Designs of ritual:
The City Dionysia of fifth-century Athens

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THE STUDY OF RITUAL must address the meta-level of designs through which particular rituals are organized.[1] Rituals are schemes of practice and action that are designed culturally to accomplish a variety of purposes less easily done through other means. Designs of ritual organize the practice of ritual into coherent and continuous patterns. Without design, ritual structures and processes could not exist. The idea of design itself depends on logic. I am not referring to the logic of philosophy and mathematics, but rather to the logics of phenomena. The logics of phenomena refer here to the principled ways in which certain social phenomena are intentionally ordered and disordered as practice (and practiced as ordering and disordering). A given ritual is activated, first and foremost, by the practice of its logic(s) of organizational design. In this work I will be concerned primarily with the design that I call *modelling*; though some mention will also be made of the design of *presentation* (I have discussed these in detail in Handelman 1998).[2]

My focus here is on rituals that are designed culturally to change the world outside these events some way. This is a key issue in ritual studies since it implies that ritual must have a special ontological status in the world that enables ritual to act on that world. In the case of rituals that model, that impact on the world outside themselves, their ontological status is to be designed as worlds unto themselves.

Ritual was one of the signal inventions of humankind, in that people *imagined* the conditions through which they became causal agents in relation to cosmic forces, however they conceived of these. Rituals were designed, one could say, in a great variety of social orders to deliberately change members of society, the

1   I am indebted to Hans Dieter Betz, Synnøve des Bouvrie, Christiano Grottanelli, David Shulman and Ithamar Gruenwald for their comments on an earlier version of this essay.

2   There I argue for doing away altogether with the term 'ritual'. However, here I continue to write of ritual for the sake of convenience.

relationships of society to cosmos, and so forth. The logics of ritual design then become a crucial issue in understanding how ritual can make change within itself through its own operations.

This emphasis on logics of design is intended to focus attention on the internal organization of ritual. I want to get away from the dominant notion in anthropology that all ritual is first and foremost representation—an expression of, a reflection of, social and cultural order. Of course, these orders invent rituals, but at least certain forms of ritual are invented intentionally to act on the very orders that create them. Such rituals, then, seem to have a relative autonomy from the orders that create them. This epistemological autonomy may be a necessary condition for the ritual to impact on the society outside itself. The design of a ritual may have a systemic organization that is crucial to enabling change to be made within the ritual itself. So, too, sequencing may be important in the practice of a ritual design intended to make change through its own practice.

The bulk of this paper is devoted to the City Dionysia of fifth-century B.C.E. Athens. In my analytical terms, the design of the City Dionysia is modular, combining modules of modelling and presentation. Nonetheless one can identify strands of causal design in the Dionysia that braided together many of the modules, and, so, shaped the festival systemically. In my view, the designs of City Dionysia were intended in large measure to make certain changes in its participants. I precede the discussion of this ritual with a brief exposition of what I intend by modelling and presentation.

Designs of ritual

Ritual phenomena tend to be relatively closed phenomenal worlds that totalize themselves. If so, then a major epistemological issue is how rituals organize themselves within their totality. If the structure of intentionality of a 'little world' of ritual is to transform someone or something within itself, through its own operation, how might this little world be designed to accomplish this? Put differently, if the lived-in world is a totality, what sort of logic of design does it take to intentionally *change* this totality? My sense is that it takes another totality, a differently designed world, to operate on the first. However, the first world, the lived-in world will be the cosmological foundation-for-form of the second world. The second totality, then, is constructed and organized as a ritual that is a micro-cosm of the first totality. I call such a microcosm an event or ritual that models the lived-in world.

The ritual that models the lived-in world has the following characteristics. The ritual selects cosmic principles and themes of the lived-in world outside the ritual for use within the ritual. This specialized microcosm of ritual is aimed intention-

ally at the broader lived-in world. Yet, this little world or model of ritual has a high degree of autonomy from the lived-in world because it is constituted within itself through directives and relationships that give it a mandate to continue to operate once it has been started. In other words, a functioning, totalizing world is built into the ritual; and so the autonomy of the ritual is a function of its design.

The ritual that models the lived-in world is purposive, establishing relationships between goals and the means to accomplish them. Put otherwise, the structure of intentionality of the model is teleological—its goals are integral to its own existence. (This, indeed, is why the model exists.) Thus, the change or transformation that the model is intended to make is directed. Such a ritual of modelling previews a hypothetical condition of the future that will be made to come into being through the operation of the ritual; and it provides procedures to actualize this act of the cultural imagination. Therefore, the ritual of modelling has predictive capacities—it contains its own futures within itself. Indeed, this kind of ritual has stipulated control over processes of causality (however these ideas are culturally constructed).

The model's capacity for prediction and its control over causality are necessary in order that the correct outcome is produced. To ensure that this occurs, the ritual should regulate itself to a degree, so that it monitors its own progression and progress towards the accomplishment of its goal. In systemic terms, this can be described as processes of feedback, through which the ongoing progression of the ritual sequence is effected by the ongoing progression of the ritual sequence.

The ritual that models has built into itself incompatible, contradictory, or conflicting states of existence, that it has to synthesize or solve through its own practice. Thus a ritual of healing changes the sick patient into a healthier one; a ritual of fertility turns the infertile into the fertile; a ritual to renew the cosmos turns entropy into regeneration, and so forth. Put otherwise, this kind of ritual does transformative work within itself. It does not simply symbolize or validate change that has taken place elsewhere through different means. By transformation I mean here that one kind of person or phenomenon is made over into another— the change is understood as an essential one in the being of the person or in the condition of the cosmos.

Transformation may require that uncertainty is introduced into the presumed stability of the person or phenomenon that is to be changed. This constitutes the destabilization of certainty, as if a question mark were placed within the person to be changed, opening that person to interior change. This may be understood as dangerous, since taking someone or something apart is to tamper with ontological premises as to how the cosmos is constituted. However, not any outcome of transformation will do. Quite the opposite. Such rituals are designed to produce the

correct or desired outcome. Therefore, care is given to checking the direction and progression of the ritual while it is in progress.

In comparison, rituals that present the lived-in world have a radically different logic of design. We know them best, perhaps, from modern national and civic events. Their comparative directness of themselves in display is striking. Their hallmarks are declaratives or imperatives, but rarely interrogatives. They are statements and mirror-images of the lived in world. They tend to a plenitude of orderliness, the product of the oversignification of exactness and replication in detail. Their expositions may well be vivid and vibrant, and they excite emotion and evoke sentiment. Yet it is questionable whether they have the capacities to make controlled change in the lived-in world.

The contrast drawn here is between rituals that are predicted as intentional causal schemes in terms of their internal design of controlled transformation, and rituals that are predicated as proclamations of social order whose effects (intended or not) on the lived-in world are very uncertain. In contrast to the uncertainty that is within (and controlled by) the design of the ritual that models, the uncertainty in the ritual of presentation is located at the interface of the ritual and the lived-in world. (Thus, when the ritual of presentation generates uncertainty, this is not controlled by the event itself. Instead, external intervention may well be needed to restore stability.) The ritual of presentation holds up a mirror to the lived-in world, selectively reflecting versions of the latter with greater clarity and precision than is usually available outside such ritual. These rituals deal in the substantiation of affirmation. They are, in the main, societal icons. The ritual of presentation may be of profound significance, but it is comparatively simple in the logic of its design, in its constitution and operation, and so in the kinds of goals it can accomplish.

In my theoretical perspective, the respective designs of modelling and presentation are associated with different kinds of social orders, broadly conceived—tribal societies on the one hand and state societies on the other. All social orders are concerned to make change occur in controlled and predictive ways; and so to have a shaping influence on things to come. The means through which they try to make change are directed through a great variety of modalities of organization. Rituals of modelling were such a great invention in the archaic history of human-kind precisely because they tried to control futures when other means were not available. However, my concerns here are not historical as such. I merely point out that humans are active beings in how they relate to their environment, to disease, to futures, to social relationships, and so forth. In tribal social orders, rituals of modelling are crucial to these endeavors and to so many more.

