

OLD COMEDY ON ANCIENT ACTORS:
SPECULATIONS ON AN ODD AND UNEXPECTED
DISCRIMINATION*



It is rather a commonplace remark that Aristophanes' theatre and in general Old Comedy are abound with references — direct or indirect, periphrastic or nominal, ambivalent, positive or negative — on a plethora of activities, events and representatives of the current or past political, religious, administrative, military, artistic and social life of ancient Athens.¹

Regarding the artistic activity that we are interested in, in the present paper, various representatives of the contemporary art both of that time and of the distant past travel through the narrative fields of Old Comedy and, in particular, the extant work of Aristophanes², who focuses with a

* The present paper is the expanded and enriched form of a communication announced in Greek at the colloquium in memory of Agni Mouzenidou, organised by the Department of Theatre Studies of the University of Athens (6-7 October 2008). I owe warm thanks to Professor S. Tsitsiridis, for his valuable, scientific and moral support, as well as to the anonymous reader, whose comments on the manuscript have improved it enormously.

1. See by way of example S. Halliwell, "Comedy and Publicity in the Society of the Polis", in A. Sommerstein et al. (eds), *Tragedy, Comedy and the Polis* (papers from the Greek drama conference. Nottingham, 18-20 July 1990), Bari 1993, 321-340; G.W. Dobrov (ed.), *The City as Comedy. Society and Representation in Athenian Drama*, Chapel Hill & London 1997, 3-267.
2. Kithara-players, such as Dexitheus (*Ach.* 14) and Phrynis (*Nub.* 971), aulos-players such as Chaeris (*Ach.* 16, 866; *Pax* 951), poets such as Ion of Chios (*Nub.* 835-36), Archilochus (*Pax* 1298-99), Lasus (*Vesp.* 1410) and Simonides (*Nub.* 1356-62; *Vesp.* 1410; *Pax* 697-99), dithyramb-makers such as Hieronymus, the son of Xenophantes (*Ach.* 387-90; *Nub.* 349), among others. About Hieronymus, the son of Xenophantes,

considerable persistence on the dramatic poetic production, on specific dramatic plays, heroes, scenes, verses, thematic, linguistic and metrical motifs, structural elements and of course on specific dramatic poets of the past or the contemporary theatrical practice.³ The comic poets Cratinus, Crates, Magnes, Eupolis, Pherecrates, Hermippus, Ameipsias and on the other hand, the tragic poets Morychus, Phrynichus, Sthenelus, Carcinus, Akestor, Morsimus, Melanthius, Philocles, Iophon, Pythaggelos, Melitus, Phormisius, Megainetus, Cleitophon, and of course Agathon, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides are some exemplary representatives of the older and newer generation of playwrights who come up, more or less often, in the textual and even in the performative field of the eleven extant comedies⁴. Their reference and/or the stage presentation as well as the style, the extent and the frequency of that reference and/or stage presentation were possibly related to the degree of “risk” or, on the contrary, to the degree of “benefit”, that each poet represented for the society of the time, according to Aristophanes’ — and to a greater or smaller group of his co-citizens-spectators’ — ideological and aesthetic criteria of evaluation, that he supported and intended eventually to “promote” from stage.

In marked contrast to all this “mosaic of quotations”⁵, one discovers with surprise that the presence of lengthier comments or even that of simple references regarding ancient actors — tragic or comic, older or contemporaries of Aristophanes — is paradoxically scarce and from a stylistic point of view, is unusually moderate and discreet. This unexpected literary “sensibility” is confirmed and rather reinforced by the extant corpus of ancient Scholia, in which questions of staging are

see the comments *ad loc* by K.J. Dover (*Aristophanes Clouds*, Oxford 1968, 147) and S.D. Olson (*Aristophanes Acharnians*, Oxford University Press 2002, 284).

3. Unless otherwise indicated, I have used the following editions: *Aristophanis fabulae*, ed. N.G. Wilson, Oxford 2007, 2 vols; W.J.W. Koster – D. Holwerda (eds), *Scholia in Aristophanem*, Groningen 1960 ff; R. Kassel – C. Austin, *Poetae Comici Graeci*, Berlin/New York 1983 ff. (hence-forth: *PCG*).
4. Regarding the “written text” and the “text of the performance”, their possible inter-relations and the original coded “geno-text” see A. Ubersfeld, *L’école du spectateur. Lire le théâtre 2*, Paris 1991, 9-50.
5. J. Kristeva: *Semiotiké: Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, Paris 1969, 146.

meant to play an important role, especially as regards the complicated texture and the challenging visualization of comedy.⁶

We sum up: Only in two (*Vesp.* 579-580, *Ran.* 302-303) among the extant Aristophanean comedies, we can trace, in each one, one certain reference to tragic actors (Oeagrus, Hegelochus), whose professional identity is confirmed both from the textual context and the corresponding ancient scholia, and from a variety of other literary sources.⁷ The case where Oeagrus is acquitted by the court only if he recites the “most beautiful lines” (*καλλίστην ῥῆσιν*) from Niobe’s part (*Vesp.* 579-80), is included in the *ἀγαθά* that Philocleon of the *Wasps* is supposed to take profit of as *φάσκων τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἄρχειν* (*Vesp.* 577).⁸ As regards Hegelochus, in *The Frogs* Xanthias reassures Dionysus that everything is all right and that they can say, as Hegelochus, *ἐκ κυμάτων γὰρ αὐθις αὖ γαλῆν ὀρῶ* (*Ran.* 302–303), repeating — without any further comment — the “fatal” phonetic error committed by the notorious tragic actor during the enunciation of line 279 at the performance of Euripides’ *Orestes* in 408 BC.⁹

6. About the different topics that ancient dramatic scholia are occupied with (“Identification of speakers and addressees”, “entrances and exits”, “delivery”, “acting”, “masks, costumes and props”, “d cor”, “special technical devices”, “dramaturgical conventions”, “critique of contemporary production”), their informational utility and limitations, see recently R. N nlist, *The Ancient Critic at Work. Terms and Concepts of Literary Criticism in Greek Scholia*, Cambridge 2009, 338-65.
7. See I.E. Stefanis, *Διονυσιακοὶ τεχνῖται. Συμβολὲς στὴν προσωπογραφία τοῦ θεάτρου καὶ τῆς μουσικῆς τῶν ἀρχαίων Ἑλλήνων* (henceforth: *DT*), Heraklion 1988, No 1298 “Oeagrus” and No 1050 “Hegelochus”.
8. The ancient scholia ad Ar. *Vesp.* 579b inform us that Oeagrus was a *τραγικὸς ἔποκριτῆς*, who *ὑπεκρίθη τὴν Νιόβην ἢ Σοφοκλέους ἢ Αἰσχύλου*, and it is believed that Philocleon (or Aristophanes) *ὡς θαυμάζων δὲ αὐτόν φησιν, ὅτι κὰν ἐκεῖνος ὁ μέγας καταδικασθῆ* [underlining of the writer]. In regard to the assumption that the ancient scholia in line 566 of *The Wasps* concern this same actor (566a: ... *Αἰσωπος τραγωδίας ποιητῆς ... Αἰσχύλου δὲ ἦν ἔποκριτῆς*) see Stefanis, *DT*, No 95 (“Aesop”) and No 1298 (“Oeagrus”). See also E. Hall, *The Theatrical Cast of Athens. Interactions between Ancient Greek Drama and Society*, Oxford 2006, 28-29.
9. Regarding Hegelochus see “Adnotatio in Scholiastas Aristophanis”, in F. D bner, *Scholia Graeca in Aristophanem. Cum Prolegomenis Grammaticorum*, Paris 1843, 520, and Th. Falkner, “Scholars versus Actors: Text and Performance in the Greek Tragic Scholia”, in P. Easterling, E. Hall (eds), *Greek and Roman Actors. Aspects of an Ancient Profession*, Cambridge 2002, 355 and note 54. In regard to the “monstrous”

In many more cases, the quality of the actor is rendered only by the ancient scholia to persons that are specified by name in the comic text without their particular artistic identity being declared or implied in any way therein. Indeed, the quality of the actor is usually one of the numerous alternative qualities (tragic poet, simple poet, spectator, mythical person, common thief, dancer and other), rendered to a specific person: it is the case of Dercylus in *The Wasps*, of Tlepolemus in *The Clouds*, of Cleocritus in *The Birds* and *The Frogs*, of Phynichus in *The Clouds*, *The Wasps* and *The Birds*, of Cleidemides, Molon and Nicomachus in *The Frogs*, of Cleomachus in *The Assembly Women*, last but not least, of the sons of the tragic poet Carcinus in *The Clouds*, *The Wasps*, *Peace*, *The Frogs*. Let's follow their traces.

