines 203-205) (Now how will I manage that/ I'm green, a landlubber, no Salaminian,/ and I'm supposed to row?) Dionysus' inexperience in rowing reflects the inexperience and uneducated mindset of the initiates on their way to Eleusis.

In fifth century Athens, the strength and power of the city came from her navy. Those who had joined the fleet and participated in the naval battles were held with a high degree of honor. The ideal Athenian citizen had fought in the navy. This is a great change from Athens a century earlier where hoplite warfare was considered the greatest glory (Goldhill, 108). War was the most glorified of masculine activities and without his participation in the war, Dionysus could have not been part of the Athenian community that had. His emphasis on his experience demonstrates that by continuing through the initiation, Dionysus will eventually learn what he needs to know in order to become more integrated into the Athenian community. His final knowledge teaches him the great role the community plays in the success of the city. For in the democratic mindset of Classical Athens, the focus was on the collective group rather than the individual.

Another part of the initiates' transitional period is their encounter with ordeals, "ranging from threats and terrifying sights to actual tortures of the greatest cruelty" (Lada-Richards, 70). Dionysus and Xanthias face each one of those threats. The doorman to Hades, seeing Dionysus dressed as Herkales, quickly begins to curse them. Immediately after Dionysus crosses the lake and meets up with Xanthias, they

are soon met with the monster, Empusa. Xanthias gives a vivid description of the monster: "δεινόν. παντοδαπὸν γοῦν γίγνεται./ τοτὲ μέν γε βοῦς, νυνὶ δ᾽ ὀρεύς, τοτὲ δ᾽ αὖ γυνὴ/ ὡραιοτάτη τις/... ἀλλ᾽ οὐκέτ᾽ αὖ γυνή ᾽στιν, ἀλλ᾽ ἤδη κύων/... πυρὶ γοῦν λάμπεται ἅπαν τὸ πρόσωπον" (lines 289-294) (Frightful! Anyway, it's a shape-shifter; now a cow; now a mule; and now a woman,/ very nice looking/... Wait, she's not a woman any more, she's a bitch/... Yes, her whole face is ablaze with fire.) In this instance, Dionysus and Xanthias are witnessing the comic equivalent of the "terrifying sights" that was common for initiates to see. The sight of this monster fulfills part of Dionysus' initiation of witnessing terrors.

Dionysus and Xanthias also receive a whipping, which would fit under the category of "actual tortures of the greatest cruelty". At this point in the play, Xanthias is dressed as Herakles and Dionysus is in the guise of the slave. Xanthias tells the doorkeeper that he needs to torture Dionysus in order to prove Xanthias' innocence in a theft. "ἐν κλίμακι/ δήσας, κρεμάσας, ὑστριχίδι μαστιγῶν, δέρων,/ στρεβλῶν, ἔτι δ᾽ εἰς τὰς ῥῖνας ὄξος ἐγχέων,/ πλίνθους ἐπιτιθείς, πάντα τἄλλα" (lines 618-621) (Bind him to the ladder./ Hang him up. Bristle-whip him. Flay him./ Rack him. Pour vinegar up his nose too./ Put bricks on him. Anything at all.) Immediately afterwards, both Xanthias and Dionysus are forced to undergo a beating in order to prove who is the god and who is not. Oddly enough, there is no winner in this competition of manliness, both Xanthias and Dionysus whimper in pain at the beating. Perhaps then there is no victor because Dionysus and Xanthias must undergo the ritual of purification. It is possible that in addition to being a physical trial, beating was a method of purification. Dionysus and Xanthias must be flogged so that

they may be purified of any evil before they can reach Hades. Dionysus must go through purification in both mind and body so that he may be clean to judge the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides.

The final step of Dionysus' initiation is to judge the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides on the quality of their poetry. Having gone down to Hades with the aim of choosing Euripides, Dionysus changes his mind based on how the poets use their rhetoric to answer his questions. He judges them on their verses and how well the can speak. When it comes to replying to what is best for the city, Aeschylus gives the more favorable response. The knowledge Dionysus gained throughout his quest was that he realized he needed to do what is best for the city, rather than following his own personal and individualistic desires. Thus at the start of the play, Dionysus began inexperienced and unknowing. He had never participated in a naval battle and did not know the correct tragedian to return to Athens. Through his initiation, Dionysus becomes knowledgeable. He helps row Charon's boat across the river and listens to the advice given to him by Aeschylus. Aristophanes' use of the Eleusinian mysteries enriches the lesson that Dionysus needs to learn. The initiates, who presented with the knowledge of how to gain a better afterlife, are much like Dionysus who needs a poet to save Athens. Participation in this traditional ritual allows Dionysus to come to this understanding.

Dionysus learns this by asking Aeschylus and Euripides "ἐγὼ κατῆλθον ἐπὶ ποιητήν. τοῦ χάριν;/ ἵν᾽ἡ πόλις σωθεῖσα τοὺς χοροὺς ἄγῃ./ ὁπότερος οὖν ἂν τῇ πόλει παραινέσιν/ μέλλῃ τι χρηστόν, τοῦτον ἄξειν μοι δοκῶ" (lines 1418-1421) (I came down here for a poet. Why?/ So our city could survive and continue her

choral festivities./ So whichever of you is prepared to offer the city some good advice,/ he's the one I've decided to take back with me.) Euripides replies, "εἴ τις πτερῶσας Κλεόκριτον Κινησίᾳ/ ἄρειεν αὔρας πελαγίαν ὑπὲρ πλάκα/…εἰ ναυμαχοῖεν, κᾆτ᾽ ἔχοντες ὀξίδας ῥαίνοιεν/ εἰς τὰ βλέφαρα τῶν ἐναντίων" (lines 1436-1441) (If someone were to wing Cleocritus with Cinesias,/ and send him aloft on the breezes o'er the watery plain/… if there were a naval battle in progress, and they carried vinegar cruets,/ they could spray it in the enemy's eyes.) Euripides suggestion is based on the strength of the Athenian navy. Aeschylus responds with, "ὅταν τὰ νῦν ἄπιστα πίσθ᾽ ἡγώμεθα,/ τὰ δ᾽ ὄντα πίστ᾽ ἄπιστα/… εἰ τῶν πολιτῶν οἷσι νῦν πιστεύομεν,/ τούτοις ἀπιστήσαιμεν, οἷς δ᾽ οὐ χρώμεθα,/ τούτοισι χρησαίμεθα/… εἰ νῦν γε δυστυχοῦμεν ἐν τούτοισι,/ πῶς τἀναντί᾽ ἂν πράξαντες οὐ σῳζοίμεθ᾽ ἄν" (lines1446-1450) (When we put our trust in what's trusted,/ and what's trustworthy is untrusted/… if we stopped trusting the citizens we now trust,/ and start making use of the citizens/ we now don't use… if we're faring poorly with the current bunch,/ how wouldn't we find salvation if we did the opposite?) Aeschylus questions the effectiveness of the leaders of the city. Dionysus must choose between the battle tactics of Euripides and the restructuring of government from Aeschylus.

Aeschylus represents the older generation and order and piety, while Euripides is characterized as innovative as well as challenging and skeptical of religion. "The heroic ideals of Aeschylean tragedy will preserve the city, the unsettling realism of Euripidean tragedy will subvert it" (Dover, 33). While it is impossible to know how the audience felt and reacted to the *Frogs*, I believe that with

reference to the historical context of the time, the *Frogs* gives counsel about a return to tradition and convention would be a welcomed relief from war. Aristophanes' dominant portrayal of the Eleusinian mysteries in the *Frogs* is used as a beacon of convention, order, and tradition. By emphasizing one of the most important rituals to the Greeks, Aristophanes demonstrates that the city still has its religious practices and through continuous worship of the gods, Athens will be able to return to its earlier triumph. To the modern reader, a return to religious practices has a different meaning than to the Athenian audience. In a world where religion is present in all aspects of life, the suggestion to maintain these rituals has deeper ramifications. The Athenians participated in these rituals before the war and during the war. Continuous celebration, along with a heightened sense of community, will rebuild Athens.

Dionysus does internalize this knowledge but he still remains the character of a comedy. He comes to Herakles with a strong craving for Euripides, "καὶ δῆτ᾽ ἐπὶ τῆς νεὼς ἀναγιγνώσκοντί μοι/ τὴν Ἀνδρομέδαν πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν ἐξαίφνης πόθος/ τὴν καρδίαν ἐπάταξε πῶς οἴει σφόδρα" (lines 52-54) (Anyway, as I was on deck reading/ *Andromeda* to myself, a sudden longing/ struck my heart, you can't imagine how hard.) He wants Euripides because he has a longing in his heart (πόθος). πόθος can be defined as an "intense longing for someone or something absent or lost" (Sfyroeras, 302). It is possible to see Dionysus' desire for Euripides as a very inward and personal matter since he compares this need in the same manner that one would crave soup (line 62). Herakles too picks up in the personal desire by asking if Dionysus has a sexual desire (lines 56-57). Dionysus denies the accusation of a sexual desire for Euripides, thus his passion is not as intense as *eros* (Sfyroeras, 303).

Dionysus' craving for Euripides is caused by the fact that there are no more talented poets in Athens; he wants a "potent poet": "γόνιμον δὲ ποιητὴν ἂν οὐχ εὕροις ἔτι/ ζητῶν ἄν, ὅστις ῥῆμα γενναῖον λάκοι" (lines 96-97) (But if you look for a potent poet,/ one who could utter a lordly phrase, you won't find any left.) He defines "potent" as "ὅστις φθέγξεται/ τοιουτονί τι παρακεκινδυνευμένον" (lines 98-99) (as in one who can give voice/ to something adventuresome.) Dionysus desires a more daring poet, thus it is understandable that he would wish for Euripides. He bases this desire on Euripides' skill as a poet, and bold language, rather than the advice he could give to the city.

By the time he has gone through his initiation and chooses Aeschylus, Dionysus still has a desire for something, but now it is for the greater good. Dionysus has made his decision based on the advice from Aeschylus. Rather than being led by his heart (ἡ καρδία), Dionysus is now instructed by his soul. "αἱρήσομαι γὰρ ὅνπερ ἡ ψυχὴ θέλει" (line 1468) (I will choose the one that my soul wishes to choose.) Although Dionysus does not use the word desire in this final statement, the choice of Aeschylus now stems from another kind of wish, to save the city through these traditional values. His use of the word soul suggests a more positive use for his decision rather than fulfilling a personal longing (Moorton, 435). It seems that Dionysus has in fact internalized Aeschylus' teachings. Aeschylus' response to Dionysus' question was that the people who are in power now are destroying the city. Aeschylus even compares Alcibiades to a wild lion. He suggests the need for a shift in power; something must change. He criticizes those who are currently in power.

When Aeschylus advises this, he indicates the need to return to a customary way of thinking because he represents tradition and convention.

Dionysiac Cult

Lada-Richards' initiation pattern is one way of interpreting the *Frogs*. While this pattern plays a crucial role in the understanding of the play, there are references to other festivals and religious practices. The use of these different experiences enriches the text as each festival aims at a similar end point in the context of the *Frogs*. Dionysus was glorified as the god of wine and theater. Iconic imagery of Dionysus, a popular subject on vase painting, includes grape clusters, ivy vines, and phallic symbols. He is also depicted as a variety of ages, from baby to grown man (Kraemer, 57). Celebrations of him ranged from wine drinking races to the choral competitions of the dramatic festivals. Dionysiac cult practices include dancing, wine drinking, and dramatic competitions. For now, I will discuss the first two.

There is an interesting connection between Dionysus and Demeter in which both cult practices stress the importance of dancing. During the competition of the great tragedians, Euripides chooses to recite a passage from his *Bacchae*, a tragedy about Dionysiac cult "'Διόνυσος, ὃς θύρσοισι καὶ νεβρῶν δοραῖς/ καθαπτὸς ἐν πεύκῃσι Παρνασσὸν κάτα/ πηδᾷ χορεύων'" (lines 1211-1213) ('Dionysus, decked out with wands and fawnskins/ midst the pines of Parnassus,/ leaping in the dance'.) The same vocabulary can be found here in this small passage as the mystic vocabulary that has flooded the rest of the play, θύρσοισι, νεβρῶν, and πηδᾷ

χορεύων. In another section from the *Bacchae*, the chorus praises those who have taken part of Bacchic dancing and revelry.

> Blessed is he who, being fortunate
> and knowing the rites of the gods,
> keeps his life pure
> and joins his soul to the dancing in Bacchic revels
> over the mountains
> with holy purifications, and who, revering the mysteries
> of great mother Cybele
> brandishing the thyrsus, garlanded with ivy,
> serves Dionysus. (lines 73-82)[3]

It is possible to see again the similarities in description with the Eleusinian mysteries.

It is interesting to note the chorus' use of Bacchic dancing, but I will discuss this after drawing another comparison. The role of Iacchus connects Dionysiac cult practices to the Eleusinian mysteries. "'Iacchus!' was supposed to be the ecstatic cry of the initiates, so the god was a personification of that ecstasy" (Bowden, 103). As Dionysus listens to the chorus of initiates, the two deities are brought together. "The god's spectating role overlaps that of patron of this Chorus since it at first addresses the invites to join them [Iacchus], the principal male divinity worshipped in the Mysteries and identified with [Dionysus] by Aristophanes' time" (Habash 2002, 8). Iacchus had come to be known as a cult aspect of Dionysus. Iacchus represents the torch bearing guide to Eleusis as well as an aspect of the theater patron.

While dancing is a part of the Eleusinian mysteries, dancing in honor of Dionysus can take different forms. The Bacchic rites mentioned by the chorus of the Bacchae were performed by the maenads, female followers of Dionysus. Through ritual dancing, they work themselves into a frenzy. The image of Dinoysus and his

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[3] Translated by John Davies, 1995.

followers is a common theme on vase painting. "Pictures of the bearded god and his ecstatic female followers encircled by ivy vines and clusters of grapes suggest that Dionysus' worshippers experienced a sense of freedom and license" (Evans, 205). The maenads of art are shown as undergoing a "Dionysiac seizure" (Henrichs 1978, 122). They convulse, roll their eyes back, shout, foam at the mouth, run through the woods on a hunt, and eat raw meat (Henrichs 1978, 122). This image of Euripides' *Bacchae*, however, cannot be seen as truly accurate. The truth is that maenadism is a much more subdued form of ritual than what was shown by Euripides (Henrichs 1978, 123). Diodorus states that, "it was customary for the maidens to carry thyrsi and join in the frenzied revels with shouts of Evo, while the matrons sacrifice to the god and celebrate the Bacchic festival in groups, and in general extol with hymns the presence of Dionysus" (Kraemer, 65). Aristophanes may have been continuing this motif of imaginative maenadism in order to show the great difference between those women who were maenads and those who were not. Participating as maenads allowed women to leave the confines of the private world of the home (Kraemer, 77). The have an opportunity to abandon their social roles and experience the freedom found in Dionysiac worship.

A comprehensive list of Dionysiac cult practices has been difficult to make because many of the textual references come from unreliable sources (Kraemer, 56). There is no doubt, however, that drinking was a significant part of Dionysiac worship. Copious amount of drinking was a feature of Dionysiac ritual since wine allows for change of mind and mental state, "that radically Other element buried deep within every civilized man, which drinking can bring to light" (Lissarrague, 13). Because

Dionysus represents transition and change of state and perception, the portrayal of wine would accurately highlight the character of Dionysus. Throughout the *Frogs*, Dionysus is called upon as patron of wine and celebration. At the beginning of the play, Dionysus announces himself as "Dionysus, son of the Wine Jug" and the chorus of frogs invokes him as the patron of the Anthesteria. When Dionysus is frightened of the monster Empusa, he cries out to his priest to save him so that they can be drinking partners in the evening celebration. "ἱερεῦ, διαφύλαξόν μ᾽, ἵν᾽ ὦ σοι ξυμπότης" (line 296) (Priest, save me, so I can come to your party.) Once Dionysus and Xanthias safely enter Hades, Xanthias disguised as Herakles, Persephone's slave greets them with a warm welcome.