State orders, as they developed historically and in the modern age, have used proto-bureaucratic and bureaucratic means of modelling to do what ritual is in-tended to do in tribal orders. I will not enter into this here. Ritual, in state orders,

becomes more presentational in its logic; more concerned with mirroring social order in selected ways in order to make certain impressions on a public than in being used as an agent to act on the world in predictive, controlled ways. I am not saying that there is a neat division of labor in how the logics of ritual design relate to different kinds of social order. I am saying that there are strong tendencies in the directions I am outlining.

Braided causalities: the City Dionysia of fifth-century Athens

I have argued that one must attend to the logics of ritual design in order to comprehend what any given ritual form is capable of accomplishing. I suggested that in order to make change happen in the world, to deliberately reconstitute this world (however it is understood), the rituals concerned will be put together as intentional causal schemes, organized teleologically and systemically.

Modeling highlights the significance of sequencing in ritual action in the sense that what comes before may effect and affect what comes after, or, may enable what comes after to emerge in relation to what comes before. However, the segments of a ritual sequence may themselves be organized as autonomous or relatively autonomous segments. That is, they may be *modular*. In turn, each ritual module may have its own internal logic of design, of organization; and the module may keep this when it is coupled to others. Or, of course, in becoming connected to other segments of the ritual, the internal logic of the module may be altered.

Thus a ritual composed of segments may have an overarching logic of design, of intentionality that is continuous throughout, or it may move through a series of different logics that are related to the various segments of its over-all composition. In turn, a segment that is organized to do something in particular may then have a different internal logic of design from the segments to which it is coupled. Or, perhaps the arrangement and organization of segments may point to their high degrees of autonomy from one another. Their conjunction, then, may reflect the happenstance or the particular circumstances—historical, social, political—of their co-presence in a particular configuration of events that have relatively little to do with one another.

Nonetheless, my working premise tends to be the following: events that are brought into conjunction with one another (for whatever reasons) tend to effect one another in ways that then alter the culturally stipulated relationships between them. The emergent relationships between these events (as these events become segments or 'parts' of a more comprehensive ritual complex) have little to do with the reasons and reasoning that brought them into conjunction in the first instance. Therefore knowing the social-historical conditions and/or the etymological derivations that indicate how the connections among ritual 'parts' were forged in the

first instance will tell us little of how they operate in relation to one another. In the same vein, postulating the evolution of a phenomenon will tell us next to nothing about the logic through which its practice is constituted and how it operates, whether today or 2500 years ago.

In terms of the study of ritual, the most productive starting-point for analysis is likely the one that is the most comprehensive—if we assume that all of the events that are located within a ritual complex are related to one another, then we can think about conceptualizing their interrelationships, and so, perhaps, rethink what the ritual complex was or is about. If, however, our concern is mainly or only about a particular event in the complex, then we are less likely to consider further how this event is connected to others; what the status of the event is in relation to others; and whether its logic of design contributes something significant to the over all ritual complex. Nonetheless, if a ritual complex is characterized by modularity, then each module should be analyzed separately as well as all of the modules of the ritual complex together.

These kinds of problematic seem to me especially germane to the study of the 'festivals' of ancient Greece. Nonetheless, in keeping with the study of literary genres, tragedy, the satyr play, and comedy are studied separately from one another. Sacrifice (such a prevalent phenomenon in the ancient world) is much its own subject of study, and so forth. The study of the festivals of classical Athens— like the Anthesteria and the City Dionysia—slips easily into the analytical mode of the event as representation.[3] In other words, into the analysis of symbolism that is grounded in cultural and social orders outside of the event itself, yet often without attended to the logic of design of the very event whose symbolism is under discussion. Such a perspective bypasses and ignores the very ritual within and through which symbolism is shaped and gains significance. (See Handelman 1998:xxi–xxix, for other aspects of these issues). First and foremost, the symbolism in an event relates to the very ritual context within which it appears. This relationship is

3   Padel's (1995:169) comment that 'Before the fourth century, Greeks have no separate category, "metaphorical"', is fascinating in relation to causality and representation. She continues, 'We cannot speak of a relationship, or slippage, between literal and metaphorical, concrete and abstract meanings... These are not two meanings "fused" together, for they have not yet been seen as distinct from each other... Mental, you might say, *is* physical.' (Emphasis in original). Our own conception of metaphor is close to that of symbol as representation, symbol as something that stands in place of something else, thereby symbolizing or representing that which is absent. If metaphor as a category was absent in fifth-century Greece, then, for example, seeing and saying were indeed doing, no less than, for example, sacrificing. If the recognition of metaphor was absent, what did this say about representation? This suggests that whatever was done within ritual had implications of causality, bringing into being whatever was denoted. Put otherwise, action signified itself recursively as action, rather than being 'symbolic' in our conventional sense. In my terms, then, ritual necessarily modelled the world in terms of cause-and-effect relationships.

the reason that the event is conceived and practiced as it is. We then can ask how the event is related to cultural and social orders, thereby adressing how the symbols involved are related to and represent these orders. Nonetheless, in order to do this, we must consider the logic of design of the event which, in my terms, imagines, generates, and regulates the configuring of symbolism and its practice within the event. In the first instance, therefore, it is the event, the ritual, which must be addressed analytically, rather than utilizing the broader social and cultural orders to do this for us.

This kind of work seems distinctly lacking in studies of ancient Greece. Of course, the event or ritual, or the module for that matter, may well be organized in a way that highlights selective representations.[4] The City Dionysia, I think, combined modules of systemic, causal modelling on the one hand, and modules of presentation on the other; though the 'length', as it were, of the causal relationships varied. Or, perhaps it is more accurate to say that causal relationships were braided with one another in a dense web of causality. Among these, the dramas of the Dionysia constituted profound moments of causal change that were the innards (the *splanchna*, as it were) of the whole ritual complex, and that were intended to transform the interiors of the spectators. (Though the entire ritual complex was much concerned with the opening of interiorities to one another, and to their interpenetration.) To a significant degree, one may argue that the festival modelled the State, cosmologically, politically, and socially; and that it was through this modelling that the State was able to act on itself through a variety of modalities during the festival.

My discussion here of the City Dionysia of Athens is intended to put these kinds of issues on the scholarly agenda. Neither a classicist nor a scholar of Greece, my approach is schematic. The issues, nonetheless, are serious. Perhaps through ideas of making change systemically, of sequencing and modularity, the City Dionysia will begin to receive the more holistic attention it deserves.

The City Dionysia in fifth-century Athens

I will recapitulate certain of the organizational preparations for the festival, followed by the order of segments that can be considered integral to the City Dionysia, discussing the implications of the designs of these segments and their relationships to one another. In this regard it is more accurate to speak of strands of causality braided together to constitute systemic modelling among festival modules, than it is to treat these modules as integrated into a seamless unity of

4   Or, in my analytical terms, presentations or re-presentations. See the introductory section of this
     paper.

ritual. I will identify five strands of causal design that were crucial to shaping the modelling of the State in the Dionysia. But I also will point to segments of presentation within this configuration.