Dercylus is mentioned as a simple spectator (*Vesp.* 78), but the corresponding scholia note his alternative identification with the actor: 78a — *Ὁδτος ὡς κάπηλος ἢ μεθυστής ... πρὸς ὃν Σωσίας τις διαλέγεται.* 78b — *ὁ Δερκύλος κωμικὸς ὑποκριτής ...*

In regard to Tlepolemus who is mentioned by Strepsiades vaguely (*Nub.* 1266: *Τί δαί σε Τληπόλεμός ποτ' εἴργασται κακόν;*), the first interpretation of the ancient scholia identifies him with the mythical hero bearing the same name who appeared in the tragedy *Likymnios* by Xenocles; the second alternative version identifies him with the tragic actor, *συνεχῶς ὑποκρινόμενον Σοφοκλεῖ*, while in Triklinios' scholia as well as in the later anonymous scholia concerning the same Aristophanean passage, Tlepolemus is mentioned as a poet.¹⁰

Cleocritus is parodied — we don't know whether it was for his physical (large build) or moral (voluptuousness) defect — twice by Aristophanes (*Av.* 877 and *Ran.* 1437-38), without any reference to the acting profession in any case. Only the scholia support this possibility and in particular the scholia in the relevant passage of *The Birds* where, inter alia, we learn about Cleocritus: *βουλόμενος αὐτὸν διαβάλλειν, ὡς*

assumption that Hegelochus was the name of an Athenian woman poet see the different scholia in M. Chantray (ed.), *Scholia in Thesmophoriazusas, Ranas, Ecclesiazusas et Plutum*, III 1b (continens Scholia Recentiora in Aristophanis *Ranas*) Groningen 2001, 303b and 303d.

10. Cf. Stefanis, *DT*, No 2430 ("Tlepolemos"); Hall (n. 8) 28-29 and idem in Easterling – Hall (n. 9) 9.

στρουθόποδα, τουτέστι μεγαλόπων. ἐκωμωδεῖτο δὲ ὡς ξένος καὶ δυσγενής. Σύμμαχος προείρηκεν ὅτι ξένος καὶ τάχα ὑποκριτής. νῦν δ' ἐμφαίνεται, ὅτι καὶ τὴν ὄψιν στρουθώδης. Nevertheless, that possibility is not confirmed by the relevant scholia in the corresponding passage of *The Frogs*, where we are informed — again inter alia — that Cleocritus was μοχθηρός ἀνὴρ καὶ νωθρός, φίλος Κινησίου.

In *The Birds* (749-50) the Chorus makes a particularly positive reference to μέλεα αμβρόσια of Phrynichus, who is compared with μέλιττα and is — according to the ancient scholia — a τραγωδίας ποιητής, ὃς ἐπὶ μελοποιίαις ἔθανμάζετο and not one of the other existing Phrynichi that are mentioned ad loc, among whom (the second among four) there is also a certain Χοροκλέους παῖς, ὑποκριτής. Paradoxically, among the different Phrynichi that are mentioned in the scholia of *The Birds* (tragic poet, actor, comic poet, general), a certain dancer Phrynichus is not included. Nevertheless, there is a reference to that “tragic dancer” in the scholia at the v. 1091 of *The Clouds*, where the scholiast judges or conveys that: τοῦτο εἰς Φρόνιχον ἀποτείνει τὸν τραγικὸν χορευτήν, ἐπειδὴ διεβάλλετο ἐπὶ μαλακία διὰ ποικιλίαν σχημάτων. Perhaps these two properties — that of the actor and of the dancer — are considered to be identical and can be used alternatively in various cases? In this case, Phrynichus that πτύσσει ὡς τις ἀλέκτωρ and whom Philocleon of *The Wasps* tries to imitate enthusiastically at the beginning of the dancing exodus (*Vesp.* 1490) should be the dancer-actor, who — according to the ancient scholia — is also the tragic poet and indeed the ancient poet for whom the positive reference is made at *The Birds*, as we have noted above: πτύσσει Φρόνιχος. παροιμία ἐστὶν ἐπὶ τῶν κακῶς τι πασχόντων, ἀπὸ Φρονίχου τοῦ τραγικοῦ. ὑποκρινομένου γὰρ αὐτοῦ τῶν Μιλησίων ἄλωσιν οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι δακρύσαντες ἐξέβαλον δεδοικότα καὶ ὑποπτήσσοντα. Things get even more blurry with a second, obviously negative, reference made to Phrynichus — or anyway, to some of the Phrynichi — in *The Wasps* (1302), where οἱ περὶ Φρόνιχον are placed with various other ὑβριστές who attended the dinner together with Philocleon, who τούτων ἀπάντων ἦν ὑβριστότατος μακροῦ. The scholia perpetuate the vagueness: Τῶν κολάκων ἂν εἴη Φρόνιχος ὁ ποιητής. ὁ δὲ Σύμμαχος φησιν, εὐλογώτατον ἂν εἴη τὸν τραγικὸν ὑποκριτὴν λέγεσθαι.

Regarding Cleidemides, when Xanthias asks why Sophocles did not claim the throne of tragedy, Heracles mentions that when Sophocles died and descended to Hades, he kissed Aeschylus, gave him his hand, conceded to him the throne incontestably and now he is ready *ἔφειδος καθεδεῖσθαι*, as Cleidemides supports (*Ran.* 791). An obscure passage, in particular in regard to the origin of the phrase that is rendered — as widely known? — to Cleidemides but also regarding the identity of Cleidemides per se, an absolutely unknown person, for whom the ancient scholia mention that there are two versions, proposed by two distinguished scholiasts: *Καλλίστρατος, ὅτι ἴσως Σοφοκλέους υἱὸς οὗτος, Ἀπολλώνιος δέ, ὅτι Σοφοκλέους ὑποκριτής.*¹¹

Always in the *Frogs* (v. 55) Dionysus compares the size of his “desire” that *ἐπάταξε τὴν καρδίαν* when he was reading *Andromeda* on board, with the height of Molon (Hercules: *Πόθος; Πόσος τις; Dionysus: Μικρός, ἤλικος Μόλων*), possibly a tall actor participating in Euripides’ plays. Molon is also mentioned by Demosthenes (29.246) as *παλαιὸς ὑποκριτής* who enacted *Phoenix* of the same poet, a play performed before 425 BC, since it is satirized in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians*. The ancient scholia, that are repeated in *Suda*, point out: *παίζει· ἔστι γὰρ μεγαλόσωμος ὁ Μόλων*, leaving at the same time open the possibility, based on a scholium by Didymos, that at this point no reference is made to Molon the actor but to a thief of the time having the same name, *ὃς ἔστι μικρὸς τὸ σῶμα.*¹²

There is also some uncertainty concerning the acting identity of Nicomachus who is mentioned, among other Athenian citizens, at Plouton’s farewell to Aeschylus and his urges for everybody to come and meet him at Hades soon (*Ran.* 1506: *καὶ δὸς τουτὶ Κλεοφῶντι φέρων / καὶ τουτὶ τοῖσι πορισταῖς, Μύρμηκι θ’ ὁμοῦ καὶ Νικομάχῳ, τόδε δ’ Ἄρχενόμῳ*). Is it about the tragic actor Nicomachus, who is mentioned second in the list of the actors who won at the Great Dionysia of Athens? Consequently his (first) victory should be dated after 447 BC and he should be overage at least when the performance of *The Frogs* took

11. See Stefanis, *DT*, No 1418 (“Cleidemides”). See also D.F. Sutton, “The Theatrical Families of Athens”, *AJPh* 108 (1987) 9-26, 15.