> ἡ γὰρ θεός σ᾽ ὡς ἐπύθεθ᾽ ἥκοντ᾽, εὐθέως
> ἔπεττεν ἄρτους, ἧψε κατερικτῶν χύτρας
> ἔτνους δύ᾽ ἢ τρεῖς, βοῦν ἀπηνθράκιζ᾽ ὅλον,
> πλακοῦντας ὤπτα. κολλάβους. ἀλλ᾽ εἴσιθι
> … ἐπεί τοι καὶ κρέα
> ἀνέβραττεν ὀρνίθεια, καὶ τραγήματα
> ἔφρυγε, κᾦνον ἀνεκεράννυ γλυκύτατον. (lines 504-511)
>
> When the goddess heard you'd come,
> she started baking bread, heating two or three pots
> of split-pea soup, barbecuing a whole ox,
> and putting pies in the oven, dinner rolls too. Now come on in
> … Listen, she was stewing birdmeat too, and toasting
> munchies, and mixing up some very sweet wine.

The first thing to note is that Persephone was mixing sweet wine for Herakles. Her actions suggest that she is in the midst of setting up a grand feast for the arrival of Herakles to the underworld. "Persephone's invitation is so enunciated as to construct to the eyes of a Greek classical spectator the merry setting of a banquet" (Lada-Richards, 129). It may have highlighted the ritual connotation of wine drinking and the symposium of Dionysus to the Athenians as the god of both theater and wine.

In fact Dionysus introduces himself to the audience as Dionysus, son of the wine jar, rather than son of Zeus, "Διόνυσος, υἱὸς Σταμνίου" (line 22). Thus in the context of the dramatic festival, Dionysus highlights these two important aspects of himself, the patron of theater and the god of wine. The theater and drinking of wine both act as a tool for release from every day social requirements. Participation in either results in a certain kind of freedom, the actor to play someone he is not while the drinker transcends into another reality.

The symposium was another location where men gathered together to drink and honor Dionysus. The setting of the symposium was an opportunity for men to discuss political, moral, and public and private ideals (Bowie 1997, 1). "It was the function of the symposium under the gaze of Dionysos to pose questions to the drinker about his behavior and nature" (Bowie 1997, 21). The symposium granted the men a space to talk, discuss, and debate about all parts of society. With the freeing of the mind and inhibitions caused by wine, men could discuss everything that made Athens the city it was in the fifth century. No one could be considered part of the community without having shared in the bonding experience of wine drinking (Evans, 173). An important part of male identity was to take part in the sympotic drinking with his fellow Athenian citizens. Without this participation, a man could not be considered a true citizen man. Lounging and drinking were activities associated with maturity and age (Bremmer, 138). Aristophanes' use of the symposium emphasizes the important role the community. Through this understanding of the community of the city, Dionysus learns that what is best for Athens is what is best for the city's

community. This bonding experience, also seen in the Eleusinian mysteries, highlights the significant part the community plays in the welfare of the city.

Persephone's mixing of wine recalls to memory the choral passage of the frogs where they invoke Dionysus, the god of wine, in connection with the Anthesteria, the festival in honor of Dionysus to celebrate the new batch of wine. "The Anthesteria celebrated the civilizing power of Dionysus experienced in the transformation of the harvested grape into wine, the essential beverage of Greek ritual practice and human social interaction" (Evans, 173). Participation in the Anthesteria and celebrating the making of new wine was one way in which a citizen could identify with the other Athenians. "λιμναῖα κρηνῶν τέκνα,/ ξύναυλον ὕμνων βοὰν/ φθεγξώμεθ᾽, εὔγηρυν ἐμὰν/ ἀοιδάν, κοὰξ κοὰξ,/ ἣν ἀμφὶ Νυσήιον/ Διὸς Διόνυσον ἐν/ λίμναισιν ἰαχήσαμεν,/ ἡνίκ᾽ ὁ κραιπαλόκωμος/ τοῖς ἱεροῖσι Χύτροις/ χωρεῖ κατ᾽ ἐμὸν τέμενος λαῶν ὄχλος" (lines 211-219) (Children of lake and stream,/ let's voice a cry in concert with the pipes,/ our own euphonious song/ – koax koax –/ that once we sounded for the Nysean/ son of Zeus, Dionysus, in/ the Marshes,/ when the hungover throng of revelers/ on holy Pot Day/ reeled through my precinct.) In this choral passage, Dionysus is invoked as the patron of this wine festival. The Pot Day was the day of the festival where the Athenian community joined together in the agora to celebrate and watch the competition of public figures racing to drink the wine (Evans, 176). The chorus of the frogs adds to the imagery of Dionysus' further integration into the Athenian community through the patron of the wine festival.

Having seen what role different elements of Dionysiac worship have in the *Frogs*, it is possible to see Dionysus as taking part in some of his own practices. At the start of the play, he wears the attire attributed to one of his followers (Habash 2002, 3). His costume includes a yellow robe, a lion skin to mimic Herakles, and the boots of a traveler. Herakles makes fun of Dionysus' appearance: "ἀλλα οὐχ οἷός τ᾽εἴμ᾽ ἀποσοβῆσαι τὸν γέλων./ ὁρῶν λεοντῆν ἐπὶ κροκωτῷ κειμένην./ τίς ὁ νοῦς; τί κόθορνος καὶ ῥόπαλον ξυνηλθέτην;" (lines 45-47) (I just can't get rid of this laughter./ It's the sight of that lionskin atop a yellow gown./ What's the idea? Why has a war club joined up with lady's boots?) Because Dionysus wants to travel to Hades just as Herakles did, he must wear a version of the lion skin, the epitomizing symbol of Herakles. Aristophanes' use of the yellow tunic and the traveling boots associated with tragedy are "reminders that the patron god of drama is, in fact, acting in one of his own rites" (Habash 2002, 3). The iconic symbols of Dionysiac worship and tragedy help demonstrate to the audience that Dionysus is joining in as one of the own participants in his cult practices. This use of metatheatre I will discuss in the chapter on the *Thesmophoriazusae*.

Aristophanes' use of elements of Dionysiac cult serves a similar purpose to the use of the Eleusinian mysteries. Just as the initiates conclude the mysteries with the knowledge that prepares them for a better afterlife, participants of Dionysiac cult return to the city more civilized and improved. Those partaking of the Bacchic rites behave in ways that would never be allowed in the daily activity of the city. "Dionysus nurtures civic cohesion by demanding that his worshippers break the normal rules of society- if only for a short while… residents in the *polis* are

encouraged to celebrate life in their city with a different sort of awareness. Dionysus is the god who incites shifts in consciousness" (Evans, 207). Such behavior would not have been tolerated on a typical day in Athens. Participants of the Bacchic rites go "out of the city to the uncultivated mountainside, staying in the open air, wearing animalskins and not cooking meat" (Bowden, 123). These activities break free from every day rules and routines. "Living in cities, in houses, wearing woven cloth and cooking meat are all indications of civilization. They mark humans out as different from animals" (Bowden, 123). The people who participate in Dionysiac ritual have the freedom to abandon the roles dictated by society. In a sense, they can purge themselves of this wild behavior so that they can return to the city humanized and civilized. While the Eleusinian mysteries and Dionysiac worship are performed through different ways, the end result is comparable. Both are about improvement, preparation, and bettering oneself for the next part of life.

The use of these festivals strengthens Aristophanes' advice to the audience. In combination of his initiation and participation in Dionysiac cult practice, Dionysus is able to return to Athens with the knowledge of how to save the city. Dionysus' initiation brings him to the understanding that the city can only flourish once the importance of the communal identity of the city has been recognized. Aristophanes' presentation of some of the Dionysiac cult practices and the Bacchic rites represent the opportunity for men and women to have an outlet to release their wild natures and to remain civilized members of the community of Athens. The use of many religious festivals brings to light the suggestion of the play. Dionysus' participation of and connection with these practices, learns that the way to help Athens is through the

unity of the citizens, along with the acquisition of knowledge. Thus, the combination of these things is how Athens may return to greatness.

The Art of Drama

In addition to the Dionysiac cult practices I previously discussed, I will now focus on another cult practice, the art of drama. In the *Frogs*, drama comes up in various ways. First, the contest of Aeschylus and Euripides parody the City Dionysia, a dramatic festival of Athens. Then I will examine the characters of the poets and their respective poetry. My final step will be to give a close reading of the tragedians' competition to offer some perspective on what Aristophanes is doing. It is vital to remember that the dramatic plays were presented for the community of Athens and were produced by Athens, that drama was a "form of entertainment sponsored and produced by the City for display to the City and nourished by a constant interaction with the *polis* and its values" (Lada-Richards, 12). The significance of the community in Athens cannot be overstated. "The incorporation into the play of some of the most important festivals of Athens is an effort to reaffirm as fully as possible the religious and ritual basis of the unity and solidarity of Athens" (Segal 1961, 222). Aristophanes uses the concept of the dramatic festivals within the contest of the two poets as another example of Greek ritual that contributes to community as it offers an opportunity for citizens to gather together.

The opening of Aeschylus' and Euripides' debate parallels some of the pre-festival rituals found in the Dionysia. The dramatic festival would commence with a grand procession of wealth. These treasures were the spoils of Athenian victory and

war booty over the enemies. The wealth "was a demonstration before the city and its many international visitors of the power of the *polis* of Athens, its role as a force in the Greek world. It was a public display of the success in military and political terms of the city. It used the state festival to glorify the state" (Goldhill, 102). The display of the goods was meant to represent the power and dominance of Athens over the rest of the Mediterranean. In another grand display, the sons of war veterans were paraded through the theater (Goldhill, 106). The sons were taken care of by the city in order to honor their fallen fathers, for men who died in battle were perceived of with the highest honor in the city. To die in the midst of battle was one of the greatest glories a man could have. The displays of both the wealth of the Athenian treasury and the sons of the veterans demonstrate the great power of Athens.

The great verses assessed by the god were similar to the wealth presented before the dramatic competitions. Aeschylus and Euripides recited the best lines of their plays in order to show off to the Athenian audience their expertise. When the verses of the poets can be compared to the wealth, they also easily represent the two tragedies in competition at the festival. The Athenians displayed the tribute in order to be an imposing force against their foreign guests. "The festival of the Great Dionysia is in the full sense of the expression a civic occasion, a city festival…The Great Dionysia is a public occasion endowed with a special force or belief. This is fundamentally and essentially a festival of the democratic *polis*" (Goldhill, 144). Aristophanes demonstrates to his Athenian audience of the great strength of the community through replicating the dramatic festivals on stage. His showcasing of a

ritual that emphasizes Athens' power may have been an attempt to inspire this feeling of strength in community once more.

At the beginning of the theatrical contest, Dionysus orders for a sacrifice and tells the poets to pray to their gods. At the beginning of any religious festival, it was necessary to make the requisite sacrifices. Dionysus calls out for a black lamb to be slaughtered to begin the contest of the underworld (lines 847-848). Another aspect of the City Dionysia included the praising of certain individuals who had benefited the city. Demosthenes described this part of the ceremony as "connected to the projection and promotion of civic duties and civic self-image" (Goldhill, 105). The reading of the names highlights the men who had made an impact on the city and Aristophanes uses this concept by calling attention to certain political individuals, Cleophon in particular. In comedy, these direct references are often found in the parabases when the poet speaks directly to the audience. Stabs at Cleophon and other political officials can be found in the parabasis of the *Frogs*, but Aristophanes leaves the audience with one lasting insult when Hades sends off Dionysus and Aeschylus on their return home, "ἄγε δὴ χαίρων, Αἰσχύλε, χώρει,/ καὶ σῷζε πόλιν τὴν ἡμετέραν/ γνώμαις ἀγαθαῖς, καὶ παίδευσον/ τοὺς ἀνοήτους. πολλοὶ δ᾽ εἰσιν./ καὶ δὸς τουτὶ Κλεοφῶντι φέρων/… καὶ φράξ᾽ αύτοῖς/ ταχέως ἥκειν ὡς ἐμὲ δευρὶ/ καὶ μὴ μέλλειν" (lines 1500-1509) (Fare you well then, Aeschylus./ Save our city/ with your fine counsels,/ and educate/ the thoughtless people; there are many of them./ And take this and give it to Cleophon/… and tell them/ hurry on down here to me,/ without delay.) The custom of heralding certain people who had assisted the city is thus parodied by Aristophanes. Here it is possible to see an individual performing

in a way that would make the city better. As a leading character in the play, Dionysus is the individual who has the idea to return a poet to save Athens. He has taken a course of action that would benefit the community.

Once the sacrifices have been made and the presentations of wealth and veteran children have finished during the City Dionysia, the dramatic competition may begin. Aeschylus and Euripides represent the plays in competition while Dionysus acts as their judge (Segal 1961, 222). Hades instructs Dionysus to be the judge of the contest "ἀγῶνα ποιεῖν αὐτίκα μάλα καὶ κρίσιν/ κἄλεγχον αὐτοῖν τῆς τέχνης" (lines 785-786) (To hold a contest immediately,/ a test and trial of the artistry of both.) Dionysus is the logical choice to judge the competition because he is the patron god of theater. He has watched all of the plays from the poets and is the appropriate choice to determine the victor because of his experience. Once the winners have been announced, at the end of the day in the dramatic festivals of Athens, the victors receive a prize. In the case of Dionysus' judgement, the winner has the opportunity to return home.

Having discussed the events of the dramatic competition, it is necessary to examine the ways in which the poets taught their fellow citizens. The comic poets use choral parabases as way of citing their authority to instruct the city. "τὸν ἱερὸν χορὸν δίκαιόν ἐστι χρηστὰ τῇ πόλει/ ξυμπαραινεῖν καὶ διδάσκειν" (lines 686-687) (It's right and proper for the sacred chorus/ to help give good advice and instruction to the city). It is interesting that Aristophanes uses the device of the setting of the dramatic competition within a play presented at the Lenaea, the winter dramatic festival. This added emphasis of the theatrical setting helps support the opinion

presented from the poet. Euripides too states the role the poet plays for the Athenian community when Aeschylus asks why a poet should be admired, "δεξιότητος καὶ νουθεσίας, ὅτι βελτίους τε ποιοῦμεν/ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν" (lines 1008-1009) (Skill and good counsel, and because we make/ people better members of their communities.) With the choral parabasis, Aristophanes reminds everyone of the play's context as a ritual performance that allows him to teach the Athenians. The parabasis of the *Frogs* helps to emphasize the role Aristophanes is playing as a poet.

The characters of the play identify that they are within a play in order to highlight the fact that their verses are meant to instruct the audience. "The second half of the play shows Aristophanes' renewed consciousness of the quality of the tragic and comic poet in their educative function…as teachers of their polis" (Segal 1961, 230). Aristophanes' method of teaching was to present new and controversial ideas to his audience with his plays usually concluding with a restoration of order. For example in *Lysistrata*, the women take over the Acropolis and gain control of the city in order to force the men to stop fighting. The play concludes with peace and the women returning home and the men in charge of the city once again. In the *Frogs*, Aristophanes can instruct the audience with his portrayal of the characters of Aeschylus and Euripides.

I will now look at the poets themselves and their characteristics in order to show how they support what Aristophanes has been saying throughout the play. Aeschylus was considered the old fashioned and conventional poet. This is represented in part by his strong association to Demeter. Demeter may be seen as traditional through her associations with agriculture and grain and fertility within the

city. To an agrarian society, Demeter would have played a significant role in ritual practices. At the start of the competition, Aeschylus prays to Demeter in hope of victory (lines 886-887). In addition, Eleusinian vocabulary is used to describe Aeschylus. Words such as revered, august, holy, and highly honored are used both for Aeschylus as well as Demeter (Lada-Richards, 247). Euripides criticizes Aeschylus' introductions to his plays because "πρώτιστα μὲν γὰρ ἕνα τιν᾽ ἂν καθῖσεν ἐγκαλύψας,/ Ἀχιλλέα τιν᾽ ἢ Νιόβην, τὸ πρόσωπον οὐχὶ δεικνύς,/ πρόσχημα τῆς τραγῳδίας, γρύζοντας οὐδὲ τουτί" (lines 911-913) (He'd always start by having some solitary character sit there muffled up,/ say Achilles or Niobe, not letting us see their face/ (a poor excuse for a tragic drama!) or hear even this much of a peep.) According to Euripides, Aeschylus often begins his dramas with a concealed, silent figure. This image also brings to mind Demeter's mourning scene in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*. She covers herself with a veil and sits silently on a rock (Lada-Richards, 248). A connection can be seen between Aeschylus and Demeter.

He is thought to have come from Eleusis so it may be that he would pay homage to his homeland in his poetry (Lada-Richards, 253). This tie between Aeschylus and Eleusis is one of the reasons Aeschylus represents tradition. Moreover, he writes about the glory of warfare and hoplites as common themes in his tragedies. The older generation revered the honor of the hoplites who won the battle of Marathon. Aeschylus capitalizes on this in his plays. Euripides favors the younger generation. As the genre of tragedy evolved, so did the art of warfare. By the fifth century, naval fighting became a much more glorious means of battle (Goldhill, 108-109).

