

Anton Bierl

## Lived Religion and the Construction of Meaning in Greek Literary Texts: Genre, Context, Occasion

### Abstract

This paper widens the theoretical basis of Lived Ancient Religion to Greek literary texts of the archaic and classical period (with a final glance on the imperial novel), in which we encounter apparent personal involvement in religious practices. The purpose of this contribution is to show how figures like Achilles, Alcaeus, Antigone, Hippolytus, Dicaeopolis and Calasiris in their fictive roles are construed and how, by embodying and performing, they attempt to reach specific goals. It explores how exemplary texts by Homer, Alcaeus, Sappho, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes and Heliodorus shape these figures as agents and *personae*, following various intentions. The authors built their figures on the principle of *bricolage*, a constant interplay between the individual and the situational as well as in the larger frame of society, culture and the genre (epic, lyric poetry, drama, novel). Beyond the general shifts from the socio-political to the personal, important factors in the evolution of situational meaning are occasion, gender, genre and specific literary contexts.

**Keywords:** Achilles in the Iliad, burial rites, Alcaeus fr. 129, curse, Sappho fr. 17, Antigone, Hippolytus, Orphism, comic phallic procession, literary genre

### 1 Introduction

The concept of *Lived Ancient Religion* (LAR) introduces a shift from focusing on essentialist and holistic systems of polis religion and cult to individual religious practice. Using Meredith McGuire's *Lived Religion* (2008), developed for the contemporary religious experience, as a base, the individual and situational come to the fore, replacing the abstract sociological perspective, which results in constant shifts of meaning depending on different frameworks and situations. This contribution marks one of the first attempts to apply this fruitful approach to Greek literature.<sup>1</sup> It must be admitted that

1 For a good theoretical summary, see Rüpke 2011, on whom I heavily draw without further referring to other theoretical literature cited there in each point.

many critics have occasionally focused on the individual perspective or experience of a specific author or character in the past whenever religion plays a larger role in literature. But by and large the dominant discourse of religious studies in the decades since the 1960s has, whenever the interaction of Greek literature with more or less essentialist concepts of ritual and myth came up, focused on the larger frame: the impact on politics and society, the reaction of the polis as a whole toward crisis, a new year, or the education of an age group as an interiorising process of the civic values in rites of passage.

Therefore I want to explore in this paper how certain religious sign configurations and practices integrated in a series of Greek literary texts do not simply replicate sets of action preconfigured by an institutionalised official religion of either the polis or the larger Panhellenic culture,<sup>2</sup> but rather serve as very specific and individual expressions corresponding to the context, genre, situation, occasion and intention of the author or fictional figures within the texts, aligning with the socio-political changes in historical development.

Particularly in archaic Greece, where oral poetry still dominated, the occasion and situation of the performance along with the dialogue between the author, in the sense of the narrating 'I', and the recipient remained of central importance. Under oral circumstances, myth and ritual become a specifically marked 'megatext' to which authors and recipients refer.<sup>3</sup> Myth and ritual practices thus form vital centres for the 'circulation of social energy,' perpetually creating novel dynamic meanings.<sup>4</sup> In such mythic-ritual poetics,<sup>5</sup> religious practices never merely mirror a fixed cultic system; rather, individuals – authors, fictive *personae* or dramatic figures – manipulate the religious contents and practices of everyday experience in order to mould new meanings. These individuals, as they act out religious signs and elements with their bodies and so come to personify the cult, interact with various discourses and appropriate, manipulate, transform and even transgress given religious forms.

Thus I chose important examples of the archaic and classical time beginning with Homer (around 700 BCE) to Attic drama (around 450–425), where mythic-ritual poetics are vital, including a wide spectrum of different genres (epic, lyric, drama, i. e., comedy vs. tragedy), modes (long narration, short lyric address, dramatic mimesis), spaces (Panhellenic Greece, the island Les-

2 On polis religion as a system, see Sourvinou-Inwood 1990; on Panhellenism see Nagy 1990, s. v.

3 See Nagy 1990, 31.

4 Greenblatt 1988, 1 and see his chapter one, 1–20; see also Neumann 2000, 52.

5 See Bierl, Lämmle and Wesselmann 2007a; 2007b; Bierl 2007a.

bos, Attica), paradigms and perspectives (Panhellenic and epichoric, mourning and lament, male and female acting in the aristocratic clan, male rhetoric cursing and female education in a female group, private reaction to political deficiencies, private belief, opposition against the polis) and different gender perspectives. Using the approach of a wide sweep through Greek literature I intend to broaden the picture avoiding an all too narrow perspective that might convey just one particular and incidental result. The texts chosen are occasionally linked through motifs, context or locality, but most of all they are representative or even highlights of the different genres. Therefore they have received either wide scholarly attention or are particularly indicative of the question of a very personal attitude in matters of religion.

This project is innovative and audacious in the sense that it explores and widens the theoretical basis of Lived Ancient Religion to fictionalised, literary material of the archaic and classical period, in which we encounter apparent personal involvement in religious practices of extreme individualism that are not real in a historic or biographic sense. The purpose of this paper is to show how these figures in their fictive roles are construed and how, by embodying and performing, they attempt to reach specific goals. At the same time I wish to explore how several authors shape these figures as agents and *personae*,<sup>6</sup> following various intentions. The authors, I argue, build their figures on the principle of *bricolage*, a constant interplay between the individual and the situational as well as in the larger frame of society, culture and genre. As already mentioned, we must be cautious in using literary texts as historical testaments of religion from which we can reconstruct real religious life. Different frameworks create ever-malleable meanings. Individuals acting out religion, be they the author or rhapsodic narrator, a performer, a hero, an actor, figure, *persona* or even a writer, embody cognition and shifting images of the self. It is necessary to differentiate between Homer as the virtual embodiment of the epic tradition, the narrator, and Achilles as a main figure carrying out burial customs. We must ask what the tradition or the narrator intend by showing us Achilles in this way. How does Homeric epic, as a genre, shape this form? In what regard do Alcaeus and Sappho in Lesbos differ and in what way are both lyrical poets differentiated within the same local and ritual context? How can tragedy or comedy create characters and new meanings, and where do we find the generic differences? At the end I offer a brief insight into the completely different genre of the imperial

6 On the rhetorical aspect of *persona* as fictive social role, see Fuhrmann 1979. In literary studies *persona*, based on the ancient meaning of mask, designates an outline of a person or figure with whom readers or the audience can identify. A person or author can assume other *personae* as alter-egos and extensions for specific purposes.

Greek novel (first to third century CE) as an extended fictional text in prose, when religion really shifted to the private.

## 2 Homeric epic: Achilles and his personal burial rites

In this first section on Homer, I focus on the massive manipulation of the conventional burial rites in the process of a gradual development toward a monumental Panhellenic epic narration. Homeric epic, deeply grounded in a long oral tradition of composition in performance, is a very complicated case. It depends on whether we, theoretically, regard Homer as an author, the first narrative poet of our tradition, or if we prefer more sophisticated models based on the oral theory of an emerging authorship in an on-going tradition of epic singers (*aoidoi*). According to some critics, the monumental epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, emerged gradually in a long historical process extending from an obscure Mycenaean past into the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. The driving force of this evolutionary development is Panhellenism and a changed agonistic performance context.<sup>7</sup>

Whatever our conclusion, the monumental Panhellenic *Iliad* highlights Achilles as the main hero in an extremely emotional state in an episode lasting only 51 days in the tenth year of the Trojan War. His retreat from battle due to a loss of honour had severe consequences for the Greek army and resulted, finally, in the death of his friend and alter-ego, Patroclus. The Homeric tradition or the author shape the pursuing mourning and burial rites as a particular instance of lived religion. The idiosyncratic practices in extreme *pathos* are put in this specific perspective for narratological purposes. The narrator, and thus the story, focus intensely on the main character in his excessive practices, which, as they link to Dionysiac images, build up a foil for the ensuing final outcome in book 24: the release of Hector's body and the peaceful solution.

I contend that the entire long end in the *Iliad*, spanning from Patroclus' death in book 16 and his subsequent burial to the events in book 24, revolves around individual and situational burial practices in relation to fictional agents and the narrator. When we follow the specific narrative of Achilles' personal and transgressive wrath (*menis*) against Agamemnon, with the subsequent retreat from and eventual return to battle, we observe how grieving over a dead friend, the personal and very individual mourning as well as excessive wailing give way to a new violent rage (*cholos*, 18.337),

<sup>7</sup> See Bierl 2015, esp. 186–194 (§ 21–40).

which seeks to exact revenge on Hector, Patroclus' killer. For this climax, the expected course of conventional ritual is interrupted, endlessly deferred and postponed. Our lack of written testimonies, apart from Homer, concerning the functionalities of mourning and burial in the seventh century BCE, regarding the twelfth century BCE or earlier, complicate the situation. In this genre, we must reckon with exaggerations in the heroic sphere, with drastic distortions tending towards heroic grandeur. Homer intends to create meaning by shaping the story as it is. The textual strategy emphasises the excesses of war and revenge, accentuating a more human denouement with special focus on Achilles. To this end, as we follow the chain of action and counteraction, we find Achilles and his double Patroclus, the victim, himself previously a killer, and his killer (Hector) paralleled and concatenated. Furthermore, the reiteration, extension and alteration of certain elements highlight the experience of death.

