

Aristophanes and the Cult of the Saviour*

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Abstract

Aristophanes' *Knights*, *Peace*, and *Birds* are deeply interested in the figure of the civic "saviour", who is depicted as a *Gottmensch*: a man become god or, at least, a man deserving of religious treatment such as the gods receive. While the Aristophanic treatment of the theme contains many parodic, paratragic, and metatheatrical elements, it arguably still offers a utilizable and unique window onto real-life practices concerning fifth-century BCE *Gottmensch*- and saviour-figures. Aristophanic comedy consequently has a role to play in the reconstruction of the early history of saviour- and ruler-cult, prior to the divine cult given to Lysandros in his own lifetime at Samos in 404 BCE.

Keywords

Aristophanes, saviour cult, *Gottmensch*, ruler-cult, epiphany

0 Introduction

The comedies of Aristophanes open up a significant perspective on heroization in ancient Greece, specifically in respect of the treatment of the saviour (*sōtēr*) as a more than human figure or, in standard scholarly parlance, a *Gottmensch*¹. The concept of saving the community plays a part in several extant Aristophanic comedies. In *Frogs*, Dionysos' descent to the underworld to fetch Euripides turns into a quest for a poet who will "save the city" (1419, 1500-1503). In *Lysistrata*, the women's aim is to "save Greece" (29-30, 39-41, 525-526)². However, three plays make very particular use of the concept of the civic *sōtēr*: *Knights* of 424 BCE, *Peace* of 421 BCE, and *Birds* of 414 BCE.³ These are the focus of the present paper.

The paper has six sections. Sections 1-3 aim to illustrate and evaluate the role that the saviour-figure plays in each of the three plays. Section 4 examines the blending of real religious elements with paratragic and metatheatrical elements that we find in the comic presentation of the saviour or *Gottmensch*. Section 5 undertakes to explain why the *sōtēr*- or *Gottmensch*-figure is properly a concern of Old Comedy. Section 6, finally, explores the significance of the Aristophanic picture for our understanding of the early history of *Gottmenschentum* in ancient Greece.

1 *Birds*

We start with *Birds*, the latest of the three plays, as it offers the clearest illustration of a civic saviour being treated as a man become god. Peisetairos is hailed early on as the birds' *sōtēr*: "thanks to god and some good chance, I think, you have come as saviour to me" (544-

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¹ The terms 'heroization' and 'hero cult' can be justifiably used in a broad, inclusive sense, of the phenomenon of the ancient Greek worship of historical persons as a whole; for the holistic comprehension of this phenomenon, it is not always helpful to insist on a strict separation between divine and heroic cult: HABICHT 2017, 145-149, 206.

² FARAONE 1997.

³ Compare TAEGER 1957, 107-108. The qualification "civic" is important; excluded thereby is e.g. Pheidippides as Strepsiades' personal "saviour" (*Nub.* 77, 1161-1162, 1177).

545)⁴. The end of the play shows Peisetairos both receiving religious attentions from the community of birds and fully apotheosized (a man become god, therefore, via becoming a bird!)⁵. In the last words of the play, he is acclaimed as "highest of divine beings" (1765).

The closing scene of *Birds* (1706-1765) draws on several schemata found in the context of ruler-cult. First, there is the messenger's announcement of Peisetairos' imminent arrival. This speech (1706-1719), delivered with Peisetairos off-stage, has been convincingly likened to the announcement by a *hierokēryx* of the imminent epiphanic arrival of a deity or the arrival of a ruler and the concomitant exhortation of the populace to "receive" the deity or ruler appropriately (1706-1708)⁶. An example involving a deity is the end of Callimachus' *Bath of Pallas* (137-139)⁷. An earlier example involving a human ruler-to-be is Herodotus' description of Peisistratos' re-entry in Athens in the mid-sixth century BCE (I 60)⁸.

Second, the chariot entry. Immediately following the messenger's speech Peisetairos enters in a chariot⁹. He is treated to a *makarismos* by the birds and his marriage with the goddess BASILEIA is celebrated¹⁰. Kavoulaki points out that "[t]he procession performed is both victorious and bridal¹¹." The conflation of victory procession and wedding procession is found elsewhere in the celebration of exceptional men¹². One revealing example, involving a returning athletic victor, is provided by Pindar's ninth *Pythian* ode (c. 474 BCE), whose encomiastic imagery equates the athlete's triumphal return by chariot with a wedding procession¹³. The victor Telesikates is described as "leading lovely DOXA to his fatherland," Cyrene, where the eponymous nymph Kyrene will "receive" him joyously (73-75). This provides a pointed parallel to the mythical narrative of the ode: Apollo brought Kyrene as his bride in a chariot to Libya, where the pair were "received" by Aphrodite (5-13). Peisetairos receives comparably elevating treatment at the end of *Birds*.

