Order Number 8900922

Winged words/graphic birds: The Aristophanic comedy of language

Dobrov, Gregory Wadim, Ph.D.

Cornell University, 1988

U·M·I
300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

WINGED WORDS/GRAPHIC BIRDS
THE ARISTOPHANIC COMEDY OF LANGUAGE

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Cornell University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Gregory Wadim Dobrov
August 1988

Biographical Sketch

Gregory Wadim Dobrov was born in San Mateo, California on November 21, 1957. He grew up in Los Altos, California, where he attended the public schools and in 1975 graduated from Los Altos High School. In 1981 he received the B.Th. from the Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville, New York and in 1983 the M.A. in Classics from Syracuse University. He entered the graduate program in Classics at Cornell University in 1983 as an A. D. White Fellow and received the M.A. in 1985 with strong emphasis on his Slavic linguistics and linguistic theory minor. He attended the École des Hautes Etudes in Paris in 1986 with the support of a Townsend Doctoral Fellowship. In September 1988 he will assume the post of Assistant Professor of Classics at Syracuse University.

Dedication

To Mara, my εὐφροσύνη

and

to my father

ὃς μ' ἐδίδαξε τὰς φωνάς

Acknowledgments

I am much indebted to the judicious guidance of Professors Pietro Pucci, Phillip Mitsis, and David Mankin, who took the time to read my work, suggest improvements, and forgive its shortcomings. I am grateful also to Professor Leonard Babby for his guidance and inspiration in linguistics and for his participation in a committee outside his field. Professor Thomas Hubbard, a fellow Aristophanic, has also been helpful in discussing and sharing his work with me. I have been much encouraged by Professors Sir Kenneth Dover, Marcel Detienne, and Michael Putnam who kindly chased bird-puzzles with me on many a Friday afternoon. I would like to thank: the Cornell University Graduate school for the 1983-1985 Andrew D. White Fellowship; the Cornell University Department of Classics for the Townsend Travel Grant and for the 1986-1987 Townsend Graduate Fellowship; Linda Iroff for bringing the SMK software to my attention and helping me with it. I am grateful, above all, to my wife Mara for her unconditional support and encouragement.

Table of Contents

I

The Meaning of *Birds*: Theory and Criticism

Birds is unique in the Aristophanic menagerie for the obstinacy with which it has resisted attempts to capture its general theme. Is the play that was first seen by an Athenian audience at the Dionysia of 414 B.C. an allegory of the Sicilian Expedition, a parable concerning human nature, another criticism of modernity and sophistic technique, sheer fantasy, or some blend of these and other motives? From its origins in hellenistic scholarship,[1] the controversy over the meaning of *Birds* developed by the end of the nineteenth century to the point where a bibliography[2] could classify work on the play under six categories, each representing a distinct band in the interpretive spectrum. The debate, which is largely one between critics who detect political tendency in whole or in part and critics who treat the play as utopian fantasy, has recently become tamer as 'historicists' and 'utopians' explore the byways of their respective approaches.[3] I submit, however, that

---

[1]V. Coulon, in his "Observations critiques et exégétiques sur l'argument II des *Oiseaux* et sur le texte d'Aristophane." *REG* 38 (1925): 73-98, solved a few long-standing textual problems in the second hypothesis to the play. By re-establishing Boissonade's emendation σκοπός for στίχος, in particualr, he clarified the context of this word that points to an ancient scholarly controversy.

[2]W. Behagel, *Geschichte der Auffassung der Aristophanischen Vögel.* Vols. 1-2. (Heidelberg: Georg Mohr, 1879.)

[3]The political approach is well reviewed by H. Newiger, "Gedanken zu Aristophanes' *Vögeln*," in *Aretês Mnêmê for K. I. Vourveris* (Athens, 1983). On the utopian end: G. Murray, *Aristophanes, a Study*. Oxford, 1933; E. Schwinge, "Aristophanes und die Utopie." *WJA* 3 (1977): 43-67. Influential

this scholarly dialectic should not be regarded as a simple cacophony of conflicting opinion, but rather as an expected reaction to a play whose central metaphor, structure, performance, and textual figures produce a double, aporetic logic. In the present chapter I outline the theoretical considerations which have led me to place my reading of *Birds* outside this dialectic: Instead of merely seeking to identify a unifying content or theme, I treat the play as a powerful dramatic experiment whose polysemy is rooted in its textuality, i.e. in the very nature of language as proto-writing characterized by an essential metaphoricity and *différance.* I conclude with a brief discussion of some other aspects of comic discourse that provide a context for this 'comedy of language.'

Stalking the *Birds*

A suitable point of departure in a study of *Birds* is Hypothesis II[4] as the earliest extant critical attempt to set forth the play's general meaning. This text appears to "report a controversy between philologists in antiquity (without our being able to distinguish the participants) over the methods of Aristophanic plot-construction:"[5]

---

readings with utopian roots have been: C. Whitman, *Aristophanes and the Comic Hero.* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1964) 167-199. W. Arrowsmith, "Aristophanes' *Birds*: The Fantasy Politics of Eros." *Arion* 1 (1973): 119-167.

[4]For the text of the plays and hypotheses am following Victor Coulon, ed. and Hilaire Van Deale, trans., *Aristophane*, Vol. 3 (Paris: Budé, 1928); although the translations are mine, I borrow from B. Rogers, *The Birds of Aristophanes* (London, 1906) and A. Sommerstein, *Aristophanes: Birds* (Warminster, 1987). L. Radermacher regarded Hypothesis II as a borrowing from a rather astute critical biography of Aristophanes (see Coulon 173).

[5]H. Hofmann, *Mythos und Komödie, Untersuchungen zu den Vögeln des Aristophanes* (Hidelsheim: Olms, 1976) 79.

Ἐν δὲ τοῖς Ὄρνισι καὶ μέγα τι διανενόηται, . . . ὡς γὰρ ἀδιόρθωτον ἤδη νόσον τῆς πολιτείας νοσούσης . . . , ἄλλην τινὰ πολιτείαν αἰνίττεται. . . . Οὐ μόνον δὲ τοῦτο, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ σχῆμα ὅλον καὶ τὴν φύσιν, εἰ δέοι, συμβουλεύει μετατίθεσθαι πρὸς τὸ ἡρεμαίως βιοῦν. Καὶ ἡ μὲν ἀπότασις αὕτη. Τὰ δὲ κατὰ θεῶν βλάσφημα ἐπιτηδείως ᾠκονόμηται . . . . Ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν καθόλου σκοπὸς τοιοῦτος. Ἕκαστον δὲ τῶν κατὰ μέρος οὐκ εἰκῇ, ἀλλ' ἄντικρυς Ἀθηναίων . . . ἐλέγχει τὴν φαύλην διάθεσιν. . . .

. . . Τινὲς δέ φασι τὸν ποιητὴν τὰς ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαις τερατολογίας ἐν μὲν ἄλλοις διελέγχειν, ἐν δὲ τοῖς νῦν τὴν τῆς γιγαντομαχίας συμπλοκὴν ἕωλον ἀποφαίνων ὄρνισιν ἔδωκε διαφέρεσθαι πρὸς θεοὺς περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς.

In *Birds* also something rather grand is intended, . . . As his city-state is afflicted with an incurable illness. . . [Aristophanes] intimates another city. . . . He suggests, moreover, a complete metamorphosis in form and nature, if necessary, in order to secure a life of peace. This is his intention. The blasphemy against the gods is skilfully handled. . .The general aim, however, is as follows: to openly expose the Athenians to general reproach for their foolish attitudes rather than randomly criticize citizens individually. . . .

. . . Some say that, whereas in other comedies the poet had ridiculed the tales of marvels in tragedy, in the given play he reveals the theme of gigantomachic conflict as trite by having the birds challenge the gods' (supreme) authority.

A salient feature of this brief commentary is an awareness of *Birds* as markedly different from other Aristophanic plays: 1) in the elusiveness of its main idea or intention which, nevertheless, appears to be 'something grand;' 2) in its departure from sustained series of jokes *ad hominem* towards a sort of critical generality; 3) in its relation to, and criticism of, other texts. The Hypothesis concludes with a discussion of chronology that quotes vv. 145-148 as a cryptic allusion to Alcibiades recalling an earlier allusion to some restriction on κωμικὴ ἄδεια, 'comic indemnity.'[6]

[6]Καὶ ἐν μὲν ἄλλοις δράμασι διὰ τῆς κωμικῆς ἀδείας ἤλεγχεν Ἀριστοφάνης τοὺς κακῶς πολιτευομένους ⟨φανερῶς.⟩ Ἐν δὲ τοῖς Ὄρνισι καὶ μέγα τι

A simple and, in my opinion, misleading approach to take in explaining the uniqueness of *Birds* is to conclude from the Scholion on v. 1297 that a certain Syracosios had somehow succeeded in legislating a restriction on ὀνομαστὶ κωμῳδεῖν.[7] First of all, *Birds*, despite its striking departure from the style of a play such as *Knights*, does mention thirty-one contemporary Athenians by name including Syrakosios himself. Moreover, we have six more oblique references: three patronymics and three nicknames.[8] Second, as S. Halliwell notes,[9] we need to beware of the "general tendency of ancient interpreters" to "draw unsound or unncessary inferences" out of an "eagerness to re-create the assumed factual background of Aristophanic jokes."[10] Σ 1297 has been especially influential since its canonization as fact by nineteenth-century German schoalrs[11] who

διανενόηται, φανερῶς μὲν οὐδαμῶς, -- οὐ γὰρ ἔτι τούτου ἦν ἐξουσία,-- λεηθότως δέ, ὅσον ἀνῆκεν ἀπὸ κωμῳδίας προσκρούειν. So Coulon, improving upon the rather confused Mss.

[7]I cite the text of J. White, *The Scholia on the Aves of Aristophanes* (Boston, 1914) 234: οὗτος γὰρ τῶν περὶ τὸ βῆμα, καὶ Εὔπολις ὡς λάλον ἐν Πόλεσι διασύρει· "Συρακόσιος δ' ἔοικεν, ἡνίκ' ἂν λέγῃ,/ τοῖς κυνιδίοισι τοῖσιν ἐπὶ τῶν τειχίων· / ἀναβὰς γὰρ ἐπὶ τὸ βῆμ' ὑλακτεῖ περιτρέχων." δοκεῖ δὲ καὶ ψήφισμα τεθηκέναι μὴ κωμῳδεῖσθαι ὀνομαστί τινα, ὡς Φρύνιχος ἐν Μονοτρόπῳ φησί· "Ψῶζ' ἔχοι Συρακόσιον. / ἐπιφανὲς γὰρ αὐτῷ καὶ μέγα τύχοι· / ἀφείλετο γὰρ κωμῳδεῖν οὓς ἐπεθύμουν." διὸ πικρότερον αὐτῷ προσφέρονται, ὡς λάλῳ δὲ τὴν 'κίτταν' παρέθηκεν. See C. Brink, *Horace on Poetry: The 'Ars Poetica'* Vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1971) 316-317 for a broader view. Vv. 283-284 of *Ars Poetica* may be generally aligned with "the confused and often unintelligent [but not necessarily fictitious] accounts" of legislation limiting comic ἄδεια.

[8]See vv. 17, 31, 126, 712 (and 1491), 766, 1292.

[9]"Ancient Interpretations of ὀνομαστὶ κωμῳδεῖν in Aristophanes," *CQ* 34 (1984): 87.

[10]Halliwell 87, 85.

[11]A. Meinecke *FCG* (1839), i. 39 ff.; F. Leo, *Qaestiones Aristophaneae* (1873)

succumbed to the "temptation to suppose that the scholia possess independent information."[12] This temptation is two-fold and somewhat contradictory: First, by claiming to reveal an interesting moment in the tumultuous years 415-414, the scholion accounts for the reticence of *Birds* with respect to contemporary people and events. Second, in so doing, it has afforded some scholars the comfort of re-associating the play with its socio-political context and interpreting it in the light of this association.

I must agree with Halliwell's suspicion that the entire statement in Σ 1297 concerning the 'decree of Syracosios' is an invention.[13] The simple fact that the scholiast introduces the comment with δοκεῖ, 'it seems,' is warning enough against trusting him. The point to emphasize here is that we must not allow ourselves, by historicizing an unreliable guess supported by a corrupt fragment (fr. 26 Kock), to underestimate or distort the design of *Birds*. Although the 'doctrine of Syracosios' has been revived intermittently since the time of Droysen[14] it returns each time, fortunately, with less and less force. The most recent effort by a believer[15] is entirely dedicated to saving the historicity of the alleged decree by modifying it to the point where all that remains for the interpreter of *Birds* is a weak excuse for Aristophanes' failure

---

ch. 2; Th. Bergk, *Kleine Philologische Schriften* Vol. 2 (1886), 566, 444 ff.; A. Körte *RE* XI, 1234 f. (from Halliwell 87, note 22).

[12]Halliwell 85.

[13]"If I am right about the general tendency of ancient interpreters to draw unjustified inferences from comic texts, then an agnostic attidtude to Syracosios' decree would be wise. If this decree was an invention, the motivation may well have come from the knowledge of the one decree of this kind which . . . may reasonably be regarded as genuine– the one attested in Σ [RE] *Ach.* 67." Halliwell 87.

[14]See below on Note 20.

[15]A. Sommerstein, "The Decree of Syracosios," *CQ* 36 (1986): 101-108.

to use Alcibiades' name in the play.

A well-known nineteenth-century discussion of *Birds*, J. Süvern's "Essay,"[16] attempted to ground the elusive text in historical fact by uncovering an intricate and explicit allegory--the only interpretive strategy capable of reconciling the play's general fantasy with a conviction that it must, nevertheless, be immediately and entirely concerned with specific individuals and events. Refuting the views of A. Schlegel[17] who held that *Birds* is "the most innocent buffoonery or farce, touching upon all subjects . . . without entering deeply into any, like a fanciful fairy-tale," Süvern presents his learned and detailed reading by means of curiously circular reasoning: the failure of scholars to detect it is itself proof of the allegory's "fine construction and masterly perfection."[18] Attempting to refine the simplistic analysis of Hypothesis II, he detects an "intricate confusion" that has "thrown a veil over the fundamental idea of the poem, and has led to the opinion, that the author had merely in view a general satire, on the notions and relations of man, though with a special reference to the Athenian people."[19] This 'confusion' turns out to be simply the resistance of *Birds* to Süvern's allegorical trap. Thus, while the gods represent the Spartans and the Hoopoe is Lamachus, the Athenians are represented sometimes by birds and sometimes by 'real' men. Peisetairos seems to be a composite portrait of Alcibiades and Gorgias whereas

[16] *Essay on "The Birds" of Aristophanes*, Trans. W. Hamilton (London 1835).

[17] *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur*, Vol. 1 (Heidelberg 1809). Cf. Murray 155: "[*Birds*] seems to be just an "escape" from worry and sordidness of life, away into the land of sky and clouds and poetry."

[18] Süvern 2.

[19] Süvern 12.

Euelpides comprises the gullible Athenians and Gorgias' pupil Polos. The cumbersome structure ultimately founders and, in its failure to persuade posterity, remains a warning against eagerness to credit the play with an explicit political design.

At the other end of the spectrum is the scholarly tradition that regards *Birds* as pure escapist fantasy involving only a general criticism of human nature. This approach can be traced from Schlegel's well-known and often-quoted judgement (cited above) through much scholarship in the nineteenth century[20] and more recent work[21] to its most provocative and sophisticated expression in C. Whitman's "Anatomy of Nothingness."[22] Earlier in his book he defines the comic hero as an ἀλαζών, "the Great Impostor, Nature's exile, the absurdity of a self against a selfless Absurd," who is master of πονηρία, especially "the ability to turn metaphors into facts."[23] *Birds*, he claims, is fantastic representation of absurdity or 'nothingness' since "the nothing that people talk is the reality which they possess:"

---

[20]A. Vögelin, "Über Aristophanes Vögel" *Ein Blatt an Herrn Prof. Köchly zum Feste des fünfundzwanzigjährigen Bestandes der zürcherischen Hochschule* (Zurich: 1858); E. Curtius, *Griechische Geschichte*, Vol. 2 4th ed. (Berlin: Weidmann 1874) 629-631; J. Droysen, "Des Aristophanischen Vögel und die Hermokopiden" *RM* 3 (1835): 161-208, and *RM* 4 (1836): 27-62; Th. Kock ed., *Ausgewählte Komödien des Aristophanes erklärt von Theodor Kock*, Vol. IV, 4th ed. Rev. by Otto Schroeder (Berlin: Weidmann 1927); For a complete overview of this approach see Behagel 20.

[21]J. Van Leeuwen,"Aves," in *Prolegomena ad Aristophanem* (Leiden: 1908); Murray; Q. Cataudella, *Aristofane* (Bari:1934) 143-145; M. Gigante, "La città dei giusti e gli 'Uccelli' di Aristofane," *Dioniso* 2 (1948): 17-25; E. Blaiklock, "Walking Away From the News," *GR* II, 1 (1954): 98-111; and Schwinge, to name a few.

[22]Whitman (Chapter 5) 167-200.

[23]Whitman 79.

> The word is all, it creates consciousness, and its enormous vitality stubbornly resists fact. A word becomes image or metaphor, and the image or metaphor lives in the mind, independent of reason and far more compelling . . . . Images and metaphors are dream substance and make dream worlds, and every world is an absurdity, a verbal nothing. All this is beyond satire, as handled in the *Birds;* it is a poetic weft comically adumbrating the world in which we live, the world where there can be no tragic reversal or recognition, the world of *poneria* and the self, where the persuasive and manipulable word is king.[24]

This approach transcends that of Whitman's predecessors who regarded Nephelokokkugia as either a simple escapist fantasy or an idealized utopia. Identifying language as the source of *Birds*' non-sense or 'nothingness,' Whitman made an exegetical advance by implicitly placing textuality in the focus of his discussion.

Naturally, much work falls between the historicizing and utopian poles. This middle ground is occupied largely by attempts to modify or integrate the two extremes.[25] Thus, W. Arrowsmith has sought to reconnect *Birds* with politics by reading the play as a comic warning and satire of Athenian πλεονεξία. Whitman, who "is drawn irresistibly to . . . his wrong-headed conclusion, that words here are *everything*,"[26] has failed to see that "the real subject of the play" is politics "as fantasy, a disease of the human spirit, a spirit *represented, incarnated,* in the Athenian imperial city." Although Arrowsmith makes many insightful comments, especially about

---

[24]Whitman 172.

[25]For nineteenth-century bibliography see Behagel 18-21 who lists a number of works occupying the *Mittelstellung* between a *Speciell-politische Tendenz* and *Tendenzlosigkeit.*

[26]Arrowsmith 146.

the function of Eros as originary lack (to which I return below), he places himself unproductively at variance with Whitman and other 'utopians' in order to dwell on how Aristophanic comedy "copes with Athenian *hybris* by self-recognition in the audience."[27] He seems, however, to agree with his linguistically-oriented adversary in the same paragraph when he notes that "comedy reveals the inherent contradiction and the doomed absurdity of it all."

H. Newiger and M. Alink[28] articulate milder *Mittelstellungen*. In Alink's reading, the play, "a clear presentation of the sort of thing that happens whenever Athenians deal with politics,"[29] finds Aristophanes playing gentle tricks on his audience by luring them away from the earth and subjecting them to a performance in which, by praising 'birds,' he praises himself.[30] Newiger's book makes a theoretical contribution by clarifying why, for all their figurality and personification, the early Aristophanic plays (including *Birds*) are clearly *not* allegories:

> Es darf abschließend festgestellt werden, daß auch die *Chorpersonifikationen* sich uns nicht als allegorische Figuren dargestellt haben. Ihre Rolle in den einzelnen Komödien ist verschieden, auch die angewandte Technik der Darstellung, wie wir sahen; aber das Wesentliche ist Wolken, Wespen und Vögeln gemeinsam: sie bedeuten nicht durchgänig etwas anderes, als sie sind, sondern nur gelegentlich. Sie werden durch Wortspiel,

[27] Arrowsmith 155. See also F. Heberlein, *Pluthygieia* (Frankfurt/Main, 1980).

[28] H. Newiger, *Metapher und Allegorie. Studien zu Aristophanes.* Zetemata 16 (Munich, 1957); M. Alink, *De vogels van Aristophanes: een structuuranalyse en interpretatie*, (Amsterdam: 1983).

[29] Alink 325.

[30] Alink 324.

> Metapher, Vergleich zu einem anderen in Beziehung gezetzt, aber nicht a priori geglichen, es wird auf sie nicht Zug um Zug des Gemeinten übertragen, sondern die Übertragungen gehen hin und her. Wir sind nur zeitweise "im Bilde." Ein im ganzen einheitliches Bild hatten wir nur in den "Vögeln," aber da war wieder kein deutlich und ständig Gemeintes feststellbar.[31]

Most studies of *Birds* from Süvern to Alink have entered the fray with some ritual meta-criticism in which the problem is delineated, allegiances declared, and opponents confronted. The historicist/utopian dialectic will doubtless engage yet many more students of *Birds* as the play continues to demonstrate an uncanny ability to generate writing by polarizing its scholarly audience.[32] My strategy, however, will involve an attempt to break the venerable holding-pattern to investigate the properties responsible for the text's elusiveness: *how* does an apparent anomaly in the Aristophanic oeuvre that is "regarded as the poet's masterpiece,"[33] continue to oscillate in critical opinion between playful nonsense and urgent, structured meaning? To seek an answer we need to step outside the closed critical circle outlined above and take a bird's-eye view of Aristophanes' *Birds*.

---

[31]Newiger 102.

[32]Among recent studies that explore other aspects of *Birds* are Hofmann's book (Note 5) and D. Pozzi, "The Pastoral Ideal in the *Birds* of Aristophanes," *CJ* 81 (1986): 119-129 which contrast with the historicizing approach as in B. Katz, "The *Birds* of Aristophanes and Politics." *Athenaeum* 54 (1976): 353-381. and I. Stark, "Die Aristophanische Komödienfigur als Subject der Geschichte." *Klio* 64 (1982): 67-74.

[33]Whitman 168.

Metaphor, *Différance*, and the Comic Truth

I argue elsewhere[34] that the 'synthetic myth' (plot or λόγος) of Aristophanic comedy differs from its 'authentic' tragic counterpart in being, among other things, inextricable from its text. Thus, while the myth of Orestes is variously represented in a number of tragedies, the ascent to Olympus on a dung beetle to retrieve Peace or the poetic mission to Hades are unique to their respective texts. In the case of tragedy it may appear useful to distinguish the interpretation of myth from the interpretation of a text though, as W. Burkert notes, "both may evolve in a hermeneutic circle and remain mutually dependent on each other."[35] The Old Comic 'myth,' however, being identical with its form *is* a text, i.e., a system structured by the properties of language as *archi-écriture*. Old Comedy, moreover, exhibits an awareness of itself as a text[36] and by involvement with its own textuality sets itself apart from other genres. In its reflection of these aspects of comic discourse *Birds* has arguably the purest and most powerful 'myth'/plot in that it derives its problem-and-solution (νόσος-μηχανὴ σωτηρίας) from a single textual figure: the man-as-bird metaphor which is deconstructively conflated with its inversion (bird-as-man). Reversing the Homeric ἔπεα πτερόεντα, 'winged words,' Aristophanes hatches a world of preposterous 'graphic birds' (cf. the χὴν γεγραμμένος 'written goose' of v. 805) from the fertile nest of writing.

Birds, then, is different from other (extant) comedies[37] which

---

[34]"The Dawn of Farce: Aristophanes," *Themes in Drama 10: Farce* (Cambridge UP, 1988): 15-31.

[35]*Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*, Sather Classical Lectures, 47 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: U of California Press, 1980), 56.

[36]Note, especially, its ability to refer to other texts; to consciously refer to, and control its own text in a variety of punning strategies; and in the self-referentiality of parabatic discourse.

[37]It is impossible to tell from testimony such as *Knights* 522 (Μάγνης . . . ψάλλων καὶ πτερυγίζων) or the entry under 'Krates of Athens' in the *Suda*

import most of their material from outside contexts, 'real-world' and literary. The plots of *Acharnians, Wasps, Lysistrata, Frogs* etc., with their 'problems' and 'solutions,' are quite stable, despite fantastic elements, in their explicit and immediate involvement with Athenian domestic and political life, the Peloponnesian War, various individual citizens, intellectual trends, contemporary literature etc. Brushing these elements into the periphery, Aristophanes has derived *Birds* as a projection of the central metaphor so that its content and 'theme' are defined, first and foremost, by play of the sign. Informed on many levels by an aporetic logic and *différance*, this comedy suspends us between sense and nonsense without offering the comfort of resolution. In distinction from the earlier plays in which metaphor figures as a more or less important accomplice in the plot, *Birds* is essentially dependent on the collision and collusion of signifiers for even its most general 'meaning.'

In identifying metaphor as the source of *Birds* I am actually speaking of a metaphorical *complex* structured as a projection from abstract to concrete: 1) the potential, at the heart of language, of one sign to replace or suppress another; 2) the lyric topos 'I wish I were a bird;' 3) the character (presence-on-stage) of Tereus (vv. 46, 92-675); 4) the subsequent multiple conflations of the human and avian. At first glance an extended example of what one critic calls "eine von den Hauptformen des Aristophanischen Scherzes, *eine Metapher buchstäblich zu nehmen*,"[38] this series, in fact,

whether Magnes' or Krates' *Birds* bore any similarity to the Aristophanic play of the same name since no fragments of either survive. A. Meinecke, *Fragmenta Comicorum Graecorum* (Berlin, 1839-1857) Vol. 1, 64, doubts that Krates (either of the two) wrote a *Birds* and suggests that the reference in the *Suda* is to a recension of Magnes' play.

transcends simple 'literalization' to involve *Birds* in a bi-directional movement which upsets the subject/predicate (tenor/vehicle) hierarchy in metaphor to allow fully reciprocal intersubstitution of signs (as 'bird' replaces 'man' and vice versa) in a single figure.

Aristophanes' complex ornithic myth, therefore, can be analyzed on a number of levels: as a rather abstract μεταφορά or *transiatio* of two men, motivated only by generalized ἔρως ('desire' or 'lack'), from the familiar into an invented Other; as the comic subversion of a lyric topos: Tereus (traditionally the supressor of language, here its disseminator) simultaneously embodies the desiderative metaphor and mocks it; as the exploitation by Aristophanes of a scenic ambiguity: the men, essentially unchanged in birdhood, cheerfully taunt our inability, as spectators, to distinguish between 'costume,' 'disguise,' and 'metamorphosis;' as the vehicle for a paradoxical character (the bird-chorus) that is at once the object of a transformation (men seek to become birds) and its subject (birds assimilate to the general human sphere of language and politics while claiming to be gods) etc. These and many other moments, charged by an essential equivocation, will necessarily continue to suggest widely divergent readings. Although it may be futile to demand a traditional 'theme' from the play of signs that is *Birds*, Aristophanes' choice to foreground textuality in the play is certainly meaningful, a point I will take up after a brief review of the metaphorical complex outlined above.

"Metaphor," writes Lacan, "occurs at the precise point at which sense emerges from nonsense, that is, at the frontier which, as Freud discovered, when crossed the other way produces . . . the signifier *esprit;* it is at this

[38]A. Schlegel in H. Newiger 181.

frontier that we realize that man defies his very destiny when he derides the signifier."[39] Language into which man is born and which 'speaks man' is a systemic prison from which jokes and metaphors can offer only the illusion of escape. In "White Mythology" J. Derrida[40] discusses at length how 'transparent' (philosophical/scientific) discourse with its pretense of complete control denies its incarceration and perceives metaphors as "weapons directed against reality, instruments to break the referentiality of language, to deliver language from its ontological function,"[41] while jokes are capsules of nonsense whose resolution is, at best, a pleasurable distraction.

Comedy, being largely innocent of a propositional imperative, is free to face its textuality by rattling its linguistic fetters in a perpetual show of escape through humor and transference. This freedom cannot fully respect a literal/figural dichotomy since comic discourse depends on all language (not simply metaphors and jokes) being, at some level, 'nonsense' in critical need of construal and interpretation. "The picturesque saying that 'language is a book of faded metaphors' is the reverse of the truth," notes L. Bloomfield "for poetry is rather a blazoned book of language."[42] What we misleadlingly call 'metaphor,' then, is not an anomalous substitution of transference for reference but rather a strategy foregrounding the transferrential and differential essence of the signifying process.[43] "Mortal speech is a calling

---

[39] *Écrits, a Selection*, Trans. A. Sheridan (New York, London: Norton, 1977) 158

[40] "White Mythology," in *Margins of Philosophy*, Trans. A. Bass (Chicago UP, 1982) 209-271.

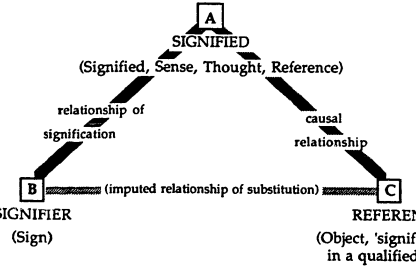
[41] K. Harries, "The Many Uses of Metaphor ," *CI* 5, No. 1 (1978): 80.

[42] *Language*, (Chicago UP, 1984) 443.

[43] A. Wilden, citing F. Bresson's comment that "languages are *simultaneously* doubly articulated and devoid of symbolic value," suggests

that names," writes Heidegger, "a bidding which, out of the simple onefold of the difference, bids thing and world to come . . . Poetry proper is never merely a higher mode (*melos*) of everyday language. It is rather the reverse: everyday language is a forgotten and therefore used-up poem, from which there hardly resounds a call any longer."[44]

Implicit in Saussure's diacritical notion of language, the originary transference and *différance* of the signification process have been variously articulated in structuralist and post-structuralist thought. Consider C. Ogen and I. Richards' 'meaning triangle:'[45]



---

that "metaphor as usually conceived (dependent on resemblance) is not something developed out of an originally digital language, but rather that language itself, as Vico, Condillac, Rousseau, and others believed, is originally metaphorical." J. Lacan, *Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*, Trans. with Comm. A. Wilden (Johns Hopkins UP, 1968) 220.

[44]M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Trans. A Hofstadter (Harper & Row, 1971) 208.

[45]This modified version is presented in Wilden 224.

This diagram represents language as the syntagmatic relationship between the signifier B and Signified A. The sign, however, has also a paradigmatic *value*: i.e., B is structured paradigmatically within the differential lexical system by other, semantically contiguous signs. In the syntagmatic dimension, the sign (B) can be exchanged other signs (A- a 'concept' or its 'sense') in predication. Language, both in its paradigmatic lexical network (containing B) as well as in the syntagmatic chain of signifiers (B-A), is essentially constituted by multiple, complex exchanges of signs for other signs. Logocentrism, denying this closure, maintains the fictional priority of a higher signified ('idea,' 'sense') revealed in 'definition' over the simple sign which, in the epistemological vacuum (or disease)[46] of translation and metaphor, is merely exchanged for another sign. Deconstructing this hierarchy P. de Man reveals the substitutional common denominator of all these processes structured by the chain of signification. Concerning Locke's dismissal as 'mere translation' of a well-known 'definition' ("motion is the passage from one place to another") he notes that

> Locke's own "passage" is bound to continue this perpetual motion that never moves beyond tautology: motion is passage and passage is a translation; translation, once again, means motion, piles motion upon motion. It is no mere play of words that "translate" is translated in German as *"übersetzen"* which itself translates the Greek *"meta phorein"* or metaphor. Metaphor gives itself the totality which it then claims to define, but it is in fact the tautology of its own position. The discourse of simple ideas is figural discourse or

[46]P. de Man, "The Epistemology of Metaphor," *CI* 5, No. 1 (1978): 13, speaks of philosophy's attempt to "control figuration by keeping it, so to speak, in its place, by delimiting the boundaries of its influence and thus restricting the epistemological damage that it may cause."

translation and, as such, creates the fallacious illusion of definition.[47]

What we call 'metaphorical language,' then, is marked only in that it forces us to confront what we usually forget or choose to ignore. "The creative spark of metaphor," says Lacan, "flashes between two signifiers one of which has taken the place of the other in the signifying chain, the occulted signifier remaining present through its (metonymic) connexion with the rest of the chain."[48] If a 'metaphor' is used with such frequency as to become cliché it ceases to be felt as unusual, the suppressed signifier is erased, and the image 'fades' or becomes 'ossified' (cf. the word just used). Although a continuum thus extends from the most brilliant poetic metaphors to opaque etymologies, 'literal' language (as an antidote to figuration) is an illusion that will always be maintained by some discourses for their own political or ideological purposes.

Our challenge throughout the commentary in subsequent chapters will be to trace *how* the 'creative sparks' of metaphor illuminate the comic labyrinth. In a provocative article D. Davidson argues that the debate about the cognitive content and function of metaphor[49] is largely misguided:

---

[47]de Man 17.

[48]Lacan 157.

[49]The two rival theories implying a 'cognitive content' in metaphor appeal, respectively, to 1) 'collusion' (similarity): although the vehicle is predicated of, or suppresses, the tenor, 'meaningful' metaphor is possible insofar as the two terms share certain aspects. The semantic sphere of the vehicle is thereby extended to make metaphor intelligible; or 2) the 'collision' of two (preferably dissimilar) terms: meaning arises in the resulting tension. Davidson's quasi-performative view of metaphor, on the other hand, denies to it any intrinsic

> To suppose that [metaphor] can be effective only by conveying a coded message is like thinking a joke or a dream makes some statement which a clever interpreter can restate in plain prose. Joke, or dream or metaphor can, like a picture or a bump on the head, make us appreciate some fact–but not by standing for, or expressing, the fact . . . there is no limit to what a metaphor calls our attention, and much of what we are caused to notice is not propositional in character.[50]

The great collision of man and bird is just such 'bump on the head' with which Aristophanes surprises us into laughter. Delighting in the root metaphoricity of signification, comedy offers little indeed for propositional restatement by 'clever interpreters.'[51]

"*One word for another:* that is the formula for the metaphor," asserts Lacan, "and if you are a poet you will produce for your own delight a continuous stream, a dazzling tissue of metaphors." He goes on to speak of comedy's perfectly convincing "demonstration of the radical superfluousness of all signification."[52] The following are several general strategies *Birds* employs in this 'demonstration' rooted in comedy's textuality, i.e., its parasitic relation to other discourses:

1) In addition to upsetting the supplementarity of the categories 'literal' and 'figural,' the *non self-effacing* 'black discourse,' of comedy[53]

---

cognitive content. Standard guides to research in this field are W. Shibles, *Metaphor: An Annotated Bibliography and History*, (Wisconsin: The Language Press, 1971) and J.P. Van Noppen *Metaphor: A Bibliography of Post-1970 Publications*, (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1985).

[50]D. Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," *CI* 5, No. 1 (1978): 46.

[51]Least of all material for allegory, cf Newiger's point that the birds of the Aristophanic play succeed in 'meaning' something other than they are *only incidentally* (Newiger 102).

[52]Lacan 157.

deconstructs the conventional suplementarity of 'vehicle' and 'tenor'[54] in metaphor. Any discourse which needs to control figurality keeps potential nonsense at bay by regarding the 'vehicle' as a semantic supplement in the imaginary periphery. Thus "The Devil in the Oval Office" may not 'seriously' imply that *Satan* is a Republican. In a move that includes, but is not limited to, so-called 'literalization,' Aristophanes forces two terms to recognize *each other* in a reciprocal transference: e.g., the comic names κατωφαγᾶς [vv. 288, 289], ὑποδειδιώς [v. 65], ἐπικεχοδώς [v. 68] which fuse the morphology of bird-names with stock terms for gluttonous and cowardly men. By rejecting supplementarities enforced in other discourses and by openly admitting its awareness of their texts and textual strategies, comedy *as text* and as a genre, draws attention to (its own) textuality which must always be parasitic. This rejection, moreover, deconstructs any future attempt, however useful, to place it in a supplementary relation to another, 'serious' discourse (i.e., to relegate it to the 'unserious' and 'marked' periphery): if anything, comedy manifests greater awareness of its textuality and imposes the least ideological restrictions on the potential of language.

2) Presentation of borrowed images: the lyric yearning to be a bird expressed by the parricide (vv. 1347 ff.), the distortion of Pindaric metaphor (vv. 941), and the manipulation of proverbs involve images structured by their source-texts and amusing as comic grafts (whether altered or not). As multiple translations (cf. μεταφορεῖν) they are allegories of their own potentially endless re-contextualization and re-reading. The most prominent

[53]See below, p. 27 f.

[54]The 'tenor' is the signifier suppressed or replaced, i.e., the metaphorical 'subject.' The vehicle or 'object' (often referred to simply as the 'metaphor') is the term predicated of, or replacing, the tenor.

and pervasive 'borrowed image,' explored in subsequent chapters, is the metaphor expressed in lyric poetry and tragedy as an unfulfillable yearning which becomes, in *Birds*, a fully realized, governing paradigm of human ambition.

3) Images set up as vehicles for phonetically or semantically disruptive substitutions παρὰ προσδοκίαν: e.g., the cicada-Athenians who are said to "sit on *law-suits*, singing their whole life long" [vv. 40-41], and men who in their bird-mania "alight on *books*, and feed on *decrees*" [vv. 1288-1289];

4) Images amusing simply in their content (cf. the 'Kleonymos tree' of vv. 1473 f.) that participate in the 'linguistics of the grotesque' discussed in the concluding section of this chapter.

Another textual/structural dimension of *Birds*, implicit in the presentation of language-as-metaphor above, is the notion of deferral or difference. Returning to the 'meaning triangle' we see that, avoiding the problem of the "real object," it has the system of signification A mediating between the sign B and the extra-linguistic realm C that is perceived, imagined, pointed to, but not stictly 'signified.'[55] The profound rift between 'digital' or 'doubly-articulated' human language B-A and the 'analog' world of phenomena C (referents) [56] is one of the boundaries marking what

[55]In stoic terminology: B is the σήμαινον (σῆμα, σημεῖον), A the σημαινόμενον (λεκτόν), and C the τύγχανον (φαντασία, πρᾶγμα). Against those who follow Frege in "regarding the referent as real, the *Beduetung* as objective reference or signification, and both as in opposition to the personal and subjective *Vorstellung*," Wilden 225 cites Wittgenstein's warning that *Bedeutung* is being used illicitly "if it is used to designate [*bezeichnet*] the thing that 'corresponds' [*'entspricht'*] to the word. That is to confound the *Bedeutung* of a name with the *bearer* of a name."

[56]*Doubly articulated:* on one level, language consists of material bits

Derrida calls *différance* (difference-differing-deferral).[57] Within language, the chain of signification itself is characterized by deferral. "It is [the] implied circularity and autonomy of language," writes Wilden, "thet lead Lacan into postulating a sort of fault in the system, a hole, a fundamental lack into which, one might say, meaning is *poured*. It is this fundamental *manque* which allows substitutions, the movement of language essential to signification, to take place."[58] Decentering the system of language by depriving it of a transcendental signified Derrida argues that every sign marks a place of difference:

> The play of differences supposes, in effect, syntheses and referrals which forbid at any moment, or in any sense, that a simple element is *present* in and of itself, referring only to itself. Whether in the order of spoken or written discourse, no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present. This interweaving results in each "element"--phoneme or grapheme--being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system. This interweaving, this textile, is the *text* produced only in the transformation of another text. Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere,

forming a non-semantic code (digits, letters, phonemes) whose relationship to what they represent is constitutively arbitrary; on a second level, it consists of syntagms (words, sentences) which combine into further syntagms thereby generating meaning. *Analog:* there is a direct rational or quantitative relationship between the scale and what it represents (e.g., mercury in a thermometer, a cry of pain) that precludes negation, and the true/false distinction.

[57]"The *a* of *différance* indicates [an] indecision as concerns activity and passivity, that which cannot be governed by or distributed between the terms of [the] opposition [presence/absence]." *Positions*, Interv. J. Kristeva, Trans. A. Bass, (Chicago UP, 1981) 27.

[58]Wilden 217.

differences and traces of traces.[59]

The opening of *Birds* is marked by a critical *différance*, or suspension of meaning structured by Aristophanes as the generalized search by two men for an absent πατρίς or Father(land). "Lacan reconstructs Freud's primal father," writes C. Segal, "not as a living, real father but in language and as an absence, the Symbolical father, whose signifier is the Name of the Father, *the locus of the Law and of the demands of the social and moral order* [italics mine]."[60] The "paradox that the very act of naming the Symbolical Father represses that for which the name stands" underlies the curious hesitancy on the part of Peisetairos and Euelpides to name their own fatherland. The detailed re-mapping of Athenian features in Nephelokokkugia, however, comically reveals the ethereal city as a return to the Father(land).

The underdetermination of the central 'problem' in *Birds* poses a major obstacle to common-sense exegesis: why, after a glancing reference to their countrymen's litigiousness, do Peisetairos and Euelpides fail to mention Athens again and continue their journey in the absence of any motivation whatever? The most productive approach is taken by Arrowsmith who identifies their motive as "want--the *want* that in Greek thought always underlies desire, the mortal imperfection, the human craving that can only be fulfilled briefly and is always renewed."[61] Aristophanes, I submit, pours his

[59]J. Derrida, *Postions* 26.

[60]C. Segal, *Language and Desire in Seneca's Phaedra*, (Princeton UP, 1986) 16-17.

[61]Arrowsmith 131.

meaning, i.e., the fabulous, autonomous metaphor into the gap, the fundamental lack (ἔρως)[62] that yawns at the opening of the play and is felt as a contextual vacuum which starkly highlights anything suspended in it. Opressed by the absent (deferred) signifier promised and yet withheld by the text of his (dis)course ("I left Athens because . . . I am searching for . . ."), Peisetairos is made to arbitrarily fasten upon one transference ('bird' for 'man') which structures an invented future into which he inscribes the past. This move then opens up a series of metaphorical substitutions which progress along the chain of signification: man becomes bird becomes a god who is comically supplementary to man! Lacan illustrates the 'opressiveness' or 'tyranny' of the signifier with a series of such sentences interrupted before the significant term and notes that "[they] are not without meaning, a meaning all the more opressive in that it is content to make us wait for it."[63] The grand metaphor/metamorphosis of *Birds* (man-bird-god) which retroactively fills the initial lack with meaning is indeed a spectacle in which the comic hero, in Lacan's words, "defies his own destiny by deriding the signifier."

Nephelokokkugia, the winged construct that rises from the ashes of faltering discourse, is thus revealed as a supplement,[64] a comic fulfillment of

---

[62]The centrality of the concept of desire has been most recently and forcefully presented by Arrowsmith 130: "No other play of Aristophanes, not even *Lysistrata*, is so pervaded, so saturated by the language of desire."

[63]Lacan 153.

[64]I invoke the well-known notion of the supplement as elaborated in Derrida's reading of Rousseau in *Of Grammatology*, Trans. G. Spivak (Johns Hopkins UP, 1974) Part II, Chapter 2, ". . . That Dangerous Supplement. . ." Essentially, it comprehends the irreconcilable notions 'an inessential extra added to something already complete' and 'something essential added to fulfill a lack in something that was supposed to be complete.' Deconstructive reading has often involved revealing supplementation, figured by the

man's originary lack. As a delightful fiction, however, the grand Aritsophanic supplement will tell us neither its name nor *what* it completes, *what* it compensates for. We can view it as a substitute for Athens with the comic implication that human politics participates an *archi*-birdland with all its arbitrariness and instability. Alternatively, we can regard it as supplementary to the human condition, in which case our life is revealed as subsumed under an *archi*-birdhood. In the broadest possible terms we can read *Birds* as setting forth the supplementarity of the terms in the Greek comic polarity: νόσος 'disease,' 'lack' and μηχανὴ σωτηρίας 'escape,' 'cure' (cf. σῶς= *salvus*): the νόσος, a structure of ailment and crisis, pushes man outward in search of a 'cure' which, when achieved, turns out to contain a new crisis. Thus, although the the νόσος of Athenian life (v. 31) is apparently cured by the man-bird metamorphosis, the 'new birds,' Peisetairos and Euelpides, infected with metaphor, succumb to a slightly different strain of the original political virus.

The metaphorical sparks catch and *Birds* is soon ablaze with writing as Peisetairos simultaneously writes (hears-himself-speak) and derides his own destiny. Appointing him protagonist in an ether where, in Whitman's phrase, "the word is all," Aristophanes retraces in Peisetairos' rhetorical creativity his own function as *writer* of comedy: Peisetairos trains the chorus for the spectacular parabatic performance by writing the text for their sham 'divinity,' a play he populates with a series of verbal constructs, i.e., the graphic bird *exempla* (τεκμήρια) of the agon. Deriving the attendant politics from a simple pun (πόλος = πόλις, vv. 182-184), he proceeds to vie with a

---

signifying process and conditioned by an originary lack, in many supposedly stable hierarchies structuring cultural and philosophical categories (e.g., speech/writing).

number of other 'writers' (the interloping poets, oracle monger, decree-seller et al.) for command of this new text which he has named Nephelokokkugia, a comic formation that neatly cpatures the connection, noted by critics such as MacMathúna[65] and Alink, between the δόλοι of characters within comedy and the governing, textual δόλοι of the comic poet himself. In his superficially clever coinage that means 'ethereal (νεφέλαι as 'clouds') city of the birds (κόκκυγες 'cuckoos'),' Peisetairos expresses his role as writer of comedy who captures idiots in the net of his discourse, i.e., Nephelokokkugia as a booby (κόκκυξ 'fool') trap (νεφέλη 'subtle snare'). Revealing through the protagonist his own deep involvement with what we now call 'textuality,' Aristophanes also demonstrates a mastery of its scenic correlate: i.e., just as the signifiers of a text call attention to themselves, so the playwright makes the physical (con)text call attention to itself in metatheatrical[66] strategies. The so-called rupture of dramatic illusion in the parabasis, for example, has the 'birds' address the spectators directly and call them to birdhood by identifying the physical constraints of the theater with abstract limitations of the human condition (vv. 785-800).

Can we make the interpretive move of evaluating the complex of textual strategies outlined above? What is the meaning of Aristophanes' foregrounding of textuality? Why does he mute the customary topicality and amplify the forces and tensions inherent in language to release a comic play of signs? Why does he, while deconstructing the conventional supplementarity of figural language, ironically expose the trace of originary lack in language to fill it with his own comic supplement? "The irony of the comic hero,"

65"Trickery in Aristophanes." Diss. Cornell U, 1971.

66On metatheater in a later play see L. Taaffe, "Gender, Deception, and Metatheatre in Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae*." Diss. Cornell U, 1987.

suggests Whitman, "from one point of view, is merely a means to a greater and more inclusive *alazoneia,* impostorship; so that one might say that there is no real *eiron,* but only a variety of *alazones,* and the biggest fraud wins, on the theory that if the fraud be carried far enough, into the limitless, it becomes a template of a higher truth."[67] Aristophanic textual ἀλαζονεία is certainly as limitless as the chain of signification and, inasmuch as every metaphor qua nonsense is a fraud, Aristophanes is the poetic ἀλαζών who (to distort Shakespeare) weaves a complex, "mingled yarn" of tricks and frauds into a "web of life" that is his 'higher' comic 'truth.' "What, then, is truth?" asked Nietzche in 1873:

> A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms --in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to people: *truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power;* [italics mine] coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins.[68]

Herein, I submit, is the 'serious' comic motive that, as a cultural meance, has been strategically overlooked by an agelast positivism: to startle us into remembering through laughter. *Birds,* especially, through the sensuality of its metaphor and other textual δόλοι, stages an ἀναγνώρισις in which, laughing, we recognize the δόλος, or illusion, of truth. Having exposed the concealer that denies concealing (cf. ἀλήθεια as

---

[67]Whitman 27.

[68]"On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense" in *The Portable Nietzche,* Trans. W. Kaufmann (Penguin, 1954) 46-47.

'unconcealedness') we are free to pretend a celebratory return to our selves-as-bodies, to our language, to our earth thrown free of the bitter gravity of the transcendental. It is only natural that the exodos of *Birds* should celebrate the apotheosis of the comic hero who, "defying his destiny by deriding the signifier," is established as his own comic truth.

The concluding section of this chapter examines the 'grotesque' dimension of comic discourse as a correlate of its metaphorics. I draw upon earlier work, such as M. Bakhtin's study of Rabelais, and more recent philological studies to explore those aspects of comic poetics which place Aristophanic comedy, especially *Birds*, at the beginning of a long tradition of the carnivaleque. Known for its "language obsession" Bakhtin's work brilliantly anticipates a criticism which will view the text as "proposing that we conceive what we call 'life' on the model of the text, on the model of supplementation figured by the signifying process."[69]

The Black Discourse and Comic Poetics

In the course of studying various aspects of *Birds* I will implicitly be seeking insight into how the comedy 'works:' how it transforms myth, how it employs metaphor, what it is that constitutes comic pleasure, etc. Peisetairos with his inventive tricks, Tereus, the paradoxical disseminator of language, as well the birds who set themselves above the gods in a parodic cosmogony all move in a universe governed by rules that are only dimly understood. The question 'what is comedy about?' is most often addressed formally (i.e. the structure of Greek comedy) or in the particular: what is the point of a given joke or what text underlies a given parody? A broader view, as I have implied above, is hard to take owing to the fact that in comedy

[69]J. Culler, *On Deconstruction* (Cornell UP, 1982) 105.

process seems to be far more important than *telos* or dramatic *logos*. I argue elswhere[70] that the poet's discussion of his own craft in the early parabases is polemical and certainly unreliable as a balnced and general guide to the nature of the comic craft. The emphasis there is on the poet's cleverness, originality, refinement, and virtue as 'teacher.'[71] Although Aristophanic comedy exhibits all of these qualities variously throughout the corpus, originality and intellectual refinement appear peripheral to the comic process. The poet's denunciation of popular comic practice as well as his silence regarding most aspects of the comic craft alert us to the fact that we must, as in the case of farce, look to what he *does* rather than rely on what he says. This is hardly surprising in light of the way in which the text of comedy, whether delivered by a 'cloud', a 'frog', or directly by the poet (chorus leader), is always implicated in a web of δόλοι.

Malcom Heath[72] reminds us that throughout the ancient literary critical tradition "poetry is thought of in what are essentially *rhetorical* terms: the focus of interest is on the effects of poetry on its audience." In seeking to locate comedy in the network of discourses we can learn from Roland Barthes' taxonomy of rhetorical functions.[73] Rhetoric as metalanguage (a discourse about discourse) comprises a number of functions: it is a τέχνη, a basis for education, a science, a moral code, and political

---

[70]Dobrov 15-26 (see N. 34, above).

[71]e.g., *Acharnians* v. 656: φήσιν δ' ὑμᾶς πολλὰ διδάξειν ἀγαθ', ὥστ' εὐδαίμονας εἶναι. See also *Knights* 510, *Clouds* 545 f. and *Peace* 747 f. For a discussion of the poet as teacher in the *Frogs* see M. Heath, *The Poetics of Greek Tragedy* (Duckworth, 1987) 40-41.

[72]Heath 11, 35.

[73]R. Barthes, "L'ancienne rhetorique," *Communications*, 16, (1970): 172 - 174.

doctrine (prescriptive linguistics). "Toutes ces pratiques," he notes, "constituant un formidable système institutionnel (<<répressif>>, comme on dit maintenant), il était normal que se développât une dérision de la rhétorique, une rhétorique <<noire>> (suspicions, mépris, ironies): jeux, parodies, allusions érotiques ou obscènes, plaisanteries . . ." Of this counter-tradition or 'black rhetoric', he says: "elle trace avec précision et gravité un lieu transgressif où deux tabous sont levés: celui du langage et celui du sexe." In relation to other types of so-called serious (σπουδαῖος) discourse comedy is textually and generically the 'black discourse'--the anti-discourse which knows and abuses the discourses of institution and tradition. At the heart of the comic process are language and the human body freed of taboos which constrain them in all other contexts. The kaleidoscope of verbal accident and distortion as well as ubiquitous bodily functions are essential features of a discourse which, like fire, cannot be said to have 'material' substance but which is a reaction changing everything it involves.