When Achilles is confronted with Patroclus' death (18.15–21) he reacts with wild mourning gestures (18.22–27). The lament is ritually performed in chorus: first Achilles with his slaves (18.28–31) and then, reacting to her son's mourning, Thetis with her Nereids (18.35–69). Thetis, within this lamentation, anticipates her grief over her own son destined to die as well. But only after the recovery of Patroclus' corpse and subsequent exposition does Achilles really fall into excessive mourning. As is well known, mourning involves self-destructive gestures along with a renouncement of food, sex and personal hygiene. In the normal rite, the body is led out (*ekphora*) following a limited period of mourning (*prothesis*) in the dead's presence, and the funeral takes place.<sup>8</sup> Achilles, however, changes the course of action: sick with grief he promises first to hunt down Hector and avenge his friend (18.333–335). The revenge means a deferral of the burial. In the meantime, the dead body at least is washed and exposed in a *prothesis* (18.343–353) that extends over many books to book 23.

While Achilles still indulges in excessive grieving, Thetis returns from Hephaestus, bearing magnificent and extravagant new armour (19.1–13). *Menis* (wrath) transforms into *cholos* (bitter anger full of aggression) (19.16; see also 18.337). Yet before exacting his revenge Achilles still worries about his friend's body, since the unnatural retardation of the burial rite might lead to decay and worms might devour his body (19.23–27). But Thetis has an antidote and pours ambrosia and nectar into Patroclus' nose halting putrefaction (19.29–39). The revenge narrative demands freezing the course of the burial in the background, at the same time allowing for the integra-

<sup>8</sup> See Alexiou 2002, esp. 4–23.

tion of other burial customs, perhaps even reflections of foreign, Egyptian, embalming practices in body preservation.

It is striking that for narratological reasons we are left with the impression that the *prothesis* must be extended indefinitely, having at that point, of course, no idea how long Achilles will take to avenge Patroclus, who died on the 26th day, the third long and central day of battle. But actually it lasts only one, very long day – the 27th day, the fourth battle day – culminating with Hector's death, spanning from 19.1 to 23.110, over four and a half books. Already on the following day, the 28th day of action, the funeral ceremony commences. The body would not have decayed completely in one day, even a long one.

Before Achilles starts his campaign he must quickly put an end to his *menis* against Agamemnon over Briseis. Sincere rage (*cholos*) drives Achilles to fight; he at least will refuse to eat (19.209–210; see also 155–156, 305–308, 319–321, 345–346). Moreover, Achilles stresses that his personal satisfaction will be killing, the blood and the moan of men (19.214). However, Odysseus pleads for a more rational course of action. They should follow the normal rite: a short period of lament, one day, then a burial, and finally the meal. With refreshment they could fight at full strength (19.216–233).

Briseis, restored to Achilles, breaks out in a spontaneous lament over Patroclus (19.282–300). Thus the typical keening, normally carried out by women, fades in: Briseis leads an antiphonal chorus of wailing women (19.301). But Achilles again usurps her role, refusing to eat; over the ribbed body, he says, he cannot eat, he feels only the desire for revenge (19.303–321). Athena now steps in to give Achilles at least some ambrosia and nectar to strengthen his body (19.350–354), the same fluids applied to preserve Patroclus' dead body (19.38). This device again links Achilles and his double on opposite sides of the threshold of life and death. The excessive mourning symbolically draws Achilles close to death as well, which he must encounter in the near future.

The next book illustrates Achilles as a raging warrior desiring neither food nor anything else but to meet his enemy, Hector, and feed his blood to Ares (20.75–78). In the beginning of book 21 he chooses the twelve Trojan aristocrats he had promised to slaughter and sacrifice in atonement for Patroclus (18.336–337), and drags them out of the wild river (21.26–32). He brutally kills Lycaon, perhaps an allusion to the mythical werewolf Lycaon (21.33–127).<sup>9</sup> Finally, he encounters his sought-after prize, Hector, killer of his beloved comrade. At this stage he exceeds and transgresses all human

<sup>9</sup> On Lycaon, see Burkert 1983, 83–93.

norms; he vows never to return Hector's body should the latter fall, which we know will happen (22.260–267). Despite Hector's supplication (22.338–343) Achilles shows no mercy and in his rage wishes to devour his enemy:

αἶ γάρ πως αὐτόν με μένος καὶ θυμὸς ἀνήη  
ὦμ' ἀποταμνόμενον κρέα ἔδμεναι, οἷα ἕοργας,

If only wrath and fury let me carve your flesh and eat it raw, because of what you have done to me ...

*Iliad* 22.346–347 trans. A. T. Murray

Achilles breaks all codes of human civilisation with his gruesome wish to indulge in the Dionysian practices of *sparagmos* and *omophagia*, the tearing apart and eating raw. His impulse is 'bringing our hero to the verge of a bestial deed'.<sup>10</sup> The situational meaning and phrasing associates Achilles with the total breach of culture displayed in Dionysian myths and rituals.<sup>11</sup> Eating, ribbing and tearing apart characterise so many descriptions following Patroclus' brutal death. The body is lacerated by war, and Achilles constantly seeks revenge through devouring. Achilles, on the one hand, refuses to eat in accordance with the mourning normally prescribed by custom, but his refusal of ritual, on the other hand, transforms into a desire for *haimakouria*, the wish to satiate himself or Ares with blood (22.267) and to eat the raw meat of his enemy.<sup>12</sup>

As antagonist of Apollo, Achilles somehow begins to resemble the Lesbian Dionysus *Omestes*, the Raw-Eater – Hecuba calls Achilles *omestes* 24.207 – and Dionysus *Omadios*, the Raw One, venerated in the adjacent territories of Tenedos and Chios near the Troas and linked with human sacrifice (Porphyrius, *de abstinentia* 2.55.3). Achilles will even mirror this strange rite when he kills the twelve Trojan boys on Patroclus' pile (23.175–176, 181–182).<sup>13</sup>

The Dionysiac plays an important role at the end of the *Iliad*. Consequently Dionysus, supposedly absent in Homer – an alleged proof for his late arrival –, becomes an important player in the sign configuration of the last books.<sup>14</sup> And we will see that in the final burial Achilles' bones will be laid to rest in a Dionysian urn together with Patroclus' remains (Homer, *Odyssey* 24.74–77).

<sup>10</sup> Nagy 1999, 136. Apollo compares Achilles to a carnivorous lion 24.41–43 in retrospect; and Hecuba calls him *omestes* 24.207, a term normally reserved only for beasts and especially dogs (22.67).

<sup>11</sup> This is not only a metaphor, as de Jong 2012, 147 *ad* 347 argues, to express Achilles' 'animal-like state of mind at this stage'.

<sup>12</sup> See Burkert 1983, 51 and 1985, 60, 194 with 425 n. 42.

<sup>13</sup> The people of Tenedos also have a strange ritual for Dionysus *Anthroporrhastes*, the Smiter of Men. See Ail. *nat.* 12.34. On these strange rituals, see Georgoudi 2011.

<sup>14</sup> In a slightly different perspective, see Seaford 1994, esp. 328–338.

In his individual expression of a lived, very personal religion, Achilles externalises the mourning rituals of self-destruction and refusal; he reverses the internal impulse of the mourner, projecting violent and destructive actions upon the enemy, particularly Hector. Instead of tearing his hair, scratching his skin, wailing, wallowing in dust and dirt, refusing to eat or drink, Achilles maniacally desires to tear apart the body of the enemy, eat his body raw, drink his blood and destroy all codes of culture, creating chaos.

When the best of the Achaeans has finally killed the leader of Troy, the guarantor of its protection, Achilles at once sees a chance to take the Trojan citadel. He urges his soldiers forward, but then orders retreat (22.378–394). The burial of Patroclus remains incomplete – we recall the freezing of the ritual action in book 19 – and so they should return to the ships, Achilles dragging Hector around through the soil, the head in the dust (22.395–404): *aieikizein* (see 22.404, ἀεικίσσασθαι), dishonouring the body, his only objective.

We encounter Achilles raging in situational violence. With this gruesome deed the narrator reformulates mourning rites, again directed against the opponent while also focusing on the regular lament as well: Hector's old parents witness the scene and begin a wild lament (before the death: Priamus: 22.38–76; Hecuba: 22.82–89; after it: 22.416–428, 431–436). But then the narrator focuses on the widow: Andromache does not know that her husband has died, but hearing the wild keening sound she rushes to the scene (22.437–460), running violently like a maenad (μαϊνάδι ἴση, 22.460). Again, the Dionysiac as the destructive force of *goos* and destruction becomes a symbol: she dissolves her hairband, a gesture underlining the breach of order and chastity in her household (22.468–472). After fainting and then reviving (22.460–476) she laments that her son has lost his father, the column and supporter of the house, and she already anticipates the dire fate of Astyanax (22.476–514).