Third, betrothal to a divine bride. Peisetairos' marriage to BASILEIA is explicitly modelled on the marriage of Zeus to Hera (1731-1735). According to the wisdom of archaic and classical choral lyric, marriage to a goddess was proverbially out of the reach of a mortal. For instance, Alcman fr. 1.17-20 *PMGF*: "do not attempt to wed Mistress Aphrodite or any [...] or a daughter of Porkos¹⁴." Or Pindar, *Pythian* IV 90-93: "Artemis' shaft hunted down Tityos swiftly, darting from her invincible quiver, in order that one should desire to lay one's hand on love affairs in the realm of the possible¹⁵." The exceptions acknowledged are significant: Peleus and Kadmos married goddesses and were granted an exceptional afterlife (Pindar, *Pythian* III 88-96; *Olympian* II 78); Herakles' marriage to HEBE is the culmination of his apotheosis (Pindar, *Nemean* I 71-72, *Isthmian* IV 59-60). In historical contexts, both Hellenistic and Roman, we hear of Demetrios Poliorketes being given "Athena" as a bride by the Athenians towards the end of the fourth century BCE (Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*

⁴ σὺ δέ μοι κατὰ δαίμονα καὶ <τινα> συντυχίαν / ἀγαθὴν ἦκεις ἐμοὶ σωτήρ.

⁵ Peisetairos' bird-metamorphosis: *Av.* 654-655, 801-808.

⁶ ὦ πάντ' ἀγαθὰ πράττοντες, ὦ μείζω λόγου, / ὦ τρισμακάριον πτηνὸν ὀρνίθων γένος, **δέχεσθε** τὸν τύραννον ὀλβίοις δόμοις. See KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 295.

⁷ ἔρχεται Ἀθαναία νῦν ἀτρεκές· ἀλλὰ **δέχεσθε** / τὰν θεόν, ὦ κῶραι, τῶργον ὄσαις μέλειται, / σὺν τ' εὐαγορία σὺν τ' εὐγμασι σὺν τ' ὀλολυγαῖς. KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 296.

⁸ προδρόμους κήρυκας προπέμψαντες, οἳ τὰ ἐντεταλμένα ἠγόρευον ἀπικόμενοι ἐς τὸ ἄστυ, λέγοντες τοιαύδε· «**ἜΩ Ἀθηναῖοι, δέκεσθε** ἀγαθῶ νόφ Πεισίστρατον, τὸν αὐτὴ ἢ Ἀθηναίη τιμήσασα ἀνθρώπων μάλιστα κατάγει ἐς τὴν ἑωυτῆς ἀκρόπολιν.»

⁹ See DUNBAR 1995, 751-752.

¹⁰ Throughout I observe the convention of capitalizing the names of personified abstractions.

¹¹ KAVOULAKI 1999, 314.

¹² KAVOULAKI 1999, 314 instances Peleus at 'Hes.' fr. 211 Merkelbach-West.

¹³ On the *eiselas* of the athletic victor, see CURRIE 2005, 139-140.

¹⁴ [... μηδὲ πη]ρήτω γαμῆν τὰν Ἀφροδίταν / [... F]άν[α]σσαν ἢ τιν' / [...] ἢ παῖδα Πόρκω.

¹⁵ καὶ μὰν Τιτυὸν βέλος Ἀρτέμιδος θήρευσε κραιπνόν, / ἐξ ἀνικάτου φαρέτρας ὀρνύμενον, / ὄφρα τις τῶν ἐν δυνατῶ φιλοτά- / τῶν ἐπιψαύειν ἔραται. See also *Pythian* II 26-28, 33-34.

IV 54), and likewise Marcus Antonius in 39/8 BCE (Seneca, *Suasoriae* I 6; Cassius Dio XLVIII 39.2)¹⁶. Theopompus records the following story of the fourth-century BCE Odrysian (Thracian) king Kotys (FGrHist / *BNJ* 115 F31, in Athenaeus XII 531e-532a):

Kotys prepared a feast as though Athena was being wedded to him and after preparing the bridal chamber waited, drunk, for the goddess; and having already taken leave of his senses he dispatched one of his bodyguards to see if the goddess had come to the chamber, and when he returned and said that no-one was in the chamber, he shot him with an arrow and killed him, and a second one likewise, until the third, getting wise, said the goddess had come a while time ago and was waiting for him¹⁷.

These historical cases suggest that, as Weinreich put it, "what Alcman [*sc. fr.* 1.17-20 *PMGF*, cited above] warns against as the ultimate expression of felicity that is forbidden to normal men – that is precisely what the *Gottmenschen* of the Hellenistic period strove for and sought to realize already on earth¹⁸." The theme of marriage to a goddess evidently became a standard encomiastic motif attached to the *Gottmensch*. Rhianus of Bene in the third century BCE speaks of the man who is carried away by success as "betrotting himself to Athena" (I 14). Virgil's fourth *Eclogue*, celebrating the birth of a *Heiland* / saviour-figure, concludes with the comment that "the goddess does not consider worthy of her bed" those who have not smiled at their parent at their birth (63) – with the implication that partnership in the goddess' (*sc.* Athena's?) bed is a natural expectation for the saviour¹⁹. It has been suggested that, already in *c.* 550 BCE, Peisistratos with Phye was exploiting the "marriage to Athena" motif (Herodotus I 60.4-5)²⁰. As early as the third millennium BCE, Sumerian kings were depicted as performing a "sacred marriage" ritual with Inanna, a tradition that may have been known to archaic Greeks²¹.