What one says about the nature of comic discourse necessarily depends on how one views the poetics of the genre, specifically its effect on the audience and its relation to the extra-dramatic world. It is instructive to contrast the central identifiable οἰκεῖα ἡδονή[74] of comedy-- the pleasure (or pleasures) of amusement--with various emotions associated with other poetic δυνάμεις: astonishment, pity, fear, etc. Roger Scruton, who sees the comic process as "attentive demolition" and de-valuing, points out "a peculiar

[74]I mean here the pleasure of amusement *not* any sort of 'comic catharsis' which seems an untenable imitation of *Poetics* 1449b. I cannot follow the idea implied in the *Tractatus Coislinianus* that pleasure and laughter "given moderate expression by mimesis relieve one's impulse to the immoderate display of these emotions in every day life, and in doing so produce pleasure." R. Janko, *Aristotle on Comedy* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: UC Press, 1984) 83.

feature of amusement, which serves to distinguish it from the common examples of emotion: it is a matter of indifference whether the object of amusement be thought to be real."[75] Our emotional response, he argues, is sensitive to belief. An emotion elicited by an object we believe to be real (e.g. a sexual rival) "involves a definite stance towards the world, and a tyrannical invasion of experience," although emotions we imagine or experience vicariously "may be titillating, even pleasant . . . (being) sealed off in a private realm of fantasy." Thus the intensity of fear, for example, is critically linked to one's belief about the object feared whereas one's amusement remains the same "whether the object of amusement be believed or imagined. . . Belief seems to be irrelevant."[76] While I would not over-generalize this 'indifference to belief' to apply to all pleasures of amusement, Scruton does seem to detect a rift between the comic process and other processes whereby we react to the world either directly or indirectly (e.g. in συμπάθεια).

Comedy, then, can be seen to differ from other forms of poesis in two ways: first, the pleasure of amusement, unlike other emotions we experience, may be indifferent to our belief concerning the object, i.e., the comic process may generate its οἰκεῖα ἡδονή entirely free of any 'truth conditions'; second, our experience of amusement in the theater is difficult to differentiate from our extra-dramatic experience of the same, whereas there is a more perceptible difference between the pleasure in fear, pity etc., which we derive from a tragic performance and 'real', extra-dramatic fear and pity. Heath's theory of 'emotive hedonism'[77] implies that tragic theater necessarily transforms and makes 'other' our emotional experience. "There is no difficulty in explaining

[75]R. Scruton, "Laughter" in J. Morreal ed., *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor* (SUNY Albany, 1987) 164.
[76]Scruton 165.
[77]Heath 11.

why we laugh in the theatre," the philosopher confidently asserts:[78]

> any theory of humor is also a theory of comedy. Aesthetic representations are as much objects of amusement as anything else, and amusement enters into the enjoyment of comedy without doing any violence to the aesthetic point of view. Tragedy, by contrast, creates a notorious problem for the philosophy of aesthetic interest. Why do we enjoy the representation of suffering? There seems to be no normal ("extra-dramatic") state of mind of which tragic feeling is a species: we do not feel grief, dismay or horror in the theatre (else why would we go there?). The experience of tragedy is, or seems to be, *sui generis*; some mysterious alchemy is at work in accommodating the representation of terrible things to the aesthetic point of view from which they become enjoyable.

What constitutes the specific genre of Greek Comedy are the conventions governing the presentation of its unique aesthetic representations.[79] These are closer than their tragic counterparts, in power and effect, to extra-dramatic objects (of amusement) and participate, therefore, in the extensive black discourse of Bakhtin's 'carnivalesque'. Put another way: "We laugh at real scenes, and at their dramatic representation, but there seems to be no transformation in the nature or quality of amusement as we proceed from life to art."[80]

"The strong tradition in the *higher kind* (italics mine) of Greek poetry, as in good poetry almost everywhere," wrote Gilbert Murray[81] "was

---

22 Scruton 167.

79For a learned analysis of the various constituent parts of Old Comedy see B. Zimmerman, *Untersuchungen zur Form und dramatischen Technik der Aristophanischen Komödien*. Vols. I-II (Königsten, 1984-5).

80Scruton 170.

81Cited by G. Thomson, "Prometheia," in E. Segal ed., *Greek Tragedy: Modern Essays in Criticism* (Harper and Row, 1983) 120.

to avoid all the disturbing irrelevances of contemporary life." The black discourse of comedy is perceived as 'low' or 'beneath' (cf. Aristotle's φαῦλον) other types of poetry in that it trades extensively in these 'irrelevances.' The key word here is *disturbing*: by lifting the taboos of institutional discourse comedy is not so much concerned with trivia as it destroys the established hierarchy of 'high/serious' and 'low/unserious' (σπουδαῖον / φαῦλον) and incorporates fragments from all registers of culture into its text. The fact that there is no transformation in the power of amusement as we proceed from art to life precludes such a hierarchy and allows the rebellious and derisive spirit that lurks outside and around the social institutions and taboos to find full expression in the theater and in 'carnival'

Comedy's *modus operandi* involves a number of specific aspects which we should examine: It is parasitic on virtually every aspect of culture and it is wildly eclectic--anything, any discourse, anybody is grist for its mill.[82] As we have already noted, comedy fractures other discourses and grafts these isolated fragments into an 'absurd' context, an aspect reflecting its fundamental metaphorical or transferrential nature. Comedy is a "mode of reflective attention to its object" which has as its purpose the οἰκεῖα ἡδονή which suppresses any other emotional power the object may have in another context (it is, in fact, quite doubtful that τὸ γελοῖον produces in us an *emotion*[83] as we usually understand the word). In distinction from tragic

[82]In this respect, the Aristotelian theory is trivially correct in maintaining that the objects of the genre are people, words and deeds (*Rhetoric* I 11); see Janko 69.

[83]In his discussion ot comic catharsis, Janko 143 does in fact treat laughter as an emotion. I follow here Scruton with his theory of amusement as "attentive demolition" which is distinct from what we call 'emotion' in its truth content and aesthetic dimension. See Scruton 164 - 171.

mimesis which transforms negative experience into pleasure, comic mimesis does not profoundly transform our experience of amusement. The effect of comedy is purely the enjoyment of an object for its own sake: "it does not have as its purpose discovery. . . it is not a motive to action . . . enjoyment is to be explained by the thought of the object, and it is not felt . . . *'for some ulterior reason.'* "[84] The point I should stress here is that the anti-discourse of comedy has as its central impulse reaction, difference, and demolition of established patterns and hierarchies.[85] It cannot, therefore, support a strong moral or philosophical 'mission' without evolving into something quite different. Moral or polemical motivation only serves to impair the vibrant effect of amusement as one might argue from the example of *Knights*.

The general characterization above is certainly not intended as an 'explanation' of origins nor as a contribution to the study of Old Comedy's formal structure. "Although poetics must indeed pay careful attention to matters of form and technique," writes Heath,[86]

> this is not its most fundamental task; any study of resources--of tragic 'syntax,' so to speak--will be pointless, unless we can clarify the meanings which those resources were used to realize: and this in turn will need reference to the typical range of meaning definitive of the genre. It is with this more fundamental question, therefore, with the general shape or structure of tragedy's *meaning-potential*, that I am chiefly concerned.

In characterizing the meaning-potential of Old Comedy as that of a 'black' discourse I describe the text of Bakhtin's 'carnivalesque.' Carnival, a

---

[84]Scruton 170.

[85]So, Sommerstein, *Aristophanes: Birds*, 3, speaks of the "subversion of the established hierarchy of the universe" in Nephelokokkugia.

[86]Heath 2.

complex of attitudes and energy that one might call the 'deep structure' of any comic gesture or utterance, belongs "to the borderline between art and life. In reality it is life itself, but shaped according to a certain pattern of play . . . (carnival) does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators."[87] Bakhtin describes a "two-world condition"[88] in which the people had an entirely separate life ouside the cults and discourses of officialdom, a life which found special expression at popular festivals. Despite the fact that it may seem anachronistic to speak of the spirit underlying Old Attic Comedy in terms of the christian calendar (carnival as a pre-lenten festivity), in this I follow Bakhtin who includes Aristophanic and satyric drama in his comprehensive discussion of the forces behind the popular comic tradition. The generalized notion 'carnival,' therefore, has an unusually broad range and should be taken, in the present discussion, as applying to European culture of all periods.

Carnival, which is "the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal . . . hostile to all that was immortalized and completed,"[89] has found, and continues to find, a wide variety of popular artistic expression ranging from the Old Comic play through the skits of Monty Python. Jokes and other comic techniques which figure in the black discourse of the carnivalesque are especially difficult to analyze since this discourse "demands ever-changing, playful, undefined forms . . . filled with

---

[87]M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, Trans. H. Iswolsky (Indiana UP, 1984) 7. For a recent treatment of the carnivalesque in Attic comedy see J. C. Carrière, *Le carnival et la politique: Une introduction à la comédie grecque* (Paris: Annales Litteraires de l'Université de Bensançon, 1979).

[88]Bakhtin 6.

[89]Bakhtin 6. See K. Reckford, *Aristophanes' Old-and-New Comedy*, (Chapel Hill, U North Carolina P) 3-13 for a spirited discussion of the regenerative aspect of Old Comedy.

this pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities."[90]

An important moment in Bakhtin's analysis is his discussion of the grotesque, conceived as an essential "aesthetic concept characteristic of folk culture."[91] The grotesque is an expression of the aporetic logic of all symbols of the carnival idiom, "the peculiar logic of the 'inside out' (*à l'envers*) or the 'turnabout,' of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from the front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings."[92] In what follows, I will argue that the semantics of the black discourse is the linguistic correlate of grotesque logic and imagery.

"The grotesque image," writes Bakhtin, "reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming. The *relation to time* is one determining trait of the grotesque image, The other indispensable trait is *ambivalence*(italics mine)."[93] In a long article on the grotesque in Aristophanes,[94] Hugo Stieger follows the work of T. Lipps in distinguishing two modes: the grotesque (which is seen as unbridled fantasy, caricature, exaggeration, the unbelievable, the monstrous) and the burlesque (the realm of 'harmless fun' of travesty and parody). He suggests that *Birds* represents a passage from the former to the latter mode. Although Bakhtin presents the concept of the 'grotesque' as something far more specific than the common notion, in his

[90]Bakhtin 10-11.

[91]Bakhtin 18-56.

[92]Bakhtin 11.

[93]Bakhtin 24.

[94]H. Steiger, "Die Groteske und die Burleske bei Aristophanes," *Philologus* 89 (1934): 161-84, 275-85, 416-32.

writings the term is considerably broader and more powerful than in the work of other critics such as Lipps and Steiger. The etymology of the word from *pittura grottesca* referring to the baths of Titus[95] is only a narrow starting point in his discussion reflecting "but a fragment of the immense world of grotesque imagery which existed throughout all the stages of antiquity and continued to exist in the Middle Ages and the Rennaissance."[96]

Noting the aporetic logic inherent in the grotesque aesthetic, the Russian critic L.E. Pinsky says, "this garland of forms. . . brings together that which is removed, combines elements which exclude each other, contradicts all current conceptions. Grotesque in art is related to the paradox in logic."[97] Grotesque imagery involves forms "interwoven as if giving birth to each other" in a process where "the borderlines that divide the kingdoms of nature in the usual picture of the world were boldly infringed." Here, notes Bakhtin, "the inner movement of being itself was expressed in the passing of one form into the other."[98]

It would be useful here to list the main characteristics of the grotesque aesthetic in Bakhtin's discussion.

1) It is a *process of regenerative degradation* from a higher to a "lower stratum that always laughs" and is deeply grounded in a 'material bodily principle.' This process has the following topography:

from ***Up***	*to* ***Down***
the sublime/spiritual	the material/corporeal
the complete	transitional, supplement

[95]On the etymology of 'grotesque' see Bakhtin 30-32, and Steiger 161-62.
[96]Bakhtin 32.
[97]Bakhtin 32, N. 12.
[98]Bakhtin 32.

Heaven	Earth (womb/grave)
face and head	the genitals and buttocks
the eternal	the temporal and transitory
stasis	process: both poles of change
logos: transparency	nonsense: metaphor and differance
voces propriae, uniformity of style	'quoted speech; 'heteroglossia'

2) It is, in this is process, profoundly ambivalent: it degrades and materializes; it mortifies and regenerates; it buries and gives birth. Degradation "digs a bodily grave for a new birth;" instead of hurling an object into destruction it hurls it "into the reproductive lower stratum."

3) Hence, it is deeply rooted in the 'material bodily principle' which "exceeds its own limits only in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defacation. This is the ever-unfinished, ever-creating body." Two bodies merge or one comes out of another. The grotesque body "is cosmic, it represents the entire material bodily world at the absolute lower stratum, as the swallowing up and generating principle, as the bodily grave and bosom . . . "

4) It is an aesthetic paradox: comprises self-contradictory elements;

5) It rejects and is parasitic on other aesthetic forms (hence the emphais on caricature and parody);

6) It involves the fusion and transgression of 'natural spheres' and species;

7) It is urgently bound to real time: the *moment* of metamorphosis, not merely its product; the *threshold* across which sense passes into nonsense not simply 'sense' or 'nonsense.'

8) It consecrates inventive freedom and defies all that is 'eternal' and 'true';

9) It liberates from "inhuman necessity";

10) it is a form of expressing the Other;

The discourse of each human activity is structured by certain principles or 'rules' which constitute its meaning-potential and which inform every aspect of language: the lexicon, syntax, morphology, style, tropes etc. Naturally, the discourse itself rarely shows that it is aware of these principles and usually expends enormous energy to hide their operation. Thus Derrida exposes the pretense to 'transparency' of philosophical discourse by upsetting the hierarchy structuring the "proper and nonproper, of essence and accident, of intuition and discourse, of thought and language, of the intelligible and the sensible."[99] It is harder to see one's way in the textuality of Comedy since it involves language at play in radical difference, in reaction to all other discourses with their rules and dissimulations. The textuality of comic discourse, I submit, reflects the linguistics of the grotesque in that the forces of language are coextensive with the carnivalesque energy of grotesque imagery and performance; these forces, in Bakhtin's words, "are part of the carnival as a whole, infused with one *single logic of imagery* (italics mine)."[100] Everything I have said so far about comic language can be seen to proceed from the general characteristics of the grotesque aesthetic.

Comedy, informed by this 'chimerical' aesthetic, is parasitic on the text of other spheres of life and is "shaped according to a certain pattern of play," as our critic put it. It is precisely the effort exhibited by other discourses to dissimulate and deny this ludic dimension that is exploited by Comedy on

[99]Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 229.
[100]Bakhtin 149.

all levels: the connected utterance, the sentence, the word, and even morpheme. The kinetic aspect of the grotesque may be said, in a scientific metaphor, to release the potential energy of static elements by displacing them. This process of regenerative degredation (Bakhtin) or de-valuing (Scruton) is essential to paratragedy. Thus when Tereus says οὐτοσὶ πάλαι πάρειμι κοὐκ ἀποστατῶ φίλων (v. 313) we recognize the Aeschylean phrase in which ἄτη is said to "stand far apart from (the chorus') friends" (*Choephoroi* v. 826). The predicate has been degraded from the intimidating concept of 'ruinous blindness' to a mottled hoopoe. The regenerative aspect of the transfer is seen in that it concretizes and releases pleasure of amusement in the process: what has been said of the abstract and terrifying ἄτη is now used in self-reference by a very specific and ridiculous 'bird.' Many, if not most, semantic shifts in Aristophanic word-play are indeed ambivalent: in Bakhtin's phrase they "degrade and materialize" by hurling an element of tragic or epic diction into the "reproductive lower stratum that always laughs."

Bakhtin's chapter "The Language of the Marketplace" deals primarily with carnivalesque vocabulary, in which "speech forms, liberated from norms, hierarchies, and prohibitions of established idiom, become themselves a peculiar argot and create a special collectivity, a group of people initiated in familiar intercourse . . ."[101] The grotesque aesthetic, however, is reflected in language much more extensively than in mere choice of words. In the service of official or 'serious' discourse, as I have noted, language is perforce stylized in that it reflects stasis and established values. The black discourse does not so much promote a 'canon' of its own as it liberates the power of play inherent in language. "Laughter," notes our critic, "liberates . . .

[101]Bakhtin 188.

from the single meaning, the single level" of other discourses in which "there prevails a tendency towards the stability and completion of being, toward one single meaning, one single tone of seriousness" and in which "the ambivalence of the grotesque can no longer be admitted."[102] We would not have any difficulty, aided by J. Henderson's *Maculate Muse*,[103] in demonstrating the wide variety of words in Aristophanes that are explicitly obscene. Terms, such as πέος, πρωκτός, and στύεσθαι, are regarded as 'primary obscenities' and are frequently used in connection with the pleasures and violence of the material bodily principle. A wide variety of words and phrases, however, that are not explicitly obscene, violent, or degrading, are torn from their 'normal' sphere of signification and "hurled into the reproductive lower stratum." There persists, in the Aristophanic literature, an impulse to uncover yet another 'figurative' or 'metaphorical' obscenity.[104] This seems to manifest a certain limitation of vision since these so-called figures, whether real or imagined, are instances of semantic displacement or destabilization and are of a class with many other jokes and 'distortions' that are not inherently sexual or scatological. Thus the ambivalence of the words πάππους 'ancestors/down-feathers' (v. 765) and νεφέλη 'cloud/trap' (vv. 188,194) allows the comic text to effect a degrading and yet regenerative metamorphosis in which no obscenity is involved. A connection with grotesque imagery is seen in much wordplay where levels of meaning are

---

[102]Bakhtin 101, 123.

[103]J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy* (Yale UP, 1975).

[104]One of many attempts to elucidate the enigmatic ληκύθιος is made by J. Quicney in "The Metaphorical Sense of ΛΗΚΥΘΙΟΣ," *CQ* 43 (1949): 40. Contra: D. Bain, "Ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν: Some Reservations." *CQ* n.s. 35 (1985): 31-37.

cheerfully confused as in the following passage from the parabasis:

ὄρνιν τε νομίζετε πάνθ' ὅσαπερ περὶ μαντείας διακρίνει·
φήμη γ' ὑμῖν ὄρνις ἐστί, πταρμόν τ' ὄρνιθα καλεῖτε,
ξύμβολον ὄρνιν, φωνὴν ὄρνιν, θεράποντ' ὄρνιν, ὄνον ὄρνιν.

You regard any sign that figures in divination a 'bird:'
a rumor for you is a bird; you call a sneeze 'a bird,'
a chance meeting's a bird, a voice is a bird, a servant's a bird, an ass a bird!
(719-721)

Once again, recalling the fundamental grotesque image of the ἄνθρωπος ὄρνις of v. 169, we have a confusion between species in the form of a 'donkey-bird.' This semantic disorientation is especially suited to the context in which the birds are presenting themselves as gods: ἦν οὖν ἡμᾶς νομίσητε θεούς, . . .

The chimerical 'language of the grotesque' is essentially metaphor. Liberating the play of signifiers, its semantics are those of transition, 'the moment of metamorphosis' rather than static signification. The very terms 'figure,' 'trope,' and 'metaphor' promote the illusion of a 'normal' mode of signification which is somehow violated in the transferrential process. 'Figures' are severely limited in discourses that, generally, deny the originary metaphoricity of language, especially in word-formation, predication, and the process of definition. This denial is essential, as we have seen, in science and philosophy in order for them to maintain the illusion of transparency. Similarly, denial of the uncontrollable metaphoricity of language allows us to regard metaphor as 'definition' and, hence, 'knowledge.' I quote above de Man's assertion that "metaphor gives itself the totality which it then claims to define, but it is in fact the tautology of its own position."[105] Because the

black discourse of Comedy strips away this illusion and foregrounds metaphor it is anti-epistemic and, naturally, the enemy and source of embarrassment for philosophical discourse and, by extension, for many discursive uses of language. In the 'world inside-out' of *Birds*, for example, we cannot hope, nor do we wish, to 'know' what a bird is, or a god: a bird is a god, a sneeze, and a donkey all at the same time! In its hostility to the arrogant claim to knowledge, Comedy offers us play, *a play*, and the unlimited pleasure of amusement.

It is even difficult to isolate 'metaphor' in Comedy since the literal/figural opposition is largely disrespected in what I have described as a dismantling of the tenor/vehicle hierarchy. What we observe is a vastly expanded field of transference: etymologies come to life, signifiers are made to collide and collude freely, and the tame notions of figurality in non-comic discourse are mockingly deconstructed. Thus when Meton says γεωμετρῆσαι βούλομαι τὸν ἀέρα 'I want to survey (earth-measure) the air' (v.995) or when Euelpides says ἀνεπτόμεθ' ἐκ τῆς πατρίδος ἀμφοῖν τοῖν ποδοῖν 'we've flown from our fatherland with both feet' (v. 35), the normal signification of the words 'to measure' and 'to flee' is made strange and amusing by a context that forces a collision between the root signifiers 'earth' and 'fly' with their respective contexts of 'the air' and 'feet.' In other words we are forced to follow the word as it crosses from its supposedly unmarked meaning to the so-called 'root image' and back again. Similarly, when Euelpides says that he will regret following his friend (κλάοιμι μεγάλα 'I might really cry about this') Peisetairos offers the consolation πῶς κλαύσει γάρ, ἢν ἅπαξ γε τὠφθαλμὼ 'κκόπῃς 'how will you cry once your eyes are pecked out?' (v. 342). We are not allowed to ignore the 'metaphors' built into the lexicon as its originary

[105]de Man 17.

metaphoricity is exposed. Comic discourse is not reverent in its derivations, however, so that when the Hoopoe remarks to Euelpides ἀριστοκρατεῖσθαι δῆλος εἶ ζητῶν 'you're obviously eager for aristocracy' (v. 125), the latter derives the verb from the name of Aristokrates, son of Skellias, and replies ἐγώ; ἥκιστα· καὶ τὸν Σκελλίου βδελύττομαι 'Me? Hardly! I detest even the son of Skellias!'

Throughout such wordplay it is multiple signification, the passage from one signifier to another, that is important, not static 'meanings.' Words that are normally kept separate in other discourses are made to collide violating the 'natural boundaries' that Bakhtin speaks of. This process may involve a mere morpheme as in the comic bird names (vv. 65, 68, 288, 289) mentioned above in which the suffixes characteristic of bird names are used in comic formations that participate in the material bodily principle. By far the most common strategy is to isolate and play with individual words and phrases as in the examples of γεμετρῆσαι τὸν ἀέρα, 'earth-measure the air,' ἐς κόρακας ἐλθεῖν, 'to go to the crows,' ὄνον ὄρνιν, 'donkey bird,' and countless others. On the level of the clause and complete utterance Comedy treats what in non-comic discourse qualifies as a (predicative) metaphor in a number of ways. Since the grotesque aesthetic necessarily involves metamorphosis and fusion of forms across boundaries of species, what we call 'metaphor' is *prima facie* the ideal linguistic mode for expressing this aesthetic. Here it is worth recalling Lacan's observation that both jokes and metaphors involve crossing the boundary between sense to nonsense, albeit in opposite directions. How are the two related in the discourse of Comedy? Can we speak of a comic metaphor as a distinct linguistic strategy?

Immediately recognizable features of metaphor in non-comic

discourse are surface incongruity and 'falsehood' as in the case of Freud's 'torch of truth.'[106] Most discourses cannot tolerate such nonsense and force a decision: either a) an alternative means must be found to construe 'torch' as predicated of 'truth' or b) all responsibility for the utterance is renounced and the result is left without construal as a semantic gap in the text. Much work on metaphor has been concentrated on deciding whether the process (a) is based on similarity between 'tenor' and 'vehicle,' fusion of their semantic fields, or some other phenomenon (see N. 49, above). The anti-discourse of Comedy, however, can force any two signifiers to collide without confronting the hierarchic decision between alternatives (a) and (b): the ambivalence which Bakhtin identifies as a central force of the grotesque aesthetic is operative here: Comedy plays freely with transferrential structures and sets them to oscillating between the sense of 'normal metaphor' and the nonsense of a joke. Consider again the metaphor in which Athenians are said to "sit on law suits, singing, their whole life long." The possibility of a similarity between the litigious Greeks and cicadas--both 'sit' and 'chatter' a great deal--alternates with the παρὰ προσδοκίαν nonsense of the grammatical parallelism:

'Αθηναῖοι δ' ἀεὶ
ἐπὶ τῶν δικῶν ᾄδουσι πάντα τὸν βίον.

But the Athenians,
ever [perched] on lawsuits sing their whole life long. (40-41)

[106]Discussing metaphoric aspects of jokes, Freud (*Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*. Norton, 1960. 82) cites the following from Lichtenberg: "It is almost impossible to carry the torch of truth through a crowd without singeing someone's beard." Naturally, truth 'literally' concieved is hardly a threat to facial hair, hence we are forced to construe the phrase differently.

As in the examples of the 'donkey bird' and 'man bird' we are allowed to percieve and enjoy the pure linguistic nonsense in way that would be counterproductive in other discourses. Similarly, my other example, the image of the Kleonymos-tree, fusing δένδρον and ἄνδρα (vv. 1473 f), makes the usual point about the man's cowardice while foregrounding the nonsense of metaphor at the same time: The 'tree' is said to be large . . . and cowardly; it blossoms and . . . acts as sycophant (with reference to 'figs'); in the winter it sheds all its . . . shields. What could have been a 'serious' image in another context, becomes an object of play the subject of which is the hardly exalted notion of cowardice, itself almost automatically linked to defecation.

Thus the comicality of metaphor is not necessarily the image or words *per se* but the way in which, in context, the transferrential structure is foregrounded and suspended between 'proper' function and nonsense. This phenomenon, in the topsy-turvy world of comic discourse, belongs to a continuum of 'grotesque' linguistic strategies which are constantly reacting to outside rules and hierarchies. The essential features of such strategies are fusion of elements (semantic fields, morphemes) that are 'normally' kept separate, passage back and forth across the boundary of metamorphosis, regenerative degradation, and profound ambivalence. Naturally, an extra dimension of pleasure is added if the 'vehicle' or 'tenor' (or both) is itself somehow amusing, especially if it participates in the material bodily stratum "which always laughs," as in the association of the φαληρίς 'coot' with Aphrodite and the ὄρχιλος 'wren' with Zeus (vv. 565-567) on the basis of partial homophony with φαλλός 'phallus' and ὄρχεις 'testicles.' It is important to emphasize that the aspects of comic metaphor outlined above

do not result from a unique 'treatment' of metaphor in Comedy but are of a piece with its foregrounding of the originary lack and supplementation of language. What we have called the grotesque aesthetic informs the imagery, parody, and plot of the comedies of all the Aristophanes, especially those preceding and including the *Birds*.

II

The Quest and the Tarot Session

Eros and the Wordplay of Deferral

A striking feature of Aristophanes' *Birds* is that it takes place entirely outside any 'likely' context: whereas the strategy through *Peace* had been to reach into the recent past and color an Athenian situation with fantasy and myth, the adventures of Peisetairos and Euelpides entail the invention of a rather unfamiliar future.[1] Nephelokokkugia does not seem to be the simple utopia or escapist manifesto that some have suggested,[2] but rather an enigmatic web, or *textum*, woven of a mingled thematic yarn that traces the aporetic patterns of metaphor and *différance*. In a quick-paced feedback the grand design of the play informs the textual network of jokes, puns, allusions, etc., while the originary features of textuality are projected outward and give direction to the major moments of the comedy. In this chapter I discuss, first, the ἔρως, or generalized search of Peisetairos and Euelpides for a

[1]Sommerstien, *Aristophanes: Birds*, 1: "*Birds* differs from all the other fifth-century plays of Aristophanes that survive in having no strong and obvious connection with a topical question of public interest, whether political (like *Acharnians*, *Knights*, *Wasps*, *Peace* and *Lysistrata*), literary-theatrical (like the *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Frogs*), or intellectual-educational (like *Clouds*).

[2]See, for example, A. Schlegel's *Vorlesungen*,Vol. 1, V. Ehrenberg *The People of Aristophanes*, (New York: Schocken, 1962) 56-57, and L. Bertelli, "L'utopia sulla scena: Aristofane e la parodia della città," *CCC* 4 (1983): 215-261. Alink 315 remarks that "it is remarkable that some [utopians] explain Aristophanes' flight from reality . . . as a result of pessimism (so: Schmid-Stählin, Van Daele, Blaiklock, Ehrenberg, Koch, Gelzer), others as a result of optimism (so: Arnott, Dover). Lesky takes a middle position . . . "

Father(land) *elsewhere* which, in its otherness, has them speaking in terms of a possible future that must be invented; and, second, the interview with Tereus (in Lacanian terms, the 'tarot session') that is catalytic in the development of the plot by allowing Peisetairos to read in it the metaphor of his destiny as bird and, finally, a god. From a suspension of sense we reach the turning point at which the cloudy meaning of Nephelokokkugia emerges to be 'poured' retroactively into the initial semantic void.

For the Greeks, birds embodied irreconcilable opposites: at once the tangible stuff of an inexpensive meal and an elusive symbol of flight, freedom, and the locative Other; both a familiar feature of everyday life,[3] and an ominous witness of the beyond; both the linguistic vehicle in various proverbial and poetic metaphors and the physical metamorph of humans in many myths, notably that of Tereus, King of Daulis. The structure of difference inscribed in the practical and literary perception of birds is evident throughout the play and is exploited for comic effect on many levels. At the very outset man and bird are thrust together in a transferrential collision/collusion as the two Athenians stumble their way to the land of 'morphs.'[4]

---

[2]My indispensible and constant guides to the world of Greek birds, terminology, and bird-lore with special relevance to Aristophanes have been D. Thompson, *A Glossary of Greek Birds* (Holdesheim, Georg Olms, 1966) and J. Pollard, *Birds in Greek Life and Myth* (Thames and Hudson, 1977).

[4]I argue in Chapter 1 that the Aristophanic text is deconstructive of the literal/figural opposition. The controversy between the restrictive views of metaphor as either 'substitution' (collusion) or 'interaction' (collision) loses force in a world where the two terms 'bird' and 'man' are free to do both or neither. The debate, naturally, continues. See, for example, L. Pegoraro, "Problemi di metaforica nella definizione dell' ambiguità aristofanesca," *L&S* 18 (1983): 387-406, who argues that Aristophanic metaphor is more 'interaction' than 'substitution.'

It is hardly coincidental that the words ὀρθὴν κελεύεις ('straight ahead') introduce the first scene in which two birds, ὄρνιθες, one a κολοιός/κελεός[5] 'daw,' the other a κορώνη 'crow' lead the two disgruntled citizens away from their native, and natural, state. The latter, a bird hateful to Athena (and the owl) as a particularly inferior bird of omen,[6] is especially suited to its comic role as a finger-biting and apparently useless guide ἄλλοσε 'elsewhere, away (from Athens).' In light of the role of language in the metamorphosis of Tereus and in *Birds* generally, it is interesting to note that the crow and the daw are the only actual animals on stage. "Real birds," notes Dover, "could be held by a short cord in the hand as long as they are wanted and released when the hoopoe's slave opens the door and the two men collapse with fright at his appearance."[7] Though physically controlled by Peisetairos and Euelpides, the two bird 'signifiers,' unlike their mythic and linguistic counterparts, offer no promise of construal and can only assert their distance from humans. They are mute, hostile, and uniterpretable. Much of the initial fun involves attempts by the men to assimilate their wild birds to the familiar human role of 'guide.' The real or imagined noises and movements of the crow, for instance, are referred to as λέγειν 'speaking' and treated as if they had discernable semantic content:

ΕΥ. Τί δ' ἡ κορώνη; Τῆς ὁδοῦ τι λέγει πέρι;
ΠΙ. Οὐ ταὐτὰ κρώζει μὰ Δία νῦν τε καὶ τότε.

[5]See Thompson 136 who notes the confusion between the two bird names: "MSS, have κηλιός, καλιός, κοιλιός, κολεός, κολιός--an unusual diversity, such as points . . . to a non-Hellenic origin."

[6]There is a tradition of 'the War of the Owls and Crows' to which Athena's enmity to the crow seems a correlate (see, for example, Ovid *Amores* 2.6.35: cornix invisa Minervae); Thompson 170.

[7]K. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: UC Press, 1972) 144.

ΕΥ. Τί δὴ λέγει περὶ τῆς ὁδοῦ;
ΠΙ. Τί δ' ἄλλο γ' ἢ
βρύκουσ' ἀπέδεσθαί φησί μου τοὺς δακτύλους;

EU. What about the crow? What does it say about the route?
PE. By Zeus, it's not crowing the same thing now as before!
EU. Well, what *does* it say about the route?
PE. It promises to bite and chew my fingers off, what else?
(23-26)

The unfortunate guides are, oddly, a *genuine* ornithic link between two non-genuine bird environments: τὰ ὄρνεα 'the bird market' and Tereus, an imperfect metamorph of a rather imperfect human being. In the company of the verbs λέγειν 'to say' (vv. 23, 25, 63), φράζειν 'to show, declare' (vv. 15, 50), δεικνύναι 'indicate' (v. 51), and φάναι 'say' (v. 26), the verb χάσκειν 'to gape' is comically applied to the birds (vv. 20, 51, 61, 165, 308 etc.,) as if it were another human feature. This word alone, on which I have more to say below in connection with the 'christening' of Nephelokokkugia, suits animals more immedaitely and was only peripherally applied to facial expressions and speech.[8] Aristophanes cleverly twists the word in a manner that places it between 'etymology' and 'metaphor:' the birds are

[8]"An essay could be written on Aristohanes' use of the concept of "gaping," and its application, in comic derision, to the Athenian citizenry in the *ecclesia*, gaping, slack-jawed, wonder-struck with amazement and greed by the eloquent demagogue appeals of the accomplished political rhetoricians." (Arrowsmith 138) J. Taillardat, *Les Images d'Aristophane* (Paris: Sociétés Éditions les Belles Lettres, 1962) 264 notes "Les verbes χάσκειν, χασκάζειν, χασμᾶσθαι, et surtout le parfait κεχηνέναι se disent de sots hébétés qui se plaisent à rêvasser en *bayant* aux corneilles." The latter form which can mean "une *attente niaise*" or "une *sotte inaction*," above all, "sert à peindre l'air benêt des citoyens athéniens." For χάσκω in the sense of 'utter' see *Wasps* 342, Sophocles *Ajax* 1227.

reproached for stupidly gaping just like . . . birds! Comic destabilization of metaphor ranges from heavy-handed 'literalization'[9] such as the μυττωτός 'moretum' scene of *Peace* 236 f. to the suspension of the phrase ἐς κόρακας ἐλθεῖν 'go to the crows (i.e., to the 'dogs' or 'to hell') at v. 28 between a nonsensical visit to the birds and the colloquial curse to which we return with a Freudian pleasure in the familiar.

"Language has shaky foundations . . ." writes W. Redfern, "two-faced, double-tongued: Janus and jackdaws are favourite analogies."[10] This Aristophanic jackdaw (contrast v. 1212) and crow, however, represent an aspect of signification that comedy knows well and that is prior even to punning *langue fourchée*: the mute and as-yet-unconstrued material sign, i.e., the sign as pre-semantic artifact which occasionally obtrudes when we catch ouselves mouthing a word we never realized 'sounded so strange.' The birds, material guides to the immaterial,[11] pass independently through the

---

[9]Cf. the point that this technique is "eine von den Hauptformen des Aristophanischen Scherzes." Schlegel *Vorlesungen* 145.

[10]W. Redfern, *Puns* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984) 11. The daw, *Corvus monedula*, as indifferently honest (Thompson 155): κακῶν πανάριστε κολοιῶν, Lucian, Fugit. 30 (3. 382); Plin. x (29) 41, xvii. 22; Cic. Flacc. 31 non plus aurum tibi quam monedulae committendum. "The Pierides, as a penalty for their presumption and rudeness to the Muses during [a] contest, were turned into *daws, which still have the power to imitate human speech*." H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology*, New York: Dutton, 1959. 174.

[11]"A generation later," writes Ehrenberg 57, "Sokrates' great disciple fled from mean and corrupt reality into the Polis of 'placelessness': Utopia. So, too, the *Birds* of Aristophanes, however it may be interpreted in relation to contemporary events, is an escape from reality into the *least material of all regions* [italics mine], the air, the realm of the birds, and at the same time the realm of pure poetry." Note, especially, the latter phrase with its radical meanig of 'verbal creation.'

first part of the comedy untouched by anything human save brute force. Proudly other, they escape just as Peisetairos and Euelpides approach Tereus, the embodiment of their metaphorical future. In the absence of linguistic contact with his guide, Euelpides resorts to a comic reversal of the normal figure to predicate a man, τὸν μὲν Θαρραλείδου τουτονί 'this son of Tharraleides' (v. 17), of his daw, as Peisetairos does somewhat later of the outlandish chorus (vv. 284 f.). What for a human are the ineluctable parameters of φύσις 'nature:' λόγος 'language,' νόμος 'law,' 'social structure,' and the polis are entirely foreign to the two birds that "know nothing exept how to bite" (v. 19). The hoopoe's exultation at Peisetairos' grand idea,

μὰ γῆν, μὰ παγίδας, μὰ νεφέλας, μὰ δίκτυα

O Earth! O snares! O traps ('clouds')! O nets! (194)

points to a major theme of the play: the ensnarement of birds, as another species and dramatic representation, in the νεφέλη 'subtle trap'[12] of language and other aspects of τὸ ἀνθρώπειον, an ensnarement resisted only by the first two feathered characters. Peisetairos and Euelpides certainly do not suspect that birds, who heretofore have been the victims of transaction (τηνδεδὶ τριωβόλου 'this one (was sold) for three obols') will soon be drawn into the linguistic trap deeply enough to begin exchanging themselves for money: in the second parabasis the chorus say to the judges

Πρῶτα μὲν γάρ, οὗ μάλιστα πᾶς κριτὴς ἐφίεται,
γλαῦκες ὑμᾶς οὔποτ' ἐπιλείψουσι Λαυρειωτικαί·

12A common term for a fine (gauze) bird net, νεφέλη is used explicitly in this sense here (v. 194) and v. 528. In each case Aristophanes is careful to indicate, contextually, that the meaning 'trap' is possible, though never exclusive.

> To begin with, what every judge desires most, he will have:
> The owls of Laureion will never desert you!
> (1105-1106)

A great deal of the comic force in the subversion of the birds' otherness (not necessarily humorous *per se*) is the invariable and familiar return to ourselves.

In *Birds* the 'ineluctable parameters of human nature' are, of course, coextensive with the text, inscribed in the play's very linguistic fabric. Strictly speaking, a representation involving birds as central characters is impossible, unutterable inasmuch as it is verbal. The messenger's exclamation at v. 1706 ὦ μείζω λόγου 'O beyond words!' referring to the 'blessed race of birds' stands in stark contrast to the immediately preceding series of tongue-as-tool metaphors characterizing the full cycle of Athenian life. The human/non-human reflects the unbridgeable rift between language and the extra-linguistic. The illusion unique to *Birds* involves a construct representing the Other which is woven into the text of human discourse. The tension between (human) sense and nonsense in the verbal presence of the birds generates much of the comic energy that runs through the innumerable twists of text. In the very first 'figure' of the play, Euelpides uses the verb προφορεῖσθαι[13] to characterize their (dis)course as a textile composed of

---

13"Un terme emprunté à la langue des tisserands, προφορεῖσθαι. *Ois.* 4: ἀπολούμεθ' ἄλλως τὴν ὁδὸν προφορουμένω << nous nous tuerons à faire inutilement la navette>>; scholie: προφορουμένω· δεῦρο κἀκεῖσε πορευόμενοι εἰς τἀναντία. Προφορεῖσθαι γὰρ λέγεται τὸ παραφέρειν τὸν στήμονα τοῖς διαζομένοις. Même verbe chez Callias le Comique, *fr.* 2: ὥσπερ ἀράχνηκες τὴν ὁδὸν προφορούμενα ! <*sc.* μειράκια ? > <<telles des araignées, ils font la navette>>, et chez Xénophon, *Cyn.* 6, 15: προΐασιν ἐξίλλουσαι τὰ ἴχνη . . . προφορούμεναι παρὰ τὰ αὐτὰ (il s' agit de chiens de chasse)." Taillardat 111.

interwoven elements:

> Τί, ὦ πόνηρ', ἄνω κάτω πλανύττομεν;
> 'Απολούμεθ' ἄλλως τὴν ὁδὸν προφορουμένω.
>
> Why are we weaving up an down, you scoundrel?
> This futile shuttling back and forth in our course will kill us!
> (3-4)

The verbs κρέκειν 'to weave, pluck' (vv. 682, 772, cf. also 1138)[14] and διαπλέκειν 'to plait' (vv. 754), exclusive to *Birds*, are similarly used of time and song as essentially textual. Tracing the linear ὁδός (dis)course multidimensionally by 'weaving' προφορεῖσθαι signals the importance of relating the linear delivery, ὁδὸς λόγων 'verbal course,'[15] to textuality which is structured on several linguistic 'axes.'

Peisetairos' and Euelpides' quest is presented ambiguously in this connection.[16] How are we to understand the words ἥδε δ' αὖ κρώζει πάλιν 'this here (crow) is *croaking back* again' (v. 2)? Perhaps his crow is contradicting, 'talking back' ? Having left Athens never to go back (πάλιν), will they seek out a homeland again (πάλιν)? Or does the phrase simply point to the crow's repetition of its opaque utterances (αὖ . . . πάλιν)? Euelpides' words ἐντευθενὶ τὴν πατρίδ' ἂν ἐξεύροις σύ που; 'where might you find

[14]This verb is one of *play* par excellence since it spans the notions *texere* (Sappho 90, Euripides *Electra* 542), to play a lyre with the plectrum as in v. 682, and simply to make a sound.

[15]See *Knights* 1015 and Herodotus 1.95, 2.20.22.

[16]As I am following Coulon's text I have kept to his line-assignment. B. Marzullo, *Philologus* 114 (1970): 181-191, however, distributes the lines differently (and, it seems, sensibly) to give Peisetairos the verbal initiative from the outset.

(invent) a Fatherland from here?' (v. 10) point to a paradox: a return to a place he has never been. The next mention of the πατρίς occurs in the context of a bird metaphor:

> 'Ημεῖς γάρ, ὦνδρες οἱ παρόντες ἐν λόγῳ,
> νόσον νοσοῦμεν τὴν ἐναντίαν Σάκᾳ·
> ὁ μὲν γὰρ ὢν οὐκ ἀστὸς εἰσβιάζεται,
> ἡμεῖς δὲ φυλῇ καὶ γένει τιμώμενοι,
> ἀστοὶ μετ' ἀστῶν, οὐ σοβοῦντος οὐδενὸς,
> ἀνεπτόμεθ' ἐκ τῆς πατρίδος ἀμφοῖν τοῖν ποδοῖν
>
> We, gentlemen of the audience,
> are afflicted with an illness the reverse of Sakas':
> an alien, he forces his way to citizenship while we,
> honored by tribe and clan, citizens among citizens,
> have taken to the air with both feet in flight from our
> fatherland though nobody is scaring us away.
> (30-35)

Invention (ἐξευρεῖν) of a new homeland is implicit both in v. 10 and in the metaphor of σοβοῦντος 'shooing' and ἀνεπτόμεθα 'fly away' (vv. 34, 35) which anticipates the men's transformation.[17] This proleptic nostalgia or urge for re-invention, which subsequently surfaces as ἔρως 'desire,'[18] is first expressed in terms of a common metaphor: the men, afflicted with an indeterminate lack, say they are ill (νόσον νοσοῦμεν).[19]

---

[17]Σ[35]: τὸ μὲν 'ἀνεπτόμεσθα' ἀπὸ μεταφορᾶς τῶν ὀρνέων, τὸ δὲ 'ἀμφοῖν ποδοῖν' ⟨ἢ⟩ ἐκ τῶν ὀρνέων, ἀντὶ τοῦ 'ἀμφοῖν τοῖν πτεροῖν,' ἢ ἐκ τῶν νεῶν . . . προληπτικῶς δὲ τῇ τῶν ὀρνέων χρῶνται μεταφορᾷ ὡς καὶ αὐτοὶ ὀλίγον ὕστερον ὀρνιθωσόμενοι.

[18]See vv. 324, 412, 574, 696, 703, 1279, 1316, 1343, 1737. "The fantasy-city" writes Arrowsmith 144, "is created by the sheer power of speech, fired by a fatal *eros*. . ."

[19]See M. Casevitz, "Sur la fonction de la médicine dans le théâtre

It is not uncommon for Aristophanes to formulate the central predicament of a comedy as a sort of νόσος 'disease.' Thus *Wasps* 71-135 is an elaborate diagnosis in which Xanthias explains to the spectators Philokleon's 'disease' of litigiousness while Strepsiades complains to Socrates at *Clouds* 243 that he is overcome by a νόσος ἱππική 'horsey sickness.' Trygaios' slave sees his master's problem as madness (*Peace* 54) as does Karion in the prologue of *Wealth*. Dionysus is so overcome with ἵμερος 'yearning' for Euripides that he says he feels ill (*Frogs* 58-59). What, then, is the sickness troubling Peisetairos and his sidekick? It seems that the playful account offered by Euelpides vv. 27-48 with its ambiguities and metaphors only serves to mask a gap, an absence of any motivation whatever and the threatening lack of meaning which looms in the distance as a consequence. K. MacLeish notes that "the heroes' original intention was simply to emigrate from Athens"[20] and the text does not suggest much more. Thus the mysterious problem of *Birds* is initially a bare ἔρως whose object is absent.

The founding of a city *in vacuo* is a curiously fitting correlate to this structure of lack and desire. In Lacanian terms, we might say that at such

---

d'Aristophane." *CEA* 15 (1983): 5-27. Plato, *Symposium* 188 a, for example, has Eryximachus present a dialectical image of ἔρως in which the darker, destructive aspect is spoken of in terms of a disease: διέφθειρέν τε πολλὰ καὶ ἠδίκησεν. οἵ τε γάρ λοιμοὶ φιλοῦσι γίγνεσθαι ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων καὶ ἄλλ' ἀνόμοια πολλὰ νοσήματα . . . Cf. Euripides *Hippolytus* 131f.: τειρομέναν νοσερᾷ κοίτᾳ δέμας ἐντὸς ἔχειν οἴκων. See also *Republic* 404e, 586 c for other negative ἔρωτες.

[20]*The Theatre of Aristophanes* (New York: Taplinger, 1980) 70. The underdetermination of the central problem is either noted as a curiosity (Arrowsmith, Ehrenberg) or implicitly regarded as a flaw in plot development (Süvern, Hofmann). The absence of anyhing in Nephelokokkugia answering to an original crisis involving Athenian litigiousness is certainly a departure from the explicit problem-solution pattern of other Aristophanic comedies.

moments where there is a break in the 'ego's cohesion' one recognizes the presence of desire and the subject's truth. "The subject," note Benvenuto and Kennedy

> is like the questioner of the tarot, who has to question the reader of the tarot cards before he can know the meaning of his own destiny lying before him. The subject is the one who has to question somebody else, an Other, in order to know the truth about himself--whether this Other be magician, sphinx, analyst, his own master or slave,[21]

or, we might add, a bird. This ἔρως for the Other is linked to writing and castration (cutting out the tongue) in the Tereus myth as well as to its comic transformation in *Birds* where, in the context of a subverted Other, Tereus promotes and disseminates speech among the birds. Our dual subject(s),[22] Peisetairos and Euelpides, hint at the significance of their choice of the comic anti-Tereus as their 'magician or sphinx' in a phrase that has long vexed commentators:

> ὃς τώδ' ἔφασκε νῷν φράσειν τὸν Τηρέα,
> τὸν ἔποφ', ὃς ὄρνις ἐγέντ', ἐκ τῶν ὀρνέων·
>
> [Philocrates] who claimed these two birds would show us Tereus, the hoopoe who became a bird from the birds (bird market). (15-16)

The multiple metamorphosis of the hoopoe in Greek myth and popular belief is reduced in *Birds* to a shoddy disguise by which an actor 'becomes a bird' in feathers from τὰ ὄρνεα 'the bird market.'[23] This instance of

[21]B. Benvenuto and R. Kennedy, *The Works of Jacques Lacan, An Introduction* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986) 169.

[22]The frequent use of the dual (number) for the two men serves to grammatically unify them as by nature and association forming a pair.

reflexive attention on the part of comedy to its own artifices adumbrates the parabatic confusion in which we, as spectators, are defied to distinguish between 'costume,' 'disguise,' and 'metamorphosis.'

From the very outset, then, Aristophanes is weaving the νεφέλη 'gauze-net' of discourse in which both men and birds will be trapped. Driven by a vague ἔρως that finds deferred expression as a disease, Peisetairos and Euelpides entrust themselves to a hostile and alien agent to take them ἐς κόρακας 'to hell' (cf. *Peace* 114-117). The gap marked by the trace of an explicit comic motivation is temporarily filled by the wordplay of deferral, the generation of comic sense in the absence of meaning. The Great Idea and subsequent 'colonization' of the air will, in due time, compensate abundantly for the inital suspension of the dramatic sentence before its significant term.

In Euelpides' address to the audience he first identifies himself transferentially with the birds that at this point are absolutely other and intractable. Following the παρὰ προσδοκίαν of the phrase describing Athens as πᾶσι κοινὴν ἐναποτεῖσαι χρήματα 'free for all . . .to shell out money' (v. 38) with an obvious reference to 'flight' (ποτέομαι)[24] there occurs an echo of a complaint against the city-state, i.e., that Athenians are litigation-happy.[25]

---

[23]I follow C. Leach, "Aristophanes *Birds* 13-18," *CQ* 23 (1983) 489-491 who does not see the need, with Cobet, Meinecke, and Van Leeuwen, to athetize v. 16. The most influential alternative suggestion has been L. Koenen, "Tereus in den *Vögeln* des Aristophanes" in H. Dahlmann and R. Merkelbach, edd. *Studien zur Textgeschichte un Textkritik* (Köln-Opladen: Westdeutschen Verlag, 1959) 83 f. who suggests the substitution of ὀργίων for ὀρνέων in light of the alleged prominence of *Dionysosorgien* in Sophocles' *Tereus*.

[24]See F. Schreiber, "A Double-Barreled Joke: Aristophanes, *Birds* 38," *AJP* 95 (1974): 95-99.

[25]Cf. the references to Kleon's abuses in *Knights* 774-776 and *Wasps* passim, (especially 88 f. and 1037-42).