Preparations for the City Dionysia

Of the festivals of classical Athens the City Dionysia is best known among scholars for the enactment of tragedies and comedies composed especially for this occasion, and performed only *once* (during the festival) within Athens itself. The festival was held during the early Spring. The previous summer the *archon eponymous*, the civic head of the city, chose three poets to write the tragedies for the festival. Each of the three poets composed three tragedies and one satyr play (I refer to the four plays together as a group or tetralogy). The three groups of plays competed with one another. It is likely that the prize was awarded to an entire group of four plays, rather than for the excellence of a single play. In addition the *archon* chose five poets to write comedies which again would compete with one another in the festival. The criteria that he used to make his choices are not known. The State chose three protagonists, actors, each of whom would play the central character in a full group of four plays composed by one of the poets. The three protagonists were assigned to the three poets by lot (Pickard-Cambridge 1953:84, 94–95). It is less clear how the five protagonists who acted in the comedies were chosen. The order of appearance of the three groups of tragedies was also decided by lot (Pickard-Cambridge 1953:100).

Each poet, tragic and comedic, was granted a chorus paid for by the State, though much of the financial burden for training, lodging, and costuming each chorus (the members of which sang and danced during the play) was borne by the *choregos*, a wealthy citizen chosen by the *archon*. In the dramatic competitions—tragedy and comedy—awards were given to the playwright for the best play (in tragedy, likely for the best group of plays), and to the protagonist and *choregos*.[5]

During much of the fifth century, following the reforms of Kleisthenes, the State was divided into ten tribes.[6] The officials of the entire State (like the *archon*

5   The winners were given the honor of having their names inscribed on the official list of Athenian victors. This included the names of victors in the Olympic competitions—in other words, the list that contained the names of those who had made great contributions to the *polis*.

6   Under the Kleisthenic reforms, the new administrative centres for each group of local inhabitants were assigned among thirty new *trittyes*, each of which included the three-fold division of Attica—city, coast, hills. Then the *trittyes* were assigned by lot to the ten tribes. Thus, each tribe contained members from all three areas of Attica. (Male) citizens gave up their patronyms and took demotic names (Manville 1990:189–192). Each tribe, then, was representative of the major sectors of the population of the State; and the tribes were thought of as equals who constituted the State.

eponymous) were often selected by lot, and were expected to administer their respective spheres of operation impartially, transcending, as it were, the tribal lines of division built into the social organization of the State. The administrators reported to the Council of Five Hundred (*boule*) which contained fifty members from each tribe. The Council met regularly to debate issues of the day and to take decisions; and reported in turn to the popular assembly (*ekklesia*) which all citizens were eligible to attend and to participate in.

According to Pickard-Cambridge (1953:96–99), the judges for the dramatic contests were chosen in the following way. The Council drew up a list of names from the ten tribes. Apparently the *choregoi* were present and had a say in this listing of names. The names selected from each tribe were placed in a common urn, which was sealed by Council officials and by the *choregoi*. The ten urns were put in the Acropolis. Before the dramatic contests were to begin, the ten urns were placed in the Theatre of Dionysos, and the *archon* drew one name from each, thereby ensuring that a representative of each tribe would participate in the judging. The judges then swore an oath to render an impartial verdict. It is not clear whether at the end of a competition the judges ranked the groups of plays (in tragedy) or inscribed only their choice of winner. In any case the logic is clear. The tablets of the ten judges were placed in an urn, from which the *archon* chose five to decide the winner (or, perhaps the *archon* kept choosing tablets until there was a majority vote) (Pickard-Cambridge 1953:99, Walton 1980:76). Indeed, the use of lots and the selection of victors were techniques that highly complemented one another on a single continuum of decision-making that may be likened to 'divination'.

The use of lots and the method of choosing of judges are commonly explained as techniques of the State for avoiding favoritism and corruption. This point is substantial; yet it obscures how the State modelled itself through the festival. Within this model the State constructed itself as superior, judicial, and impartial in relation to its parts, the tribes. Within the festival model, the level of the city-state encompassed the incipient divisions built into itself. Though this may appear self-evident and teleological, it is precisely the latter that must be stressed. It is the encompassing and therefore hierarchical relationship of city to tribe that enabled the city to withstand symbolic division as a threat to its unity.[7] These divisions were especially exacerbated in the dithyramb competition, based on the unit of tribe; and perhaps in the tragedies themselves, whose themes often drove the private sphere of the household (and the relationships between the sexes) against the rock of state (Humphreys 1983:69–75). The division of the holism of the State

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7   Handelman 1998:116–135, analyzes the Palio of Siena as an example of how processes of division may be organized to generate unity.

into tribes was prominent in the architectonics of seating, indeed of presence within the theatre of Dionysos, as I discuss further on.

In terms of modelling, the use of chance in selection may point to a configuration quite different from one that emphasizes ethics. This depends on how seriously Attic Greeks took their cosmos and, of course, their gods. By most accounts, they did.[8] By most accounts, too, chance played a small role in ancient Greek conceptions of an organic cosmos characterized by the connectivity and interdependence of its elements. In these organic worlds nothing was arbitrary— there was a necessity for everything that existed (Sambursky 1987:159–164). Cause was related continuously (and so, intergenerationally, historically) to effect, even as effect turned into cause. Dionysos, then, was a causal force. The festival model was dedicated to his *presence*, to making him present in the city; and the use of lots and urns speaks to the intervention of the deity. The victors in the dramatic competitions were chosen finally, in this sense, by Dionysos. Within the model, outcomes may have had divinatory qualities, perhaps no less than the entrails of sacrificial animals.

Thus far, I have focused on preparations of the city or state level of organization. However, one major competition of the festival was contributed by the lower, encompassed level of   tribes. This was the contest of lyrical choruses, the dithyrambs (Pickard-Cambridge 1962). Each tribe contributed men and boys to constitute its two choruses and a *choregos* to finance them. However, many of the rules of allotment and judging that held for the dramas likely applied to those of the dithyrambs (Pickard-Cambridge 1953:99).

In these procedures of allotment, two strands of causality may begin to be discerned in the organization of the festival model, though their effects would only be felt during the Dionysia itself. The first was put into place by the adjudicating apparatus upon which the contests necessarily depended. The adjudication mech-

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8   Nonetheless, not a few scholars state that Athenian democracy secularized society; and so that religion supplied no more than institutionalized frameworks within which new, secular expressive forms—like that of tragic poetry and theatre—emerged (*e.g.* Friedrich 1998:272). Thus, rituals atrophied under democratic conditions, and became no more than an expressive genre, at the best used to mobilize demonstrations of Durkheimian-like solidarity. Such thinking itself expresses the bias of literary analysis that favors the study of Greek tragedy as a literary genre, while turning the capacities of ritual into a narrow and restrictive caricature of its spectrum of designs, cultural and analytical (see Friedrich 1998:275, for such a perspective). Such perspectives deny the existence of effective, transformative power in any ritual design, in order to strengthen the cachet of literary genre. Considering Greek tragedy as a special form of ritual would be more rewarding and less ideologically obfuscating for the relationship between tragic theatre and the ritual designs of the Dionysia, and the relationship between them and the State. I should add that it was less likely for ritual to be secularized so long as the ancient Greeks perceived themselves to exist within a holistic, organic cosmos, as Louis Dumont (1977) has argued more generally.

anism connected the goals of the competition to their outcomes. The judging caused the contests to be enacted, so as to reach those goals specified in the premises of the contests. On the organizational level of the festival, attaining these goals were the effects of the contests. Teleology was crucial to these segments, since the goals embedded in the outset were those realized in the end. Moreover, the adjudication of the performances produced verdicts that, in a strong sense, brought the enactments themselves into line with those goals. Those performances judged the best then became those that were closest to the goals of the adjudication. Put otherwise, the verdicts of the judges (as well as the method used to produce these) *looped back* recursively to reproduce the goals of the contests that were embedded in the premises of the festival model. Perhaps the outcomes modified the goals themselves from year to year. In any case, the segments of drama and of dithyramb in the Dionysia were organized *systemically.*

The second strand of causality related the lower level of the tribes to the upper level of the State, looping them together. Within the festival model the lower level of tribes took apart the State symbolically during the dithyramb contest, while this opposition was contained by the pristine impartiality of the higher State level. In this way the State level, the whole, would be reproduced through the opposition among its parts, the tribes. Put otherwise, within the festival model the state *caused* the opposition among its tribes to reproduce its own encompassing power. Simultaneously, as the State set in place a micro-system for generating opposition within itself inside the model in order to cause certain changes to happen—through victory in contests—it also set in place its own reproduction through these very changes. These two loops of causality—the teleological relationship between goals and effects through the dramas on the one hand, and that between levels of the State on the other—were intertwined, each braided with the other, generating that which I would call a *web of causality* which was crucial to the performance of the festival.