Fourth, impersonation of Zeus. *Birds* depicts Peisetairos as wielding Zeus' thunderbolt (1714). Striking impersonations of Zeus are reported for fourth-century-BCE *Gottmensch*-figures: Klearchos of Heraclea, "on becoming tyrant of Heraclea, took to wielding a sceptre [or, if we accept an emendation, "thunderbolt"] and called one of his sons Lightning" (Plutarch, *On the Fortune or Valour of Alexander the Great* 338b)²². Menekrates called himself "Zeus" and "went around wielding a sceptre" (Athenaeus VII 289c)²³. The place where Demetrios Poliorketes descended from his chariot in Athens was consecrated to "Demetrios *kataibates*" and received an altar (Plutarch, *Demetrius* 10.5): places struck by lightning were consecrated to Zeus *kataibates* and provided with an altar²⁴. Already in Old Comedy, "Olympian" Perikles had been likened to Zeus, "lightning and thundering" (Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 530-531), apparently not just a jibe at Perikles' powerful oratory (Plutarch, *Pericles* 8.2-4), but a reflection of a popular notion that the immense power he wielded made him Zeus-like²⁵. The

¹⁶ See WEINREICH 1932, 362; O'SULLIVAN 2008a; VERSNEL 2011, 452 and n. 58.

¹⁷ δειπνον κατεσκευασεν ο Κότυς ως γαμουμένης αὐτῶι τῆς Ἀθηναίας καὶ θάλαμον κατασκευάσας ἀνέμενον μεθύων τὴν θεόν. ἦδη δ' ἔκφρων γενόμενος ἐπεμπέ τινα τῶν δορυφόρων ὀψόμενον εἰ παραγέγονεν ἢ θεός εἰς τὸν θάλαμον· ἀφικομένου δ' ἐκεῖνου καὶ εἰπόντος μηδένα εἶναι ἐν τῶι θαλάμῳ, τοξεύσας τοῦτον ἀπέκτεινεν καὶ ἄλλον δεύτερον ἐπὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς, ἕως ὃ τρίτος συνεῖς παραγενομένην ἔφη πάλαι τὴν θεὸν αὐτὸν ἀναμένειν. The physical presence of the deity (hero) is presupposed in other stories of divine-human sexual intercourse (typically with genders reversed): the Hero of Temesa (Paus. VI 6.7-10), Astrabakos (Hdt. VI 69.1-4).

¹⁸ WEINREICH 1932, 361 (original in German). Compare KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 298, for marriage to a goddess is "die Krönung des Götterglücks, nach dem der Gottmensch strebt."

¹⁹ WEINREICH 1932. For the "saviour figure" or "divine man" in Virgil's *Eclogues*, see HARDIE 1998, 11-12, 20-22.

²⁰ BONNER 1943; VERSNEL 2011, 448 n. 40.

²¹ CURRIE 2016, 161-168.

²² Κλέαρχος Ἡρακλείας τύραννος γενόμενος σκῆπτρον [read, perhaps, σκηπτὸν!?] ἐφόρει καὶ τῶν υἱῶν ἕνα Κεραυνὸν ὀνόμασε. For a defence of the mss reading σκῆπτρον, "sceptre", see BURSTEIN 1974. See also VERSNEL 2011, 440.

²³ αὐτὸς δ' ὁ "Ζεὺς" ... σκῆπτρον κρατῶν... περιήει. On the sceptre (etc.), see WEINREICH 1933, 9.

²⁴ KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 299; GRAF 2005. Cf. HABICHT 2017, 36, 113.

²⁵ Cf. Ar. *Vesp.* 671, cf. 619-624; Cratinus fr. 73, 118, 258 Kassel-Austin. See BAKOLA 2010, 184 and n. 7. Zeus "tyranny" is used as an allegory for Perikles' political power in Cratinus' *Plutoi* (fr. 171.22-23 Kassel-Austin):

philosopher Anaxarchos of Abdera, according to the third- or second-century BCE biographer Satyrus, asked Alexander the Great after a thunderclap whether he, the son of Zeus, could thunder like that (Satyrus fr. 26 Schorn = Anaxarchos fr. 72 A4 Diels-Kranz)²⁶. Alexander was depicted wielding the thunderbolt in a (near-)contemporary painting by Apelles (Plutarch, *Alexander* 4.3; Pliny, *Natural History* XXXV 92) and on coins dating to Alexander's lifetime²⁷. Callimachus' *dictum*, "it is not mine to thunder, but Zeus'" (*Aetia* fr. 1.20 Harder) seems wittily to conflate such impersonations of Zeus with the metaphorical sense of "thundering" found in rhetorical or literary critical contexts (this latter use also deriving from Old Comedy: Aeschylus is "deep-thundering", ἐπιβρεμέτας, at Aristophanes, *Frogs* 814, like Zeus in epic: *Iliad* XIII 624). Rhianus' puffed-up man "thunders like Zeus" (I 13), and Virgil, in a passage possibly influenced by Rhianus, speaks of "[sc. Augustus] Caesar the Great thundering by the deep Euphrates" (*Georgics* IV 560-561), a phrase which conflates notions of the Zeus-impersonating ruler thundering with Callimachean literary critical notions²⁸. If these last cases suggest a metaphorical understanding of "thundering", then the case of the mythical Salmoneus suggests that artificial simulations of thunder were possible (Apollodorus, *Library* I 9.7; Virgil, *Aeneid* VI 585-594; Manilius, V 91-96)²⁹. The idea leant itself to parody already in the fifth century: Euripides' Cyclops equates his farting with Zeus' thunderbolt (*Cyclops* 328)³⁰. All this is not to be divorced from fifth- and fourth-century impersonations of Zeus (or of the gods more generally). Xerxes invading Greece is likened to Zeus (Herodotus VII 56.2; Gorgias 83 B5a Diels-Kranz). On the tragic stage, Rhesos is hailed as a Zeus made manifest (Pseudo-Euripides, *Rhesus* 355-356 σύ μοι Ζεὺς ὁ φαναῖος / ἤκεις)³¹. In 336 BCE, Philippos II presented himself as a thirteenth Olympian god in the theatre of Aegae (Diodorus XVI 92.5, XVI 95.1). This again infringes an epinician injunction against wishing to become Zeus (Pindar, *Isthmian* V 14, *Olympian* V 24). I have argued that such Pindaric *gnōmai* "belong precisely in a context in which the possibility of heroization is being explored"³². In several of these historical cases, the possibility of heroization (or apotheosis) was being explored in real life. Interesting here too are the implications of Pindar's pairing in *Pythian* 1 of Hieron with Zeus, specifically as wielder of the thunderbolt (5-30, especially 5-6)³³.