Interestingly, with the exception of the word ἀπηλιαστά 'anti-jurors' (v. 110), the issue of litigation is never again brought up in the play! A mere excuse by comparison, say, to the problem of debt in *Clouds*, these lines seem to be the minimum currency admissible in exchange for a μηχανὴ σωτηρίας:[26]

> Οἱ μὲν γὰρ οὖν τέττιγες ἕνα μῆν' ἢ δύο
> ἐπὶ τῶν κραδῶν ᾄδουσ', Ἀθηναῖοι δ' ἀεὶ
> ἐπὶ τῶν δικῶν ᾄδουσι πάντα τὸν βίον.
> Διὰ ταῦτα τόνδε τὸν βάδον βαδίζομεν,
> κανοῦν δ' ἔχοντε καὶ χύτραν καὶ μυρρίνας
> πλανώμεθα ζητοῦντε τόπον ἀπράγμονα,
> ὅποι καθιδρυθέντε διαγενοίμεθ' ἄν.
>
> Cicadas, for example, sing on fig-branches for a month
> or two, but the Athenians sing on . . . lawsuits their whole life!
> That's why we're journeying this here journey now
> trudging along with our basket, pot, and myrtles.
> We're roaming about looking for some trouble-free spot
> where we might settle down and pass the time.
> (39-45)

The men explain their yearning for a place devoid of πράγματα '(troublesome) affairs,' a zero-point of existence later characterized metaphorically εὔερον ὥσπερ σισύραν ἐγκατακλινῆναι μαλθακήν 'a soft, thick rug to cuddle up and sleep in' (vv. 121-122). By mechanical substitution of οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι for τέττιγες and of δικῶν for κραδῶν, Euelpides generates some delightful nonsense in which Athenians are depicted as perched bug-like 'on lawsuits.' This 'metaphor' is meant to distract, to provide the semblance of

26"The broadest term used for a trick [in Aristophanes]," writes MacMathúna 1, "is μηχανή: it is a 'way out' or means of rescue for the person employing it (e.g. *Lys.* 111; *Thesm.* 87), regardless of the precise nature of the device. Apart form the generic use of this term, it [is] applied mainly . . . to the strategem that does not involve deciet."

meaning, and is, therefore, manipulated for comic effect. The semantic clumsiness of the phrase ἐπὶ τῶν δικῶν ᾄδουσι diverts us from the smooth effect of comfortable, familiar metaphorical partterns and forces us to notice the mechanism that is barely more than a pun. Language into which man is born and which 'speaks man' is a tyranny from which 'jokes' and 'metaphors,' by confronting the fundamental difference of the logos, offer the illusion of escape. A humorous twist is achieved by spoiling the illusion: this happens in 'bad metaphors' or jokes that stretch the potential of substitution to the point of leaving exposed a strong residue of nonsense. Aristophanes mechanically replaces a few terms and exploits the resulting παρὰ προσδοκίαν (near-) nonsense: we laugh, reminded of the nonsense that lurks in every passage from sign to sign, and we forget that Aristophanes is saying nothing: Peisetairos and Euelpides are leaving Athens because . . . ; They are looking for . . . ; The joke thrown in our path of construal is that they are emigrating because . . . 'Athenians sit on cases and sing their life away,' which is precisely what Peisetairos ends up doing himself: a 'bird-god' perched in Nephelokokkugia as a tricky arbiter who manipulates the members of the divine embassy by (ab)using the text of Athenian law (vv. 1641 f.). "The signifier," writes Lacan

> by its very nature, always anticipates meaning by unfolding its dimension before it. As is seen at the level of the sentence when it is interrupted before the significant term: 'I shall never . . .', 'All the same it is . . .', 'And yet there may be . . .', Such statements are not without meaning, a meaning all the more opressive in that it is content to make us wait for it.[27]

The opening of *Birds* is laden with meaning the explicit value of

[27]Lacan 153.

which is unknown, absent. We know only that Peisetairos and Euelpides are looking for a πατρίς 'Father(land)' they cannot name. As I suggest above, because the very act of using the Name of the Symbolic Father ("the locus of the Law and of the damands of the social and moral order") represses that for which the name stands we have in *Birds* a curious situation: while Nephelokokkugia, in many respects, represents an obvious return to the Athenian way of life, the *name* of Athens is suppressed throughout the play:[28] Tereus, a horrific father-figure who has been transformed into a benign surrogate (bird-)father, provides some comic relief in the opressive quest by introducing the grand transference. In modes of symbolic transformation, notes Segal, "we operate within a chain of signifiers which convey the repressed contents of the unconsious through metaphorical and metonymic substitutions. *Repression is itself a species of metaphor formulation* [italics mine]."[29] The repressed contents of the unconscious, which for Lacan had the structure of language, become visible through the "translucent barrier" of linguistic substitution and 'figuration.' Tereus, then, to whom the men's ἔρως leads them, embodies and disseminates the grand

[28]Aside from the formulaic 'coals to Newcastle'-type proverb at v. 302: τίς γλαῦκ' Ἀθήναζ' ἤγαγεν; (ridiculously out of context, anyway), the only oblique naming involves the 'Athenians' at v. 40. The Athenian in v. 1036 is part of legislative formula: ‹‹'Εὰν δ' ὁ Νεφελοκοκκυγιεὺς τὸν Ἀθηναῖον ἀδικῇ --››. The goddess Athena is mentioned at vv. 828, and 1653. There are, however, a number of periphrases such as the mention of the Kerameikos (v. 395) , the 'Melian hunger' (v. 186), and 'wise *Hellas*' (v. 409).

[29]Segal 19: "The unconscious, with its repressed contents of unspeakable desires, fears, and anxieties, can find expression in the imaginary events enacted before us on the stage. . . . The metaphorical and symbolic language of drama . . . provides the kind of indirect speech through which these contents can be represented, even if the process reamins, ultimately, mysterious to us."

metaphor which, as a large-scale example of comic repression, is intimately bound up with the desire to name, and return to, the Father(land).

"Whatever else Aristophanes' fantasy of Cloudcuckooland may be, it is not escapist," writes Arrowsmith, "but a fantasy-mirror of Athenians, δυσέρωτας τῶν ἀπόντων, sent soaring . . . by the erotic politics and winged words of Pisthetairos and his comic sidekick."[30] Our comic Athenians are thus afflicted with a 'desire for the absent,' a situation marked by the numerous instances of ἔρως in the text.[31] At vv. 412-415 the hoopoe formulates the men's meaning as ἔρως for the company/society of the birds--something of which they have yet no experience. When the chorus ask why the men have come Tereus says: "Ἔρως βίου διαίτης τέ σου καὶ ξυνοικεῖν τέ σοι 'impelled by ἔρως for your way of life: they want to co-dwell with you.' In other words, he pronounces their lack of knowledge (inability to translate) to be ἔρως, the same term used to mark the gap in signification encountered at the outset (vv. 135, 143) when Euelpides and Peisetairos were presenting the impossible scenarios of the good life. In that passage the men's desire is expressed as the negation of their experience, that is, as a comic periphrasis of its absence. Before forcing, with Arrowsmith, the semantics of the

[30]Arrowsmith 143-144. An obvious source for characterization of Athenian πολυπραγμοσύνη is Thucydides (e.g., 1.70 f, 6.10 f, and Pericles' last speech 2.63 which denounces unambitious men as dangerous to the tyranny whether they stay at Athens or found a 'city apart:' εἴ που ἐπὶ σφῶν αὐτῶν αὐτόνομοι οἰκησείαν). Arrowmith 141 cites Plutarch's *Alcibiades* 17.1 f. which is interesting in its 'erotic' connection: Alcibiades, persuading the Athenians to set sail for Sicily, is said to "fan into flame their eros" so that "the young men were uplifted by hopes." He had on his golden shield a chryselephantine Ἔρως κεραυνόφορος.

[31]I count nineteen, including forms of Ἔρως (vv. 412, 574, 699, 696, 703, 1316, 1737), ἐραστής (vv. 324, 707, 1279), and the verb ἐρᾷν (135, 136, 143, 593, 704,1343, 1634, 1659), and the related Πόθος (v. 1320).

Thucydidean δυσέρωτας 'sick with desire' into *Birds* to see an "erotic politics of world conquest," I should point out that in the mouth of Nicias the phrase was surely meant to emphasize the notion of absence, while the ἔρως of Peisetairos and Euelpides is expressed as sickness (νόσος). In either case the force of the phrase 'sick with yearning for things absent' seems to transcend the simple urge to conquer. Inasmuch as ἔρως represents a structure of lack and desire it is quite appropriate that Tereus should determine the men's as-yet-unrevealed identity by the phrase ἐραστὰ τῆσδε τῆς ξυνουσίας 'desirous of this being-with-us' i.e., of what they do not know. In other words, by force of this pronouncement, the men become 'lovers' of being-in-the-presence (ξυνουσία, βίος, δίαιτα)[32] of the birds and the consequences of that encounter.

The comic strategy, however, in distinction from another, perhaps more somber, context is to mock the opressive ἔρως, to challenge the tyranny of the signifier in a way that both recognizes and dismisses it. In more concrete terms: Peisetairos and Euelpides have renounced their place of origin because . . . their compatriots sing like bugs in trees (nonsense). Their quest is to go . . . ἐς κόρακας because they 'need to and are ready' (nonsense again). Actually, they don't hate Athens: it's a fine place for everybody to . . . part with their wealth (nonsense). The daw and crow are, naturally, the best guides to the realm of myth because . . . being completely alien they will chew our fingers off (nonsense again). The character of these jokes is to distract by filling, energizing a narrow context. The potentially opressive failure of

[32]It is interesting to note that δίαιτα can mean 'arbitration' as well as 'way of life,' 'abode' (LSJ give S. *El.* 1073 [lyr.], Arist. *Rh.* 1374^{b}20, Lys. 32.2, Isoc. 18.13, etc.) It may be too subtle to see a pun here, but the possiblity of exchanging litigation (v. 41) for a more ornithic kind of 'arbitration' is not out ot the question.

meaning is exposed and disarmed by laughter. At the very least we can allow the two buffoons to stumble along their way toward Tereus, their comic 'reader of the tarot,' whom they will interrogate and learn the meaning of their destiny encoded before them (in his very person). Although what I call the 'tarot session' promises to be yet another member of the sense-in-nonsense series, it will strike the crucial spark of metaphor to kindle subsequent invention. Aristophanes makes the most of his characters' need to "question somebody else, an Other" whether he be magician or Sphinx. The choice of Tereus from the mythic beyond is certainly no accident.

Before encountering Tereus the ἔποψ we meet a curious intermediary, his slave. I compared the two 'real' birds to opaque signifiers, i.e., signifiers of an unknown tongue which, though perceptible resist construal. Peisetairos and Euelpides have been under comic pressure to do the impossible and 'read' the birds' meaning and assimilate their behavior to that of human communication. Failure to understand these guides prompted jokes about the birds which involved a good deal of unconscious nonsense. Thus Euelpides must utter his words about needing and being ready to go to the dogs (ἐς κόρακας) with mock urgency as if he is annoyed at his predicament. His failing to hear and 'understand' himself is as funny as his clowning around with the jackdaw. True to their signifying function one bird leads to another as the initial party reaches the dwelling of the hoopoe.[33] Once evoked, the phrase ἐς κόρακας "plots the poetic course of the play through a preposterous series of verbal pyrotechnics whose irridescent web of

[33]Whitman 175 observes that the play "begins with dramatized metaphor . . . [which] may be no more that simple slang, but to stage two characters who pace out the actual steps of 'going to the birds' has the unmistakable effect of putting language in the controlling position."

innuendo gradually reveals the poet's gay but profound reflection upon the world."

The comic relationship between Euelpides and his bird ends with the observation that, in true bird-fashion, the daw is 'showing' him something, albeit by the idiot-gape that Peisetairos is later to criticize (e.g., vv. 165 f):

> Χὠ κολοιὸς οὑτοσὶ
> ἄνω κέχηνεν ὡσπερεὶ δεικνύς τί μοι,
> κοὐκ ἔσθ' ὅπως οὐκ ἔστιν ἐνταῦθ' ὄρνεα.
>
> And this here jackdaw's
> gaping skyward as if pointing something out to me;
> there *must* be some birds around here!
> (50-52)

Peisetairos, by now accustomed to the uselessness of the bird-guides throws his companion one half of a wry proverb τῷ σκέλει θένε τὴν πέτραν 'kick the stone' (v. 54). This opressive riddle marks the inception of Peisetairos' career in birdland and it is remarkable that it's substance remains unuttered, i.e., the second half καὶ πεσοῦνται τὰ ὄρνεα 'and the birds will fall.'[34] The force of the saying in its popular context was, no doubt, to mock an impossible undertaking. The comic text, by suppressing the full sense of a familiar proverb, achieves a dual purpose in answering Euelpides' suggestion to make some noise. Mocking his friend by suppressing 'birds' (τὰ ὄρνεα) Peisetairos implies that the proverbial kick will be just as effective at producing some

[34] Σ^{R} gives the proverb in the following form: δὸς τὸ σκέλος τῇ πέτρᾳ, καὶ πεσοῦνται τὰ ὄρνεα. Kock ad. loc.: "Hier markiert um des Witzes willen ein Fels die Tür." This, if accurate, would serve to concretize the proverb by grounding the impossible in a *very* possible action, namely, knocking on the bird-door.

'birds' out of the sky. At the same time, his words escape the allusive connection to simply mean 'well, give this stone here (marking the entrance) a rap.' Euelpides, already the ruder punster of the two, further distorts the proverb by retorting σὺ δὲ τῇ κεφαλῇ γ', ἵν' ᾖ διπλάσιος ὁ ψόφος 'why don't you use your head to make twice the noise?' This 'borrowed speech' is a fine example of comic destabilization of meaning in substitution.

In *Birds* Peisetairos is a subtle and incessant verbal trickster. Take, for example, his handling of the word ὁδός 'way:' in response to Euelpides' characterization of their ὁδός '(dis)course' as text (v. 4), he translates their disorientation ('I haven't the vaguest idea where we are' v. 9) into an angry metaphor in which he forces his companion's exclamation οἴμοι to substitue for the same word:

ΕΥ. Οἴμοι.
ΠΙ. Σὺ μέν, ὦ τᾶν, τὴν ὁδὸν ταύτην ἴθι.

EU. Oh hell!
PE. You can go *there*, buddy!
(12)

This surface substitution produces the absurdly unfamiliar metaphor in which an exclamation replaces a noun. All this, of course, by way of taunting Euelpides' laments at the seeming impossiblity of inventing a Fatherland and a (dis)course to follow. A similar game is played with the name ἔποψ 'hoopoe.' There seems to be a connection between the verbs θένε 'strike,' κόψον 'hit,' and Euelpides' exclamation παῖ, παῖ 'hey, boy!' (v. 57, as if from παιεῖν 'to smite') which was certainly accompanied by some sort of knocking noise. Peisetairos' suggestion in vv. 57-58 ridicules the expectation that a hoopoe will have a slave[35] and his words punningly suggest tragic lament

[35]Σ[57]: οὐ πιθανόν, φησίν, ἐπὶ ὀρνέου οἰκίαν ἐλθόντα 'παῖ παῖ' καλεῖν· οὐ γὰρ εἰσιν ἄνθρωποι ὥστε καὶ παῖδας ἔχειν.

(ἐποποῖ~ ὦ ποποῖ cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 1072, 1076, 1100 etc.) and perhaps, as Kennedy thought, ἐποποιΐα 'epic poesis' as if to say "you might as well wail or seek your adventure in an unlikely epic.'[36] The joke, however, seems to rest as much on the fabricated vocative 'corresponding' to some nominative such as *ἐποποῖς. It is this morphological 'kick' naming *nobird* that will bring down the birds (the ersatz hoope and his slave) from above after all. Euelpides complies and stutters in his attempt to manage the tongue-twisting ἐποποῖ, ποήσεις ... (v. 59, cf. ἔπoψ, ποιεῖν, ποῖ, ποῖ).

Following the confused cry of Euelpides at v. 60 there emerges a grotesquely masked 'bird' who does not name himself (throughout *Birds* the act of naming is left up to the men, especially Peisetairos who thereby gathers everything into his textual net). The creature is remarkable: it the same size as the two Athenians and speaks normal Attic despite it bizzare appearance. The men's first reaction is to stumble back and, perhaps, fall down in astonishment at the creature's gape: "Απολλον ἀποτρόπαιε, τοῦ χασμήματος 'Apollo protector, what a maw!' Having been unfairly identified as a bird-hunter, Euelpides tries to control the situation by a comic naming sequence: continuing the bird-metaphor of vv. 34-35 he ignores the new character's pun that substituted, by folk etymology, ἀπολεῖσθον 'perish' for the name of Apollo,[37] and retorts 'but we're not men!' (v, 64). The surface

[36]Merry ad. loc. He notes how Aristophanes has assimilated the vocative to genitive, thus grammaticizing the 'borrowed speech.' For epic references to the Tereus myth see *Od.* 19.518 f., and Hesiod *WD* 568.

[37]This well-known cratylic association (*Cratylus* 404e, 405 d-e) has been productive in Greek poetry: Aesch. *Ag.* 1081: ὄπολλων ... ἀπόλλων ἐμός, ἀπώλεσας γὰρ οὐ μόλις τὸ δεύτερον; Archilochus Fr., 30 (Diehl, I,219); Menander *Perikeir.* 440 (1018 Sandbach) etc., To this etymology, L. Müllner, *APA Abstracts* (1983): 133, has recently added the verb ἀπειλέω 'to threaten.'

nonsense, again corresponds to the comic nature of the hoopoe's slave: like his master he was "once a man" (vv. 71-73) and, presumably, is as shabby and preposterous a 'bird' as Tereus. The extended bird metaphor 'proleptically' points, as the scholiast notes, to the subsequent metamorphosis. Anticipating the large-scale mingling of men and birds, Peisetairos and Euelpides draw upon the stock identity between fear and feces to give themselves names which fuse the semantics of the species.

My discussion of the carnivaleque emphasized the importance, in comedy, of the material boldily stratum into which fragments of other discourses are hurled in an act of simultaneous degradation and renewal. The elemental impulses of fear, hunger, and sexual desire have almost automatic correlates in Aristophanic comedy which are 'ritually' exchanged for them in a farcical release of pleasure. Marking fear with excrement, hunger with (lusty consumption/theft of) food, and desire with the phallus, comedy dispells the gloom of bodily constraints by allowing their transitive expression in the 'stratum that always laughs,' to use Bakhtin's phrase.[38] Here the word δέος 'fear' is repeated

ΠΙ. Κακῶς σύ γ' ἀπόλοι'. Ὡς μ' ἀπέκτεινας δέει.
ΕΥ. Οἴμοι κακοδαίμων, χὠ κολοιός μοΐχεται
ὑπὸ τοῦ δέους.
ΠΙ. Ὦ δειλότατον σὺ θηρίον,
δείσας ἀφῆκας τὸν κολοιόν.
ΕΥ. Εἰπέ μοι,
σὺ δὲ τὴν κορώνην οὐκ ἀφῆκας καταπεσών;

For a more general discussion of the productive role of folk etymology in poetry see F. Ahl *Metaformations* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.

[38] I am grateful to the participants in a seminar presented by P. Pucci on *Clouds*, for this suggestion.

PE. Damn you, you frightened me to death!
EU. Oh, no! . . . my daw has also fled from fright,
PE. You frightful coward, *you* released him out of fright.
EU. Yeah, well tell me: didn't you release the crow as you fell?
(85-89)

The names at vv. 65 and 68 employ the morphology of bird names[39] to express the ritual transaction common to the men of Aristophanic comedy: Euelpides identifies himself as 'Υποδεδιώς 'fearling,' while Peisetairos is 'Επικεχοδώς 'shitlir̲.' The participial game is complemented by a graphic demonstration: when the hoopoe's servant seeks to disentangle himself from the joky trap, dismissing it as nonsense (literally οὐδὲν λέγεις 'you're saying *no-thing*') Euelpides produces proof of his comic authenticity: καὶ μὴν ἐροῦ τὰ πρὸς ποδῶν 'go ahead, ask me what's at my feet!' The exotic epithets Λυβικόν, Φασιανικός similarly yield their initial strangeness to the familiar weaknesses of cowardice and συκοφαντία.[40]

The naming sequence continues as the two men turn their attention to the hoopoe's servant. The Greek phrase τί θηρίον ποτ' εἶ 'what ever sort of beast *are* you?' traces a circular path similar to that of the puns with χάσκω. Often used colloquially to mean 'beast' or 'something odd/odious'[41] in a

[39]Aristophanes may have intended finer wordplay with foreign (cf. Λυβικός) morphology: Thompson 295 counts "six bird-names beginning with the syllable ὑπ-, all of them obscure, and what little is said about them seems replete with foreign influence. I am pretty certain that in none of these cases does ὑπ- mean *sub*, and I suspect that in some or all of them it is no other than *pi-*, the Egyptian article." The lexicon lists three birds beginning in ἐπι- (ἔπιζα, ἐπιλαΐς, and ἐπιλεῖος)and the ending in -ως is found in many bird-names such as χηνερώς, ταώς, and ῥινοκέρως.

[40]Lybia is mentioned, the Scholiast conjectures, ἐπεὶ οἱ Λίβυες βάρβαροι καὶ δειλοὶ while Φασιανικός may indicate συκοφάντης, παρὰ τὸ φαίνειν.

context that is far removed from animals, the word θηρίον is pulled back from the periphery to dead center, i.e., what kind of animal is this after all? On another level, of course, we return once again to the periphery since the actor is certainly a man and, judging by his ridiculous costume, deserves the question 'what the hell are *you* supposed to be?' The 'bird' understands the question this way and in matter-of-fact fashion tells Peisetairos and Euelpides that he's a slave-bird (ὄρνις ἐγὼ δοῦλος v. 70) with emphasis on δοῦλος 'slave.' The men, however, return to the subject of birds: since when do birds keep slaves? Surely he must be a δοῦλος 'vanquished' in the context of a cockfight. Denying this the slave-bird claims to be a parallel metamorph with Tereus:

> Οὔκ, ἀλλ' ὅτε περ ὁ δεσπότης
> ἔποψ ἐγένετο, τότε γενέσθαι μ' ηὔξατο
> ὄρνιν, ἵν' ἀκόλουθον διάκονόν τ' ἔχῃ.
>
> No, but when my master became a hoopoe
> he prayed that I also become a bird,
> in order that he have a companion and servant.
> (71-73)

There being no name in the mythological tradition for the comic improvisation, Euelpides asks if birds need slaves. The answer involves a repetition of the verb τρέχειν 'to run' which sets up the punning name τρόχιλος which seems to range over several birds including the wren.[42] The

[41] As a general term of reproach, besides *Wealth* 439 and *Knights* 273, LSJ supply the following examples: κόλακι, δεινῷ θηρίῳ Pl. *Phaedr.* 240b; Κρῆτες, κακὰ θ. Epimenid. I; δυσνουθέτητον θ., of poverty, Men. *Georg.*78; ἡ μουσικὴ ἀεί τι καινὸν θηρίον τίκτει Anaxil. 27, cf. Eup. 132; τί δέ, εἰ αὐτοῦ τοῦ θηρίου ἠκούσατε; said by Aeschines of Demosthenes, Plin. *Ep.* 2.3.10; θ. συνεστιώμενον, of woman, Secund. *Sent.* 8.

indeterminacy is appropriate for a twilight creature of the comic stage: the τρόχιλος, or 'runner' does not object and the naming sequence ends as the two Athenians, taking nominal disguises from fear and feces, release the real birds in order to replace them with a hybrid comic pair, the slave and his master Tereus the hoopoe.

Tereus, the Benign Castrator

The manifest lack of meaning in the quest of Peisetairos and Euelpides leads to the suspicion that the play is structured around something other that a linear problem-solution sequence. Mythology is not lacking in man-to-bird metamorphoses and, had the notion of 'birdland' been Aristophanes' leading idea, we might have expected any number of bird metamorphs to crowd the stage (that is, if he were to draw on the tradition at all). The seductive strangeness of the Tereus myth as well as the fact that Sophocles[43] had brought out a play of the same name no doubt conspired to make the figure of Tereus an attractive and catalyzing choice for a central character. Prior to the question of what the birds 'mean' or even 'why birds at all?' is the issue of Tereus in the context of the complex Tereus-Polytechnus myth. Much, if not all, of the motivation behind the Aristophanic bird extravaganza is supplied by the character of the extraordinary and extra-ornithic Epops, initiator (ὀρνιθαγωγός) of men into the world of birds.

[42]Thompson 287-289.

[43]P. Rau, *Paratragodia. Untersuchungen einer komischen Form des Aristophanes*, (Munich: Beck, 1967) 195, follows VanLeeuwen and Schröder, in denying any throroughgoing parody of Sophocles' *Tereus* but rather feels that the parody extends only, perhaps, to costume and 'sporadically chosen diction.'

Consider the account given by Apollodorus:

> Pandion (who succeeded Erichthonius as king of Athens) married Zeuxippe, daughter of his mother's sister and begat Procne and Philomela . . . When war broke out against Labdacus, through a border dispute, he summoned the aid of Tereus, son of Ares, from Thrace. The outcome being successful he gave Tereus his daughter Procne to wife. Tereus had by her a son Itys, but fell in love with Philomela, raped her and pretending that Procne had died hid her in the country. He then married Philomela and cut out her tongue. But she wove letters on a robe and by this means apprised Procne of her own misfortunes. Procne sought out her own sister and after murdering Itys, boiled him and served him up for Tereus to eat. She then decamped with her sister. When Tereus learned what had happened he snatched up an axe and pursued them. The pair were overtaken at Daulia in Phocis and prayed to the gods to change them into birds. Whereupon Procne became a nightingale and Philomela a swallow. Tereus too was changed into a bird a became a hoopoe.[44]

A different version supplied by Antoninus Liberalis, derived from Boios,[45] has Pandareos who dwelt 'in the neighborhood of Ephesus' instead of Pandion. He was blessed (?) by Demeter with the ability to eat unlimited quantities of food without overloading his stomach. The two sisters are proleptically Aedon and Khelidon, while Tereus' counterpart is Polytechnos, a carpenter who lived at Colophon in Lydia. This version includes a more elaborate account of the crime of Tereus-Polytechnos:

---

[44]Apollodorus III 193 f. translation in Pollard 165. A comprehensive account of the Tereus myth is given by G. Mihailov, "La légende de Térée" *Annuaire de l'université de Sofia, Faculté des Lettres*,vol. 50, 2 (1955): 15-199. See also N.J. Zaganaris, "La mythe de Térée dans la littérature greque et latine," *Platon* 25 (1973) 208 ff.

[45]A fifth-century author of an 'Ορνιθογονία known to the antiquarian Philochorus (Historicus 4th c. B.C.)

> As long as they reverenced the gods they were happy, but one day they let slip that they were more in love than Zeus and Hera. This angered Hera who sent Discord to fill them with a spirit of rivalry. As Polytechnos was on the point of completing a chariot seat and Aedon was finishing weaving a web they mutually agreed that whoever finished the work first should receive the present of a slave-girl from the other. When Aedon finished first (for Hera helped her) Polytechnus was angered by her victory and went to Pandareos pretending that he had been sent by Aedon to bring back her sister Khiledon. Pandareos suspecting no evil handed her over. But Polytechnos took the girl and raped her in the bush. He then dressed her in strange clothes, cut off her hair and threatened to kill her if she revealed anything to Aedon. When he reached home he handed her sister over to Aedon to be her slave-girl, in accordance with the terms of the agreement. She plied her with work, until holding a pitcher Chelidon broke down by the well. Aedon heard her laments and after recognizing one another and embracing they plotted Polytechnos' doom.[46]

The slaying of Itys and the cannibal feast proceed as in the better-known version. An interesting departure, however, is an account of further family complications:

> When Poytechnos realized that he had eaten his child's flesh he pursued the fugitives right up to their father's. He was captured by Pandareos' servants and bound with strong bonds, because he had brought dishonour on his household. After smearing his body with honey he was thrown among the sheep. Flies landed on Polytechnos and tortured him, but Aedon pitied him for their former love and kept them off. When her parents and brother saw what she was doing their hatred knew no bounds and they wished to kill her.

At this point Zeus intervenes and, apparently, turns the entire clan

[46]Pollard 172-173, citing Cook *CR* 8 (1904): 81.

into birds: Pandareos into a sea-eagle, Aedon's mother into a kingfisher, Polytechnos into a woodpecker, Aedon's brother into a hoopoe which is said to be "of good omen for mariners as well as travellers on land and in particular when it appears in the company with the sea-eagle and the kingfisher." As for Aedon and Khelidon, the former is "always lamenting by rivers and brakes for her son Itys, while Khelidon lives in the company of men by the will of Artemis, because it was by violence that she lost her virginity and called upon Artemis to come to her aid."

The lore of the hoopoe is elaborate and occurs with a variety of interesting details across many cultures. His name alone participates in a complex series of associations: perhaps cognate with an Egyptian solar name Apopis (Sun's brother) as well as the names Epaphos and Epiphi, the ἔποψ also appears as ἀπαφός, γέλασος, γόλμις, κουκούφα, μακεσίκρανος, ποῦπος, and σίντης.[47] The Egyptian name κουκοῦφα caused a terminological confusion between 'hoopoe' and 'cuckoo,' while the parallel metamorphoses of the cuckoo and hoopoe into types of hawks served to deepen the association. The Aeschylean fragment (304.7) preserved by Aristotle refers to the popular belief that the hoopoe changed form regularly during the year:

> τοῦτον δ' ἐπόπτην ἔποπα τῶν αὐτοῦ κακῶν
> πεποικίλωκε κἀποδηλώσας ἐχει
> θρασὺν πετραῖον ὄρνιν ἐν παντευχίᾳ·
> ὃς ἦρι μὲν φανέντι διαπάλλει πτερὸν

[47]"Εποψ, notes Thompson 96, "is in form onomatopoetic, like *upupa*, but may be based on, or influenced by, and Egyptian solar name, "Αποπις, 'Ηλίου ἀδελφός, Plut. de Is. xxxvi; for the Hoopoe with its radiant crest was undoubtedly, like the Woodpecker and the Crested Lark, an emblem of the sun." The other names appear to represent the hoopoe in a variety of different sources such as Hesychius and the Suda.

κίρκου λεπάργου·

This bird, as witness to his crimes
he has given dappled plumage and revealed
the proud bird of the rocks in all his panoply;
who when spring comes displays the wing
of a hawk with white plumage,[48]

This text reflects a belief that the bird, out of perpetual restlessness and torment, alternates in form between a hoopoe in the autumn and a hawk in spring. On the level of 'second metamorph' the cuckoo and hoopoe converge since the former was similarly believed to change into a hawk either the κίρκος or ἱέραξ. While the wordplay associated with ἔποψ is often onomatopoetic (cf. vv. 227, 310) or etiological (cf. in the derivation of the ἔποψ/ποῦπα from the cry ποῦ; ποῦ; 'where? where?' of the bereaved Tereus searching for Itys), the tragic fragment shows a connection with the mysteries, according to Könen and Thompson, in what is presumably a popular derivation: ἔποψ < ἐπόπτης 'spectator,' 'initiate.' The notion of 'one initiated into the highest mysteries' accords well with the magical element in the Tereus mythology.[49] The hoopoe was believed to use the magic herb ἀδίαντον to liberate its imprisoned young. This "is aversion of the well-known Samir legend (the 'open Sesame' of the Forty Thieves), and is told also of the Hoopoe in connexion with Solomon . . . . Hence used in magic to reveal secrets or discover treasure." The lore of the hoopoe includes filial affection and the curious habit of imprisoning the hen in her nest during the

[48]Aristotle, *HA* 9. 633a19; Welcker, Oder, and Pearson (cf. Σ^{281} ὁ Σοφοκλῆς πρῶτος τὸν Τηρέα ἐποίησεν κτλ.) ascribe this fragment to the *Tereus* of Sophocles. Nauck following van Leeuwen rejects Sophoclean authorship.

[49]In the following discussion, the mythology of the hoopoe is taken from the *Glossary of Greek Birds* 95-100.

whole time of incubation. Sacred in Egypt and in Islamic tradition (as one of four creatures forbidden to kill), it was associated with the sun and Apollo by virtue of the rayed crest it shares with the hawk. Finally, its reputation as a foul-smelling bird may have something in common with the odd name γέλασος (cf. the feces-laughter association) and seems to qualify it for a central character in comedy.[50]

In a structural-anthropological sense marriage and ἔκδοσις are processes of exchange in an unconsciously determined system of communication similar to language.[51] The Tereus myth exhibits a remarkable correlation between the violation social law (incest) and violation of language. The presence of Philomela (Kelidon) in one version with the added envy of the gods in another, upsets what could be considered an unmarked Oedipal triangle consisting of Tereus, Procne and Itys. In Antoninus' account, Tereus-Polytechnos' crime is more explicitly structured

[50]In *Birds*, notes Thompson 100, "we have many veiled allusions to the mythology of the Hoopoe. The confusion with κόκκυξ . . . is indicated throughout; the fables of Tereus and Procne are frequently referred to, e.g., ἦ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος (98), τὴν ἐμὴν ἀηδόνα (203, 367, &c.); the Hoopoe's first cry, ἄνοιγε τὴν ὕλην (92), is a reference to the Samir-legend; the kindred fable of κορυδός appears in 472-6; the mysterious root (654) is the magical ἀδίαντον: the mention of ἡλιαστής (109) is a pun on ἥλιος: the allied solar symbolism of δρυοκολάπτης is suggested (480); and the nauseous reputation of the nest is probably hinted at in the Hoopoe's pressing invitation to Peisthetairus (641) that he should enter in.

[51]See G. Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, R. Reiter ed. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975). For a critique of the linguistic analogy, especially in Lévi-Strauss' *Mythologies*, see G. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meanings and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures*, Sather Lectures 40 (Cambridge U Press, UC Press, 1970) 42-50.

around a rivalry with Procne-Aedon: preserving his immediate family order, Tereus vents his frustration and rage in transferred violence by raping and 'castrating' Philomela, an act doubly expressed in the tradition as the shearing of hair (i.e. enslavement) and cutting out of the tongue. The castration is very real in the sense of an attempt to reduce her to a pre-verbal state of fragmentation and impotency. The transference, not unlike psychotic delusions described in the psychoanalytical literature,[52] is exposed and disrupted as Philomela takes up the counter-phallus, the signifier of linguistic power (of being-in-language) to inform her sister in writing of Tereus' act. The violent conflict between Tereus and the women is articulated explicitly in terms of *writing:* Tereus, as a Thracian,[53] is the destroyer/depriver of the sign who is defeated by means of writing.

Procne's direct retaliation within the scope of the Father-Mother-Child triangle suggests the immediacy of her reaction to the crime: in castrating Philomela Tereus had transferentially attempted to remove Procne as Itys' primary (m)other in a perverse expression of rivalry for the child. The mother then strikes directly, killing the child and forcing upon his father

---

[52]Cf. The case of Aimée (one of Lacan's earliest), in Benvenuto and Kennedy 31-46; also Wilden 177-284.

[53]"The inhabitants of Thrace . . . are illiterate people . . . they are so illiterate that they consider the knowledge of writing indecent . . . During an incident of the Peloponnesian war, which Thucydides (who should know) labels one of the most horrible atrocities of the war, they slaughtered with the short sword--which is not a regular weapon for the Greeks--all of the children of the city of Mykalessos gathered in the school, helpless children learning how to read and write. Obvioulsy, *the role of the Thracians, full of scorn for writing, was to destroy in fury everything which concerned the intellectual sphere* [italics mine]: books, tools, and men." M. Detienne,"The Voice and the Book of Orpheus," (Townsend lecture: Spring 1987): 2-3, from *The Gods of Writing,* forthcoming.

another, more horrible violation of taboo: the eating of human (and kindred!) flesh. The story ends with a homosexual polarization of the family: sister-sister vs. father-son (within father). The additional account of Pandareos' torturing the ironically named Polytechnos as well as Aedon's catastrophic intercession only serves to emphasize the dissolution of the social order mirrored by the attempt to violate and control the sign.

The incest prohibition, according to Lévi-Strauss, occurs "inexplicably at the frontier between (biological) nature and (human) culture."[54] The correlation between abuse of the signifier and abuse of woman-as-sign is mythically expressed in the passage out of the human condition. Use of the woman outside the communicative exchange can only be regarded as abuse and, as such, extra-systematic, absurd, and non-sensical. The tragic 'nonsense' is projected across the boundary of nature to a realm that is other and which absorbs and neutralizes the irreconcilable conflict. The disintegration of social structure in metamorphosis (i.e., a family scattered across species) is an aspect of this neutraliztion.

Although a formidable presence as the castrating Father, Tereus, in his suppression of the sign was, nevertheless, overcome and tricked into attacking only one element in the chain leaving intact the always elusive signified. His transgressions of taboo subsequently place him outside the system where all he can utter is the barely semantic πού; πού; This violently polysemous myth is transformed in *Birds* by the devious energy of Comedy to form a new set of associations. In a remarkable strategy that resembles foreclosure or repudiation (*Verneinung*), comedy seems to reject certain features of myth together with their effect and behaves as if the idea had

54 *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté* (Paris: PUF, 1949) 592-617. Wilden 251.

never occurred to it at all. Tereus the 'spectator of/initiate into his own evils' becomes, in his Aristophanic context, a *benign* father, teacher of language, and supreme among the birds. Reflecting the complex structure of otherness in which birds as simple other (in the sense of objects) become involved in comic discourse as other subjects, Tereus is only partially 'ornithized' and the familiar presence of the human form is only loosely attached to tokens of birdhood.

The absence of Philomela and Itys as well as any other characters from the myth is telling: Tereus and Procne enjoy a harmonious relationship with no trace of the crisis responsible for their being birds in the first place.[55] Procne's role is marginal and non-verbal. The banishment of women from the stage and text is perhaps the only trace of Tereus' crimes in *Birds*.[56]

[55]Hofmann's theoretical perspective does not go beyond the following comment (98): "übergeht der Dichter damit geflissentlich die tragische Seite des Mythos, die in der Komödiensituation ohne Bezug gewesen wäre, und stellt das für seine Absichten wichtige Moment der glücklichen Ehe zwischen Tereus-Epops und Prokne-Aëdon heraus." The sole exception is one of the rare moments where comedy brushes closely by tragedy in what appears to be a non-parodical moment: the parallelism between *Birds* 212-214 and Euripides *Helen* 1111-1112 is interestingly bound up with the sole mention of Itys in the play. Despite the fact that the comedy seems to have been produced two years before the tragedy, there may be a connection (perhaps a common source) that would explain the text' awareness of each other without resorting to positing paracomedy in Euripides. See Dover 148-149. and below pp. 110 f.

[56]Of the three female figures (which are not 'women' in any normal sense of the word) Procne is a silent character with a perfunctory role, Basileia a silent abstraction with virtually no 'role,' and Iris a goddess who is violently evicted from Nephelokokkugia. See Taaffe 54-63 who says that, in *Birds* the female characters, including Basileia, "point out the use of women as a serious threat to the [male] utopia."

Foreclosing the anti-linguistic force of the castrating Father, *Birds* amplifies the non-Hellenic periphery of the Tereus myth. His entrance at v. 92 is signalled by the words ἄνοιγε τὴν ὕλην, ἵν' ἐξέλθω ποτέ 'throw open the woods so I can make my exit at last!' The exotic reference to the hoopoe's role in magic and in the Samir legend is grounded in the substitution of ὕλην 'wood' for πύλην 'door.' The 'door' characteristic of the bombastic diction here is erased leaving Tereus an entrance through a clever pun. He seems a bit sensitive to ridicule and, when Euelpides notes that the gods seem to have 'thrashed' him (ἐπιτρῖψαι), responds:

> Μῶν με σκώπτετον
> ὀρῶντε τὴν πτέρωσιν; Ἦν γάρ, ὦ ξένοι,
> ἄνθρωπος.
>
> You wouldn't be laughing at me on account of my plumage? I was once, my friends, a man.
> (96-98)

These words point to an uneasiness on Tereus' part with respect to his synthetic condition. Not only is he a metamorph from myth but he owes something to a prior representation on the tragic stage. When Euelpides says that he finds Tereus' beak 'laughable,' the latter attributes this 'mockery' to Sophocles (τοιαῦτα μέντοι Σοφοκλέης λυμαίνεται ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαισιν ἐμέ, τὸν Τηρέα vv. 100-101). If Horace is correct in saying that along with murder and cannibalism, metamorphosis was excluded from the visual dimension of tragedy, then Tereus here means to complain of the narrative abuse heaped on him in the Sophoclean play bearing his name.[57] Tereus, however, is

[57] *Ars Poetica* 179-187: Aut igitur res in scaenis aut acta refertur. | segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem | quam quae sunt oculis subiecta fidelibus et quae | ipse sibi tradit spectator: non tamen intus | digna geri promes in

made to name himself whereby he asserts his affinity with the men-as-namers. Aristophanes exploits the rather fragmented personality of the bird-man for further humor. The sophistic distinction between 'you' and 'your funny beak' as well as the question 'are you bird or peacock?' at v. 102 underscore the character's composite nature.[58] Tereus' bird-status is called into question due to his lack of feathers and, despite his insistence that he is a bird, Euelpides asks (punning on ποῦ), κᾆτά σοι ποῦ τὰ πτερά; 'well, then, where are your feathers?' Substituting for fact a gross misconception about bird plumage Tereus tells Euelpides that birds lose all their feathers in winter and hastens to ask the men who *they* are. Caught up in the context of questioning identities, Euelpides provides him with absurdly obvious information, stated so as to avoid a term in direct opposition to 'bird' νώ; βροτώ. 'us? we're mortals' (v. 107).

Finally man and bird are face to face, having exchanged indentification. The most surprising comic transformation in the character of Tereus is his newfound facility with language which stands in stark contrast to the Thracian (anti-textual) violence of his counterpart in 'tragic' myth. It is Tereus himself that is responsible, in *Birds*, for the inter-specific communication:

> Ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτοὺς βαρβάρους ὄντας πρὸ τοῦ
> ἐδίδαξα τὴν φωνήν, ξυνὼν πολὺν χρόνον.
>
> They're not the barbarians they used to be: I taught them language, having spent a long time here.

scaenam, multaque tolles | ex oculis, quae mox narret facundia praesens; | ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet, | aut humana palam coquat exta nefarius Atreus, | *aut in avem Procne vertatur, Cadmus in anguem.*

[58]The word ταὦς is used here and at v. 269 to denote otherness, as a marker of an indeterminately exotic creature.

(199-200)

The violation of language and castrating paternal function have been banished and Tereus appears as a disseminator of the Word and benevolent surrogate Father for the two men in their quest. Not quite bird-like he seems to object to the animals' speechlessness as 'barbaric.' The word φωνή marks language as a comic supplement to the natural song of the birds, a supplement that is to take on a more and more dominant role until 'song' is absorbed into an archi-phoné as the indexes of bird-nature are attracted in reciprocal intersubstitution to the human.

The Tarot Session

The interruption of our dual subjects' sensible (dis)course, as we have seen, reveals a gap in signification which comedy disarms by wordplay and laughter deferring the opressiveness of the signifier. Though characteristic of the Athenians' enigmatic quest from the very outset, it is in the questioning of Tereus or 'tarot session,' to borrow Lacan's metaphor, that this strategy is employed to its fullest and serves as a pivotal point at which Peisetairos takes over the interpretive role first to read (ἐνορᾶν) his own destiny and then to write the text of his future. The reversal of the quest(ioning) in which the seekers of a word or oracle become its preceptors participates in a number of mythic and lingustic reversals in *Birds*.

Myth, like language, is fragmented and spliced into the discourse of comedy which isolates selected elements and takes advantage of their disassociation from context. In this respect, a proverb quoted merely to make a feeble pun, the ritual violence and abuse of farce, as well as the character of Tereus share a certain autonomy as comedy both transforms and exploits the

materiality of these fragments lifted from other discourses for its own hedonistic purposes.[59] It should not be a surprise, then, to find in our play a Tereus who is almost unrecognizable in his personality and function. Unlike the men, Tereus is a static figure and is not looking for anything. The foreclosure of the crisis that elicited his μηχανὴ σωτηρίας (ornithization) is expressed in his denial of being affected by any comic νόσος: when, appalled by the hoopoe's appearance, Euelpides asks if he is afflicted by some disease, Tereus, by way of denial, produces the nonsense about his deciduous plumage (v. 106). The use of νόσος which, as I argue above, has a specific connotation in Aristophanic comedy constitutes a jab that cuts deep. It is as if to say 'you must certainly be looking for a way out of *that* predicament!' In obvious contradiction to his condition, Tereus insists on his bird φύσις and includes himself in the class of πάντα τῶρνεα 'all the birds, everybird' (v. 105) thereby confirming his role as comic initiator (ὀρνιθαγωγός) of the men into the avian mysteries of the Other. The men's preoccupation with the ὄρνις/ἄνθρωπος distinction is put to use in the παρὰ προσδοκίαν, noted above, when the men announce themselves to be 'mortals.' This, of course, does not answer Tereus' query, is stylistically incongruous,[60] and contradicts

[59]The autonomy of language and action has was emphasized by Bergson (1900) in his famous essay *Le Rire: de quoi rit-on? pourqoi rit-on* (in *Comdey*, Trans. W. Sypher [Johns Hopkins UP, 1956] 61-190. On the relationship between language and farce see also J. Davis *Farce*, vol. 39 in Critical Idiom Series, J. Jump ed. (Methuen & Co LTd, 1978) pp. 85-103; also A. Bermel, *Farce: A History from Aristophanes to Woody Allen* (Simon & Schuster, 1982).

[60]"βροτός as mortal man, opp. ἀθάνατος, or θεός" LSJ. Compare the condescension of the bird chorus in the parabasis when they address the men as ἐφημέριοι, ταλαοὶ βροτοί (v. 687). There seems to be a devious reciprocity even at the level of 'pompously poetic' diction.

their assertion at v. 64 that they are *not* men.[61] Are we to suppose that, having abandoned their human nature, they are now in a generic state of mortality waiting to re-determine their species? Tereus stems the proliferation of nonsense and repeats his question by asking what sort of men they are, ποδαπὼ τὸ γένος 'what's you race/nationality?' The answer is again playfully evasive and participtes in the curious suppression of the *name* of Athens thoughout the play: ὅθεν αἱ τριήρεις αἱ καλαί 'the land of the beautiful triremes.' The play on the word ἡλιαστής 'juror' in the following lines emphasizes the circularity of this suppression by simultaneously engaging the ablative and perfective aspects of the prefix ἀπο-. There is a great logical circle inscribed in comic play as the attempt to escape any of the constraints of human nature (and language is regarded as one of the main fetters) necessarily involves these very constraints. So with the changes rung on the word at hand:

ΕΠ. Μῶν ἡλιαστά;
ΕΥ. Μὰλλὰ θατέρου τρόπου,
ἀπηλιαστά.

HO. Would you be heliasts, then?
EU. No, quite the contrary, antihelialsts.
(109-110)

The joke here combines punning references to paleness (cf. ἥλιος 'sun'), an ugly sophistic feature ridiculed at *Clouds* 103, and to the Ἡλιαία in a way that looks back to the cicada-metaphor at vv. 39-41 and forward to the cicada again at v. 1096 who is lyrically the ἀχέτας ἡλιομανής 'sunmad chirper.'[62] The

[61]Kock, ad. loc., is surely correct when he notes that the force of the phrase is largely its homoioteleutic jingle.

prefix ἀπο-, moreover, contributes to the pun grammatically: First, as a prefix and preposition ἀπο- is usually ablative in function and similar to the α-privative in adjectives such as ἀπάνθρωπος 'far from man, inhuman.' Second, it has a perfective aspect most commonly in (perfect) passive participles such as ἀπορνιθώμενος 'turned into bird.'[63] As the Supreme Court of Athens consisting of not less than six thousand members (all over age 30), the Heliaia is a suitable metaphor for the city-state itself. Thus we read the comic form ἀπηλιαστά as a bi-directional pun 'we are renegades from Athens / we are thoroughly Athenified,' the first corresponding to the departure form the city, the second to the eventual assimilation of Nephelokokkugia to Athens. The adversative and complex nature of the line is extended in the correspondence to *Medea* 807-808.[64]

---

[62]Although the pun involving ἥλιος and ἡλιαία is weakened if the later is unaspirated, it is hard to believe that the connection was not intended since the cicada, compared to the Athenians at vv. 39-41, is said to be ἡλιομανής at v. 1096. Note, however, that there is convincing evidence that the word ἡλιαία was unaspirated in fifth-century Attic Greek. (MacDowell 158: "fifth-century inscriptions which show the aspirate correctly in other words never aspirate ἡλιαία (IG i^2 39.75, 63. 14, *ATL* D 14. II. 7) and *Birds* 110 has ἀπηλιαστά not (ἀφ-); so *Lys.* 380 οὐκέθ' ἡλ- (ἡλ- R) should probably be emended to οὐκέτ' ἡλ-. Cf. H. T. Wade-Gery in *BSA* xxxvii (1940), 265 n. 3, and Dover's note on *Clouds* 863). Cf. the entry αλιεσ- in Chantraine *DE*.

[63]Cf. the verbs ἀποθηλύνω 'become woman(ly),' and ἀποδειλιάω 'become a coward.' Σ^{35} speaks of the men's imminent ornithization (ὀλίγον ὕστερον ὀρνιθωσόμενοι) and Σ^{100} (of Tereus): Σοφοκλῆς ἐποίησεν αὐτὸν ἀπωρνιθώμενον. (This and a similar word occur in the scholia on vv. 654 and 250). The noun ἀπορνεώσις, though late, is interesting morphologically.

[64]μηδείς με φαύλην κἀσθενῆ νομιζέτω | μηδ' ἡσυχαίαν, ἀλλὰ θατέρου τρόπου, | βαρεῖαν ἐχθροῖς καὶ φίλοισιν εὐμενῆ· That Rau does not connect this text with *Birds* is not surprising since he is interested only in very obvious correspondences (cf. his criticism of his predecessors, Rau 1-5).

Tereus finally styles his speech to conform with the oblique and substitutionary utterances of Euelpides and returns metaphor for metaphor to ask if 'that seed (i.e., ἀπηλιαστής) is sown there:' Σπείρεται γὰρ τοῦτ' ἐκεῖ τὸ σέρμ'; (v. 110-111).[65] In the unmarked substitution of 'metaphor' a suppressed signifier is generally recoverable and ambiguity more connotative than denotative. Replacing the dubious ἀπηλιαστά with a suggestive and polysemous 'seed,' however, the hoopoe simultaneously recognizes the word in 'metaphor' and avoids confronting its possible meaning by bouncing the unstable form back at Euelpides. In accordance with Tereus' evasive strategy, the name of Athens. again, is suppressed and marked only by the adverbial trace ἐκεῖ. Euelpides' answer absorbs the metaphor in allegory: ὀλίγον ζητῶν ἂν ἐξ ἀγροῦ λάβοις 'with a little effort you'll find some in the field.' A way of describing the mechanics of metaphor is to speak of a focus/frame opposition in which one or several signifiers are replaced at a point (focus) in the utterance the rest of which remains intact and superficially incongruous with respect to the new element(s).[66] A sentence in which all semantically active material is replaced by another system of coherent signifiers functions as a unit on the sentential level and places the entire new utterance (allegory) in a more distant and non-grammatical relationship to the suppressed or implied one. Unlike the focal word(s) in metaphor which is bound to the syntax of its immediate context (frame), the allegory has no frame and thus avoids

[65]Cf. Euripides *Hecuba* 254 and *Iphigeneia in Aulis* 520.

[66]This terminology, along with the tenor/vehicle opposition, does not necessarily imply either a 'substitution' or 'interaction' view of metaphor. See J. Mooij, *A Study of Metaphor--the Nature of Metaphorical Expressions, with Special Reference to Their Reference* (Amsterdam: Linguistic Series 27, 1976), and "Tenor, Vehicle, Refernce," *Poetics* 4 (1975, No 2-3, 14-15): 257-272.

altogether an immediate sense/nonsense boundary.

Relieveing metaphor of the sense/nonsense tension by incorporating it into allegory is a paradoxical strategy of (unexpected) least resistance and, as such, can be a pleasant and surprising deferral of the metaphorical challenge.[67] Thus the necessity of interpreting the conundrum ἀπηλιαστά is suspended as the allegory takes its own direction Tereus assigns the comic form an algebraic and strictly variable (polysemous) value[68] σπέρμα, a natural enough choice for a bird in its concreteness and familiarity. The verbal equation no longer needs to be solved as Euelpides takes up the substitution and extends it by gesturing towards the country (ἀγρός). The potential energy of multiple sense and nonsense in the preceding comic coinage is disseminated and expanded, at which point Tereus abruptly asks the unanswerable question πράγους δὲ δὴ τοῦ δεομένω ἦλθετον; 'what undertaking has brought you here?' (v. 112). The paratragic form πρᾶγος 'thing, affair' is as far from colloquial diction as one could imagine and underscores the strangeness of the quest discussed above.[69] Euelpides has already answered the question using the same verb as Tereus (δεῖσθαι) and we know that his mission is to go to hell (the dogs/birds)! The word πρᾶγος, its correlative πρᾶγμα, as well as a number of other key words such as νόμος and

[67]An interesting example of unresolved and allegorized metaphor occurs in the film *Colonel Redl* (István Szabo, 1984) when Kaiser Franz Joseph warns Redl that the discipline in the Wehrmacht must be "as cold and hard as the ice which binds a lake in winter." Redl silences him by noting that "the water beneath the ice swarms with living fish."

[68]True to its *disseminating* power, σπέρμα has a broad range: seed, germ, origin, element, offspring, issue, race, class, descent, seed-time, sowing,. etc.

[69]Rau 195 cites this form as poetic (Pindar, Tragedy: cf. *Lysistrata* 706 and Eur. *Telephos* Fr. 699): "Dem Vogelkönig kommt ein leicht gehobenes Ethos zu."