12. *Ibid.*, No 1738 (“Molon”). See also the interpretation of the distinction *μικρός/μέγας* with regard to the age and not to the height in Schol. Ar. *Ran* 55c (Chantry [n. 8] p. 13).

place. Or is it about some other person of that time bearing the same name and indeed Nicomachus against whom Lysias wrote his *Against Nicomachus* (30) and who after the fall of the Council of the Four Hundred, was nominated as one of the citizens responsible for the revision of Solon's constitution within a four-month period that was extended to four years because of Nicomachus' tardiness, always according to Lysias' opinion? The relevant scholia on Aristophanes' passage, with the alternative versions they provide, leave the question unanswered: Ὀνόματα κύρια. ἐπὶ πονηρία δὲ οὗτοι ἐκωμωδοῦντο. οὐ πάντως δὲ ὁ Μύρμηξ τῶν ποριστῶν ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ δὴ οἴονται ἀπὸ ἄλλης ἀρχῆς· οὐδὲ γὰρ ὁ Νικόμαχος. ἀλλὰ ἦτοι ὁ τραγικός ὑποκριτής, ἢ ὁ πολίτης, περὶ ὧν προεῖρηται.¹³

As far as Cleomachus is concerned, he is mentioned nowhere else but in Aristophanes' scholia in line 22 of *The Assembly Women* (καταλαβεῖν δ' ἡμᾶς ἔδρας ἅς Φυρόμαχος ποτ' εἶπεν), where the ancient Scholiast notes that Phyromachus — who is here referred to as “Sphyromachus” and who ψήφισμα εἰσηγήσατο, ὥστε τὰς γυναικάς καὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας χωρὶς καθέζεσθαι καὶ τὰς ἐταίρας χωρὶς τῶν ἐλευθέρων — should be corrected and become “Cleomachus” who was a tragic actor: (Γράφεται) ἅς Κλεόμαχος. (καὶ) φασὶ Κλεόμαχον τραγικὸν ὑποκριτήν. οὗτος φαίνεται ὑποκρινόμενός ποτε εἰρηκέναι ἔδρας ἐν δράματι καὶ ἐσκῶφθαι διὰ τὸ κακέμφατον.¹⁴

In the case of the sons — their number and names being dubious — of the tragic poet Carcinus, their frequent references in the surviving comedies and the respective, extremely contradictory, scholia do not converge but to their quality as “dancers” (*Vesp.* 1502, 1514; *Nub.* 1261-64; *Pax* 289, 778, 788, 792; *Thesm.* 169, 441; *Ran.* 86).¹⁵

13. See also H. van Daele in *Aristophane. Comédies*, (Budé) Tome IV, Paris 1946, 156, note 3 and Stefanis, *DT*, No 1850 (“Nicomachus”).

14. See also Stefanis, *DT*, No 1444 (“Cleomachus”). Cf. R. Ussher, *Aristophanes: Ecclesiazusae*, Oxford 1973, 145; L. Taaffe, *Aristophanes and Women*, London & New York 1993, 186 n. 20.

15. See Stefanis, *DT*, No 586 (“Datis, son of Carcinus, Thorikios”). Cf. Sutton (n. 11) 18; K.S. Rothwell, “Was Carcinus I a Tragic Playwright?”, *CPh* 89 (1994) 241-45; N.W. Slater, “The Idea of the Actor”, in J.J. Winkler and F. Zeitlin (eds), *Nothing to do with Dionysos? Athenian Drama in its Social Context*, Princeton 1990, 390-91 n. 14.

In addition, two satirized persons (Lysikrates and Likymnius in *The Birds*), to whom the ancient scholia attribute other qualities beyond that of the actor, are identified with ancient tragic actors, according to more or less debatable suppositions of more recent scholars. Should Lysikrates — who is satirized vaguely in v. 513 of *The Birds* and according to the ancient scholia was a thief and a cunning general of the Athenians¹⁶ — be, according to Wilhelm’s supposition, the same person with the tragic actor Lysikrates who acted in *Tyro* (probably by Sophocles) at the Lenaia when Archion was the archon (418 BC)?¹⁷ According to Wilamowitz’s supposition this time, another tragic poet of dubious historicity, Likymnius, the main person of an Alciphron’s “parasite” letter, is mentioned in a passage of *The Birds* (v. 1242), where, the *Λικύμνιαι βολαί*, according to the ancient scholia, probably refer to Euripides’ tragedy *Likymnius*, where *εἰσήχθη τις κεραινοβόλοῦμενος*, or to Xenocles’ tragedy bearing the same title.¹⁸

In addition to the above nominal — more or less direct — references found in the eleven extant comedies, there is one more reference in the surviving Aristophanean fragments to another tragic actor, Kallippides, one of the most famous representatives of the new acting generation in the second half of the 5th century. Although we do have a lot of details about the famous actor, both from didascalic inscriptions and other posterior literature sources (Plutarch, Aristotle, Xenophon, and Sophocles’ Biographer and others)¹⁹, Kallippides himself is conspicuous by his absence from the extant comedies of Aristophanes. Nevertheless, the presence of Kallippides²⁰ may be distinguished in an obscure and

16. Sch. Ar. Av. 513: *ὄδοτος δὲ στρατηγὸς ἐγένετο Ἀθηναίων κλέπτῃς τε καὶ πανοῦργος, διεβάλλετο ὡς δωροδόκος.*

17. See A. Wilhelm, *Urkunden dramatischer Aufführungen in Athen*, Wien 1906, 62: “Auch Lysikrates Z. 15 ist als Schauspieler unbekannt, doch zweifle ich nicht, dass auf ihn das Scholion zu Aristophanes’ Vögeln 512: *ἔνιοι δὲ τραγικὸν αὐτὸν φασὶ κλέπτῃν καὶ σφόδρα ἄσημον* geht”.

18. Regarding Wilamowitz’ “unsuccessful” effort to relate Likymnius to *Birds* 1242, see Stefanis, *DT*, No 1552 (“Likymnius”), with relevant bibliography.

19. *Ibid.*, No 1348 (“Kallippides”).

20. Kallippides was the “late actor” (*ὕστερος ὑποκριτής*), that the “previous” (*πρότερος*) actor and protagonist of Aeschylus, Mynniskos, called an “ape” (*πίθηκον*) because of his being too exaggerating (*ὡς λίαν ὑπερβάλλοντα*) in an anecdotal proverbial dispute

dubiously satirical excerpt of Aristophanes' *Skenas Katalambanousai*, where the actor is possibly satirized for his realistic way of acting ("sitting on the ground upon the floor-sweepings")²¹ and, as a consequence, for his performative offense against the splendour of some (Euripidean?) mythical hero.²²

If we now move from the Aristophanean microcosm into the greater dramatic universe of the Old Comedy, the mishap of Hegelochus, who is satirized in *The Frogs* 304 (supra), seems perhaps to repeat an already established "common place" as comic fragments by Sannyrion (*PCG* fr. 8) and Strattis (*PCG* fr. 1) reveal.²³ In addition, according to indirect sources, the actors Hegelochus and Mynniskos had also been satirized by the comic poet Plato;²⁴ in a fragment of Eubulus (*PCG* fr. 134) a meta-theatrical (and paratragic) reference is presumably made to the famed skill of the tragic actor Nikostratos in delivering messenger speeches,²⁵ while the actor Kallippides, whom we have just mentioned herein above in relation to Aristophanes' *Skenas Katalambanousai*, was possibly satiri-

that Aristotle would record several years later in his *Poetics* (1461^b34-5). Regarding Aristotle's judgment about the "mimetic exaggeration" of Kallippides and other actors of his time see G.M. Sifakis, "Looking for the Actor's Art in Aristotle", in Easterling – Hall (n. 9) 163-64.