After his rage of violence Achilles returns to mourning. With his Myrmidons he circles thrice around the dead body of Patroclus, still dragging Hector, a ritual expression of deep lament and desire (23.4–16). Achilles becomes the leader of the ensuing *goos* again in an unusual practice and configuration. Finally, he throws the dishonoured body of Hector before Patroclus (23.19–26), seemingly establishing a balance between the defiled opponents, now further associated in concatenating scenarios. At last the funeral, in a stricter sense, begins: animals are sacrificed around the dead body in anticipation of the big feeding scene (23.26–34). The comrades lead Achilles to Agamemnon and try to convince him to take a bath, but still he refuses (23.39–42) before Patroclus' interment: first they should eat, devot-



ing the next day to burial (23.43–45). For the first time Achilles participates at least in eating, the first step towards reintegration (23.48, 54–57). Patroclus appears in a dream and asks Achilles not to forget the funerary rites.

The next day we witness a mundane burial, both implying and anticipating heroic cult (23.110–248).<sup>15</sup> What Richardson asserts for the offering of hair alone applies to the entire ritual. He emphasises that ‘in *Iliad* 23 Homer the poet has (typically) taken a conventional ritual’ and, by modifying it, ‘given it new and deeper significance.’<sup>16</sup> As mentioned above, the funerary practice becomes a fantastic construct in narration. Therefore we find certain elements of everyday practice intact, while others appear reversed, magnified, and still a few others might draw on earlier practices similar to the burial in Lefkandi and mythic instances.<sup>17</sup> Of course, we encounter the *prothesis* – here prolonged in the background of the revenge episode. When the wood for the pyre is collected (23.114–126) we witness a huge *ekphora* writ large (23.127–137).

The ceremony implies heroic cult, alluding to it without explicitly saying so.<sup>18</sup> The Greeks carry the body to the future location of the pyre and set it upon the earth (23.138). Then Achilles, after he has performed hair-offerings and other laments, asks only the leaders to accompany him (23.140–160). They build the *sema*, place the body atop, add many animals, and use the fat to cover the body. Oil and honey are added, as well as four horses and two dogs. Finally Achilles puts the promised twelve noble boys on the pile after killing them with the sword (23.163–177). The human sacrifice is certainly part of ‘the excesses of destruction in which Akhilleus indulges’ – as Richardson puts it.<sup>19</sup> The entire rite is a fantastically constructed ritual composed of many typical signs used for burial. As the preparations reach an end, Achilles promises the anti-ritual: the non-burial of Hector who is to be devoured by dogs (23.179–183).

As the fire burns, Achilles pours out libations of wine, lamenting. The fire does not die out until the following morning. Soon they gather Patroclus’ bones and Achilles instructs his comrades to store them in the urn where his own bones will also lie. The tumulus should be only temporary, Achilles says, and only after his own death should they pile high into monument (23.192–248). These instructions foreshadow how both Achilles and his double will fuse, an implicit rite of a hero cult in the making.

<sup>15</sup> See Nagy 2012 and Bierl 2015, 198–199 (§ 50–53).

<sup>16</sup> Richardson 1993, 182.

<sup>17</sup> See Richardson 1993, 165, 185–189.

<sup>18</sup> See Nagy 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Richardson 1993, 189.

Viewed through the lens of lived religion this long interment scene clearly does not merely replicate cult, the fixed practices of a polis religion or a fixed Panhellenic religious regiment; rather it, highlighted in this special and idiosyncratic manner, reveals narrative tendencies to underpin the very personal, emotional involvement. There is a hybrid mix of fantasy, heroic exaggeration, and archaic reminiscences from Lefkandi and other late Iron Ages or even earlier Mycenaean periods, partially overlapping with seventh or sixth century reality.

Achilles' lament remains excessive, even after his alleged reintegration, the meal and the long funeral games in book 23 (24.3–21). For eleven days (24.31) he indulges in transgressive grieving rites, dragging Hector around the *sema* of Patroclus, three times every day.

All things considered, we witness here how narratological and ideological purposes alter rituals, decompose them in fragmentation, handling it all in a creative way. A text needs not comply with a fixed cult or religious system, rather the epic tradition and its recipients willingly deal with the lived religion of an individual person in a dynamic manner. In order to highlight the emotional strain of the main figure of the narrative in his very personal engagement, the epic singers, as well as the epic figures, tinker freely with those elements they know so well from everyday experience. By doing so, the *oidoi* create an efficacious narrative full of emotional involvement. An author, Homer, or the epic tradition moulded by the personal endeavour of each singer to surpass the previous version in a diachronic chain, appropriates everyday ritual practices for narrative needs and construes an individual character. Achilles thus oscillates between the very traditional religion as an abstract system and extremely personal embodiment. The individual performance of lived religion interacts with normal practice and can be fully appreciated only on its foil.

### 3 Archaic lyric on Lesbos island: Alcaeus fr. 129 V., prayer and curse as lived religion

In this chapter I want to show how Alcaeus, an aristocratic politician and lyric poet singing in Mytilene on Lesbos around 600 BCE and using the pan-Lesbian sanctuary of Zeus, Hera and Dionysus at Messon,<sup>20</sup> a common sacred ground, addresses scenarios of alienation from and re-integration

<sup>20</sup> See Robert 1960; Nagy 1993; 2007; Caciagli 2010; other critics, e.g. Picard 1962, plead for Cape Phocas; see Furley and Bremer 2001a, 173–174.

Delivered by Ingenta  
5.10.31.210 Wed, 07 Feb 2018 14:32:31  
Copyright Clearance Center

into the common civic body of the δᾶμος (Attic *demos*), i. e., the entire city as well as the Lesbian and Panhellenic aristocracy. He deploys ritual language in a manner perfectly suited to the categories of lived ancient religion.

For a long time, Alcaeus has represented the primary paradigm of biographical or pragmatic interpretation. Wolfgang Rösler rightly emphasised how Alcaeus' poetry is genuinely grounded in the *hetaireia*, the informal grouping of the aristocratic clan.<sup>21</sup> The pragmatic anchoring stems from the symposium of Alcaeus' male comrades, *hetairoi*. However, this anchoring does not necessarily mean Alcaeus' songs such as fr. 129 V. can be pinned to one very specific moment in the *hetaireia*.<sup>22</sup> I therefore believe that Alcaeus projects his person onto other *personae* as well as onto idealised situations and locals. Moreover, to meet not only his but also his aristocratic faction's objectives, Alcaeus appropriates both ritualistic language and elements of his religious experience, i. e., specific cultic venues in Lesbos and, in particular, Dionysian elements.

In archaic society, myth and ritual serve as marked discourses that lend a specific authority to any utterance.<sup>23</sup> By projecting his poetic and mimetic ego onto the sacred temple at Messon, attaching it to the holy triad dwelling there, Alcaeus secures an authoritative voice in matters of the Lesbian commonwealth.

The poem zeroes in on the power negotiations between agonistic groups and two opposing leaders, oscillating between inside the groups and outside. In fr. 129 Alcaeus, the expelled opponent in the outer position, curses Pittacus, a former member of the *hetaireia*, who changed sides and is now a new leader at the centre of power on the inside of the polis.<sup>24</sup>

This song draws heavily on the euphemistic and maledictory hymnal form, an *ara* plotted in that overlap between prayer and curse in Greek culture. As speech-acts they attempt to influence the gods, trying to both manipulate and change situations. Despite all the resemblances, however, it is not a real hymn, rather a strong appropriation of the usual hymnal form for personal ends. Consequently the *hypomnesis* is transposed into the evocation of the

<sup>21</sup> Rösler 1980; see now Caciagli 2011.

<sup>22</sup> On fr. 129, see Voigt 1971, 233–236; Liberman 1999, I, 61–62; Hutchinson 2001, 192–204; with further literature 192 n. 6; Furley and Bremer 2001a, 171–176; 2001b, 119–125; further: Rösler 1980, 191–204; Burnett 1983, 157–163; Andrisano 1994; Kurke 1994; Bachvarova 2007; Catenacci 2007; Yatromanolakis 2008.

<sup>23</sup> See Nagy 1990, 31.

<sup>24</sup> Through de Polignac's studies we know how a polis structures its ritual space in sites at the *eschatia* and the centre and how processions on this axis are used to convey a feeling of cohesion and unity. See e. g. de Polignac 1995.

oath re-performed in recapitulation (14–20).<sup>25</sup> The prayer as first climax is short (9b–12), immediately following the first part (1–9a), where the process of founding and naming is emphasised. The gods should lend a friendly ear to the executors, heeding their speech-act, ‘our *ara*’ (10), and, as a consequence, rescue them from the negative ramifications of exile (9b–12). Then ensues the much longer performative curse, full of individual involvement in the current politics and encoded in bodily experience and movements.