The plays in the contests were introduced to the public in the *proagon,* held during the week preceding the festival. In the *proagon* the playwrights introduced the subjects of their plays, and the actors, choruses and *choregoi* (Walton 1980: 75). Formally, the *proagon* may appear outside the festival itself. Yet, in terms of the coming argument, the symmetry between the *proagon,* the preview before the festival and the review, the inquest that was held after the festival is significant (*e.g.* Parke 1977:135, Henderson 1990:287). I will discuss this further on. The relationship between *proagon* and inquest constituted a third causal loop of the model, braided through the other two.

Dionysos

The City Dionysia was held under the auspices of Dionysos, and the dramatic contests were held in his theatre near to his temple. Dionysos is often described by scholars as the god who dissolves boundaries, perhaps as the god who best transforms relationships between selfness and otherness, opening ways for the mimetic self to become other within its own interiority. Dionysos could be characterized as a god of self-transformation, the god whose interiority is characterized by transformation (*metabole*). My concern here is how Dionysos was characterized within the festival model of the Dionysia; and for this there are at least indicators of his transformative capacities.

Myths of Dionysos say that he was twice-born, once from a human mother and once from his father, Zeus, thereby spanning and containing within himself multiple possibilities of gender. In Orphic myth he was sacrificed by the Titans, taken apart, and cooked. In this sacrifice the middleness of his interiority, his innards (*splanchna*) which contained the seat of emotion/cognition, were exteriorized and exposed to public viewing and knowledge. However, the Titans inverted the correct ritual order for cooking the body parts, inadvertently giving birth to human beings from the ashes of Dionysos' body (Bruit Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel 1992:173). Just as human beings are born from the exteriorized remains of Dionysos so too they contain his potentialities within themselves. Thus he resonates within them and takes them apart within themselves by filling their interiors with madness—thus, his female followers (the maenads or *bacchae*) in myth and to a degree in life, and, in a dionysic mode, not a few of the characters in the tragic theatre of the City Dionysia. *Mania* as a form of transformation was especially connected to him (Schlesier 1990:93).

The theatre of Dionysos

Two aspects are especially relevant here—the structuring of areas of the theatre complex, and the seating arrangements for the spectators (who were by all accounts more spectator/participants than they were viewer/listeners). As I will discuss, regions of the theatre complex put in place a fourth strand of the causal web. As well, the structure of seating in the theatre placed the spectator/participants within the braiding of levels between State and tribes inside the festival model.

There is little doubt that Dionysos was present in his theatre during the festival, in the form of his wooden figure usually kept in his adjacent temple. Elsewhere (in the deme theatre of Ikarion), Dionysus was the preeminent spectator, and humans took second place (Wiles 1997:29). The deme theatre at Thorikos was located

between the temple of Dionysos and the altar. 'The statue of the god inside the temple is thus the honorific spectator, and the play must seem to be given for his benefit as much as for the audience.... in Athens the temple [of Dionysos] lay beneath the playing area, and for performances the statue was moved to the centre of the auditorium in order to view the play performed in the god's honour' (Wiles 1997:33). So, too, Dionysos and his priest had pride of place in the audience (Padel 1990:340).

The theatre of Dionysos itself modelled central spaces of the city. The *agora*, the centre of meeting and commerce, had once functioned as a theatre. In classical times, argues Padel (1990:337), the theatre had certain analogies to the agora— 'both were meeting places, where male citizens felt, and saw themselves as, part of the civic body; where important speeches were set before them.' Within the festival model, the agora entered the theatre, and the theatre inside the city encompassed the agora within the city, but now under the auspices of Dionysos. The theatre thereby contained the city and was capable of exposing the interiority of the city and of its citizens. In a further sense, the imaginary of the theatre exteriorized potential turmoils that could be generated by life in the city; by the competitive and aggressive character of interaction in the public domain; by the highly public character of such interaction that often was played out before mass audiences (Humphreys 1983:68).[9]

Writing of the deme theatre at Epidaurus, Wiles (1997:41) comments that, 'the harmonious proportions of the theatre are related to the Asclepian premiss that the elements of a sick body are in a state of disharmony, and that a cure for the spirit is necessary for a cure of the body.' The logic of design of this theatre (and perhaps that of Dionysos in Athens) was that of a medium for the evocation of 'illness', together with its attendant emotions (within the body politic); and, so, for ritual 'healing' of some kind (*i.e.* Des Bouvrie 1993:96). Yet, *contra* Aristotelian catharsis, this healing effect may have been more in the way of a preparation for everyday life than its cleansing. I will expand briefly on this point at the end of this essay. The important point at the moment is that the theatre of Dionysos (and that which took place within it) likely was designed to *act on* the worlds of Athenians, to deliberately shape these worlds in certain ways. The theatre had a deliberate *causal* thrust in its design.

In this regard, the north-south axis of the theatre is significant. Wiles (1997:57) comments that, 'The line which runs through the centre of the auditorium where the priest [of Dionysos] and the statue [of Dionysos] were located, through the centre of the *orchestra* and through the central doorway points to the great sacri-

9   Humphreys (1983:68) points to audiences of 'several thousand in the Assembly, 500 in the Council, 201 in the smallest jury.'

ficial altar some forty metres beyond... The performance is physically located
between the god and the sacrifice in his honour.' This axis line also transversed the
focal middleness of the *thymele* upon which, Wiles (1997:76) suggests, libations
were poured, thereby locating Dionysos (as god of wine) at the symbolic centre of
the performance, one which may have had associations with an earth-navel
(omphalos). In Wiles' view, the floor of the *orchestra* may have been a midpoint
on the vertical axis between the gods of the underworld and the Olympians. These
centripetalities also may have had associations with the prevalent idea of the
human body as microcosm, with its middle as the seat of feeling/thinking (Padel
1992). This trajectory of thought would place Dionysos within each human body
in the theatre, within its middleness, opening this to his transformative powers
(*contra* Winkler 1985:51). Within the festival model of the Dionysia the spectator/
participants were placed within a cosmic, causal nexus that was intimately related
to the structure and topology of the city. The relationships of this nexus opened
them to the power of Dionysos. Through this nexus flowed the braided loops of
causality.

The north-south axis also passed through the *skene*. Padel (1990:358) argues
that the *skene* (the backdrop, a painted house with doors in front of which the
actors performed) 'and what it stands for, is an image of the unseen interior of a
human being.' The *skene*, then, contained a doorway into the hidden interiority
and the horizons of possibility of selfness and otherness that, contracted within the
cosmic nexus, opened into a continuum that stretched from Olympia to the inner
recesses of the human soul.[10]

In my view, this cosmic nexus within the theatre was activated through sacrifice
—and here the north-south axis aligning god and altar is central. In general, my
understanding of sacrifice is that of simultaneous destruction and creation
(Kapferer 1997 goes into this logic in depth). Sacrifice is a creative act, the turning
of one thing or being into something else, a quintessential act of transformation.
It should be obvious, for example, that it is the very act itself of sacrifice that trans-
forms and endows the entrails of a sacrificial animal with divinatory power. The
animal gives the gift of its death so that another configuration of life will come into
being. (This is why the sacrificial animal so often must willingly assent to its own
death—otherwise the gift of death is not created.)