This changing of the times can be found in Euripides' tragic genre. Euripides tells Aeschylus that he took Aeschylus' form of tragedy and make improvements on it (lines 954-979). While Aeschylus wrote about old heroes and their glory in war, Euripides kept up with the contemporary fashion. Euripides' poetry was considered more radical; he challenges religion and portrays leading female characters performing hideous acts, like Phaedra's suicide and Medea's infanticide. Also by citing the negative actions of certain politicians in comparison to the playwrights, Aristophanes is able to demonstrate his negative opinion of Euripides. In particular, Aristophanes claims that Cleon and Socrates were ruining the city much like Euripides and Agathon were destroying the art of poetry (Henderson 1990, 292). Thus, in the *Frogs*, newness and change are considered bad while the old ways and tradition are highly revered. Dionysus' selection of Aeschylus as the winner proves Aristophanes' suggestion that the old ways are what is best for Athens.

Like the Eleusinian mysteries, the importance of watching something was naturally the central aspect during the dramatic competitions. In both settings, the presentation of performances of the plays is meant as a means of instruction. The audience visually learns from watching the performance. Aristophanes shows his advice in this comedy, a comedy that is meant for a festival that highlights the glory of the community of Athens. "Aristophanes seems to sense the imminent collapse of Athens, and tries to make a final defense of an art-form, which more than any other, is inseparable from its communal setting" (Segal 1961, 230). The golden age of Athens came to a close at the end of the fifth century as other cities like Sparta and Thebes came into power. It is safe to say that the morale amongst the Athenians was

quite low at the end of the century. Aristophanes was a master at manipulating the genre of comedy to make it relevant to the social context of the time. The presentation of the *Frogs* at the Lenaea allowed Aristophanes to use a more Athenian topical subject because the Lenaea was attended by mainly Athenians. It is impossible to suggest that all the audience members would have walked away from the play thinking the same thing, even though they all watched the same performance. But perhaps they would have recognized their collective identity and understood the significance of the community that Aristophanes was presenting to them. The City Dionysia and the parodic festival in the play highlight the great power Athens has as a collective city.

In this parody of the Dionysia, Dionysus acts as the judge between the tragedians. The skill of the poets is lost on Dionysus as he judges the lines one by one. He misses the main point of each verse. When Aeschylus makes fun of Euripides' for his predictable meter by adding on the line "ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν" (line 1208) (lost his little bottle of oil) to the end of Euripides' lines, Dionysus, rather than commenting on the effectiveness of Aeschylus' point, he jokes about how Euripides should buy the little bottle of oil from Aeschylus (line 1235). Because of his inability to adequately judge the skill of the poets, Dionysus turns to asking the tragedians for the best advice of the city. Dionysus is now informing the audience of the "social role of drama" (Habash 2002, 13). As the patron of drama, Dionysus is advocating the role drama plays in the city, to instruct the city. Because the plays are written for the Athenian audience, Dionysus thus focuses on the "utilitarian" use of the dramas to instruct rather than the amount of pleasure given to the audience

(Habash 2002, 14). Dionysus judges Aeschylus' answer on saving the city to be the most useful as he comments on the use of the good men in Athens. Euripides, who gives a well-spoken answer, gives a practically useless answer.

The best method to save the city, according to Aristophanes, is stated by the chorus in the parabasis and again by Aeschylus in the competition. "Athens needs to have good, honest men as its leaders. Here, Aristophanes demonstrates that he is a poet full of δεξιότης καὶ νουθεσία, whose aim is didactic: to make men better in their communities" (Habash 2002, 15). Aristophanes' use of the setting of the dramatic festival helps to portray his suggestion of a return to old Athenian thought through continual use of the old traditions and rituals. It is important to remember that the role of comedy was to mock and parody every day life. The appeal of comedy was that it made fun of what was normal and what was real. The message of the poet was quite serious, but presented through a lighthearted medium. Because the role of poets was meant to instruct, the choice of Aeschylus was significant in that the choice of Aeschylus is what will improve Athens. Perhaps the general idea of the strength of the community is what Aristophanes was hoping to emphasize in order to boost Athenian morale at the end of the Peloponnesian war.

The turning point of the play is the great contest between Aeschylus and Euripides. Thus, a close reading of the text is necessary. This will demonstrate the role Aeschylus plays in aiding the suggestion from Aristophanes. Dionysus judges the poets based on four criteria: their prologues, the physical weight of their lines, their opinions on Alcibiades, and the advice the poets give for the city's salvation. Thus the competition truly begins with Euripides asking Aeschylus to recite his prologue from

the *Oresteia* (line 1124). Immediately Euripides finds fault with Aeschylus' verses. He remarks upon Aeschylus' redundancy. "'ἥκω γὰρ εἰς γῆν,' φησί, 'καὶ κατέρχομαι'./ ἥκειν δὲ ταὐτόν ἐστι τῷ κατέρχομαι" (lines 1156-1157) (I've come back to this land," he says, "and return"; but "coming back to" is the same as "returning.) Euripides cites more examples of repetitiveness in Aeschylus' prologue. Aeschylus retorts by mocking Euripides' predictable meter. "ποιεῖς γὰρ οὕτως ὥστ᾽ ἐναρμόζειν ἅπαν,/ καὶ κῳδάριον καὶ ληκύθιον καὶ θυλάκιον,/ ἐν τοῖς ἰαμβείοισι" (lines 1202-1204) (The way you compose, any such object/ can be tagged on to your iambics:/ "tuft of wool," "oil bottle," "little sack.") Perhaps Aeschylus suggests that Euripides is less of a poet since he cannot write verses with varied meter. There is no clear winner from this round of competition.

The next method for testing their skill is chosen by Aeschylus, "ἐπὶ τὸν σταθμὸν γὰρ αὐτὸν ἀγαγεῖν βούλομαι,/ ὅπερ ἐξελέγξει τὴν ποίησιν νῷν μόνον./ τὸ γὰρ βάρος νὼ βασανιεῖ τῶν ῥημάτων" (lines 1365-1367) (What I'd like to do is take him to the scales./ That's the only real test of our poetry;/ the weight of our utterances will be the decisive proof.) Dionysus agrees to weighing the lines. It is important to note that not long into the competition, Dionysus looks to the poets to lead the contest and give advice on how to judge themselves. As instructors to the city, Dionysus is bowing down to the authoritative role of poets. Once Aeschylus proposed the use of scales, Dionysus replies, "εἴπερ γε δεῖ καὶ τοῦτέ με" (lines 1367) (If that's what I really must do.) Dionysus begins to listen to the poets as soon as they begin to advise him. Euripides and Aeschylus weigh their lines three times and each time Aeschylus wins. The first test is between Aeschylus' use of a river and

Euripides' use of wings (lines 1386-1387). The second trial matches up Euripides' use of death and Aeschylus' persuasion (lines 1394-1395). The final round consists of Aeschylus' use of chariots and corpses and Euripides' iron (lines 1405-1406). Dionysus judges that each of Aeschylus' verses consists of material with more literal weight. After this round, Dionysus begins to favor Aeschylus more so than Euripides.

Dionysus, however, is still unable to make a decision and wishes to end the competition. It is Hades that forces Dionysus to ask the questions that will ultimately result in Aeschylus' victory. After debating the skill of the poets, he then asks for their advice on Alcibiades. In 415 BCE, Alcibiades was accused of profaning the Eleusinian mysteries and mutilating statues of the herms. Alcibiades, leading the expedition to Sicily, left Athens before he could be cleared of the charges. Thucydides writes that a ship was waiting upon Alcibiades' arrival in Sicily to return him to Athens in order to close the case (6.53.1-3). Alcibiades, knowing that he could not return to Athens, fled the ship and headed to Sparta. And as if to add insult to injury, Alcibiades later left Sparta and headed to Persia, an even greater enemy of Athens. With this knowledge of the crimes that Alcibiades has committed, Dionysus asks the poets what they think of him.

Euripides is quick to answer that he hates anyone "ὅστις ὠφελεῖν πάτραν/ βραδὺς φανεῖται, μεγάλα δὲ βλάπτειν ταχύς,/ καὶ πόριμον αὑτῷ, τῇ πόλει δ᾽ ἀμηχανον" (lines 1427-1429) (who will prove to be slow/ to aid his country, quick to do her great harm,/ resourceful for himself, incompetent for the city.) Euripides explicitly states that anyone who does not help his country is not good. Aeschylus responds: "οὐ χρὴ λέοντος σκύμνον ἐν πόλει τρέφειν. μάλιστα μὲν λέοντα μὴ 'ν

πόλει τρέφειν. ἢν δ᾽ ἐκτραφῇ τις, τοῖς τρόποις ὑπηρετεῖν" (lines 1431-1432) (It's not good to rear a lion cub in the city. It's best to rear no lion in the city. If you do raise one to maturity, then cater to its ways.) He uses a metaphor to explain that the city should not let someone like Alcibiades come to power, but if he does manage to gain control, the city should not anger him. Dionysus still cannot make his decision because "ὁ μὲν σοφῶς γὰρ εἶπεν, ὁ δ᾽ ἕτερος σαφῶς" (line 1434) (One spoke sagely, the other clearly.) From the text it is unclear to whom Dionysus refers as being sage and the other being clear. I believe that Dionysus is describing Aeschylus as sage and Euripides as clear. During the first round of the competition, when judging the contests, Euripides points out that Aeschylus does not use clear language. He says that Aeschylus fills his text with "στοιβὴν…τοῦ λογοῦ" (lines 1178-1179) (irrelevant padding.) Thus if Aeschylus has already been criticized for fluffing his poetry, then it is logical that he would not give the clear advice, but rather the sage advice. By process of elimination, if Aeschylus has given the sage advice, then Euripides would have spoken clearly.

The final question posed to the poets is about the future of Athens, "ἀλλ᾽ ἔτι μίαν γνώμην ἑκάτερος εἴπατον περὶ τῆς πόλεως ἥντιν᾽ ἔχετον σωτηρίαν" (lines 1435-1436) (So each of you tell me one more idea that you have about the city's salvation.) Euripides replies with a battle tactic, he suggests to distract the enemies by pouring vinegar in their eyes (lines 1437-1441). The text following this question has been subject to much debate. There were two performances of the *Frogs*, a rare occurrence, and the text that remains may possibly be a compilation from both instances (Dover, 226). Some scholars suggest that Euripides is given a chance to

give a second opinion and that Aeschylus does not speak at all (Rosen, 307). But they tend to disagree as to which lines are spoken by Aeschylus and Euripides. I agree with Dover's distribution of the contested lines 1435 through 1466. Dover designates these lines to Aeschylus because Aeschylus must give a response to Dionysus' inquiry. There is no debate as to Euripides' response. The contest "is based on σοφία, in which Aeschylus emerges supreme. Dionysus wishes the sentiment of 1443 to be expressed ἀμαθέστερον, i.e. less σοφῶς and 'more clearly', i.e. in a manner less like that of Aeschylus, whose lack of clarity has been criticized" (Dover, 226). Thus because Dionysus complains that the previous few lines were spoken unclearly, they should be attributed to Aeschylus because Aeschylus is known in the *Frogs* for being an unclear writer. Then it would follow that Aeschylus speaks the following lines, attempting to clear up his argument, with Euripides having already given his answer.

Aeschylus responds to Dionysus' question by saying that Athens should no longer trust the current citizens in charge of the city and that it is best to do the opposite (lines 1446-1448). Aeschylus criticizes the people who are currently in power in Athens. It is necessary to look to the people of either the past or the future. To look back to the stable past of Athens may have made a greater impact than looking towards the frightening suggestion of Athens' future in the postwar era. Therefore, Aeschylus' advice correlates with Aristophanes' opinion on traditional values. By traditional, I mean characteristic of old practices and customs. Aeschylus' conventional opinions serve to support Aristophanes' teaching of the importance of old values. The continual participation of some of the ritual practices I have

discussed, a heightened sense of awareness of the community, and a change of politics will allow for Athens to flourish.

The poets have a clear role as teachers of the polis. Aristotle in the *Poetics* suggests that,

> The difference between a historian and a poet is not that one writes in prose and the other in verse… The real difference is this, that one tells what happened and the other what might happen. For this reason poetry is something more scientific and serious than history, because poetry tends to give general truths while history gives particular facts. By a "general truth" I meant the sort of thing that certain type of man will do or say either probably or necessarily. (1451b6-1451b10)[4]

The poet suggests these scenes as instructive because they are meant for the audience to reflect upon. But Aristophanes is able to outdo the tragedian by using the tragic poets in his comedy. Aristophanes raises himself above Aeschylus and Euripides. He includes lines of tragedy within his comedy and forces the tragedians to give explicit advice. Aristophanes makes the tragedians be a part of comedy. He may even be humbling the distinguished genre of drama through the competition between Aeschylus and Euripides. It is hard to imagine the poets so revered when Euripides whines over whose lines literally weigh the heaviest. Aristophanes continues to mock tragedy when Dionysus cannot even keep up with the debate as the tragedians led themselves through the contest. The parabasis of Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, performed in 425 BCE, establishes the role of comedy.

> For doing that our poet deserves a rich reward at your hands,
> And also for showing what democracy meant for the peoples of the allied states.
> That is why they will come now from those states bringing you their tribute,
> Eager to see the superb poet
> Who took the risk of talking justice to the Athenians.

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[4] Translation by Hamilton Fyfe, 1995.

> So far has the fame of his boldness spread
> That even the king, when he questioned the Spartans' embassy,
> First asked them which side was more powerful in ships,
> And then which side received plenty of abuse from this poet:
> "For these people," he said, "have been made much better men,
> and will win the war decisively with him for an adviser." (lines 641-651)[5]

Aristophanes here emphasizes to the audience that he has always spoken the truth to Athens and even attracted the attention of the king who recognized the role the poet plays in advising his fellow citizens. Aristophanes has taken his genre farther than the tragedians pushed their dramas. The comedian can outdo the tragedians in their usefulness to the city. Aristophanes has given advice to his fellow Athenians through use of customary religious festivals and a culminating discussion between the tragedians in which Dionysus realizes that Aeschylus can help Athens the most all within the context of a comedy.

The Audience

While I have demonstrated the kind of advice given in the play, it is necessary to see if the *Frogs* was well received. In fact, the Athenian audience seemed to take a great liking to the play. It won the competition in the Lenaea the first year it was performed and was granted a repeat performance (Arnott, 19-20). Since most productions were only performed once in Athens, it was a rare event for a play to be a given a second presentation. In fact, the audience's reception to the play was an important factor in the judges' decision of victory (Csapo and Slater, 157). The poets often included "commands and admonitions" to the audience and judges to gain their

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[5] All translations of the *Acharnians* cited by Alan H. Sommerstein, 1980.

favor (Csapo and Slater, 160). In fact, the audience of the *Frogs* may have even experienced their own initiation while at the dramatic festivals.

Following Lada-Richards' pattern of initiation, I suggest that Dionysus' initiation provides a model for the audience to experience their own figurative initiation. The audience too goes through their own period of separation, liminality, and reintegration into the city. Separation from reality for the spectator begins during the commencement of the Lenaea. The context of a festival takes the Athenian citizen out of his every day activities and changes the regular running of the city. Celebration of religious festivals allowed the everday rules dictated by society to be ignored. In the Panathenaic festival, for instance, women could be the head priestesses and slaves and foreigners could participate in the great procession (Lewis, 26).

In the context of the dramatic festivals, the audience's initiation is primed by the fact that they are already situated within the setting of a religious festival in honor of Dionysus. Having completed the separation from the "original environment" once the audience arrives at the theater- just as the initiates travelling to Eleusis- they begin their transition into initiates (Lada-Richards, 46). Perhaps the greatest similarity between being at the theater and participating in the rites of Demeter at Eleusis is the importance of watching some type of spectacle. While it is quite unknown what happened in the Telesterion, many sources do refer to the "*ta dromena, ta deiknumena* and *ta legomena*, 'things done, things shown and things said' (Bowden, 38)." It has been suggested that the initiated were exposed to sacred objects were shown or watched a reenactment of the abduction of Persephone. They may have even seen a light at the end to emphasize the conclusion of their initiation (Foley

1994, 70). The importance of viewing is without a doubt present in the dramatic festivals. During the Lenaea, the Athenians flock to the theater while during the Dionysia Greeks from all over the Mediterranean come to Athens to watch the dramas and competitions. While the initiates of the Eleusinian mysteries are possibly watching a version of the myth of Persephone, the audience of the theater watches dramas whose plotlines range from the abduction of Helen to the incorporation of Dionysus into the Greek pantheon. This experience of watching a performance is the defining moment of initiation.