Apart from these schemata of ruler cult, the Messenger's speech in *Birds* (1706-1719) is replete with language, images, and motifs that recur in the real experience of epiphany of gods and *Gottmenschen*³⁴. The main ones are the following.

BAKOLA 2010, 124-125 n. 24, 213. See KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 305; TAEGER 1957, 105, 108, 158-159.

²⁶ See SCHORN 2004, 431-433, for the mischievous ambiguity in the question (thundering / farting).

²⁷ On these coins, see e.g. LANE FOX 1996, esp. 100-102; HOLT 2003, esp. 122-124, 151-152.

²⁸ *Caesar dum magnus ad altum / fulminat Euphraten*. Cf. Hor. *Carm.* III 5.1-3. See THOMAS 1988, 240; HARDIE 1986, 51; differently, MYNORS 1990, 324. For the literary critical sense of "thunder" in a Roman context, see Prop. III 17.40. With Virgil's use of *magnus*, compare Plut. *de Alex. magn. fort.* 338c οἱ δὲ Μεγάλους ἀνηγόρευσαν ἑαυτοῦς (and compare also Cat. XI 10 *Caesaris... magni*).

²⁹ Compare CHANIOTIS 1997, 248 "from Hellenistic times on several references in literary sources and papyri indicate that stage-devices, similar to those used in the theater, were applied in mystery cults, to present flying gods, lightning and thunder, or give the astounded audience the impression that an earthquake was taking place."

³⁰ See also SCHORN 2004, 431-432.

³¹ Cf. *Rhesus* 385 (Rhesos as Ares); cf. also 301. See FRIES 2014, 201, for Rhesos as a "saviour god." The adjective φαναῖος (an attested epithet of Apollo on Chios) is understood as "bringer of light", i.e. "saviour", by FRIES 2014, 250. Perhaps (especially in conjunction with ἤκειν: see below) it could mean "manifest", sc. appearing in an epiphany (cf. φανερός, ἐπιφανής, ἐπιφανής, φανείς); the verb φαείνεσθαι, of which φαναῖος is a derivative, means "appear", of a god, at Callim. *Hy.* II 9.

³² CURRIE 2005, 81, cf. 45, 198-199. This view of the *gnōmai* is found inadequate by HORNBLOWER 2008, 995-996. See also, however, VERSNEL 2011, 461-462.

³³ See NOCK 1928, 32 = 1972, i.146, on "the Pindaric habit of drawing parallels such as... Zeus defeating Typhon and Hieron defeating the Etruscans and their Carthaginian allies (*Pyth.* I)." Compare CINGANO 1995, 18; PFEIFFER 2005, 38-40.

³⁴ See esp. KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 295-302; VERSNEL 2011, 484.

First, the "reception" motif: 1708 δέχεσθε³⁵. We have touched on the use of this verb, in the imperative form, in the context of the proclamation of a *hierokēryx*, preparing the community to "receive" the arriving deity or *Gottmensch* (see above). It is also found in the context of the "reception" by a community of worshippers of a deity arriving in epiphany at a festival in their honour (e.g. Poseidon, at the Isthmus: Pindar, *Nemean* V 38 θεὸν δέχονται) and of the "reception" of the *Gottmensch* (e.g. Demetrios Poliorketes in Athens: Demochares FGrHist 75 F2 = *BNJ* 75 F6)³⁶.

Second, the "advent" motif (found, in conjunction with the preceding, in the epiphany of deities at festivals in their honour): 1709 προσέρχεται, 1712 ἔρχεται³⁷. Compare Callimachus, *Bath of Pallas* 137 ἔρχετ' Ἀθαναία νῦν ἀτρεκές; the ithyphallic hymn to Demetrios, 5-7 χῆ μὲν (*sc.* Δημήτηρ) τὰ σεμνὰ τῆς Κόρης μυστήρια / ἔρχεθ' ἵνα ποιήσῃ, ὁ δ'... κτλ.

Third, solar and astral imagery: Peisetairos is said to outshine the stars and the sun: 1709-1712³⁸. In a poem by one Hermodotos, Antigonos Monophthalmos was acclaimed as "son of Helios" and a "god" (Plutarch *Isis and Osiris* 360c)³⁹. The ithyphallic hymn to Demetrios compared him to the sun and his associates to the stars (11-12)⁴⁰. In Horace, *Sermones* I 7.22-25, one Persius, in a lawsuit with Rupilius Rex, called Brutus "the sun of Asia" and his associates "healthsome stars" (but Rupilius a "Dog-Star, hateful to farmers")⁴¹.