21. According to Kassel and Austin (*PCG* fr. 490) (who print the reading of the manuscripts of Pollux): *ὡσπερ ἐν Καλλιπιδῆ / ἐπὶ τοῦ κορήματος καθέζομαι χαμαί* ("I sit on the ground upon the floor-sweepings as in *Kallippides*"). Or, according to Kock (fr. 474), who prints Brunck's emendation: *ὡσπερὲι Καλλιπιδῆς / ἐπὶ τοῦ κορήματος καθέζομαι χαμαί* ("Like the [actor] Kallippides I sit on the ground upon the floor-sweepings").
22. As regards the aesthetic and at the same time ideological and political dispute between the old and the new school of actors, represented by Mynniskos and Kallippides respectively, but also the problems of the critical restoration and interpretation of the specific Aristophanean fragment accompanied by a review of the relevant sources (n. 21) see E. Csapo, "Kallippides on the Floor-Sweeping: The Limits of Realism in Classical Acting and Performance Styles", in Easterling – Hall (n. 9) 127-147, mainly 127-28, 130-31.
23. See H.S. Spyropoulos, *Αριστοφάνης. Σάτιρα – Θέατρο*, Thessaloniki 1988, 265.
24. See Sch. Ar. *Ran.* 303, while the testimony about the parody of Mynniskos by the same poet (*κωμωδεῖται ἐπὶ Πλάτωνος ἐν Σύρρακι ὡς ὀμοφάγος οὔτως*) comes from Athenaios (*PCG* fr. 175). See Stefanis, *DT*, No 1050 ("Hegelochus").
25. See all the relevant sources in *PCG* 5, p. 268, fr. 134. Cf. Csapo, "Kallippides on the Floor-Sweeping", in Easterling – Hall (n. 9) 130-31 n. 8.

zed in a play named after him by Strattis (*PCG* fr. 11. 12. 13).²⁶ No other reference is made neither by Aristophanes nor by any other comic poet to other important tragic actors of the classical 5th century, both older or more recent (Heracleides, Saondas, Andron, Leptines, Chairestratos, Menecrates, Charidemos and others),²⁷ not even to Sophocles, who had probably — according to the ancient biographer — been an actor and protagonist of the plays of his early theatrical production,²⁸ or to Euaeon, Aeschylus' son, who had been characterized as *ΚΑΛΟΣ* in a relevant inscription by the Phiale Painter,²⁹ or to Mnesilochus, presumably Euripides' second-born son, who according to the poet's biographer, had been an actor³⁰ and whose father was a favorite target of Aristophanes' satire. Likewise, no other reference is made — neither in the extant comedies nor in the fragments and the ancient scholia — to comic actors, not even to Crates, the known comic poet of the Old Comedy, whose contribution to the forming of the comic *λόγος* and *μῦθος* was fundamental according to Aristotle (*Poet.* 5.1449^b7) and who could be satirized ruthlessly as a tragic poet (*Eq.* 539-544) but never as an actor, as

26. See Stefanis, *DT*, No. 1348 (“Kallippides”). Regarding the connection between Aristophanes' *Skenas Katalambanousai* and Strattis' *Kallippides* see Csapo, “Kallippides on the Floor-Sweeping”, in Easterling – Hall (n. 9) 130-131, n. 8: “[...] With Kassel and Austin's text we would have to imagine a character in Aristophanes' play (which, judging by the title, may have been about the theatre), who also appeared in an undignified posture in Strattis' play, and this character would surely be none other than the *komoidoumenos* Kallippides himself”. See also quite recently E. Csapo, *Actors and Icons of the Ancient Theatre*, Wiley-Blackwell 2010, 117-39. About Strattis' *Kallippides* see also D. Braund, “Strattis' *Kallippides*: The Pompous Actor from Skythia?”, in D. Harvey, J. Wilkins (eds), *The Rivals of Aristophanes: Studies in Athenian Old Comedy*, London 2000, 151-58.

27. See the corresponding entries in Stefanis, *DT*.

28. See Hall, “The Singing Actors of Antiquity”, in Easterling – Hall (n. 9) 9.

29. Regarding Euaeon as a tragic actor see R. Green, “Towards a Reconstruction of Performance Style”, in Easterling – Hall (n. 9) 95-96 and 122; M. Kaimio, “The Protagonist in Greek Tragedy”, *Arctos* 27 (1993), 22; Hall, “The Singing Actors of Antiquity”, in Easterling – Hall (n. 9) 9 and n. 23. About the artistic identity and career of Aeschylus' two sons, Euphorion II and Euaeon see also Sutton (n. 11) 12.

30. See Stefanis, *DT*, No 1727 (“Mnesilochus”); also Sutton (n. 11) 17.

he had probably been in the early years of his career (*Prolegomena de comoedia* III, 8 — Ar. Sch. *Eq.* 537a).³¹

At the same time, apart from the rare – more or less certain – nominal references to specific ancient actors, the references to actors who are not specified by name or the general references to the art of acting range from infrequent to inexistent. In *The Wasps* (1275 ff.) the chorus blesses the good fortune — ironically or not, it is not known — of Automenes for having begot *παῖδας χειροτεχνικωτάτους*, among whom the first one — anonymous — is a “wise” citharoedus, the second one — he, too, anonymous — is an *ὑποκριτῆς ἀργαλέον ὡς σοφός* and the third one, Aripbrates, a person of dubious moral character, also known from *The Knights* (1275ff).³² Apart from the above, there is no other comment. Even when there are critical references to thematic, costume-related, kinesic etc. slips that generally occur in various comic or tragic performances (see, for instance, the critical review made in the Parabasis of *The Clouds* 530ff or in *The Wasps* 58-61), these are not charged directly or indirectly to the actors but are rather attributed to the dramatic poets and/or the didaskaloi and their specific dramaturgic, thematic, aesthetic and staging-related choices.³³ Furthermore, no reference is made to playacting techniques, particularities, involuntary lapses or achievements, even in strongly metatheatrical comedies such as *The Frogs*³⁴, or to strongly metatheatrical isolated scenes such as the successive “theatre-in-theatre” sequences in *The Thesmophoriazusae*.³⁵

31. Stefanis, *DT*, No 1490 (“Crates”). About Crates’ career as an actor see also K. Schneider, “Ὑποκριτῆς”, *RE* Suppl. VIII (1956) 221.

32. The Scholia offer no further illuminating information on this specific point.

33. Cf. A. Sommerstein, “Old Comedians on Old Comedy”, in B. Zimmermann (ed.), *Antike Dramentheorien und ihre Rezeption*, Stuttgart 1992, 14-33.

34. The extreme bipolar attitude that characterizes the caricaturized outline of Aeschylus and Euripides in *The Frogs* goes beyond their political or moral choices and raises issues related to dramatic art, costume designing, kinesiology and articulation choices. Nevertheless, all these subsystems of the tragic genre are examined on a “dramatic text” level without direct or indirect references to their specific concretisations on the “performance text” level.

35. See by way of example P. Rau: “Das Tragödienspiel in den *Thesmophoriazusen*”, in H.-J. Newiger (ed.), *Aristophanes und die alte Komödie*, Darmstadt 1975, 339-56; E. Bobrick, “The Tyranny of Roles: Playacting and Privilege in Aristophanes’

Finally, no real actor, tragic or comic, is ever included as a *dramatis persona* at least in the extant eleven comedies³⁶, as it happens, on the contrary, with three tragic poets (Euripides, Agathon, Aeschylus) that incarnate five different roles in three surviving comedies (*The Acharnians*, *The Thesmophoriazusae*, *The Frogs*) or as it happens in general with many historical widely known persons — of various occupations, habits and morals — of ancient Athens that appear repeatedly under the satiric light in different extant comedies³⁷.

Which are the reasons behind this odd “discrimination”, this relative “silence” regarding ancient actors, in contrast to the tireless and systematic (at least in the comedies of the 5th century), relentlessly derisive and straightforward critical attitude of Aristophanes and in general of the Old Comedy towards the artistic and particularly the theatrical practice of the time? A critical attitude that was mostly expressed through various ways of paratragic reference: parody of the tragic style, of specific tragic thematic patterns, heroes, verses, stage effects, structural elements and of course parody of specific dramatic poets and of whole sequences extracted from specific tragic performances.³⁸ Certainly, the inconclusive evidence, the great many dubious

Thesmophoriazusae”, in G.W. Dobrov (ed.), *The City as Comedy: Society and Representation in Athenian Drama*, Chapel Hill/London 1997, 177-97, mainly 184-89.