For the audience of the dramatic competitions, watching the plays is the journey of their own initiation where they receive instruction from the poets. In the *Frogs*, the audience learns from Aristophanes how to best help their city. In order to do so, Athens must return to a traditional way of life, as represented by the festivals. The audience received this instruction through following along on Dionysus' initiation and journey to the underworld. Perhaps initiation of the audience is not exclusive to the performance of the *Frogs*. All plays take their viewers on a journey into a new life as led by the characters of the show. Dramatic presentations are a time during which the poets explore challenges to the conventions of society while the audience internalizes new interpretations by means of watching the production. The audience takes a ritual voyage through the course of every play and leaves the performance reflecting on what they just watched. They return to the every day pattern of life, but perhaps still thinking about the play they most recently saw. The *Frogs* takes this imagery to a deeper level. If the theme of initiation is already present in the context of a dramatic production, Aristophanes further emphasizes the

importance of this ritual journey with Dionysus acquiring his instructive knowledge at the conclusion of his ritual initiation.

At the conclusion of the mysteries, the initiates are with knowledge of a better life in the afterworld; by the end of the dramatic productions, the audience is taught how make the city better. The message given to the initiates remains unknown. However for the audience of the theater, some of the play's suggestions seem quite clear: break from tradition leads to disorder. Previous historical experience has shown that disregard of social customs and religious ceremonies results in pandemonium. Thirty years earlier, Thucydides wrote about the disregard for traditional religious rituals when Athens was struck with plague.

> All previously observed funeral customs were confounded, and burial was haphazard, any way that people could manage. Many were driven to shameful means of disposal for lack of friends to help them, so many of their friends already dead: they made use of other people's funeral lyres, either putting their own dead on a pyre constructed by others and quickly settling light to it, or bringing a corpse to a pyre already lit, throwing it on top of the other body in the flames, and then running away. On other respects too the plague was the beginning of increased lawlessness in the city (2.52-2.53).[6]

Thucydides comments on the complete disorder in the city because of the neglect for these funeral customs. For example, while it was customary to have a separate funeral pyre for each body, the turmoil of the time results in people's neglect of these practices. Fear of the plague and destruction from the war causes the Athenians to act in outrageous ways. The terror of immediate death may have set off the abandonment of these rituals. Aristophanes' suggestion of keeping alive customary religious

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[6] Translated by Martin Hammond and P. J. Rhodes, 2009.

practices and returning to the old way of doing things may have been comforting advice to the audience.

Thus, going to the plays may be seen as a comparable experience to participating in the mysteries at Eleusis. The audience is able to enjoy the abandon and freedom that is sought after in Dionysiac worship by exploring an altered reality in the context of the theater. Then when Dionysus is given advice to save the city, the audience too may internalize this teaching. That the audience can experience the same things as the characters on stage were presenting shows what a deep impact Aristophanes tried to make on his audience. "Aristophanes believes that theater can change what people do, not just what they feel or think" (Slater 1999, 366). If the audience can empathize with what is happening on stage, then they can employ the advice and criticisms given by the poet to their own lives.

Final Thoughts

What Aristophanes does with these rituals in the play is new and unique. It is not the rituals alone that will help Athens. The Athenians celebrated the festivals before the war, during the war, and after the war. While the continual participation of these rituals is necessary for Athens, there is more to it. There needs to be more awareness of the community of citizens, to unify and solidify it. With these things in mind, the final piece is the politics- a change in the government needs to be made. The uniqueness of the *Frogs* of other Aristophanic comedy is the unusual emphasis on the combination of these three factors. Their union will make the beneficial difference in Athens. It may be utopian, but is something for which to reach.

Chapter 2: The *Thesmophoriazusae*

The festival of the Thesmophoria is the setting for Aristophanes' play *Thesmophoriazusae*. The play was produced in 411 BCE during the Dionysia, seven years before the *Frogs* (Henderson 2000, 444). It takes places during the festival into which the tragedian Euripides and his relative decide to intrude. This women's only festival, in honor of Demeter and Persephone, occurred in the fall. The women of Athens gathered together for three days to worship the two goddesses (Evans, 111). The first day of the festival, called the Anodos, began with the women, wives of Athenian citizens, leaving their homes and setting up camp, either in a sanctuary near the Acropolis or besides the Pnyx. The second day, called the Nesteia, the day of mourning and fasting for Demeter's loss of Persephone, is the day in which the play takes place, "ἐστὶ Θεσμοφορίων ἡ μέση" (line 80) (it's the middle day of the Thesmophoria.)[7] The final day of the festival, the Kalligeneia, celebrated the reunion of mother and daughter.

The purpose of the festival was to gain fertility both in the household and in the family's land (Evans, 113). The rites "involve handling objects associated with fertility: snakes, male 'forms', pine branches, and piglets. Models of female genitalia may also have been worshipped" (Habash 1997, 22-23). In order to take part in the Thesmophoria, there is a required fee. Thus it is necessary for the husband to consent to the women's participation since he would be the one to pay the fee (Habash 1997, 22). In the agrarian society of ancient Greece, a festival meant to promote fertility and

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[7] All translations of the *Thesmophoriazusae* cited by Jeffrey Henderson, 2000.

procreation, would have been an important one. In fact, the Thesmophoria was a festival celebrated throughout the country.

The annual festival changes the general order of the city for three days. Men and women switch social roles as the Thesmophoria occurres. The gathering of women seems to resemble the daily meeting of men's council and assembly. "The exclusive admission of citizen-wives at the festival and the election of official magistrates offered a rare opportunity to women…as members of a religio-political association" (Tzanetou, 334). When the women gather together for the Thesmphoria, two women from each deme are elected as the leaders of the festival. These women are called *archousai*, the female version of *archontes* (leaders). "The designation *archousai* in effect made the annual all-female Thesmophoria an alternative assembly- an officially sanctioned gathering that mirrored the activities of the normal male political gatherings" (Evans, 112). That women gather in a religious context was not shocking to Greek men. It was common practice for women to take part in religious festivals. Their daily life, however, was confined to the private realm of the home. Pericles' Funeral Oration in the middle of the fifth century highlights the fact that "respectable women should have no public reputation, whether for good or bad" (Foley 1981, 130). During the Thesmphoria, the women have the opportunity to participate in a public part of life, the men needed to remain at home in the domestic world, where women normally stay. "Without their mothers, wives, and daughters to run the household, men were left home alone to look after the children and slaves and keep things running smoothly" (Evans, 115). Men were required to take on the roles of the women, while the women got to enjoy the public freedom of men.

Gender reversals are the premise for the play. At the opening of the play, the women are in the middle of the festival, thus Euripides recognizes the power they have in highlighting the case against him. He dresses up his relative as a woman to sneak him into the festival and argue in his favor. During the Thesmophoria, the women act as if they are in the men's assembly. Their behavior brings up the subject of mimesis. I will be discussing the mimesis by different characters in the *Thesmophoriazusae*. In Greek, μίμησις is generally translated as imitation. Women had a reputation of being clever and deceitful. "Woman is the mimetic creature par excellence, ever since Hesiod's Zeus created her as an imitation with the aid of the other artisan gods and adorned her with a deceptive allure" (Zeitlin 1990, 85). Woman is made as a means of deception to punish Prometheus after tricking Zeus. Beginning with Pandora, there has always been a mystery about women. She was fashioned by all the gods and we associate her with the beginning of evils in the world. In the Pythagorean table of opposites, women have been identified with "unlimited, even, plurality, left, curved, darkness, bad, and oblong" (Foley 1981, 142). Imitation and disguise fit in with these attributes. During the Thesmophoria, the women imitate several of men's actions in their pseudo-assembly.

In the *Thesmophoriazusae*, in addition to the women, most of the characters participate in some form of mimesis. I will look at the characters of Agathon, Euripides' relative, Euripides, and the group of women at the festival to examine the depth of their mimesis of the opposite gender. "The products of mimesis have a significant capacity to shape the ways in which people view and judge the world, and can therefore reveal things about the nature of the human mind itself" (Halliwell

2002, 27). Thus, I will see what the mimesis performed by the different characters has to say about gender and gender roles in ancient Greek society. It is necessary first to assess what mimesis means.

Mimesis has a more complex definition than simply imitation. There can be both an external and internal kind of mimesis, one that takes place at the physical level and another that occurs more within the mind. The Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World defines mimesis as a kind of literary technique, “the study and conspicuous deployment of features recognizably characteristic of a canonical author’s style or content, so as to define one’s own generic affiliation” (364). The dictionary lists a few methods of imitation, “memorization, excerpting, paraphrase, translation, commentary, variation of theme or style, comparison” (364). Thus the literary definition of mimesis describes it as reuse through influence of the original text. In the *Thesmophoriazusae*, mimesis is not merely imitating when it comes to replicating actions and behaviors.

But mimesis on a personal rather than literary level comes from a more internal place. In the *Republic*, Plato suggests that imitation is a series of “representations of human experience (with the perceptions, attitudes, and values, that belong to them) that are embedded in a highly mind-*dependent* reality” (Halliwell 2002, 25). Some criteria of imitation include: visual resemblance, behavioral imitation, and impersonation (Halliwell 2002, 15). Not only is there a physical imitation that needs to occur, but also something more internal needs to happen. Thoughts, actions, and behaviors of another person must occur instinctively. Goethe states that it “must rise above mere illusions” (Halliwell 2002, 3). A character

performing mimesis needs to be able to replicate a person's disposition and personality. In the *Thesmophoriazusae*, Aristophanes explored all different elements of imitation through his characters' cross dressings and parodying of past Euripidean tragedies. He uses costume changes, differences in speech, and adapting behaviors to highlight his characters' imitation. I will demonstrate that Agathon has undergone the greatest mimesis in comparison to the other characters. The inability of the other characters of the *Thesmophoriazusae* to perform mimesis indicates the depth of change necessary to result in successful imitation. After examining Agathon's mimesis, I will then look at Euripides' relative, Euripides, and the women of the Thesmophoria to see how triumphant their mimesis is in comparison to Agathon's.

Agathon

The play begins with Euripides and his relative paying a visit to the famous tragedian, Agathon. Agathon effectively introduces the theme of mimesis found throughout the play. For Euripides visits Agathon in order that Agathon may dress up as a woman and sneak into the Thesmophoria, "ἐκκλησιάσοντ᾽ ἐν ταῖς γυναιξὶ χἂν δέῃ/ λέξονθ᾽ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ/… λάθρᾳ, στολὴν γυναικὸς ἠμφιεσμένον" (lines 90-92) (to attend the women's assembly and say whatever's/ necessary on my behalf/…in disguise, dressed up like a woman.) Thus, Euripides requires someone capable enough to imitate a woman successfully and convince the women not to kill the poet. Known as an effeminate playwright, Agathon would be a reasonable choice for Euripides' mission. I shall examine the nature of Agathon's mimesis to see how far he takes it physically and internally.

Euripides and his relative first see Agathon in the midst of composing a tragedy, explained to them by his slave. “κάμπτει δὲ νέας ἁψῖδας ἐπῶν,/ τὰ δὲ τορνεύει, τὰ δὲ κολλομελεῖ,/ καὶ γνωμοτυπεῖ κἀντονομάζει/ καὶ κηροχυτεῖ καὶ γογγύλλει/ καὶ χοανεύει” (lines 53-57) (He’s warping fresh strakes of verses;/ some he planes down, others he couples,/ minting aphorisms, swapping meanings,/ channeling wax and rounding the mold/ and funneling metal.) Agathon appears, dressed in feminine costume and practicing a tragic chorus. He most likely wears a pale mask to designate his effeminacy (Given, 42). Because Agathon plays a female role temporarily, he must look like a woman. Based on the relative’s questioning of Agathon, it is possible to construct what else Agathon is wearing.

> ποδαπὸς ὁ γύννις; τίς πάτρα; τίς ἡ στολή;
> τίς ἡ τάραξις τοῦ βίου; τί βάρβιτος
> λαλεῖ κροκωτῷ; τί δὲ λυρὰ κεκυφάλῳ;
> τί λήκυθος καὶ στρόφιον; ὡς οὐ ξύμφορα.
> τίς δαὶ κατόπτρου καὶ ξίφους κοινωνία;
> σύ τ᾽ αὐτός, ὦ παῖ, πότερον ὡς ἀνὴρ τρέφει;
> καὶ ποῦ πέος; ποῦ χλαῖνα; ποῦ Λακωνικαί;
> ἀλλ᾽ὡς γυνὴ δῆτ᾽; εἶπα ποῦ τὰ τιτθία; (lines 136-143)
>
> Whence comes this femme? What’s its homeland? What’s its dress?
> What confoundment of living is this? What has a lute
> to chat about with a party dress? Or a lyre with a hairnet?
> Here’s an oil flask and a brassiere: how ill-fitting!
> And what’s this society of mirror and sword?
> And you yourself, child, are you being raised male?
> Then where’s your dick? Your suit? Your Spartan shoes?
> All right, say you’re a woman: then where are your tits?

When the relative listed the different objects, the audience would have been able to see to what he was referring. “The audience must have *seen* what a character was referring to, that therefore some kind of stage business transpired to reinforce the text” (Stehle, 378). Agathon, then, has to appear in a woman’s dress (κροκωτῷ),

hairnet (κεκυφάλῳ), brassiere (στρόφιον), and mirror (κατόπτρου). The relative is shocked by Agathon's appearance and struggles to understand him as he sees Agathon surrounded by both masculine and feminine accoutrements. Euripides, as well, describes Agathon's physical form, "σὺ δ᾽εὐπρόσωπος, λευκός, ἐξυρημένος,/ γυναικόφωνος, ἁπαλός, εὐπρεπὴς ἰδεῖν" (lines 191-192) (You, by contrast, are good-looking, pale, clean shaven,/ soft, presentable, and you sound like a woman.) Euripides gives a full list of characteristics that are used to describe a woman's physical appearance. Agathon is also missing the comic phallus, suggesting that his lack of male genitalia makes him effeminate. Agathon, then, performs a physical form of mimesis. He has adopted feminine external characteristics, in costume and accessories, to take on the persona of a woman.

Agathon's reason for such behavior is that it helps him to become a better and more truthful writer (Stehle, 378). I will first examine Agathon's physical mimesis and then his deeper mimesis through his behaviors.

> ἐγὼ δὲ τὴν ἐσθῆθ᾽ ἅμα τῇ γνώμῃ φορῶ.
> χρὴ γὰρ ποιητὴν ἄνδρα πρὸς τὰ δράματα
> ἃ δεῖ ποιεῖν, πρὸς ταῦτα τοὺς τρόπους ἔχειν.
> αὐτίκα γυναικεῖ᾽ ἢν ποιῇ τις δράματα,
> μετουσίαν δεῖ τῶν τρόπων τὸ σῶμ᾽ ἔχειν
> … ἄνδρεῖα δ᾽ ἢν ποιῇ τις, ἐν τῷ σώματι
> ἔνεσθ᾽ ὑπάρχον τοῦθ᾽. ἃ δ᾽ οὐ κεκτήμεθα,
> μίμησις ἤδη ταύτα συνθηρεύεται. (lines 148-156)
>
> I coordinate my clothing with my thoughts.
> To be a poet, a man must suit his behavior
> to the requirements of his plays. If, say, he's writing plays about women,
> his body must partake of women's behavior
> … If one writes about men, that element of the body
> is at hand. But qualities we do not have
> must be sought by mimicry.

Agathon justifies his behavior for the purpose of his art. He even calls his technique μίμησις (mimesis). His physical mimesis is already successful in convincing the relative of his female behavior. During his questioning of Agathon, the relative admits to being sexually aroused by him, "θηλυδριῶδες καὶ κατεγλωττισμένον/ καὶ μανδαλωτόν, ὥστ᾽ ἐμοῦ γ᾽ ἀκροωμένου/ ὑπὸ τὴν ἕδραν αὐτὴν ὑπῆλθε γάργαλος" (lines 131-133) (How feministic and tongue-gagged/ and deep-kissed! Just hearing it/ brought a tingle to my very butt!) The relative's desire stemmed from his perception of Agathon as a woman. Thus Agathon has done a successful job with his mimesis on a physical level. The relative is convinced by Agathon's performance of a woman and Euripides is proven right in his idea that Agathon is capable of intruding the women's festival.