Sacrifice was so prominent in Greek public and household life. Any significant
event or transition was preceded by sacrifice. Sacrifice seemed to open the way into
another kind of activity, into another mind-set—perhaps sacrifice created the

10 Padel compares the door of the *skene* to the open mouth of the mask, the mask's open door
    through which speech comes from one's hidden interiority; again, a relationship of the micro-
    cosm of the human body and macrocosm.

opening through which something else, something other, could come into existence, whether this was self-transformation or the transformation of otherness (Handelman 2002). Thus the presence of Dionysos in his theatre could not be taken for granted. The way to his presence had to be activated, and this likely was done through sacrifice. My guess is that within the theatre his presence was most required within the performance space, the region of the cosmic nexus of middleness, of the human and the divine, of microcosm and macrocosm. Henrichs (1993:40) states that, 'If it was true that Dionysos was perceived in antiquity essentially as an epiphanic god who revealed himself in concrete physical manifestations,' then, 'to accept Dionysos was tantamount to being in the presence of the god...' If so, then the presence of Dionysos in his theatre was crucial to the activation of the latter, just as sacrifice was crucial to bringing Dionysos to his theatre.

Sacrifice was the fourth strand of causality within the festival model. Sacrifice opened cosmic levels to the innerness of audience selves. The effects of this opening intertwined with the casual strand that connected the goals of the festival to its outcomes, to the judges and their verdicts.

Within the space of performance, transformative possibilities were activated in order to effect changes in the spectators. For this to be happen, the performers and the spectator/participants had to be opened to the dionysian, to the presence of the deity within them. In the alignment of god and altar, transformation came into being between the deity and the sacrifice to the deity—that is, within the space for performance. The drama was more than the dramatic—it was ritual that took dramatic form for particular purposes within the Athenian context. Indeed, unless the drama is understood as ritual (or as segments within more comprehensive ritual), its broader import will not make itself present.

The seating of the spectator/participants is especially interesting here (see Winkler 1990:38-43, 1985), since within the model it was a topological analogue of the causal braidings that I have been discussing. Apparently there were thirteen wedges of seats—the most exterior, 'border' wedge on each side for non-citizens; ten wedges for the ten tribes; and the middle wedge for the *boule*, the ruling Council of 500, comprising fifty councillors from each tribe, and for the ephebes, the soldiers (and citizens) in training, also recruited from the ten tribes and seated accordingly.[11] The contrast between the middle wedge and those of the tribes on each side is striking. Within the city the tribes competed with one another in many public domains; and the division into tribes constituted lines of potential fracture that crosscut levels of governance, civic organization, the military and the generations. Hypothetically, were the city to be taken apart symbolically, these divisions

11 The tribes were the units of military organization on the battlefield, and the war dead were buried according to tribe.

would predictively define the city in pieces. Therefore these divisions were a relatively safe way of generating fission within the *polis* (as well as putting it together from its parts). Within the middle wedge, but close to the performance area sat the priest of Dionysos with the figure of the deity, the highest officials of the state, and the judges. Winkler (1990:39) describes the seating as 'a kind of map of the civic corporation, with all its tensions and balances'—the ten tribes, the governing Council, and the ephebes, the coming generation of citizens and warriors. Moreover, this was an embodied map, especially salient within the festival model, one that demonstrated how the tribes joined together to supercede themselves within the Council and ephebes; and how the Council and ephebes potentially could fission into the tribes.[12]

This mapping of the body politic emphasised the overarching value of middleness in its layout, in keeping with the significance of this value in the design of the performance space. The middle wedge with the deity at its tip transected the middle of the performance area—the *thymele* and *skene*—pointing towards the sacrificial altar which in turn pointed back towards the deity in the audience. This was the symbolic axis of the generation of transformative power, activated by sacrifice to Dionysos and realized through dramatic performance. This axis, with its focus on the deeply encompassing innerness of middleness, spread out on either side from the central wedge, balancing the incipient instabilities of the tribes on either side (and of the non-citizens at the borders). But this axis was tipped with the volatile, epiphanic presence of Dionysos the dissolver of boundaries, and led directly to the cauldron of possibilities in the performance area.

Within the theatre the stability of the State level, of the central wedge, led inexorably into the fluid instability of transformation within performance space, opening the spectator/participants to the effects of the drama. Given the organization of the wedges, the directionality of the central wedge, and the structuring of the performance area, there was no stability on any level within the theatre, except for the judging of outcome which pinched off the uncertainty and volatility of opening the spectators to transformation. This closing looped back recursively to reproduce the encompassing qualities of the State level that were embedded in the use of lots to choose the judges.

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12 Estimates of audience size at performances by scholars vary greatly, from 12,000 to 20,000 and
    more. The number of (male) Athenian citizens during the fifth century B.C.E. has been estimated at around 40,000. The dramas were, by any account, great ritual performances that had to
    be thronged, if the plays were to act on and move the spectators. Other ritual dramas of the
    ancient world did not necessarily require an audience (or much of an audience) to be effective—
    the important point was that these rituals were performed (*i.e.* Fairman 1974).

The sequence of segments in the City Dionysia

In myth, Dionysos was a wanderer who brought his cult to Athens. The City Dionysia, which lasted five or six days, began in the early Spring with the entry into Athens of Dionysos (Winkler 1985:29). His wooden figure was taken from its permanent place in his temple to the last location he passed through before entering Athens on his original journey. Sacrifices were performed for him there, and his figure travelled by night into the city, accompanied by priests, the leaders of the city, and ephebes, the young men who were undergoing their training as hoplite infantry. The journey was called 'Bringing in from the sacrificial hearth' (Parke 1977:127), or 'the leading in from the sacred hearth' (Goldhill 1990:99). This references to hearth, an interior and generative location (whether of household or of city), may imply Dionysos' emerging from deep within himself, while the sacrifices performed for him may have opened the city to him.

Dionysos re-entered his temple near the theatre. Yet his entry into Athens was not simply a repetition of the last phase of his originary journey. In Deleuzian terms, every repetition is a first time in that the originary contains within itself all future renditions or versions of itself, and the differences amongst them (Deleuze 1994). The first time contains within its own logic of organization the capacity to generate all possible variations of itself. Therefore every ritual performance is originary, since it contains the generative force of the first time. It is not a re-enactment.

Near the beginning of the festival the *proagon* (Preliminary to the Contest) introduced the plays. Considering that the performance of the plays constituted the practice of ritual, and that each play was performed only once, the *proagon* filled the crucial function of outlining the thematic shapings that these rituals were to take in a given year, without entering into the dramatism that had such an impact on the spectators.

The Great Procession (*pompe*) likely was held after the *proagon*. Carrying symbols of Dionysos, the citizenry processed through the streets, escorting numerous bulls to be sacrificed to Dionysos at his temple (at the great altar beyond the performance area). In the Great Procession the people of the city presented themselves to themselves. This self-presentation of the city preceded other modules of more particularistic presentation, which I discuss shortly. This may have been followed by a night-time revel for Dionysos, a *komos* (which itself may have been part of the procession). The revel involved the license of inversion in the streets of the city, as men, drinking wine, sang and danced in the the streets. Goldhill (1990:99) comments that the 'combination' of procession, sacrifice, and celebration was typical to the organization of Greek ritual practice. I emphasize the sequencing of these occasions. The formalism of the procession precedes the

license of the revel. The sacrifice is mediatory of and transformative for this change, but in the sense that the sacrificial acts transformatively *open or create the way* for other events that evoke, overturn, and expose the undersides of values of Athenian cultural order. These sacrifices turned the Athenian world dionysian—a world in which the forbidden and the normative savaged one another without bounds, a world of madness and murder, of the killing of children by their parents, and other themes that likely were anathema to the daily public life of the city. The sacrifices to Dionysos opened the interiors of the citizens to the presence of the deity who dissolves boundaries, just as the sacrifice at the sanctuary outside the city opened Athens to his coming. The sacrifices framed through transformation what was to come in the entire festival.