36. See *supra*, n. 26.

37. Or as it usually happens — we would like to add — with many modern (Greek and foreign) actors who have been and are still satirized by the Greek “epitheorisis” (a kind of theatrical review, consisting of various satirical episodes, containing song, music and dance), that “modern heir to Ancient Comedy’ spirit”, according to Th. Chatzipantazis’ estimation (*Η ελληνική κωμωδία και τα πρότυπά της στον 19ο αιώνα*, Heraklion 2004, 201).

38. As regards the variety of the forms and the functions of “parody” in Aristophanes, with a plethora of examples cf. quite indicatively A.C. Schlesinger, “Indication of Parodies in Aristophanes”, *TAPhA* 67 (1936) 296-314; A.M. Komornicka, “Quelques remarques sur la parodie dans les comédies d’ Aristophane”, *QUCC* III (1967) 51-74; P. Rau, *Paratragodia: Untersuchungen einer komischen Form des Aristophanes*, München 1967, *passim*; O. Taplin, “Fifth-Century Tragedy and Comedy: A Synkrisis”, *JHS* 106 (1986) 163-74; M.G. Bonnanno, “Παρατραγωδία in Aristofane”, *Dioniso* 57 (1987) 135-67; M.S. Silk, “Aristophanic Paratragedy”, in A. Sommerstein et al. (eds.), *Tragedy, Comedy and the Polis. Papers from the Greek Drama Conference, Nottingham, 18-20 July 1990*, Bari 1993, 477-504; M. Revermann, *Comic Business. Theatricality, Dramatic Technique and Performance Contexts of Aristophanic*

and contradictory pieces of information resulting from direct and indirect sources regarding the conditions of the ancient theatrical practice, the hierarchy of the theatrical factors and the scenic systems of signs, the terms of the organization and conduction of the performances, limit us — in this case as in many others — to pure speculations. Being fully aware of the limitations summarized hereinabove, I will set forth some hypotheses and thoughts, testing and leaving open to judgment the weaknesses and the advantages of their entailments, while, at the same time, guiding the reader's choice among the different alternatives, through an elementary *reductio ad absurdum*, towards the most probable one.

First hypothesis: The relative lack of references to the actors, tragic and comic ones, and the focus of the critic-satirical interest on the dramatic poets can be explained on the basis of the traditional primary identification between the function of the actor and that of the poet-didaskalos. In other words, it is integrated and justified in the context of an old theatrical tradition, whereby, during the first long-lasting phase of its shaping and function, the poet-didaskalos and the actor of the performance — the one single actor in the beginning and the main actor afterwards — was the same person, the *τραγωδός*.³⁹ Under this perspe-

Comedy, Oxford 2006, 95-106, mainly 101-103. For the specific techniques (“Internal Undermining and Undermining through the Context”) and sub-techniques (“Substitution”, “Change of position”, “Addition”, “Detraction”, “Excess”) of Aristophanic parody, see now and through the light of modern literary theory, S. Tsitsiridis, “On Aristophanic Parody: The Parodic Techniques”, in idem (ed.), *Παραχορήγημα. Μελετήματα για το αρχαίο θέατρο προς τιμήν του καθηγητή Γρηγόρη Μ. Σηφάκη*, Heraklion 2009, 359-82.

39. In regard to the etymologic and semantic explanation of the terms *ποιητής*, *διδάσκαλος*, *τραγωδός*, *κωμικός*, *πρωταγωνιστής*, *δευτεραγωνιστής*, *τριταγωνιστής* et al., the review of the relevant sources and the most important bibliography see J.B. O'Connor, *Chapters in the History of Actors and Acting in Ancient Greece together with a Prosopographia Histrionum Graecorum*, Chicago 1908, 1-37; A. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens* (2nd ed., revised with suppl. by J. Gould and D.M. Lewis), Oxford 1988, 126-35; P. Ghiron-Bistagne, *Recherches sur les acteurs dans la Grèce antique*, Paris 1976; G.M. Sifakis, “The One-Actor Rule in Greek Tragedy”, in A. Griffiths (ed.), *Stage Directions. Essays in Ancient Drama in Honour of E. W. Handley*, (BICS Suppl. 66) London 1995, 13-24; Hall (n. 8) 45 and n. 97.

ctive, the critique performed systematically by the Old Comedy at the dramatic poets, was eventually extended to include also (both in the conscience of each comic poet and in that of the spectators of the ancient performances) the respective main tragic and comic actors, thus considering and projecting the theatrical act as an integral “whole” where its dramatic discourse and its stage performance originated from the same creative source.

The counterargument to such an assumption is the fact that already in the era of Aristophanes’ first lost or surviving comedies not only had the three-actor rule been thoroughly established in stage practice (Arist. *Poet.* 4.1449^a12-14)⁴⁰ — with possible exceptional deviations in the case of comedy⁴¹ —, but also the roles were assigned to professional actors among whom poets were not generally included. If during the 6th century BC the person of the poet and that of the actor coincided (Arist. *Rhet.* III 1.140^b23; Plut. *Sol.* 29, 6), by the time of Aeschylus and onwards it seems that there were professionals who specialized in the art of acting and were indeed further specialized in a specific dramatic genre (Plat. *Rep.* III 395a), while the existence of “theatrical families” (“of tragic poets and actors and of comic poets and actors, but rarely if ever, of both”) would help “create or at least perpetuate a situation in which one worked in tragedy or comedy, but not in both genres”.⁴² And even if it is possible that during his youth Sophocles was still acting in performances of his own plays (*Life of Sophocles*, 4 – Athen. I 20 ff.), Euripides on the contrary had never enacted a dramatic person of his own plays while it is very doubtful that Aristophanes ever participated as an actor

40. On the introduction of a third actor by Sophocles and its adoption by Aeschylus see by way of example B. Knox, *Word and Action. Essays on Ancient Theatre*, Baltimore and London 1979, ch. 3 “Aeschylus and the Third Actor”, 39-55. Cf. B. Gredley, “Greek Tragedy and the ‘Discovery’ of the Third Actor”, in J. Redmond (ed.), *Drama and the Actor: Themes in Drama 6*, Cambridge 1984, 1-14.

41. For various speculations on the exact number of actors in ancient Greek comedy cf. Pickard-Cambridge (n. 39) 149-153; C.W. Dearden: *The Stage of Aristophanes*, London 1976, 88-94; K. McLeish, *The Theatre of Aristophanes*, Essex 1980, 150-152; P. Thiery, *Aristophane. Fiction et dramaturgie*, Paris 1986, 41; D.M. MacDowell, “The Number of Speaking Actors in Old Comedy”, *CQ* 44 (1994) 325-35; C.W. Marshall, “Comic Technique and the Fourth Actor”, *CQ* 47 (1997) 77-84.

42. Sutton (n. 11) 10. Cf. O’Connor (n. 39) 39-44.

in performances of his comedies for once.⁴³ Already during the early classical period, the multiple initial competence of the dramatic poet seem to have most probably been gradually limited to the skills of a writer, secondly to the skills of a director-*chorodidaskalos*⁴⁴ and thirdly — rarely or never — to the skills of an actor.⁴⁵

Second hypothesis: More or less, we could claim that the lack of references indicates a belittlement — personal and public — of the actor as an essential factor for the theatrical act, in a hierarchical scale of theatrical agents at the top of which the poet and rather the poet-*didaskalos* is placed beyond any doubt, as it is rather indicated by the autobiographical “nautical metaphor” in the Parabasis of *The Knights*, describing the gradual evolution of a dependant oarsman into an autonomous captain.⁴⁶ Furthermore, if we combine the lack of references

43. See Ar. Schol. *Eq.* 230: ... λέγει οὖν ὅτι μηδενὸς ὑποστάντος αὐτὸν [Κλέωνα] ὑποκρίνεσθαι, αὐτὸς ὁ Ἀριστοφάνης μιμνῶσας ἑαυτὸν ὑπεκρίνατο, ἢ τῇ τρυγία χρίσας ἑαυτὸν — an assumption transmitted also by Triclinius, see N.G. Wilson (ed.), *Prolegomena de Comoedia. Scholia in Acharnenses, Equites, Nubes*, Fasc. II (containing Scholia Tricliniana in Aristophanis Equites), Groningen/Amsterdam 1969, p. 57, 230b. In regard to that matter cf. D.F. Sutton, “Dicaeopolis as Aristophanes, Aristophanes as Dicaeopolis”, *LCM* 13/7 (1988), 105-8; E. L. Bowie, “Who is Dicaeopolis?”, *JHS* 108 (1988), 183-85; H.P. Foley, “Tragedy and Politics in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians*”, *JHS* 108 (1988) 33-47; Slater (n. 14) 387-88; E. Hall, “The Theatrical Roles of Athens”, in Hall (n. 8), 48-49.