Agathon's statement suggests that anyone can become something different through putting on different kinds of clothing. In the scene where Agathon and Euripides dress up the relative as a woman, they simply dress him in a dress and wig and he immediately transforms into a woman (Bobrick, 181). Agathon's description of mimesis, "that it works inward, from the clothes to the poet's nature- is much more anxiety-provoking. It suggests that the clothes we put on can change our natures, that we are all actors, acting to suit our costumes" (Duncan, 30). Agathon brings into question this debate about self-identity and representation. Does our clothing order how we behave? Or does how we behave dictate how we present ourselves? And if it were so easy to change one's persona into a female, then would the audience find themselves becoming effeminate? "The anxiety here is that the audience of a tragedy can become effeminate by watching (and hearing it)" (Duncan, 34). Euripides and the

relative see Agathon as a woman when writing tragedies, and later they too imitate female characters. Their transformation is caused, in part, by their watching of Agathon's female tragedy as well as their later donning of female costumes. Thus, the audience, by watching Agathon's creation of his plays, would also become feminine through habituation. Plato suggests that by watching actors portray women, the audience "would fall prey to the same flaws" (Duncan, 34). Thus this mimesis might have brought up this fear that what is presented on stage may be projected back onto the audience. Agathon's mimesis, however, is deeper than a mere physical imitation of a woman.

Agathon needs to understand the ways of women. Since he was writing a new tragedy about women, he must embrace feminine attributes in order to know how to write about them truthfully. "He seeks to become the embodiment of the play itself" (Given, 38). Once he can transform himself into a woman, then he can take on the challenge of producing his play. When he discusses partaking of female ways (τρόπους), Agathon suggests more than putting on a woman's dress; full mimesis must go beyond the body. Agathon suggests that he is capable of writing women's tragedies because he is female in nature, "ὅμοια γὰρ ποιεῖν ἀνάγκη τῇ φύσει" (line 167) (For as we are made, so must we compose.) Agathon compares his feminine nature to beautiful Phrynichus' lovely poetry (line 165). This kind of mimesis comes from a more internal place than merely imitating physical characteristics. Agathon's imitation thus "turns out indeed to be all too much in harmony with his nature and his ways" (Zeitlin 1996, 384). Agathon has persuaded himself of his effeminate nature through continual use of female practices. By seeing himself as a woman for such an

extended period of time, then Agathon has eventually come to believe himself as feminine in nature.

Because of his biological sex, Agathon obviously cannot be a woman. It can be said then that he has completed the deepest and most internal form of mimesis. He has played the part of a woman so well and for so long that he now considers himself to have feminine characteristics. Agathon is clearly at ease in his feminine costume and takes no offense at the relative's mocking, "ὦ πρέσβυ πρέσβυ, τοῦ φθόνου μὲν τὸν ψόγον/ ἤκουσα, τὴν δ᾽ ἄλγησιν οὐ παρεσχόμην" (lines 145-146) (Old man, old man, I heard your envious/ mockery, yet felt no pain thereat.) Since he is so comfortable in his costume, deeper mimesis to his internal transformation is necessary. During his tragic chorus, Agathon does a successful job in speaking like a woman, "ἕπομαι κλῄζουσα σεμνὰν/ γόνον ὀλβιζουσα Λατοῦς,/ Ἄρτεμιν ἀπειρολεχῆ" (lines 116-119) (I follow you, invoking, praising,/ the holy spawn of Leto,/ Artemis untried in bed!) He uses the feminine plural endings of the participles (κλῄζουσα, ὀλβιζουσα) in his speech, thus including himself with the group of women speaking. Agathon also invokes the goddess Leto, a goddess that would be invoked by women more so than men. Agathon's understanding of the way women speak and to which deities they address signifies his deep transformation from a masculine to feminine nature through mimesis.

Agathon was born a man and is treated as a man by Greek society. The influence of culture, then, is what gave Agathon his feminine characteristics. He dresses like a woman, speaks like a woman, and prays to the gods of the women. Thus Agathon did not come into the world already effeminate by nature. Because of

his habituation of female behaviors, Agathon eventually adopts these feminine qualities. Once he has continually behaved with his feminine mannerisims, Agathon starts to believe that he is effeminate. By the time of the *Thesmophoriazusae*, Agathon is, in fact, effeminate by nature. Agathon refuses because he claims to be too successful in portraying a woman, "δοκῶν γυναικῶν ἔργα νυκτερείσια/ κλέπτειν ὑφαρπάζειν τε θήλειαν Κύπριν" (lines 204-205) (I'd appear to be stealing the nocturnal doings/ of women and absconding with the female Cypris.) Agathon suggests that he would play the part of a woman so well that he would be in competition with all of the real women. His refusal may have been a surprise to the audience since he has been shown to be a master of imitation (Slater 2002, 155). Agathon may be aligning himself with the women since he will not be the one to deceive the women since he considers himself to be similar to them. When the expert in femininity declines to do the job, he does, in fact, agree to outfit the relative in a female costume in order that he may trespass the Thesmophoria. "Agathon gives entrance into a hidden world of women that is about to be exposed…He is soon followed by Mnesilochus [the relative] and Euripides, who think that they can make other women believe that they are women, just by dressing up" (Bobrick, 182). While Agathon has mastered both external and internal mimesis, the other characters of the play struggle to perform as effectively as Agathon does.

The Relative

Euripides' relative offers to be Agathon's replacement to break into the Thesmophoria. Scholiasts identify the relative as Mnesilochus, Euripides' father-in-

law, although he is never named in the play (Henderson 2000, 446). There is some debate as to whether or not this is his true identity, but I will be referring to the relative as Mnesilochus for the remainder of the discussion. With Euripides' help, Agathon equips Mnesilochus with a female costume and they send him off to the festival. To see the extent of his mimesis, I will examine four scenes: Mnesilochus' change into this female costume, his speech in the women's assembly, and the parody scenes of the Euripidean dramas, the *Helen* and the *Andromeda*. Based on the relative's success at playing a woman, it will be possible to see how well he has taken on his new identity. We will see that Mnesolichus' mimesis is not as deep as Agathon's. "The kinsman's masculinity is so overwhelming that it is the reason why his female disguise fails" (Duncan, 31). While Agathon's costume suits him, Mnesilochus' is parodic. Agathon fully embraces his role as a female, but Mnesilochus retains too many of his masculine qualities to successfully imitate a woman.

Mnesilochus' physical transformation begins as soon as he agrees to play the woman. "With the Relative, Euripides constructs a theatrical and comic woman on stage right infront of the audience" (Taaffe, 85). The first step is to shave off his facial hair and singe off the pubic hair (lines 215-216). Agathon readily supplies Euripides with a razor from his personal store. Since women had no facial hair, it was necessary to get rid of Mnesilochus' masculine identifying features, such as his beard. Once Mnesilochus has been rid of his extra hair, it is time to dress him in proper attire. Agathon gives Mnesilochus all of the proper clothing. Agathon first hands him a dress and bra (lines 250-251), then a wig (line 258), a wrap (line 261) and shoes

(line 262). Euripides immediately announces the disguise as a success, "ἀνὴρ μὲν ἡμῖν οὑτοσὶ καὶ δὴ γυνὴ/ τό γ᾽ εἶδος" (lines 266-267) (Our gentleman here is a real lady,/ at least to look at,) thus declaring the physical mimesis a triumph.

Not only is this scene an imitation of female dress, but perhaps it is also meant to be a parody of Agathon, according to Stehle. Like Agathon, Mnesilochus must put on clothes to play the woman. Agathon as the effeminate male would be a natural inspiration for Mnesilochus. Eva Stehle suggests that there are three phases of Mnesilochus' imitation of Agathon. The first phase has to do with a physical mimesis, while the other two would be considered a more internal imitation. The two male characters look alike in their feminine appearance (Stehle, 384). Both have gotten rid of any facial hair and are wearing clothing supplied by Agathon. At the physical level, Mnesilochus has effectively made himself look like Agathon, as I have already discussed that Agathon is dressed as a woman. But as we will see shortly, Mnesilochus has neither adopted the habits and mannerisms of either Agathon or the women nor reached full internal mimesis (Stehle, 387). Although he does attempt to imitate female tendencies, he is not quite successful. This comparison of Mnesilochus to Agathon demonstrates the failure of the relative's mimesis.

At the same time, this episode of Mnesilochus' costume change is quite similar to a scene from the *Acharnians* where Dicaeopolis visits Euripides in order to borrow a costume so that he may present his attitudes on the current war. Perhaps this is an attempt of Aristophanes to parody an earlier play of his. The definition of literary mimesis comes into play here. Aristophanes imitates a literary technique that he has used before. A parody, as another kind of imitation, can be described as "any

kind of distorting representation of an original" (Silk, 479). Aristophanes distorts the *Acharnians* scene in the *Thesmophoriazusae*. While Dicaeopolis hides his reasons for coming to Euripides, Euripides immediately tells Agathon his purpose. The tragedian in the *Acharnians* is old and sickly, but is alive and still composing in the *Thesmophoriauzsae*. Thus the idea of putting on a different costume to become a new character had already been a poetic device for quite some time. This idea in the *Acharnians*, produced in 425 BCE, is being used again almost fifteen years later.

> "Oh Zeus who seest through and under all!"-
> Euripides, since you have done me this favor,
> please also give me those properties that go with the rags-
> the little Mysian felt cap for my head. "For I this day must seem to be a beggar,
> "be who I am and yet appear not so."
> The audience must know me for who I am,
> but the chorus must stand there like imbeciles,
> so that I can give them the long finger with my neat little phrases.
> (lines 435-444)

Both Mnesilochus and Dicaeopolis have gone to visit a tragedian in hopes of a costume to deceive a group of people. Both Agathon and Euripides advise the characters to dress up. Through their costumes, both characters are able to deceive their respective choruses, even if only temporarily. Dicaeopolis comes to the chorus as a beggar, and Mnesilochus appears before the women of the Thesmophoria as a fellow woman. But just as Dicaeopolis fails to fully convince the chorus to take his side, so Mnesilochus cannot completely fool the female chorus of his gender.

Not long after he gets dressed does Mnesilochus begin to fully embody his female character. As Agathon and Euripides help him, Mnesilochus starts to control his disguise and prayer to female gods. When the men are trying to singe his hair off, Mnesilochus runs away and when asked where he's going, exclaims, "εἰς τὸ τῶν

σεμνῶν θεῶν./ οὐ γὰρ μὰ τὴν Δήμητρά γ' ἐνταυθοῖ μενῶ/ τεμνόμενος" (lines 224-226) (To the shrine of the Venerable Goddesses! Because, by Demeter, I'm not about to sit here getting cut up.) Mnesilochus immediately considers running to the shrine of Demeter, the patron goddess of the female festival. It is possible that the relative has started to embrace his new identity. "The Relative's language immediately displays a certain generic femininity. He swears by Aphrodite and admires the fabric of his dress (254). He becomes more and more involved in the transformation" (Taaffe, 86). Thus, Mnesilochus' directing of his dressing indicates his gradual shift to performing female mimesis. He takes control rather than letting Euripides instruct him. First, Mnesilochus tells the men to give him a belt (line 254) and then to fix the way his skirt was hanging (256). This would also offer a great opportunity for comic acting. It would be necessary for Mnesilochus to be continuously "checking his 'skirts', since it could not have been easy to keep his comic phallos properly concealed. After all, he must show everyone, even those in the upper rows, that he is a man trying to be a woman, while the other (male) actors are 'real' women" (Hansen, 176). With the influence of a dress, he begins to behave like a woman on stage. Dressed and ready to go, Mnesilochus departs for the Thesmophoria.

Mnesilochus finds himself in the midst of an assembly of women. "A certain symmetry marks these role reversals: as the Relative dresses and acts like a woman at the Thesmophoria, so the 'women' proceed to act as men might in the *ecclesia*" (Taaffe, 88). When the women do such a proficient job at their role, it is interesting to see how Mnesilochus takes on the challenge of deceiving women with his disguise.

As stated earlier, his physical disguise is quite good yet his internal mimesis will prove to suffer. When it is his turn to speak, Mnesilochus gives a defense of Euripides. His claim is that even though Euripides did reveal the women's secrets, there were many other secrets about which he kept quiet.

> τί ταύτ' ἔχουσαι 'κεῖνον αἰτώμεθα
> βαρέως τε φέρομεν, εἰ δύ' ἡμῶν ἢ τρία
> κακὰ ξυνειδῶς εἶπε δρώσας μυρία;
> ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτὴ πρῶτον, ἵνα μἄλλην λέγω,
> ξύνοιδ' ἐμαυτῇ πολλὰ δείν'. (lines 473-477)
>
> Why are we bringing that man up on these charges
> and getting so angry with him for just mentioning two or three
> of our misdeeds, out of the thousands of others he knows we've committed?
> I myself to begin with, not to mention anyone else,
> have a lot of awful things on my conscience.

Mnesilochus claims that women perform more devious acts than what Euripides has exposed. The women, in fact, do not get angry with Mnesilochus for saying they commit more misdeeds, rather they are mad that he reveals their secrets so publically. "τάδε γὰρ εἰπεῖν τὴν πανοῦργον/ κατὰ τὸ φανερὸν ὧδ' ἀναιδῶς/ οὐκ ἂν ᾠόμην ἐν ἡμῖν/ οὐδὲ τολμῆσαί ποτ' ἄν" (lines 524-526) (I wouldn't have thought the hussy/ would ever have had the nerve/ to say these things so brazenly/ right before our eyes!) Despite his bold speech, however, the women still have no idea that he is an imposter. They refer to Mnesilochus as a woman when they speak about him (τὴν πανοῦργον). Thus, so far, Euripides' relative has played his part well. The women are fooled by his costume and he has yet to fully reveal his masculine identity through speech.

There has been some debate as to whether or not Mnesilochus truly speaks like a woman during his time at the Thesmophoria. He does successfully use feminine

grammar and pronouns when he speaks of himself and the group of women collectively (Stehle, 387). "εἰ γὰρ οὔσης/ παρρησίας κἀξὸν λέγειν ὅσαι πάρεσμεν ἀσταί,/ εἶτ᾽ εἶπον ἁγίγνωσκον ὑπὲρ Εὐριπίδου δίκαια,/ διὰ τοῦτο τιλλομένην με δεῖ δοῦναι δίκην ὑφ᾽ ὑμῆν;" (lines 540-543) (There *is* freedom/ of speech here, and all of us who are citizens *are* entitled/ to speak, so if I merely said on Euripides' behalf what I know to be fair,/ am I to be punished by depilation at your hands?) Mnesilochus, here, uses the feminine plural participles (οὔσης and ὅσαι) to include himself with the women. He brings up the idea of παρρησία (freedom of speech). The women were able to speak freely during their assembly. Dressed as a woman, Mnesilochus has the opportunity to use his masculine language because of freedom of speech. In order to play his character effectively, Mnesilochus coneeds to speak as a woman. He restricts his masculine language in favor of a feminine one. Rather than speak as a man, he chooses to use the language of the women. He controls the language he uses. One way he does this is by using less explicit obscenity. Crude language is a linguistic device attributed to men in comedy (McClure, 209). Men generally use more "active" language while the women use more "passive" forms of obscenity (McClure, 209). Some of the bawdy terminology they would have used was πέος (penis), κύσθος (cunt), σκώρ (shit), βινῶ (fart), and βινητιάζω (fuck) (McClure, 208). Yet Mnesilochus refrains from using any of these explicit words while he is in the women's assembly (Stehle, 387). His avoidance of masculine language shows that he has begun to embrace his character and controls his speech to suit his purpose.

In addition to speaking like a woman, Mnesilochus starts to act like one too. When Cleisthenes arrives with the news that there is an imposter in the Thesmophoria, "under pressure of discovery, Inlaw begins to think about how really to talk and act like a woman" (Stehle, 388). Mnesilochus' new female identity, however, comes with a state of inferiority, which he embraces. The relative's acting as a woman puts him underneath the status of a "manly" man. As Cleisthenes questions each woman, Mnesilochus runs away, claiming he is going to the bathroom (line 611). Crytilla orders Cleisthenes to keep an eye on him (line 613). In this scene, Mnesilochus is probably squatting down with Cleisthenes behind him. As a woman, he physically lowers himself beneath Cleisthenes. This physical position can be read as a symbolic act of female submission (Stehle, 388). Thus, Mnesilochus does begin to behave like women. Although he is forced to perfect his behavior from fear of discovery, it is possible that he is influenced by the company of the group of women to start performing as one. The longer he spends in their midst, the more he can see himself as a woman.