The modules of the City Dionysia that I would call presentational—those that were not implicated in the teleological making of change (as the *proagon* and the Great Procession were)—preceded the rituals of dramatic performance. These presentational modules are described as 'civic rituals' or words to that effect. Goldhill (1990:114) phrases their relationship to the city as a deep involvement 'with the city's sense of itself'. Nonetheless, one should ask why these presentational modules came *before* the dramatic modules. Why not after? Why not between tragic and comedic performances, and so forth? What were the sensibilities that positioned these modules of presentation? It is insufficient to treat the sequencing of modules (in fact, any kind of sequencing) as if these units were simply strung together, one after the other like political pearls on a necklace of historical circumstances. Attention must be given to the logic of this ordering, in relation to what came before and what came after. Often, what comes before frames, in the Batesonian sense (Bateson 1972, Handelman in press), what comes after.

One of these presentations, likely the first, was the pouring of ritual libations by the ten generals, one from each tribe, the military leaders of the Imperial State. Libations signified beginnings (Bruit Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel 1992:38-39). Here, this beginning occurred within the frame established, first, by Dionysos entering the city, and then, by the sacrifices to the god. The emphasis was statist and civic, yet there was also an implicit thrust of entering the city from its exterior (as Dionysos did to establish the master frame for the entire festival). The business of these ten (who were elected annually) was the conduct of Athens' incessant warfare which in the main took place elsewhere. There is a sense here of components of the city, often located elsewhere, reaggregating, flowing centripetally inward. The ten generals not only represented the ten tribes but they constituted and united them in the ritual of libation. Thus the city also opened itself to its own exteriority.

The tribute that Athens received from its allies was displayed in the perform-ance area. Clearly presentational, this was 'a public display of the success in military and political terms of the city. It used the state festival to glorify the state' (Goldhill 1990:102). That which belonged to Athens not only flowed into the city but was shown there demonstratively. So, too, the absence of those who had left the city forever was made present in the performance area.[13] The orphaned sons of warriors killed in battle paraded into the performance area in full hoplite dress. They were raised and educated by the State, and they appeared in the Dionysia when they were ready to become fighting men. This, too, was a presentation, a declaration of how the city turned its generational losses into intergenerational continuity; in other words of the State's continuity through time, perhaps the only clearcut measure of its ongoing survival. All of these modular ritual moments in the performance area celebrated the unity of the city-state through different modes of presentation. They were statements of the imperative ramifications of political and economic power. In these public declarations there was no room for question marks or doubts. The ritual events that followed—the dramatic contests —did quite the opposite. Nonetheless, they also nestled within the systemic causal nexus that I outlined—the sacrifices to Dionysus and the architectonics of the performance space and seating plan for the spectator/participants.

Except for the pouring of libations, these civic rituals were not essential to the logic of practicing the City Dionysia. By this I mean that these rituals, hypotheti-cally, could have been omitted from the Dionysia without altering its overall ritual logic. The civic rituals were didactic devices but not transformative ones. By contrast, the tragic and comedic plays could not be separated from one another without destroying the logic of transformation in the festival. (Or, for example, as a problematic in the logics of sequencing, one could ask as to the consequences for the festival if the comedies had preceded the tragedies.)

I am not making light of the problem of maintaining unity in classical Athens. This issue was embedded in the very conception of the State as the aggregation of its citizens, the State that was always represented as 'the Athenians' rather than as Athens (Manville 1990:6)—as a collectivity more than as a meta-construct. The very existence of the democracy depended on the public participation of its citi-zens; yet the other side of vigorous participation was the generation of conflict and, potentially, the fragmentation of the *polis* in ways unforeseen by its constitu-tion and democratic institutions.

From this perspective, the numerous contests that were integral to city life may be seen as simulations of the generation of conflict that contained this within

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13 For a discussion of how absence is turned into presence, see Handelman and Shamgar-Handel-
    man 1997.

predictable divisions and outcomes. Contests were the simulated generation and control of disorder—the practicing of conflict and the experiencing of its resolution, the remaking of order. Contests then and now necessarily are organized systemically in terms of causal logic. The contest is teleological—its goal is embedded in the premises and conditions of its existence. So, too, are the autotelic procedures and/or rules for reaching this goal, and the decision as to when the goal has been reached. In other words, the contest causes change to be done through its own operation. Certainly the contests of the Dionysia can be discussed in these terms.

This is also the structure of not a few of the tragedies—change is made to happen within the protagonist, and the consequences of this change ramify, exposing cultural nerves nakedly and painfully. This too is the structure of Dionysos himself—he penetrates the interior of the city and then the performance area, just as the tragedies performed under his aegis penetrate the interiority of their protagonists. In his penetration, Dionysos dissolves boundaries within and between persons. Thus the contents of different categories, previously separated, are made to come together, often to clash, to smash into one another and break themselves upon one another. This is a condition of 'madness' whether this is made explicit or not—the blurring of difference, of realities within the person, of interior and exterior turned inside out (within the person, within social order), and the inability to cease the relentlessness of these processes of destruction that, once unleashed, bore into being as tragedy should bore into the participant/spectators.

This brief discussion of contest is germane to the subsequent segments of the City Dionysia—the contest of the dithyramb choruses, and those of tragic and comedic performances. The sequencing of these contests is far from certain, but it is probable that the dithyramb preceded the dramas, and that tragedy (and the satyr play as the last of each tetralogy) preceded comedy (Walton 1980:62).[14] The sequencing of these contests reproduced the architectonics of the seating of the spectators/participants. The temporal and the spatial were tightly woven through one another. The dithyramb stressed the competition between the ten tribes, each of which was represented by a men's and a boys' chorus, echoing the tribal divisions in the audience.[15] The dithyramb (Pickard-Cambridge 1962:1, 5, 25) was the

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14 Each day of drama may have begun with tragedy which was followed by comedy, rather than the performance of all the tetralogies, followed by all the comedies. In either instance, the sequence of tragedy, satyr play, comedy, would have been maintained.

15 Surely it was not happenstance that many of the youth of the tribes—those between boys and men—in transition to adulthood and citizenship, served and identified with the city-state as ephebes, as hoplites-in-training, and sat in the section reserved for city officials and judges of the competition; while the boys' and men's choruses of the tribes competed in performance.

first of the competitions, following on the presentations and declarations of the absolute unity and centricity of the State level of organization.

Divisions became prominent as members of the audience identified with their tribes within the festival model.[16] In the audience the middle wedge of the State level gave way to the adjacent and more peripheral wedges of the tribes. However, the contest was adjudicated by judges chosen by lot who had taken oaths to and who represented the impartial State. This mirrored the seating of the judges in the central wedge, close to the performance area. Architectonics and action together produced a thick recursive weave of the context through which the transformation of emotions gained power.

Tragedy, the next contest, put the State back together again as a unity. Once again this mirrored the seating of the audience—that is, the focus in the performance area shifted from the segmented tribes to the middle, the unifying wedge of the State level of organization in the model. In the audience the adjacent tribes came together, supporting their own middleness, themselves as the State, in relation to transformations through tragedy. The distinctions between tribes as separate units were enfolded again within the State level.

My use of transformation points once more to the deliberate making of controlled change, though this depends on an understanding of these tragedies (and the other dramas) as rituals designed to do this (see Parke 1977:134). There is no inherent difficulty in this perspective from the point of view of anthropological studies of ritual. Ritual processuality often (though not necessarily) has a strong performative dimension. In the case of Attic ritual dramas, the performative (as read through literary interpretations of the texts of the dramas) continues to be at the forefront of scholarly thinking. Left aside is the likelihood that these ritual dramas were deliberately *designed* to act on and to transform the interiors of the spectators as the *polis*.