It works according to the principle of *similia similibus* applied in curse tablets with the dead often as imagined and embodied agents.<sup>26</sup> The Erinyes,<sup>27</sup> the personification of and synonym to *ara*, should walk after and pursue Pittacus, the child of the Thracian barbarian Hyrrhas. The new ruler at the centre is thus associated with the outside, the alien. The feet of the Erinyes should overtake him who trampled oaths (23) with his grotesque feet (πόσιν, 22). Feet are also a *pars pro toto* for and feature of the choral dance. As a notional group, the Erinyes resemble choral dancers (like in Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*)<sup>28</sup> who attack Pittacus, the grotesque dancer, who, being lame, walks strangely, a typical sign of tyrants.<sup>29</sup> He could be compared to a padded comic dancer, all belly (see 21), walking on the wineskin. Like a predator the ‘pot-belly’ (φύσκων, 21) devours the entire city, all the citizens – another cultural feature of the tyrant.

I contend that Dionysus *Omestes*, the Raw-Eater,<sup>30</sup> is the secret centre of violence linked with the cruellest forms of the Other, such as fantasies of human sacrifice as well as the practices of *sparagmos* and *omophagia*. He serves as the embodied agent of the curse, merging with the Erinyes, themselves often associated with the maenadic practice of hunt, as we know from

<sup>25</sup> See Bachvarova 2007.

<sup>26</sup> See Versnel 2009 and Riess 2012, 164–234; on *similia similibus*, see Riess 2012, 186, on a comparison between *ara* and *defixio*, see Riess 2012, 201–207; on the dead as agents 213–217.

<sup>27</sup> Our *ara* belongs to the complicated mixture of law and religion, what Kurt Latte called *Heiliges Recht* or *Sakrale Rechtsform* (Latte 1964). *Arai* are often deadly and synonymous with Erinyes (Aeschyl. *Eum.* 417) and another form of legitimately enforcing and implementing the law. While *defixiones* are mostly private and secret, *arai* and prayers for justice happen publicly.

<sup>28</sup> See the performative reading of the *hymnos desmios* in Aeschyl. *Eum.* 321–396 by Bierl 2009, 62–65.

<sup>29</sup> See Vernant 1982.

<sup>30</sup> As *Omadios*, The Raw One, Dionysus received also human sacrifice (Porph. *abst.* 2.55.3). Even Themistocles still allegedly sacrificed Persian captives before the battle of Salamis to Dionysus *Omestes* (Plut. *Them.* 13.2–5 = Phaenias fr. 25 Wehrli<sup>2</sup>). Plutarch refers to Phaenias as his witness, who interestingly comes from Lesbos (fourth century BCE); see Henrichs 1981, 208–224. On the Raw-Eater, see esp. 219–222 and Henrichs 1978, 144 (mentioning also Alcaeus fr. 129).

Aeschylus' *Eumenides*. The Raw-Eater Dionysus, the quintessential dancer paradoxically bridging the opposites between outside and inside, animal and central god, alien/barbarian and native, is summoned to devour the grotesque Eater and Devourer of the people and the city.

Curses as speech-acts can bind and kill the victim metaphorically.<sup>31</sup> The song progresses efficaciously, first highlighting that the Lesbians, i. e., the entire people (*demos*) of the island, established for Hera a large τέμενος (2), temple, as ξῦνον (3), common to all (1–4). By focusing on this sanctuary the first-person speaker aligns himself with the entire *demos* and singles out Pittacus as opposed to the Lesbian community. Second, the *persona loquens* details how the Lesbians installed (ἔθηκαν, 4) altars for the blessed immortal gods and named (κάπωνύμασαν, 5) them. The names encapsulate the action: they titled Zeus *Antaios*, to be approached by suppliants in a *hikesia*, as is currently done; they address the central goddess Hera 'you', the goddess of the *Heraia*, calling her 'Aeolian' and the 'Glorious', 'the Mother of all' (6–7). The third one is associated with a deictic (τόνδε, 8) as he will be central and decisive for the curse. They call him *Kemelios* (κεμήλιος, 8), the god of young deer, a common allusion to the brisk movement of dance.<sup>32</sup> Also, Dionysus *Omestes* and his maenads typically dismember and eat fawns raw.

The epithet ὠμήστας (9) encapsulates the power needed for the ensuing curse. An appeal to the Erinys (14), typically present at oaths (*Iliad* 19.253), follows the prayer for deliverance. Erinyes are sometimes equated with *arai*, curses.<sup>33</sup> Then, instead of the *pars epica*, comes a long flashback to the oath scene attended by Pittacus (14b–20). Sacrificing an animal (τόμοντες, 15), they swore not to betray or leave a single one of the comrades, under pain of death and burial under the earth.<sup>34</sup> Third, they vowed to kill the opponents currently in power, most likely the *hetaireia* of Myrsilus, and deliver the *demos* (δαῖμον, 20), the entire community, from the suffering.

Through this exact recollection of the oath, its breach becomes even more drastic. As Pittacus has changed sides he must die himself, otherwise the *demos* will not regain freedom.<sup>35</sup> By securing his death, Alcaeus can free the people from a grotesque monster who devours them. In all the fantasies surrounding Dionysus it is the god's enemy (*theomachos*) who is sacrificed

31 We do, in John Austin's words (Austin 1975), something with words, and they have an effect.

32 See Catenacci 2007.

33 See Riess 2012, 201 with n. 176.

34 The dead often serve as the agents of the curse tablets, restless to help in the revenge, in the form of the revenge's personification, the Erinys. Chthonian Dionysus also assists.

35 See ῥύεσθε, 12, and ῥύεσθαί, 20, with emphasis at the end of the strophe.

to the god. Pittacus is transplanted to the side of the barbarian, the animal, facing the threat of being hunted down, dismembered and eaten. In killing the enemy, Dionysus usually destroys a small household to install community, common harmony and social cohesion. Native Dionysus himself seems alien; in the same manner, Alcaeus, a native aristocrat, feels alienated, marginalised and isolated by Pittacus' propaganda.

Drawing on the religious energy of the common precinct, the first-person narrator envisages Dionysus, embodied by Alcaeus, returning from the outside as the *kommende Gott*,<sup>36</sup> destroying the centre here pictured as a small household, the grotesque kitchen, of the tyrant: the eater of the polis (23–24) and its people, full of voracity, devoured by the Raw-Eater. The god leaves the tyrant and his house in tatters. Through this act *Lyaios* or *Lysios* releases his people, restoring cohesion and unity.<sup>37</sup>

Obviously Alcaeus refers not to an abstract system of polis religion or a fixed meaning of cult, rather he resorts to a personal expression of lived religion in words and performance. This focus activates a new situational meaning: in a given occasion, thus imbued with new intention, the song evolves into a marked strategy meant to deal with the common enemy of the aristocratic group, suited for both specific situations and general ones: whenever the *hetaireia* convenes Alcaeus can re-enact the situation by repeating the song. Its performance, combined with allusions to certain mythic-ritual elements stemming from actual Lesbian religious experience, reinforces group cohesion and aids the negotiation of power relations.

#### 4 Archaic lyric on Lesbos island: Sappho fr. 17 V., festivity, female song and beauty contest at Messon

Sappho, the contemporary female and lyric equivalent, who like Alcaeus also engaged in and was affected by the power struggles among the Lesbian aristocratic families, sometimes uses for her female group the same practices and signs towards completely different aims.<sup>38</sup> In fr. 17 she evokes the same triad and the identical setting for her personal and female experience to fit

<sup>36</sup> Otto 1933, esp. 74–80.

<sup>37</sup> The social process is described according to Seaford 1994, who sees it put into practice only in fifth-century Attic tragedy. On fr. 129, see 259–260.