φύσις submit to considerable (ab)use as Aristophanes exploits their wide ranges of signification to effect a sort of reverse-metaphor: whereas the most common transferrential strategy is to trap a single signified between two signfiers that collide/collude to produce a variety of effects ranging from mysterious to ridiculous, the words πρᾶγμα and πρᾶγος pose throughout the text as superficial constants. Strictly speaking there is no semantic shift between occurrences: the signified, as demanded by the context, slides about under the sign creating a tension between the material stability of the written/spoken word and the quicksand of 'meaning.' While the terms νόμος, φύσις, and πόλις figure as key words later in the play, the focus here is on πρᾶγμα / πρᾶγος.

The text supplies a number of distracting associations as decoys to lure us away from the essentialy unanswerable quest(ion): what πρᾶγμα are you seeking? Alongside the comic ἐς κόρακας ἐλθεῖν mentioned above is Euelpides' redefinition of the hapax form πλανύττομεν which was coined by way of introducing the play's text-metaphor: πλανώμεθα ζητοῦντε τόπον ἀπράγμονα (v. 44). That is to say, 'we are seeking no πρᾶγμα at all, a place that is entirely anti-pragmatic.' Tereus, it would seem, has asked a nonsensical question which is negotiated only by allowing πρᾶγμα to shift from the narrow meaning 'lawsuit, court-business' to 'state/private affairs' to 'circumstances' in the most general sense of the word. It is fitting that Euelpides continues to tease the issue by offerring yet another definition of their quest: σοὶ ξυγγενέσθαι βουλομένω 'desirous of being-with-you.' What Tereus receives in exchange for the slippery πρᾶγμα is an equally polysemous signifier συγγίγνεσθαι. Open to us is a spectrum of meanings: 'to be born with,' 'to associate with,' 'to coexist with,' 'to consult with,' 'to have sexual

intercourse with,' 'to come to assist,' 'to meet with,' 'to be acquainted with.' Each of these meanings is relevant to the man-bird encounter: the men become birds and comically partake of bird flesh both in incarnation and by consuming it. (Interspecific sexuality is again hinted at in connection with πρᾶγμα: cf. the layered metaphor at vv. 438-442 discussed below.)[70] The notions of co-birth and sharing in the 'bird experience' foreshadow the transformation in which Peisetairos and Euelpides follow Tereus, while 'assistance,' coexistence,' and 'association' are characteristic of the cooperative efforts in building Nephelokokkugia. While the full semantic potential of συγγίγνεσθαι is generally relevant to bird-man relations, the most prominent aspect in the passage at hand is linguistic: 'to discuss with,' 'to share in discourse with,' The upshot of the foregoing metaphorical and evasive exchange is that Peisetairos and Euelpides, in their circular quest(ioning) reflected in the ludic treatment of (ἀπ)ηλιαστής and πρᾶγμα, look to Tereus as to a source of the Word, as to a keeper of an oracle that knows their destiny. The institution of supplication involves an appeal to an entity or institution beyond one's station, a god or locus of greater power and knowledge. By placing themselves in the relation of ἱκέται 'suppliants' (v. 120) to Tereus the

[70]Before agreeing to set forth his πρᾶγμα, Peisetairos demands a διαθήκη 'treaty, testament' of the chorus: μὰ τὸν 'Απόλλω 'γὼ μὲν οὔ, | ἢν μὴ διάθωνταί γ' οἵδε διαθήκην ἐμοὶ | ἥνπερ ὁ πίθηκος τῇ γυναικὶ διέθετο, | ὁ μαχαιροποιός, μήτε δάκνειν τούτους ἐμὲ | μήτ' ὀρχίπεδ' ἕλκειν μήτ' ὀρύττειν -- (vv. 438-442). (The name of the individual in question is a triple mystery: Σ[440] cites *Islands* [Νῆσοι] as mentioning a μαχαιροποιός, Panaitios 'the ape,' μαγείρου πατρός. This 'all-culpable' primate seems to have made an agreement with his overbearing wife half of which is given here: she must not [during sex, presumably] bite him, tear at his testicles, or penetrate ['dig' his anus].) Peisetairos is using sexual language where sex, strictly speaking, is impossible i.e. accross the boundaries of φύσις. The substitution of 'eyes' for 'anus' at v. 443 is an insincere attempt at mitigating the nonsense.

men formally abandon their connection to preceding circumstances for all their indeterminacy.[71] The absence of meaning noted repeatedly above, i.e., the absence of an expressed motivation for the quest is once again filled by a formulaic joke. When Tereus asks Euelpides what is the subject of his proposed quest(ioning) the latter says:

> Ὅτι πρῶτα μὲν ἦσθ' ἄνθρωπος ὥσπερ νώ ποτε,
> κἀργύριον ὠφείλησας ὥσπερ νώ ποτε,
> κοὐκ ἀποδιδοὺς ἔχαιρες, ὥσπερ νώ ποτε·
> εἶτ' αὖθις ὀρνίθων μεταλλάξας φύσιν
> καὶ γῆν ἐπεπέτου καὶ θάλατταν ἐν κύκλῳ,
> καὶ πάνθ' ὅσαπερ ἄνθρωπος ὅσα τ' ὄρνις φρονεῖς.
>
> First of all, because you were a man, like us, once.
> and you owed money, like us, once,
> and you delighted in defaulting, like us, once.
> Second, you exchanged you nature for that of the birds
> and have circled the earth and sea, and have
> the mentality, in every respect, of a man *and* a bird.
> (114-119)

The comic predicament *par excellence*, debt, is identified with the human condition in a mechanical association secured by the anaphoric ὥσπερ νώ ποτε. The repeated words serve to tightly link the words ἄνθρωπος, ὠφέλεισας, and ἔχαιρες. The implication that it was the metamorphosis that offered Tereus a μηχανὴ σωτηρίας fuses the conditions of 'being human' and 'being in debt' in a movement by which comedy forcludes the tragic aspects of myth and appropriates the mythical personage, i.e., it replaces the horrible (castrating/anti-societal) reasons for Tereus' metamorphosis with a stock comic problem (νόσος). The comic (ab)use of myth is reinforced at v. 157

[71]Properly only a tragic posture, cf. Aeschylus *Suppliants* 19-21.

where Tereus identifies freedom from financial obligation as the primary benefit of the bird life: οὗ πρῶτα μὲν δεῖ ζῆν ἄνευ βαλλαντίου 'where, most important, you don't even need a wallet.' Note also the ambiguity of the word ποτε: in the anaphoric sequence the adverb can be taken with the pronoun νώ to mark the departure of the Athenians from the world of men, the 'indeterminate mortality' discussed above. Although Peisetairos is later to attempt a redefinition of the ἄνθρωπος/ὄρνις collision, here the hoopoe is credited with possessing both natures and, accordingly, appointed as interpretive authority who has paradoxically retained what he was supposed to have lost. The verb μεταλλάσσειν commonly designates change or exchange of one thing for another. In trading human nature for bird nature Tereus has curiously preserved his link to the past, i.e., his memory of the human, a memory which stands in inexplicable contradiction to the suppression of mythic memory in the play (comic truth, again, as a concealer).

Euelpides continues the wordplay of deferral characterizing his enigmatic quest in terms of sleep and zero-degree existence, wrapped in a σισύρα, the familiar Attic goatskin cloak. "We were hoping," he says, "you might show us a polis as soft and wooly as a sisura in which we could cuddle up in:" εὔερον ὥσπερ σισύραν ἐγκατακλινῆναι μαλθακήν (vv. 121-122). The word εὔερος was a colloquial equivalent of τρυφερός 'dainty, luxurious' and was not bound to garments in its application.[72] The image of a σισύρα concretizes the current adjective and contributes to drawing the πρᾶγμα inherent in the τόπος ἀπράγμων of v. 44 away from the formulaic excuse of Attic litigiousness to mean 'activity' more generally. In the following lines

[72]See, for example, Taillardat 320 who discusses the connection between the two words (his comment on the given passage however, seems to miss some of the transferrential force.)

πρᾶγμα seems unstable as the men anticipate the semantic drift of this word and others such as νόμος within the insulating confines of the fantastic city.

First, however, Tereus asks if they are looking for a city *greater* than Athens for which he uses the periphrasis τῶν Κραναῶν πόλιν 'the Kranaan city' (v. 123).[73] As 'reader of the tarot,' Tereus is oddly lacking in sensitivity offering the men rugged stones instead of wool. Euelpides is quick to set him on the right track: μείζω μὲν οὐδέν, προσφορωτέραν δὲ νῷν 'not greater, but more suited to our advantage/tastes' (v. 124). While προσφορωτέραν clearly indicates a preference for something a bit softer than rugged Athens, Tereus takes the comment more abstractly and suggests that the men seek a politically more advantageous situation: 'you prefer, then, an aristocratic government?' This sets up the simple pun on the name of Aristokrates (τὸν Σκελλίου) after which Euelpides and the hoopoe engage in a joky four-part exchange consisting of suggestions and rejections in close succession interrupted only by two equally patterned digressions on πράγματα.

The structure of the 'tarot session' proper, i.e., the series of 'cards' suggested by Tereus and rejected by Euelpides is the comic negative of the preceding quest: until now we have seen gaps in signification filled with distracting nonsense. Verbal deferral occupied spaces in the discourse which were always anticipated by the comic sign "unfolding its dimension before itself." Aristophanes set up a context 'the Athenians are seeking . . .' and playfully supplied anything *but* the meaning forced upon us by the oppressive structure. Because the entire question-session is set up for the reversal at vv. 155-162 where Peisetairos seizes on the etymology of his own

[73] κραναά πόλις, an ancient name of Athens seems to combine the notion 'rocky, rugged' with a reference to the king Kranaos; cf. Pindar *Olympians* 7.82.

name and takes control of the text (and, therefore, his 'future'), it is only a pseudo-context, as Tereus is a pseudo-sphinx/magician/ὀρνιθαγωγός, a 'straw bird' set up to be knocked down. The pseudo-contextual nature of the Session is reflected in the structure of the individual exchanges: Aristophanes selects a suitable pun-target such as the names Aristokrates, Lepreos, Opuntios (automatically offensive to Euelpides) for which he fabricates, by back-formation,[74] a context in the form of a suggestion from Tereus. Not only is there no wordplay of defferring an always absent meaning, but there is no unfolding of meaning before the signifer: all the poet gives us here is the hollow structure of the pun iterated four times and then discarded. The spectral and, finally, meaningless episodes of 'seeking' and 'consulting' which occupy the first one hundred and fifty lines are driven much more by the ἀνάγκη of narrative which must, at all costs, arrive at the actual beginning of the play, the moment where Peisetairos begins to 'see' and act for himself: ἦ μέγ' ἐνορῶ βούλευμ' ἐν ὀρνίθων γένει 'I perceive a great design/meaning in the race of birds' (v. 163).

The questioning of Tereus is yet another example of a fragment of discourse transformed by comedy. The Questioner is here a suppliant who already possesses the word which he ceremonially lends and receives back from the Oracle/Sphinx Tereus. The communicative aspect of 'consultation' is mocked as the target of discourse is revealed to be the source. Since comedy 'knows' that the men do not need to learn of another city and must reject any such suggestion, it generates for them puns on the negative notions

[74]Back-formation or Rückbildung is extrapolation in reverse to an erroneous antecedent or simple form, usually by subtracting a real or supposed affix, e.g., arriving at the positive term *couth by back-formation from 'uncouth.'

'aristocracy,' 'leprosy,' and 'sycophancy' which Tereus is forced to recite. For example, to the hoopoe's suggestion that the men consider settling in Lepreos in Elis Euelpides replies: οὐκ ἰδὼν βδελύττομαι τὸν Λέπρεον ἀπὸ Μελανθίου 'without even seeing it, I'm disgusted by the very name on account of (the leper) Melanthios' (vv. 150-151). the comic effect of the exchanges is that Tereus' exotic suggestions are routinely 'misunderstood' as Euelpides fastens on a topical issue and makes familiar fun of it, exposing the vacuity and playful absurdity of the 'tarot session' in which the Athenians' quest ends.

A comic digression occurs after the first of the four Tereus-Euelpides exchanges when the hoopoe restates his question concerning the nature of the πρᾶγμα sought by the men. Anticipating the comic autonomy of Nephelokokkugia in which they will be free to assign words whatever value they choose, Euelpides begins by redefining the key term:

> "Οπου τὰ μέγιστα πράγματ' εἴη τοιάδε.
> Ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν μου πρῴ τις ἐλθὼν τῶν φίλων
> λέγοι ταδί· ‹‹ Πρὸς τοῦ Διὸς τούλυμπίου
> ὅπως παρέσει μοι καὶ σὺ καὶ τὰ παιδιά
> λουσάμενα πρῴ· μέλλω γὰρ ἑστιᾶν γάμους·
> καὶ μηδαμῶς ἄλλως ποήσῃς· εἰ δὲ μή,
> μή μοι τότ' ἔλθῃς, ὅταν ἐγὼ πράττω κακῶς.››
>
> (I'd like a city) where the greatest troubles (πράγματα) would be the following: a friend comes to my door early in the morning and says "I beg you by Zeus Olympios, take your bath early and come over, you and your children, to my house for the wedding banquet I'm giving. Don't think of not showing up! Well, if you do, don't come to *me* when I'm broke.
> (128-134)

The surface absurdity of making one's 'greatest problem' a pleasant situation is reflected in the inverse logic of the last clause (v. 134). It is certainly

characteristic of comedy to seek food and sex as a cure for minor troubles. The desiderata of Peisetairos and Euelpides are referred to as ἔρως again in vv. 135-136 where the text points to Nephelokokkugia: Tereus, pretending surprise, notes that Euelpides is 'eager for rather bitter πράγματα:' νὴ Δία ταλαιπώρων γε πραγμάτων ἐρᾷς (v. 135). Peisetairos chimes in, saying that he too has ἔρως for such πράγματα, and produces an exact imitation of his companion's text. He describes the impossible situation in which a friend, calling him Στιλβωνίδης '*flambard* (Van Daele),' reproaches him for failing to make advances on his beautiful young son. This comic patronymic is appropriate to the erotic context since Eros is called στίλβων νῶτον πτερύγοιν χρυσαῖν 'his back aflame with wings of gold' (v. 697).[75] In this way ἔρως returns to unite the linguistic aspect of desire for elusive meaning with the physical aspect of lust, one of the comic constants. Peisetairos anticipates his ornithization by giving himself a name pointing to the god later identified as the progenitor of the race of birds. We know, of course, that this is not his real name and, as spectators, must wait for it until v. 644. The session, then, in which the men look to Tereus to know 'the truth about themselves' fails as the hoopoe is temporarily deprived of the word. Familiar motifs crowd the empty space and we are entertained with aspects of life that participate in the νόσος-σωτηρία dialectic: finances (debt/escape from debt), private life (idle comfort/πράγματα), sex (desire/satisfaction), food (hunger/satiety), and sycophants. Such series are not rare in Aristophanes and we shall have occasion to explore another instance below at vv. 785 f. where the birds

[75]It is interesting that Στίλβων is the name of a star associated with Heremes, the παλαιστρίτης θεός. Hence the palaestric lust expressed in this passage is comically attributed to Peisetairos-Hermes. See A. Desrousseaux, "Notes critiques sur les *Oiseaux* d'Aristophane," *RPh* 3, 27 (1953): 7-15.

outline the benefits of birdhood (becoming a bird) for mankind in terms of food, defecation, and sex.

The text overturns the interrogative situation at vv. 155 f. when Euelpides suddenly asks Tereus what the bird life is like. The answer is oblique: οὐκ ἄχαρις εἰς τὴν τριβήν 'it wears rather gracefully' (v. 156). This phrase would properly apply to a garment and the line has perplexed commentators.[76] Tereus returns Euelpides' allegorizing strategy and speaks in terms of the σισύρα (read: 'polis') which he said he was seeking. The sentiment is that the bird-life would not wear ungracefully as the cloak of ἀπραγμοσύνη desired by the men. Characterization of the Athenians' elusive enterprise as something woven (here: replacement of an expected noun διατριβήν 'passing the time' with τριβήν denoting the wear of a text[ile]) combined with the opening metaphor of the play involving the verb προφορεῖσθαι for the 'weaving' of their (dis)course reminds us to look for the resolution of the quest in textual terms, in generalized 'metaphorical' textiles woven to shroud a gap and, especially, in the textum 'Nephelokokkugia' as a grand *written* supplement to the initial verbal vacuum.

The first νόσος of human life which Tereus offers to heal is that of debt. His removal of currency (βαλλάντιον 'wallet,' by metonymy), to his interlocutor's delight, neutralizes the debt/wealth opposition. Euelpides understands the figure and answers metonymically saying πολλήν γ' ἀφεῖλες τοῦ βίου κιβδηλίαν 'you've stripped life of one of its great counterfeits' (v. 158). The transference to 'life' of a phenomenon possible only within the differential system of currency is suggestive in its characterization of life as

76χ156: ἀπὸ μεταφορᾶς τῶν ἐνύφων ἱματίων τῶν ὑπουργούντων εἰς τρῖψιν καὶ φόρεσιν πολλῶν χρόνων.

text, i.e., as a diacritical system structured on several axes similar to other 'unconsiously determined' systems of language and kinship.[77] That the multiple violations of taboo, the transgressions of νόμος in the Tereus-myth are fully suppressed in *Birds* is evident from the hoopoe's characterization of the care-free avian lifestyle placed at the greatest possible remove from human activities: νεμόμεσθα δ' ἐν κήποις τὰ λευκὰ σήσαμα καὶ μύρτα καὶ μήκωνα καὶ σισύμβρια 'from the gardens we glean white sesame, myrtles, poppies, and cress (or, perhaps, 'water mint')' (vv. 159-160). This first occurrence of the key notion νόμος is intended to convey the otherness of the bird life, i.e., a very different set of 'rules of being' located in a garden rather than a city. All of this does not make much sense to Euelpides and he reincorporates these tokens of otherness into his own familiar world: ὑμεῖς μὲν ἅρα ζῆτε νυμφίων βίον 'you live the life of real bridegrooms' (v. 161). By comically identifying Tereus and the other birds as perpetual celebrants of marriage he reinforces the banishment of the darker ouranomic aspects of myth and prepares us for the cheerful and lyrical invocation at vv. 209 f. in which Tereus summons his 'bride' Procne. The sesame cakes used at weddings along with the myrtle sacred to Aphrodite[78] serve as a pleasant

[77] κιβδηλία denotes numismatic counterfeit. The cluster of related lexical items in LSJ all revolve around the same notions of 'adulterated,' 'base,' 'counterfeit.' On tragic κιβδηλία, (especially with reference to *Medea* 516) see P. Pucci, "Survival in the Holy Garden" *The Violence of Pity in Euripides' 'Medea.'* Ithaca: Cornell UP 1980. The relationship, in the Greek vocabulary, between 'value' of a coin and the 'force' ('meaning') of a word is important in this connection and returns below with reference to v. 163.

[78] Sesame seeds, reports Merry "were a regular ingredient in wedding cakes. So Pax 869 ἡ παῖς λέλουται· . . . σησαμῆ ξυμπλάττεται. Poppy-seeds bruised in honey (μήκωνα μεμελιτωμένην Thuc. 4. 26) were regarded as stimulating food but the use of these seeds at marriages was symbolical. So Schol. on Pax 869, and Phot. ἐπεὶ πολυγονώτατον σήσαμον. The myrtle-berries (μύρτα) were

garnishing to the foregoing erotic feast of words. At any rate, the life of a bridegroom is precisely what Peisetairos has in mind as he conceives his nebulous plan and, subsequently, ascends to divinity to marry Basileia 'Sovereignty' in the concluding hieros gamos.

Peisetairos: The Omen of the Name

The reversal of the interrogative sequence implicit in the unexpected questions at v. 155 ('what is the bird-life like?') emerges in full force when Peisetairos suddenly interrupts the preceding conversation to exclaim:

ΠΙ. Φεῦ φεῦ·
Ἦ μέγ' ἐνορῶ βούλευμ' ἐν ὀρνίθων γένει,
καὶ δύναμιν ἣ γένοιτ' ἄν, εἰ πίθοισθέ μοι.
ΕΠ. Τί σοι πιθώμεσθ';
ΠΙ. Ὅ τι πίθησθε; πρῶτα μὲν
μὴ περιπέτεσθε πανταχῆ κεχηνότες·

PE. Hey, Hey wait a second!
I see a tremendous design/potential in the race of birds,
and a meaning /force that's possible if you'd only trust
(*be persuaded by*) me!
HO. In what matter should we trust (*be persuaded by*) you?
PE. Trust (*be persuaded*) in what matter, you ask?! First of all,
don't flutter about everywhere with yawning gapes etc.,
(162-165)

Not only has the seemingly pointless consultation with the hoopoe been interrupted, but Peisetairos who has heretofore been all but silent emerges as the leading voice and 'writer' of the play. Unmoved by Tereus' reading of his possible future, he seizes the initiative and is struck by a

sacred to Aphrodite, and were used along with the leaves of mint (σισύμβριον) to make wreaths for the newly-married: so Ov. Fast. 4. 869 *Cumque sua dominae* (sc. Veneri) *date grata sisymbria myrto.*

revelation expressed in the prophetic verb ἐνορῶ.[79]

In following one bird's lead to another bird Peisetairos has so far failed to be enlightened by the ornithic chain, a failure which is the source of a number of jokes in the opening sequence of the play. Contemplating the reverse flow of sense in the 'tarot session,' lost in the verbal vacuum generated in the exchange, he suddenly infuses it with *his own* δύναμις 'meaning' inspired by a new reading of some obscure card. The word βούλευμα (and the less common βούλημα with which it alternates in textual confusion)[80] is a word of intention and meaning reflecting the Attic usage of βούλομαι in the linguistic sense 'to mean' (cf. *qu' est-ce que ça veut dire*).[81] This discovery of meaning is reinforced by δύναμις, a Greek term for the 'vlaue of a word.' δύναμις shared in denoting the *value* of money as well as words an and unites the general spheres of value and signification.[82] The

[79]ἐνορᾶν is a verb of insight and perception, not uncommonly into the future as in *Acharnians* 1129.

[80]βούλευμα is 'resolution,' 'purpose,' 'design' while βούλημα means 'purpose,' 'intention,' 'meaning.' The two words compete in the Aristophanic paradosis at *Birds* 993 (where Bergk's emendation has prevailed) and *Wealth* 493.

[81]Cf. Plato *Theatetus* 156c: τί δὴ οὖν ἡμῖν βούλεται οὗτος ὁ μῦθος, ὦ Θεαίτητε, πρὸς τὰ πρότερα; ἆρα ἐννοεῖς; . . . βούλεται γὰρ δὴ λέγειν ὡς ταῦτα πάντα μὲν ὥσπερ λέγομεν κινεῖται, . . .

[82]Coulon's retention of the MSS nominative pronoun in v. 163 (ἢ γένοιτ' ἄν, resisting Dobree's influential emendation ᾗ γένοιτ' ἄν accepted by Meinecke, Holden, Merry) is important since Peisetairos is pointing both to the present, the βούλευμα he now sees in the system of the birds, as well as to the possible meaning, δύναμις, linked to the potential optative γένοιτ' ἄν. The two terms are in parallel series, one in the present characterized by the intentional aspect of signification, the other (δύναμις) to a possible future in which the intention will acquire a more tangible force. Subordinating the latter to the former with an instrumental relative eliminates the continuity

passage from βούλευμα to δύναμις expressive of the will to signify yields rich rewards and serves to unite various system of human experience.

While Tereus and Euelpides are busy with the negative operation of suppressing one system of value/signification, i.e., banishing the κιβδηλία of money, Peisetairos will reap a great profit from studying another, i.e., the language exchange in which 'man' can be traded for 'bird.' The movement in *Birds* between systems which man makes (money) and those which make man (language) is presented in the words βούλευμα and δύναμις and has always figured in *the* leading metaphor of metaphor, the notion of 'coinage,' 'value' and *usure* of the word. Metaphor that "simultaneously hides and is hidden"[83] and the play of language constituting Nephelokokugia trace a cyclic pattern in which the men divest themselves of an external, visible, system of money (perceived as rigid and inhibiting) only to become more tightly fastened in the net(work) of the internal and invisible system of language. Passage outside of the human once again turns out to be a deeper involvement in the same. Comedy here plays a trick with the men by ostensibly freeing them of a constraining physical system while another, more dangerous trap lurks in their own unconscious involvement with language that speaks them. They have a word for the former--κιβδηλία--an evil they are confident to identify and remove. But how does one speak of counterfeit or usury of the sign? What word or metaphor will serve to fill this metalinguistic need? On this subject Derrida notes that " it is in our interest ("profitable") that the involvement promises more than it gives:"

---

and the unfolding of the signification in time. For δύναμαι and δύναμις in the sense of semantic 'value' of a word see *Clouds* 674, Ar. Fragment 691, Plato *Cratylus* 394b, *Euth.* 286c, Lysias 10.7.

[83]Derrida, "White Mythology," 211.

> How can we make this *sensible* except by metaphor? which is here the word *usure*. In effect, there is no access to the usure of a linguistic phenomenon without giving it some figurative representation. What could be the *properly named usure* of a word, a statement, a meaning, a text?[84]

In setting forth the differential nature of language Saussure indeed profited from the numismatic comparison despite the ever-present danger inherent in metaphor of promise exceeding profit. The money metaphor has, of course, been a useful tool in articulting the different axes of the linguistic system.[85] Words have δύναμις 'value/power' as a new currency which is to be the foundation of the economy of the future in Nephelokokkugia. The involvement of the latter in the signifying *process* serves to fill the Athenians' initial erotic void or gap in signification.

---

[84]Derrida 209.

[85]Relating signification to value in a move intended to dismiss the reductive view of language as a simple naming process he offers the following: "To determine what a five-franc peice is worth one must therefore know: 1) that it can be exchanged for a fixed quantity of a different thing, e.g., bread; and 2) that it can be compared with a similar value of the same system, e.g. a one-franc piece, or with coins of another system (a dollar, etc.). *In the same way* a word can be exchanged for something dissimilar, an idea; besides, its can be compared with something of the same nature, another word. Its value is therefore not fixed so long as one simply states that it can be 'exchanged' for a given concept, i.e. that it has this or that signification: one must also compare it with similar values, with other words that stand in opposition to it. Its content is really fixed only by the concurrence of everything that exists outside it. Being part of a system, it is endowed not only with a signification but also and especially with a value, and this is something quite different." (Derrida 218) Note that in the Greek δύναμις/δύνσθαι there is already present a clear connection between the exchange of coins and signifiers.

'Force' and its semantc correlate, 'signification,' must be wielded by an agent whose main activity is expressed by πείθειν 'to persuade, to use words forcefully,' a function inherent in our protagonist by virtue of his as-yet-unrevealed name Πεισέταιρος. I comment on this controversial name not to decide once and for all between competitors (Πισθέταιρος, Π[ε]ιθέταιρος, Πεισέταιρος) but to draw attention to the controversy surrounding it and to assign a possible value to this unstable sign's instability. Recalling Rogers' confident dismissal of forms favored by other scholars such as Meinecke, Kock, Merry, Holden, Blaydes, van Leeuwen, it is worthwhile to consider the issue: The morphology of the manuscript form Πεισθέταιρος been considered impossible and, as D. Pozzi notes, we are left to choose between an active Πεισέταιρος ('persuader of friends') and Πιθέταιρος ('he who trusts/is persuaded by friends').[86] Actually, we only *seem* forced into a choice between active and passive since Aristophanes, in any case, is ahead of the entire controversy. The Mss. Πεισθ-, as an unattested nominal/adjectival morpheme, would probably not have been a natural choice to punningly combine the notions of 'persuadee' and 'persuader.' The preferred spelling Πεισ-, however, does not remove the active/passive ambiguity despite its 'correctness' and, whether we keep the older, and probably corrupt, form or adopt Dobree's suggestion Πεισέταιρος the name of our protagonist retains its

[86]Pozzi 119, N.1. See B. Marzullo, "L'Interlocuzione negli 'Uccelli' d'Aristofane," *Philologus* 114 (1970): 181-194. "The basic sense of the stem πειθ- (πιθ-, ποιθ-)" writes G. Bertram (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, G. Kittel ed. [Michigan: Eerdmans, 1964] Vol 6, p. 1) "is 1. "to have confidence in a statement," "to give creedence to it," "to be convinced," then 2. "to have confidence in a command, admonition etc.," hence "to obey," also "to be persuaded." Originally πειθ- was only intr., but a pass. developed out of the intr., and from this was derived 3. the trans. "to convince," "to persuade."

potential to mean both 'one manipulated by language' and 'manipulator of language.'[87] In other words, we may be moved to 'correct' Aristophanes but we cannot deprive his character of a central ambiguity. Recapitulating the very history of the morpheme πειθ-/πεισ- Aristophanes has involved Peisetairos in its full spectrum of associations. The emergence of an active participation in the persuasive use of language (πείθειν) from an older, general intransitive (πείθεσθαι) reflects man's ability to speak and persuade which develops within the originary and confining linguistic competence that 'speaks him.' It is no accident that Aristophanes chose a form (whether Πεισθ- or Πεισ-) which would mark his character as a manipulator of the very medium which imprisons him. The triple reiteration of the verb at vv. 163-164 serves to announce Peisetairos' ambiguous power well in advance of the publication of his name at v. 644.

Tereus is suddenly at a loss for words. In a dramatic reversal of the 'tarot session' he now looks to Peisetairos for his and the birds' meaning. Straightaway ready with a linguistic trick Peisetairos suggests that the birds reclaim their name, their proper signifier, from abuse in the discourse of men:

> μὴ περιπέτεσθε πανταχῆ κεχηνότες·
> ὡς τοῦτ' ἄτιμον τοὔργον ἐστίν. Αὐτίκα
> ἐκεῖ παρ' ἡμῖν τοὺς πετομένους ἢν ἔρῃ·

[87] πεισ- as active at *Choephoroi* 362: πεισίβροτον βάκτρον 'the staff that sways men;' and as passive at Pindar Pythians 2.21: ἅρματα πεισιχάλινα 'the rein-obeying charriot.' We need not, with Pozzi, equivocate between acknowledging the impossibility of Πεισθέταιρος and clinging to this form's supposed polysemy by which it alone has Peisetairos "start as a victim of persuasion . . . and become a deft ans successful persuader." Πεισέταιρος, though a more likely form, does not disambiguate the issue. See Hofman 86 N.1 who citesT. Gelzer *RE* 1461, 22 f, in support of Πεισέταιος.

⟨⟨Τίς ὄρνις οὗτος;⟩⟩ ὁ Τελέας ἐρεῖ ταδί·
⟨⟨"Ανθρωπος ὄρνις ἀστάθμητος, πετόμενος,
ἀτέκμαρτος, οὐδὲν οὐδεποτ' ἐν ταὐτῷ μένων.⟩⟩

Don't flutter about with yawning gapes: That's really
an embarassment. For example, back *there* if someone
asks one of the flutter-brains,"who's this here bird?"
Teleas will say "That man? A bird, irregular, flighty,
unstable, never in one place for very long."
(165-170)

We may smile when we imagine Tereus' condition or that of the other men who become 'birds,' the scenic representation of the phrase Peisetairos rejects, ἄνθρωπος ὄρνις 'bird man.' Forgetting, however, the metaphor of χάσκειν, Peisetairos fastens on the use of ὄρνις 'bird' and πέτεσθαι 'to fly,' characteristic items in the bird lexicon transformed in pejorative theft by men. While he strictly forbids the birds to gape, apprehensive of the word's value in human discourse, he cannot forbid them to fly despite the use of πέτεσθαι to denote flightiness. His choice of Teleas as the hypothetical linguistic abuser of birds is significant since this individual had a reputation for "having one thing on his mind and another on his tongue."[88] Besides having a host of other stock faults, including being εὐμετάβλητος 'unstable,' Teleas represents the fragmentation of language, the rift between sign γλῶττα/λέγειν and the signified νοεῖν (again 'to mean,' 'to intend to say' cf. βούλεσθαι). This distorter of the Word is made responsible for misappropriating avian vocabulary and applying it to men who are as

[88]Πλάτων Σύρφακι ἐκὶ τοῦ Τελέου, the Scholiast notes ('Plato Comicus in *Rubbish* says of Teleas:') νοεῖ μὲν ἕτερ', ἕτερα δὲ τῇ γλώττῃ λέγει. Compare the famous line in the *Hippolytus* (612). See H. Avery, "My Tongue Swore but my Mind is Unsworn," *TAPA* 99 (1968): 19-35. Also Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, 9.

volatile as the elements of the language constituting them. Synchronically, change or potential change is feared by the established institutions of human culture. Fear of change which threatens systemic boudaries, linguistic and societal, is expressed in the pejorative adjectives ἀστάθμητος and ἀτέκμαρτος. A στάθμη '(carpenter's) rule,' 'plumbline,' 'boundary,' and a τέκμαρ 'end,' 'fixed line,' 'boundary,' are the instruments of measure and demarcation that are the prerequisites of structure. Failure to be captured within their rigid lines is seen as an intolerable menace. Peisetairos intends several things simultaneously. First, the birds are victims of metaphor since they may no longer engage in the characteristic χάσκειν because it has been stolen from them into the disreputable human lexicon, i.e., basic entries in their list (ὄρνις, πέτεσθαι) have been ruined in transference. Second, he is warning them concerning man's abuse of language, an abuse expressed as Teleas' phobia of the sign which he sees as bird-like in its instablity, οὐδὲν οὐδέποτ' ἐν ταὐτῷ μένων. By showing Tereus the lamentable context in which 'man' and 'bird' collide, he is suggesting that the birds avail themselves of linguistic δύναμις threatening to men and turn the metaphorical weapon on them by deconstructing the pattern of 'normal' figuration to allow human and avian features to reciprocally interpenetrate. Some humor, no doubt, is intended in the different usages of πετόμενος: although its occurrence in v. 169 is an 'example' of bird-abuse in metaphor, the πετόμενος at v. 167 is used 'unconsciously' as an ordinary term of reproach. In other words, Peisetairos perpetuates the practice he is contesting comically oblivious to the contradiction. He stands as an example to the birds of how quickly the underminer is himself undermined by his own discourse!

Tereus is impressed by the critical display and asks what the birds

might do: τί οὖν ποιῶμεν; True to his name, Peisetairos traces his design of the future with the stylus of language alone. After all, the point of the vv. 164-170 was to illustrate to the birds their need to effect a change in what is to be the common human/avian lexicon by means of a change in human behavior: at stake is the way *men* speak with an implicit glance toward the effect of this speech on birds.

The time has come for Peisetaros to conceive his plan which is none other than the semantically transfigured πρᾶγμα of v. 198: οἰκίσατε μίαν πόλιν 'establish a single/unified state' (v. 172). Although the birds were just associated with a transgressive instability in the adjectives ἀστάθμητος and ἀτέκμαρτος, Tereus is a bit slow and exhibits none of his tragi-mythical propensity for violating social and linguistic rules (or even comprehending them very well). The telegraphic suggestion of μίαν πόλιν remains opaque to him and he asks for clarification. Peisetairos is annoyed and etymologizes his scorn by ridiculing the foolish ἔπος 'utterance' of the ἔπoψ: ἄληθες, ὦ σκαιότατον εἰρηκὼς ἔπος 'Are you kidding? O the folly of your utterance! [mock bombast]' It is as if to ask impatiently why Tereus, who is facilitator of the Word (vv. 199 f.), is so sluggish in the medium from which he can derive his own name and certainly not very observant (cf. τηρεῖν).

Nephelokokkugia is to owe its existence to language and as a text, i.e., as the product of a differential system, its elements will hover 'between the upper air and the earth,' nowhere, really, yet identifiable by a boundary (φράξηθ' v.183) which the birds must draw to set their vacuous region apart from the rest of nothing. To communicate this difficult notion to the hoopoe Peisetairos first illustrates the futility of seeking an absolute location ('polis') in terms of the related futility of trying to fix any sign, or seeking the

transcendental signifier of other discourses. The exercise of vv. 175-179, therefore, consists in precisely this: forcing the bird to nearly twist his neck off in a circular survey of nothing and everything ('the clouds and sky' v. 178) in order to show that the only way of mapping the unbounded expanse is by means of language:

ΠΙ. Βλέψον κάτω.
ΕΠ. Καὶ δὴ βλέπω.
ΠΙ. Βλέπε νυν ἄνω.
ΕΠ. Βλέπω.
ΠΙ. Περίαγε τὸν τράχηλον.
ΕΠ. Νὴ Δία
ἀπολαύσομαί ⟨τί⟩ γ', εἰ διαστραφήσομαι
ΠΙ. Εἶδές τι;
ΕΠ. Τὰς νεφέλας γε καὶ τὸν οὐρανόν.
ΠΙ. Οὐχ οὗτος οὖν δῆπου 'στὶν ὀρνίθων πόλος;
ΕΠ. Πόλος; Τίνα τρόπον;
ΠΙ. Ὥσπερ ⟨ἂν⟩ εἴποι τις τόπος.
Ὅτι δὲ πολεῖται τοῦτο καὶ διέρχεται
ἅπαντα διὰ τούτου, καλεῖται νῦν πόλος.
Ἦν δ' οἰκίσητε τοῦτο καὶ φράξηθ' ἅπαξ,
ἐκ τοῦ πόλου τούτου κεκλήσεται πόλις.

PE. Look down.
HO. Allright.
PE. Now look up.
HO. I'm looking, I'm looking.
PE. Twist your neck around.
HO. What a treat for me if I snap it!
PE. Did you see anything?
HO. Only clouds and sky,
PE. Isn't this the birds' *pole*?
HO. Pole? What do you mean?
PE. Well, as you might say, their 'locale.'
Since everything *passes* and *rolls* through it

> it's called a *pole.* But if you should establish yourselves there and draw a wall around it, it would change name from *pole* to *polis*.
> (175-184)

The intractability of the notion πόλος, or hollow sphere revolving around the earth is related to an equally general spatial marker τόπος. Where there are no differential relationships, where 'everything rolls through a (perpetually) moving expanse,' the birds cannot hope to establish a meaning. Peisetairos rectifies this by changing a single phoneme πόλος to πόλις,thereby justifying a series of association between πόλος, πολεῖται, πόλις, and πολῖται which is impossible outside language. This simple substitution allows us to speak of a new entity, a city *in vacuo,* which Peisetairos hastens to secure by another signifier, the boudary φρᾶγμα which will protect the birds from further accusations of violating either στάθμη or τέκμαρ. The linguistically motivated foundation is immediately reinforced by a pun on the words ἀνθρώπων 'men' and παρνόπων 'locusts.' The oblique references to Athens as ἐκεῖ παρ' ἡμῖν 'back *there,* we . . .' and the reference to the 'Melian hunger' at v. 186 perpetuate the suppression of the name in the text while reserving the essential right to speak about one of the boundaries of the newly conceived city.

To illustrate the possiblity of speaking about what is to be called Nephelokokkugia, Peisetairos continues his design along linguistic lines: he offers a metaphor in order to locate the city in the system of the 'cities' as well as to translate the meaning (δύναμις) which he saw in the race of birds, into the political and economical power proper to a polis:

> Ἐν μέσῳ δήπουθεν ἀήρ ἐστι γῆς.
> Εἶθ' ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς, ἦν ἰέναι βουλώμεθα

Πυθώδε, Βοιωτοὺς δίοδον αἰτούμεθα,
οὕτως, ὅταν θύωσιν ἄνθρωποι θεοῖς,
ἢν μὴ φόρον φέρωσιν ὑμῖν θεοί,
διὰ τῆς πόλεως τῆς ἀλλοτρίας καὶ τοῦ χάους
τῶν μηρίων τὴν κνῖσαν οὐ διφρήσετε.

The air hangs between (the heavens/gods and) the earth. Consequently, just as we must request passage from the Boiotians whenever we want to go to Delphi, thus, whenever men offer sacrifice to the gods, *you* can stipulate: unless the gods pay you tribute, you will not grant the fatty savor pasage through (your) foreign city and the empty space. (187-193)

The transference of the earthly situation in metaphor to the linguistically projected city extends the initial wordplay and finally fixes our attention persuasively on a void, as always, but a void that is now coming to life with words. The δύναμις of Nephelokokkugia will, as meaning usually does, proliferate and engage a number of other associations, especially the metaphorical chain bird-man-god. The boycott in which the city of signifiers will deprive the gods of the sign of sacrifice (κνῖσα) initiates the bird-god competition which forms the so-called gigantomachic theme of the play. It is a pleasure to watch Peisetairos put language to good use in conceiving a city ἐν τοῖς μετεώροις with breathtaking ease, a city wholly dependent on the play of signs for its generation and on stolen smoke for its power.

Tereus' reaction is one of overwhelmed enthusiasm: ἰοῦ ἰοῦ· μὰ γῆν, μὰ παγίδας, μὰ νεφέλας, μὰ δίκτυα, μὴ 'γώ νόημα κομψότερον ἤκουσά πω· 'Wow! O Earth! O traps! O snares! O nets! I've never heard a more elegant idea!' (vv. 194-195). Celebrating a variety of trapping devices in his oath, Tereus alerts us to the polysemy of νεφέλη.[89] Although we just heard the

word above at v. 178, Aristophnes is careful to splice the form into a context of snares. The convergence of the expected meaning 'clouds' with the meaning 'net' in this one sign (cf. v. 528) sheds light on the comic formation Nephelokokkugia which is a booby trap, a net in which fools are snared.

Tereus finally receives an answer to his question at v. 112 'what πρᾶγμα brought you here?' After a series of perverse and joky πράγματα Peisetairos has finally reinvented his homeland in the void, in the gap of signification revealed in their quest, an achievement worthy of the designation πρᾶγμα. It needs now to be comunicated, to be disseminated verbally among the birds, and Peisetairos asks τίς ἂν οὖν τὸ πρᾶγμ' αὐτοῖς διηγήσαιτο; 'who, then, might narrate the πρᾶγμα to the birds?' (v. 198). 'You!' comes the emphatic answer. As anticipated in the discussion of the Tereus-Polytechnos myth, the Tereus of *Birds* can not only substitute 'seed' for words (v. 111) but has done the reverse and sown the Word among birds. A static figure, Tereus is central in facilitating the comic inter-discourse between men and birds but defers to Peisetairos as the latter gathers momentum in the capacity of perusader. The last, and most important ornithic link in the chain of signification ascending to the mute daw and crow, Tereus points onward to the chorus of birds he is about to summon.

89Σ[194] has νεφέλη: εἶδος δικτύου θηρευτικοῦ.

III

Peisetairos Κωμῳδοδιδάσκαλος: The Parabasis of a New Chorus

Amusing Grace

Upon learning the remarkable fact that Tereus taught the birds language we approach what on critic has called the 'beginning of the action proper.'[1] Proper, formally speaking, if we regard the hoopoe's monody and the parodos in general as the inception of events leading up to the establishment of Nephelokokkugia; proper as well in its involvement, as poetry, in the hypothesized union of men and birds. The hoopoe's eponymous cry at v. 227 initiates a complex polymetric song in which the bird's music and language are blended in delightful συμπλοκή. In this chapter I discuss first, the lyric performance in which Tereus gives voice to the chorus by calling on them individually, assembles and summons them to speak; second, the agon in which Peisetairos, as self-styled χοροδιδάσκαλος, confronts the chorus and in a long persuasive speech trains them for their new role as 'gods;' and finally, the parabasis, in which the newly-trained chorus steps forth wearing the textual disguise of autoauthentic poetry with

[1] A. Wartelle, "Analyse métrique de l'appel de la huppe," *BAGB* IV, 4 (1966): 440-449. While he is certainly correct in his first observation, I must differ with him on the point of the chorus 'setting the tone for the actors (441):' "En fait, c'est à ce moment que commence l'action proprement dite, et, comme il arrive souvent, le prologue est sensiblement plus long que dans la tragédie; le chœur n'est plus un confident discret: il entre dans l'orchestra pour exciter les acteurs à la lutte et au besoin pour lutter avec eux; contrairement à ce que l'on voit dans la tragédie, c'est lui qui donne le ton aux acteurs."

which it presents itself.

Vv. 209-22 are an excited anapestic address to the Nightingale to arise and sing. Here is the closest we come to the mythic context from which comedy has drawn its hybrid hoopoe. Pretending to firmly fix the word νόμος in the semantics of the bird life, Tereus urges his mate to 'release her melodies:'

> Ἄγε σύννομέ μοι, παῦσαι μὲν ὕπνου
> λῦσον δὲ νόμους ἱερῶν ὑμνων,
> οὓς διὰ θείου στόματος θρηνεῖς
> τὸν ἐμὸν καὶ σὸν πολύδακρυν Ἴτυν,
> ἐλελιζομένη διεροῖς μέλεσιν
> γένυος ξουθῆς.
>
> Come, my companion, arise from sleep
> and release the strains of sacred song from
> divine lips in lament for our much-bewailed
> Itys. Warble the fluid melody from your
> tawny throat.
> (209-214)

In this short sequence lurk a few mysteries that have long vexed commentators. The familiartiy of the Tereus myth makes the connection τὸν ἐμὸν καὶ σόν 'yours and mine' unremarkable in itself. Lament (θρηνεῖς), however, is unusual for a comic situation which has so far banished all violent traces of the source-myth from its memory. This glance towards the darker tradition must somehow be related to the correspondence between Tereus' opening lines and vv. 1107-112 of Euripides' *Helen*.[2] "One can

[2] *Birds* 209-211: σύννομέ μοι . . . θρηνεῖς
Helen 1112: θρήνων ἐμοὶ ξυνεργός,
Birds 213-214: ἐλελιζομένη διεροῖς μέλεσιν γένυος ξουθῆς.
Helen 1111: ὦ διὰ ξουθᾶν γενύων ἐλελιζομένα
Birds 215: διὰ φυλλοκόμου μίλακος

infer," writes M. Silk, "that the two passages have a common, presumably lyric, source or alternatively that Aristophanes is actually a direct source for the tragedian."[3] It can hardly be fortuitous that comedy and tragedy stand in chiastic relationship to one another as if to indicate the 'reverse polarities' of genres at this point. Most unusual, also, is the coincidence of context: both passages invoke the nightingale (and, implicitly, her myth) that is unlike parody both in tone and extent. A further curiosity, noted by A. Haury, is Tereus' appropriation of Procne's 'speech' (i.e., the sounds of the nightingale's song) in his own:[4] "le poète athénien a donné à la huppe les paroles du rossignol représenté par une flûtiste, muette mais non silencieuse."[5] Aristophanes suppresses the entire mythic context of the onomatopoetic Ἴτυς (the most powerful item in this 'lexicon')[6] by silencing its source, Procne: he has deprived her of her tongue to conceal the violent story and has given her speech and the power of writing to another. The only point of contact between the two 'birds' is this signifier Ἴτυς (ἴτω) which is Tereus' by virtue of his being in language and Procne's as her proper cry.

An important feature of the anapestic system (vv. 209-222) is the

---

Helen 1107: ἐναύλοις ὑπὸ δενδροκόμοις

See P. Pucci, *Aristofane ed Euripide*. Acad. Nat. dei Lincei 10 (1961): 227-421.

[3]M. Silk, "Aristophanes as a Lyric Poet," *YCS* 26 (1980): 99-151.

[4]While other birds are given onomatopoetic or generic cries (τιττυβίζειν, κικκαβαῦ, κρῴζειν etc.,) the Hoopoe extends his natural ἐποποῖ to include the 'motifs' of nightingale song: τοροτίξ, ποποπό, τιτιτί, τιὸ τιό, τιοτιοτίγξ. A. Haury, "Le chant du rossignol ou Buffon mystifié par Aristophane," *BAGB* IV, 3 (1960): 373-376.

[5]F. Romer, "When is a Bird not a Bird?," *TAPA* 113 (1983): 135-42 argues that Procne was an actual flute-girl whose bird identity had to be conveyed by gesture.

[6]Cf. Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1144: Ἴτυν Ἴτυν στένουσ' ἀμφιθαλῆ κακοῖς ἀηδὼν μόρον (see also Sophocles *Electra* 148, Euripides Fr. 775).

distinct tension between lyric convention and the comic context. First of all the hoopoe's linguistic bond with the nightingale participates in a distinctly 'tragic' tradition systematically excluded from the rest of the play. Second, the conventional image of Procne's song 'reaching the seat of Zeus etc.,' (v. 216f.) implies harmonious relations between gods and birds in diametric opposition to the gigantomachic theme introduced by Peisetairos. The nightingale's potential song has taken the place of pleasing κνῖσα 'savor' in ascending to the gods' dwelling and eliciting a favorable musical resonse, an echo of the original ἠχώ, from Apollo. Far from portending an embargo of the sacrificial token, the lyric verse here seems obligated to depict the birds in musical and choric symphony with the gods: ξύμφωνος ὁλολυγή. Tereus is oblivious to the contradiction between his verse and his context, i.e., having just heard Peisetairos' theomachic plan his role is to summon the birds to involve them in it. Not necessarily parodical of anything, the clash between the 'ground-level reality' of the trimeter and the conventional world of lyric song is put to comic use as the anapests rhetorically threaten to undo the entire plan before it is even has a chance of success.[7]

It is a pleasant relief to hear an interlude of pure music as Procne

[7]Aristophanes' lyrics depend heavily on context for their full effect and, as Silk has argued (Silk 99-104), are not always profitably isolated for evaluation as 'serious' lyrics despite their charm and sophistication. Here there is only 'parody' of the momentum of convention which etymologically 'goes along' with the grain of a socio-literary context. A mechanical adherence to νόμος when the song is actually *conta-ventional* with respect to context adds a humorous dimension to the semantics of the word and in its many occurrences in *Birds*. The signifer of human convention and law *par excellence*, νόμος here is used of the bird life to denote 'habitat,' and 'pasture,' and especially '(paths of) song,' in which capacity it is firmly fixed by a number of poetic synonyms: ὕμνων, μέλεσιν, ἠχώ, ἐλέγοις.

'sang' (αὐλεῖ). Though 'mute but not silent' she identifies her presence as Tereus' mate by returning only one half of the μέλος, i.e., the melodic contour.

The hoopoe's song is an act of identification and organization and can be schematically represented as follows:

1)	227	2do	Introductory Invocation
	228	3ia	
	229	3ia	
2)	230	2do	Grain-Eating Birds
	231	iambel	
	232	hemiep	
	233	3tr	
3)	234	do	Swallow-Type Birds
	235	3tr	
	236	do	
	237	4tr	
4)	238	3ion	Garden Birds
	239	do	
5)	240	3ia	Swift Mountain Birds
	241	4an	
	242	ia + ba	
6)	243	4cr	Meadow Birds
	244-5	4cr	
	245-6	3cr + sp	
7)	247-8	tel	'Attagas'
	249	2cr	
8)	250-3	4da each	Sea Birds
	254	paroem	
9)	255-7	spondaic	Peisetairos Announced
10)	258	2tr	Concluding Invocation
	259	2tr	
	260	anapest trim. cat.	
	261	2cr	
	262	anapest trip.[8]	

[8]In setting forth this scheme I have been eclectic in choosing those analyses which are the most colometrically straightforward: P. Mazon, *Essai sûr la composition des comédies d'Aristophane* (Paris, 1904), J. White, *The Verse of Greek Comedy* (London, 1912), O. Schroeder, *Aristophanis Cantica* (Leipzig, 1930), A. M. Dale, "The Hoopoe's Song," *CR* 73 (1959): 199-200, *The Lyric Metres of Greek Drama* (Cambridge, 1968), C. Prato, *I Canti di Aristofane* (Rome, 1962), A. Dain, *Traité de métrique greque* (Paris, 1965), A.

Outside language the birds, of course, have no names and exist in mute differentiation.[9] This situation is expressed in the monody as the hoopoe spreads his verbal net in all directions: he sings both as a bird and as a man dividing the universe of winged creatures lexically and musically (metrically). His first move is to name himself in the single eponymous dochmiac in v. 227. The following line expressing his verbal bond with Procne gradually changes until the 'nightingale speech' passes into human speech: ἴτυς of the myth is transformed by context into the imperative ἴτω as comic discourse reappropriates a word stolen in myth by a bird ('ἴτυς,' the only signifier the metamorph of Procne, the nightingale, took with it to the beyond). The name passed from human speech to that of the birds until Tereus borrowed it here and gave it back to human utterance in the simplest trimeter form.