Even though Mnesilochus adopts some speech patterns and manners of the opposite gender, he still, however, retains his masculinity. He proves he is unable to completely hide his male identity. Even though he may have spoken grammatically correct in order to pass off as a woman, the "misogynistic content" of his speech may have given away his identity (McClure, 219). One of his first errors was accidently using a masculine singular endings rather than feminine plural in his speech (Taaffe, 89). Through this linguistic blunder, Mnesilochus' true identity becomes evident. He does not speak in defense of the women, but suggests that they perform many more

devious acts than was originally thought. Moreover, the fact that there is even a scholarly debate as to the relative's success in his language shows that he has not been victorious in his presentation of women through his speech. That he can speak both as a man or a woman demonstrates that he still thinks and acts like a man. Clearly, his mimesis into a woman has not been as successful as Agathon's. He is capable of physically looking like a woman, but his masculine character is jut too present to yield to a woman's. "A man is in disguise who cannot hide his gender, even though the exterior details of his disguise may be technically flawless. His identity becomes suspect rather through the themes of his commentary" (Taaffe, 90). Mnesilochus' entire purpose of sneaking into the festival is what gives him away, rather than his costume itself. His defense of Euripides reveals him as the male imposter of the women's festival. His rhetorical skill fails to support his disguise, highlighting the fact that the importance of speech is central to identifying masculinity (McClure, 219). The context of Mnesilochus' speech reveals his disguise. He is unable to separate his masculine speech from his female voice. He is brought down through his speech, which reveals his male identity.

In another attempt at a mimetic impersonation of women, Mnesilochus takes part in two parodies of Euripides' tragedies, the *Helen* and the *Andromeda*. Once the women have discovered that Mnesilochus is no woman, they imprisone him for breaking into their secret festival. The relative decided that the best way to save himself is to bring Euripides to the stage through the use of parodies. "Mnesilochus thinks that his temporary transvestitism entitles him to be a heroine in a drama" (Epstein, 5). The decline of his imitation comes through in the parodies. Mnesilochus

must portray the heroines in the dramas successfully in order to be freed. Euripides' *Helen* is based on the myth that Helen was not in Troy during the Trojan war. The real Helen was in Egypt while a shadow of Helen went to Troy. As Menelaus leaves Troy, his fleet stops in Egypt and he and Helen have a moment where they recognize each other. Together, the two find a way to escape the Egyptian king and they sail back to Sparta. The *Helen* was presented in Athens only a year earlier, in 412 BCE (Taaffe, 95). The plot of the play may have still been familiar to the audience.

As mentioned earlier, the mimesis of the *Helen* is an attempt to bring Euripides to the festival. "τῷ δῆτ᾽ ἂν αὐτὸν προσαγαοίμην δράματι;/ ἐγῷδα τὴν καινὴν ᾽Ελένη μιμήσομαι./ πάντως ὑπάρχει μοι γυναικεία στολή" (lines 849-851) (So which of his plays *can* I use to entice him?/ I've got it! I'll do a take-off on his recent *Helen*;/ after all, I'm already wearing a woman's costume.) Mnesilochus chooses to parody is the *Helen* because he is already dressed as a woman. In this instance, the relative is very aware that he is solely performing the character of a woman for a purpose rather than needing to internally become a woman. Both Agathon and Mnesilochus use the word mimesis (μιμήσομαι) to explain what they are doing. But while Agathon thinks and behaves like a woman, Mnesilochus is merely acting the part. It was easy enough for Mnesilochus to imitate a woman in the Thesmophoria. But now that his own life is at stake, he is unable to keep up with the disguise. Aristophanes even uses exact quotes from the play in his comedy. He knows to imitate the women's lines because they are the words of the play. Thus, he must use the grammar of a woman. But he openly admits to this physical imitation.

Mnesilochus and Euripides perform the recognition scene between Helen and Menelaus for the female audience, consisting of Crytilla and perhaps the female chorus. Crytilla stood as a guard while Cleisthenes goes to find a real guard from the city. The scene from the *Helen* is an appeal to the women to free Mnesilochus (Zeitlin 1996, 392). The women of the Thesmophoria had previously been angry because Euripides only writes about problematic characters such as Melanippe and Phaedra and never about virtuous ones like Penelope.

> …ὃς ἡμᾶς πολλὰ κακὰ δέδρακεν
> ἐπίτηδες εὑρίσκων λόγους, ὅπου γυνὴ πονηρὰ
> ἐγένετο, Μελανίππας ποιῶν Φαίδρας τε. Πηνελόπην δὲ
> οὐπώποτ᾽ ἐποίησ᾽, ὅτι γυνὴ σώφρων ἔδοξεν εἶναι. (lines 545-548)
>
> …a man who's abundantly wronged us by purposely
> finding stories where a woman turns out bad,
> by creating Melanippes and Phaedras. But never has he created a Penelope,
> because she was a woman noted for her virtue.

Melanippe was raped by Poseidon and exposed the children who resulted from that union. The twins, however, did not die and when they were discovered years later, Melanippe was ordered to sacrifice them. She then committed suicide (Dillon, 9-10). Phaedra, the wife of Theseus, was struck with love for her stepson Hippolytus. She confided this love to her nurse, and the nurse told Hippolytus. Phaedra decided to hang herself and in a letter she left behind, she wrote that Hippolytus raped her and she killed herself from shame (Segal 1970, 282). Both these women performed outrageous acts. Their shocking behavior is in stark contrast in comparison to loyal Penelope. Penelope was Odysseus' faithful wife who waited twenty years for his return home. Euripides' *Helen* takes on a new version of the traditional myth of Helen of Sparta. This Helen is now the virtuous wife who was never disloyal to her

husband. In this presentation, Helen seems quite like the faithful wife Penelope (Zeitlin 1996, 394). While everyone knows Homer's version of Helen's adultery, it is interesting that this new version of the myth was presented. *Helen* "introduces a new role for women in Euripides' plays that serves implicitly to counteract the charges of slander" (Zeitlin 1996, 406). Mnesilochus and Euripides perform a scene that exemplifies a wife's loyalty. Thus in order to appease Crytilla and the women, Euripides acquiesces to their request and shows them as faithful wives. For example, Helen in Euripides' play never deceives her husband. Only a little earlier did Mnesilochus claim all women to be unfaithful and baby-switching women. Now, he plays the virtuous and loyal wife. This quick change in thought demonstrates that Mnesilochus is just acting.

Unfortunately, the parody is unsuccessful in saving Mnesilochus. Crytilla does not understand that a parody is going on and she is needed to play the part of the daughter of the Egyptian king who helps save Helen. She sees Mnesilochus only as a man attempting to play a woman to no avail. "πείθει τι τῷ κακῷ κακῶς ἀπολουμένῳ/ ληροῦντι λῆρον; Θεσμοφόριον τουτογί" (lines 879-880) (Do you believe the ravings of this awful man, condemned to an awful death? This is the Thesmophorium!) Crytilla is not convinced by Mnesilochus' performance. "Too literal-minded (they cannot even involve her in playing a role, 875), she provides extra comic depth to the theme of *mimesis*. She watches a performance without illusions (861-2) and remembers the proper venue for theater, knowing that that where they are, the Thesmophorian, is not it" (Taaffe, 96). Her reluctance in joining in the parody prevents the scheme of presenting the *Helen* from working.

Mnesilochus has failed in his female mimesis to portray Helen because Crytilla does not realize that she is in the middle of a tragic parody.

After a choral ode, a parody of Euripides' *Andromeda* begins. This time, it is Euripides who decides on the parody, rather than Mnesilochus. "ἀνὴρ ἔοικεν οὐ προδώσειν, ἀλλά μοι/ σημεῖον ὑπεδήλωσε Περσεὺς ἐκδραμών,/ ὅτι δεῖ με γίγνεσθ᾽ Ἀνδρομέδαν" (lines 1010-1012) (It seems the man won't give up on me:/ he just popped up as Perseus,/ meaning I'm supposed to be Andromeda.) Perhaps as the tragedian, Euripides would be able to lead where the parody of his own play is going. Euripides' *Andromeda* is a lost play so it is more difficult to assess the successfulness of the parody. According to ancient tradition, Andromeda was chained up to a rock, about to face death, when Perseus rescued her. Mnesilochus, too, is bound up, guarded by the archer, waiting to be rescued. "πάντως δέ μοι/ τὰ δέσμ᾽ ὑπάρχει. δῆλον οὖν τοῦτ᾽ἔσθ᾽ ὅτι/ ἥξει με σώσων. οὐ γὰρ ἂν παρέπτετο" (lines 1012-1014) (I've certainly/ got the requisite chains, and he's obviously/ on his way to rescue me; otherwise he wouldn't have zipped by!) Mnesilochus' enchainment and need of rescue make the *Andromeda* the perfect parody for the situation.

During his speech, he combines both the plight of Andromeda and his own (Zeitlin 1996, 396). He begins with himself,

> φίλαι παρθένοι, φίλαι,
> πῶς ἂν ἀπέλθοιμι καὶ
> τὸν Σκύθην λάθοιμι;
> κλύεις, ὦ προσᾄδουσ᾽
> ἀυταῖς ἐν ἄντροις;
> κατάνευσον, ἔασον ὡς
> τὴν γυναῖκά μ᾽ ἐλθεῖν.
> ἄνοικτος ὅς μ᾽ ἔδησε, τὸν
> πολυπονώτατον βροτῶν. (lines 1015-1023)

> Dear maidens dear,
> how might I get away
> and escape the Scythian?
> Do you hear me, you in the caverns,
> who reply in song to my cries?
> Permit me, do let me go home to my wife!
> Pitiless he who enchained me,
> most sorely tested of mortal men!

Mnesilochus immediately steps out of character by praying to return home to his wife. With the reference to his wife, Mnesilochus goes in the opposite direction of mimesis. He reinforces his masculinity. The mention of the wife reminds the audience that Mnesilochus is indeed a man. He "alternates runs of masculine and feminine self-references as he describes his plight and hers" (Stehle, 392). Thus it seems that Mnesilochus' feminine character is only as deep as his physical costume, since he is still clearly dressed as a woman at this point in the play. In addition, Euripides has forced this role upon the relative. While Mnesilochus chose to parody the *Helen*, the character of Andromeda was given to him.

While the *Helen* was performed in front of a female audience, the *Andromeda* seems to be a play more for a male audience. Instead of the female guard, Crytilla, Mnesilochus must now escape from the Scythian archer. Thus he must partake in a parody more appealing to men. From the *Frogs*, it is possible to see that the *Andromeda* is a highly erotic and sexual play (Sfyroeras, 300). Dionysus is willing to venture to Hades in order to return Euripides to Athens because he is so moved by the play. This more explicit play would attract the Scythian archer as the male audience and perhaps would be more effective in distracting him from Mnesilochus' escape. But even with the arrival of Euripides as Echo and Perseus, the parody is unsuccessful in freeing the relative. Like Crytilla, the Scythian does not understand

that he is in the middle of a tragic parody and refers to Mnesilochus several times as a man. Because of his barbarian and foreign status, the archer struggles to recognize the parody in front of him. The Scythian cannot speak Greek, thus he is unable to understand and follow the dialogue. The archer is also very much a character of the comic stage and his identity as such prevents him from taking part in the tragedy. "For the Scythian policeman belongs fully to the conventions of the comic theater, as do all barbarians and others whose outlandish language, gestures, and costumes offer a dependable source of ethnic laughter" (Zeitlin 1996, 396). The result of this interaction is the comic scene of the Scythian archer watching, confused, as Euripides and Mnesilochus pretend to by Perseus and Andromeda. Having heard enough from Euripides as Perseus, the Scythian threatens Euripides with a whipping (line 1135) and Euripides runs off.

Thus Mnesilochus is unsuccessful in his mimesis of a female character in these parodies. His masculine identity comes out in his speech. Mnesilochus is unable to reach a kind of imitation to match Agathon's. Because Agathon's nature is feminine, he was able to play the role of a woman. There is no question of Mnesilochus' masculinity. It is true that he maintained his disguise for some time, but his deception is eventually revealed. Habituation of behavior influences Agathon's nature to effeminacy. But it has not had the same effect on Mnesilochus. He has stepped into a role made for him, rather than creating one for himself. Throughout the play, Mnesilochus' mimesis steadily declines. He can only temporarily imitate a woman. By the time of the parodies, Mnesilochus has not reached a full mimesis. His portrayal of a woman does not come from within himself, as Agathon's does. The

tragic parodies fail in their role to save the relative because Mnesilochus cannot successfully play his female part.

Euripides

In addition to examining these parodies, it is also necessary to look at the tragedian himself, Euripides, as the author of these scenes. The analysis of Euripides' character offers another way of examining mimesis. In the *Thesmophoriazusae*, it is his idea to trespass the festival since he has angered the women. In the play, Euripides is characterized as an old man. He describes himself as, "πρῶτα μὲν γιγνώσκομαι,/ ἔπειτα πολιός εἰμι καὶ πώγων᾽ ἔχω" (lines 189-190) (First, I am well known./ Second, I'm an old graybeard.) Thus in his physical appearance, Euripides is a full-fledged Athenian male. The beard is one of the identifying features of masculinity in his mask and costume. Despite this external look, perhaps Euripides has a bit of a feminine personality. He is characterized as clever and tricky, adjectives that are often used to describe the deceptiveness of women.

In the *Frogs*, we already saw Euripides as a clever poet. When the relative asks Euripides how be plans to get past the women of the Thesmophoria, he asks what kind of trick Euripides will play. "ἀτὰρ τίν᾽ εἰς ταύτας σὺ μηχανὴν ἔχεις" (line 87) (But what's your strategy against these women?) While Euripides tells Mnesilochus of his plan to invade the festival, the relative then praises his cleverness. "τὸ πρᾶγμα κομψὸν καὶ σφόδρ᾽ ἐκ τοῦ σοῦ τρόπου./ τοῦ γὰρ τεχνάζειν ἡμέτερος ὁ πυραμοῦς" (lines 93-94) (A pretty cute bit, and just your style./ We take the cake for craftiness!) Crafty plan and sneaking and scheming are attributes

generally associated with women. The play seems to highlight Euripides' craftiness, his *poneria* (Whitman, 219). Even with Euripides manly external persona, he may just have a feminine touch to him. There may be evidence of Euripides' internal mimesis.

Once Mnesilochus has been fully clothed, Euripides does not come back onstage until the parodies. During the *Helen* parody, Euripides performs the role of Menelaus perfectly. Mnesilochus' use of the *Helen* brings Euripides back to the stage as Menelaus. Unlike Mnesilochus' performance of Helen, Crytilla believes Euripides to be the newly arrived stranger to foreign land. Crytilla has been initially convinced by Euripides' performance as Menelaus (Whitman, 224). However, once Euripides tries to take Mnesilochus away with him, Crytilla prevents their escape. She warns that, "κλαύσετ᾽ ἄρα νὴ τὼ θεὼ/ ὅστις σ᾽ ἀπάξει τυπτόμενος τῇ λαμπάδι" (lines 916-917) (By the Twain Goddesses, whoever tries to take you away/ is going to be sorry, after he gets pummeled with this torch!) Only when Mnesilochus gets involved, and the matter of his escape comes up, does Crytilla realize that some sort of trickery is going on. She even calls them out on their acting (line 921). When the archer is seen in the distance, Euripides immediately flees with a promise to come back with another plan, "οὐ γὰρ προδώσω σ᾽ οὐδέποτ᾽, ἤνπερ ἐμπνέω,/ ἢν μὴ προλίπωσ᾽ αἱ μυρίαι με μηχαναί" (lines 926-927) (I'll never desert you, as long as I draw breath,/ or until I exhaust my vast supply of stratagems!) Euripides does come back with his own parody in mind, the *Andromeda*.