<sup>38</sup> See Voigt 1971, 44–46; Bremer and Furley 2001a, 165–166; 2001b, 115–117; Aloni 1997, 28–29 with bibliography; Calame 2007; 2012, 64–66; Caciagli 2011, 153–156. On the newly discovered textual evidence, see now Burris, Fish and Obbink 2014, esp. 5–6, 18–22 and Ferrari 2014, 15–18; see also the new interpretation by Nagy 2016 (forthcoming).

her educational intentions. She cites the mythical, 'old' precedent of Hera's support for the Atridae when asking the goddess of marriage, the holy and fair Lady, for help so that the maidens can perhaps be gracious themselves, reaching the shrine in procession and their *telos*. They have to pass their decisive *rite de passage* to become women. For the same festival girls and women of the island leave their home once a year to dance as chorus at this pan-Lesbian shrine at Messon, 'where Lesbian females with trailing robes go to and fro being judged for beauty' (ὄππαι Λ[εσβί]αδες κριννόμεναι φύαν/ πώλεντ' ἔλκεσίπεπλοι, Alcaeus fr. 130b.17–18). In the seasonal festival of the Heraea, including a procession and large sacrifice, they hold their own competition concerning the quintessential female value of beauty, the *Kallisteia*. In the choral and musical celebration the women notionally return to their liminal status at their rite of passage when they, like the young maidens present, after being judged as the most beautiful, are wed to the bridegrooms, the initiates and new masters of the household. Perhaps evoking the mythical scenario, Sappho, the choral leader and performative 'I', beseeches Hera to gather her strength in order to compel the aristocratic girls to complete their journey to adulthood. As the Trojan War and the labours of the *nostos* were hardships for the Atridae, so too will it be a hard effort to educate the aristocratic girls in beauty so that they reach marriage and, in the future, win this famous contest. Again, in a strictly gendered society, the context and occasion appropriated by the female agents fit the same religious framework conveying a new situational meaning. On the model of lived religion Sappho utilises a common sacred space and cultic expressions for her very personal agenda full of subjective, female and corporeal experience and performance. The newly discovered 'Brothers Song' is another example in which Sappho makes her intimate sisterly affection public in choral mimesis, again probably at Messon. This is another example of personal and public closely intertwining in archaic lived religion, which directly interacts with the choral performance and its words.<sup>39</sup>

## 5 Drama

Expressions of lived religion in drama are, again, very different from lyric or epic, since the agents act roles in mimesis. Thus their apparent very personal

<sup>39</sup> For the very recently discovered fragments see Obbink 2014 and the forthcoming volume based on a conference in Basel and a panel presented at the SCS meeting in New Orleans (Bierl and Lardinois 2016), for the Brothers Song esp. the contribution of Nagy 2016 (forthcoming).

attitude toward religion is not a direct reflection of real life, but it certainly draws on Attic reality. Moreover drama follows very strict generic norms. Therefore the play with elements of lived religion in comedy is very different from tragedy. Context, occasion, embodiment, genre and forms of personal appropriation again play decisive roles for understanding the very individual and ego-centred behaviour.

## 6 Old Comedy: Dicaeopolis in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* as individual religious practitioner and performer of a phallic procession

In Old Comedy the hero, based on a comic idea, often acts individually against the polis, aiming at creating fantastic solutions for deficiencies in society and the political system. In *Acharnians* (425 BCE) Aristophanes (c. 450–380 BCE) puts Dicaeopolis on scene, who, frustrated by the limitations caused by the Peloponnesian war and the politicians' inability to make peace, negotiates his own private peace accord. Drawing on public cult and procession he invents his personal and very individual rites in order to reach the countryside where he establishes a private market and an egoistic form of utopia.<sup>40</sup> Leaving Athens, Dicaeopolis appropriates a phallic song and elements of the rural Dionysia in purely private and domestic dimensions for his very personal agenda.

In this scene of lived and private religion (241–279),<sup>41</sup> Aristophanes idiosyncratically draws on the festive life of the polis, embedding the public ritual of the *phallophoria* used in actual performances in the plot and blending it with the similar rites of the rural Dionysia.<sup>42</sup> The festival of τὰ κατ' ἀγροῦς Διονύσια (250) is mentioned specifically because the procession (πομπή) shown on stage also leads the hero from the polis into the countryside. The thirty-year wine offered by the Eleusinian priest Amphitheus becomes a magical device for the comic hero's egoistic plans. In a typically comic manner, the *spondai*, the private peace treaty, corresponds to a sacred activity. Dicaeopolis transforms the secondary, metaphorical meaning into

<sup>40</sup> For the relation of city and countryside in this passage, see Henrichs 1990, 269–270. See also Henderson 1991, 59–60 and Habash 1995, 560–567.

<sup>41</sup> This passage is partly based on Bierl 2009, 314–325.

<sup>42</sup> According to the scholion on Aristoph. *Ach.* 202, the rural Dionysia correspond to the Lenaea, the festival of the performance. Throughout the play, rites of Dionysus, in particular the Anthesteria, are reworked in pastiche-like fashion. See Habash 1995 and Fisher 1993.



actual libations of wine in honour of Dionysus, the god of wine and theatre.<sup>43</sup> The movement to the rural space, to his deme of *Cholleidai* (406), tangibly expresses the realisation of the private peaceaccord.<sup>44</sup> The phallic procession wends its way towards the fall into primordial and utopian chronotopes. In this other space and time the hero may install his private market. Reducing the celebrations to one's own *oikos* and deme reflects the extraordinary nature of the act, not based on the inclusion of the whole community. For this reason, the usual collective style of speech is abandoned in favour of a monodic solo-delivery.

Dicaeopolis, trailing as symbol of comic inversion and distortion, fulfils as solo-singer the role of a citizen chorus, while simultaneously acting as chorus leader of the mini-procession. After a brief prayer (247–252), he begins the actual song, alone, without a chorus, while his wife assumes the role of the crowd participating in the ritual on the roof.<sup>45</sup> The procession, founded on crowd participation and the presence of a comastic choral dance group, distilled in this one woman, is kept to the bare minimum of performers and participants.

The procession derives its peculiar comic and parodic nature particularly from the sexual remarks and ribald wishes of fertility directed at the daughter, who leads the parade as bearer of the sacrificial basket (254–258). In a subsequent command Dicaeopolis positions Xanthias as *phallophoros* behind the virgin, the phallus to be carried erect, which happens as soon as the procession commences. Dicaeopolis himself takes position at the end of the procession.

This vivid expression of lived religion is an individual practice. Dicaeopolis embodies a role and practice of a new invention, drawing on the ritual of procession and intermingling it with the comastic (264–265, 277–279), the ribald, and the erotic (254–260, 265, 271–275, 277–278), adding the *aischrologia* and personal ridicule of Lamachus and Strymodorus (270, 273), combining sacrifice with the pleasure of eating and drinking, the symposium

<sup>43</sup> On the Eleusinian dimension of Amphitheus as *spondophoros*, see Bowie 1993, 21; for the procession 26–27. On the connection of the Lenaea to Eleusis, see Deubner 1932, 125–126. On the metaphorical usage of *spondai* in the *Acharnians*, see Newiger 1957, 104–106.

<sup>44</sup> Similarly Pickard-Cambridge 1962, 146.

<sup>45</sup> Through the instruction 'Have a look from the roof' (262), she also becomes the internal female 'spectator' in the theatrical spectacle, which is at the same time ritual, being presented on stage. The woman's viewing from the roof is especially connected with the ecstatic ritual of the Adonis procession. See Aristoph. *Lys.* 389 with Henderson 1987, 119 *ad* 389.

(277), and musical performance.<sup>46</sup> All the rites and pleasures mentioned fuse into the worship of peace (251, 268–270, 278–279) and simultaneously refer to the Dionysia currently taking place.<sup>47</sup>

The monodic form of performance strikingly expresses the lack of pragmatic anchoring in the imitation of a choral dance song. Dicaeopolis exercises an exclusive right to speech in the performative portion as well. The chorus is relegated to the role of the Acharnian charcoal burners, embodying a species of dark primordial human beings and opposing ghosts or monsters, who oppose this anti-social behaviour by Dicaeopolis and thus attack said individual, their attention drawn to him by his sacred activity. They try to prevent Dicaeopolis from reaching his goal.

The lived religion of a dramatic protagonist can thus shape the plot by dynamically interacting with patterns known to the audience. Through this individual practice based on a lived religious experience, we find meaning deeply anchored in the comic genre of its working, i. e., the comic lapse into primordial chronotopes where utopia and dystopia meet. Through a comic lens, the self-centred family procession in monody highlights the tensions between the polis and the individual, war and peace. Only upon the foil of extremely individualistic anti-social behaviour ceding to the lures of peaceful abundance in an idyllic setting can the collective perspective be reshaped. The domestic procession emblematically and symbolically effects this change upon the stage. Through the lived experience of Dionysus the scene is linked to its comic origins and specifically to the dynamic energy of opposites.

## 7 Tragedy: Euripides' *Hippolytus*, a new Orphic lived religion

The situation is completely different in tragedy, the other and higher dramatic genre – the satyr play, on the other end, has little to contribute in this regard. Euripides (ca. 480–406 BCE) is the tragic poet renowned for sophistic and individual arguments, private and domestic space, and radical breaches of the generic norm and horizons of expectation. The scenario does not reflect real life directly either, but certainly new philosophical ideas, indi-

<sup>46</sup> Kugelmeier 1996, 153 even thinks of ‘comic dance movements’. In general one may also characterise the body language of the entering comasts as choral kinetics, that is, as dance in the broader sense of the term.

<sup>47</sup> Dionysus brings together all these concepts. Dionysus is peace, to be sure, but peace cannot be wholly subsumed under Dionysus, because the god also carries within him an element of Ares. For Ares and Dionysus, see Bierl 1991, 154–157.

vidual and aristocratic expressions of life style, particularly new religious sects and revolutionary forms of individual belief systems have some repercussions on certain Euripidean figures.