44. Who was definitely a different person from the tragic poet himself, at least in the case of posthumous performances (cf. the case of the posthumous performances of Aeschylus’ work or of Sophocles’ and Euripides’ extant tragedies *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Bacchae*) or who could be a different person even from a still living poet, as Aristophanes’ repeated co-operation with the *didaskaloi* Kallistratos and Philonides for the performance of many of his comedies testifies. See C.F. Russo, *Aristophanes. An Author for the Stage*, (revised and expanded English edition, transl. by Kevin Wren) London & New York 1994, 25-32; S. Halliwell, “Aristophanes’ Apprenticeship”, *CQ* 30 (1980) 33-45; D.M. MacDowell, “Aristophanes and Kallistratos”, *CQ* 32 (1982) 21-26; F. Perusino, “Aristofane Poeta e Didascalo”, *CL* II (1982), 137-145; T.K. Hubbard: *The Mask of Comedy. Aristophanes and the Intertextual Parabasis*, Ithaca, New York 1991, 227-30.

45. Cf. O’Connor (n. 39) 40: “Apart from this one possible instance [the actor Antiphon of the latter part of the second century A.D.] we know of no poet after Sophocles who acted in his own plays”.

46. Ar. *Eq.* 541-44: Ταῦτ’ ὀρθωδῶν διέτριβεν ἀεὶ, καὶ πρὸς τούτοισιν ἔφασκεν / ἐρέτην χρῆναι πρῶτα γενέσθαι, πρὶν πηδαλίους ἐπιχειρεῖν, / κατ’ ἐντεῦθεν προωρατεῦσαι, καὶ

regarding actors and in general the art of acting with the respective lack of references regarding other — basic nowadays — semiotic sub-systems of the theatrical act (for instance, in Old Comedy there is not one specific, nominal critical reference to a particular costume and mask makers or to specific designers or technical manufacturers of settings), we could conclude that there was a general disregard for the “exterior” components of the theatrical act in opposition to the *sine qua non* dramatic discourse and plot that claim the essential artistic and ideological primacy. An assumption that is strengthened by the — posterior, of course, to Aristophanes and Old Comedy — famous hierarchy of the constituent parts of tragedy by Aristotle, who in his *Poetics* gives undisputedly the first place to *mythos*, followed by *ethos* and *dianoia* as parts related to the content and the substance of the tragic imitation, and reserves for *opsis* the last place after *lexis* and *melos*, the three “exterior” parts that have to do with the enactment of a drama.⁴⁷ Exactly at the point where *opsis* is considered to be *ψυχαγωγικὸν μὲν, ἀτεχνότατον δὲ καὶ ἥμισυ οἰκείον τῆς ποιητικῆς ... ἔτι δὲ κυριώτερα περὶ τὴν ἀπεργασία τῶν ὄψεων ἢ τοῦ σκευοποιῶν τέχνη τῆς τῶν ποιητῶν ἐστίν*, the statement interposed by the philosopher *ἢ γὰρ τῆς τραγωδίας δύναμις καὶ ἄνευ ἀγῶνος καὶ ὑποκριτῶν ἐστίν* (6.1450^b19) seems to include the entire acting support of a dramatic text (from a linguistic, paralinguistic, kinesic, gestural and proxemic point of view)⁴⁸, in the general — of

τοὺς ἀνέμους διαθροῆσαι, / κἄτα κυβερνᾶν αὐτὸν ἐναντῶ. Cf. Ar. *Nub.* 530-32: κἀγὼ — παρθένος γὰρ ἔτ’ ἦν, κοῦκ ἐξῆν πῶ μοι τεκεῖν — / ἐξέθηγα, παῖς δ’ ἑτέρα τις λαβοῦσ’ ἀνεῖλετο, / ἕμεις δ’ ἐξεθρέψατε γενναίως κἀπαιδεύσατε. Cf. Halliwell (n. 44) 33-45; N.W. Slater, “Aristophanes’ Apprenticeship Again”, *GRBS* 30 (1989) 67-82; P. Thiery, “Deux variations sur les *Acharniens* (et *Cavaliers* 542-44)”, *CGITA* 5 (1989) 31-38; idem, *Aristophane. Théâtre complet* (textes présentés, établis et annotés par P. Thiery), Paris 1997, 1048-49.

47. Arist. *Poet.* 6.1450^b15-19. See the critical review of the widespread — based not only on the specific passage — perception regarding the “belittlement” of the theatrical performance in *Poetics*, by G.M. Sifakis, “Ο Αριστοτέλης στο θέατρο του Διονύσου”, in D.I. Iakov – E. Papazoglou (eds), *Θυμέλη. Μελέτες χαρισμένες στον καθηγητή Ν.Χ. Χουρμουζιάδη*, Heraklion 2004, 389-403. Cf. the earlier analytical review of Aristotle’s references to *opsis* by B. Marzullo, “Die visuelle Dimension des Theaters bei Aristoteles”, *Philologus* 124 (1980) 189-200, especially 191 ff.

48. Regarding the different sign categories of the theatrical system, see indicatively W. Puchner, *Η σημειολογία του θεάτρου*, Athens 1985, 31-57; idem, *Θεωρητικά Θεά-*

relative value and teleologically non necessary — category of the *ᾄψις*⁴⁹, thus perpetuating, or trying to perpetuate, in a rapidly changing political and cultural context, a collective belief that originated from the previous century and was still influencing the artistic production and perception of the mature classical period, when Old Comedy was flourishing with Aristophanes.

What could be the basic counterargument to the assumption that the quantitative and qualitative imbalance of the Old Comedy's critique of poets and actors and in general for the poetic text and its scenic representation, is based on and reflects a respective scale of value attributed to the theatrical means and agents during the entire classical period? Nothing else but the increasing contribution of the actors in the success of a performance and, in particular, the continuously greater public acknowledgement of this decisive contribution of the actors and especially the protagonists⁵⁰ in the scenic realization of the drama, which had been distanced from its improvised ritual origins and had become a work of art that could be assessed by its producers and its audience with primarily aesthetic criteria. This public acknowledgement is evidenced by the official establishment of the tragic actors' contest ca 450–447 at the Great Dionysia and some years later (ca 440–423?) at the Lenaia Festival, as well as of the comic actors' contest halfway through the 5th century, in the case of the Lenaia Festival (ca 440) and with a far greater delay, after the middle of the 4th century, in the case of the Great Dionysia (ca 328–312).⁵¹ It was when both in Athens and the newly established theatres, the contests of the actors were promoted at the

τρον, Athens 2010, 65-223.

49. Cf. Sifakis (n. 47) and idem, "Looking for the Actor's Art in Aristotle", in Easterling – Hall (n. 9) mainly 117-18 and 132.

50. Regarding the eminent role of the protagonist for the aesthetic result of an ancient tragic performance, even when the number of actors had increased to three, see Sifakis, "The One-Actor Rule in Greek Tragedy" (n. 39) 13-24.