Mnesilochus believes that he has seen Euripidies off in the distance dressed as Perseus. The relative realizes that he must play Andromeda. But Euripides first

returns to the scene as Echo. "Ἠχώ, λόγων ἀντῳδὸς ἐπικοκκάστρια,/ ἥπερ πέρυσιν ἐν τῷδε ταὐτῷ χωρίῳ/ Εὐριπίδῃ καὐτὴ ξυνηγνωιζόμην" (lines 1059-1061) (Echo, a comedienne who sings back what she hears,/ who just last year, in this very place,/ personally assisted Euripides in the contest.) An echo is the purest form of mimesis. Echo is an exact reproduction of the original form without any kind of personal influence (Zeitlin 1996, 397). She is considered to be a female character since women excelled in imitation (Zeitlin 1996, 397). Euripides' portrayal of Echo does not question his masculinity because "the mimetic reproduction of an echo in personified form translates the imitation of nature into an artificial theatrical effect" (Zeitlin 1996, 397). Since the mimesis of Echo is purely for theatrical purposes, there is no tension between the masculine and feminine character of Euripides. To play the female role of Echo does not require the same depth of mimesis as it does to play Helen or Andromeda. Euripides' touch of femininity grants him the ability to play this female character. Because Euripides is solely copying words when he plays Echo, his masculinity is not called into question. He can speak without compromising his male identity. After fooling around with the Scythian for a while, confusing him with his character, Euripides departs from stage only to return immediately as Perseus.

Like Crytilla, the Scythian is convinced by Euripides' performance of Perseus. The archer sees him as a foreigner recently arriving to the area but is confused by Euripides' description of Mnesilochus as a woman. "οὐ παρτέν᾽ ἐστίν, ἀλλ᾽ ἀμαρτωλὴ γέρων/ καὶ κλέπτο καὶ πανοῦργο" (lines 1111-1112) (That's no maiden! That's a dirty old man, a crook, and a creep!) Mnesilochus is still clearly clothed as a woman, but the Scythian archer knows that he is a male imposter. Thus

the archer does not understand that he is in the context of a tragic parody and is unable to see Mnesilochus as a woman. However, Euripides as the male character is believable. But once again, the tables turn when Euripides tries to rescue Mnesilochus. The Scythian then threatens Euripides with a beating (line 1125). In his exit this time, Euripides says that he must come back with a plan that would work for distracting the Scythian archer,

> αἰαῖ. τί δράσω; πρὸς τίνας στρεφθῶ λόγους;
> ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἂν ἐνδέξαιτο βάρβαρος φύσις.
> σκαιοῖσι γάρ τοι καινὰ προσφέρων σοφὰ
> μάτην ἀναλίσκοις ἄν. ἀλλ᾽ ἄλλην τινὰ
> τούτῳ πρέπουσαν μηχανὴν προσοιστέον. (lines 1128-1132)
>
> Ah me, what action, what clever logic now?
> All wit is lost upon this savage lout.
> For work a novel ruse upon a clod
> and you have worked in vain. I must apply
> a different stratagem, one suitable for *him*.

In fact, Euripides does come back with a new plan that does save Mnesilochus from the clutches of angry women.

In both tragic parodies, the scenes have failed in their mission to rescue Mnesilochus. This failure has less to do with Euripides than it does with Mnesilochus' inability to play the female character. As the author of the plays, there is no doubt that Euripides would understand his characters and what would be necessary to do in order to portray them. But Euripides did get the easier characters to play, the male characters. Once Euripides realized that his tragic parodies were not working, it was time to make a deal with the women. He must promise to stop slandering women in stage in exchange for Mnesilochus' freedom.

> γυναῖκες, εἰ βούλεσθε τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον
> σπονδὰς ποιήσασθαι πρὸς ἐμέ, νυνὶ πάρα,

ἐφ᾽ ᾧτ᾽ ἀκοῦσαι μηδὲν ὑπ᾽ ἐμοῦ μηδαμὰ
κακὸν τὸ λοιπόν. ταῦτ᾽ ἐπικηρυκεύομαι
…ὅδ᾽ ἐστὶν οὐν τῇ σανίδι κηδεστῆς ἐμός.
ἣν οὖν κομίσομαι τοῦτον, οὐδεν μή ποτε
κακῶς ἀκούσητ᾽. ἢν δὲ μὴ πίθησθέ μοι,
ἃ νῦν ὑποικουρεῖτε, τοῖσιν ἀνδράσιν
ἀπὸ τῆς στρατιᾶς παροῦσιν ὑμῶν διαβαλῶ. (lines 1160-1169)

Ladies, if you want to make a permanent
peace treaty with me, now is the time.
I'll stipulate that in the future none of you woman will ever again
be slandered in any way by me. That is my official proposal
… This man on the plank here is my kinsman.
If I can take him away with me, you'll never hear
another insult. But if you refuse,
whatever you've been doing behind your husband's backs
while they're away at the front, I'll denounce to them when they return.

The women have the power to free Mnesilochus, but Euripides also has the ability to take away the little bit of freedom they have at home by revealing all of their secrets. As Euripides and Mnesilochus have just learned, the women are necessary for their survival. For Mnesilochus would still be bound up if the women had not agreed to free him. Thus, Euripides recognizes the power that they currently have in saving himself an Mnesilochus.

Euripides' final scheme to save Mnesilochus takes place in the form of a comedy. Already the *Helen* and the *Andromeda* were tragedies that were trailing dangerously close into the genre of comedy through their use of disguise and trickery (Taaffe, 98). Aristophanes may have been mocking Euripides for dabbling in his genre by using his parodies as a means of showing the decline of tragedy. In order for comedy to be successful, tragedy must fail (Zeitlin 1996, 387). In the final rescue scene, Euripides constructs a comedy to free the men. Here is the great tragedian Euripides bowing down to the art of comedy in being the only way to save his

relative. His last attempt to save Mnesilochus finally results in Euripides' dressing up as a woman and bringing a dancing girl to distract the Scythian archer. However, Euripides begins this parody immediately after he bargains with the women. It is possible that Euripides shaves off his beard before this scene and changes into his female costume (Stehle, 397). At the beginning of the play, Euripides says he is unable to disguise himself as a woman because he is easily recognizable and has a beard. The emasculation of Euripides by taking away his beard helps highlight the power of women (Stehle, 397). While this is a physical mimesis, it may be something deeper because Euripides does this to himself. The previous scenes had Euripides playing a man. He now acknowledges what woman can do by finally acting as a female character.

Euripides can distract the Scythian archer with a young dancing girl, a common element in Aristophanic comedy (Taaffe, 100). "The scene is a stroke of comic genius: Aristophanes makes Euripides produce a comedy with a woman in her traditional comic role, and claims the innovation of women in central roles for himself" (Taaffe, 99). Euripides instructs his dancing girl to perform for the Scythian, "φέρε θοἰμάτιον ἄνωθεν, ὦ τέκνον, τοδί./ καθιζομένη δ᾽ ἐπὶ τοῖσι γόνασι τοῦ Σκύθου/ τὼ πόδε πρότεινον, ἵν᾽ ὑπολύσω" (lines 1181-1184) (All right, girl, off with your dress,/ and sit on the Scythian's lap./ Now stick out your feet so I can take off your shoes.) At the conclusion of the play, Aristophanes has returned to the traditional roles of society. Euripides and his little girl distract the Scythian archer by parading the girl to incite his sexual desire. Once the archer is preoccupied, Euripides and Mnesilochus make their escape. Even though Euripides and Mnesilochus have

their female clothes still on, there is no doubt of their masculinity. What is important is that women have returned to their traditional role, submissive to men. Euripides uses the dancing girl and her sexual allure to assist in the escape. Through Euripides' own portrayal of an old woman, he is able to orchestrate the final plan to save Mnesilochus. Euripides' femininity allows him to play the part. While Agathon and Mnesilochus are openly mocked because of their female dress, no one offers an opinion on Euripides' female costume.

The Women

Having discussed the men's mimesis of female characters, it is important to examine the women's imitation of men. It has been well established that the women's meeting during the Thesmophoria closely resembles the meeting of the Athenian assembly. Some of the elements include addressing themselves as taking part in an assembly, speaking as orators, discussing of laws, and saying opening prayers (Bowie 1993, 209). The second scene of the play has a political beginning. The festival causes a reversal of gender roles, "so why should not the women usurp the judicial function too" (Bowie 1993, 209)? Mnesilochus brings up the fact that all male activities have been suspended when Euripides suggests the need to clear his name. "καὶ πῶς; ἐπεὶ νῦν γ᾽ οὔτε τὰ δικαστήρια/ μέλλει δικάζειν οὔτε βουλῆς ἐσθ᾽ ἕδρα,/ ἐπείπερ ἐστὶ Θεσμοφορίων ἡ μέση" (lines 78-80) (How can that be? The courts/ won't be trying cases today, and the Council isn't in session either,/ because it's the middle day of the Thesmophoria.) The women have temporary control of the city while the men are required to remain at home. It is this setting that allows for this

extended exploration of mimesis. The women's rise to power was considered a natural and necessary thing because the Thesmophoria was such an important festival for the Greeks. Men allowed women this chance to partake in a public part of society as it was a festival to promote fertility in both the city and the home.

Crytilla begins the meeting with an invocation to Demeter and Persephone to take care of Athens (lines 295-311). Then, she opens up the meeting with the opportunity for anyone to speak, addressing the crowd in a very orderly and democratic fashion.

> …ἔδοξε τῇ βουλῇ τάδε
> τῇ τῶν γυναικῶν. Τιμόκλει᾽ ἐπεστάτει,
> Λύσιλλ᾽ ἐγραμμάτευεν, εἶπε Σωστράτη.
> ἐκκλησίαν ποιεῖν ἕωθεν τῇ μέσῃ
> τῶν Θεσμοφορίων, ᾗ μάλισθ᾽ ἡμῖν σχολή,
> καὶ χρηματίζειν πρῶτα περὶ Εὐριπίδου,
> ὅ τι χρὴ παθεῖν ἐκεῖνον. ἀδικεῖν γὰρ δοκεῖ
> ἡμιν ἁπάσαις. τίς ἀγορεύειν βούλεται; (lines 372-379)
>
> …The Women's
> assembly- Timocleia presiding,
> Lysilla being secretary, Sostrate proprosing-
> has passed the following motion: an Assembly will be held at dawn of the middle day
> of the Thesmophoria, when we have the most free time,
> its principal agendum being deliberation about the punishment of Euripides,
> who in the view of us all is a criminal.
> Now who wishes to speak to this question?

Crytilla refers to the women as the council and assembly (βουλῇ and ἐκκλησίαν) and lists elected women who perform important duties of the meeting (Τιμόκλει᾽, Λύσιλλ᾽, and Σωστράτη). The assembly parody continues with the use of a garland for speaking (line 380) and the chorus introduces Mica as speaking like a politician, "χρέμπτεται γὰρ ἤδη,/ ὅπερ ποιοῦσ᾽ οἱ ῥήτορες. μακρὰν ἔοικε λέξειν" (lines 381-382) (because she's clearing her throat just like the politicians./ She'll probably

be making a long speech.) The women who speak in the gathering describe each other as politicians (οἱ ῥήτορες). The assembly continues until the arrival of Cleisthenes, when the women learn an imposter is in their midst. Despite their masculine activities, the women are still dressed in their female costume. While the formal organization of their festival is male, the context and purpose is quite female. In this instance, they have adopted the habits and manners of the opposite sex, rather than undergoing a physical mimesis. Women, who are associated with "madness, the irrational, and emotional aspects of life", are now behaving like any upstanding man of the Athenian citizenry (Zeitlin 1990, 65).

Because deceit and trickery are inherently female characteristics, they do a successful job in their mimetic impersonation of men in the assembly (Zeitlin, 1990, 81). Their imitation of the assembly helps give authority to their meeting and to give validity to their cause of denouncing Euripides (Bobrick, 183). The women never lose their female identity and the men never question their temporary rise to power. They do not need the physical costume of a man because the Thesmophoria allows them to have this control. Perhaps it is a token of the real power the women had in Athens for these three days that Euripides truly believed that the women might decide on his capital punishment "αἱ γὰρ γυναῖκες ἐπιβεβουλεύκασί μοι/ κἀν Θεσμοφόροιν μέλλουσι περί μου τήμερον/ ἐκκλησιάζειν ἐπ᾽ ὀλέθρῳ" (lines 82-84) (The women, you see, have devised a plot against me,/ and today in the sanctuary of the Two Thesmophoroi they're going to hold/ an assembly on the question of my destruction.) As the only officials in the city during those three days, the women have an extraordinary amount of power.

Wome could take part in the public part of life during religious festivals. Women tend to occupy the private area of the home, but are allowed to take part in the public world of the religious celebrations. Their roles included mourners at weddings, major participants in weddings, and leading roles in some of the most important Greek festivals (Foley 1981, 131). In Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, produced just one year before the *Thesmophoriazusae*, the women's chorus gives a catalogue of important festivals in which women could participate.

> Citizens of Athens, we begin
> by offering the city valuable advice,
> and fittingly, for she raised me in splendid luxury.
> As soon as I turned seven I was an Arrephoros;
> then when I was ten I was a Grinder for the Foundress;
> and shedding my saffron robe I was a Bear at the Brauronia;
> and once, when I was a fair girl, I carried the Basket
> wearing a necklace of dried figs. (lines 638-647)[8]

The chorus lists the Panathenaia, the Eleusinian mysteries, and the Brauronia. The *Lysistrata* is another play in which the women take over the city. But rather than in a religious context, the women seize the Acropolis and declare a sex strike until the men of Greece stop fighting. It is clear that in a religious setting, women exercise a freedom unavailable to them in their daily life. This chorus of the *Lysistrata* emphasizes the women's power to advise Athens because of their participation in these festivals.

While enjoying the freedom granted to them because of the Thesmophoria, the topic of the day's meeting is the outrageous affront of Euripides, who revealed the secrets of the home. The oikos is the private domain of the women while the men dominate public space (Cohen, 5). At the same time, "any violation of the house is an

[8] Translated by Jeffrey Henderson, 2000.

attack on the honour of its men and the chastity of its women, even if the intruder be only a thief" (Cohen, 6). Euripides portrayal of women on stage was an insult to the privacy of home. It seems that towards the end of the fifth century, there was a great change of interest to the confined world of the household (Foley 1981, 149). But because of this renewed interest in the domestic sphere, the world of women comes into display. Euripides has revealed to the men how women may misbehave at home, thus men now keep a closer watch on the activities of the household. "It is the male spectator's enthusiastic reception of the tragedian's representations of the female that propels the women's anger. If their husbands had ignored his Medeas and Phaedras, the women would not be seeking Euripides' death" (Bobrick, 183). Thus the women are not angry at Euripides for spreading lies about their behavior, but rather because he is exposing the privacy of their world and vilifying it.

But because Greece was a male dominated society, the life women led has remained quite unknown. The portrayal of women in drama is not even necessarily an accurate representation, but may have been a stereotype, "embodying the fears and anxieties, the mild, underlying paranoia about what *might* happen, of the audience for whom the author is writing" (Gardner, 51). Since Aristophanes is writing for the Athenian men, the men's fear of women is prime subject material. In an attempt to quell the fears of men, Aristophanes exploited these stereotypes of women. The *Thesmophoriazusae* presents men's parodies of how women actually behaved during their secret festivals (Taaffe, 78). Even while the women are being portrayed as performing in a democratic fashion, imitating the manners of men, they still perform

their feminine actions. They have not fully imitated men's actions. Nor do they need to because the women keep their female identity.

When women gather together during a women's only festival, men are afraid of what happens. One of man's greatest fears was that women always had this secret desire to drink, and when given the opportunity, would drink to excess (Gardner, 52). This fear is found in the scene where Mnesilochus tries to sacrifice one of the women's babies only to discover that it is a wine sack. In a parody of Euripides' *Telephus*, Mnesilochus has grabbed Mica's baby as a threat to get the women to cooperate. He undresses the baby as if to prepare a sacrifice and exclaims, "ἀσκοὸς ἐγένεθ᾽ ἡ κόρη/ οἴνου πλέως καὶ ταῦτα Περσικὰς ἔχων./ ὦ θερμόταται γυναῖκες, ὦ ποτίσταται/ κἀκ παντὸς ὑμεῖς μηχανῶμεναι πιεῖν" (lines 733-736) (The baby girl's become a skin/ full of wine, and wearing Persian booties to boot!/ Women, you overheated dipsomaniacs,/ never passing up a chance to wangle a drink.) To portray a woman desperately trying to save a bag of wine would have been an attempt from Aristophanes to ease the fears of women's permeating desire to be drunk. By placing the fears of men on stage, Aristophanes can show the men that is it not as frightening as they may imagine.