In *Hippolytus* (428 BCE) we encounter another expression of lived religion in the form of the eponymous hero's one-sided, and very singular stance for a chaste life under the sign of Artemis.<sup>48</sup> Hippolytus' father, Theseus, in his rage at trying to understand this position, accuses him of adherence to Orphism:

σὺ δὴ θεοῖσιν ὡς περισσὸς ὢν ἀνὴρ  
 ζῆναι; σὺ σῶφρων καὶ κακῶν ἀκήρατος;  
 οὐκ ἂν πιθοίμην τοῖσι σοῖς κόμποις ἐγὼ  
 θεοῖσι προσθεὶς ἀμαθίαν φρονεῖν κακῶς.  
 ἦδη νυν αὔχει καὶ δι' ἀψύχου βορᾶς  
 σίτοις κατήλευ' Ὀρφέα τ' ἄνακτ' ἔχων  
 βάκχευε πολλῶν γραμμάτων τιμῶν καπνούς.

Are you, then, the companion of the gods, as a man beyond the common? Are you the chaste one, untouched by evil? I will never be persuaded by your vauntings, never be so unintelligent as to impute folly to the gods. Continue then your confident boasting, take up a diet of greens and play the showman with your food, make Orpheus your lord and engage in mystic rites, holding the vaporings of many books in honor.

Euripides, *Hippolytus* 950–954 transl. D. Kovacs

As an alleged follower of an extremist sect of mystery belief, Hippolytus leads an absolutely pure and asexual life. Also in dietary provisions he avoids meat killed in bloody procedures and therefore practices vegetarianism.<sup>49</sup> Hippolytus thus provides the ideal candidate for a lived ancient religion approach.

On the basis of a personal decision and conviction he stands against the polis religion and its principles, choosing a life radically opposed to norm. To some extent Orphism represents the direct opposite of normal polis cult, the flip side of the medal.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, Hippolytus leads his 'pure life' (see Eur. *Cret. fr.* 472.9 Kannicht) with conviction. The individual extremist refuses to honour Aphrodite and engage in heterosexual love. Instead, he invents his own monolatrous cult, dedicating himself completely to Artemis, the chaste goddess of young girls before marriage, charged as a guardian before their period of initiation. In a structural sense, Hippolytus refuses

<sup>48</sup> On Euripides' *Hippolytus*, see Barrett 1974; Michelini 1987; Susanetti 1997 and 2007; Cairns 1997; Fitzgerald 1973; Goff 1990.

<sup>49</sup> See Eur. *Cret. fr.* 472.18–19 Kannicht: τήν τ' ἐμψύχων/ ἐδεσπῶν βρώσιν πεφύλαγμα.

<sup>50</sup> See e.g. Dodds 1951, 136–156; Masaracchia 1993; Parker 1995; on the alleged reversal of the polis cult, see Detienne 1975 and 1977.

to become an adult man who lives in marriage and begets children. Therefore Aphrodite schemes to punish him in a particularly perfidious manner. Euripides, the sophist poet composing with the poetics of fissures and breaches, has Hippolytus' stepmother madly fall in love with him. The pure asexual life resembles a sublimation of a maniac erotic desire.

When the erotic *mania*, the wild disease (*nosos*),<sup>51</sup> refuses Phaedra's attempts at suppression, the nurse plays the mediator of her desire. Hippolytus is shocked and outraged. However, although he first vows to break it, he keeps his oath because of personal conviction, so as not to betray Phaedra's love – he only unleashes a violent tirade against the female sex (601–668). But she commits suicide, out of shame and, in defence of her female honour, attaches a letter on her body, which perfidiously details an invented version in which the stepson attempted to rape her (669–886). The fictional version coincides with hidden erotic feelings as *stephanophoros* (73–74) for Artemis or his hunting fellows in the first part (58–113).

Theseus, an adherent of orality, ironically believes in the written version and his son Hippolytus, the alleged modern participant in the bookish culture of Orphism, sticks to his oral oath and so must die.<sup>52</sup> Theseus, in his misjudgment ironically corresponding to certain elements of Hippolytus' character as an Orphic extremist and poorly suppressed erotomaniac, characterises Hippolytus as personal sectarian and personal devotee of a new lived religion of individuality (948–961). Theseus claims that his son is a *περισσοῦς ... ἀνὴρ* (948), a man transgressing normal standards. Almost a god and personally devoting his life to a goddess he, in Theseus' opinion, is a sexual addict and perpetrator.

In the system of polis religion represented by tragedy, Euripides, the tragic intellectual, portrays Hippolytus as individual enchanter (*ἐπωδός*) and shamanistic magician (*γός*) (1038), who in the end must die – an intellectual modernist and religious radical like the Derveni-author.<sup>53</sup> But Theseus' deed will turn out to be a terribly tragic error.

In a kaleidoscope of perspectives we witness the Euripidean fissures and fractions between the polis system and a deviant, individual puritan belief: erotomania and chastity, Aphrodite and Artemis, although both belong to the Olympian pantheon.

51 Illness as result of Phaedra's love: 597, 698; also before the actual cause is known: 131, 179, 205, 269, 279, 283, 293–294; illicit love as mental perversity and disease: 394, 405, 766, 1306. See Barrett 1964, 246 *ad* 476–477.

52 See Segal 1992.

53 See Bierl 2014.

## 8 Tragedy: Sophocles' *Antigone*, a girl's personal drive for burial

Another case of the typically perverted and distorted polis cult system is Sophocles' *Antigone* (442 BCE).<sup>54</sup> The heroine represents another dramatic embodiment of a deviant and individualistic religious behaviour and the dramatic author Sophocles (497/6–406 BCE) builds his entire plot about her special and individual attitude toward the burial practice. Creon, however, occupies the other extreme, forbidding the burial of Polyneices, who attacked his home city and his own brother Eteocles, who, as defender of Thebes, receives full honour.

There is a given rite, burial customs, which one can interpret within certain limits. On the one hand, Creon's measures in forbidding Polyneices' burial and instead letting the decayed body feed wild animals (*Ant.* 205–206, 697, 1198), overstep 'unwritten and irrevocable laws of the gods' (454–455) and the standards of human behaviour. Antigone, on the other hand, disobeys Creon by symbolically sprinkling dust on the body and giving him the ritual duties *in situ*. Both display a one-sided, individual practice. The burial rite, as happened in the *Iliad*, becomes the centre of energy around which the drama revolves. Antigone, with her own lived religion, feels compelled to complete the interment, driven especially by the vicious cycle of Oedipus' fundamental distortion of all elemental categories of blood relationship and sexuality. An extreme desire, the ἔρως and ὄργη, to complete this deed, dictates her actions, which, in her mind, will bring her death and heroic glory. Yet her actions also mean an isolated and radical stance against the polis and the overall system. She moves forward with a totally free and wild decision of the self, itself completely autonomous. Composites with *autos* (self) abound: she is *autonomos*, autonomous (821), and her inner desire is *autognotos*, idiosyncratic (875); these artificially and almost philosophically coined *termini* betray Antigone's self-centred, extremely individual mind and value system.

The dramatic author stages the radical figures of Antigone and Creon to create a new situational framework for understanding what burial and death mean. Sophocles thus questions all certainties concerning polis religion and current cults. Driven by extreme desire, these radically isolated figures talk at cross-purposes, while meaning is constituted only by permanent and mutual transgression, in which the Dionysiac, as a generic feature of drama, manifests itself, embodied in wild, manic behaviour that can lead to murder, perverted sacrifice, butchery and brutal violence. In comedy, on

<sup>54</sup> From the vast secondary literature I cite only Oudemans and Lardinois 1987; Bierl 1989; Heinrich 2002; Sourvinou-Inwood 1989; Flashar 2002, 58–79.

the other hand, we find the Dionysiac in distorted scenarios of sex, aggressive speech, ribaldry and journeys to primordial Otherworlds where utopia and dystopia overlap.<sup>55</sup>

## 9 The Greek love novel: a brief insight into imperial fiction and its new, personalised forms of lived religion

In the Greek novel, fictional prose texts from imperial times, we encounter anew completely fresh variants of this picture of lived religion, due to drastic socio-political changes in the religious realm, which one could indeed summarise as a development toward individual expressions of a lived religion.<sup>56</sup> Personal beliefs, feelings and needs come into relief against the background of an altered political situation for the Greeks in Asia Minor under Roman dominion. Moreover, within the complex plots of prose we witness a specific referencing of canonical pretexts from archaic and classical times with their different religious outlooks, blended with particular strategies of the erotic genre. Lived religion in this context always provides a vehicle for the development of the erotic story and almost never merely reflects everyday life experience.

Perhaps the most striking religious figure developed for this genre is the holy man and priest Calasiris in Heliodorus (third century CE). John Winkler posited Calasiris as the narratological focus, the γόνος, the shamanic manipulator of signs and the magician in his enigmatic role as disseminator of sense, knitting together the threads of the story about *Charicleia and Theagenes*.<sup>57</sup> Author, auctor and actor<sup>58</sup> overlap in the created cascades of signs entirely subordinated to the goal of developing the erotic plot.