Tereus' designation of all (potential) birds as ὁμοπτέρων 'like-winged' (v. 229) is interesting in that the wing here stands in paradigmatic distribution with the more familiar second morpheme of ὁμο-compounds: ὁμογενής, ὁμόνους, ὁμοήθης etc., The role of the sign πτερά in *Birds* is precisely that of a stylized substitute for the bundle of features constituting φύσις. The wing is yet another human cypher attached to the Other in order to identify it and set it apart. In its paradigmatic juxtaposition to the fullness of features that mark our nature, πτερά is only 'what we do *not* have' and represents 'what we

Wartelle, "Analyse métrique de l'appel de la huppe" *BAGB* IV, 4 (1966) 440-449; M. L. West, *Greek Metre* (Oxford, 1982, E. Fränkel, "Notes on the Hoopoe's Song," *Eranos* 48 (1950): 75-84.

[9]A vase recently published by J. Green (Sommerstien, *Aristophanes: Birds* 6) suggests that all the members of the Aristophanic bird-chorus wore *identical* costumes. This has interesting implications for the monody in that the words alone must mark the various sub-species.

cannot do.' The feather-to-wing metonymy is itself alien to us and has no counterpart in human morphology. The general invocation ends with v. 220 which may have raised a chuckle if the spectators pondered it literally: where was Tereus hoping to find birds actually like him in his failed, twilight metamorphosis, bizzare beak, and human habits? Perhaps the dramatic situation here mocks itself inasmuch as all the 'birds' on stage were like him!

In general, each section of this well-known κλητικὸς ὕμνος[10] has a distinctive metrical character that sometimes interacts with the sense and always changes as the sense changes. The last group mentioned are sea-birds whose invocation (vv. 250-251) is especially interesting in light of the reference to Alcman's desiderative metaphor: βάλε δὴ βάλε κηρύλος εἴην, ὅς τ' ἐπὶ κύματος ἄνθος ἁμ' ἀλκυόνεσσι ποτήται 'O, that I were a cœruleus who flies over the wave's flower with the halcyons' (Page *LGS* 10). Here the text undoes one of its governing metaphors by comically returning it to the birds as if in revenge for the earlier trick with ἴτυς/ἴτω. Alcman's is certainly one of the most wistful examples of the ornithization topos. Tereus usurps the Spartan poet's diction and destroys the metaphor by making it refer to itself: birds that even implicitly wish to become birds are, in de Man's phrase, "a tautology of their own position." The comic irony of this passage is that the birds are summoned to 'hear new things' πευσόμενοι τὰ νεώτερα (v. 252)

[10]Fränkel (supra) and, following him, W. Horn *Gebet un Gebetsparodie in den Komödien des Aristophanes* (Nurnberg: Hans Carl, 1970), quite persuasively analyze the hoopoe's monody as a traditional κλητικὸς ὕμνος in which a series of deities is named: "The whole invocation has the form of a polysyndeton, the second word in each of the eight sections being τε. This type of polysyndeton is familiar from a number of prayers or κλητικοὶ ὕμνοι in which a plurality of gods is asked to come to the assistance of the person praying. Compare, for instance, the parodos of the *Seven against Thebes* . . ." (Fränkel 456).

which will, in fact, involve them in the net(work) of human νόμος, λόγος, and, of course, πόλις.

Suddenly the rhythm changes to spondaic as the arrival of Peisetairos is announced: ἥκει γάρ τις δριμὺς πρέσβυς καινὸς γνώμην 'an elder of penetrating wit, an intellectual innovator, has come' (vv. 255-257). Although the men first identified themselves as suppliants it is Tereus who now solemnly announces them, pointing out their distinguishing characteristic: originality. The birds will have to be attentive since Peisetairos' scheme is unusual and elusive 'never before heard.' But if we ask what it is that Peisetairos represents as πρέσβυς 'ambassador' the answer can only be 'himself,' i.e., he can only be self-referential and therefore appears unusual.

Tereus has ventured forth to gather the birds into a verbal and metrical (taxonomic) net. Interestingly, however, no bird save for the dubious ἀτταγᾶς, is actually named since the men must participate in this activity, albeit with complete comic abandon. Tereus is in complete control of all the 'definitions' and knows everything concerning the different classes of birds. By controlling, setting forth, the signified he hopes to attract the signs themselves much in the same way that one attempts to arrive at a name when faced with a charade or riddle. As in the case of the 'paracomic' source-text (vv. 209-214)[11] Tereus is involved in a riddle. However, he is not the riddle's victim but we, the spectators, left standing looking into the sky, along with Peisetairos and Euelpides, wondering what all the music was about.

[11]I use 'paracomedy' with some reservations. Dover 148-9, for one, feels that "the coincidence in these two passages is rather large, particularly since the verb *elelisdesthai*, 'trill' is not found elsewhere in extant Greek poetry. It would seem that at the same time as comedy plundered tragedy for parodic purposes, a tragic poet was not above borrowing from a comedian." See Van Leeuwen *Aves* vv. 749-51, Rau 195, and Kannichton on *Helen* ad. loc.

We are at a familiar impasse: the birds Tereus just summoned are to be found . . . ; they are called . . . ; The semantics of the monody were governed by the music: we could sense the movement, the distinct variety, even the 'descriptiveness' of the text and meter, yet we still know nothing and see nothing. Euelpides is the only 'bird' around to apply χάσκειν to! Peisetairos assumes failure and berates the performance, saying ἄλλως ἄρ' οὔποψ . . . ἐπῴζε χαραδριὸν μιμούμενος 'the hoopoe seems to have whooped and whooped in vain like a charadrios (thickknee?)' (v. 266).[12]

The well-known four birds of vv. 268-290 are yet another example of meaning deferred, this time the jokes being amplified by an outlandishly constumed character onstage to give substance to the verbal humor. Since the chorus memebers are enumerated below (vv. 297-304) the given interlude offers a gap which Aristophanes fills with the nonsense of word and stage play. The oppressiveness of the signifier is strong as we wait to see the chorus, to learn their names, and hear them speak. The text supplies colorful substitute signs, scenic 'metaphors' of the actual birds demanded by the hoopoe's monody. Despite the pressure, however, the dramatic space isolated for play is cheerfully filled and impervious to context. Euelpides is at a loss to identify the first of the four odd birds and labels him ταὼς 'peackock,' which we have seen to be simply a way of naming the unnamabale (cf. v. 102:

[12]The exact point of the χαραδριός metaphor is unclear. Thompson 311 can only guess about the habits of this bird whose name is "of unknown derivation and uncertain meaning." Kock ad. loc. speculates about the bird's *Versteckspielen* while Rogers suggests 'lapwing' or 'plover' which, "to divert attention from her nest, flies to some distant spot, and calls as if to her young, where her young are not." Aristotle, *HA* 9. 614, b 35 contributes the following cryptic phrase to the bird's ethology: φαίνεται δὲ νύκτωρ, ἡμέρας δ' ἀποδιδράσκει. Elusiveness and trickery are the general qualities that emerge.

'you're Tereus? What, a bird or, perhaps, tahos ?') Here, however, the word has been moved inside the paradigm of bird names and there replaces an ὄρνις whose type is other. This shift is, of course, required by the context since the elaborate invocation was directed at a spectrum of ὄρνιθες to the exclusion of other (species of) 'zoa.' The task faced by the spectators (including Peisetairos and Euelpides) is to complete the process of associating birds and names. It would would not be an exaggeration to extend Taplin's dictum (concerning the verbal marking of all significant action in tragedy) to say that in *Birds* this marking includes also identifying the given bird-character by naming him. The elaborate naming-pun concerned with the τρόχιλος and the discussion of Tereus' name (vv. 70-107) were the first in a series of name-entrance identifications.[13]

As if powerless to name, Peisetairos turns to Tereus to learn the name of the bird that just appeared. Continuing in his monodic vein the hoopoe defers the sign in a riddle by offering a periphrastic 'definition:' οὗτος οὐ τῶν ἠθάδων τῶνδ' ὧν ὁρᾷθ' ὑμεῖς ἀεί, ἀλλὰ λιμναῖος 'he's not an ordinary type you see every day, but a fresh-water one' (vv. 271-272). Euelpides stumbles upon half of the name φοινικοῦς 'crimson' and the familiar πτερά completes the Greek 'flamingo' φοινικόπτερος. The entrance has served its purpose and is rapidly succeeded by another.

Peisetairos now quotes Sophocles' *Tyro*[14] and reverses the semantic

[13]For example, O. Taplin, *Greek Tragedy in Action*, (UC Press, 1978) 5: "The *words*--which are, after all, almost all we have--contain and explain the visual dimension." This involves several working assumptions: all significant action is signposted by the words; active stage directions were put into concrete form on stage.

[14]The Scholiast ad. loc. and all commentators hence: ἐκ τῆς Σοφοκλέους δευτέρας Τυροῦς· ἀρχή· "τίς ὄρνις οὗτος ἕξεδρον χώραν ἔχων·"

polarity of the borrowed words to dealienate them: χοὗτος ἕξεδρον χώραν ἔχων 'and this one, of extrinsic habitat' (v. 275). The tragic context, naturally, uses the sign ὄρνις in the sense of 'omen' and, in a familiar transferrential gesture, extends the ornithic connection to speak of the portent's 'alien habitat,' i.e., strangeness. Aristophanes, however, forces a return to the meaning 'bird' and we read Peisetairos' words as a pompous exclamation at a zoo. The intertextual game overshadows the subsequent use of Aeschylean text in which it seems that comedy substitutes ἄτοπος 'strange' for the tragic ἄλαλος 'speechless' and ὀρειβάτης 'mountain-ranging' for ἁβροβάτης 'delicately stepping.'[15] The birds are no longer ἄλαλοι nor βάρβαροι since Tereus taught them language, and the 'Persian' terminology is rejected. This follows the substitutionary rules of paratragedy which allow the borrowed text to be recognized but invariably alter the referential force by tampering with the wording and supplying a new context. Driven by the suppressed 'habitat' of the tragic line Tereus riddlingly plays along with Peisetairos' allusion and identifies the bird as Μῆδος 'a Mede,' making an impossible return to the tragic text. Euelpides knows, of course, that there is no such bird name and adds some nonsense by asking how the 'Mede' could be genuine: πῶς ἄνευ καμήλου εἰσέπτετο; 'how'd he fly in here without a camel?' (v. 278). Like the first sequence this entrance ends in a climactic joke and makes way for the third of the strange 'dancers.'[16]

[15]G. Hermann's emendation of the corrupt Mss. (ἁβρατὰ ὂν σθένει, among other things) to ἁβροβάτης, implying strangeness of Persian manners and dress, makes the best sense of the lot, see White, Scholia 66.

[16]See J. Carriere, "Sur la chorégraphie des Oiseaux d'Aristophane," *REA* 58 (1956): 211-235. L.B. Lawler, "The four Dancers in the *Birds* of Aristophanes," *TAPA* 73, (1942): 58-63. and A. Henry, "Aristophanes *Birds* 268-93," *CP* 72 (1977): 52-53.

The first joke, though a pun, included a genuine bird name; the second, swayed by paratragic pressure, was led astray into absurdity. The present exchange reveals a new twist as a metaphor is literalized in a familiar example of comic misunderstanding. A bird resembling a hoopoe comes on stage and surprises Euelpides who says: τί τὸ τέρας τουτί ποτ' ἐστίν; οὐ σὺ μόνος ἄρ' ἦσθ' ἔποψ, ἀλλὰ χοῦτος ἕτερος; 'what in the world is this wonder? Aren't you the only hoopoe, or is this another?' (vv. 280-281). Tereus explains what he considers to the genealogy of the bird by reference to a human situation. This bird, he says, is from Philokles' hoopoe and he, Tereus, his grandfather: 'as you might say that Kallias is Hipponikos' father while Hipponikos himself has a son Kalias.' Tereus here presents a tricky analogy to articulate the relation between himself and the new hoopoe: *he* claims to be the original dramatic ἔποψ. Continuing the strategy of vv. 100-101, he names tragedy as his source and implies that he is Sophocles' Tereus. His 'son,' then, is the Tereus of Philocles' play by way of imitation.[17] The newly arrived bird is, in turn, the 'son' (i.e., an even worse imitation) of Philocles' character and the miserable grandson of our Tereus. This comic genealogy is compared to the genealogy of Kallias, a disreputable Athenian in the following way:

Sophocles' Tereus (as 'guest star' in *Birds)*	Kallias
Philocles' Tereus	Hipponikos
The 'new' hoopoe	Kallias Jr.

It is interesting, first of all, that the Tereus of *Birds* presents himself as a

[17] Σ^{281} supplies two possible works in which Philokles could have presented the character of Tereus: ἐν τῇ Πανδίονι τετραλογίᾳ, or alternatively, Φιλοκλεῖ ἐστι δρᾶμα Τηρεὺς ἢ Ἔποψ. The suggestion that Philokles himself was a 'hoopoe' (προκέφαλος or 'having a pointed head') is dismissed since he is nowhere ridiculed for his appearance.

physical representation of the paratragic process. In the same way that a fragment of text is altered and grafted into an entirely new and incongruous context, so he claims to be an element of an original tragic performance that has been imported into the given comedy. We have here a subtle reference to the nature of Tereus' comic metamorphosis as foreclosure of the horrific aspects of the myth. Rather than facing the original tradition of his character and having to directly account for suppressing the violent aspects of the human metamorph, Aristophanes playfully treats Tereus in the same way he treats elevated, non-comic language, i.e., he has appealed only to the tragic *representation* of the character in a Sophoclean play and has followed the familiar pattern of transplanting a mere fragment of the tragic discourse with deliberate and total disregard for the force and context of the original material. We need not be any more surprised at the absence of any reference to the violence of Tereus' mythology than we are at the incongruity of a bit a tragic language suspended in a rude and alien context. Also interesting is the fact that Aristophanes has concretized Sophoclean language by giving us an actual character, i.e., Tereus as a bird *after* the metamorphosis. As implied at vv. 100, the Sophoclean Tereus was most likely 'presented' after his crisis in a messenger's speech and certainly did not stroll on stage in a bird-costume.[18]

When the new bird appears onstage Tereus identifies himself as a concretization of the paratragic process, a claim that renders his situation more intelligible and his 'originality' all the more laughable. The new hoopoe, naturally, has little chance to win respect since his literary genealogy is so tenuous that Peisetairos fails to understand it. Instead, he comically

[18]Cf. vv. 100-101 τοιαῦτα μέντοι Σοφοκλέης λυμαίνεται ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαισιν ἐμέ, τὸν Τηρέα. The verb λυμαίνεσθαι here sounds like a self-pitying exaggeration as if to say that Sophocles' words inflicted physical harm.

deconstructs the analogy and directly assigns the unfortunate third-generation hoopoe the human name Kallias, a well-known spendthrift who had dissipated his family wealth.[19] Here he is verbally identified with the new hoopoe and, again, the joke submerges all sense in nonsense as Peisetairos and Euelpides ridicule him in terms of his new value as 'Kallias:' all his feathers are being plucked out by sycophants and women (vv. 284-286). The absurd mixture of human and bird features exemplifies the comic disruption of normal figuration as birds are predicated of men and vice-versa to the point where we are uncertain about the species of a given character. The Kallias-Hipponikos pattern, moreover, underscores the cycle of nonsense characteristic of the 'four birds' passage, i.e., a series of bizzare birds the sole function of which is to provide a comic spectacle as material for wordplay.

The pattern of predicating man of bird is repeated in the final episode of the given sequence. Yet another outlandish creature appears and Euelpides is amazed by his bright plumage: ὦ Πόσειδον, ἕτερος αὖ τις βαπτὸς ὄρνις οὑτοσί. τίς ὀνομάζεταί ποθ' οὗτος; Poseidon, here's another dyed (brightly-colored) bird. What's *his* name?' (vv. 287-288). Tereus abandons even the pretense of naming and produces the hybrid figure κατωφαγᾶς which again fuses bird and human morphology (cf. ὑποδεδιώς [v. 65] and ἐπικεχοδώς [v. 68]) to suggest a feathered glutton, an image which predictably triggers the following Kleonymos-joke and the play on λόφος 'crest': πῶς ἂν οὖν Κλεώνυμός γ' ὢν οὐκ ἀπέβαλε τὸν λόφον; 'How can it be Kleonymos without

[19]The genealogy of the family included Phaenippos, Kallias, Hipponikos, Kallias, Hipponikos, Kallias. The two men named Kallias were known by the nick-name λακκόπλουτος 'cistern-wealth' (Plutarch, *Aristides* 5, Andocides, *De Myst.* 110-131) with reference to their supposed discovery of buried treasure. Plato's *Protagoras* and Xenophon's *Symposium* take place at his house.

having cast away its crest?' (v. 290). The tendency to spin off into 'irrelevant' associations is actually a denial on the part of comic discourse to be regulated in its interpretation of signs. The word λόφος is confusingly allowed to mean everything at once and we are forced to superimpose a metonymy for a coward's helmet, bird's crests, and hilltops as the joke segues into the arrival of the chorus. Euelpides has makes a circular pun passing from λόφος 'bird crest' to λόφος 'helmet (crest)' back to λόφος 'bird crests' as he sees the chorus crowd the stage. Tereus' snyde non-sequitur about the Karians who dwell on λόφοι 'hilltops' is a joke which makes fun of the preceding jokes: he takes the ususal semantic drift of the pun to an absurd limit and leaves us high and dry at a point from which there is no return.

At v. 297 the members of the chorus begin to be identified by kind.[20] The rapid succession of twenty-four bird-names is complete by v. 306 with only a few incindental jokes from Euelpides who tries to continue the nonsense by seeing a barber (κείρειν 'shear') named Sporgilos in the bird-name *κείρυλος (i.e., κηρυλος). We encounter the sole mention of Athens in the formulaic 'coals-to-Newcastle' proverb which Euelpides places deliberately out of any relation to context. Reacting to the owl onstage he asks τίς γλαῦκ' 'Αθήναζ' ἤγαγεν; 'who brought an owl to Athens?' (v. 301). In fact, nobody 'brought' this owl and we are trying to forget, as spectators, that we are in fact at Athens! The joke could be quite effective if Euelpides were to make clear by gesture and intonation that he is momentarily stepping out of the fictitious situation to join the crowd watching the play.

The compact catalog of names at vv. 302-305 completes the combined

[20]On the chorus and naming sequence see W. Blake, "The Aristophanic Bird Chorus," *AJPh* 64 (1943): 87-91, and H. Crosby, "The *Bird* Riddle Reexamined," *HS* 8 (1949): 75-81.

identification-and-entrance of the chorus. Having fully materialized, they prepare to speak and begin by making a variety of bird-sounds perceived by the men as generic πιπτίζειν. The familiar sign χάσκω is applied to the birds by Peisetairos who notes that they are eyeing him with apparent hostility. At first it seems that the men are faced with a crowd of creatures as foreign as the birds (crow and jackdaw) of the opening sequence. The combination of inarticulate sounds and gaping threatens to terminate the man-bird encounter in the usual uncommunicative enmity. Suddenly, however, bird sounds pass into human language and the chorus speak: Ποποποποποποποῦ μ' ὃς ἐκάλεσε; Τίνα τόπον ἄρα νέμεται; . . . Τιτιτιτιτιτιτί τίνα λόγον ἄρα ποτὲ πρὸς ἐμὲ φίλον ἔχων; 'Who who who who called me, where is he, where's his haunt? Wha wha wha what friendly word does he have for me?' (vv. 310-315). The convocation is complete as the birds are both seen and heard. In his complex monody and subsequent naming exercise Tereus assembled the chorus and gave them a voice both literally (teaching them language) and dramatically (fulfilling the name-entrance convention). The distracting four-bird interlude was only a temporary exploitation by comedy of the necessary and inevitable invocation and naming sequence. By interrupting it and suspending the dramatic rhythm the episode was able to revell in a mischievious series of unrelated jokes whose only purpose was to entertain and slow down the rapid plot-development somewhat. As the chorus begins to speak, when it enters as a character in its own right, the action resumes and we await to see the outcome of the interspecific encounter as the 'ambassadors' of the human race face the birds.

Agon: Winged Words/Graphic Birds

In a relatively short space *Birds* has already unfolded its Great Idea, which, though in Whitman's view "a mere pun,"[21] is seen to be "the result of a gradual but inevitable progress,"[22] which can be characterized as the emergence, in a contextual vacuum, of the creative force of the spoken word. As we follow the establishment of Nephelokokkugia and Peisetairos' restructuring program, we may seduced into forgetting that behind the action is a uniquely powerful and generative played word. Instead of serving as the connecting fabric of physical presence (action), language in *Birds* is behind the action as linguistic structure informs events on the stage. In seeking to articulate the significance of a disturbingly innovative dramatic work that bridges the gap between the act of playing and the played word,[23] it is enlightening to cite M. Goldman's observation that

> the leading role or roles of any play act out some version of a half-allowed, blasphemous and sacred freedom characteristic of the era in which the play was written. A culture's leading dramatic roles reflect *its sense of where, outside theater terrific energies are likely to appear* [italics mine] . . . In comedy [the hero's] extremism is

[21]Whitman 177.

[22]McLeish 70. Heberlein 7 writes: "Koch nimmt als Kern der komischen Handlung ein--aus einer 'Kritischen Idee' geborenes--'Komisches Thema' an, das wie der musikalische Themabegriff im doppelten Sinne verstanded wird als 'Einfall' und als 'Substrat der Durchführung', von dem die einzelnen Handlugnsteile, die dramatisch sebständig sein können, abhängen; thematisiert wird entweder die Durchsetzung eines neuen Planes oder eine Beseitigung. Im 'Komischen Thema' wird die 'Kritische Idee' des Autors in die phantastische Bühnenaktion umgesetzt. Die Idee selbst dagegen hat außerdramatische Wurzeln;" The 'idea' of *Birds*, however, and the 'theme' are related to Peisetairos' verbal invention.

[23]Cf. W. Gruber, *Comic Theatres: Studies in Performance and Audience Response* (Athens and London: U of Georgia Press, 1986) 17, who notes that "the played word is often contradicted by the act of playing."

> frequently disguised or protected, the punishment displaced, dispelled, or transformed.[24]

Placing the fantastic, overgenerative spectacle of language liberated from referential duty in the focal point of a comedy Aristophanes forces an admission of the impossibility of such a spectacle. A world in which anything were 'no sooner said than done' would certainly be violent and chaotic as the "random fiction generated by the machine of language"[25] would prove the destruction of those who engage it. The comic protagonist, however, whom Gruber calls "a collection of parts--an open force field or a potential for transformation" experiences the meaning crisis in a new way (and herein is the comedy): he becomes a god!

Prominent in the fantasy element of *Birds*, to use a mathematical metaphor, is the absolute value function of the carnivalesque, i.e., suppression and mitigation of the darker consequences of the fusion of language, desire, and action in mute admission of what could never be. The πόλος-πόλις speech act, for example, being emblematic of the creative linguistics of *Birds* as a whole "*produces an excess of cognition* [which] *can never hope to know the process of its own production (the only thing worth knowing.)*"[26] The generative linguistics of *Birds*, then, is the hinge on which the play swings from the lack of signification to the excess that unfolds in the latter half of the play. Although a tragicomic image of man who hangs in the balance between these two extremes is dominant in the play,

---

[24]M. Goldman, *The Actor's Freedom: Toward a Theory of Drama* (New York: Viking Press, 1975) 55-56.

[25]W. Ray, *Literary Meaning: From Phenomenology to Deconstruction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984) 202.

[26]P. de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979) 300.

Aristophanes suppresses the tragic element of man who, on the one hand, is 'spoken by language' in the Lacanian sense and, on the other, cannot know the process of the production of his own meaning. To anticipate somewhat, it is telling that the revelation of a linguistics of the will, i.e., the attempt to defy destiny and rupture the closure of signification, is symbolized by a magic root (the ῥιζίον τι of v. 654), a physical token of the new dimension being revealed in *Birds*.

Rhetorical excellence has, since Homer, been graced with the metaphor of flight, ἔπεα πτερόεντα 'winged words,' in which the properties of a bird in motion are predicated of speech which is, presumably, about anything but birds. In the play of that name, however, we encounter an interesting reversal of the figure: as Peisetairos begins to create, to speak a new world for the birds, he rewrites their history by producing tricks of text that mask as bird *exempla* in the service of reclaiming a prior bird-truth. The winged words of Peisetairos appear as a sequence of birds in the second agon and lyric scene: a lark, cock, kite, cuckoo, and others--written, fabricated entites that effect a dramatic change in the disorganized flock of birds and inspire the choral display of the Parabasis. In this section Peisetairos emerges as a clever χοροδιδάσκαλος who supplies a text and choreographs (i.e., 'chorus-writes') the performance of a group that relies on his skill and artifices to know 'who it is' and 'what it is to do.' Brilliant language may seem to fly but Peisetairos' textual birds, such as Lampon's goose-oath, are patently graphic and their flight is bound up with a number of metpahors, especially those of cooking, violence, and the substitution of μάθησις 'learning' for ἀνάγκη 'necessity.'

Following the introduction of the birds through the agency of Tereus

who 'gives them voice' Euelpides' role dwindles and the play focuses on the interaction between Peisetairos, the chorus, and a variety of interloping characters. The conception of Nephelokokkugia and the monody seem to have a performative aspect as language 'slips behind' the action to guide it. In answer to the chorus' question about what kind of λόγος the men have brought Tereus expresses the universal scope of the Word in a series of five adjectives: κοινόν, ἀσφαλῆ, δίκαιον, ἡδύν, ὠφελήσιμον. ἄνδρε γὰρ λεπτὼ λογιστὰ δεῦρ' ἀφῖχθον ὡς ἐμέ. 'for all, safe, just, sweet, helpful; two men, you see, clever calculators, have come here to see me' (vv. 316-317). Here are all the ingredients of σωτηρία, political, moral, and sensual. Tereus connects the λόγος of the men with πρᾶγμα as he announces that they have the 'stem' (basis) of a monstrous deed: πρέμνον πράγματος πελωρίου (v. 321). The birds are alarmed at this and their leader must exhort them not to fear the Word since its 'ambassadors' are driven by an ἔρως for a mode of living as yet unknown to them: ἄνδρ' ἐδεξάμην ἐραστὰ τῆσδε τῆς ξυσουσίας 'I've welcomed here men that are lovers of this (our) society' (v. 324).

As I argued above concerning vv. 412-415 and other 'erotic' passages, Tereus pronounces the men's lack of knowledge (metaphor for experience) to be ἔρως, the same term used earlier to mark the gap in signification encountered at the outset when Euelpides and Peisetairos were presenting impossible scenarios of the good life. The men are also called λεπτὼ λογιστά a designation which can mean both 'subtle reasoners' as well as 'quibbling logic-choppers.'[27] A demonstration follows at vv. 340 f. when the birds threaten to attack and Peisetairos first substitutes the passive notion of

[27]W. B. Stanford in his commentary on *Frogs* (Bristol, New York: Bristol Classics/St. Martins, 1958) 145 note at vv. 826-829: "λεπτολογεῖν= 'split hairs' *cf. Clouds* 320;" See also *Frogs* 876.

'following' for the active 'leading' and corrects his sidekick, pointing out that he will *not* 'be sorry' (κλάοιμι 'cry') since his eyes will be plucked out. This sophistic concretization of κλάειν is a mockery of explanation and confirms Euelpides' worst fears, even intensifies them. So far, the power of speech has polarized birds and men and the two sides prepare for battle.

Tereus is blamed for violating the ancient customs and oaths of the birds (vv. 331-331), i.e., the bird-man responsible for giving the birds language (and, therefore, the power to make oaths) is now alienated through the use of the same: πρὸς τοῦτον μὲν ἡμῖν ἐστιν ὕστερος λόγος 'we'll deal (talk) with this guy (Tereus) later' (v. 336). The menacing rhetoric of the choral attack which follows is tragic in style and is playfully Iliadic in its tmesis and mention of giving the men up for plunder to the birds.[28] Recalling the locative speech act in which Peisetairos organized and fixed the birds in space (v. 183) we can see that it is now reversed as the birds deny the men any place at all: οὔτε γὰρ ὀρὸς σκιερὸν οὔτε νέφος αἰθέριον οὔτε πολιὸν πέλαγος etc., 'neither gloomy mountain, not etherial cloud, nor grey sea (sc. will offer you refuge, vv. 349-350).' A similar sentiment informs the joke a bit later (vv. 393-351) in which Peisetairos writes a fictional ending for the agon in answer to Euelpides' question about what place on earth will afford them a place for burial. "The Kerameikos will welcome us," he says, "we'll be buried at public expense; in fact we'll tell the generals that we died fighting the enemy at Orneae." Here we have a hint at the 'impossible mode' in which Peisetairos' language is cast: reporting one's own death in a battle that never took place in a town called up

[28]Cf. Euripides *Medea* 1264, Sophocles Oedipus *Tyrranos* 1023; The Iliadic connection is not intended as an explicit reference, rather the verb περὶ τε κύκλωσαι in tmesi along with the martial spirit of the phrase δοῦναι ῥύγχει φορβάν (cf. οἰωνοῖσι τε δαῖτα which makes for an appropriate bird context) lend the feathered warriors a little mock menace.

merely for its homophony with ὄρνιθες 'birds.' This mode of impossibility is emphasized when the hoopoe describes the men's message as ἄπιστα καὶ πέρα κλύειν 'more than unbelievable to hear' (v. 417), and the benefits they speak of as ὄλβον οὔτε λεκτὸν οὔτε πιστὸν 'bliss/wealth that can neither be spoken nor believed' (vv. 422-423). Peisetairos, moreover, is ἄφατον ὡς φρόνιμος 'too clever for words' (v. 428).

The first agon and its resolution are governed by culinary metaphor the immediate force of which must be that the birds, though menacing and articulate in their dealings with men are never far from being food, i.e., an object to be desired and consumed in a gesture comedy knows well. The men arm themselves with kitchen implements (vv. 357 f.): χύτραι 'pots,' ὀβελίσκοι 'spits,' and a τρύβλιον 'platter.' Weapons, ὅπλα, are the common instruments of martial intercourse between men so the uneven relationship between men and birds calls for different equipment.

The source-text for the treaty between species (vv. 438 f.), moreover, is a cook whose διαθήκη[29] is both sexual and interspecific: Panaitios who wants to keep his wife at bay is called an 'ape,' so that the agreement is a comic graft, by men, of a fragment of performative discourse between species.[30] The timeless infinitives legislate the birds' behavior toward the men, beginning with μήτε δάκνειν 'no biting,' (v. 441) a concretization that occurs in the graft since the woman's 'biting' was clearly a marked activity which the 'ape' wanted to prohibit, while biting for birds is much more natural and expected. The following two infinitives μήτ' ὀρχίπεδ' ἕλκειν μήτ' ὀρύττειν-- 'no

[29]See Chapter 2: 87, N. 66

[30]Laws and treaties are the performative text *par excellence:* see, for example, the final chapter on Rousseau in de Man, *Allegories of Reading.* See also J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1975), 157-160

yanking my testicles or digging into my-- (v. 442) are sexual and suggest the impossible metaphor of sex-as-war between birds and men. The absurdity is especially keen in the word ὀρύττειν 'to dig' which is already applied 'metaphorically' to Panaitios' wife. Transferred to the birds, the figure is derailed and, in the interjected phrase οὔ τι που τόνδ'; 'you don't mean your . . .' the chorus halts, stumped by the tangled semantics of the performance. The trace of the impossible metaphor 'no digging at my *anus*' is clearly present and even supplied by the scholiast.[31] Peisetairos, however, hastens to supply a 'sensible' word and says οὐκ, ἀλλὰ τὼφθαλμὼ λέγω 'no, I mean my *eyes*' (v. 443). The success of the joke lies in the way the familiar signifier so hastily supplied and semantically comfortable, points to the nonsensical trace of πρωκτόν that is literally obscene, 'off-stage.' Though I call the obscene aspect of the joke impossible, in performance involving only men there is a level at which the sexual metaphor is quite possible and forces a move outside the dramatic situation to engage a 'real' sexual potential. Thus the uneasy juxtaposition of the trace of πρωκτόν and the overt τὼφθαλμώ creates a tension between performance and representation effected by multiple substituion in metaphor. Here again, by means of a graft of the performative text of the original treaty, an exclusively linguistic phenomenon is projected into the action.

Finally, when asked to set forth his idea, Peisetairos speaks again in culinary terms, presenting the creative power of language as baking: καὶ μὴν ὀργῶ . . . καὶ προπεφύραται λόγος εἷς μοι, ὃν διάματτειν οὐ κωλύει 'I'm rearing

[31]Commenting on μήτ' ὀρχίπεδ' ἕλκειν the Scholiast notes: 'μὴ διασκᾶν τοὺς ὄρχεις,' 'μὴ ὀρύττειν τὸν πρωκτόν,' τὸν πρωκτὸν γὰρ δεικνύς φησιν "οὔτι που τόν--;" ἄλλως: τοῦτο ὁ ἔποψ ἢ ὁ χορὸς δεικνὺς τὸν πρωκτόν, ὡς ἐν κωμῳδία δὲ ταύτην πρώτην τιμωρίαν ὁρίζεται.

to go and a certain Word is already leavened within me; nothing stops me from kneading and rolling it out' (vv. 462-463).[32] The sexual and alimentary aspects of the text's substitutions remind us again of comedy's favorite currency (food/sex/feces), i.e., the medium of exchange that underlies the other modes of inter(dis)course. The coloring of speech by the comic δύναμις 'value' of feeding and copulation is especially fitting here since the broad outline of Peisetairos' language passes shortly into the physical reality of the stage. The community of birds is fertilized and fed by his speech and will soon find themselves in a new world which he has invoked.

Tereus is interesting in his dual function as bird and man on stage. Naturally, he is an actor who is given a purposely inadequate costume that borders on a bad disguise. His comic failure as a bird is exploited at the beginning of the play but his monody and the birds' response to him establish Tereus securely as 'bird.' When the chorus learns, however, that he has introduced men into their company they are outraged and Tereus is again attracted to the human end of the polarity:

> Εἰπέ μοι, τί μέλλετ', ὦ πάντων κάκιστα θηρίων,
> ἀπολέσαι παθόντες οὐδὲν ἄνδρε καὶ διασπάσαι
> τῆς ἐμῆς γυναικὸς ὄντε ξυγγενεῖ καὶ φυλέτα;
>
> Tell me, vilest of all beasts, why are you about
> to kill and tear to pieces these two men, my wife's kinsmen
> and clansmen, though they've done you no harm?
> (366-368)

The birds are called 'vilest of all beasts' and reproached for their hostility to

[32]Taillardat 441 notes that the culinary metaphor is common to the great lyric poets Ibycus, Anacreon, Alcaeus. "Elle s'applique enfin à tout orateur."

the men who are Procne's ξυγγενεῖ 'relatives,' the word being related to the συγγίγνεσθαι (cf. γένος ⟨ γίγνεσθαι). The frequent occurrence of this word along with συνεῖναι[33] marks an essential connection in *Birds* between being, becoming and inter(dis)course. Weakened, for the moment, in his authority over the chorus (demonstrated so vividly in the monody) Tereus regains it by presenting a particularly empty argument: first he introduces the abstract distinction between being and intention:

> Εἰ δὲ τὴν φύσιν μὲν ἐχθροί, τὸν δὲ νοῦν εἰσιν φίλοι,
> καὶ διδάξαντές τι δεῦρ' ἥκουσιν ὑμᾶς χρήσιμον;
>
> Though enemies by nature, they are friends in mind (intention),
> and have come here to teach you something useful.
> (371-372)

It is remarkable how the text simultaneously fuses and divorces intention and essence and implies the comic paradox that the men have come 'to be with,' 'have intercourse with' the birds despite the fact that their φύσις and νοῦς do not agree on this matter![34] The impossible rift between 'nature' and 'intention' prepares us for the ornithization of the characters in which only a sham physical transformation is brought out in the performance. Still faced with a partial enmity, Tereus continues his linguistic manipulation to 'prove' that the ἐχθρός 'enemy' is actually useful, even good, in that he satisfies a need:

> Ἀλλ' ἀπ' ἐχθρῶν δῆτα πολλὰ μανθάνουσιν οἱ σοφοί.
> Ἡ γὰρ εὐλάβεια σῴζει πάντα. Παρὰ μὲν οὖν φίλου
> οὐ μάθοις ἂν τοῦθ', ὁ δ' ἐχθρὸς εὐθὺς ἐξηνάγκασεν.

[33]See vv. 113, 200, 324, 368, 415, 650, 1487.

[34]For a detailed treatment of νοῦς etc. in Aristophanes see E. W. Handley, "Words for Soul, Heart, and Mind in Aristophanes," *RM* 99 (1956): 205-225.

Αὐτιχ' αἱ πόλεις παρ' ἀνδρῶν ἔμαθον ἐχθρῶν κοὐ φίλων
ἐκπονεῖν θ' ὑψηλὰ τείχη ναῦς τε κεκτῆσθαι μακράς.

Indeed, the wise learn much from their enemies and caution is the common Savior. You wouldn't learn this from a friend but the enemy forces you, and quickly! A city, for example, is taught to erect high walls and build long ships not by allies but by its enemies. (375-379)

Of course, an enemy satisfies a need insofar as he creates it. The very means of combatting an ἐχθρός and protecting oneself are credited to him as a positive contribution. This bizzare metaphor of μάθησις 'learning' for ἀνάγκη 'necessity' is illuminating if we consider the fact that throughout *Birds* the ἀνάγκη of signification enforced by Peisetairos' rhetoric is offered as a substitute for learning and information. Take, for example, the πόλος-πόλις pun in which the change of a single vowel constitutes a novel idea and city-plan.

The metaphors of food in the agon give way to the violence of peace as Peisetairos promises to smash the birds psyche with the power of speech:

Μὰ Δί' ἀλλὰ λέγειν ζητῶ τι πάλαι, μέγα καὶ λαρινὸν ἔπος τι
ὅ τι τὴν τούτων θραύσει ψυχήν. Οὕτως ὑμῶν ὑπεραλγῶ.

By Zeus I've long sought to say something, a great and weighty word that will shatter their [i.e., *your*] soul, such is my concern for you. (465-466)

The incongruity of metaphor sits well with the impossible mode of the protagonist's discourse and prepares the way for the verbal *tour de force* in which he speaks the new order.

Peisetairos presents his λαρινὸν ἔπος as an epideictic speech or 'proof

by example' (cf. v. 483) involving τεκμήρια 'positive evidence' of the birds' erstwhile primacy. This proof takes the form of writing in which a series of birds are woven together to attest to the fiction. First he cites a mysterious tale from Aesop (unknown to us) in which a lark buries her father in her head, as if to chiastically parody the father-daughter generation in Athena's myth. Second, the natural habit of the rooster is transformed into an imperative and he is made 'king of all Persians, Dareios and Megabazes' (v. 484), by the metonymy of the epithet περσικός. It is interesting to note that the mutation of natural behavior to an act of will is linked with a pun that may occur at v. 489 where the phrase νόμον ὄρθριον 'morning tune' parodies the Terpandric νόμον ὄρθιον as if to suggest the radical poetics of Peisetairos' own performance, i.e., that he is ποιητής by virtue of his trickery and mastery of texts.[35] In fact, this creative or 'poetic' aspect of the protagonist's role emerges most clearly in Nephelokokkugia where, during the sequence of episodes, he demonstrates his authority over the fantastic text he has written.

A similar strategy is employed in the case of the kite and cuckoo (vv. 499-507): both were natural signs, one of spring the other of the harvest. Peisetairos appropriates them for his purposes and, mirroring his own activities, brings the signifier to life: one might say that in actual practice the kite ἰκτῖνος announced the spring which the people greeted with a prostration. Removing the aspect of assertion, of 'normal' signification, Peisetairos has people comically bow down directly to the signifier thereby inscribing his own strategy into the appearance of the bird: passive statement becomes

[35]Though Porson's emendation has not been well received it is a reminder of how a textual critic becomes necessarily involved in the strategies (here, joke) of his subject as he tries to correct a corrupt passage to re-arrive at the 'truth.'

demonstration of majesty. The case of the cuckoo is interesting also because the operation involves a more explicit act of signification: the bird speaks his own name κόκκυ as a sign to begin the harvest.[36] Again, in a typical gesture of writing a 'bird-proof,' Peisetairos transforms a sign, a simple token, into a command in which the Cuckoo orders men to worship it.

The penultimate example involves more signs, i.e., birds as emblems of power. In vv. 508-516 Peisetairos once again conflates sign and signified to identify the emblem with authority. This sequence of graphic bird examples is closed by the trick in which Zeus becomes a goose by simple substitution of one phoneme. Peisetairos claims that nobody will swear by the gods any longer as birds will replace them. Euelpides provides an example: Λάμπων δ' ὄμνυσ' ἔτι καὶ νυνὶ τὸν χῆν', ὅταν ἐξαπατᾷ τι 'Lampon already swears by the goose whenever deceiving someone' (v. 521).

The absurdity of Peisetairos' graphic birds is accordingly pointed out as Euelpides interjects his own nonsense. Systematically misunderstanding his fellow Athenian in what has become his regular style he provides delightful examples of verbal slapstick that contrast starkly with the linguistics of the will in Peisetairos' performance. Thus, for example, when the latter speaks of the kite ἰκτῖνος and makes an imperative out of a mere token, Euelpides misunderstands and recites a farcical anecdote of how he fell to the ground and swallowed a coin. He seems to want to make a joke of abuse, i.e., the abuse of money in exchange for the linguistic abuse of birds.

---

[36]The curious cry inspired by the cuckoo ⟨⟨κόκκυ, ψωλοί, πεδίονδε.⟩⟩ (v. 507) has invited speculation. A. Rapp, "Aristophanes *Aves* 507," *RM* 88 (1939): 191 sees sexual metaphor ψωλός is the penis with foreskin pulled back while the 'field' represents the female genitals. C. Stearn, "A Note on Aristophanes' *Birds* 507," *CPh* (1933): 207-208 sees a reference to circumcised Jews. (Henderson 110, predictably, follows Rapp in the obscene reading.)

He similarly abuses the semantics of δωροδοκεῖνin response to Peisetairos' manipulation of emblems: the word at v. 510 meaning simply to 'receive gifts' becomes 'bribery' in v. 513.

The chorus is, nevertheless, impressed by the fabricated series of illustrious birds and announces Peisetairos their savior (σωτήρ v. 545, cf. μηχανὴ σωτηρίας) who has mobilized and 'trained' them to dance their way out of their predicament. Naturally, they fail to read Tereus' discourse well and understand that, in their case, the 'problem' was also generated out of thin air by a tricky enemy. The metaphor of learning for sheer necessity of signification is maintained in the chorus' acceptance of the fictitious 'graphic birds' as proof of their priority.

Approaching the Parabasis: From Transgression to Self-Praise

The metaphorics of *Birds*, the series of visual and textual substitutions in which the ornithic functions as a comic vehicle, receives fullest expression in the parabasis. The first moment of the man-bird transformation, as we have seen, involved a literalization of the lyric-tragic sentiment 'I wish I were a bird' (εἴθε κήρυλος εἴην): Peisetairos and Euelpides finally succeed in motivating their nonsensical quest by placing it in the context of ὁ μετ' ὀρνίθων βίος (line 155). The critical link was the myth of Tereus which supplied a bispecific guide for the men into birdhood. The discourse of comedy, however, could never allow a simple passage of men into mute, chattering birds[37]. Instead, the paradox implicit in a radically

[37]Such a transformation would not make much sense in terms of performance and would be wholly contrary to what Bakhtin calls the carnivalesque spirit of popular comedy. An essential feature of the carnivalesque, as I argue above, is the 'grotesque' mingling of forms across the boundaries of species, not complete and traceless transformation.

human expression of the yearning to escape the human condition is exploited: since the very notion of man-to-bird transformation is made possible by that most human of media, language (i.e. in some graphic/symbolic form), the target of the transformation (birds) is attracted to the source (man). The birds become entangled in the net of human discourse just as they imagine themselves to be gaining the upper hand over men. In constructing Nephelokokkugia ('net/trap for fools') the birds become more and more assimilated to men until their city emerges as a pseudo-Athenian colony ruled by Peisetairos, a man who, as always, eats birds. Of course, there is comic pleasure in this inevitable return to the familiar human world constrained by the 'prison of language'. The parasitic and eclectic nature of comic discourse is masterfully exploited by Aristophanes to bring together contradictory and fragmentary mythic elements to form a dramatic realization of this return. In the first half of the play through the parabasis Tereus, cosmogony, gigantomachy and other themes conspire to mock the desiderative metaphor of 'ornithization' while the latter half makes fun of man's aspiration to divinity by extending the metaphor along a chain of signification: if men become birds, and birds become gods, then men must be gods! While Peisetairos' apotheosis seems to confirm this serial transformation the net result is a patently non-theriomorphic and non-divine man whose comicality consists in the contrast between his presumptions and his human nature. The parabasis and immediately following scenes will provide the text for further exploration of the root metaphors of *Birds* and the parasitic nature of comic discourse which has the human body with its functions as an ur-metaphor or substratum.

The parabasis of *Birds* is a remarkable moment in Aristophanic

comedy in that the cosmogonic parody and the following syzygy depart from a pattern established in the earlier plays. Whether one prefers to speak of dramatic illusion with Dover[38] or to emphasize the conventional aspect of Greek drama with McLeish and Sifakis[39] the fact that the chorus remains in character and never 'steps forward' on the poet's behalf appears significant. From Sifakis' review of the characteristic themes of the parabasis, pnigos, and epirrhematic syzygy,[40] it is evident that these themes, especially in the first five extant plays, are in complementary distribution with the themes of other constituent elements of comedy, i.e., what occurs in the parabasis does not occur elsewhere. "What is a peculiarity of the parabasis, as compared with the other choral parts," he writes[41], "is the fact that the poet may identify with the leader of the chorus, and address the audience in the first person; . . .The themes of P (parabasis) are not found in other choral parts." The reverse is also true since "the other usual theme of the stasima, the glorification of the comic hero is unknown to the parabasis" while "the third basic theme of the parabasis--the self-presentation of the chorus and its preoccupation with itself--occurs neither in the stasima nor in the choral parts of the agon."[42] In

---

[38]Dover 56: "provided that by 'illusion' we do not mean visual ingenuities of production . . . but simply the uninterrupted concentration of the fictitious personages of the play on their fictitious situation."

[39]G. Sifakis, *Parabasis and Animal Choruses*, (U of London Press, 1971) 11: "Any conventional type of drama . . . is by definition unrealistic and, in consequence, anti-illusionistic." and Sifakis 14: "It is wrong, therefore, to speak of interruption or disruption of illusion and thus imply that illusion is the normal state of affairs, an indispensable element of drama itself." See also McLeish 80: "In the theatre of illusion the effects *simulate* reality; in the theatre of convention the effects *symbolize* reality."

[40] Sifakis 38-42.

[41] Sifakis 52.

[42]Sifakis 52.

Birds, however, the voice of the poet is never heard; instead, the bird-chorus is allowed to substitute a parodic poetry of their own in the place of the poet's discourse. This suppression of the usual parabatic themes in favor of enhanced 'self-presentation of the chorus' and parody is merely noted by the commentators[43] who seem to regard it as an incindental feature of the play.

We were prepared for the first stage of bird-to-man assimilation by Tereus whose traditional metamorphic status made him a natural choice for a bi-directional guide: for men into the life of birds and for birds into language. Immediately following the agon the only notion of 'parabasis' the birds seem to have is that of 'transgression':

XO. "Ομνυμ; ἐπὶ τούτοις, πᾶσι νικᾶν τοῖς κριταῖς
καὶ τοῖς θεαταῖς πᾶσιν,--
ΠΙ. "Εσται ταυταγί.
XO. εἰ δὲ παραβαίην, ἐνὶ κριτῇ νικᾶν μόνον.

CH. I swear on these conditions: to win unanimously, by the votes of all judges and spectators.
PI. And so you shall.
CH. And if I transgress . . . let me win by only one vote. (445-447)

This passage and its echo at line 461 is a far cry from the technical comic use of the verb παραβαίνειν which has been argued to mean 'to praise oneself' with the "underlying implication that the self-praise indicated by these verbs is a digression, something additional that does not belong to the

43 Thus Rogers ad. loc.: "In every preceding Parabasis which has reached us, the Poet takes the opportunity of dilating on his own extraordinary merits. Here the Birds take the opportrunity of dilating on theirs." Kock 86 says even less although he notes that "Der Abstand zwischen Mensch und Gottheit scheint unter den neuen Göttern nur grösser noch als z B bei dem frommen Pindar."

performance, or to the speech proper."[44] The birds have been introduced to language but they are not yet fully involved in the trickery of comic discourse. Pursuing a seductive strategy that will prepare them for their dramatic 'stepping forth' Peisetairos spreads his rhetorical net to implicate them in a plan that opens with the bald assertion that the birds were kings (v. 467). Süvern[45] regards the culinary metaphor discussed above (v. 462) especially pointed "inasmuch as the speech of Peisthetairos is made for the insidious purpose of entrapping the birds." At first the birds' ignorance is total: τουτὶ μα Δί' οὐκ ἐπεπύσμην 'I certainly had no idea about that, by Zeus' (v. 470). We can assess the power of Peisetairos' speech by sudden ardor and authority with which the birds assert their newfound supremacy in the parabasis.

The basic pattern of deception is implicit in Peisetairos' reference to Aesop at v. 471: In support of the metaphoric δόλος according to which the birds are prior, original, and divine (i.e. an object of desire to which less substantial men shall assimilate in transformation) he cites a text in which

---

[44]Sifakis 65. Similarly, on the following page he cites *Knights* 507-9 where the verb means 'to come forward by way of digression to speak to the theatre' and notes that "this seems to have been the original technical use of the verb in comedy. When, however, the subject of the verb is the poet himself the figurative meaning of the verb is strengthened at the expense of the literal one ."

[45]Süvern 61. He notes further that "Plato who entertained exactly the same opinion that Aristophanes did, in regard to sophistry, compares the art of persuasion (and especially in regards to Gorgias) with that of cooking; and places it together with sophistry in the category of κολακεία." The reference here is to *Gorgias* 462 e ff. Similarly, on the formal aspect of the agon, Gelzer says "Der ganze epirrhematische Agon ist nun eigentlich eine 'garnierte' Rede des Peishetairos." *Der epirrhematiche Agon bei Aristophanes: Untersuchungen zur Struktur der attischen Alten Komödie,* (München, 1960) 23.

the reverse metaphor obtains and where, in Rosenmeyer's phrase, "the beasts aspire to be men and become moral agents."[46] The following epideictic speech, as discussed above, advances a series of τεκμήρια ('graphic birds') each of which, in its own way, contributes to the grand illusion. Euelpides' final 'example' at v. 521 is a case in point. The partial homophony employed to *avoid* naming Zeus in this deceptive oath is exploited to assert the birds' priority over the gods. Once again comedy infuses the accidental play of signifiers with meaning, a gesture we have repeatedly noted, and which, on a larger scale, introduces the cosmogonic sequence of the parabasis.

The birds are, as expected, easy prey for Peisetairos' rhetorical snares. Even when he demonstrates some expertise in cooking fowl[47] and takes apparent pleasure in describing to the victims how they are disgraced in the process (with the comic implication that there is an 'honorable' way to be eaten), the birds suspect nothing and eagerly ask him for guidance:

Ἀλλ' ὅ τι χρὴ δρᾶν, σὺ δίδασκε παρών· ὡς ζῆν οὐκ ἄξιον ἡμῖν,
εἰ μὴ κομιούμεθα παντὶ τρόπῳ τὴν ἡμετέραν βασιλείαν.

But since you're here, do teach us what to do! Life wouldn't be worth living for us unless we could reclaim our sovereingty by every means possible! (548-549)

Peisetairos, of course, has a plan and immediately proceeds to 'teach' the birds how to regain their 'royal status' although it is *he* who will actually take the greatest pleasure in 'Basileia' (personified) in the final sequence of the play. The metrical and semantic ambiguity of the word βασιλεια[48] has

[46] in E. Segal ed., *Greek Tragedy: Modern Essays in Criticism* (Harper & Row, 1983) 375.