Mnesilochus' speech to the women highlights another great fear of Athenian men, the fear of their wives being adulterous. They are scared that that the women would bring a stranger into the privacy of the home (Gardner, 56). That women could have lives beyond their husbands' control may have also been an unsettling idea. The men's fears are not unreasonable because if a woman becomes pregnant and there is suspicion of adultery, there is an issue with paternity and inheritance. With Pericles'

new law of citizenship passed in 451 BCE, it is required that the parents must both be born of Athenian parents. Otherwise, there would be a great issue of passing on the family wealth and name to a child of a foreigner (Gardner, 57). Athenian men would have also been unwilling to give the child anything if there was any doubt as to the paternity. Mica points to this issue by accusing Euripides of teaching the men to fear and distrust their wives, "ὥστ᾽εὐθὺς εἰσιόντες ἀπὸ τῶν ἰκρίων/ ὑποβλέπουσ᾽ ἡμᾶς σκοποῦνταί τ᾽ εὐθέως/ μὴ μοιχὸς ἔνδον ᾖ τις ἀποκεκρυμμένος" (lines 395-398) (That's why, as soon as our men get home from the grandstand,/ they start right in giving us suspicious looks and/ searching the house for a hidden lover.) The women are angry because they have lost the freedom to go about as they please in their homes, the only place society gives to them to control as they see fit. When Euripides characterizes the women as running around the house hiding their lovers, the men leave the theater immediately distrusting and suspecting of their women.

Women do have an informal power in the household as they manage the affairs and see to the running of the man's property (Foley 1981, 133). While the men conduct business in the public, women oragnize the private operation of the home. With Euripides' criticism of female behavior, any power that the wife may have at home would no longer be available to them. Their already restricted lives would become stricter. By controlling the freedom available to women, men are able to control what happened in their own homes (Zeitlin 1990, 77). Men could reassert their control in all aspects of the polis, including the private domains of the household. Thus, when Euripides portrays women as deceptive creatures, the men

have no choice but to extend their dominance into the household. They can take away the deception that women perform by removing their power.

Aristophanes portrays the women of the *Thesmophoriazusae* in this way to alleviate men's fears, but also because he knows no other way to portray women. Because women have no public life, there was no precedent as to how to portray them in the ritual setting. Men are barred from the Thesmophoria and all other female festivals, thus no one knows how they really acted. Aristophanes chooses to portray women was as lustful and bibulous characters. Women never speak in the assembly, so there would be no record as to how they would have spoken. To have the women imitate men is a natural answer to this problem, since they already adopt the roles of men as leaders of the city during the Thesmophoria. Aristophanes has no other way to write his women other than to resemble Athenian men. In Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae*, the third of his plays about women, the women want to sneak into the men's assembly. The plot of this play is almost the reverse of the *Thesmophoriazusae*. In this instance, the women must be seen as both physically and internally male, so they must perfect the art of speech. Praxagora instructs them based on her knowledge of what she has heard the men say: "during the displacements I lived with my husband on the Pnyx, and learned by listening to the orators" (lines 243-244)[9], she explains. Praxagora and her fellow women thus imitate the men's speech. The women become men during the assembly, unlike the women of the Thesmophoria. The women of the Thesmophoria have no need to become men. Their power is granted through the context of the festival. Euripides even recognizes their

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[9] Translated by Jeffrey Henderson, 2002.

power because he is forced to keep quiet about women's affairs. The women of the Thesmophoria have silenced the tragedian.

Metatheatre in the *Thesmophoriazusae*

Cross-dressing and costume changing can be classified as one of the elements of metatheatre. Metatheatre is a play's "awareness of itself as theater" (Slater 2002, 1). Some of the elements of this dramatic device include a play-within-a-play, role-playing, and self-reference (Slater 2002, 1). Examples of these abound in the *Thesmophoriazusae*. Agathon's tragic chorus, Mnesilochus in the women's assembly, and the Euripidean parodies cocanuld be seen as elements of play-within-a-play, especially since each scene, taking place in the context of the play, has been organized and orchestrated by a playwright. In the previous section, I have extensively discussed the use of role-playing in the play: Aristophanes plays with the idea of mimesis to examine levels and implications of imitation. I turn to instances of self-reference through which different characters identity that they are part of a play. Because of mimesis, the characters demonstrate their awareness of being within a comedy. Upon Agathon's first appearance on stage, Euripides announces that Agathon is about to perform, "μελῳδεῖν αὖ παρασκευάζεται" (line 100) (He's getting ready to sing his aria.) Another instance includes Mica's speech in the assembly when she denounces Euripides.

> ποῦ δ᾽ οὐχὶ διαβέβηχ᾽, ὅπουπερ ἔμβραχύ
> εἰσὶν θεαταὶ καὶ τραγῳδοὶ καὶ χοροί,
> τὰς μοιχοτρόφους, τὰς ἀνδρεραστρίας καλῶν,
> τὰς οἰνοπότιδας, τὰς προδότιδας, τὰς λάλους,
> τὰς οὐδὲν ὑγιές, τὰς μέγ᾽ ἀνδράσιν κακόν; (lines 390-394)

> Where, on any occasion where there are spectators, tragic actors, and choruses,
> has he spared us his disparagement, calling us
> lover-keepers, man-chasers,
> wine-oglers, traitors, chatterboxes,
> utter sickies, the bane of men's lives?

Mica herself mentions Euripides' portrayal of the women, in front of the play's audience. In the public setting of the dramatic competition, the women are trying to get rid of their evil reputation. Examples of this kind of self-reference to the dramatic competitions were also seen in the *Frogs*. As we saw, Xanthias establishes the fact that they are in the midst of the comic festival before starting their descent to Hades. Dionysus and Xanthias switch costumes on several occasions in order to be disguised as different characters. Aeschylus and Euripides recite lines of their plays, enacting elements of a play-within-a-play. Metatheater contributes in supporting Aristophanes in his cause of elevating the genre of comedy above tragedy (Slater 2002, 5). "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" (Taplin, 171). This added level of self-awareness in the theater brings an immediacy to comedy that is not as explicitly present in tragedy.

Having extensively discussed each character's mimesis, it is possible to see the men and women's imitation of each other as a way of further looking at theater production as an added element of metatheatricality. "Transvestism in the theater… has another function, [t]his is the exposing of the secret artifices that theatrical conventions keep off stage to maintain the fictions of theatrical mimesis" (Zeitlin 1990, 385). The characters' mimesis on stage points to the costuming of the Greek

theater. In Old Comedy, there is a great emphasis on characters' costuming and the failure of their costumes to maintain a character's disguise (Taplin, 120). Mnesilochus lists different accessories of a woman's costume when he sees Agathon for the first time (lines 130-145). Again, components of the women's costume can be found when Agathon and Euripides are dressing up and preparing Mnesilochus to sneak into the Thesmophoria (lines 213-265). The women's traditional dress is composed of a dress, wrap, shoes, and wig. The costume pieces are referred to because they emphasize the gender reversal that occurs in the play. Based on images of Italian and Attic vase painting, a typical man's costume would have consisted of mask with prominent features and a beard, padding all over the body, and an attached comic phallus (Stehle, 372). The exaggerated features, the beard and phallus, are elements that highlight masculinity.

In addition to highlighting costumes, metatheatre through mimesis points to ideas about the process of production. This is highlighted best in the scene in which Agathon enters and Mnesilochus adopts his female costume. Agathon shows the audience how he begins to write a play. The plays he writes are created because of his nature and puts on the costume of his characters in order to portray them as truthfully as possible. Once the play has been written, the next step is choosing the actors. As Agathon has refused to play the part of a woman, Mnesilochus accepts the challenge. Agathon and Euripides clothe Mnesilochus. The last step in preparing Mnesilochus for his performance is to remind him to perfect his voice. At last, Mnesilochus is ready for his grand performance in the Thesmophoria.

Aristophanes has used mimesis to explore the different levels of imitation in each character. Agathon has assimilated what he tries to imitate most closely of all the characters in the play. Not only does he adopt the female costume, but he acts like a woman and begins to think like a woman. His masculinity has been brought into question since he is known by all to be effeminate. Mnesilochus' maleness is too much a part of him for him to be able to fully embrace the habits of women. He effectively dresses the part and is successful in his physical imitation. But Mnesilochus' disguise falls apart. When forced to play the female part, Euripides is never subjugated to the humiliation of being feminine in nature. While wearing a female costume, Euripides does not seem to adopt the nature or speech of a woman. Euripides' performance as an old woman in comedy serves the purpose of highlighting the idea of the rise of comedy above tragedy. Euripides may be offering a counter argument to Agathon. He can write characters without assimilating to their nature. Aristophanes, in fact, writes in this way.

With the conclusion of the play, there is a clear return to the standard rules of Greek society. Agathon, who reached the most mimesis, was looked down upon and mocked for his female nature and behavior. This may serve as a warning for letting an inversion of gender rules occur for too long. The women have recognized that they need men's help when they discover Mnesilochus' intrusion. Men have won, Euripides and Mnesilochus can make their escape with the help of a woman's body. The audience knows that the festival will end soon and then women will return home. The play seems to have gone through a path of most mimetic characters to least, suggesting that only a temporarily imitation of a person is possible.

A Final Thought

I choose to examine the *Thesmophoriazusae* through the lens of mimesis rather than in the dramatic festivals from the *Frogs*. I used the setting of the Thesmophoria to dramatize the space as a place for the action to occur. Crytilla even exclaims, at one point, that the Thesmophoria is no place for theater. "πείθει τι τῷ κακῷ κακῶς ἀπολουμένῳ/ ληροῦντι λῆρον; Θεσμοφόριον τουτογί" (lines 879-880) (Do you believe the ravings of this awful man,/ condemned to an awful death? This is the Thesmophorium!) The *Thesmophoriazusae*, however, is preoccupied with inversion of gender roles and mimesis. The mimetic nature of the play required that is be looked at as such rather than the parodies in comparison to a dramatic competition.

Coda

It is clear that Aristophanes has a reason for the religious festivals he includes in his plays. The *Frogs* incorporates the Eleusinian mysteries, Dionysiac cult practices, and the dramatic competitions. Within the play, references to the mysteries included Eleusinian vocabulary as well as Dionysus' symbolic initiation. While the Eleusinian mysteries were performed in order to gain a happier afterlife, so too Dionysus participated in an initiation that teaches him how to help Athens. Dionysus decides to bring Aeschylus back to Athens to ensure the city's safety. This decision represents a return to a traditional way of thinking and acting within the city. Aeschylus stands for order and convention. In addition to his initiation, Dionysus participates in and encounters some of his own cult practices. Persephone welcomes Dionysus and Xanthias to the underworld with a great feast and symposium. Sympotic practices, including wine drinking, were in honor of Dionysus. The wine drinking resulted in men's transcendence into an alternative reality. Within the symposia, men discussed all aspects of the city.

Another Dionysiac practice includes ecstatic dancing. The chorus of initiates in the underworld says that only those who have participated in these dances may join in the Eleusinian dancing. The maenads, the female followers of Dionysus, performed these frenetic dances. These festivals set up an organized space to allow people to cross certain limits in order to express certain emotions. The dramatic competitions, also in honor of Dionysus, are represented in the *Frogs* primarily by the contest of Aeschylus and Euripides. Their challenge to prove themselves as the better poets validates the role of the poet to teach and educate the citizens. As Aeschylus and

Euripides argue over who has the best skill in poetry, Aristophanes gives authority to himself to advise his audience as an instructor to the city. Thus in the *Frogs*, the rituals enrich Aristophanes' suggestion to help Athens through traditional festivals, recognition of the role of the community, and a change in politics.

The ritual in the *Thesmophoriazusae* plays a much different role. This time, the Thesmophoria functions as the setting for Aristophanes' dramatic action. Agathon, the character who has undergone great depth of mimesis, has become effeminate by nature because of culture. I mean that he has continually performed the behaviors of women that now they are habitual. The way he must think and dress in order to write his feminine tragedies has persuaded himself of his feminine nature. Because he seems himself as effeminate, Agathon can be a woman when he needs to be. Mnesilochus, does not perform mimesis as successfully. His masculine speech and thoughts reveal his disguise to the women of the Thesmophoria. Culture does not have the same effect on Mnesilochus because he cannot truly take on his new female character. Even in the parodies of Euripidean tragedy, Mnesilochus is incapable of successfully playing the women's roles.

Euripides, however, as a character in the *Thesmophoriazusae*, may have a feminine touch to him. As the poet known for being radical and deceptive, as emphasized in the *Frogs*, Euripides plays his female role successfully. He is required to imitate a woman in the final rescue attempt to save his relative. The women, in their ritual setting, behave like men but are never required to fully imitate them. Their actions stem from the formal organization of the Thesmphoria, which resembles the men's assembly. Thus, the women's actions are masculine while their thoughts

remain feminine. Mimesis, then, in the *Thesmophoriazusae*, emphasizes the gender dynamic in ancient Greece. Role reversal, as mimesis, can only last temporarily without ramifications. Agathon is ridiculed because of his transformation as the other characters return to their normal lives.

Both plays focus a great deal on the tragic and comic genres. They both include the art of drama and the dramatic competition, to some extent. I briefly discussed the idea of comedy as being superior to tragedy. Aristophanes includes the rituals in order to show comedy as the better genre. The use of tragic parodies elevates the comic genre in order to suggest comedy as the most effective means to teach and educate the citizens. "In the work of Aristophanes, comedy assimilated its political function ever more clearly to that of tragedy to the point of competing with it" (Dobrov, 265). Rather than just highlighting the ability of comedy to instruct, Aristophanes also mocks the art of tragedy when Aeschylus and Euripides argue and Euripides appears onstage as an old woman. One of the differences of the genres is comedy's use of explicit self-referentiality. The definitions of comedy and tragedy are based on what is unique to each genre (Taplin, 172). Through choral parabases, the poet speaks directly to the audience and emphasizes that he is doing so. There is meant to be an interaction between the audience and the actors as the play unfolds. Laughter from the audience is encouraged as a means of interrupting the plot (Taplin, 172). Aristophanes harnesses the power of laughter in teaching his audience through perverting rituals, costume changing, and men and women exchange roles with each other.

In the *Frogs*, Aristophanes does so through the competition of Aeschylus and Euripides. Within a comedy, Aeschylus and Euripides argue and compete with their art. While the answer on how to save Athens occurs during the tragic debate, it still happens in the context of comedy, which remains under Aristophanes' control. This mastery is seen especially in the way he manipulates the tragic references. We can also see this in the *Thesmophoriazusae*. Aristophanes cites almost exact phrases of Euripides. When Euripides and Mnesilochus act out the rescue scenes, none of the tragedies succeed in saving Mnesilochus. The parody of the *Helen* fails as soon as the Scythian archer approaches the group of women to guard the relative. The parody of the *Andromeda* is also insufficient in freeing Mnesilochus. As the Scythian archer refuses to leave his guard, Euripides realizes that the tragic parodies will not work. Euripides makes a promise to the women to no longer slander them on stage. In addition to portraying the tragedies as unable to play their role in a rescue, Aristophanes has Euripides compromising the art at which he so excels. Euripides wrote his tragedies about women who performed outrageous acts. With his promise to the women of the Thesmophoria, Euripides can no longer use the women for the plots of his plays in which he vilifies them.

Moreover, he can finally save his relative when a he constructs a rescue scene typical of comedy. He returns as an old woman with a young dancing girl to distract the archer. Comedies generally end with some sort of celebration (Taplin, 172). Euripides brings the girl as a sexual delight for the archer and seems to organize the start of a celebration as the girl begins to practice her dancing. The scene, however, cannot end as a comedy normally would because Euripides, as the organizer of this

scheme, is not a comic poet. Therefore, Aristophanes retains the upper hand, so to speak, by having Euripides and Mnesilochus flee the stage still in their female costumes.

The rituals presented in these comedies give Aristophanes the authority to validate the elevation of his comic genre above tragedy. He does tend to pervert the rituals through exaggeration and parody, but he reshapes them to support what he is trying to say within the plays. Aristophanes maintains the purposes and goals of the festivals while they are on stage. He does this as a dramatic and rhetorical device of manipulating these customary rituals to suit his purpose. The dramatized rituals in the plays give him this power because he has control. Through his poetry and mastery of language, he rewrites the festivals for his comedies. Thus, his reworking of the celebrations granted Aristophanes ability to bring his genre above tragedy. While no genre necessarily rose above the other in fifth century Athens, Aristophanes uses these rituals to prove comedy better than tragedy in educating the citizens.

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