## 10 Conclusion

The Lived Ancient Religion concept represents an important new method in tackling religious centres of interest in ancient Greek literature. In these texts we always encounter personal and individual perspectives on both the level of actor in the plot and *auctor* as extra-textual author. Factors of epoch and the horizon of expectations determine particular choices, but not merely in

<sup>55</sup> See Bierl 2011; 2013.

<sup>56</sup> See Bierl 2007b.

<sup>57</sup> Winkler 1982.

<sup>58</sup> See Winkler 1985.

an abstract systematic way for the cult or Greek religion. Beyond the general shifts from socio-political to the personal, important factors in the evolution of situational meaning in the same synchronic time frame are occasion, genre and specific literary contexts. Meaning thus becomes situational in manifold ways. Religious expressions in Greek literature, integral to the textual body, possess special force and potential of energy. Since the agents and the authors are always individual figures endowed with specific motivations and predispositions, seeing them as mere extensions of the system does them a disservice. Rather, lived religion, as a personal experience and behaviour, interacts with literature. According to the occasion, the authors' intentions, the situation and the context of the plot, religious expressions can convey different levels of meaning. As nuclei of special energy they never merely replicate an abstract cultic system; rather they create new meanings based on individualistic religious embodiment.

Archaic and classical texts in which performance is prominent are particularly fruitful in this respect. Homeric epic displays heroes in their social role to convey aristocratic values in an artfully narrated monumental story. In extremely emotional situations main characters shape regular religious practices according to their own personal goals that are all in accordance with, and in service to, the purpose of the extended narration. In archaic lyric, authors project themselves into *personae* with fictive roles to reach specific goals in groups. These *personae* can utilise rites and religious language in a new context of very personal engagement and appropriate them for their agenda in harmony with their gendered social roles. Theatre is per se performative and applies actors who enact roles via mimesis. According to generic norms of plot figurations these figures can be moulded into ego-centred agents of lived religion, as they create private rites or domestic festivals (comedy) or are radical followers of new sects or oppose polis orders for their very personal religious attachments (tragedy). As a new conception, I add that Hellenistic comedy displays domestic and bourgeois involvement in religious practice as an expression of lived religion. With the radical change in imperial times, extreme agents of a lived religion can be incorporated into the new totalising genre of the novel, acting always in function of the sophisticated narrative. Inheriting the functions of the monumental epics, these fictional prose texts also appropriate such expressions of lived religion for various narrative goals. I hope it has been demonstrated that 'Lived Ancient Religion' is a fruitful approach for analysing Greek literary texts, which intensely interact with culture as well as everyday life and work on the basis of the interface of religion and literature.

## Bibliography

- Alexiou, Margaret <sup>2</sup>2002. *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Aloni, Antonio 1997. *Saffo: Frammenti*. Florence: Giunti.
- Andrisano, Angela 1994. 'Alcae. fr. 129, 21 ss. V.: (L'eroe e il tiranno: una comunicazione impossibile)', *Museum Criticum* 29. 59–73.
- Austin, John L. <sup>2</sup>1975. *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, eds. J. O. Urmson, Marina Sbisa. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bachvarova, Mary R. 2007. 'Oath and allusion in Alcaeus fr. 129.' In *Horkos: The oath in Greek society*, eds. Alan H. Sommerstein, Judith Fletcher. Exeter: Bristol Phoenix Press. 179–188.
- Barrett, William S. 1964. *Euripides: Hippolytos*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bierl, Anton 1989. 'Was hat die Tragödie mit Dionysos zu tun? Rolle und Funktion des Dionysos am Beispiel der Antigone des Sophokles', *Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft N. F.* 15. 43–58.
- Bierl, Anton 1991. *Dionysos und die griechische Tragödie: Politische und 'metatheatralische' Aspekte im Text*. Classica Monacensia 1. Tübingen: Narr.
- Bierl, Anton 2007a. 'Literatur und Religion als Rito- und Mythopoetik: Überblicksartikel zu einem neuen Ansatz in der Klassischen Philologie.' In Bierl, Lämmle and Wesselmann 2007a. 1–76.
- Bierl, Anton 2007b. 'Mysterien der Liebe und die Initiation Jugendlicher: Literatur und Religion im griechischen Roman.' In Bierl, Lämmle and Wesselmann 2007b. 239–334.
- Bierl, Anton 2009. *Ritual and Performativity: The chorus in Old comedy*. Hellenic Studies 20. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bierl, Anton 2011. 'Dionysos auf der Bühne: Gattungsspezifische Aspekte des Theatergottes in Tragödie, Satyrspiel und Komödie.' In *A Different God? Dionysos and ancient polytheism*, ed. Renate Schlesier. Berlin: de Gruyter. 315–341.
- Bierl, Anton 2013. 'Dionysos in Old comedy: Staging of experiments on myth and cult.' In *Redefining Dionysos*, eds. Alberto Bernabé et al. MythosEikonPoesis 5. Berlin: de Gruyter. 366–385.
- Bierl, Anton 2014. "'Riddles over riddles": "Mysterious" and "symbolic" (inter)textual strategies. The problem of language in the Derveni papyrus.' In *Poetry as Initiation. The Center for Hellenic Studies Symposium on the Derveni Papyrus*, eds. Ioanna Papadopoulou, Leonard Muellner. Hellenic Studies 63. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 187–210.
- Bierl, Anton 2015. 'New trends in Homeric scholarship.' In *Prolegomena. Homer's Iliad*, vol. 1, eds. Anton Bierl, Joachim Latacz. Berlin: de Gruyter. 177–203.
- Bierl, Anton; Lämmle, Rebecca; Wesselmann, Katharina (eds) 2007a. *Literatur und Religion I. Wege zu einer mythisch-rituellen Poetik bei den Griechen*. MythosEikonPoesis 1.1. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Bierl, Anton; Lämmle, Rebecca; Wesselmann, Katharina (eds) 2007b. *Literatur und Religion II. Wege zu einer mythisch-rituellen Poetik bei den Griechen*. MythosEikonPoesis 1.2. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Bierl, Anton; Lardinois, André (eds) 2016. *The Newest Sappho (P. Obbink and P. GC Inv. 105, frs. 1–5)*. Studies in Archaic and Classical Greek Song 2. Leiden: Brill.



- Bowie, Angus M. 1993. *Aristophanes: Myth, ritual and comedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Burkert, Walter 1983. *Homo Necans: The anthropology of ancient Greek sacrificial ritual and myth*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Burkert, Walter 1985. *Greek Religion: Archaic and classical*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell and Harvard University Press.
- Burnett, Anne P. 1983. *Three Archaic Poets: Archilochus, Alcaeus, Sappho*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Burris, Simon; Fish, Jeffrey; Obbink, Dirk 2014. 'New fragments of book 1 of Sappho', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 189. 1–30.
- Caciagli, Stefano 2010. 'Il temenos di Messon: uno stesso contesto per Saffo e Alceo', *Lexis* 28. 227–256.
- Caciagli, Stefano 2011. *Poeti e società: comunicazione poetica e formazioni sociali nella Lesbo del VII/VI secolo a. C.* Supplementi di Lexis 64. Amsterdam: Hakkert.
- Cairns, Douglas L. 1997. 'The meadow of Artemis and the character of the Euripidean *Hippolytos*', *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 57. 51–75.
- Calame, Claude 2007. 'Mythos, musische Dichtung und Ritual am Beispiel der melischen Dichtung.' In Bierl, Lämmle and Wesselmann 2007a. 179–210.
- Calame, Claude 2012. 'La memoria poetica nei canti di Saffo: Performance musicale e creazione sociale.' In *Approaches to Archaic Greek Poetry*, eds. Xavier Riu, Jaume Pòrtulas. Messina: Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità. 45–97.
- Catenacci, Carmine 2007. 'Dioniso ΚΕΜΗΛΙΟΣ (Alceo, fr. 129, 8 V.)', *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 85. 37–39.
- Detienne, Marcel 1975. 'Les chemins de la déviance: *Orphisme*, dionysisme et pythagorisme.' In *Orfismo in Magna Grecia*. Atti del quattordicesimo convegno di studi sulla Magna Grecia. Naples: Arte Tipografica. 49–79.
- Detienne, Marcel 1977. *Dionysos mis à mort*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Deubner, Ludwig 1932. *Attische Feste*. Berlin: Keller.
- Dodds, Eric R. 1951. *The Greeks and the Irrational*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ferrari, Franco 2014. 'Saffo e i suoi fratelli e altri brani del primo libro', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 192. 1–19.
- Fitzgerald, G. J. 1973. 'Misconception, hypocrisy, and the structure of Euripides' *Hippolytos*', *Ramus* 2. 20–40.
- Fisher, Nicolas R. E. 1993. 'Multiple personalities and Dionysiac festivals: Dicaeopolis in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*', *Greece & Rome* 40. 31–47.
- Flashar, Hellmut 2002. *Sophokles: Dichter im demokratischen Athen*. Munich: Beck.
- Fuhrmann, Manfred 1979. 'Persona, ein römischer Rollenbegriff.' In *Identität*, eds. Odo Marquard, Karlheinz Stierle. München: Fink. 83–106.
- Furley, William D.; Bremer, Jan M. 2001a. *Greek Hymns: Selected cult songs from the archaic to the hellenistic period. Vol. 1: The texts in translation*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Furley, William D.; Bremer, Jan M. 2001b. *Greek Hymns: Selected cult songs from the archaic to the hellenistic period. Vol. 2: Greek texts and commentary*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Georgoudi, Stella 2011. 'Sacrificing to Dionysos: Regular and particular rituals.' In *A Different God? Dionysos and ancient polytheism*, ed. Renate Schlesier. Berlin: de Gruyter. 47–60.