[47] lines 532-37, a recipe we shall see again at 1579 ff. where Peisetairos directs the cooking of the birds found guilty of an oligarchic plot.

troubled some critics, most recently Hofmann,[49] who would like to fix Aristophanic usage and solve the mystery of the character Basileia's identity (although we must read βασίλεια [final α, short] 'queen' in vv. 1538 and 1754, Coulon chooses to accent the word elsewhere βασιλεία [final α, long] 'kingdom, royalty'.) In most instances, however, the final syllable is anceps and will admit the ambiguity -- an occasion for wordplay in which Aristophanes allows the text to refer *both* to the perception of the birds (their 'kingdom') and to Peisetairos' intentions (apotheosis with his 'queen').

The connection made in the text (vv. 552, 1252) between Peisetairos' plan and the gigantomachy further undermines the cheerful tone of the project.[50] If, as Euelpides suggests, the birds are untertaking something comparable to the hubris of Kebriones and Pophyrion they can hardly expect to be successful. To the extent that Nephelokokuggia does succeed it is fair to say that comic discourse has, again, appropriated a mythic theme and

[48]In the *Birds* it is often difficult to distinguish between βασίλεια 'queen' and βασιλεία 'kingdom, royalty' since the critical syllable is often anceps, cf. vv. 478, 549, 1536, 1537, 1634, 1687, 1730, 1754. Although the context usually makes it clear which meaning is preferable, the potential polysemy serves to connect the myth of the birds and Peisetairos' ambitions.

[49]Hofmann 147 - 49 puzzles over the precise identity of Basileia in the finale and concludes that the comic identification of Peisetairos with Zeus justifies identifying the personified Basileia with Hera. Aristophanes, however, named his character simply Βασίλεια. It seems best to respect this ambiguity and allow the earlier occurrences of the words to participate in it.

[50]It is not clear, despite Hofmann's research into the subject (Hofmann 79-90), how the writer of Hypothesis II intended *Birds* to 'reveal the gigantomachic theme as trite' (ἔωλον ἀποφαίνων). Rather than see in the phrase an allusion to dramatic abuse of a hackneyed theme, it seems simplest to understand the hypothesist as saying that Aristophanes used gigantomachy *mockingly:* the 'stale' solemnity of the celestial war is undermined for comic purposes.

distorted it for its own purposes.[51] Before we allow Peisetairos to persuade us, with the birds, to leave Tereus behind and to be charmed by the new myth of cosmogony and 'ornithomachy' in the parabasis it is necessary to inquire a bit more deeply into the way that comic discourse is able to absorb and fuse a multiplicity of mythic and literary fragments into the whole we call comedy.

Ornithogony: Stolen Poetry and Milk of the Birds

In the introductory chapter I discussed the grotesque fusion of man and bird, the mutual passage of one into the other in a bi-directional metaphor. It has not been surprising to find how important language, in a variety of poetic guises, is in representing this image. The fusion, in turn, of two main mythic themes, Tereus and Gigantomachy, expands the metaphoric sequence: men aspire to become birds while the birds aspire to be gods. Peisetairos will, of course, progress along this metaphorical chain to his apotheosis at the end of the play. The parabasis of *Birds* is a brilliant exploitation of form for the purpose of unifying the mythic fragments and providing a transition from the 'quest' in which meaning was suspended to a celebration of new meanings revealed in comic metamorphosis. First, what traditionally had been the moment of 'parabasis' (i.e. self-praise) of the poet becomes, in the *Birds*, the discourse of the bird-chorus. Second, the anapestic section in which the birds have usurped the poetic voice goes far beyond a mere presentation of the chorus: in ambitious cosmogonic style the birds seek

[51]Hofmann 71 distinguishes between the *Birds* and Mythoskomödie in the traditional sense as those of Epicharmus, Cratinus, or Plato Comicus. The central argument of his book is that *Birds* is informed by two main themes: the myth of Tereus up to the parabasis, and the gigantomachy in the episodes and exodos.

to substantiate Peisetairos' fantastic argument (second agon, vv. 465-552) by providing it with a myth, i.e. a 'true' past. This is, for the birds, a further degree of involvement in human discourse which they implicitly claim to control. This involvement, moreover, betrays their dependence on, and subservience to, man (Peisetairos) and stands in comic contrast to their newly-discovered divinity.

The anapestic section begins with an exaltation of birdhood, a condition to which men must aspire and which must be recognized as prior to established divinity. Men are said to live in darkness (ἀμαυρόβιοι), to be ephemeral and insubstantial (φύλλων γενεᾷ προσόμοιοι, ὀλιγοδρανέες, πλάσματα πηλοῦ etc.,) and wretched (ταλαοί). Perhaps the key term in this comic condescension of birds to man is ἀπτῆνες 'wingless,' a theme taken up in the syzygy where the chorus announces that "nothing is better or sweeter than to grow wings . . ." Following the stolen discourse of man/god about man[52] the birds appropriate man's discourse about the gods and convert it into a self-referential ornithogony. Peisetairos' erudition is put to good use: his references to Nike's poetic characterization πέτεται πτερύγοιν χρυσαῖν 'flies on golden wings' and to Eros as another deity punningly given wings by poetry χρυσόπτερος (v. 574, 1738) are integrated by the birds in a three-layered allusion to illustrate their lineage from Eros, a notion we have seen to be important in the play. On one level the allusion is to the commonplace notion of certain gods, including Eros, as winged or bird-like, e.g. in the Homeric simile of the 'tender dove' for Iris mentioned by our protagonist (v. 575). On another level, the language as well as the tone of the whole passage

[52]i.e., the condescending speech in which human life is poetically likened to leaves, dreames, shadows, etc. Cf. *Iliad* 6.146, Aesch. *Prometheus Bound* 547f.

directly reflect the persuasive, punning monologue of Peisetairos. The birds may have learned Greek (τὴν φωνήν) from Tereus but Peisetairos is their instructor in rhetoric. In the parabasis and syzygy the chorus is the very voice of comedy: not actually having a discourse of their own they exhibit a masterful, parasitic/parodic manipulation of the discourses of others, offering to us, in return, the full benefits of carnival blessings:

> Ἢν οὖν ἡμᾶς νομίσητε θεούς,
> ἕξετε χρῆσθαι μάντεσι Μούσαις . . .
> . . . παρόντες δώσομεν ὑμῖν
> αὐτοῖς, παισίν, παιδίων παισίν,
> πλουθυγίειαν, βίον, εἰρήνην,
> νεότητα, γέλωτα, χορούς, θαλίας,
> γάλα τ' ὀρνίθων.
>
> If you honor us as gods
> we'll be at your service as prophetic Muses . . .
> We'll give you, your children, and children's
> children health, wealth, life, peace, youth,
> laughter, dances, festivities, and bird's milk.
> (723-734)

In a pattern of circular logic that is characteristic of the latter half of the *Birds*, the chorus present themselves as Muses although they are simultaneously speaking as 'poets.' Comedy here, to use Hofmann's phrase , is a "*translation* of myth,"[53] i.e. a metaphor of myth that is paradoxically its own origin! Circularity is also playfully exhibited a bit later in the play (vv. 832 ff.) when the πολιοῦχος θεός must be chosen from among the inhabitants of the polis, a bird offered sacrifice by birds on behalf of birds. Another comic circle is implicit in the dismissal of Prodicus in v. 692: while ostensibly rejecting the sophist's innovative teaching on lexical ὀρθώτης and the origins

[53]Hofmann 101.

of religion[54] the birds themselves return to invent these origins anew. Perhaps the greatest circle in the structure of *Birds* is the bizzare replacement of linear Indo-European succesion mythology by a circular pattern: in the newly invented genealogy the birds occupy the position of older gods which, in the pattern of succession myth, are supplanted by subsequent generations, i.e., Zeus and the Olympians. "Aristophanes," notes Hofmann, "verwandelte diese lineare Vorstellung in eine kreisförmige, wo das letzte Glied, mit sich selbst identisch, wieder in den Anfang einmündet. Diese Kreislauftheorie ist im mythologisch-religiösen Bereich einmalig, dagegen eine typische Denkenvorstellung vorsokratischer Kosmosspekulation."[55] In other words, the pattern birds-Olympians-birds has as a correlate the speculative rejection of speculation. We shall encounter a number of other examples in the play of such 'grotesque' logic.

The bird genealogy itself is a remarkable piece of comic writing. To begin with, Aristophanes has the birds, in their stolen poetic language, anticipate their own creation by predicating bird-qualities of the antecedent deities: Night, the female who comically lays an egg in the male Erebos, is the black-winged (μελανόπτερος) parent of "Ερως ὁ ποθεινὸς στίλβων νῶτον πτερύγοιν χρυσαῖν 'desirable Eros brilliant-backed with golden wings' (vv. 696-697). The latter, in turn, mixes with Chaos (πτερόεντι 'winged') and engenders (ἐνεόττευσεν 'hatches') the birds. Eros paradoxically emerges from an unfertilized 'wind egg' (ὑπηνέμιον ᾠόν). This sequence is no doubt parasitic on Orphic cosmogony in which the male principle (Chronos) lays an

[54]Hofmann 182 : "In der Rekonstruktion der *Horen* konnte NESTLE auf Grund des Referats bei Themistios 30, 349b Dind. nachweisen, daß von Prodikos der gesamte Kultus auf den Ackerbau zurückgeführt und dabei auch Orpheus."

[55]Hofmann 164, N1.

egg in Aether/Chaos and produces Phanes (Eros).[56]

The connection with Eros is interesting as he generates the rest of the cosmos in a deliberately vague 'mixing up of things' in which the gods are deprived of direct descent from the winged proto-bird. The contrast here is one between conception and a sort of spontaenous generation out of confusion. In a familiar strategy of degradation the text presents comic 'proof' of the birds' descent from Eros: they are given as presents by men to their beloved boys. In a single move we pass from cosmogonic diction to the direct language of διεμήρισαν ἄνδρες ἐρασταί 'the lover-men split their [boys'] thighs' (v. 706). By boasting about their 'role' in human erotic transactions the birds remind us of the fact that they have, for a brief moment, appropriated the discourse of men who use them and eat them. Similar cadences of degradation occur throughout the parabasis: 1) in the following passage where the birds advertise their function as signifiers: of the seasons, the harvest, of conditions at sea, and . . . when to weave a cloak for the robber Orestes (vv. 708-712); 2) in the sequence ending with ὄνον ὄρνιν; and in the pnigos where the birds enumerate for the first (but certainly not last) time what benefits they represent for mankind: these 'blessings of comedy' include youth, peace, laughter, only to end with the ambivalent γάλα ὀρνίθων 'bird's milk' which, by *not exisitng*, signifies "le comble du bonheur, des délices" in Van Daele's phrase. Physically the birds cannot give 'milk' while in another

[56]See J. Pollard, "The *Birds* of Aristophanes: A Source-Book for Old Beliefs,"*AJP* 69 (1948): 353-376, who is concerned, among other things, to refute Cook's use of the play. Also: K. Ziegler, "Orphische Dichtung," *RE* 18 (1942): 1321-1417; S. Morenz, "Ägypten und die altorphische Kosmogonie," in *Aus Antike und Orient: Festschrift W. Schubart*(Leipsig, 1950) 64 f.; Hofmann 191.

sense they offer men what is signified by 'milk of birds'; once again, both meanings coexist, oscillating between the impossible and desirable. It is tempting to regard this phrase as emblematic of the *Birds* in which the fullness of comic pleasure is signified by an impossible, fantastic metaphor.

The relatively somber tone of the anapestic section which rises to lyric beauty in the first strophe of the syzygy dissolves quickly in the material stratum of the tetrameters where the birds describe the benefits of the winged condition. Here they invite men to share with them in the fantastic advantages of a birdhood which, as we would expect, is a grotesque hybrid of species. The black discourse mocks the desiderative lyric/tragic metaphor in which complete transformation is invoked as an escape from the pain of the human condition. Here the escape is only from the temporary discomfort of the theater and wings are offered to the spectators in a familiar strategy: the impossible alternates with and is exchanged for the familiar currency of comedy: freedom, food, sex, and the pleasure of defecation (vv. 753-768, 785-800). Human laws are overturned:

"Οσα γὰρ ἐνθάδ' ἐστὶν αἰσχρὰ τῷ νόμῳ κρατούμενα,
ταῦτα πάντ' ἐστὶν παρ' ἡμῖν τοῖσιν ὄρνισιν καλά.

Everything *here* (Athens) that is held by law to be base,
all this is beautiful in our land, as far as we birds are concerned.
(755-756)

Freedom is announced for all: father-beaters, slaves, the disenfranchised, and those whose necessity is more immediate, i.e., πεινῶν 'hungry,' . . . χεζητιῶν 'needing to defecate,' . . . μοιχεύων 'involved in adulterous sex,' . . .

The myth of the parabasis is interesting also in connection with what I called the 'anti-epistemic' nature of the grotesque aesthetic, i.e., by foregrounding the fundamental metaphoricity of the sign comedy deprives us

of the comforting epistemology of metaphor. In a world where gods descend from birds and where a bird is, in turn, a sneeze (v. 720) no exploitation of transference for the purposes of definition and knowledge is possible. This leaves a gap which comedy fills by means of a few remarkable strategies: one, as we have seen, is the 'word-play of deferral,' in which the absence of meaning (knowledge) is displaced and filled with 'comic noise'--witness the proleptic nostalgia of Peisetairos and Euelpides in which the men are driven by a desire to return to an object they cannot possibly remember or identify. The lack of knowledge is disarmed and suspended in verbal play moderated by the grotesque bird-man Tereus. The paradox of such a nostalgia for the future finds a parallel in the ornithogonic myth. We get a glimpse of how comedy operates, and what it means in terms of the black discourse to 'know': the bird-chorus, parodists and parasites *par excellence* are at first (for nearly five hundred lines) entirely ignorant of their divine and 'mythic' potential. They are bewildered by Peisetairos' claims and require extensive initiation by means of verbal trickery and puns into the mystery of their importance and priority. Suddenly, at the beginning of the anapestic section (v. 685) they step forward possessed of a mature and pseudo-traditional 'knowledge.' This is a central ἀνάγκη of comedy--*remembering* what one does not and cannot know! In other contexts such necessity is horrific, as in the case where in the *Oedipos Tyrannos* the messenger says, in a tone that foreshadows torture, that he will 'remind (the herdsman) of the unknown:' ἀλλ' ἐγὼ σαφῶς ἀγνῶτ' ἀναμνήσω νιν (v. 1132: Pearson). Just as we were forced to follow two men in a return to an unknown homeland, a possible world of the future, the parabasis is an exercise in recalling an unknown (and certainly impossible) past. In the agon Peisetairos suggested the cosmogonic theme by placing the

birds above and before the gods. The tricky epideictic speech of the protagonist rendered the Orphic/Hesiodic text an ideal victim for the birds who, stimulated by pure invention, fashion an intricate text from their complete lack of knowledge. What Comedy 'knows', then, is only its difference from other discourses and the potential of language. The representation of this anti-knowledge is unique in that it exists only in the theatrical moment and, unlike tragedy with its fully-formed and preexistent mythos, has no abiding traditional referent. The chorus describe themselves as deathless, ever-present, unaging, and ἄφθιτα μηδόμενοι (vv. 689-690). This also seems to be a fitting set of epithets for the δόλοι of Comedy which the 'new race' of birds has come to represent. With newly-acquired authority they assert that they plot/contrive/invent things that are undecaying and as unquenchable as the laughter of the Homeric gods.

Euelpides' words at vv. 801 f. are coincidentally the perfect response to the parabatic madness: he beholds the resultant fusion of bird and man in his friend and exclaims:

> Μὰ Δί' ἐγὼ μὲν πρᾶγμα πω
> γελοιότερον οὐκ εἶδον οὐδεπώποτε.
>
> By Zeus, I've never seen anything more hilarious!
> (801-802)

Peisetairos seems to be offended at the laughter and, recalling the birds' invitation to 'participate in the text' of life (διαπλέκειν, v. 754, a metaphor we have seen several times), comments that Euelpides appears to be the result of bad writing/representation: Εἰς εὐτέλειαν χηνὶ σύ γε γεγραμμένῳ 'you [look like] a cheaply drawn goose.' He need not worry,

however, as Euelpides will soon disappear and the comic consequences of the birds' re-writing of history will be presented in a rapid sequence of visitors and intruders culminating in the final celebration.

The Parodos of a New Chorus

The opening of the *Birds*, tense with suspended meaning, presented Peisetairos and Euelpides as motivated by a simple desire to escape, their destination being 'anywhere but *here*.' In speaking of 'discovering a new fatherland' Euelpides anticipates the invention of Nephelokokkugia, an absurdly familiar comic construct of otherness: ἐντευθενὶ τὴν πατρίδ' ἂν ἐξεύροις συ που; 'where might you invent a Father(land) from here?' (v. 10). The entire idea of the ethereal city, Whitman argues,[57] is generated by wordplay as Peisetairos evokes the comic vision of another world in the agon and invites the birds to participate in it. Given this new context, the birds are able to step forward in the parabasis and usurp the poetic function to present a new cosmogony in which they are given priority over the traditional gods. The condition of man is poetically represented as far below that of the newly-inspired birds:

Ἄγε δὴ φύσιν ἄνδρες ἀμαυρόβιοι, φύλλων γενεᾷ προσόμοιοι,
ὀλιγοδρανέες, πλάσματα πηλοῦ, σκιοειδέα φῦλ' ἀμενηνά,
ἀπτῆνες ἐφημέριοι, ταλαοὶ βροτοί, ἀνέρες εἰκελόνειροι,
πρσέχετε τὸν νοῦν τοῖς ἀθανάτοις ἡμῖν, τοῖς αἰὲν ἐοῦσιν,
τοῖς αἰθερίοις, τοῖσιν ἀγήρῳς, τοῖς ἄφθιτα μηδομένοισιν,
ἵν' ἀκούσαντες πάντα παρ' ἡμῶν ὀρθῶς περὶ τῶν μετεώρων,
φύσιν οἰωνῶν γένεσίν τε θεῶν ποταμῶν τ' Ἐρέβους τε Χάους τε
εἰδότες ὀρθῶς, Προδίκῳ παρ' ἐμοῦ κλάειν εἴπητε τὸ λοιπόν.

Come ye men, shadow-dwellers, like unto a generation of leaves,

[57]Whitman 179-180.

feeble creatures shaped of clay, strengthless, spectral tribe,
wingless ephemerals, mortal wretches, evanescent human dream!
Harken to us the deathless, the everlasting, the ethereal, the ageless
contemplators of the uncorruptable, that you might hear from us all
wisdom concerning things on high. Holding true the nature of birds,
the generation of gods and streams and Darkness and primeval Chaos
you can bid Prodikos a final farewell and send him to hell on my behalf.
(685-692)

From the vantage-point of the comic other, men live in darkness, are feeble, ephemeral etc., The metaphors of shadow, dreams, and falling leaves are inseperable from the marked language in which they are expressed. With a voice of immortal authority the birds promise men knowledge surpassing even that of the sophist Prodicus. It is interesting to compare the function of the chorus in this parabasis with the parabases of earlier plays such as *Clouds* and *Wasps*.[58] In a play such as the *Acharnians* the chorus enters and participates (especially in the agon) in its fully-realized form which it lays aside for the parabasis. Moreover, the text of the anapests, although characteristically self-referential, has a scope that extends well beyond the immediate dramatic context. Thus the review of comic poets in the parabasis of *Knights* (vv. 520 f.) contributes cleverly to the poet's self-glorification while momentarily abandoning the fantasy of the play to refer to an invented 'reality.' This invented reality of the early plays allows the poet to contrast the ἰδέαι and jokes of his play with the 'truth' of parabatic discourse:

οὕτω δ' αὐτοῦ περὶ τῆς τόλμης ἤδη πόρρω κλέος ἥκει,
ὅτε καὶ βασιλεὺς Λακεδαιμονίων τὴν πρεσβείαν βασανίζων

[58]In what follows I do not intend to be dismissive of, or deproblematize, Aristophanes' prior inventions. The chorus of *Clouds* is especially tricky; see C. Segal, "Aristophanes' Cloud-Chorus," *Arethusa* II (1969): 143-161. T. Hubbard reminds me, in this connection, that the notion νεφέλη as a governing symbol of ambiguity is certainly not unique to *Birds*.

ἠρώτησεν πρῶτα μὲν αὐτοὺς πότεροι ταῖς ναυσὶ κρατοῦσιν,
εἶτα δὲ τοῦτον τὸν ποιητὴν ποτέρους εἴποι κακὰ πολλά·
τούτους γὰρ ἔφη τοὺς ἀνθρώπους πολὺ βελτίους γεγενῆσθαι
καὶ τῷ πολέμῳ πολὺ νικήσειν τοῦτον ξύμβουλον ἔχοντας.

The fame of his prowess had already reached distant lands, so that the Great King even exacted of the Spartan embassy an answer to two questions; first, who were lords of the sea and, second, what nation had the illustrious Poet as its merciless critic? For these, he said, would surely be the best of men by far, enjoying many victories in war by virtue of having such a counselor. (*Acharnians* 646-651)

Here, the diction is more prosaic as the poet reflects on himself in the third person. The playwright and his poetry are discussed as if the present context did not belong to the poetic fabric of the *Acharnians*. The point to emphasize here is the severance between the poetic fantasy and the persona of the chorus on the one hand (i.e. the drama proper) and the reflective 'objectivity' of the parabasis on the other. The structure of referentiality is unidirectional, i.e., the lucid 'non-poetic' discourse of the parabasis may refer to the poetic fantasy of the play but not vice-versa. In the *Birds*, however, the situation is very different. Here, for the first time, the parabasis itself is the locus of a new poetry (instead of prosaic and discursive 'criticism') which signals the emergence of the chorus in a new form, that of the fully self-aware 'new birds.' Furthermore the ornithogony is a poetic realization of Perisetairos' rhetoric in the agon, i.e. he choreographs, 'writes the text' of what is effectively the parodos of a new chorus. In a marvellous circular move, Aristophanes has the birds take the sophistic tricks of Peisetairos (a Prodicus-type) which are a comic substitute for the traditional theogony and to cast these once again into 'theogonic' form. The birds dismiss Prodicus

and, presumably, his reductionist view of religion[59] as ineffective. Instead, they integrate the parasophistic 'teachings' of Peisetairos both into their poetry and their persona: their cosmogonic song coincides with their stepping-forth (parabasis) as a chorus of birds who are suddenly and acutely 'aware' of their genealogical priority over the gods. Peisetairos has been the stimulus in this transformation but it is the comic authority of the ornithogonic poetry that fully establishes this new truth.

The anapestic section differs from other instances of Aristophanic parody in that individual elements borrowed from epic diction and, presumably, Orphic cosmogony are woven together to form a coherent whole that does not clash comically with a surrounding context. Naturally, the ornithogony falls outside the scope of the paratragic category, strictly speaking.[60] The beginning of the parabasis, rather, involves a re-translation by the birds of Peisetairos' silly sophistry into a kind of epic poetry. Comically uniting the functions of divinity and poet the chorus must simultaneously draw upon the traditional language of epic and Orphic cosmogony while claiming to be prior to the created universe. To put it another way: the birds assert their divine priority through a stolen text, a text whose main ideas come from Peisetairos' rhetorical inventions and whose language is taken from an earlier poetry. As poets the birds are subordinate to the tradition and must acknowledge their indebtedness; as gods and muses (v. 724), however, they themselves are the source of the poetry and must not refer to an antecedent discourse. It is the circularity of a stolen text which asserts its originality that lends much comic force to the first forty lines of the parabasis. In their first outburst of pompous condescension the birds re-use Glaukos'

[59]See Hofmann 182.

[60]Rau 175-177, 195-198, who does not include the parabasis in his discussion.

famous simile[61] in which the epic οἵη περ . . . τοίη περ is replaced by προσόμοιοι, a modern word.[62] Like Bellerophon in the same passage, the chorus here is made to deliver signifiers, σήματα λυγρά, whose force they do not fully control and which contradict the ostensible purpose of their actions. The divine status which they assert will, of course, lead to their subordination to the demagogue-Zeus, Peisetairos.

The parabatic poetry supresses its indebtedness to man (Peisetairos) by addressing him condescendingly. In the lines cited above (vv. 685-692) the limitations of the human condition are gathered around the adjective ἀπτῆνες equating 'winglessness' with mortality. A comic interruption of the 'epic' diction, the placement of this word suggests that possession of wings and an exalted, immortal condition are synonymous--a suggestion which is later dramatized when ἐφημέριοι βροτοί flock to partake of the bird life. At the same time, the use of the Homeric gloss ἀμενηνά (sc. κάρηνα *Od* 10.521) the opacity of which Aristophanes had put to good use in the *Daitales*[63] makes one suspect that the birds are not in full control of the language they are using. In fact, if we recall Peisetairos' speech which he introduced with the baking metaphor at v. 462 (προπεφύραται λόγος εἷς μοι), we will see in it the unacknowledged source of the birds' poetry. The divinity of the birds is asserted in vv. 467-469, while their priority to the earth is comically 'proved'

---

[61] *Iliad* 6. 145-149: οἵη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν.

[62] LSJ shows the word first attested in the late fifth century: E. *Ph.* 128, Pl. *Sph.* 267a.

[63] Fr. 222 (Galen *Praef. Lex. Hippocr.*): "The old man from the Banqueter's deme calls upon his depraved son to expound, first, the meaning of the word korumba, and next, 'what do they call ἀμενηνά κάρηνα?' The other, however, replies by propounding this kind of thing from the obsolete words on Solon's pillars about various lawsuits: 'Well, let your son, this brother of mine, explain what they mean by ἰδυῖοι!'" (Norwood's translation)

by an absurd reading of Aesop's tale about the lark who buried her father in her head (vv. 471-475). The role of birds as indicators of seasons is humorously used in vv. 500 f to illustrate how men 'bow' to the kite and 'obey' the cuckoo. Peisetairos suggests the connection with Eros at v. 574 when he notes that Nike and Eros 'fly with gilded wings.' The birds remember their source well when they put forth wings (which they had doubted as respectable at v. 572) as a mark of divinity and even use the same epithet when expanding on Peisetairos' suggestion:

τίκτει πρώτιστον Νὺξ ἡ μελανόπτερος ᾠόν,
ἐξ οὗ περιτελλομέναις ὥραις ἔβλαστεν Ἔρως ὁ ποθεινός,
στίλβων νῶτον πτερύγοιν χρυσαῖν,

First blackwinged Night laid an egg from which
in due revolution of the seasons emerged desirable Eros
his back glistening with golden wings.
(695-697)

Furthermore, the birds' assertion that they are "Ammon, Delphi, Dodona, and Phoebus Apollo" (v. 716) is inspired by Peisetairos' suggestion of how they might substitute common sense for mysticism in augury: the advantage of flight will allow the birds to gather and communicate information concerning a wide variety of subjects such as conditions at sea and location of buried treasure (vv. 592 ff). This is cleverly incorporated into the wordplay in which the secondary meaning of ὄρνις ('oracle,' 'omen') is pushed to the comic limit to produce the nonsense of a 'sneeze bird' and 'donkey bird' (720-721). Finally Peisetairos' somewhat practical attempt at demonstrating the blessings that birds might confer on mankind is transformed into the wholly comic catalog of bird-benefits in the parabasis (vv. 753 f).

The new poetic and authoritative persona of the bird chorus has

arisen, quite obviously, out of Peisetairos' joky rhetoric. The gigantomachic project, however, goes beyond the mere rejection and demotion of the gods: it involves a rejection of the expected vehicle for revisionist theology, i.e. sophistic (rationalizing) discourse. The birds' text, we might say, assumes the disguise of traditional theogonic poetry both in its form and by explicitly denouncing sophistic technique: Προδίκῳ παρ' ἐμοῦ κλάειν εἴπητε τὸ λοιπόν. In fact, the chorus assert that accurate knowledge is contingent on this move: we must reject Prodicus and, presumably, his concept of ὀρθώτης in order to receive accurate knowledge (ὀρθῶς εἰδότες) about all things from the birds. The comic contradiction of having to reject the new learning in order to learn new things about τὰ μετέωρα is amplified in the tetrameters at vv. 753 f:

> Εἰ μετ' ὀρνίθων τις ὑμῶν, ὦ θεαταί, βούλεται
> διαπλέκειν ζῆν ἡδέως τὸ λοιπόν, ὡς ἡμᾶς ἴτω.
>
> If anyone of you, spectators, wishes to sweetly spin
> the rest of his days with the birds, let him come to us!
> (753-754)

The theogonic regression brings us back to--the future, a world where the order of things has been reversed, a conservative's nightmare! Human ἀισχρά become, in the transformation, ornithic καλά. Fatherbeaters, fugitives, and traitors are offered bird-identities that will legitimate their respective 'talents.'

The text of the modern utopia here sheds its archaic mask and, in a familiar second-person parabatic address, violates the boundary between actor and spectator, 'god' and man, as the chorus invite men to share in the text (διαπλέκειν ζῶν)[64] of the divine life. The metaphor of weaving which, as C.

[64]Here again, the metaphor of the *textum* of life, passage, and speech; cf. similar words at lines 4, 682, 772, 942, etc.

Murphy points out,[65] is a paradeigma associated with the power of rhetoric here appropriately introduces a new bird-life conceived in the rhetoric of Peisetairos and incubated in the poetic disguise of the parabasis. The New Birds, upon hatching, appear to have come on a subversive embassy to Athens which they refer to as ἐνθάδε 'here' while Nephelokokuggia is ἐκεῖ 'there' (vv. 757-758): here the self-presentation of the chorus and the customary stepping-forth in the theater conflict to produce the ridiculous situtation in which a flock of impostor-gods speaks directly to the audience outside the action of the play proper. The somber epic condescension of the proem, "Αγε δὴ φύσιν ἄνδρες ἀμαυρόβιοι. . . , is exchanged comically for elemental bodily pleasures as men are encouraged to 'sprout wings' in a move that, we might assume, will cure them of their mortality: Οὐδὲν ἐστ' ἄμεινον οὐδ' ἥδιον ἢ φῦσαι πτερά 'nothing is better nor anything sweeter that to grow wings' (v. 785). The theater is presented as a frustrating constraint which inspires hunger and other lusts. Naturally, it is the wings of comic gods that offer a solution: men will be able to escape the artificial prison of the theater to gratify their need for food, defecation, and sex.

Peisetairos, then, has trained the chorus and provided the birds with a largely rhetorical, or textual, disguise which they wear loosely and from which they maintain a comic distance. After speaking their ornithogony they can return to the earthy level of comic bird-pleasures. Naturally, they never really undergo a physical metamorphosis into divinities. Instead, the simple metaphor "wingedness = divinity" is enforced in order to mark the emerging polis with its citizens and gods as different from all others: the inherently

65"Aristophanes and the Art of Rhetoric," *HSCP* 49 (1938): 93-94. Compare Fr. 638 in which Euripides is called στρεψίμαλλος τὴν τέχνην "with tangled fleece."

winged birds are translated or re-named 'gods' while all those who aspire to inhabit the city will have to be marked by wings. Much of the fun in the airy city, naturally, arises out of the obvious contradiction between the alleged 'newness' of the winged community asserted by the text, on the one hand, and the obvious lack of anything new i.e., repetition of all the old patterns revealed in the action of the play, on the other. The emphasis on the markedness of being winged[66] mocks the deep tribal instinct of every human society and community to identify features, however trivial, that set it apart and give it a differential significance. The mockery involves the paradox that in *Birds* this most human of practices requires a sham metamorphosis out of the human condition!

The birds continue to be the executors of Peisetairos' rhetorical will and presently, in exchange for their new status, they extend to men a μηχανὴ σωτηρίας that involves the audience in a metatheatrical joke: wings. Here the fantasy exploits the ploysemy and arbitrariness of the sign to answer the first large question posed by the play: what have the two men abandoned? what do they seek? Conventionally, comedy supplies the central problem with a concrete means of 'salvation.'[67] Dikaiopolis uses disguise to convince

---

[66]See Komornicka, *Metaphores, Personnifications et Comparaisons* (Breslau, Warsaw, Cracow, 1964) 94: "Le trait particulier--tantôt pris au sens transposé, tantôt au pied de la lettre--et commun aux trois sphères en cause, sont les ailes. Il en est question plus de 120 fois à travers la pièce."

[67]This σωτηρία is synonymous with the Comic Hero's great deed that is the focus of the early comedies, especially. The issue of the central deed and its relation to the comic form is well presented in McLeish 64-78, "The Real World and the Fantasy World." See also J. Bosquet, "Le mur de la Nephelococcygie," *Actes VIIme Congrès Association Budé* (Paris, 1964): 351-354; G. Perotta, "Aristofane," *Maia* 5 (1952): 14 f.; R, Cantarella, "Das Werk des Aristophanes," *Altertum* 3 (1957): 206-210; O. Seel, *Aristophanes* (Stuttgart, 1960); Whitman 7, and 295, N 25.

the Acharanians and to make his separate peace. Strepsiades hopes that training in sophistic techniques will provide him with an escape from debt, Trygaios rides his comic Pegasus on a rescue mission to Olympus etc. *Birds*, as I have argued, is remarkable in that the initial 'problem' itself, the νόσος that motivates the quest, is a structure of suspended sense which is only resolved by the arbitrary metaphor of 'birdhood.' A comic variation on the usual structure of signification in which one sign leads to another, νόσος to μηχανὴ σωτηρίας, the *Birds* generates its sense in reverse, allowing the signifier πτερά to inform the preceding scenes retroactively. The first third of the play can now be read as the quest by two brave men for an unknown, generalized 'salvation' which is allowed to arise, as it were, out of a chance association (Tereus--ἄνθρωπος ὄρνις) and play on words (πόλος-πόλις) to signify prolifically and fill the semantic void in the past and open a wide world of comic meaning in the future.

"Nothing is better," intone the birds, "nor is anything sweeter than to sprout wings!" A variety of predicaments is solved by the gift of flight. The initial and perfunctory complaint about the Athenians' litigiousness has left no trace as the text sets forth a metatheatrical μηχανή. In a general sense the question, 'what do men seek to escape? what necessity constrains them?' is answered simply by 'the theater!'[68] The textual disguise of divinity under which the birds may bestow a gift on mankind gives them the opportunity to problematize the theatrical situation in terms of the dichotomy winged/wingless which was equated above to the immortal/mortal opposition. The theater or, more specifically, a performance of tragedy, is depicted in ascetic, i.e., anti-comic terms: the verbs discussed above (κεινῶν,

[68]For a general discussion of metatheater in relation to Aristophanes see Taaffe 1-22.

χεζητιῶν, and μοιχεύων) in parallel protases describe bodily urges the satisfaction of which is denied to the spectators. The moment at which the chorus of birds address the audience directly in the second person (αὐτις ὑμῶν τῶν θεατῶν . . .) the parabasis becomes a metaphorical embassy in which a group of parvenu deities offer the citizens of Athens a generic benefaction in the form of the winged sign which allows all variety of νόσοι and ἀνάγκαι to be replaced by the theater. Most obviously, birds offer men the promise of progress into a new condition beyond the human; on another level, however, a theatrical and textual construct, the deified bird-god, offers men an escape from the very theatricality that engendered it and a sort of return to pre-political life in which social/theatrical constraints are lifted. In a unique and tricky move comedy takes advantage of the parabatic discourse to pretend to be other than itself and to offer a release from the 'tragic' constraints of theater. Here Aristophanes seems to be extending his experimentation with the genre to involve it in the conceptual fabric of his drama: first we were confronted with a curious absence: underdetermination of a 'problem' to which Peisetairos and Euelpides might be seeking a 'solution.' The supression of explicit references to Athens stood in stark contrast to the explicitly Athenian predicaments of the earlier comedies as the familiar comic structure 'problem–solution' was reversed; next, the parabatic address was usurped by the bird chorus so that the customary forum for the poet was occupied by the joky representatives of comedy, an animal chorus 'steping forth' (presenting itself) in poetic disguise as gods; finally the solution, generated from the very nature of the chorus itself, pretends to see beyond the limitations of its genre to an extra-dramatic bounty of comic blessings.[69]

[69]Compare the 'direct address' at vv. 753 f with the pnigos (especialy 729-734) in which the chorus promise men health, wealth, (long) life, peace, youth,

Thus *Birds* is very much a comedy about comedy, a play in which fun is made by playing with the very conventions of the form.

laughter, choral dances, feasts, and 'bird's milk.' Much in the same way as the latter is a sign without a referent, the sign 'wings' is allowed to fill the gap in signification left by the deferral of the central problem: it points to the gap, simultaneously underscoring the emptiness of the action and suggesting a multiplicity of substitute meanings.

IV

Λέγων Πτερῶ σε: Writing in the Sky

The great rhetorcial display is complete and Nephelokokkugia emerges as the textual creation of the protagonist in which he is author and god. This textum, the σισύρα of v. 121, is worn by a linguistic tyrant who, paradoxically, refuses to stand in a diacritical relation to other gods and, to borrow from Quarrini,[1] reestablishes his city in a pre-olympian past. To prepare for his monotheistic monopoly on the sign he vies for its control in textual competitions with a variety of literary competitors: two poets, an oracle-monger, decree-seller, and sycophant. He then confronts the gods: Iris, Prometheus, and a special embassy. Having first established a semantic vacuum in which Peisetairos and Euelpides wandered from sign to sign, Aristophanes now fills the void *retroactively* in Nephelokokkugia, a world in which there rages the powerful dialectic of the transferrential, 'metaphorcal' signifying process. The comic deconstruction of the 'tenor'/'vehicle' structure is played out by means of actors on either side of the signifier πτερά. Peisetairos' function in this dialectic is that of the author who, by embodying comedy's mockery of the rules and gods of 'serious' discourse, is identified with sophistic technique. In a very real sense, however, he is the ποιητής who writes a text that is aware of its own fictionality: in the agon he singlehandedly trained the chorus of birds who

[1] I owe my awareness of Quarrini's work, which I have not been able to consult myself, to P. Pucci who kindly shared his notes with me. I refer here to the reestablishment by Peisetairos of a pre-olympian (monotheistic) order in Nephelokokkugia which suggests in the latter half of *Birds* aspects of a 'comedy of horrors.'

step forward in the parabasis on behalf of his ideas, wearing the textual disguise of Orphic/Hesiodic comogony. In his confrontation with the rival ἀλαζόνες and the gods he proves to be a master at writing and dramatic competition who controls not only the play's text but its system of costume-signification as well. Aristophanes enstages the large-scale triumph of language released from taboos and restrictions by having Peisetairos, master of the 'black discourse,' celebrate his power in a world restructured by a metaphorical revolution modelled on gigantomachy. He succeeds in locating the seat of this power 'Nowhere' between heaven and earth and forces men and gods to assimilate to a nonsensical comic gap that can only exist in the differential structure of language.

Christening and the Sign of the Wing

In an immediate sense, the birds themselves become the meaning of the comedy. To be a bird is to be marked as a citizen of the new city and to participate in a life both beyond Athens and prior to Athens (a golden age of comic freedom), a life associated with bird deities that are beyond the Olympian gods and, if we can recall what we did not know, prior to them. In accordance with the new direction of the play in which success and escape are marked by the general sign of the wing, the two men must now participate in the bird metaphor. The emergence of Peisetairos and Euelpides in bird-costumes is a supreme moment in comedy and offers yet another example of Aristophanes' delight in concretizing what normally remains only figural. Here the lyric-tragic yearning to escape the human condition on wings becomes a laughable (con)fusion of bird and man in a trans-specific manisfestation of the grotesque aesthetic. It is no accident that the chorus

conclude the antepirrhema by asking if birdhood is not indeed the best of conditions:

> Ἆρ' ὑπόπτερον γενέσθαι παντὸς ἐστιν ἄξιον;
> Ὡς Διειτρέφης γε πυτιναῖα μόνον ἔχων πτερὰ
> ἠρέθη φύλαρχος, εἶθ' ἵππαρχος, εἶτ' ἐξ οὐδενὸς
> μεαγάλα πράττει κἀστὶ ξουθὸς ἱππαλεκτυών.
>
> Isn't wingedness the very greatest of blessings?
> Why, Dieitrephes having only wicker 'wings' was elected captain and then colonel; so that from a mere nobody he has of late been doing marvelously well and is now a regular tawny horse-rooster. (798-800)

Dieitrephes' success as 'captain' (phylarch) and 'colonel' (hipparch) is accounted for by means of a silly association with the 'wings' which, if the Scholiast is right, decorated his wicker flasks. He has done so well, in fact, that from mere hipparch he is promoted punningly to a 'tawny horse-rooster.' This grotesque image, apparently a familiar Aeschylean phrase[2], by involving a man in a loose linguistic association with horse and bird prepares us for the appearance of the metamorphosed men.

The men inspect each other with contempt and Euelpides begins to

---

[2]Σ*Peace* 1177 says that Aeschylus mentions this hybrid naval emblem in his *Myrmidons*. See also *Frogs* 932. Taillardat 26 writes "en étudiant systématiquement les images qui s'appliquent aux vêtements, on s'aperçoit que πτέρυξ, πτερόν <<aile>> se disent du *pan* d'un vêtement, spécialement du pan de la *chlamyde* (Θετταλικὰ πτερά <<les ailes thessaliens>> c'est-à-dire <<la chlamyde>>), que πτεροφόρας, chez Ménandre (*Périk.* 104), désigne un officier <<porteur de chlamyde>>. Il apparaît alors qu'Aristophane appelle ironiquement ξουθὸς ἱππαλεκτρύων <<cheval-coq rutilant>> tout πτεροφόρας, c'est-à-dire tout officier porteur d'une chlamyde rouge (taxiarque, *Paix* 1177; officier de cavalerie, *Ois.* 800, où, précisément les <<ailes>> sont mentionnées).

laugh at his partner. An exchange of invective metaphors follows in which Peisetairos tries to forestall an insult by speaking first:

ΕΥ. Οἶσθ' ᾧ μάλιστ' ἔοικας ἐπτερωμένος
ΠΙ. Εἰς εὐτέλειαν χηνὶ σύ γε γεγραμμένῳ.

EU. You know what you look like in feathered form?
PI. No, but *you* resemble an ill-scribed goose ('a cheap sketch')! (804-804)

The metatheatrics extend here to a comment on comic costume and technique: Peisetairos likens the failure of his friend's 'ornithization' to the difference inherent in 'bad' writing. Here the fabric of drama is thin and its textuality is exposed as the power of the sign πτερά is called into question. The text, at least, boldly transforms Euelpides into a bird while Peisetairos uses the very process of writing to mock and deny the transformation. We can laugh both with pleasure at the comic solution in which wings are a general μηψανὴ σωτηρίας and with pleasure at its impossibility. Euelpides' retort is a simple low-brow insult which Peisetairos answers by involving the culprit signifier πτερα in a further (inter)textual play:

Ταυτὶ μὲν ἠκάσμεσθα κατὰ τὸν Αἰσχύλον
‹‹Τάδ' οὐχ ὑπ' ἄλλων, ἀλλὰ τοῖς αὑτῶν πτεροῖς.››

So now, we're like the Aeschylean line, "This comes upon us not from without, but from our own feathers." 807-808

Although this exclamation of an eagle shot by an arrow fitted with his own plumage was proverbial in antiquity,[3] the text here is from Aeschylus'

[3]Rogers ad. loc. refers us to the compilation of Classical instances of this

Myrmidons cut short before the critical word ἁλισκόμεθα. Figurality and intertextuality undergo comic distortion as an expression which is simultaneously a quotation as well as common metaphorical currency is dragged in merely on the strength of its literal meaning involving 'feathers' leaving the act of quotation quite pointless. In contrast to paratragic practice, the text here identifies the borrowing, pointing to the Aeschylean origin of the line and falsely promising that such a gesture will enrich the given text. The result is a piece of delightful nonsense: the proverb τοῖς ἐμοῖς ἁλίσκομαι πτεροῖς involves recognition of a sign-of-self, a token that forces one to recognize a crisis as involutarily marked by one's own signature. In the *Myrmidons* it is Achilles who laments his friend's death and recognizes his own participation in it. Peisetairos, however, cannot claim to recognize anything old in a new situation and the πτερά are only obliquely 'signs-of-self.' The reference to Aeschylus, therefore, is a meaningless gesture and a mockery of the quotation process. The metaphoricity of the proverb is reversed so that the only meaning remaining is the obvious one: "our new feathers make us look ridiculous."

Interestingly, the chorus behave as if the entire exchange between Peisetairos and Euelpides did not occur. The notion of being ensnared by one's own feathers can, naturally, only apply to a real or metaphorical bird and, as we have seen, the proverb was comically displaced in the playful quotation above. *Birds*, however, is very much concerned with the subversion of otherness and the sign of the wing is actively involved in

---

Aesopic proverb by Porson and others and extends the list into late antiquity, citing even Christian texts. The Aeschylean fragment (139, Nauck) is spoken by Achilles, as Kock explains, "in bitterm Schmerz . . . im Anblick seines von ihm selber in den Tod geschickten Freundes."

getting the 'real' birds hopelessly tangled up in the net of human cunning and discourse: birdhood is recognized as a venerable other only to be immediately appropriated by ambitious men. Accordingly, the notion of entrapment is soon expressed in the text by a not-so-subtle pun discussed above[4], namely, the polysemous compound 'Nephelokokkugia.'

We are now making a transtition to a new world marked by the sign πτερά which allegedly permits men to participate in the ornithic beyond. Fundamental to the establishment of a new polis is the act of naming, the invention of a name which, like all inventions, will fuse the old (morphemes) into the new (sign). The clumsy compound invented by Peisetairos, however, offers even more than promised and looks back to the beginning of the play to pick up additional significance. When the chorus ask what to name the new city, the protagonist offers a poor interpretation of otherness and suggests 'Sparta.' While the political opposite of Athens, 'Sparta' cannot represent the given comic innovation and Euelpides, characteristically, drags the matter down to the level of concrete absurdity:

Ἡράκλεις·
σπάρτην γὰρ ἂν θείμην ἐγὼ τὴμῇ πόλει;
Οὐδ' ἂν χαμεύνῃ πάνυ γε κειρίαν γ' ἔχων.

Herakles! *Me* apply a 'sparta' (cord) to *my* city? I wouldn't even tie one on my cot as long as I had a length of rope!
814-816.

The similarity between the name of the famous city-state and the word σπαρτόν (σπεῖρα), 'cable,' 'cord,' allows him to vehemently state that he would not even apply a 'sparta' to his bed in the capacity of a girth. He prepares his friend for the famous coinage by suggesting that the name be

[4]Chapter 1, p. 8.

taken "from the clouds and upper spheres, something very χαῦνον:"

Ἐντευθενὶ
ἐκ τῶν νεφελῶν καὶ τῶν μετεώρων χωρίων
χαῦνόν τι πάνυ.

Well, try something from the clouds and upper spaces,
something quite vacuous/porous ('spacey').
817-819.

The adjective χαῦνον (from χαίνω) itself has several meanings that Peisetairos nicely inscribes into the new name. Etymologically it can pick up the root meaning of the verb to mean 'gaping, of vast extension,' as the present instance is glossed in the lexicon.[5] The more immediate and relevant meaning participates in the secondary notion of χαίνω associated with lightness, frivolity, and . . . birds (cf. χήν), namely, that of 'porousness' and 'emptiness' as well as that of 'stupid gaping' which Peisetairos noted as a particularly revealing and damaging bird-trait in the opening of the play.[6] This association allows the act of naming to participate in the wonderful polysemy of the key word χαίνω / χάσκω where speech,[7] stupidity, and the

[5]LSJ, χαῦνος II.2. This gloss is weak in that the occurrence at *Birds* 819 is the only instance attested for the 'root' meaning in which χαῦνον picks up the primary notion of χαίνω.

[6]Cf. vv. 20, 51, 61, 165, 308, etc.

[7]for χάσκω in the sense of 'utter' see *Wasps* 342, Sophocles *Ajax* 1227. Arrowsmith, with a little help from C. J. Herrington, points out the goose-connection χήν~χαίνω~χάος: "The culmination of all these equations of the Birds with chaos-creatures occurs when Pisthetairos and Euelpides make their first appearace with wings. Pisthetairos, in a splendid pun on the word χήν (goose: cp. κέχηνα pf. of χάσκω to gape) describes Euelpides as the

origin of the universe in χάος[8] are compressed into a verb denoting the commonest gesture of a bird's beak. The politics of Nephelokokkugia become clearer if we recall some earlier comic formations in which the characteristic bird-verb is incorporated into a criticism of the Athenian body politic. In the parabasis of the *Acharnians*, Aristophanes speaks in a voice of sobriety and edification and implies that his influence will be an essential safeguard for his compatriots against the deceitful power of rhetoric:

φησὶν δ' εἶναι πολλῶν ἀγαθῶν ἄξιος ὑμῖν ὁ ποιητής.
παύσας ὑμᾶς ξενικοῖσι λόγοις μὴ λίαν ἐξαπατᾶσθαι,
μήθ' ἥδεσθαι θωπευομένους, μήτ' εἶναι χαυνοπολίτας.
πρότερον δ' ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῶν πολέων οἱ πρέσβεις ἐξαπατῶντες
πρῶτον μὲν ἰοστεφάνους ἐκάλουν· κἀπειδὴ τοῦτό τις εἴποι,
εὐθὺς διὰ τοὺς στεφάνους ἐπ' ἄκρων τῶν πυγιδίων ἐκάθησθε.

The poet insists that he has repeatedly proved your benefactor
having prevented you from being fooled too much by foreign
rhetoric or seduced by sweet flattery or being general citizens of Vacuum.
At first, ambassadors would come from abroad to trick you with the 'violet-crowned' number, for these 'crowns' never fail to set an Athenian rump on the edge of its seat.
(*Acharnians* 633-638)

The poet's own craft is presented as an antidote to the dangerous, flattering rhetoric of men from other city-states. Submission to, and entrapment by this rhetoric is marked by the bird-metaphor of χαυνοπολίτας

consummate chaotic "sucker"--a silly cackling goose. The Birds are, in short--like Pisthetairos and Euelpides (and mortals generally)--hybrids, mixed breeds, *beasts* [cf. 67, 97 ff.] who soar; aspiring suckers. Because Love and Chaos are the oldest of powers, the sovereignty of the world belongs to them by right of primogeniture."

[8]We are reminded of the mingling of Eros and Chaos in 'wide Tartarus' that produced the race of birds (lines 698-699).

(derived from χαίνω / χάσκω) in which Athenians are on the passive end of a gaping mouth and, like silly birds, ready to swallow anything.[9] This danger is woven into the sausage-seller's flattering comment to Demos in the *Knights*:

> καὶ μὴν ἐγώ σ' ὦ Δῆμε θεραπεύσω καλῶς,
> ὥσθ' ὁμολογεῖν σε μηδέν' ἀνθρώπων ἐμοῦ
> ἰδεῖν ἀμείνω τῇ Κεχηναίων πόλει.
>
> I'll be a good servant to you Demos;
> you'll be the first to admit that you have not
> seen a better man than me in the entire Vacuumian city.
> (*Knights* 1261-1263)

Here the unexpected comic formation involves a subtle insult in that the *senex stupidus* Demos is flattered with the assurance that he will be served by the very best citizen in the state of 'gapers.' The implication of χαίνω/ χάσκω throughout the early plays is that fundamental to the structure of at least the Athenian state is a society of 'birds' who are ready chatterers and even readier with open mouths to swallow any rhetorical morsel handed them by flattering demagogues. Blind to their own ensnarement, they allow themselves to be thoroughly and constantly persuaded in a way that shapes their city's destiny. The city of birds that is about to receive a name is, therefore, an iconic repetition, in terms of the favorite Aritsophanic device of concretized metaphor, of this gaping society and its folly.