This is the reason I refer to the bulk of the audience as spectator/participants. They were not the object of the tragic drama, but rather the subject of the play. In this sense, the spectator/participants *were* the drama. The dramas were causal designs intended to transform the emotions of the audience, to exteriorize and to experience the cultural psyche of Athenians (as they lived through this themselves), just as Dionysos opened the city to his presence; just as, for that matter, one peered into the innards of sacrificial animals for divinatory purposes. The dramas effected affect. The theatre of Dionysos was designed to do this through the relationship through sacrifice of the deity to the performance area; and through the organization of the performance area and audience. Des Bouvrie (1993:103)

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16 See Winkler's (1985) argument that the dithyrambic competition strengthened solidarity within and identification with the Kleisthenic tribes.

comments that, 'tragedy presented a recognisable universe... but beyond that it aimed at effecting an emotional disturbance in the audience, which was generally acknowledged in Antiquity.' Not unlike Dionysos himself, the god coming from the outside, clothed in strangeness, driving madness into and deeply within those who rejected him (Zeitlin 1993:152), the cauldron of performance space generated emotions that resonated with the innards of the spectator/participants, a goodly proportion of the citizenry of Athens.

One cannot argue that the performance of Attic tragedy was constituted as a linear, causal sequence. Nonetheless, tragedy may be thought of as a configuration of interacting themes that *caused* Athenians to be moved deeply within a spectrum of desired emotions. Moreover, whether these effects had been achieved was checked (at least to a degree) at the end of the festival through the judging and perhaps through the inquest. From this perspective one may argue that the effects of the performance of tragedy within the nexus of the Dionysian theatre was indeed transformative for the interiors, the middleness, of the spectator/participants. The thematics may have been explicit, while the emotions they affected may have been more diffuse, overlapping, and interpenetrating. Yet, so long as the performance of themes had their affects within the desired spectrum of emotions, stretching and whorling feeling states into frightening shapes, tragedy would have been effective. *The tragedies were scripts for rituals of the transformation of emotions that cathected highly sensitive themes in the Athenian cultural psyche.* In turn, perhaps the tragedies (and the other dramas) were remolded incrementally from year to year by the verdicts of the judges and by the responses of the citizens. Perhaps these rituals of dramatic transformation were themselves shaped in ongoing ways by State, tribe, and citizen.

Transforming the emotion-body (which no less was mind) through sets of rituals may have been a major concern of fifth-century Athenians. In this regard it is worth mentioning that Classical Greeks thought hard about the relationships between elements of speech, music, and emotional effect. Stanford (1983:65) comments that, 'the emotional effects of rhythm [in speech] were a subject of intensive study in Greece since the fifth century.' The emotive qualities of rhythm were explained in the same way as was music. 'The emotions being movements in the *psuche* are sympathetically affected by the vibrations of sounds. Rhythm could have a stronger effect than melody, since the heart-beat is essentially rhythmical' (Stanford 1983:66). Greek physicians, he notes, 'compared the rhythm of the heart, with its systole and diastole, to that of a metrical foot. They were speaking of the regular pulse. But one can extend the analogy. The dochmiac rhythm that occurs at most of the major climaxes [in tragedy] resembles the irregular heart-beats of a highly excited person' (Stanford 1983:67). He adduces that in the timbres or tone-colors of Greek, 'the poets had, as it were, a whole range of instruments to call on

for musical and emotional effects, like a modern composer-conductor with a symphony orchestra. Their single instrument, the human voice, was so versatile that it constituted a whole orchestra of wind and percussion instruments in itself' (Stanford 1983:68).

The appearance of tragedy within the performance area, following on the dithyramb competition among tribes, put the audience back together as a unity of spectator/participants. Simultaneously, the performance of tragedy took the spectator/participants apart within their own middleness as individuals, through its nuanced exposure of the interiority of different lines of potential fracture and dismemberment of relationships in Athenian society. There should be little doubt that tragedy (and all the other dramatic performances) were intended to act on, to make change happen within each spectator/participant, and in the audience as a whole.

Contra aristotelian poetics, tragedy likely was intended to be less cathartic than it was to create pain in the innards of the audience. Tragedy was predicated on the protagonists' absence or lack of knowledge, so that every attempt to elude or to unravel this absence self-enclosed its knots of pain, making these tighter and tighter, until one's entrails strangled themselves. Tragedy signified itself, enclosing the Athenians within worlds of mythic reality that explored the terrible potentialities hidden within the everyday life of protagonists and its consequences; transforming the emotions of the spectator/participants. Recursively, tragedy created tragedy; or, perhaps tragedy emerged from within tragedy, the unseen taking shape in the performance area just as it did in the middles of the spectator/participants (see Padel 1990:361).

The sequencing of segments was crucial to shifting the audience from the self-totalizing modularity of tragedy within the festival model. The final drama of each tetralogy was the humorous satyr play. The satyr play had been described as 'tragedy at play' (Sutton 1980:141). The satyr play had the structure of a tragedy in miniature, in terms of its form, language, length, and mythic themes; but it was expected to have a happy ending (Sutton 1980:141, 158). Sutton (1980:159) comments that, 'the satyr play is subversive to tragedy, insofar as an essential aspect of satyric humor consists in travestying tragedy and inviting the audience to laugh at what tragedy takes seriously.' As a tragedy in miniature the satyr play positioned the protagonist within the suffocating self-enclosures of suffering, yet then shaped these as unreal, as indeed belonging to a world distant from the audience.

Looked at in terms of the organization of the festival model, and of sequencing within this, the satyr play becomes the way out of the totalizing self-signifying worlds of tragedy. The satyr drama dissolved tragedy's incorporation and encompassment of the world of mundane reality within the world of myth. And it opened a bridge from the tragedy to the comedy.

The comedies were strongly grounded in the everyday life of the State, positioning their scenes in the settings of the city; taking incident, gossip and scandal, as their subject matters; satirizing and criticizing the rich, the powerful, and the political; and offering useful advice and criticism about issues of the day (Henderson 1990:293). Henderson (1990:297) comments that the comedies 'created a comic version of the city itself, where the partisan comic troupe reproduced the demos in festive caricature and the competitors for its favor in the guise of traditional figures of mockery.' Comedy shifted the dramas further from the self-enclosing mythopoetic worlds of tragedy and their revelations of disasters lurking to happen within everyone, into the hurly-burly of the actuality of Athenian life. Almost the last in the sequence of segments in the festival model, the comedies put the spectator/participants back into city life, still within the theatre yet only a short step to the end of the festival and to daily existence outside of the theatre. Yet something crucial is missing from this formulation, since the most terrifying possibilities probably were those of mundane life and not of the mythopoetic realm. I return to this point in the concluding lines.

There likely was a parallel shift occurring within the interiority of the spectator's self. The tragedies penetrated and transformed the hidden, interior feelings of the spectator's self-sensibilities and security of selfness. They shaped the subjectivities of the audience through the terrifying possibilities of mythopoesis. Against such penetration, for example, that of dionysian-like madness, there was no defence. (Still, I suggest that the terror of such unexpected explosions in the everyday public life of citizens was even more frightening, given its consequences for social relationships.)

Through their humor the satyr plays began to shape the more private terrors of tragedy, towards the return to mundane life. The comedies developed these processes more fully, encouraging the spectators to feel and to think critically about the explosive conditions and qualities embedded in the density of interaction in city life, and of their own roles which could suddenly become threatened in this (see Henderson 1990:312). Now, the theatre no longer encompassed the city—the city had emerged from the theatre and now encompassed the latter as just one more eminent location in the cityscape.