Fourth, the motif of the "presence" of the deity or *Gottmensch*: 1718 ὁδὶ δὲ καὶ τὸς ἐστίν. Compare Aristophanes, *Wealth* 1189-1190 ὁ Ζεὺς ὁ σωτήρ γὰρ πάρεστιν ἐνθάδε, / αὐτόματος ἦκων. Likewise, Pseudo-Euripides, *Rhesus* 385-387 (of Rhesos) θεός, ὦ Τροία, θεός, αὐτὸς Ἄρης / ὁ Στρυμόνιος πῶλος ἀοιδοῦ / Μούσης ἦκων καταπνεῖ σε. Further, the ithyphallic hymn to Demetrios, 7-8 ὁ δ' ἰλαρός, ὥσπερ τὸν θεὸν δεῖ, καὶ καλὸς / καὶ γελῶν πάρεστι, 18 σὲ δὲ παρόνθ' ὀρῶμεν⁴².

Overall, the effect of the scene consists in the co-presence of unreal (fantastical, absurd, theatrical) elements and of real practices derived from the treatment of epiphanic deities, of *Gottmenschen*, or of extraordinary men. There is a double distancing from reality in the scene, set in Cloudcuckooland and acted out in the comic theatre. But, as Kleinknecht and Versnel in particular have shown, there is a significant amount of "zooming" to real practices that could be, and were, applied to historical personages, both earlier (e.g. Peisistratos) and later (e.g. Demetrios Poliorketes)⁴³.

2 *Knights*

Knights was produced ten years earlier than *Birds*, in 424 BCE. Early in the play, "Demosthenes" / "Servant 1" greets the Sausage-Seller on his first appearance as follows (147-150)⁴⁴:

ζητῶμεν αὐτόν. ἀλλ' ὁδὶ προσέρχεται

³⁵ KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 296; CURRIE 2005, 181-183; CHANIOTIS 2011, 167-169.

³⁶ τὸν Δημήτριον... οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι ἐδέχοντο οὐ μόνον θυμιῶντες καὶ στεφανοῦντες καὶ οἰνοχοοῦντες, ἀλλὰ καὶ προσόδια καὶ χοροὶ καὶ ἰθύφαλλοι μετ' ὀρχήσεως καὶ ᾠδῆς ἀπήντων αὐτῷ.

³⁷ See PARKER 2011, 179-185.

³⁸ οἷος οὔτε παμφαῆς / ἀστήρ ἰδεῖν ἔλαμψε χρυσαυγεῖ δρόμῳ / οὔθ' ἡλίου τηλαυγῆς ἀκτίνων σέλας / τοιοῦτον ἐξέλαμψεν. KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 297; O'SULLIVAN 2008b, 88. For the image in a quite different encomiastic context, see Alc. fr. 1.39-43 *PMGF*.

³⁹ Ερμωδότην τινὸς ἐν ποιήμασιν αὐτὸν (*sc.* Ἀντίγονον) Ἥλιου παῖδα καὶ θεὸν ἀναγορεύοντος.

⁴⁰ ὁμοῖον ὥσπερ οἱ φίλοι μὲν ἀστέρες, / ἥλιος δ' ἐκεῖνος. See O'SULLIVAN 2008b.

⁴¹ *laudat Brutum laudatque cohortem, / solem Asiae Brutum appellat stellasque salubris / appellat comites excepto Rege; Canem illum, / invisum agricolis sidus, venisse.* VERSNEL 2011, 448-449 n. 42.

⁴² CHANIOTIS 2011, 174-176. SLATER 1988, 127 n. 7.

⁴³ KLEINKNECHT 1937b; VERSNEL 2011, 480-484. "Zooming" is the term used by SOURVINOU-INWOOD 2003, 22-23, and often.

⁴⁴ On the question of the identification of "Servant 1" with the general Demosthenes, see OLSON 1992, 310 n. 22.

ὥσπερ κατὰ θεὸν εἰς ἀγοράν. ὦ μακάριε
 ἄλλαντοπῶλα, δεῦρο δεῦρ', ὦ φίλτατε,
 ἀνάβαινε, σωτήρ τῆ πόλει καὶ νῶν φανείς.
 Let's go and find him. Well, here he is coming along,
 as if heaven-sent, into the market-place. O blessed
 sausage-seller, come up here, here, o dearest fellow,
 appearing as a saviour to the city and to the two of us.

According to Slater, "almost every word belongs to cult language⁴⁵." We may point to the following phrases in particular.

First, ὀδὶ προσέρχεται (147). Both words are used in the context of Peisetairos' "epiphanic" re-entry, *Birds* 1709 προσέρχεται and 1718 ὀδὶ δὲ καὶ τὸς ἐστίν⁴⁶. Compare above on the "advent" and "presence" motifs.

Second, ὥσπερ κατὰ θεόν (148)⁴⁷. A similar locution is used of Peisetairos' arrival as a "saviour" to the birds "by the favour of a god": *Birds* 544-545 (cited above) σὺ δέ μοι κατὰ δαίμονα... / ... ἦκεις ἐμοὶ σωτήρ⁴⁸.