Thus when Euelpides suggests that the notion χαῦνο- be included in the name, Peisetairos fastens on the idea and exploits the word νεφέλη for the task. It is as if Euelpides had said "be sure to express in the name the contradictory notions of exaltation and stupidity, utterance and

[9]Taillardat 264.

gullibility, subtlety and blind folly." The result is the emblematic Νεφελοκοκκυγία in which the representatively stupid κόκκυξ or 'booby'[10] is put in a νεφέλη which, along with the meaning 'cloud', commonly denotes a fine bird-trap made of some subtle fabric (such as gauze) as well as having a broad application in the area of deception and disguise.[11] However, unlike the phrase of Plato Comicus (Fr. 64) ἀβελτεροκόκκυξ ἠλίθιος, the bird-city's name involves concretization since 'real' birds are expected to inhabit this island-in-the-sky. Perhaps the partial homophony with Ogygia[12] is intended to emphasize the notions of isolation and captivity which characterize the sham utopia. The inhabitants of 'Cloudcuckooland' or 'Ethereal Boobytrap', whether birds or men, will be assimilated to the cuckoo's silliness in the latter part of the play where the process of populating the new city is enacted.[13] Peisetairos, on the other hand, now has the power to do both

---

[10]Taillardat 256: "A cause de son cri, le *coucou* est tenu pour un oiseau stupide; cf. Phrynich. Soph. 48, 12 *Borries*: κόκκυγα λέγουσι τὸν κενὸν καὶ κοῦφον.

[11]Note a similar exploitation of the two meanings at v. 194 where Tereus exclaims μὰ γῆν, μὰ παγίδας, μὰ νεφέλας, μὰ δίκτυα. Here the meaning 'clouds' creates a chiastic pattern 'earth, traps, clouds, nets' while the meaning 'trap' places the last three words in a parallel sequence that creates a nonesensical anticlimax to the first element of the oath. For a discussion of nefelh in the capacity of deception and disguise see C. Segal "Aristophanes' Cloud-Chorus," *Arethusa* (2), 1969: 143-161 and Hubbard <forthcoming>. Kock: 120 has collected a number of refernces in this connection as well.

[12]*Odyssey* 1.85 etc.

[13]P. Pucci is surely correct when he suggests that the name of the city is also bound up with the deceptive coupling of Ixion with Hera's double, called νεφέλη, to produce the first Centaur. The ὕβρις of Ixion is directly relevant to Peisetairos' marriage to Basileia. Alcman 1 is a famous text on this ultimate ὕβρις. See Newiger 1983: 55.

things the famous lines of Alcman 1 prohibit as the ultimate outrage: to fly into the heavens and to marry a goddess: μή τις ἀνθρώπων ἐς ὠρανὸν ποτήσθω μηδὲ πηρήτω γαμῆν τὰν 'Αφροδίταν.

Textual Rivalry: Contests in 'Αλαζονεία

The chorus is delighted at the invention while Euelpides sarcastically suggests that they have finally identified the locus of Aeschines' and Theogenes' fictitious wealth (vv. 821-823), continuing the idea that the city is something χαῦνον. Instead of objecting, Peisetairos says:

> Καὶ λῷστον μὲν οὖν
> τὸ Φλέγρας πεδίον, ἵν' οἱ θεοὶ τοὺς γηγενεῖς
> ἀλαζονευόμενοι καθυπερηκόντισαν.
>
> But best of all is the the plain of Phlegra where the gods outshot the earth-born Giants in insolence. (823-825)

The implication here is two-fold: first, Peisetairos supports the flattering theme of gigantomachy (explicitly referred to at v. 553);[14] second, he undermines this flattery by suggesting that the project is an even better manifestation of frivolity, i.e. that surpassing its potential to house the imaginary wealth of braggarts, Nephelokokkugia is even more ludicrous as a rival Olympus and headquarters of theomachy. A striking feature of this last comment is that he presents the Gigantomachy as a contest of αλαζονεία in which the Olympians' victory consisted in merely "outshooting the

[14]An authoritative treatment of this subject is F. Vian, *La guerre des géeants. Le mythe avant l'époque Hellénistique.* Etudes et Commentaires 11 (Paris, 1952). Hofmann extends research on the subject with a special trelevance to *Birds.*

Earthborn Ones in making false, boasting pretensions." This makes the ancient power-struggle an essentially rhetorical contest in which the Olympians were better at sophistic technique.[15] Furthermore, the door is now open for Peisetairos and his rhetorical constructs (bird-gods) to particiapte in a renewed gigantomachy since the only requirement for success is superiority in being a 'desperate impostor.' Here we touch upon a central point that is relevant to the latter portion of the *Birds*, namely, that the Nephelokokkugia project is a large-scale exercise in ἀλζονεία, and, as such, stands in a absurdly contradictory relation to subsequent impostors such as the poet, oracle monger, and Meton. "The irony of the comic hero," writes Whitman,[16] "from one point of view, is merely a means to a greater and more inclusive *alazoneia*, impostorship; so that one might say that there is no real *eiron*, but only a variety of *alazones*, and the biggest fraud wins, on the theory that if the fraud be carried far enough, into the limitless, it becomes a template of a higher truth."

The comic spectacle of Nephelokokkugia, then, is the world recast into a complex network of frauds from which we expect some higher truth to emerge. Of the several layers of ἀλαζονεία the highest remains, of course, the achievement of Peisetairos who, accordingly, is crowned supreme authority and 'New Zeus.' The 'template of higher truth' in this comedy is the establishement of a superior and authoritative ἀλαζονεία over all others. At this point, however, it cannot be regarded properly as 'impostorship' and passes into an autonomous'truth.'

The inauguration of Nephelokokkugia begins with another comic

---

[15]For the verb ἀλαζονεύομαι as a characterization of sophistic practice see Xen. *Mem.* 1.7.5 f.

[16]Whitman 27.

denial of Athens when Peisetairos rejects Athena as the πολιοῦχος θεός in a sexist joke designed to poke fun once again at Kleisthenes' effeminacy. In a clever turn of phrase he represents his city of origin as one in which the signs of male and female are reversed, hinting at a general disruption of order:

> Καὶ πῶς ἂν ἔτι γενοιτ' ἂν εὔτακτος πόλις
> ὅπου θεὸς γυνὴ γεννῦα πανοπλίαν
> ἔστηκ' ἔχουσα, Κλεισθένης δὲ κερκίδα;
>
> And how's it ever going to be a well-ordered city
> if a *female* goddess stands in panoply while
> Kleisthenes plays with his spindle?
> (829-831)

Naturally, Athens itself is not named but Peisetairos is able to imply, without using the name, that the source of his quest, Athens-under-erasure, is a perversion of meaning which he rejects and will correct. The αλαζονεία of rhetoric which he had implied was at the heart of policy and power manifests itself in full force as the absurd metaphor-made-fact[17] of Nephelokokkugia (πόλος/πόλις) is presented as εὔτακτος 'well-ordered.' Having restored order by nominating 'Persian scion of Ares' as patron deity, Peisetairos now severs his last ties with the past and dismisses Euelpides, effectively forcing him to dissolve in the anonymous ranks of birds assigned to construction tasks. Their final exchange is characteristically farcical as Peisetairos wishes his friend a hearty fall from a ladder (v. 840) while Euelpides responds in kind (οἴμωζε v. 846). Their association ends with a significant assurance on the part

[17]This calls to mind Whitman's general thesis that "the main theme of Birds, [is] the power of language to mould fact." (Whitman 97) He elsewhere describes the comic hero's main talent as πονηρία, especially in the manipulation of words, i.e., the "ability to turn metaphors into facts" (Whitman 79).

of Peisetairos:

> "Ιθ', ὦγαθ'. οἶ πέμπω σ' ἐγώ.
> Οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄνευ σοῦ τῶν' ἃ λέγω πεπράξεται.
>
> Go, my good man, where I'm sending you to and know that
> none of these things I speak will be accomplished without you;
> (846-847)

With these words the protagonist turns to his sacrificial duties, an act that retraces the circular logic of the play: he will sacrifice to the new-gods on behalf of the bird-citizens of the new city despite the absurdity of the fact that the two are identical! Circularity, as we have seen, is a comic refraction of the world's 'normal' aspiration to linearity and directedness. The Birds, in particular, involves numerous 'circles' the most obvious being the escape from Athens only to re-establish 'Athens,' in a progression from suspended sense to delightful non-sense in which men appear to escape themselves only to fully reassert themselves once again.

There follows the colorful series of puns in which bird-names are deified by attraction. This passage (vv. 864-881) is a playful catalog in imitation of a prayer intended to omit no deity of importance. Leto becomes the quail-mother ('Ορτύγια~ὄρτυξ, vv. 872-873), Artemis becomes a finch (the epithet Κολαινίς becomes 'Ακαλανθίς, v. 874), Sabazios a chaffinch etc. This linguistic assertion of the birds' new divine status comes to an abrupt end when the prayer erupts in a potentially endless flurry of bird-names. Peisetairos angrily interrupts the priest with the perfectly inappropriate παῦ ἐς κόρακας (v. 889) and sends him packing, essentially beating him off the stage as the first failed intruder:

> "Απελθ' ἀφ' ἡμῶν καὶ σὺ καὶ τὰ στέμματα

ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτὸς τουογὶ θύσω μόνος.

Go away, you and you fillets!
I'll perform this sacrifice here myself.
(893-894)

He is now the sole officiator, a priest who is soon to celebrate his own apotheosis. For now, however he is content to represent the birds as unstable intermediates in this game of divine musical chairs. The usurpation of the priestly role is dramatically useful as it allows Peisetairos to exhibit his role as leading ἀλαζών who must discourage or evict any lesser competitors. No sooner does he utter his first line of invocation to the 'feathered gods' than the poet arrives (v. 904).

The poet surprises Peisetairos by claiming to have already composed poetry about Nephelokokkugia. Peisetairos' πονηρία, to quote Whitman again,[18] is largely "the ability to turn metaphor into fact," a skill which reflects the craft of the comic poet. The power of rhetoric in comedy which has sometimes even been called 'dangerous' [19] is an imporant weapon in the arsenal of the protagonist--the instantiation on stage of the creative power of the playwright who has his leading character act out, as it were, the comic poetic process.[20] Now, an important moment in the design

[18]Whitman 79.

[19]MacMathúna 242 implies that Aristophanes, while sympathizing with physical tricks of farce, was wary of the dangers of rhetorical δόλοι: "Thus trickery in Aristophanes is part of the struggle in his writing between the old and the new. Here as elsewhere, while his heart is with the old and its simple [i.e. physical] deceits, he himself both exploits and tries to escape from the modern [i.e. rhetorical decieits]. In this area lies the central contradiction in Aristophanes's writing."

[20]See, in this connection, F. Muecke "Playing within the Play: Thatrical Self-

of the ethereal city was that it arose spontaneously out of a series of verbal tricks and puns the climax of which was the cosmogonic poetry of the parabasis and the 'christening' (naming). Nephelokokkugia, in other words, was conceived, named, and supplied with a text well before it ever existed. So far it has been a signifier without a referent, a text *conscious of its own fictionality*. This self-consiousness is nowhere better expressed than in Peisetairsos' bewilderment at the verses the poet claims to have composed in the city's honor:

ΠΙ. Ταυτὶ σὺ πότ' ἐποίησας; Ἀπὸ πόσου χρόνου
ΠΟ. Πάλαι, πάλαι δὴ τήνδ' ἐγὼ κλῄζω πόλιν.
ΠΙ. Οὐκ ἄρτι θύω τὴν δεκάτην ταύτης ἐγώ;
καὶ τοῦνομ' ὥσπερ παιδίῳ νυνδὴ 'θέμην;

PE. *When* did you do this? How've you had any time?
PO. For a long, long time now I sing the city's praises.
PE. Sure, but aren't I just sacrificing the tenth (day) now?
I've just named it like a new-born baby, haven't I?
(920-923)[21]

The text of the poet who could not have participated in the verbal πονηρία that engendered the comic construct pretends to be ignorant of the city's fictionality and, consequently, claims to have a tradition (πάλαι) in which it could treat 'Nephelokokkugia' as an established referent. This comes as a shock to Peisetairos who is aware of only just having named his creation, in his metaphor, 'like a new-born baby.' The startling claim of the poet that he

consiousness in Aristophanes." *Antichthon* 11 (1977): 64-67.

[21]P. Pucci brings to my attention the tricky pun intended here with the word πάλαι which can mean 'for (a) long (time),' 'long ago' *as well as* 'just now.' This makes the exchange equivocal on both sides. For example, the newcomer-poet's words may mean 'I just made these verses up,' which renders Peisetairos indignation ridiculous and yet sensible if *he* understands the word in the more predictable context as 'for a long time now.'

can provide the city with a text, that he has long possessed such a text is in a more intimate and profound competetion with the ἀλαζονεία of Peisetairos than the intrusion of other buffoons such as Meton or the Inspector. Rather than react violently, however, Peisetairos treats the poet with a curious clemency as if recognizing spiritual kin in this pale dithyrhambic reflection of his own 'poetic' and rhetorical role. He eventually gives a cloak to the poet whose clothes he punningly described by repeating the Homeric word ὀτρηρός (v. 915) in his poetry as if only half-understanding it and thinking it to mean 'full of holes,' perhaps in oblique reference to some word such as τετρημένος.

The poet, however, is quite a master of the text in his own right. He is able to answer Peisetairos' challenge by producing poetic 'evidence' of his Muses' speed:

> 'Αλλά τις ὠκεῖα Μουσάων φάτις
> οἷαπερ ἵππων ἀμαρυγά.
>
> Ah, but a rumor of the Muses, swift
> as the glancing flicker of horses. . .
> (924-925)

Here the newcomer exploits the markedness of his own poetic diction where mere utterance substitutes for reference. The result is a playful and tricky exchange in which Peisetairos addresses the poet in an unadorned, conversational style asking direct questions whose logic corresponds to that style, while the poet answers in his poetic style with the implication that the performance of a distantly relevant text is sufficiently informed by a 'poetic' logic. Thus in answer to the question "how could you have been writing

poetry for a long time about a city that is just now coming into existence?" the poet is able to get away with a few verses about the "swift rumor of the Muses" employing the technique of simple association which we have seen in many an Aristophanic pun. The remainder of the strophe is Pindaric[22] and connects Peisetairos with Hieron in a bit of clumsy flattery:

Σὺ δὲ πάτερ, κτίστωρ Αἴτνας
ζαθέων ἱερῶν ὁμόνυμε,
δὸς ἐμὶν ὅ τι περ
τεᾷ κεφαλᾷ θέλεις
πρόφρων δόμεν ἐμὶν τεῶν

But you Father, Aetna's Founder
Whose name is that of holiness
Give to me what thy bounty chooses
To give me willingly of thine.
(926-130)

To begin with, the flattery is second-hand since the Pindaric fragment itself is a flattering exaggeration.[23] Most obviously the poet is true to his epinician pretensions and seeks to flatter his 'hero.' A remarkable feature of the borrowed text, however, is that it is not altered to fit the situation, i.e. the reference to Aetna deprives the strophe of any relevance save that of general flattery with, perhaps, a hint at the sham nature of Peisetairos' colonization

[22]OCT Fr. 94, Schroder Fr. 105

[23]"The appellation Κτίστωρ Αἴτνας is a piece of delicate flattery on the part of Pindar, for Hiero, anxious to obtain the fame and honours of a Founder, re-colonized Catana, and changing its name to Aetna, proclaimed himself its Founder (Scholiast at the beginning of the Nemean 1). And when he won the chariot race in Pythian games (474), he caused the prize to be awarded to him not as Ἱέρωνι Συρακοσίῳ, but as Ἱέρωνι Αἰτναίῳ." Rogers ad. loc.

(inasmuch as Hiero did not 'build' Aetna). Similarly, Pindar's own wordaplay 'Ιέρων=ἱερῶν is, of course spoiled as the signs slip out of the poet's control. The reduction to nonsense in this ill-grafted and spoiled pun is continued in the final lines by the silly repetition of pronouns parodic of dithyrhambic excess.[24]

More sophisticated, however, is the manipulative return to the same Pindaric text a few lines later in the poet's reaction to the next statement, i.e. when Peisetairos says: "But it appears that this man will not depart from here." While the first Pindaric borrowing was a clumsy graft, the given answer makes a parodic substitution concluding the fractured fragment, in fact, with its first lines:[25]

> Νομάδεσσι γὰρ ἐν Σκύθαις ἀλᾶται στρατῶν
> ὅς ὑφαντοδόνητον ἔσθος οὐ πέπαται.
> 'Ακλεὴς δ' ἔβα σπολὰς ἄνευ χιτῶνος.
> Ξύνες ὅ τοι λέγω.
>
> Amid nomad Scythians, far-wandering from any
> army is he who lacks . . . a spindle-spun garment.
> Hollow is the repute of . . . a leather jerkin without a tunic.
> Harken to my meaning!
> (941-945)

In an act of textual ἀλαζονεία the newcomer substitutes a personal request (he wants an ὑφαντοδόνητον ἔσθος) for the turgid Pindaric phrase ἀμαξοφόρητον οἶκος, converting the original conclusion into a line requesting

[24]Cf. the Scholiast's comment "he is mocking the Doricism of the dithyrhambists in such poems, especially Pindar who, in entreaties, unceasingly repeats emin."

[25]The Pindaric fragment (94) is thus given in Bowra's OCT: Σύνες ὅ τοι λέγω,/ζαθέων ἱερῶν ὀμώνυμε/πάτερ, κτίστωρ "Αιτνας /νομάδεσσι γὰρ ἐν Σκύθαις ἀλᾶται στρατῶν/ὃς ἁμαξοφόρητον οἶκον οὐ πέπαται/ἀκλεὴς δ' ἔβα . . .

that the first gift (σπολάς) be followed by another (χιτών). By forcing his own words to intrude into the text, the poet transforms the transitive epinikion into a text of self-referential greed. Such a transformation is, of course, common in parody since the parodic process is one of semantic appropriation and manipulation. Nevertheless, the Pindaric exercise succeeds: though the newcomer reveals his motives he nevertheless reasserts his affinity with Peisetairos. Instead of having an interest in contributing to the city, he uses the veneer of such a contribution to disguise his self-seeking and greed. The final line, apparently a familiar Pindaric quote in antiquity,[26] may serve as an emblem of parody in that it has a 'legitimate' textual origin and yet serves simultaneously to point to the parodic meaning in which it participates. That is, the words presumably follow in their correct 'Pindaric' order while at the same time pointing to the greedy poet's manipulation for his own purposes: "understand my function, what I am saying" warns the text. Peisetairos recognizes the δόλος and sympathetically dismisses the poet having granted his wish:

> Ξυνίημ' ὅτι βούλει τὸν χιτωνίσκον λαβεῖν.
> Ἀπόδυθι· δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ποιητὴν ὠφελεῖν.
> Ἄπελθε τουτονὶ λαβών.
>
> I *harken*, sure enough, to the fact that you want a tunic!
> Hey, you! Take that off: we must help the poet.
> Now take it a be off!
> (946-948)

---

[26]"Compare the use of these same words by Plato, *Phaedrus* chap. xii. (236 D); *Meno* chap. ix. (76 D), Schneider quotes from Greg. Naz. Epist. II. (vol. i. p. 678) σύνες ὅ τι λέγω, φησι Πίνδαρος." Rogers ad. loc.

Thus resolves the genial collision of two ἀλαζόνες where there is only room for one. The newcomer indirectly confirms the soundness of Peisetairos' decision to dismiss him by producing one last string of poetic gibberish in which four irrelevant adjectives (τρομεράν 'quaky,' κρυεράν 'shivery,' νιφόβολα 'snow-whipped,' πολύπορα 'multi-passaged') are applied to Nephelokokkugia in pompous praise. The point of this apparent nonsense is an effort by the poet to underline his need for the cloak, i.e. it is he who is 'cold' and 'shivering.' He is predictably self-serving in his conversion of transitive praise into a self-referential text of petition.

The skill and efficiency of the rival ἀλαζών somewhat disturb Peisetairos who comments at the end of the episode that he never expected such a nuisance:

> Τουτὶ μὰ Δί' ἐγὼ τὸ κακὸν οὐδέποτ' ἤλπισα,
> οὕτω ταχέως τοῦτον πεπύσθαι τὴν πόλιν.
>
> I must admit, I never expected such a nuissance,
> I mean, this fellow finding out so soon about the city!
> (956-957)

Although Nephelokokkugia's generation *ex nihilo* has been challenged and the poetry promised by the newcomer threatened the city's fictionality Peisetairos is now prepared for another self-serving peddler of texts, the Chresmologos, or oracle monger. First, however, he seeks to conclude the sacrifice in peace.

The second intruder into is only a poor runner-up in the contest of textual trickery. His inadequacy in ἀλαζονεία is revealed in structural terms: the presentation of an oracular text for the city is the exact opposite of the dithyrhambist's poetry. The oracle-monger must, of necessity, possess a text

in advance of the city's colonization while the poet can only praise something that already exists. The comicality of the first episode rested, in part, on the fact that Nephelokokkugia had just been founded when the poet arrived claiming to have composed hymns of praise in its honor 'long ago.' This bewildering efficiency was part of the successful trickery that earned him some new clothing. The oracle-monger's texts are similarly out of chronological context with the important distinction that this circumstance is discrediting and inspires Peisetairos to challenge and defeat him at his own game.

When Peisetairos asks the newcomer why he did not present his oracles *before* the city was founded he is told that Τὸ θεῖον ἐνεπόδιζέ με (v. 965). This is, of course, a lame excuse for a lame profession whose representative, like Hierocles in *Peace*, only collected 'used' texts in the hopes of earning some money by making them re-signify. Aristophanes is having fun here with what is essentailly a *bad* comedian, i.e., someone who steals and re-uses texts in a clumsy and obtrusive manner. The first oracle is revealing:

> Ἀλλ' ὅταν οἰκήσωσι λύκοι πολιαί τε κορῶναι
> ἐν ταὐτῷ τὸ μεταξὺ Κορίνθου καὶ Σικυῶνος,--
>
> But when wolves and hoary crows settle
> into the same haunt 'twixt Corinth and Sicyon . . .
> (967-968)

The only point of this dark saying is to use the proverbial expression 'twixt Corinth and Sicyon' which, as Kock notes, was proverbial for Nowhere.[27]

[27]There is much evidence that the phrase was so used, the most often cited being that of Aesop: "Das selbe gilt ja von der absichtlich irre fuhrenden 'asopischen' Antwort b Ath V 219a auf die Frage eines frommen Beters, 'Lieber Gott, wie konnt ich wohl reich werden?' εἰ τὸ μέσον κτήσαιο Κορίνθου

Here Aristophanes allows the text to signify differently to several audiences simultaneously since the obvious force of the 'prophecy' for the outside spectator is to mock Peisetairos' project as being the establishment of a fabulous Nowhere; The oracle-monger, on the other hand, seems to have no interest in mocking the city and is simply peddling his wares, if somewhat foolishly; Peisetairos, however, misunderstands altogether and hears only the word 'Corinth' and objects to the whole idea. Following the nonsensical interpretation of his own nonsense that "Bakis is thus riddling in the direction of the air" (line 970) the oracle-monger prepares to ask for gifts by ordering Peisetairos to sacrifice to 'Pandora.' The requests for gifts (a himation, sandals, and food) follow, of course, and Peisetairos decides to resist the impostor by improvising superior nonsense:

> Οὐδὲν ἄρ' ὅμοίος ἐσθ' ὁ χρησμὸς τουτφί,
> ὃν ἐγὼ παρὰ τἀπόλλωνος ἐξεγραψάμην·
> Αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν ἄκλητος ἰὼν ἄνθρωπος ἁλαζὼν
> λυπῇ θύοντας καὶ σπλαγχνεύειν ἐπιθυμῇ,
> δὴ τότε χρὴ τύπτειν αὐτὸν πλευρῶν τὸ μεταξύ--
>
> That oracle's nothing like the one I wrote as Apollo dictated!
> "But when an insolent intruder comes unbidden, disrupting
> the sacrifice but eager to taste the (sacrificial) meal, then
> is the appropriate time to smite him 'twixt his ribs.'
> (981-985)

Peisetairos invents an act of re-writing (ἐξεγραψάμην). By presenting the sham oracle he competes with the intruder while inscribing some of the oracle-monger's text into his own rejection of that text (especially the last phrase which reinterprets the proverb about the space 'twixt Corinth and

---

καὶ Σικυῶνος." Kock ad loc.

Sicyon) and promptly dismisses this ἀλαζών and failed competitor at writing.

While the first two visitors have attempted a textual trickery to gain their end, the third guest has broader intellectual pretensions and disguises himself in sophistic jargon the opacity of which he hopes will liberate him from having to make any sense. His own description of his project tells it all:

> Γεωμετρῆαι βούλομαι τὸν ἀέρα
> ὑμῖν διελεῖν τε κατὰ γὺας.
>
> I intend to geometrize (earth-measure) the ether
> and divide it for you into parcels.
> (995-996)

The grotesque semantics of 'earth-measuring the air' prepare us well for the confusing sequence in which Meton writes the city plan (vv. 1000-1009) at the heart of which is yet another paradigm of impossibility, the squared circle (ὁ κύκλος γένηταί σοι τετράγωνος "the circle will be squared for you' v. 1005). Once again, Peisetairos dismisses a potential rival who seems rather good at promoting himself by means of nonsense. He tells Meton, as he told the oracle-monger, that there is no room for other ἀλαζόνες in the city:

> 'Ομοθυμαδὸν
> σποδεῖν ἅπαντας τοὺς ἀλαζόνας δοκεῖ.
>
> It has been unanimously decreed to
> wipe out all insolent intruders.
> (1015-1016)

Peisetairos' final injunction to Meton is a fine mockery of the self-referential and self-serving strategy of ἀλαζονεία: he uses the 'learned' man's jargon to tell him to 're-measure (retrace his steps) himself to another place' (v. 1020):

οὐκ ἀναμετρήσει σαυτὸν ἀπιὼν ἀλλαχῆ;

The last two visitors that arrive before the second parabasis are somewhat weaker attempts at ἀλαζονεία. The first of these is a Commissioner who claims to have textual support in his assignment to superintend and organize the new colony: to Peisetairos' question about who sent him he replies φαῦλον βιβλίον Τελέου τι (v. 1024). He is quickly sent away with a 'reward' that consists of blows. The last visitor seeks to provide legal texts for Nephelokokkugia and makes his entrance in mid-sentence: ἐὰνδ' ὁ Νεφελοκοκκυγιεὺς τὸν 'Αθηναῖον ἀδικῇ-- 'And if a Nephelokokkygian should offend an Athenian . . . ' (v. 1034). This strategy sets up a fictitious context that pretends to belong to a more extensive discourse. As a radio broadcast suddenly turned on, the decree-seller's words force us, by their incompleteness, to listen and wait for meaning. The function of the ψηφισματοπώλης, however, goes beyond yet another comic suspension of meaning. Rather, in his person Aristophanes challenges the authority of the archetypal sophist ἀλαζών Peisetairos and the fundamental premise of Nephelokokkugia. The decree-seller offers to sell him some ψηφίσματα in an act that would subsitute mere writing for civic activity (meeting and functioning of the assembly). Naturally, the entire project of the ethereal city is based on an act of writing, i.e., the verbal inventions of the protagonist that with its winged words evokes an entire community of written or 'graphic' birds. Nevertheless, the refusal to copy another's text and rejection of the blatant subsitution by an intuder of writing for political 'reality' establishes Peisetairos finally as the sole inventor and master of the text of *Birds*. He dismisses the decree-seller by verbally reducing him to a bird: οὐκ ἀποσοβήσεις; (v. 1031), in other words, "won't you flutter away in fear?"

The chorus returns for a continued self-presentation in the second parabasis (vv. 1058-1117). We noted above that an important feature of the play has been a joky, circular logic. Now we are faced with the delightful complication of sacrificing to the birds on behalf of those same birds who are to inhabit the new city! The first strophe expresses fully the metaphor of birds-as-gods as the new deities sing a hymn of self-praise. The aerial perspective open to a creature in flight first served as a pretext for Peisetairos and Euelpides to contact the failed bird-man metamorph, Tereus. Now the birds speak of themselves in this regard as the all-seeing and all-ruling divine recipients of sacrifice:

> Ἤδη 'μοι τῷ παντότᾳ
> καὶ παντάρχᾳ θνητοὶ πάντες
> θύσουσ' εὐδκαίαις εὐχαῖς.
> Πᾶσαν μὲν γὰρ γᾶν ὀπτεύω,
> σῴζω δ' εὐθαλεῖς καρποὺς . . .
>
> Now, in earnest entreaty
> all mortals will sacrifice to me,
> the all-seeing, the all-ruling.
> I survey the whole earth
> and guard its flourishing fruits. . .
> (1058-1062)

Their natural diet of insects is now presented as an aspect of their beneficence as they will protect men's crops. There follow several proclamations that parody the opening ceremony at the Great Dionysia[28] in which the names of

[28]"At the Great Dionysia, several interesting ceremonies took place in the theatre before the dramatic competitions began. One is mentioned . . . infra. The Chorus in this Epirrhema are referring to another, the proclamation, before an audience representing all friendly Hellenic peoples, of the outlaws on whose heads a price had been set by the Athenian Demus." Rogers ad loc.

men 'wanted' by the Demos were read to the panhellenic gathering. Here the point seems to be a comic punishment of the (already dead) atheist Diagoras and the bird-catcher Philocrates as two individuals patently hostile to a chorus of bird-gods. Once again, our attention is caught by a metatheatric device that involves the very situation of the theater in the bird's discourse. Much in the same way that Aristophanes allows the inherent properties of the linguistic sign to play freely and visibly in his work, the physical structure of the dramatic event is not allowed to be merely a 'transparent' supporting context but is dragged in to be displayed and distorted in play. In distinction from the rules of so-called 'serious' drama, the comic theater repeatedly refers to itself in a gesture that seems to be basic to the strategies of verbal δόλοι. The parabatic form in Greek comedy seems to have been the ideal forum for such self-referentiality because in the chorus as it 'steps forth' the institution of drama and individual 'prosopon' coincide providing an ideal spokesman for the dramatic form. As the use of the chorus declined, so did the metatheatric and self-referential aspect of comic discourse.

The meatatheatric twist continues in the antepirrhema (lines 1101 ff) in which the birds become identical with the the play and speak from the 'person' of the text:

> Τοῖς κριταῖς εἰπεῖν τι βουλόμεθα τῆς νίκης πέρι,
> ὅσ ἀγάθ', ἢν κρίνωσιν ἡμᾶς, πᾶσιν αὐτοῖς δώσομεν
> ὥστε κρείττω δῶρα πολλῷ τῶν 'Αλεξάνδρου λαβεῖν.
>
> We have something to say to the judges concerning our victory:
> that is, what blessings--far surpassing Alexander's--we shall confer
> on you if you adjudge the prize to us.
> (1101-1103)

This rhetorical trick (i.e. the equation chorus=the play) continues the 'textual disguise' assumed in the first parabasis where the birds usurped, as it were, the voice of the poet. It should not be a surprise to hear that the linguistic manipulation goes so far that the birds concretize the coinage metaphor ('owls of Laureion') and offer themselves as payment for victory of the text which they claim to represent:

> Πρῶτα μὲν γάρ, οὗ μάλιστα πᾶς κριτὴς ἐφίεται,
> γλαῦκες ὑμᾶς οὔποτ' ἐπιλείψουσι Λαυρειωτικαί.
>
> First of all, what every judge desires most he will
> have: The owls of Laureion will never desert you!
> (1105-1106)

The obvious comic paradox here is that the fictitious situation in which bird-gods would address men condescendingly from the summit of divinity is allowed to mingle with the theatrical situation of an author (i.e. the text of the play itself) speaking obsequiously to judges who have power over him. Again, the metaphorics of the birds' discourse (especially the reference to money) is deconstructive of their rhetorical posture and reflects interestingly the author's own paradox: the supreme creator must yet himself be judged.

There follows a sequence of short messenger speeches (lines 1118-1202) leading up to the next group of visitors comprised of Iris, a parricide, Kinesias, and a sycophant (Prometheus and the Olympian embassy form a somewhat separate group). The account of Nephelokokkugia's construction is an elaborate display of bird-jokes in which various fowl are made to participate in the work according to associations with their name or habitiat. Now the 'new gods' seem to be enslaved, physically as well as intellectually,

to Peisetairos' idea. It is significant that the Grand Architect's final comment, upon hearing the report of the fabulous progress, is a double-edged expression of wonder. Having been asked if he is impressed (ἆρα θαυμάζεις;) Peisetairos replies:

> Νὴ τοὺς θεοὺς ἔγωγε· καὶ γαρ ἄξιον·
> ἴσα γὰρ ἀληθῶς φαίνεταί μι ψεύδεσιν.
>
> I sure am, . . . and well I should be!
> What I hear looks like sheer lies.
> (1166-1167)

In other words, the 'truth of the matter' (ἀληθῶς) appears as outlandinsh as lies. These words are at once an expression of amazement as well as a moment in which the text of comedy reflects on itself to anticipate Whitman's observation that in the comic plot "the biggest fraud wins, on the theory that if the fraud be carried far enough, into the limitless, it becomes a template of higher truth."[29] The grand fabrication of the master trickster, Peisetairos, thus becomes the truth of the comic stage, which is to name him the author, within the *Birds*, of the play's text.

Already in two parabatic sequences the chorus, upon usurping priority and creative authority, has addressed the audience with the poetic voice of new divinities. An important element in Peisetairos sham rhetorical conversion of the birds from twittering idiots into 'gods' was the exploitation of bird imagery in poetic references to certain gods such as Nike, Iris, and Eros at vv. 574-575, as we have seen. The reference to Iris is especially interesting: Ἶριν δέ γ' Ὅμηρος ἔφασκ' ἰκέλην εἶναι τρήρωνι πελείῃ 'and Homer likened Iris to a trembling dove' (v. 575). What had simply been

[29]Whitman 27.

an epic simile becomes comic reality when its transferrential nature was inverted: the attribution, in writing, of certain bird-qualities to the goddess is concretized and reversed. The vehicle of the metaphor ('bird') becomes the comic subject, deified by attraction. In a move which is fundamental to the Birds (and comedy in general) the 'normal' hierarchy of metaphor (tenor-vehicle, subject-predicate) is deconstructed and the two signs are allowed to interplay freely. First the term of comparison became the subject as the birds stepped forth as gods; now the original subject, the goddess Iris, visits the bird-gods in the capacity of a messenger and god-bird. For a moment, however the text pretends to forget its own tricks and when Peisetairos asks who it is that evaded the guards and entered the city, he is told 'we don't know anything *except that it had wings*' (v. 1177). Iris is a belligerent visitor and her function is obvious: she, as one of the linguistic sources for the bird-god metaphor, is sent to dispute the comic exploitation of language and reclaim her right (and that of the other Olympians) to divine priority. Naturally, such a 'serious' mission can only be ridiculed in the present comic context and Iris, accordingly, is made to participate in the discourse of ἀλαζονεία. Her encounter with Peisetairos is vulgar and certainly does not become her divine status.

The governing mood of Peisetairos' encounter with Iris is misunderstanding and comic εἰρωνεία (v. 1211). Peisetairos makes such outrageous jokes about her name that Iris cannot make sense of his words. When he says that she should be arrested for having entered the gates, she is equally perplexed. This arrogant failure to acknowledge his fabulous achievement angers Peisetairos and he exclaims: ἥκουσας αὐτῆς οἷον εἰρωνεύεται; 'you see how she ironizes?!" (v. 1211). This delightful clash of

discourses allows comedy to playfully juxtapose its own fantasy with an imagined 'other.' Iris, despite her participation in the metaphorics of the text, is made ignorant of the world to which she has come. Her function here, which is 'as old as Homer,' is to communicate the will of Zeus to his subordinates. Peisetairos and his textual/political project, as we know, are hostile to the text from which she comes and have expended some energy in distorting it for their own purposes. The poor goddess is unaware of her role in the metaphoric revolution and is so thoroughly confused by her interview with Peisetairos that she questions his sanity (ὑγιαίνεις μέν; v. 1214). Initially polite, she is soon dragged down to the new demagogue's vulgar register and shouts back at him using the insults ὦ μέλε 'you idiot' (v. 1216), μῶρε 'fool' (v. 1238), and διαρραγείης 'blast you' (v. 1257). The clash escalates and reaches a climax with Peisetairos' ultimatum to Zeus that cleverly unites ultimate ἀλαζονεία, insult, and an ideological statement of gigantomachic politics:

> Ἀρ' οἶσθ' ὅτι Ζεὺς εἴ με λυπήσει πέρα,
> μέλαθρα μὲν αὐτοῦ καὶ δόμους Ἀμφίονος
> καταιθαλώσω πυρφόροισιν αἰετοῖς
> πέμψω δὲ ποφυρίωνας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν . . .
> . . . Καὶ δή ποτε
> εἷς Ποφυρίων αὐτῷ παρέσχε πράγματα.
>
> Know, then, that if Zeus annoys me any further
> I'll burn down his chambers and those of Amphion
> with fire-bearing eagles. I'll send 'porphyrions' into the sky . . .
> You know, a certain Porphyrion sure gave him trouble once already!
> (1246-1252)

As we mentioned above, the reference to Porphyrion is double-edged: while it asserts a rebellious attitude, it also carries connotations of ultimate failure, a feature of the giants' revolution suppressed in the comedy.

Peisetairos' language is even made to playfully contradict itself when he asserts that men must sacrifice to the birds, not to Zeus: μὰ Δί' οὐ τῷ Δίι 'By Zeus not to Zeus!' (v. 1237). There is a clash of generations in the phrase! Peisetairos isolates himself entirely from the traditional human socio-religious context and establishes his supreme position in a birdland where, surrounded by a world generated by his (Aristophanes') fantastic intellectual power, he is left only one postition--that of god. He asserts this position with the phallic threat to Iris in which he promises to 'split her thighs' and impress her with the force of his erection. She is rudely dismissed with the familiar metaphor οὐκ ἀποσοβήσεις (v. 1258) and a fragment of her text, the verb καταιθαλώσειν 'to burn, inflame,' is punningly thrown back at her by Peisetairos who converts her threat of divine retribution (v. 1242) into sexual mockery (v. 1261).[30]

There follows a passage in which yet another messenger, this time from the realm of men, brings Peisetairos good news. Whereas Iris and the gods refused to acknowldedge the existence of Nephelokokkugia and placed themselves in a relationship of irony with respect to the bird-coup, men below are acutely aware of the goings-on and are eager to follow the new bird-trend. It is interesing to note that the bird-mania takes on a predominantly linguistic aspect as bird pastures (νόμοι) become human laws, while men are said to alight on texts (βιβλία) rather than reeds (βυβλία):

Πρῶτον μὲν εὐθὺς πάντες ἐξ εὐνης ἅμα

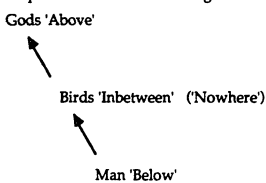
[30]Taaffe 56 writes that Peisetairos "takes advantage of her gender with sexual aggression, he dissolves her power. He quite effectively reduces her to an object of sexual interest and so negates her divine authority. . . . Iris does not perform any distinctly female functions; her mythological identity determines her function." The phallus and language are his weapons.

ἐπέτονθ' ἔωθεν ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς ἐπὶ νομόν·
κἀκεῖθεν ἂν κατῆρον εἰς τὰ βιβλία·
εἶτ' ἂν ἐνέμοντ' ἐνταῦθα τὰ ψηφίσματα.
'Ωρνιθομάνουν δ' ὄντω περιφανῶς ὥστε καὶ
πολλοῖσιν ὀρνίθων ὀνόματ' ἦν κείμενα.

The first thing they do upon rising in the morning
is to fly to pasture like we do. There they settle down on
books and peck decrees. The bird mania has gone so far
that bird-names are fastened on to many men.
(1286-1291)

Characteristic human activities such as writing and legislation are couched in terms of the bird-life. The aspiring bird-men perch on 'books' and the system of human nomenclature mingles with that of the birds as a number of men (Menippos, Opuntios, Philocles, Syracosios etc., see vv. 1291-1299) are comically renamed. Here the graphic nature of the Aristophanic 'bird' is laid bare and we see the sign in free flight: as animal, man, supplement, and simply a mute artifact which is superimposed on (κείμενα) other signs.

The grand metaphor becomes clearer: Peisetairos' deification proceeds by way of an intermediate metaphor in which he sets up an empty or fictitious category of birds to which he can assimilate. This category first occupied an indeterminate space between 'man' and 'god:'



This intermediate category is then allowed to assimilate to the higher category and lay claim to divinity, while the lower category (man) is made to assimilate to the intermediate one and participate in the new priviliges. The result is a clever metaphorical ladder, or chain, which allows Peisetairos to ascend gradually to his isolated summit. As we might expect, a higher element in the ladder is ostensibly ignorant of changes in the lower ones; thus the Olympians (in the person of Iris) claim ignorance with respect to the bird-coup, as Peisetairos is ignorant in the world of men, especially inasmuch as the text of the play (which is *his* text) places the name of Athens under erasure and ignores any 'real' past experience that he must have had there. In this respect the portrayal of our sophist's isolation from the pulse of life has a textual basis and is more sublte than simply hanging him in a basket and giving him pompous words to speak as does Socrates in *Clouds*. The lower categories, however, are intensely interested in those above them: thus in the parabasis the birds discuss the Olympians at length and now, we are told, men below have gone bird-crazy in their fascination with the etheral city. This metaphorical pecking-order, naturally, reflects the semantics of metaphor in which the 'lower' term (tenor) assimilates in predication to a 'higher' term (vehicle). Comedy, however, does not allow the hierarchy to function neatly, as we have seen, and the 'vehicle' is finally allowed to be touched, or contaminated, by the 'tenor.' The most striking feature of this comic deconstruction of the metaphorical process is the thorough re-assimilation of the birds and their city to the Athenian political paradigm.

Propositional, non-comic discourse is only comfortable maintaining the linguistic hierarchy between subject and metaphorical predicate. Thus, as I have noted, the phrase "the devil in the Oval Office" cannot mean, in a

'serious' context, that *Satan* is a sleepy executive. It is one of the pleasures of comedy, however, to confuse subject and object in language (as I have just done) and to concretize supposedly figurative predicates. If we compare the speeches of the first messenger (vv. 1121-1169) and the herald (vv. 1271-1308) in this latter portion of the play we see how Aristophanes confuses the central transference. First, he gives us an unadulterated statement[31] of the desiderative metaphor in the mouth of a typical ἀλαζών who seeks to assimilate to birdhood:

> Γενοίμαν αἰετὸς ὑψιπέτας
> ὡς ἂν ποταθείην ὑπὲρ ἀτρυγέτου
> γλαῦκας ἐπ' οἶδμα λίμνας.
>
> O that I were a high-flying eagle
> that I might soar over the barren
> grey swell of the sea.
> (1337-1339)

The paratragic force of this sentiment arises from the fact that the text speaks with two voices simultaneously: the tragic voice remains an unfulfillable and, to some extent, clichéd expression of the desire to escape the human condition, while in the comic context the parricide simply looks forward to a simple, and real, costume-change that will, in fact, allow him *not* to change his ways. This is another example of the way in which Aristophanic humor forces the impossibility and apparent absurdity of metaphor into a comic 'reality.' In other words, the network of man-bird jokes retrace backward, as Lacan observed, the emergence of sense from nonsense in metaphor.[32]

[31]According to the Scholiast these verses are from Sophocles' *Oenomaos* (cf. also Euripides *Hippolytus* 732 ff).

[32]What makes metaphor appear marked and strange is the effect:

Although this contextual parody itself teases the root metaphor (ἄνθρωπος ὄρνις), Aristophanes proceeds to further twist the man-as-bird predication by making it bi-directional and confusing it with the bird-as-man transference for delightful nonsense: we have the birds falling in line along the pattern of an Athenian colony ruled by a sophist-demagogue (the messenger's speech) and silly men afflicted with a bird-mania (the herald's speech). The play sustains and develops this man/bird dialectic in subsequent scenes. Thus we have the Iris scene opposed to the herald's speech , and the triad of human intruders (parricide, Kinesisas, sycophant) balanced by the Prometheus scene and the divine tiplet (the Poseidon-Heracles-Triballos embassy). All of this play on both sides of the governing metaphor is finally capped by the deification of the most important metamorph, Peisetairos, in a sequence that simultaneously celebrates the comic hero's achievement and reveals its absurdity.

Nephelokokkugia, by virtue of exploiting the linguistics of the impossible, now becomes the focus of activity--human, divine and 'other.' We have heard how many birds were participating in the city's construction and now the herald reports than more than ten thousand men are flocking to participate in the feathered fun (v. 1305). The transformation of men to birds is subjected to a light bit of metatheatrical mockery as Peisetairos bids his attendants to "fill all the baskets with wings" (v. 1310). We certainly cannot forget the erasure of Tereus' horrific transformation and even the supernatural character of Peisetairos' conversion to birdhood by means of a magic root. Now, however, the great transition is reduced to the simplest of

(successful) metaphors, though fully circumscribed by the laws of language, foreground the essential rift in the structure of the sign and signification, the "frontier" at which. in Lacan's words, "sense emerges from nonsense."

theatrical techniques in which a minimal 'bird' is signalled by a basic costume consisting of two wings. These πτερα will allow men to make the transition to a comic otherness that is, of course, ridiculously familiar:

> 'Αλλ' ὡς τάχιστ' σὺ μὲν ἰὼν τὰς ἀρρίχους
> καὶ τοὺς κοφίνους ἅπαντας ἐμπίμπλη πτερῶν·
> Μανῆς δὲ φερέτω μοι θύραζε τὰ πτερά·
> ἐγὼ δ' ἐκείνων τοὺς προσιόντας δέξομαι.
>
> Now bring me as quickly as possible the crates and baskets.
> Fill them with wings. When that's done, let Manes
> bring them out here so that I can greet the wing-seekers
> with wings.
> (1309-1312)

The confusion between birds and men is poetically emphasized in the lyrical dialogue that follows when the chorus refers to the population of Nephelokokkugia as men (πολυάνορα . . . καλὸν ἀνδρὶ μετοικεῖν vv. 1313, 1319). Now that the city is offered as the object of desire we remember the initial references to ἔρως[33] and its connection, at the beginning of the play, with suspension of meaning: κατέχουσι δ' ἔρωτες ἐμᾶς πόλεως (v. 1316) . . . Σοφία, Πόθος (v. 1320). In this respect Nephelokokkugia emerges as an invented other which is aware of itself as being a comic reflection of the self. The prolonged search with which the play began involved two men who wanted to 'invent' a homeland that was to be *anything* but familiar. The locus of this other has turned out to be Nephelokokkugia, a city of birds, which, as we have said, attracts men back to themselves, back to their human nature. Thus the parricide seeks to give free rein to his violence. When he

[33]See especially vv. 412, 324, and 574: also vv. 696, 703, 1279, 1343, 1737

expresses his approval of the 'law' in birdland which allows one to beat his father Peisetairos replies Καὶ νὴ Δί' ἀνδρεῖόν γε πάνυ νομίζομεν (v. 1349). Once again the comic otherness of birdhood is revealed to be *man*ly. Peisetairos must assert his authority (this is the main function of these scenes, after all) and turns the situation around to his own advantage by diverting the newcomer's zeal to more legitimate military activity (ἐπειδὴ μάχιμος εἶ, εἰς τἀπὶ Θράκης ἀποπέτου κἀκεῖ μάχου, vv. 1368-1369).

Kinesias comes next motivated by the theoretical consideration that the beginnings (ἀ"αβολαί 'preludes') of poetry are to be found in the clouds. Peisetairos does not quite understand and is frustrated by the poet's marked language (παῦσαι μελῳδῶν, v. 1381). As in previous encounters of Peisetairos with 'poets' and other sham masters of texts this interview is characterized by irony between discourses since Aristophanes makes the two men speak different languages. For the poet the vocabulary of the bird-life continues to be metaphorical of his craft, while Peisetairos represents the pragmatic view which is annoyed by useless figuaration and seeks to bring it 'down to earth' by means of linguistic or physical violence. The exchange is familiar as poetry appropriates the ornithic vocabulary for itself: ἀναπέτομαι . . . πτερύγοιν κουφαῖς (v. 1373), πέτομαι δ' ὁδὸν . . . μελέων (v. 1374) ἅπαντα γὰρ δίειμι σοι τὸν ἀέρα (v. 1392). "Our craft," says Kinesias "hangs in the clouds:"

> Κρέμαται μὲν οὖν ἐντεῦθεν ἡμῶν ἡ τέχνη.
> Τῶν διθυράμβων γὰρ τὰ λαμπρὰ γίγνεται
> ἀέρια καὶ σκοτεινὰ καὶ κυανανγέα
> καὶ πτεροδόνητα· σὺ δεε κλύων εἶσει τάχα.
>
> Our craft, you see, hangs in the air.
> The glory of dithyrambists is the airy,

the riddling, the murky, the wing-fluttered.
You'll understand as soon as you hear it.
(1387-1390).

Peisetairos, however, flatly denies the assertion "you will soon understand" and concretizes the poet's metaphorical discourse. He takes up Kinesias' desiderative bird-word πνοαῖσι 'breeze' and says νὴ τὸν Δί' ἦ 'γώ σου καταπαύσω τὰς πνοάς 'by Zeus, I'll stop your *breezze*!'(v. 1397). This is followed by an insult in which he offers the poet to train choruses for a certain Leotrophides. As in previous encounters Peisetairos asserts his mastery over language and seeks to control any potential competition in alzoneia. The most interesting moment in this exchange is its conclusion. Kinesias, it seems, does not have a sense of humor and behaves as we might expect a 'serious' or extra-comic poet to behave in reaction to Aristophanic humor. He sees himself the victim of explicit comic parody since Peisetairos repeatedly mocks his language (πνοάς v. 1397, χαίρεις πτεροδόνητος v. 1402, διδάσκειν . . . χορόν vv. 1404-1405). The poet's takes offense at Peisetairos' concretization and control of his figural diction: Καταγελᾷς μου, δῆλος εἶ (v. 1407). It is as if he were saying that Peisetairos threatens to vitiate the power of his language by exposing and mocking its figurality. In this contest between comedy and 'serious' discourse the former is free to deconstruct the linguistic conventions of the latter. Both the parricide and Kinesias have relied 'seriously' on poetic metaphor to lend their discourse a certain power and prestige. Peisetairos, true to the spirit of his comic-sophistic ἀλαζονεία, in each case destroyed this power and prestige and subordinated the visitors by absorbing them into his kingdom of sham metamorphs. Consequently, despite his outrage at being mocked, the poet no doubt assumes the token

signs of birdhood and is so absorbed by the νεφέλαι, i.e. the 'clouds' or 'traps' which he postulated as fundamental to poetry.

The final human visitor is the most important in that he excites Peisetairos to a full expression of his verbal mastery. The Sycophant represents a man who employs his intellectual abilities for insidious and base purposes. In his fascination with litigation (πραγματοδίφης v. 1424, καταπεπωκὼς δίκας v. 1429, δικορραφεῖν v. 1435) he is both a threat to Peisetairos and a generic 'bad guy.'[34] So far our protagonist has dealt with aspiring masters and abusers of language from various spheres of life. The sycophant who avoids real work by means of trickery and intrigue pursues a career of self-aggrandizement in the public arena and as such is offensive to Peisetairos who refuses to give him wings or accept him into Nephelokokkugia. In a fantastic turnaround Peisetairos who had just deflated Kinesias' poetry suddenly appropriates the metaphorics of wings to instruct the Sycophant. The latter is impatient with Peisetairos' moralizing disapproval of his profession and urges him:

ΣΥ. Ὦ δαιμόνιε, μὴ νουθέτει μ', ἀλλὰ πτέρου.
ΠΙ. Νῦν τοι λέγων πτερῶ σε.
ΣΥ. Καὶ πῶς ἂν λόγοις
ἄνδρα πτερώσειας συ;
ΠΙ. Πάντες τοι λόγοις
ἀναπτεροῦνται.

SY. Come now, man, don't preach, just feather me!
PE. I *am*: by speaking I give you wings, can't you see?
SY. How would you make a man winged by mere words?
PE. *Everybody* takes flight in speech!
(1436-1439)

[34]Cf. the excuse for leaving Athens which Peisetairos and Euelpides give in vv. 39-41 that Athenians "sit on lawsuits their entire life."