The transformation of emotion through the performances and sequencing of the dramatic contests is the fifth strand of causality within the festival model. It was braided tightly with all of the other causal strands; and it caused the realization of one of the major goals of the festival, the verdicts of the judges and the awarding of the prizes for victory in the competitions. The verdicts and awards closed that which I have called the first strand of causality within the festival model which was initiated by the choice of judges by lot. The closing of this strand braided with and

led also to the closing of the second strand of causality initiated by the *proagon*—this closing took place in the inquest, the final segment of the festival model.

The inquest was held within the theatre in the format of the *ekklesia*, the popular assembly, presided over by the Council of Five Hundred, perhaps together with the awarding of the prizes. As I noted earlier, all citizens could participate in the assembly. Apparently thousands would attend the inquest. Just as the verdicts of the judges evaluated the accomplishments of the performances—their relative success in transforming the emotions of the spectator/participants—so the performances of the *archon eponymous* and the other officials who were responsible for the entire City Dionysia were evaluated by the citizenry, as was the behavior of the spectator/participants (Pickard-Cambridge 1953:66-69, Parke 1977:134-135, Padel 1990:339). There is some indication that there were rules established by the *demos* regarding the content of performance, at least for the comedies (Henderson 1990:287-288). These too would have been open to plaudit, complaint, and discussion. The awarding of prizes and the inquest of the festival were the responses of the citizens to the very events in which they themselves had participated. These were reflexive moments through which citizens critiqued rituals that they themselves (or their representatives) had created, and in the process they both involved and distanced themselves from their own inventions. I would expect the outcomes of the competitions and the discourse of the inquest to effect the ways in which the festival was practiced the following year and after, just as previous Dionysias had effected its organization and practice in any given year. This would demonstrate just how systemic and reflexive were the practices of this festival.

The City Dionysia as ritual

If the City Dionysia is understood as a series of coupled modules, especially modules constituted in part with transformative capacities, then this festival offers the opportunity to pose an unusual problem concerning the design of ritual. The problem might be addressed to a hypothetical, native designer of rites, and could be phrased something like this. Let us say that we desired to create a ritual medium with the following parameters. Great masses of urban dwellers should be enabled to participate, yet at times within limited space that could not support extensive physical movement. The ritual medium should act on the emotions of these participants and even change them profoundly for short periods in fairly predictive ways. The ritual medium also should have the reflexive capacity to check its success to a degree. Moreover, it should be sufficiently flexible to respond to ongoing, changing, social conditions in its own environment. It should include as well moments during which its sponsors would make unequivocal, straightforward statements about their own worth.

What, then, would our ritual look like? Our hypothetical designer might very well suggest a modular logic of different ritual segments, themselves containing various logics of design, yet capable of being coupled to one another. This parcelling out of design functions within separate modules would build flexibility into the ritual—thus some of the modules could be made to respond to ongoing shifts in social conditions outside the ritual. Other of the modules could then specialize in making change within the participants—a form of drama might be suggested as a way of doing this, of focussing the attention of participants on a fixed space of performance, with little moving about. The modules would be connected to one another with the kind of sequencing that would introduce degrees of feedback and self-correction into the entire ritual. And, finally, modules designed in terms of a logic of presentation would enable the sponsors of the occasion to make unquestioning pronouncements about the institutions they represented.

The entire ritual design might well look something like the City Dionysia with its relationships between Dionysos, sacrifice, and city; between *proagon* and inquest; between dithyramb and city; as well as those within the interiority of tragedy (in relation to itself); and those of the sequencing of the dramas, tragedy – satyr play – comedy. So too, modules of presentation (the showing of tribute; the march of the war orphans, and so forth) declared the power and character of the Athenian state.

Something like this hypothetical approximation, with the overall flexibility of its modular organization, enabled the City Dionysia (for whatever the reasons by which it was put together over time) to work as it did for a period of its history. Yet such an understanding is only possible if we take seriously the capacity of certain logics of ritual organization to make change happen in fairly systemic ways and contrast these with other logics of ritual that have other capacities.

Let me point to one other facet of this complex that I mentioned at the outset, but that becomes more outstanding, given the above. During much of the fifth century, the City Dionysia contained ritual content that was performed annually once and only once. Of course I am referring to the dramas. When the dramas are understood as ritual, one speedily realizes that certain of our criteria for identifying ritual—like the criterion of repetition (Moore and Myerhoff 1977:7)—are utterly shallow in their significance. Instead we begin to perceive the possibilities of ritual as an *experimental* mode; a mode shaped within certain structures of design which may have varied relatively little from one annual performance to the next, yet which did indeed vary in its contents. These contents—stories, dramatizations, and performances of tragedy and comedy—were tried out on and in the spectator/participants, and were judged for how well they did the tasks of shaping and transforming the emotions of these participants. The dramas were varied through the experimental sensibilities of the playwright poets who were indeed

writing scripts for rituals of interior transformation. Some succeeded better than others; the more conservative and the more innovative may have clashed; and so forth—yet some degree of change was deliberately built into the very design of these modules of the Dionysia.[17] Within these modules, ritual became malleable, responding actively from year to year to changes in the social environment, not only through its modules of presentation, but also through those of drama. In this malleability of rite there is a basis for rethinking common sensically accepted notions of what ritual is.

The City Dionysia and the transformation of emotion

The transformation of emotion within spectator/participants was crucial to the rituals of fifth-century dramatic performance.[18] Yet I have hinted that there likely was something more to the sequencing of tragedy and comedy than catharsis through the experiencing of mythopoeisis, followed by a parodic return to the hurly-burly of everyday life.

As I commented earlier, tragedy tied the protagonists into ever-tightening knots of interior agony which could not be disentangled and from which there was no escape. My sense is that these kinds of painful transformations of emotion would have blossomed deep within the spectator/participants. Many of these terrifying mythic disasters began within the relatively private nexus of kin relations. The dramas exposed these venues to the public gaze and feeling of the spectator/participants, and may have served as exemplars of what occurred with no less disastrous consequences in the daily public lives of Athenian citizens. If so, then tragedy became the mythopoetic base, but also the prologue for comedy.

Athenian comedy was not done in fun. Comedy related the interpersonal cruelty that emerged from the intense and intensely public interaction among Athenian citizens in numerous fora. The disasters in the making that could not be foreseen, could not be corrected once they exploded and surfaced. These loci of pain in the innards of protagonists were not fated, but emerged through the very processes of living that made Athenians just that.

Comedy returned spectator/participants to their daily lives with a vengeance— with the comprehension and apprehension that the most terrifying of all were the potentials for human destruction generated through the relationships of mundane life. Wherever citizens turned, their lives were replete with the potentials for disas-

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17 For an example of a ritual from New Guinea that seems designed for individual and group catharsis, see Schieffelin (1976); and for another that highlights the potential malleability of ritual, see Lindquist (1997) and the comments by Handelman (1999).

18 I am indebted to David Shulman for many of the thoughts in this section.

ter. That each drama was performed only once during the Dionysia points to how thematics could be varied in relation to the variabilities of life.

Comedy was an *intensification* of tragedy. In comedy the self-enclosing and self-sealing character of tragedy opened up into the immediacy of the uncertainty of mundane life. So many citizens interacted intensely and in large numbers with one another in public fora that no one could be assured of not putting a foot wrong, leading to disastrous social ruptures. Yet in everyday living, unlike the mythopoetic, this collapse of the surety of knowledge had to be engaged with in order that social life continue to exist. Both tragedy and comedy were experiential preparations for living that intensified from the former to the latter, as the innards of audiences were drowned with the pain of what each of them might have to endure (and that some had endured).

The transformations of self that the spectator/participants underwent prepared them, perhaps with trepidation, for the sudden eruption of dionysian-like wildness and madness that erupted through the very living of life that could not be avoided or curtailed. The intensification of embodied interior pain presaged what some audience members would experience, perhaps even in the most mundane of ways. In these respects the ethos of the City Dionysia was indeed dionysiac, and an imminent refraction of Athenian daily life.

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