51. About the actors' Dionysian and Lenaean, tragic and comic contests cf. O'Connor (n. 39) 45-59; R. Rehm, *Greek Tragic Theatre*, London & New York 1992, mainly 25-30; N.W. Slater: *Spectator Politics. Metatheatre and Performance in Aristophanes*, Philadelphia 2002, mainly 30-41; Th. Pappas, *Ο φιλόγελος Αριστοφάνης*, Athens 1994, 46-50; E. Csapo, N.W. Slater, *The Context of Ancient Drama*, Michigan 1995, 222, 227-228.

expense of the contest of the poets and acting has reached such a degree of flourishing that Aristotle should say, in a rather critical if not complaining mood, that: *μείζον δύνανται νῦν τῶν ποιητῶν οἱ ὑποκριταὶ* (*Rhet.* 3, 1, 1403^b33).⁵²

Third hypothesis: Diametrically opposite to the previous assumption, the discreet “tolerance” of the Old Comedy towards the actors could be indicating a general appreciation and recognition for the strenuous work of the ancient actor and the multiple skills required (reciting, singing and dancing skills, sense of rhythm and knowledge of the difficult harmonic system, great memorizing ability, diversity of styles and vocal adaptability, physical readiness for the continuous change of masks and costumes, flexibility of movements, gesticulative expressiveness, knowledge of the different acting “conventions” among the different genres but also in the framework of the same genre, e.g. play-acting for messengers, women, slaves, etc.),⁵³ but also his discreet

52. Cf. Slater (n. 15) 390: “The importance of the institution of the contests cannot be overemphasized. Their existence means that acting is now conceptually separate from the drama. Actors have an ontology in and for themselves. Standards exist by which one actor’s performance can be judged superior to another’s. If actors do not yet have the same status as the poets, they nonetheless are seen to be doing something very different – for it is now possible for a victorious actor to play in a losing play. No doubt at the beginning the prize for acting tended to go to the protagonist of the victorious play, just as today there is some association of the Oscar for best actor or actress and best picture. Nonetheless the possibility exists that a great play can be inadequately acted or that extraordinary acting can be done in inadequate plays. We first know that this happened in 418, when we have inscriptional evidence for a victorious protagonist in a losing play [Recorded in the *didascalia*, IG II2 2319. See *DFA*, 95].”

53. As regards the composite and demanding art of ancient acting cf., among many other approaches, Hall, “The Singing Actors of Antiquity”, in Easterling – Hall (n. 9) 3-38; K. Valakas, “The Use of the Body by Actors in Tragedy and Satyr-Play”, *ibid.*, 69-92; R. Green, “Towards a Reconstruction of Performance Style”, *ibid.*, 93-126; Sifakis, “Looking for the Actor’s Art in Aristotle”, *ibid.*, mainly 160-164; I. Lada-Richards, “The Subjectivity of Greek Performance”, *ibid.*, 395-418; eadem, “Drama and the Actor: Fifth-Century Perceptions of Performers and Performance”, in J.-Th. Papademetriou (ed.), *Πρακτικά. Πρώτο Πανελλήνιο και Διεθνές Συνέδριο Αρχαίας Ελληνικής Φιλολογίας (23-26 Μαΐου 1994)*, Athens 1997, 431-62; T. Lignadis, *Θεατρολογικά*, Athens 1978, 29-31; Z. Pavlovskis, “The Voice of the Actor in Greek Tragedy”, *CW* 71 (1977) 113-23; F. Jouan, “Refléxions sur le rôle du protagoniste

exemption from any responsibility concerning the aesthetic and ideological result of the performance, that virtually depended on the poet and *didaskalos* and their specific dramaturgical and stage choices, which the actor served in an unselfish, dedicated and effective way by all possible means⁵⁴. This hypothesis is reinforced by the fact that in the heyday of the Old Comedy with Aristophanes and his peers — an era preceded by the establishment of the contests among tragic actors (see protagonists) at the Great Dionysia and the Lenaia Festivals and that of the contests among comic actors at the Lenaia (*supra*) — the protagonists (at least the tragic ones) were not selected on the basis of each poet's personal and/or artistic criteria but they were designated and allocated by lot so that the possibilities of victory be shared as far as possible among the contesting dramatic poets. On one hand, such a practice implied that every protagonist should specially perform at least four main roles (if not a complex of each tragedy's most important roles)⁵⁵ at the Great Dionysia (three tragedies and one satyr-play)⁵⁶ — an exceptional performance and responsibility that corresponded to the performance and the responsibility of the Chorus. On the other hand, this practice eliminated any kind of identifications as well as any sort of long-term, fixed co-operations

tragique”, in *Théâtres et spectacles dans l'antiquité*, Leiden 1983, 63-80; M. Vetta, “La voce degli attori nel teatro attico”, in F. de Martino and A.H. Sommerstein, *Lo Spettacolo della voci*, Bari 1995, 61-78; Hall (n. 7) 30, 48-51, 321-52; G. Ley, *The Theatricality of Greek Tragedy. Playing Space and the Chorus*, Chicago/London 2007, 83-111.

54. Cf. Sifakis, “Looking for the Actor's Art in Aristotle”, in Easterling – Hall (n. 9) 163: “The same conflation ought to be recognized in the *Poetics* between dramatist and actor, its implication being that — according to Aristotle, anyway— an actor was bound by the text as far as the style of performance was concerned, from *lexis* (meaning both diction and manner of delivery) to movement and gesture, which were originally conceived by the poet/*didaskalos* and executed by the actor.”
55. Regarding the way of distribution of different dramatic roles to the three ancient actors see indicatively Sifakis (n. 39) 13–24.
56. Either the whole of each tragic tetralogy was presented during one day so that the next two tetralogies could be presented the following two days or — an assumption that seems more probable from Sophocles' time onwards — one tragedy from each of the three contesting tragic tetralogies was performed every day of the contest. Regarding this “beachtenswerten Hypothese”, owed to T.B.L. Webster (“The Order of Tragedies at the Great Dionysia”, *Hermathena* 6 [1965] 21) see A. Lesky, *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen*, Göttingen 1972, 381.

among specific poets and actors, with the latter maintaining — precisely thanks to the practice of drawing lots and the consequent role switching — a status of personal and artistic “independence” and, at the same time, a possibility of continuous trial and experimentation with their artistic and expressive skills in different dramatic environments. Furthermore, it would be quite illuminating if we knew when exactly did the trend prevail — testified by didascalic inscriptions dated from the second half of the 4th century BC — according to which the three basic actors and their respective theatrical troupes were sharing among them the plays of all the three tragic poets.⁵⁷ The result would be that the rival poets, on one hand, would equally take advantage of or sustain damage by the acting (linguistic, singing, mimic, gestural etc.) skills of the three protagonists (and those of their respective colleagues); on the other hand, the rival protagonists (and their respective colleagues) would equally take advantage of or sustain damage by the theatrical (dramaturgical, discursive, metric, musical, choreographic) skills of all three poets, since they were judged on the basis of the total number of performances they would take part in each time — written by different poets and of different thematic/aesthetic identity.⁵⁸ Furthermore, protagonists during the 5th century BC could not easily connect themselves with the interpretation of a specific role in the public conscience and could not easily link their reputation with a specific tragic performance,⁵⁹ given that ancient plays were probably performed — at least in the official context of the City Dionysia in Athens⁶⁰ — only once, with the unique exception of

57. Lesky, *ibid.* Regarding the selection and the allocation of actors see always Pickard-Cambridge (n. 39) 93-95.

58. See Sifakis (n. 38) 16-17.

59. Of course, with possible exceptions confirming the rule, as it happened in the case of Telestes — the coryphaeus or a simple member of the Chorus if not, most probably, a professional *orchestes*, in the first (or in a later) performance of the *Seven against Thebes* — Telestes who οὕτως ἦν τεχνίτης ὥστε ἐν τῷ ὀρχεῖσθαι τοὺς Ἑπτὰ ἐπὶ Θήβας φανερὰ ποιῆσαι τὰ πράγματα δι’ ὀρχήσεως (Athen. I 22a). About Telestes’ artistic identity and the specific part played by him in *Seven against Thebes*, in relation to the notorious authenticity problem of the end of the play, see recently and quite analytically K. Tsantsanoglou, “The Lament of *Seven against Thebes* and the Role of Telestes”, in Tsitsiridis (n. 38) 31-56.

60. Taking into account that Athenian tragedy was already known, esteemed and performed in Magna Graecia and Sicily since the first half of the 5th century BC.