Third, δεῦρο δεῦρ' (149). The same anadiplosis is found in a cletic invocation of Artemis at *Lysistrata* 1271-1272 ὦ, δεῦρ' ἴθι, δεῦρο, / ὦ κυναγέ παρσένε (a Spartan speaker)⁴⁹. Compare also, in a cletic invocation to Hymen, Catullus LXI 8-9 *huc / huc veni*⁵⁰.

Fourth, σωτήρ τῆ πόλει καὶ νῶν φανείς (150). The phrase is also used at *Knights* 458 καὶ τῆ πόλει σωτήρ φανείς ἡμῖν τε τοῖς πολίταις. For φανείς, or similar, as the *mot propre* of epiphany, see *Acharnians* 566-567 ἰὼ Λάμαχ', ὦ βλέπων ἀστραπάς, / βοήθησον, ὦ γοργολόφα, φανείς⁵¹. At *Clouds* 275, the divine Clouds say ἀρθῶμεν φανεραί, in response to Sokrates' invocation, 266 ἄρθητε, φάνητ', ὦ δέσποινα. Pseudo-Euripides *Rhesus* 370 ἐλθὲ φάνηθι. Euripides *Ba.* 42 φανέντα θνητοῖς δαίμων' ὄν τίκτει (*sc.* Σεμέλη) Δί, 22 ἴν' εἶην ἐμφανῆς δαίμων βροτοῖς⁵². Herodotus III 27.1 ἐφάνη Αἰγυπτίοισι ὁ Ἄπις... ἐπιφανέος δὲ τούτου γενομένου, III 27.3, II 91.3 (the hero Perseus), II 153 (Apis), IV 95.5 ἐφάνη τοῖσι Θρήξι (of Pythagoras *rediuuius*), VI 106.1 (Pan), cf. II 146.1 εἰ μὲν γὰρ φανεροί τε ἐγένοντο (*sc.* Dionysos and Pan). This plainly relates to the motif of the "presence" of the deity or *Gottmensch* in epiphany⁵³.

It is clear that in *Knights* 147-150, "Demosthenes" / "Servant 1" hails the Sausage-Seller as a "saviour" in language typical for an epiphany. The idea of the Sausage-Seller as a *Gottmensch* is developed at *Knights* 836-840, where the coryphaeus says the following to the Sausage-Seller:

ὦ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις φανείς μέγιστον ὠφέλημα,
 ζηλῶ σε τῆς εὐγλωττίας. εἰ γὰρ ὦδ' ἐποίσει,
 μέγιστος Ἑλλήνων ἔσει, καὶ μόνος καθέξεις
 τὰν τῆ πόλει, τῶν ζυμμάχων τ' ἄρξεις ἔχων τρίαίναν,
 ἦ πολλὰ χρήματ' ἐργάσει σείων τε καὶ ταράττων. 840
 You who have appeared as the greatest boon to all men –
 I envy you your eloquence. For if you are to lay in to him like this,

⁴⁵ SLATER 1988, 127, after KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 307; cf. TAEGER 1957, 107.

⁴⁶ On the significance of the deictic, see SLATER 1988, 128.

⁴⁷ It matters little for our purposes whether we read the θεῖον of the mss. and scholl. (defended by Pohlenz, followed by LANDFESTER) or Cobet's θεόν (preferred by modern editors; cf. Plat. *Leg.* 682e10).

⁴⁸ For the meaning "by the favour of a god", see scholl. *Ar. Eq.* 147a-c; cf. Pind. *Ol.* IX 28; LSJ s.v. κατὰ B.v.

⁴⁹ KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 307 n. 2. Cf. PULLEYN 1997, 138, 218.

⁵⁰ See FEDELI 1983, 23 for discussion and further examples.

⁵¹ A quasi-heroic epiphany of Lamachos: KLEINKNECHT 1937a, 79 and n. 1; SLATER 1988, 127; CURRIE 2005, 69.

⁵² KLEINKNECHT 1937a, 79 n. 1 "Φαίνομαι ist ja der älteste und seit Homer für das sichtbare Kommen der Gottheit zu den Menschen gebräuchliche religiöse Begriff." Cf. LANDFESTER 1967, 36; Cf. SLATER 1988, 127. Cf. WHITMAN 1964, 102-103.

⁵³ See CERFAUX, TENDRIAU 1957, 185 n. 2 for comparison between *Ar. Eq.* 150 and the ithyphallic hymn to Demetrios, v. 18 σὲ δὲ παρόνθ' ὀρῶμεν.

you shall be the greatest of the Greeks, and you alone shall be master of affairs in the city and shall rule the allies wielding the trident, with which you shall make heaps of money, shaking and stirring⁵⁴.

The passage continues the theme of the Sausage-Seller as an epiphanic (note φανείς) saviour-benefactor (πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις... μέγιστον ὠφέλημα). Moreover, the Sausage-Seller, envisaged as ruling the allies with the trident, is now implicitly likened to Poseidon⁵⁵. This verbal image of the Sausage-Seller as "Poseidon" should be compared to the on-stage appearance of Peisetairos in *Birds* as a "Zeus", wielding the thunderbolt (1714, 1748-1753)⁵⁶. It also has affinities with the Old Comic image of Perikles as a thundering "Zeus" (see above).