Peisetairos then gives two examples of the way in which language can exalt a man and 'give him wings:' Discussing their sons two fathers exchange complaints, one saying that his boy has 'flown aloft' with desire for chariot-driving while the other boy's heart has taken to the air with inspiration after a performance of tragedy:

> ‹‹ Δεινῶς γέ μου τὸ μειράκιον Διειτρέφης
> λέγων ἀνεπτέρωκεν ὥσθ' ἱππηλατεῖν.››
> Ὁ δέ τις τὸν αὐτοῦ φησιν ἐπὶ τραγῳδίᾳ
> ἀνεπτερῶσθαι καὶ πεποτῆσθαι τὰς φρένας.
>
> "It's frightening how Dieitrephes has set my
> boy aflutter with eagerness for chariot racing!"
> Another complains that his boy heart has taken to
> the air and palpitates over a tragic performance.
> (1442-1445)

Naturally, these examples contradict Peisetairos' moralizing intentions since the passion for ἱππηλασία is a classic vice of youth as we have seen in *Clouds*. The reference to the effects of the tragic theater is even more outrageous since the preoccupation on the part of youth with the new poetry is presented in comedy as deleterious and effeminate.[35] Several factors are at work here: first, the clash between Peisetairos' intention and his examples sets up a

[35]Thus in *Clouds* Strepsiades complains about his sons recitation of scurrilous passages from Euripides (lines 1371-1376) and in *Frogs* Aeschylus blames Euripides for the physical deterioration of Athens' youth (vv. 1069-1097).

hilarious contradiction; second, Peisetairos asserts his authority over the sycophant and dismisses him shamefully using the rhetoric of moral indignation; third, and most important, having dismissed all competitors at the game of linguistic and poetic manipulation Peisetairos is free to deploy the metaphorics of his invented world in a joyous expression of his power. Language is flight and in its effect gives the mind of man wings:

> Ὑπὸ γὰρ λόγων ὁ νοῦς ⟨τε⟩ μετεωρίζεται
> ἐπαίρεταί τ' ἄνθρωπος. Οὕτω καὶ σ' ἐγὼ
> ἀναπτερώσας βούλομαι χρηστοῖς λόγοις
> τρέψαι πρὸς ἔργον νόμιμον.
>
> The mind is lifted up by words and a man soars.
> Thus I wish, by constructive speech, to give you wings and
> turn you to a lawful pusuit.
> (1447-1450)

The city of birds, then, is a city whose citizens have been 'seized up' into the air and 'converted' (τρέψαι) by 'effective' or 'functional,' so as not to say 'good' words.

Exodos

Peisetairos now emerges as the sole ruler over the world of metamorphs and, most important, as the undisputed master of its metaphorical text. In terms of development, this final rhetorical display (the Sycophant episode) is the logical climax of *Birds*.[36] In the freedom of

[36]"Aristophanes seems to have come to the end of his bird-lore, and he fills the interstices between the remaining scenes of his play with four stanzas which . . . might as well have been introduced into any other Comedy." Rogers on v. 1470.

Aristophanic invention Peisetairos is at liberty, on the one hand, to radically concretize birdhood by reducing the transformation to a metatheatrical parody of the bird costume and, on the other hand, to exploit its metaphorical potential in giving men wings through the power of speech. His progress has reached completion as he passed from an initiate and suppliant[37] to high priest. The remaining episodes, the visits of Prometheus and the embassy as well as the exodos, are a celebratory extension of Peisetairos' achievement.

The visits of the gods are framed by three choral odes in which the birds display their newly-acquired mastery of metaphor. The first (vv. 1470-14930) tells of a wondrous Kleonymous-tree and a distant pseudo-hyperborean realm where the robber Orestes is the 'hero' one is most likely to encounter. The second (vv. 1553-1564) is a bizzare Socratic Nekuia in which the unwashed philosopher acts as a comic ψυχαγωγός who conjures up the spirits of the cowardly Peisander and the 'vampire' Chairephon. The third (vv. 1694-1705) tells of an exotic tongue-oriented people (i.e. Athenians) who from normal achievement by manual labor or χειρογάστορες have become tongue-achievers γλωττογάστορες, men who are said to fulfill the sum total of their human needs (γαστήρ)[38] with their tongues alone. These images

---

[37]See the discussion above (Chapter 2) of lines 120ff in which Peisetairos and Euelpides approach Tereus as ἱκέται and seek to be initiated by him into the cult of birds.

[38]The semantics of γαστήρ in the compounds ἐγχειρογάστορες (Athenaeus 1.6) and χειρογάστορες, as well as the Aristophanic coinage involving γλῶττα support Pucci's presentation of the suuplementarity of the concept in the Odyssey (*Odysseus Polutropos*, Chapter 17:181-182). The comic involvement of γαστήρ with γλῶττα is clever and natural in this Odyssean connection. "Perhaps the *englôtogastores* (1695 ff.)," writes Pozzi, "an allusion to the cutting and setting aside of the victim's tongue at the sacrifice, involve a reminder of Philomela" (Pozzi 120 N. 6).

illustrate that the birds have learned to see the world in a new way since Peisetairos' arrival and since Euelpides first turned to Tereus because he had "flown round the earth and sea having the mind of both bird and man" (vv. 119-120). The suspension of meaning has been resolved and now the chorus of birds is free to articulate any experience in freely associative metaphor.

Prometheus arrives to announce that "Zeus is undone" (v. 1514) as a consequence of the aerial colonization. He reports that in the divine world, which metaphorically reflects the Hellene/barbarian opposition of men, there is dissent and unrest. An embassy, he warns, is on its way with the intention of reaching an agreement. The rebellious Titan is true to his nature and continues his resitance to the established rule of Zeus (ἀνθρώποις εὖνους and θεομισής, vv. 1545 and 1548). His advice serves to introducde the final episode and to suggest the marriage of Peisetairos and Basileia.

The divine embassy reinforces the success of the Ornithomachy and completes the theatrical/linguistic conspiracy. The visit of Poseidon Herakles and 'Triballos' is the occasion of many jokes especially the reflection of Athenian democracy and laws among the gods (vv. 1570, 1641-1675) and the linguistically opaque barbarian god. Peisetairos, who has learned his lesson well and will settle for nothing less that absolute dominion, is busy cooking some 'criminal' birds and is able to exchange this food for Herakles' initial violence. A delightful trick in this final episode is a momentary return to suspended meaning in the cryptic utterances of Triballos. These 'gaps' in the dialogue offer Peisetairos the chance, once again, to write his own text, and write he does! The vote to tranfer Zeus' sceptre to Peisetairos devolves to the barbarian's opinion:

ΗΡ. Τὸ σκῆπτρον ἀποδοῦναι πάλιν ψηφίζομαι

τούτοις ἐγώ.
ΠΟ. Καὶ τὸν Τριβαλλόν νυν ἐροῦ.
'Ο Τριβαλλός, οἰμώζειν δοκεῖ σοι;
ΤΡ. Σαυ νακ
βακταρι κρουσα.
ΗΡ. Φησί,' εὖ λέγειν πάνυ.

HE. I vote to return the scepter to the Birds.
PO. Fine, but first get Triballos' vote.
HE. Hey, Triballos, what's your opinion.
TR. Sow naka staffer wakker.
HE. You see? He's *quite* supportive of my suggestion!
(1626-1629)

This gibberish is then inscribed into Peisetairos' script and settles the issue of his 'deification.' There follows the long debate in which Poseidon tries to dissuade Herakles from conceding Basileia to Peisetairos on the grounds that he will thereby forfeit his inheritance. Peisetairos manipulates legal texts cleverly to prove that Herakles, as a bastard, does not stand to inherit anything anyway and might as well side with the birds and enjoy the proverbial and symbolic 'bird's milk' which, as we noted above, is simultaneously representative of the pleasure of comedy and of 'nothing.' The vote returns to Triballos and the process is repeated: Peisetairos rewrites the barbarian's nonsense (v. 1678) to suit his 'drama.'

The stage is now set for the exodos and a messenger arrives proclaiming the events to be 'beyond words' μείζω λόγου (v. 1706) and presenting the author of Nephelokokkugia in wildly laudatory verse (lines 1709-1714). The hymeneal song begins and reminds us one final time of the central role of desire, Ἔρως, who is said to be the attendant of the sacred marriage (v. 1737). The ἔρως who first manifested himself as the lack of

meaning in a structure of suspended signification now attends the fullness of comic meaning in the ἱερὸς γάμος between Sovereignty and Peisetairos who is δαιμόνων ὑπέρτατος (v. 1765).

In *Birds*, Aristophanes has pursued the fantastic plan of enstaging, and therby concretizing, a large-scale metaphor in which men ostensibly seek to participate in the Other with the result of an utter confusion between terms in 'metaphor' and comparison.[39] The play has involved a thoroughgoing program of deconstructing the patterns of serious discourse for the purpose of revealing their comic underside. The supplementarity of jokes and metaphors (and proliferation of meaning) which is fundamental to the overall design of *Birds* is used to resolve the initial tension (suspension of meaning) which was cleverly rooted in the basic duality and difference of the sign. In other words, Aristophanes relies on the very properties of language itself for the underlying logical dialectic of the play which has seemed to some to lack meaning. The triumph of manipulative rhetoric as well the linguistic anarchy characteristic of comic invention is mirrored in the play by a revolution in the world-order as Peisetairos, the exponent of unlimited signification, is establishes his power over men and gods.

At the beginning of *Birds* Peisetairos and his friend, not having a context, turned to a metaphor (Tereus) that simultaneously embodied and disseminated the transferential power of language. The 'Tarot Session,' or initiation, placed the protagonist in a meta-context from which he was able to

[39]Sommerstien, *Aristophanes' Birds* 3: "Over and over again, men are spoken of as birds (34-35, 64-48, 169, 300, 760-8, 800, 804-6, 978-9, 987, 1086-7, 1286-99, 1372, 1406, 1410-12, 1564), gods as birds (575, 1258) or as men (186, 830, 1514, 1520-4, 1549, 1551, 1571, 1638, 1639, 1644-70), birds as men (17-18, 57, 284, 292-3, 353, 1179, 1349; compare also the account of the building of the walls [1132-57]) or as gods (571, 586, 716, 722, 833-6, 849-903, 1058-60, 1236, 1249-50)."

single-handedly create a world whose only rule was the language of which he was master. Peisetairos is the κωμῳδοδιδασκαλος, i.e., the successful author of his own comedy who proves to be a fine poet and choreographer. The chorus and its poetry is literally written by him while a series of rival texts for the play (the poets and other ἀλαζόνες) are defeated. As the pre- or post-olympian creator of his own literary context Peisetairos can only be its supreme 'deity,' master of persuasion (πειθ-, πεισ-), perhaps, but quite alone and without any ἑταῖροι to fulfill the omen of his name--a signifier which he does not control. "Nowhere, even in Aristophanes," writes Sommerstein, "are the laws of the universe so utterly set aside for the hero's benefit. He has but to will, and it is so. His power is total."[40]

40 *Aristophanes: Birds* 4.

WORKS CONSULTED

Primary Texts

Bury, R. ed *The Symposium of Plato*. 2nd. ed. 1932. Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1973.

Coulon, V., ed., and H. van Daele, trans. *Aristophane*. Vols. 1-5. Paris: Budé, 1923-1930.

Diels, H., and W. Kranz, edd. *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. Berlin, 1951.

Dover, K. J., ed. *Aristophanes: Clouds*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1970.

Dübner, F., *Scholia Graeca in Aristophanem*. Paris, 1877.[1]

Edmonds, J. M., ed. *The Fragments of Attic Comedy*. Vols. I-III. Lieden: Brill, 1975.

Hall, F. W., and W. M. Geldart, eds. *Aristophanis Comoediae*. 1907. Vols. I-II. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982.

Kaibel, G., ed. *Comicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*. Vol. I Fasc. 1: Doriensium Comoedia Mimi Phluaces. Berlin, 1899, 2nd ed., 1958.

Kakridis, P. ed. Ἀριστοφάνους *Ὄρνιθες*. Ἑρμηνευτικὴ ἔκδοση. Athens: Hestia, 1974.

Kern, O., ed. *Orphicorum Fragmenta*. Berlin, 1922.

Kock, Th., ed. *Comicorum Atticorum Fragmenta*. Vols I-III. Leiden: Teubner, 1888.

[1]Note M. N. Dunbar *Birds of Aristophanes*, forthcoming in the Oxford series (Sommerstein).

MacDowell, D. ed. *Aristophanes: Wasps.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1971.

Merry, W.W., ed. *Aristophanes: Birds.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1904.

Nauck, A. and B. Snell, edd. *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta.* Hildesheim, 1964.

Platnauer, M., ed. *Aristophanes: Peace,* Oxford: Clarendon, 1964.

Rogers, B. B., ed. and trans. *The Birds of Aristophanes:* The Greek Text Revised With a Translation Into Corresponding Metres. London: George Bell & Sons, 1906.

Schroeder, O. ed. *Ausgewählte Komödien des Aristophanes.* Erklärt von Th. Kock. IV: *Die Vögel.* 4. Aufl., neue Bearbeitung von O. Schroeder. Berlin: Weidmann, 1927.

Sommerstein, A. *The Comedies of Aristophanes.* Vol. VI: *Birds,* Warminster, Wiltshire: Aris and Phillips, 1984; Chicago: Bolchazy-Carducci. 1987.

Starkie, W., ed. *The Acharnians of Aristophanes.* London: Macmillan, 1909.

Todd, O. J. *Index Aristophaneus.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1932.

Van Leeuwen, J., ed., *Aristophanis Aves, Cum Prolegomenis et Commentariis.* Batava: Sijthoff, 1902.

White, J. W., ed. *The Scholia on the Aves of Aristophanes.* Boston, London: Ginn and Company, 1914.

West, M. L., ed. *Hesiod: Theogony,* Oxford: Clarendon, 1966.

Secondary Texts

Adkins, A. "Polypragmosune and 'Minding One's Own Business:' A

Study in Greek Social and Political Values." *CP* 71 (1976): 301-327.

Ahl, F. *Metaformations*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.

Allen, J. "Three Emendations." *UCPP* 11 (1930): 93-104.

Alink, M. "Vogels, vleugels en vlerken." *Lampas* 10 (1977): 332-350.

_____. *De vogels van Aristophanes: een structuuranalyse en interpretatie*. Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1983.

Armstrong, E. *The Folklore of Birds*. London, 1958.

Arnott, P. *Greek Scenic Conventions in the Fifth Century B.C.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1962.

Arrowsmith , W. "Aristophanes' *Birds:* The Fantasy Politics of Eros." *Arion* NS 1 (1973): 119-167.

Avery, H. "My Tongue Swore but my Mind is Unsworn." *TAPA* 99 (1968): 19-35.

Auger, D. "Le théâtre d'Aristophane: le mythe, l'utopie et les femmes." *Les Cahiers de Fontenay* 17 (1979): 71-102.

Austin, J. *How To Do Things With Words*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1975.

Bain, D. "Audience Address in Greek Tragedy." *CQ* 25 (1975): 13-25.

____. *Actors and Audience: A Study of Asides and Related Conventions in Greek Drama*. Oxford: Oxford Up, 1977.

_____. "ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν: Some Resevations."*CQ* 35 (1985): 31-37.

Bakhtin, M. *Rabelais and His World*. 1940. Trans. Hélène Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984.

Ballotto, F. "Religgendo gli Uccelli di Aristofane," *BIEH* 2,1 (1968): 3-7.

Brathes, R. "L'ancienne rhetorique," *Communications* 16 (1970): 172-244.

Beare, W. "The Costume of the Actors in Aristophanic Comedy." *CQ* 4 (1954): 64-75.

Behagel, W. *Geschichte der Auffassung der Aristophanischen Vögel.* Vols. 1-2. Heidelberg: Georg Mohr, 1878-79.

Benvenuto, B. and R. Kennedy. *The Works of Jacques Lacan: An Introduction.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.

Bergson, L. "Eiron and Eironeia." *Hermes* 99 (1971): 409-422.

Bermel, A. *Farce: A History from Aristophanes to Woody Allen.* Simon & Schuster, 1982.

Bertelli, L. "L'utopia sulla scena di Aristofane e la parodia della città." *CCC* 9 (1983): 215-261.

Beznantakos, N. "Aristophanis *Aves* v. 180." *Athena* 75 (1974): 81-84.

Blaiklock, E. "Walking away from the News." *GR* 2,1 (1954): 98-111.

Blake, W. "The Aristophanic Bird Chorus--A Riddle." *AJP* 64 (1943): 87-91.

Bloomfield, L. *Language.* 1933. Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1984.

Blumenthal, A. "Beobachtungen zu griechischen Dichtern: Zu Aristophanestext." *Hermes* 69 (1934): 457-458.

Bongenaar, J. "de enscenenering van Aristophanes' *Aves.*" *Tijdschr. voor Taal. en Lett.* 27 (1939): 24-37.

Bonner, C. "Sovereignty and the Ambitious Hero." *AJP* 64 (1943): 208-210.

Borthwick, E. "Two Notes on the *Birds* of Aristophanes." *CR* 17 (1967): 248-250.

Bosquet, J. "Le mur de la Néphélococcygie." *Actes Congrès Association G. Budé* 7 (1964): 351-354.

Boudreaux, P. *Le texte d'Aristophane et ses commentateurs.* Paris: G. Méautis, 1919.

Bowie, A. "The Parabasis in Aristophanes: Prolegomena, Acharnians." *CQ* 32 (1982): 27-40.

Box, H. "Aristophanes' *Birds* 795-6 and *Thesmophoriazusae* 450-1." *CR* 14 (1964): 241-242.

Brelich, A. "Aristofane: Commedia e religione." *ACD* 5 (1969): 21-30.

Burkert, W. *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual.* Sather Lectures 47. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: U of California P, 1980.

_____. *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth.* Trans. P. Bing. Berkeley: U of California P, 1983.

Burelli, L. "Metafore monetali e provvedimnti finanziari in Aristofane." *ASNP* 3 (1973): 767-787.

Carrière, J. "Sur la choréographie des *Oiseaux* d'Aristophane." *REA* 58 (1956): 211-235.

_____. *Le carnival et la politique: Une introduction à la comédie grecque.* Paris Bensançon, 1979.

Casevitz, M. *Commentaire des Oiseaux d'Aristophane.* Coll. Les Hommes & les Lettres. Lyon: Edition L' Hermès, 1978.

_____. "Sur la fonction de la médicine dans le theâtre d'Aristophane." *CEA* 15 (1983): 5-27.

Cassio, A. "L'uovo orfico e il Geritade di Aristofane (*fr.* 164 *K.*)" *RFIC* 106 (1978): 28-31.

Cataudella, Q. "Duo note ad Aristofane." *Ath* (1935): 195-204.

Cavaignac, E. "Pythagore et Socrate." *RPh* 33 (1959): 246-248.

Chandler, A. "The Nightingale in Greek and Latin Poetry." *CJ* 30 (1935): 78.

Chapman. "Some Notes on Dramatic Illusion in Aristophanes." *AJP* 104 (1983): 1-23.

Chiarni, G. "Metafora e metonimia. Per l'elaborazione di un modelo interpretativo del theatro classico." *RPL* 6 (1983): 113-122.

Clayman, D. "The Origins of Literary Criticism and the Aitia Prologue." *LAP* 837 (1977).

Cook, A. B. "Nephelokokkygia." *Essays and Studies Presented to William Ridgeway*. Ed. E. C. Quiggin. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1913. 213-222.

Corrigan, R., ed. *Comedy: Meaning and Form*. San Francisco: Chandler, 1965.

Coulon, V. "Observations critiques et exégétiques sur l'argument II des *Oiseaux* et sur le texte d'Aristophane." *REG* 38 (1925): 73-98.

_____. "Beiträge sur Interpretation des Aristophanes." *RM* 105 (1962): 10-35.

Courby, F. "Aristophane, *Oiseaux* 1410-1417." *REA* 34 (1932): 5-10.

Crosby, H. "The *Bird* Riddle Reexamined." *Hesp. Suppl.* 8 (1949): 75-81.

Culler, J. *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1975.

_____. *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982.

Curiazi, D. "Note agli Uccelli di Aristofane." *MCr* 10-12 (1975-77): 117-121.

Dain, A. *Traité de métrique greque.* (Paris, 1965).

Daitz, S. "The Call of the Hoopoe: Aristophanes' *Birds* 227-262." *Mémorial André-Jean Festugière. Cahiers d'orientalisme* 10. Geneva: Cramer (1984): 34.

Dale, A. M. "The Hoopoe's Song: Aristophanes' *Birds* 227 ff." *CR* 9 (1959): 199-200.

Dalfen, J. "Politik und Utopie in den *Vögeln* des Aristophanes. Zu Ar. *Vögel* 451-638." *BIFG* 2 (1975): 268-285.

David, E. *Aristophanes and the Athenian Society of the Early Fourth Century B.C. Mnemosyne,* Supplement 81. Leiden: Brill, 1984.

Davidson, D. "What Metaphors Mean." *CI* 5, 1 (1975): 31-48.

Davis, J. *Farce: Critical Idiom 39.* Methuen & Company, 1978.

Dawson, W. "The Lore of the Hoopoe." *Ibis* 12 (1925): 31.

Dearden, C. *The Stage of Aristophanes.* London: Athlone, 1976.

Degani, E. "Aristophanea." *QIFG* I (1966): 10-18.

De Man, P. "The Epistemology of Metaphor." *CI* 5, 1 (1975): 13-30.

_____. *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzche,*

Rilke, and Proust. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1979.

Denniston, J. "Technical Terms in Aristophanes." *CQ* 21 (1927): 113-121.

Derrida, J. *Of Grammatology.* 1967, Trans. G. Spivak. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974.

_____. *Writing and Difference.* 1967, Trans. A. Bass. Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1978.

_____. *Dissemination.* 1972. Trans. B. Johnson. Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1981.

_____. *Margins of Philosophy.* 1972. Trans. A. Bass. Brighton and Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982.

_____. *Positions.* 1972. Trans. A. Bass. London and Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982.

Desrousseaux, A. "Notes critiques sur les *Oiseaux* d' Aristophane." *RPh* 3, 27 (1953): 7-15.

Detienne, M. "Le mythe: Orphée au miel." *Faire de l'histoire,* Edd. J. de Goff and P. Nora, Paris: 56-75.

_____. and J. P. Vernant. *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Literature and Society.* Trans. J. Lloyd. New York: Humanities, 1978.

Deubner, L. *Attische Feste.* Berlin: Keller, 1932.

De Vries, G. "Aristophanes Aves 40, 1273." *Hermeneus* 21 (1949-50): 34-36.

_____. "Mystery Terminology in Aristophanes and Plato." *Mnemosyne* 26 (1973): 1-8.

Dietrich, F. *Die Vögel des Aristophanes in der Nachdichtung.* Frankfurt: Bauer, 1940.

Dohm, H. *Mageiros: die Rolle des Kochs in der griechisch-römischen Komödie.* Munich, 1964.

Dover. K. "Aristophanes 1938-1955." *Lustrum* 2 (1957): 52-112.

_____. "Greek Comedy." *Fifty Years (and Twelve) of Classical Scholarship.* ed. M. Platnauer. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1968: 123-158.

_____. *Aristophanic Comedy.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1972.

Duchemin, J. "Recherche sur un thème Aristophanien et se sources religieuses: Les voyages dans l'autre monde." *LEC* 25 (1957): 273-295.

Dunbar, H. *A Complete Concordance to the Comedies and Fragments of Aristophanes.* 1883. Ed., tr., and enl., Benedetto Marzullo. Hildesheim and New York: Olms, 1973.

Ehrenberg, V. *The People of Aristophanes: A Sociology of Old Comedy.* 1951. New York: Schoken, 1962.

_____. "Polypragmosyne: A Study in Greek Politics." *JHS* 67 (1947): 46-67

Epstein, P. "The Marriage of Peisthetairos to Basileia in the *Birds* of Aristophanes." *Dionysus* 5 (1981): 6-28.

Fontenrose, J. "The Sorrows of Ino and Procne." *TAPA* 79 (1948): 125-67.

Fowler, W. *A Year With the Birds.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1889.

Fraenkel, E. "Notes on the Hoopoe's Song." *Eranos* 48 (1950): 75-84.

_____. "Catching Birds." *CQ* 2 (1952): 186.

_____. "Ar. Av. 1752 διὰ σὲ τὰ παντα κρατήσας." *Philologus* 104 (1960): 293.

_____. *Beobachtungen zu Aristophanes.* Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, (1961).

Freud, S. *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious.* 1912. Trans. J. Strachey. New York and London: Norton, 1963.

Frisk, H. *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch.* Vols. 1-2. Heidelberg: Winter, 1970.

Geissler, P. "Lancicula Satura III: Aritophanes, *Av.* 815 f. Thsaurismata." *Festschrift Ida Kapp,* 1954: 42-43.

Gelzer, Th. "Tradition und Neuschöpfung in der Dramaturgie des Aristophanes." *Antike und Abendland* 8 (1959): 15-31.

_____. *Der epirrhematische Agon bei Aristophanes. Untersuchungen zur Struktur der attischen Alten Komödie. Zetemata* 23. Munich: Beck, 1960.

_____. "Dinonysisches und Phantasisches in der Komödie des Aristophanes." *Probleme der Kunstwissenschaft* 2 (1966): 39-78.

_____. "Aristophanes." *RE* Suppl. 12 (1970): 1391-1569.

_____. "Some Aspects of Aristophanes' Dramatic Art in the *Birds.*" *BICS* 23 (1976): 1-14.

Gerhardt, D. "Vogelmilch." (1976).

Ghiron-Bistagne, P. "Un calembour méconnu d'Aristophane, *Acharniens* 400, *Oiseaux* 787." *REG* 86 (1973): 285-291.

Giagrande, G. "The Origins of Attic Comedy." *Eranos* 61 (1963): 1-24.

Giffler, M. "A Note on Aristophanes: the Owl and the χύτρα." *AJP* 61 (1940): 77.

Gigante, M. "La città dei giusti in Esiodo e gli *Uccelli* di Aristofane." *Dioniso* 11 (1948): 17-25.

Gill, D. "*Birds* 393-395. A Note." *HSPh* 79 (1975): 69-72.

Gil-Fernández. J. "Parerga II, 2." *Emerita* 31 (1963): 135-136.

Gilbert, S. "Costumes of the Mind: Transvestitism as Metaphor in Modern Literature." *CI* 7 (1980): 391-418.

Goldman, *The Actor's Freedom: Toward a Theory of Drama.* New York: Viking Press, 1975.

Gomme, A. "Aristophanes and Politics." *CR* 52 (1938): 97-109.

Goossens, R. "Autour de l'expédition de Sicile," *AC* 15 (1946): 43-60.

Greenberg, C. "Reading Reading: Echo's Abduction of Language." *Women and Language in Culture and Society.* Edd. S. McConnell-Ginet, R. Borker, N. Furman. New York: Praeger, 1980. 300-309.

Greene, D. "The Comic Technique of Aristophanes." *Hermathena* 50 (1937): 87-125.

Gruber, W. "The Wild Men of Comedy: Transformations in the Comic Hero from Aristophanes to Pirandello." *Genre* 14 (1981): 207-227.

_____. "Systematized Delerium. The Craft, Form, and Meaning of Aristophanic Comedy." *Helios* 10 (1983): 97-110.

_____. *Comic Theaters: Studies in Performance and Audience Response.* Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1986.

Halliwell, S. "Aristophanes' Appreticeship." CQ 30 (1980): 33-45.

_____. "Ancient Interpretations of ὀνομοαστὶ κωμῳδεῖν in Aristophanes." *CQ* 34 (1984): 83-88.

Händel, P. *Formen und Darstellungsweisen in der Aristophanischen Komödie*. Heidelberg: Winter, 1963.

Handley, E. "Words for Soul, Heart, and Mind in Aristophanes." *RM* 99 (1956): 205-225.

Hanus, J. "The Gods in the Clouds." *GLP* 8 (1980): 11-23.

Harries, K. "The Many Uses of Metaphor." *CI* 5, 1 (1978): 73-90.

Harriot, R. "Aristophanes' Audience and the Plays of Euripides." *PICS* 9 (1962): 1-8.

Harsh, P. "The Position of the Parabasis in the Plays of Aristophanes." *TAPA* 61 (1934): 178-197.

Haury, A. "Le Chant du Rossignol ou Buffon Mystifié." *BAGB* 4,3 (1960): 373-376.

Heberlein, F. *Plythugieia: Zur Gegenwelt bei Aristophanes*. (Franfurt: Haag & Herchen, 1980).

Heath, M. *The Poetics of Greek Tragedy*. London: Duckworth, 1987.

Heidegger, M. *Poetry, Language, Tought*. Trans. A. Hofstadter. New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, 1975.

Henderson, J. *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy*. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1975.

Henry, A. "Two Passages in the *Birds* of Aristophanes." *RM* 119 (1976): 8-10.

_____. "Aristophanes' *Birds* 268-93." *CP* 72 (1977): 52-53.

Herrington, C. "A Study in the *Prometheia*, Part II: *Birds* and *Prometheia*." *Phoenix* 17 (1963): 236-243.

Higham, T. "Two Notes on Aristophanes' *Birds*." *CQ* (1932): 103-115.

Hirst, M. "*Birds* 904-955." *CW* 29 (1936): 112.

Holoehr, W. "De Metaphoris Aristophaneis." Diss. Marburg 1923.

Holwerda, D. "De Aristophanis Avium Fragmento Laurentiniano." *Mnemosyne* 15 (1962): 31-43.

_____. "De Codice Aristophaneo Neap. II *D* 49." *ZPE* 41 (1981): 13-16.

Hofmann, H. *Mythos und Kmödie. Untersuchungen zu den Vögeln des Aristophanes*. Spudasmata 33 Hildesheim: Olms, 1976.

Horn, W. *Gebet und Gebetsparodie in den Komödien des Aristophanes*. Nurnberg: Hans Carl, 1970.

Hornby, R. *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 1986.

Horowski, J. "De Vocibus, Quae Dicuntur Onomatopoeia in Aristophanis Fabulis Occurrentibus." *Eos* 56 (1966) [1969]: 227-237.

Hubbard, T. "Parabatic Self-Criticism and the Two Versions of Aristophanes' *Clouds*." *CA* 5,2 (1986): 182-197.

Hunter, R "The Comic Chorus in the Fourth Century." *ZPE* 36 (1979): 23-38.

_____. *The New Comedy of Greece and Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985.

Irigoin, J. "Remarques sur la composition formelle des *Oiseaux*

d'Aristophane." *Σχόλια: Studia ad Criticam Interpretationemque Textum Graecorum et ad Historiam Iuris Graeco-Romani Pertinentia D. Holwerda Oblata.* Edd. W. Aerts and J. Lokin. Groningen: Forster, 1985.

Jackson, C. "The Decree-Seller in the *Birds* and the Professional Politicians at Athens." *HSCP* 30 (1919): 89-103.

Janko, R. *Aristotle on Comedy*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U California P, 1984.

Jernigan, C. "Incongruity in Aristophanes." Diss. Menasha Banta, 1939.

Kakridis, P. "Phrynicheisches in den Vögeln des Aristophanes." *WS* 4 (1970): 39-51.

_____. "L'erreur du coq. Un motif populaire chez Aristophane, *Oiseaux* 489-48." *Hellenica* 25 (1972): 185-189.

_____. "Κριτικὰ καὶ ἑρμηνευτικὰ στὸν 'Αριστοφάνη." *Dodonne* I (1972): 109-124.

Kapp, E. "Πισθέταιρος," *Philologus* (1928): 259-61.

Karouzou, S. "Vases from Odos Pandroson." *JHS* 65 (1945): 38-44.

Katz, B. "The *Birds* of Aristophanes and Politics," *Athenaeum* 54 (1976): 109-124.

Kilmer, M. "Genital Phobia and Depilation." *JHS* 102 (1982): 104-112.

Kirk, G. *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures.* Sather Lectures 40. Cambridge UP/U of California P, 1970.

Kleinknecht, H. *Die Gebetsparodie in der Antike.* Hildesheim: Olms, 1966.

_____. "Λουτρὰ τῆς Παλλάδος." *Hermes* 74, 1939, 301-350.

_____. "Zur Parodie des Gottmenschentums bei Aristophanes." *ARW* (1937): 294-313.

Kleve, K. "'Απραγμούνη and Πολυπραγμοσύνη: Two Slogans in Athenian Politics." *SO* 39 (1964): 83-88.

Koch, K. *Kritische Ide und komisches Thema: Untersuchungen zur Dramturgie un zum Ethos der Aristophanischen Komödie.* Bremen, 1965.

Koenan, L. "Tereus in den Vögeln des Aristophanes." *Studien zu Textgeschichte und Textkritik.* Ed. H. Dahlman and R. Merkelbach. Köln-Opladen: Westdeutschen Verlag, 1959.

Komornicka, A. "Quelques remarques sur la parodie dans les comédies d'Aristophane." *OUCC* 3 (1967): 51-74.

_____. *Métaphores, Personnifications et Comparaisons dans l'œuvre d'Aristophane.* Breslau-Warsaw-Cracow: Archiwum Filologiczne X, 1964.

Kopidakis, M. "Πρέμνον πράγματος πελωρίου. 'Αριστ. *"Ορνιθες* 321." *EETh* 15 (1976): 141-147.

Krauss, W. "Prometheus." *RE* 23 (1957), 653-702.

Lacan. J. *Écrits: a Selection.*1949-1960. Trans. A. Sheridan. New York and London: Norton, 1977.

_____. and A. Wilden. *Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis.* Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1968.

Landfester, M. "Aristophanes und die politische Krise Athens." *Krisen der Antike: Bewustsein und Bewältigung.* Düsseldorf, 1975: 27-45.

_____. *Handlungsverlauf un Komik in den frühen Komödien des*

Aristophanes. Berlin-New York, 1977.

Lawler, L. "Four Dancers in the *Birds* of Aristophanes." *TAPA* 73 (1942): 58-63.

_____. "'Limewood' Cinesias and the Dithyrambic Dance." *TAPA* 73 (1942): 58-63.

_____. "In Garments with Figures of Gold." *CB* 33 (1957): 29.

Leach, C. "Aristophanes' *Birds* 13-18." *CQ* 33 (1983): 489-91.

Lefkowitz, M. "Aristophanes and Other Historians of the Fifth-century Theater." *Hermes* 112 (1984): 143-153.

Lever, K. "Poetic Metaphor and Dramatic Allegory in Aristophanes." *CW* 46 (1953): 220-223.

Liddell, H., R. Scott, and H. Jones, edd. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 1940. Oxford: Clarendon, 1961.

Lilja, S. "Animal Imagery in Greek Comedy." *Arctos* 13 (1974): 85-90.

Littlefield, D. "Metaphor and Myth. The Unity of Aristophanes' *Knights*." *SPh* 65 (1968): 1-22.

Long, T. "Persuasion and the Aristophanic Agon." *TAPA* 103 (1972): 285-300.

_____. "Understanding Comic Action in Aristophanes." *CW* 70 (1976): 1-8.

Looy, H. van. "Les Oiseaux d'Aristophane. Essai d'interprétation." *Hommages à C. Préaux* (1975): 177-185.

MacDowell, D. "Theagenes of Peiraieus." *RM* 104 (1961): 229-236.

MacLeish, K. *The Theatre of Aristophanes*. New York: Taplinger, 1980.

MacMathúna, S. "Trickery in Aristophanes." Diss. Cornell U, 1971.

Manuel, F. and P. Fritzie. "Sketch for a Natural History of Paradise." *Daedalus* (1972): 84-90.

Marzullo, B. "L' Interlocuzione negli 'Uccelli' d' Aristofane," *Philologus* 114 (1970): 181-194.

_____. "Le mura di Temistocle e la mura di Nubicuculia." *QS* 3 (1977): 41-50.

_____. "Aristophanes *Aves* 801-808." *MCr* 15-17 (1980-82): 87-91.

Mauron, C. *Psychocritique du genre comique: Aristophane, Plaute, Terence, Molière.* Paris: José Corti, 1964.

Maxmin, J. "Meniskoi and the *Birds*." *JHS* 95 (1975): 175-180.

Maxwell-Stuart, P. "Two Notes on Aristophanes." *ZAnt* 26 (1976): 43-44.

Mazon, P. *Essai sur la compositon des comédies d'Aristophane.* (Paris, 1904).

_____. "La farce dans Aristophane et le origines de la comédie en Grèce." *Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre* (1951): 7-18.

Meckenstock, I, "Naturbild und Tierchor bei Aristophanes." Diss. Marburg, 1952.

Mihailov, G. "La légende de Térée." *Annuaire de l'université de Sofia, Faculté des Lettres* 50, 2 (1955): 15-199.

Milner, G. "Homo Ridens: Toward a Semiotic Theory of Humour and Laughter." *Semiotica* 5 (1972): 1-30.

Mondi, R. "Tradition and Innovation in the Hesiodic Titanomachy." *TAPA*

116 (1986): 25-48.

Mooij, J. "Tenor, Vehicle, Reference." *Poetics* 4 No. 2-3, 14-15 (1975): 257-272.

_____. *A Study of Metaphor: The Nature of Metaphorical Expressions, With Special Reference to Their Reference.* Amsterdam, North Holland: Linguistic Series 27, 1976.

Morreal, J. ed. *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987.

Moulton, C. "The Lyric of Insult and Abuse in Ariustophanes." *MH* 36 (1979): 23-47.

_____. *Aristophanic Poetry.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1981.

Muecke, F. "Playing with the Play: Theatrical Self-consciousness in Aristophanes." *Antichthon* 11 (1977): 64-67.

_____. " 'I Know You--By Your Rags.' Costume and Disguise in Fifth-Century Drama." *Antichthon* 16 (1982): 17-34.

Mueller, D. "Die Verspottung der metaphorishcen ausdruckweise durch Aristophanes." *Festschrift A. Thierfelder* (1973): 29-41.

Mugler, C. "Sur une polémique scientifique dans Aristophane." *REG* 72 (1959): 57-66.

Murphy, C. "Aristophanes and the Art of Rhetoric." *HSCP* 49 (1938): 69-113.

_____. "A Survey of Recent Work on Aristophanes and Old Comedy." *CW* 49 (1956): 210-211.

_____. "Popular Comedy in Aristophanes." *AJP* 93 (1972), 169-89.

Murray, G. *Aristophanes.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1933.

Nenci, G. "Un' allusione all' occupazione del Pelargico nel 431 A.C. (*Thuc.*, 2.17, 1-3) in Aristofane (*Aves*, v. 832)." *ASNP* 10 (1980): 1125-1126.

Nestle, W. "Die Horen des Prodikos." *Hermes* 71 (1936): 151-170.

_____. *Vom Mythos zum Logos.* 2nd ed. Stuttgart, 1940.

Newiger, H. "Die Vögel und ihre Stellung im Gesamtwerk des Aristophanes."*Aristophanes und die alte Komödie. Wege der Forschunng* n. 265. Ed. H. Newiger. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975: 266-282.

_____. *Metapher und Allegorie: Studien zu Aristophanes. Zetemata 16.* Munich: Beck, 1957.

_____. "Gedanken su Aristophanes *Vögeln.*" *Aretês Mnêmê for K. I. Vourveris.* Athens: Μελ. καὶ Ἐρευ. 35, 1983: 47-57.

Noppen, J.-P. van, and S. de Knopf, R. Jorgen. *Metaphor: A Bibliography of Post-1970 Publications.* Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1985.

Norwood. G. *Greek Comedy.* 1931. New York: Hill and Wang, 1963.

Osmun, G. "Building up Comic Steam." *CJ* 49 (1953-54): 85-89.

Paduano, G. "La città degli 'Uccelli' e le ambivalenze del nuovo sistema etico-politico." *SCO* 22 (1973): 115-144.

Parke, H. *Festivals of the Athenians.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977.

Pegoraro, L. "Problemi di metaforica nella definizione dell' ambiguità aritofanesca." *L&S* 18 (1983): 387-406.

Peppler, C. W. "Comic Terminations in Aristophanes: Part IV." *AJP* 39

(1918): 173-183.

Perusino, F. "Il finale degli 'Uccelli' di Aristofane." *Maia* 18 (1966): 60-63.

Pickard-Cambridge, A. *Dithyramb, Tragedy, and Comedy*. 1927. 2nd ed. Rev. T. B. L. Webster. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1962.

_____. *The Dramatic Festivals of the Athenians*. 1953. 2nd ed. Rev. J. Gould and D. Lewis. Oxford UP, 1968.

Platnauer, M. "Antistrophic Variation in Aristophanes." *Greek Poetry and Life. Essays Presented to Gilbert Murray on his Seventieth Birthday*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1936. 241-256.

Pollard, J. "The *Birds* of Aristophanes--as Source-Book for Old Beliefs." *AJP* 69 (1948): 353-376.

_____. "Birds in Aeschylus." *GR* 17, 51 (1948): 116.

Pozzi, D. "The Pastoral Ideal in *The Birds* of Aristophanes." *CJ* 81 (1986): 119-129.

Prato, C. *I canti di Aristofane: Analisi commento scoli metrici*. Rome: Edizioni dell' Ateneo, 1962.

_____. *Birds in Greek Life and Myth*. Thames & Hudson, 1977.

Pucci, P., *Aristofane ed Euripide. Richerche Metriche e Stilistiche*. Atti dell' Academia Nationale dei Lincei 10 (1961): 227-421.

_____. *Hesiod and the Language of Poetry*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977.

_____. *The Violence of Pity in Euripides "Medea."* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980.

_____. *Odysseus Polutropos: Intertextual Readings in the Odyssey and the Iliad*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987.

Quincey, J. "The Metaphorical Sense of ΛΗΚΥΘΟΣ and *AMPULLA*." *CQ* 43 (1949): 32-44.

Radermacher, L. "Zu Aristophanes' Vögeln." *WS* 46 (1927-28): 92-93.

_____. "Excurse zu Aristophanes' Vögeln." *WS* 50 (1932): 26-36.

Raines, J. "A Critical Note on Aristophanes." *CP* (1934): 340-341.

Rapp, A. "*Aves* 507." *RM* 88 (1939): 191.

Rau, R. *Paratragodia. Untersuchungen einer komischen Form des Aristophanes.* Munich: Beck, 1967.

Ray, W. *Literary Meaning: From Phenomenology to Deconstruction.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984.

Reckford, Kenneth J. "Aristophanes' Ever-Flowing Clouds." *Emory University Quarterly* 22 (1967): 222-235.

_____. "Desire with Hope. Aristophanes and the Comic Catharsis." *Ramus* 3 (1974): 41-69.

_____ . *Aristophanes' Old-and-New Comedy.* Chapel Hill and London: U of North Carolina P, 1987.

Redmond, J. ed. *Farce: Themes in Drama 10.* Cambridge UP, 1988.

Redfern, W. *Puns.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984.

Ricoeur, P. "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling." CI 5, 1 (1975): 143-159.

_____. *The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of Creation and Meaning in Langugae.* Trans. R. Czerny, K. McLaughlin, J. Costello. Toronto UP, 1977.

Robertson, D. "Three Passages of the *Birds*." *CR* 55 (1941): 67-69.

Romaios, K. "Οἱ κόκκυγες τρεῖς τοῦ 'Αριτοφάνους." *Athena* 59 (1955): 73-75.

Romer, F. "When is a Bird not a Bird?" *TAPA* 113 (1983): 135-142.

Rose, H. "Aristophanes *Birds* 1122." *CR* 54 (1940): 79.

Rosen, R. "ἰαμβικὴ ἰδέα: the Influence of the Ionian Iambographers on Greek Old Comedy." Diss. Harvard U, 1980.

Rosenmeyer, T. "Notes on Aristophanes' *Birds*." *AJP* 93 (1972): 223-238.

Rubin, G. "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, Ed. Reiter. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975.

Rudall, D. "The Function of Inconsistency in the Plays of Aristophanes." Diss. Cornell U, 1969.

Ruijgh, C. "Aristophae, *Oiseaux* 1372 sqq., *Grenouilles* 1316 sqq., et le sens de πόδα κυλλόν." *Mnemosyne* 13 (1960): 318-322.

Sacks, S. ed. *On Metaphor*. Chicago UP, 1979.

Sapir, E. *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921.

Schareika, H. *Der Realismus in der aristophanischen Komödie. Europäische Hochschulschriften*. Vol. 13. Frankfurt: Lang, 1978.

Schlegel, A. von. *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur*. Vol I (Heidelberg, 1809).

Schleisinger, A. "Identification of Parodies in Aristophanes." *TAPA* 67,

(1936): 296-305, and *AJP* 58 (1937): 294-305.

Schreiber, F. "A Double-Barreled Joke. Aristophanes *Birds*, 38." *AJP* 95 (1974): 94-95.

Schroeder, O. *Aristophanis Cantica* (Leipzig, 1930).

Schwarze, J. *Die Beurteilung des Perikles durch die attische Komödie und ihre historiographische Bedeutung*. Munich, 1971.

Schwinge, E. "Aristophanes und die Utopie." *WJA* n.s 3 (1977): 43-67.

Seel, O. *Aristophanes oder Versuch über Komödie*. Stuttgart: Ernst Lett, 1960.

Segal, C. "Aristophanes' Cloud-Chorus." *Arethusa* II (1969): 143-161.

_____. *Language and Desire in Seneca's Phaedra*. New Jersey and Guilford: Princeton UP,

Seidensticker, B. "Comic Elements in Euripides' *Bacchae*." *AJP* 99 (1978): 303-320.

Sheppard, J. "ΤΙΣ ΕΣΤΙΝ Η ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑ; The Last Scene of the *Birds* of Aristophanes." *Fasciculus Ionanni Willis Clark Dedicatuas*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1909. 529-540.

Shibles, W. *Metaphor: An Annotated Bibliography and History*. Whitewater, Wisconsin: The Language Press, 1971.

Sifakis, G, M. *Parabasis and Animal Choruses: A Contribution to the History of Attic Comedy*. London: Athlone Press, 1971.

Silk, M. "Aristophanes as a Lyric Poet." *YCIS* 26 (1980): 99-151.

Simon, Erika. *Festival of Attica: An Archaeological Commentary*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1983.

Simon, R. *The Labyrinth of the Comic: Theory and Practice from Fielding to Freud.* Gainesville: U of Florida P, 1986.

Sommerstein, A. "Act Division in Old Comedy." *BICS* 31 (1984): 139-152.

_____. "The Decree of Syrakosios," *CQ* 36 (1986): 101-108.

Sparkes, B. "The Greek Kitchen." *JHS* 82 (1962): 121-137.

_____. "Illustrating Aristophanes." *JHS* 95 (1975): 122-135.

Spyropoulos, E. *L'Accumulation verbale chez Aristophane.* Thessaloniki: Altintzis, 1974.

Srebrny, S. "De Sycophantae in Aristophanis *Avibus* Cantico." *Eos* 41,1 (1940/6): 104-113.

Stanford, W. B. *Greek Metaphor: Studies in Theory and Practice.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1936.

Staples, D. ""Επεα Πτερόεντα. Plot and Metaphor in Aristophanes." Diss. Boston U, 1972. Published 1978.

Stark, I. "Die Aristophanische Komödienfur als Subjekt der Geschichte." *Klio* 64 (1982): 67-74.

Stark, R. "Sokratisches in den *Vögeln* des Aristophanes." *RM* 96 (1953): 77-89.

States, B. "The Actor's Presence: Three Phenomenal Modes." *TJ* 35 (1983): 359-375.

Stearn, S. "A Note on Aristophanes' *Birds* 507." *CP* (1933): 207-208.

Steiger. H. "Die Groteske und die Burleske bei Aristophanes." *Philologus* (1934): 161-184, 275-285, 476-432.

Stewart, D. "Aristophanes and the Pleasures of Anarchy." *Antioch Rev.* 25 (1965): 189-208.

_____. "*Nous* in Aristophanes." *CJ* 63 (1968): 253-255.

Stone, L. *Costume in Aristophanic Comedy.* Mimeographs in Classical Studies. 1980. Salem, NH: Ayer, 1984.

Storey, Ian C. "Old Comedy 1975-1984." *Classical Views* ns 6 (1987): 1-46.

Stow, H. "The Violation of the Dramatic Illusion in the Comedies of Aristophanes." Diss. U of Chicago, 1936.

Suss, W. "Scheinbäre un wirkliche Inkongruenzen bei Aristophanes." *RM* 97 (1954): 115-159, 229-254, 289-316.

Sutton, D. *Self and Society in Aristophanes.* Washington D. C.: UP of America, 1980.

Süvern, J. *Essay on 'The Birds' of Arisophanes.* 1830. Trans. W. Hamilton. London: John Murray, 1835.

Sypher, W. ed. *Comedy: "An Essay on Comedy" by Geroge Meredith and "Laughter" by Henri Bergson.* Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1956.

Taaffe, L. "Gender, Deception, and Metatheatre in Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae.*" Diss. Cornell U, 1987.

Taillardat, J. *Les Images d'Aristophane.* Paris: Sociétés Éditions les Belles Lettres, 1962.

Tammaro, V. "Aristof. *Av.* 159 ss." *MCr* 10-12 (1975-77): 145-146.

Tennenhouse, L. ed. *The Practice of Psychoanalytic Criticism.* Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1976.

Thompson, Sir D'Arcy W. *A Glossary of Greek Birds*. 1936. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1966.

_____. "Aristophanes *Birds* 1122." *CR* 54 (1940): 188.

Tompkins, J. ed. *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980.

Tosi, R. "Aristophanes *Aves* 539 ss." *MCr*. 13-14 (1978-79): 239-240.

Turato, F. "Le leggi non scritte negli *Uccelli* di Aristofane." *AAPat* 84 Part 3 (1971-72): 113-143.

Vernant, J. P. "The Myth of Prometheus in Hesiod." *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*. 1974. Trans. J. Lloyd. Atlantic Heighlands, NJ: Humanities, 1980. 165-185.

F. Vian, *La guerre des geants. Le mythe avant l'epoque Hellenistique*. Etudes et Commentaires 11 (Paris, 1952).

Walcot, P. "Aristophanic and Other Audiences." *GR* 18 (1971): 35-50.

Wartelle, A. "Analyse metrique de l'appel de la huppe (Aristophane, *Oiseaux*, vers. 209-262)." *BAGB* (1966): 440-449.

Webster, T. B. L. "Greek Theories of Art and Literature down to 400 B.C." *CQ* 33 (1939): 166-179.

_____. "The Masks of Greek Comedy." *BJRL* 32 (1949-50): 97-133.

_____. *Greek Theatre Production*. London: Methuen, 1956.

_____. *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*. 3rd ed. Rev, and enl. J. R. Green. *BICS* Suppl. 39. London: U of London Institute of Classical Studies, 1978.

West, M. L. "Two Passages of Aristophanes." *CR* 18 (1968): 5-8.

_____. "Four Emendations in Aristophanes." *CQ* 27 (1977): 73-75.

_____. *The Orphic Poems.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1983.

_____. *Greek Metre.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1982.

Westlake, H. "Overseas Service for the Father-Beater (Av. 1360-71)." *CR* 4 (1954): 90-94.

Whatmough, J. "On 'Triballic' in Aristophanes (*Birds* 1615)." *CP* 47 (1952): 56.

White, J. *The Verse of Greek Comedy.* London: MacMillan 1912.

_____. and E. Cary, "Collations of the Mss. of Aristophanes' *Aves*." *HSCP* 29 (1918): 77.

Whitman, C. *Aristophanes and the Comic Hero.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1964.

von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, U. "Aristophanes' *Vögel*." *Hermes* (1928): 369.

Wiles, T. *The Theater Event: Modern Theories of Performance.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980.

Wilshire, B. *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor.* Bloomingon: Indiana UP, 1982.

Wycherly, R. "*Birds* 995-1009." *CQ* (1937): 22-31.

Zaganaris, N. "Le mythe de Térée dans la littérature grecque et latine." *Platon* 25 (1973): 208 f.

Zimmerman, B. *Untersuchungen zur Form und dramtischen Technik der*

Aristophanischen Komödien. Vols. I-II. *Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie* 154, 166. Königstein: Hain, 1984; 1985.