- Goff, Barbara E. 1990. *The Noose of Words: Readings of desire, violence and language in Euripides' Hippolytus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Greenblatt, Stephen 1988. *Shakespearean Negotiations: the circulation of social energy in Renaissance England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Habash, Martha 1995. 'Two complementary festivals in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*', *American Journal of Philology* 116. 559–577.
- Henderson, Jeffrey 1987. *Aristophanes: Lysistrata*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Henderson, Jeffrey <sup>2</sup>1991. *The Maculate Muse: Obscene language in Attic comedy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Henrichs, Albert 1978. 'Greek maenadism from Olympias to Messalina', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 82. 121–160.
- Henrichs, Albert 1981. 'Human sacrifice in Greek religion: Three case studies.' In *Le sacrifice dans l'antiquité*, eds. Jean Rudhardt, Olivier Reverdin. Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique 27. Geneva-Vandœuvres: Fondations Hardt. 195–235.
- Henrichs, Albert 1990. 'Between country and city: Cultic dimensions of Dionysus in Athens and Attica.' In *Cabinet of the Muses. Essays on classical and comparative literature in honor of Thomas G. Rosenmeyer*, eds. Mark Griffith, Donald J. Mastronarde. Atlanta: Scholars Press. 257–277.
- Heinrich, Klaus 2002. 'Der Staub und das Denken: Zur Faszination der sophokleischen "Antigone" nach dem Krieg.' In *Sophokles. Antigone*, ed. Gisela Greve. Tübingen: Edition diskord. 25–58.
- Hutchinson, Gregory O. 2001. *Greek Lyric Poetry: A commentary on selected larger pieces: Alcman, Stesichorus, Sappho, Alcaeus, Ibycus, Anacreon, Simonides, Bacchylides, Pindar, Sophocles, Euripides*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jong, Irene J. F. de 2012. *Homer: Iliad. Book XXII*. Cambridge Greek and Latin classics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kugelmeier, Christoph 1996. *Reflexe früher und zeitgenössischer Lyrik in der Alten attischen Komödie*. Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 80. Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner.
- Kurke, Lesley 1994. 'Crisis and decorum in sixth-century Lesbos: Reading Alkaios otherwise', *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 76. 67–92.
- Latte, Kurt 1964. *Heiliges Recht: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der sakralen Rechtsformen in Griechenland*. Aalen: Scientia Verlag.
- Lieberman, Gauthier (ed.) 1999. *Alcée, texte établi, trad. et annoté, 2 vols*. Paris: Belles Lettres.
- Masaracchia, Agostino (ed.) 1993. *Orfeo e l'orfismo. Atti del Seminario Nazionale (Roma-Perugia 1985–1991)*. Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica Atti e Convegni 4. Rome: Gruppo Editoriale Internazionale.
- McGuire, Meredith 2008. *Lived Religion: Faith and practice in everyday life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Michellini, Anne Norris 1987. *Euripides and the Tragic Tradition*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Nagy, Gregory 1990. *Pindar's Homer: The lyric possession of an epic past*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Nagy, Gregory 1993. 'Alcaeus in sacred space.' In *Tradizione e innovazione nella cultura greca da Omero all'età ellenistica, vol. 1*, ed. Roberto Pretagostini. Rome: Gruppo editoriale internazionale. 221–225.
- Nagy, Gregory <sup>2</sup>1999. *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the hero in archaic Greek poetry*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Nagy, Gregory 2007. 'Did Sappho and Alcaeus ever meet? Symmetries of myth and ritual in performing the songs of ancient Lesbos.' In Bierl, Lämmle and Wesselmann 2007a. 211–269.
- Nagy, Gregory 2012. 'Signs of hero cult in Homeric poetry.' In *Homeric Contexts: Neo-analysis and the interpretation of oral poetry*, eds. Franco Montanari, Antonios Renakos, Christos Tsagalis. Trends in Classics, Supplementary Volumes 12. Berlin: de Gruyter. 27–71.
- Nagy, Gregory 2016 (forthcoming). 'A poetics of sisterly affect in the Brothers Song and in other songs of Sappho.' In Bierl and Lardinois 2016 (forthcoming).
- Neumann, Gerhard 2000. 'Begriff und Funktion des Rituals im Feld der Literaturwissenschaft.' In *Lesbarkeit der Kultur: Literaturwissenschaften zwischen Kulturtechnik und Ethnographie*, eds. Gerhard Neumann, Sigrid Weigel. Munich: Fink. 19–52.
- Newiger, Hans-Joachim 1957. *Metapher und Allegorie. Studien zu Aristophanes*. Zetemata 16. Munich: Beck.
- Obbink, Dirk 2014. 'Two new poems by Sappho', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 189. 31–50.
- Otto, Walter F. 1933. *Dionysos: Mythos und Kultus*. Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann (2011).
- Oudemans, Theodorus C. W.; Lardinois, André P. M. H. 1987. *Tragic Ambiguity: Anthropology, philosophy and Sophocles' Antigone*. Leiden: Brill.
- Parker, Robert 1995. 'Early Orphism.' In *The Greek World*, ed. Anton Powell. London: Routledge. 483–510.
- Picard, Charles 1962. 'Où fut à Lesbos, au VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'asyle temporaire du poète Alcée?', *Revue Archéologique* 2. 43–69.
- Pickard-Cambridge, Arthur 1962. *Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Polignac, François de 1995. *Cults, Territory, and the Origins of the Greek City-State*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Richardson, Nicholas 1993. *The Iliad: A commentary, vol. 6: books 21–24*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Riess, Werner 2012. *Performing Interpersonal Violence: Court, curse, and comedy in fourth-century BCE Athens*. Mythos/Eikon/Poiesis 4. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Robert, Louis 1960. 'Recherches épigraphiques. Inscriptions de Lesbos', *Revue des Études Anciennes* 62. 285–315.
- Rösler, Wolfgang 1980. *Dichter und Gruppe: Eine Untersuchung zu den Bedingungen und zur historischen Funktion früher griechischer Lyrik am Beispiel Alkaios*. Theorie und Geschichte der Literatur und der Schönen Künste 50. Munich: Fink.
- Rüpke, Jörg 2011. 'Lived Ancient Religion: Questioning "cults" and "polis religion"', *Mythos* 5. 191–203.
- Seaford, Richard 1994. *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and tragedy in the developing city-state*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Segal, Charles P. 1992. 'Signs, magic, and letters in Euripides' *Hippolytos*.' In *Innovations of Antiquity*, eds. Ralph Hexter, Daniel Selden. New York: Routledge. 420–456.
- Sourvinou-Inwood, Christiane 1989. 'Assumptions and creating of meaning: Reading Sophocles' *Antigone*', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 109. 134–148.
- Sourvinou-Inwood, Christiane 1990. 'What is polis religion?' In *The Greek City from Homer to Alexander*, eds. Oswyn Murray, Simon Price. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 295–322.
- Susanetti, Davide 1997. *Gloria e purezza: note all'Ippolito di Euripide*. Venice: Supernova.

- Susanetti, Davide 2007. *Euripide: fra tragedia, mito e filosofia*. Rome: Carocci.
- Vernant, Jean-Pierre 1982. 'From Oedipus to Periander: Lameness, tyranny, incest in legend and history', *Arethusa* 15. 19–38.
- Versnel, Hendrik S. 2009. *Fluch und Gebet: Magische Manipulation versus religiöses Flehen? Religionsgeschichtliche und hermeneutische Betrachtungen über antike Fluchtafeln*. Hans-Lietzmann-Vorlesungen 10. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Voigt, Eva-Maria 1971. *Sappho et Alcaeus: Fragmenta*. Amsterdam: Athenaeum-Polak & Van Gennep.
- Winkler, John J. 1982. 'The mendacity of Kalasiris and the narrative strategy of Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*', *Yale Classical Studies* 27. 93–158.
- Winkler, John J. 1985. *Auctor & Actor: A narratological reading of Apuleius's Golden Ass*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Yatromanolakis, Dimitrios 2008. 'Genre categories and interdiscursivity in Alkaios and Archaic Greece', *Synkrise/Comparaison* 19. 169–187.

**Anton Bierl**

Department of Ancient Civilisations  
Ancient Greek Literature and Language  
University of Basel  
Petersgraben 51  
4051 Basel  
Switzerland  
a.bierl@unibas.ch