In *Birds*, Peisetairos is hailed as *sōtēr* at the start and as "highest of the *daimones*" and ruler of the universe at the end of the play; in *Knights*, by contrast, the parallel promise of the Sausage-Seller's monarchical rule and apotheosis turns out to be a *suggestio falsi*, for the plot takes a surprising turn. When the Sausage-Seller re-enters at 1316, he unexpectedly plays the part not of the apotheosized *sōtēr*, but of the *hierokēryx*, announcing to the chorus (and audience) the imminent appearance of DEMOS, whom he has "boiled down" and restored to his former glory⁵⁷. Here are verses 1316-1318 and 1326-1328:

εὐφημεῖν χρῆ καὶ στόμα κλῆειν καὶ μαρτυριῶν ἀπέχεσθαι,
καὶ τὰ δικαστήρια συγκλῆειν, οἷς ἡ πόλις ἦδε γέγηθεν,
ἐπὶ καιναῖσιν δ' εὐτυχίαισιν παιωνίζειν τὸ θέατρον

...

ὄψεσθε δέ· καὶ γὰρ ἀνοιγνυμένων ψόφος ἦδη τῶν προφυλαίων.
ἀλλ' ὀλολύξατε φαινομέναισιν ταῖς ἀρχαίαισιν Ἀθήναις
ταῖς θαυμασταῖς καὶ πολυύμοις, ἵν' ὁ κλεινὸς Δῆμος ἐνοικεῖ.

Please observe religious silence and bar your mouth and refrain from giving evidence and shut up the law courts in which this city delights and let the theatre raise the paeon-cry in recognition of brand new good fortune.

...

You shall see; for even now there is the noise of the gates being opened.
Come, ululate at the appearance of the Athens of old,
wondrous and much celebrated in song, where the well-known Demos dwells.

The Sausage-Seller's request for εὐφημία (1316) before the re-entry of DEMOS resembles that of the Messenger before the "epiphany" of Peisetairos at *Birds* 1719⁵⁸. His request for the chorus of knights to ululate (ἀλλ' ὀλολύξατε) invites comparison with Callimachus' *Bath of Pallas* (ἀλλὰ δέχεσθε / τὰν θεόν... / σὺν... ὀλολυγαῖς). The re-entry of DEMOS at the end of *Knights*, therefore, not that of the Sausage-Seller, corresponds to the re-entry of Peisetairos at the end of *Birds*. It is DEMOS now who is feted by the chorus of knights as "sole ruler" and "king of the Greeks" (1330, 1333), not the Sausage-Seller.

Kleinknecht argued that the re-entry of DEMOS in *Knights* is modelled on an epiphany of a deity or *Gottmensch*-figure, such as we see with Peisetairos in *Birds* (see above)⁵⁹. Consider the following points.

First, DEMOS is beautiful and sweet-smelling (1321, 1331-1332), like Peisetairos at *Birds* 1715-1717. Both are attributes of deities or *Gottmenschen*, especially in an epiphany⁶⁰. In the ithyphallic hymn, Demetrios is said to be "present, gracious, as a god should be, and beautiful and laughing" (7-8)⁶¹.

⁵⁴ There is a pun on "shake" (the trident) and "extort, blackmail" (LSJ s.v. σείω I.4; KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 310).

⁵⁵ KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 310. Cf. SOMMERSTEIN 1981, 189.

⁵⁶ With *Eq.* 840, cf. *Av.* 1752.

⁵⁷ For the Sausage-Seller as *hierokēryx*, see KLEINKNECHT 1939, 59 (cf. KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 295-297, for the ritual of good-news bringing); LANDFESTER 1967, 92; SLATER 1988, 129.

⁵⁸ KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 301; 1939, 59 and n. 3.

⁵⁹ KLEINKNECHT 1939.

⁶⁰ KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 300; 1939, 61; PETRIDOU 2015, 37.

⁶¹ ὁ δ' ἰλαρός, ὥσπερ τὸν θεὸν δεῖ, καὶ καλὸς / καὶ γελῶν πάρεστι. CHANIOTIS 2011, 177-178.

Second, DEMOS receives the beautiful personified SPONDAI for his sexual gratification (1388-1394), as Peisetairos is betrothed to BASILEIA in *Birds* (and as Trygaios is to OPORA in *Peace*). (Note, however, that DEMOS is not married to the SPONDAI, and the divine status of the SPONDAI is somewhat less clear than that of BASILEIA and OPORA.)⁶² Their beauty (*Knights* 1390) appears to have a divine quality, corresponding to that of BASILEIA (*Birds* 1713) and OPORA and THEORIA (*Peace* 524).

Third, the impression that DEMOS here has something like divine status would be fostered by a sense of "zooming" to religious reality: an apotheosized DEMOS is attested in Athens from c. 450 BCE and depicted on Attic relief documents from at least c. 350 BCE⁶³.

Knights refrains from explicitly calling DEMOS a god⁶⁴. However, the Sausage-Seller's words to DEMOS at 1337-1338 may suggest that this is indeed how he is to be conceived:

ἀλλ', ὃ μέλ', οὐκ οἶσθ' οἷος ἦσθ' αὐτὸς πάρος,
οὐδ' οἷ' ἔδρας· ἐμὲ γὰρ νομίζοις ἄν θεόν.
Ah, my good friend, you do not know the kind of person you yourself were formerly,
or the kind of things you used to do; if you did, you would consider me a god.