Aeschylean tragedies' post mortem performances.⁶¹ Under these conditions, the optimization of the interpretation through repetition and through comparison with previous interpretations of the same role, were not eventually allowed, but on the other hand, the consolidation of interpreting "styles" as well as the adoption of any sort of "prima-donnism" that could provoke the public opinion and in consequence give food to the comic satire, were also limited to a great extent.⁶² Finally, to the same direction — namely, the lack of an individualized and fixed "image" of the ancient actor — seems to be pointing the fact that the aesthetic outcome of the performance was considered by the end of the 5th century as a result of the "collective" interpretation of the ancient (three-member) "troupe" that was virtually competing for a prize after the establishment of the tragic contests during the Great Dionysia and the Lenaia, with the protagonist winning a prize both for his personal performance and for the successful selection of his other fellow actors.⁶³

61. Cf. Pickard-Cambridge (n. 39) 99-100: "In the fifth century the only performances of old plays (with an exception to be noticed) were presentations of unsuccessful plays in a revised form — of comedies perhaps more frequently than of tragedies, though Euripides certainly revised and re-produced his *Hippolytus*, and possibly other plays. But the fact that the two forms of a play were known does not necessarily mean that both were performed at the City Dionysia, as the programmes of the Rural Dionysia may often have included re-productions, in their original or in revised forms, of plays which had appeared at the greater festival. To the memory of Aeschylus was accorded the singular honour of a decree that anyone who desired to do so should be allowed to produce his plays at the Dionysia". Regarding the "meta-fable" of the single-performance cf. W.M. Calder, "The Single-Performance Fallacy", *Educational Theatre Journal* 10 (1958) 237-239.

62. In regard to the — aesthetic, social, professional — development of the acting profession through the "repetitions" from the 4th century onwards and then see Slater (n. 14) 385-395, who proposes a "model" of three stages with no strict boundaries (p. 387): "First, one in which acting is judged in relation to the myth it enacts; second, one in which actors are compared and judged in similar but not identical performances; and finally a stage in which performance has become possible and comparisons can be made of actors playing precisely the same roles [...]"; Cf. Hall (n. 8) mainly 50-51; Falkner (n. 9) mainly 360-61. Regarding the development of acting during the Classical period and the performances outside Attica, cf. also now Csapo (n. 26), ch. 3 ("The Spread of Theater and the Rise of the Actor"), 83-116.

63. See Csapo (n. 22) 136: "True, only the name of the protagonist was officially recognized, but he won the prize not for his individual performance in competition

The previous assumptions would be additionally illuminated if we had the bare minimum information regarding the theatrical customs that were applying to the case of the comic actors during the early and the late classical period respectively. If, from 486 BC when comedy was included officially in the program of the Great Dionysia and till the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, the dramatic, comic and tragic contests lasted for four days in total, with five comedies competing the first day (the fourth day of the Great Dionysia, the 11th of the Elaphebolion) followed by three tragic tetralogies, one for each of the following three days, we may wonder how many were those comic actors who had to play the five consecutive leading comic roles with all their exceptional — judging by the extant comedies — textual, stage, dramatic and communicative importance? Were they equal in number with the five leading roles or could a comic actor undertake more than one leading roles offering his services to more poets? Which degree of “professionalism” was characterizing the comic actors and when was it conquered and established in the collective conscience? Was the draw also applied in the case of the comic actors with the complete alternation of the relationship between poets-actors that a similar practice entailed, as we have seen in the case of tragedy? And what happened during the period of the Peloponnesian War when the number of the enacted comedies was most probably reduced to three and the comedies were spread over three days as an afterword following the performance of a tragic tetralogy or, according to another opinion (*supra*), after the performance of three different tragedies from the three contesting tetralogies with the interposition of the performance of one of the satyr plays? Furthermore, what were the regulations as regards the comic protagonists, the way they were chosen and their responsibilities in such a case? Were there any differences at the Lenaia regarding the number of the contesting comedies? What was the exact timing of their performance vis-à-vis the tragedies? How was the order of their presentation determined? What way were the basic actors appointed, and how did the Peloponnesian War influence all the above?

with his subordinates, but for the performance of his troupe in competition with other troupes.”

We are confronted with consecutive unanswered questions that can offer no solid support to the assumptions hereinabove, nor can they illuminate the “textual” stance of Aristophanes and of the Old Comedy in general towards the artistic role and the social status actors enjoyed in the 5th century. Even more so, since we ignore the ancient “performance text” according to which it is quite possible that the paratragic and, in general, the parodic reference was extended to most if not all the semiotic sub-systems of ancient theatrical act and mainly acting itself: audio-visual references to paralinguistic, mimic, kinesic, gesticulative, costume-related signs of specific previous theatrical representations and specific previous acting performances without these references being accompanied by any respective verbal information.⁶⁴ “On the ubiquitous parody of tragedy in Old Comedy it is worth observing that, as well as indicators such as metrics and diction, there were almost certainly indications in performance which it is less possible for us to document. There was surely a tragic timbre to the voice, and a tragic poise to physical movement and posture, which comedy would also exploit. I suspect that a single gesture or a single syllable was often sufficient to indicate paratragedy. The many common features of the two genres make it easy to indicate parody by means of the differences; and this helps to account for the pervasiveness of paratragedy in Old Comedy” — notes Oliver Taplin in regard to the “intake” of the Aristophanean intertext by the ancient audience both on an acoustic and a visual level.⁶⁵

64. For the extended range of parody’s scope cf. Tsitsiridis (n. 38) 363-64, 379: “It is obvious from this definition that, apart from texts, the potential objects of parody may be mimic and gestures, paralinguistic phenomena (accent and intonation habits, manner of recitation etc.), the products of the visual arts, musical works, as well as all phenomena and behaviours of a semiotic character and social function (e.g. rituals, the ceremonies, festivals, professional codes). [...] Things get even more complicated when we take into account that in some cases parody must have included music and dance.”

65. O. Taplin, “Fifth-Century Tragedy and Comedy. A Synkrisis”, *JHS* 106 (1986) 163-174, 170. Cf. Valakas: “The use of the body by actors in tragedy and satyr-play”, in Easterling – Hall (n. 9) 84-85: “The comic portrait of Agathon in the prologue of Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazusae* (87-265) is evidence of the conscious choice on the part of dramatists and actors to make the performance of tragedy look and sound *theatrical*. A development along these lines is not surprising in a period when every

Was the actor still nostalgically identified with the poet following a distant theatrical tradition that had already passed into its next stage? Or was the actor perhaps downgraded versus the poet and, thus, “safe” and “devoid of” any substantial responsibility, in a theatrical framework that used to give top priority to the poetic myth and rank lower anything that had to do with its external, i.e. stage expression? Or, on the contrary, was the actor held in high esteem for his strenuous efforts and, as a result, protected against all accusations, fully independent from any personal and artistic craft guilds, continuously available for cooperation — thanks to the drawing of lots — with any poet, and finally free from the risks both of the artistic “decay” and the artistic “reputation”, that the acting art would carry from the first decades of the 4th century with the establishment of the repetition of the “old” performances and the progressive connection of the actors with certain roles?⁶⁶ In any case, almost unharmed by the caustic arrows of the comic satire but also deprived of its revelatory — even often distorting — eloquence.

original play and performance would — almost inevitably — echo and allude to, or even parody, previous dramatic texts and acting techniques used in all dramatic genres, which by this time were identifiable as the long-standing traditions of a solid institution.” Regarding the possible ways of the theatrical intertextuality on an audio-visual level see in general M. Issacharoff: *Le spectacle du discours*, Paris 1985, 57-65 (chapter “L’intertextualité au théâtre”), mainly 62-65.

66. See Slater (n. 15) 395, where the actor Polos is mentioned in a way of example representing the new status quo of the 4th century. The above mentioned actor — considered to be the inventor of “method acting” — stayed memorable for his enactment of Oedipus and of course for his enactment of Sophocles’ Electra. In regard to the synchronic and diachronic effect that some specific tragic and comic actors from the 4th century and after had on the conscience of the audience and the literature tradition see Easterling, “Actor as Icon”, in Easterling – Hall (n. 9) 327-41.