The Sausage-Seller speaks, hyperbolically, of his own euergetism: "if you [*sc.* DEMOS] knew the extent of the service I have done you, you would consider me a god⁶⁵." This particular hyperbole may be an idiomatic figure of speech⁶⁶. But, however figuratively or hyperbolically meant, the Sausage-Seller's phrase "you would consider me a god" reverberates ironically and wittily with both the present situation, in which DEMOS is actually being treated as divine, and with the unrealized scenario previously envisaged by the coryphaeus in 837-840, where the Sausage-Seller was to be treated as a *Gottmensch* ("if you are to attack [Paphlagon] like this, you [the Sausage-Seller] shall be the greatest of the Greeks, and you shall rule the allies wielding a trident, etc.")⁶⁷. The emphatic form ἐμέ suggests the possibility of translating: "you would consider *me* a god", implying that DEMOS is the one who, as things stand, is being regarded as a god. The Sausage-Seller steps aside for DEMOS, unexpectedly making good here on his earlier disavowal of personal ambition (182).

Gottmenschentum plays a significant role in *Knights* as well as *Birds*. It is, of course, anachronistic to read *Knights* in the light of *Birds*, produced ten years later; but I submit that it is legitimate and illuminating to draw on *Birds* in order to reveal the plot pattern that underlies *Knights*. *Knights*, though earlier, is with its *suggestio falsi* the quirkiest play in its deployment of the *sōtēr* / *Gottmensch* motif. This oblique treatment of the theme in *Knights* raises the possibility that plays with this kind of plot pattern had already preceded *Knights*. We shall see that the same plot pattern is in evidence also in *Peace* of 421 BCE, three years later than *Knights*. Both plays (plus *Peace*) could then be assumed to be drawing independently on a standard Old Comic plot-pattern. Alternatively, *Birds* could be seen as responding specifically to (*Peace* and) *Knights*; on this scenario, *Birds* could show us how to read *Knights*, reading

⁶² On BASILEIA as divine, compare VERSNEL 2011, 483 n. 135. For BASILEIA as an "ephemeral personification", without any known cults (she is also depicted on an Athenian *pyxis* of 420-410 BCE), see SMITH 2011, 83-84 (a reference for which I thank Prof. G. Camassa). For OPORA as divine, note her presence on Attic red-figure vases of 420-400 BCE in the company of Dionysos (WEISS 1994; SMITH 2011, 79-81). Compare DIALLAGE at Ar. *Lys.* 1114 (a reference I owe to Constanze Güthenke). The fact that SPONDAI and DIALLAGE in their respective plays are bestowed by human characters on human characters makes it harder to conceive of them as divine (Trygaios has OPORA and THEORIA from the gods: *Pax* 706-707, 847).

⁶³ See KLEINKNECHT 1939b, 65 and n. 1; KRON 1979, 71-72; ALEXANDRI-TZAHOU 1986, 375; GLOWACKI 2003; SMITH 2011, 96-97.

⁶⁴ KLEINKNECHT 1939b, 58-59.

⁶⁵ TAEGER 1957, 107.

⁶⁶ Cf. e.g. Theogn. 339 χούτως ἄν δοκείμι μετ' ἀνθρώπων θεὸς εἶναι, "then would I be considered a god among men."

⁶⁷ Compare WHITMAN 1964, 103.

back up the line of reception (I have argued similarly that seeing how Sophocles represents the process of Oidipous' heroization in his latest extant play, *Oedipus at Colonus*, can help us to recognize a similar process of heroization with Aias in *Ajax*, his earliest extant play)⁶⁸.

3 Peace

Peace intervenes chronologically between *Knights* and *Birds*. Trygaios is depicted as *sōtēr* three times in the play⁶⁹. The first is 856-867:

- | | | |
|--------|--|-----|
| Xo. | εὐδαιμονικῶς γ' ὁ πρε-
σβύτης, ὅσα γ' ᾧδ' ἰδεῖν,
τὰ νῦν τάδε πράττει. | |
| Τρ. | τί δῆτ' ἐπειδάν νυμφίον μ' ὀρᾶστε λαμπρόν ὄντα; | |
| Xo. | ζηλωτὸς ἔσει γέρων,
αὐθις νέος ὦν πάλιν,
μύρω κατάλειπτος. | 860 |
| Τρ. | οἶμαι. τί δῆθ' ὅταν ξυνὸν τῶν τιθίων ἔχωμαι; | |
| Xo. | εὐδαιμονέστερος φανεῖ τῶν Καρκίνου στροβίλων. | |
| Τρ. | οὐκουν δικαίως; ὅστις εἰς ὄχημα κανθάρου ἴπιβας
ἔσωσα τοὺς Ἑλληνας, ὅστ' ἐν τοῖς ἀγροῖσιν αὐτοῦς
ἅπαντας ὄντας ἀσφαλῶς κινεῖν τε καὶ καθεύδειν. | 865 |
| Chor.: | The old man is faring happily,
from all that we can see before us,
in the present moment. | |
| Tryg.: | What about when you see me as a bridegroom, all resplendent? | |
| Chor.: | You shall be an old man to envy,
being young once more,
anointed with perfume. | |
| Tryg.: | I should say so. What about when I lie with her and fondle her boobs? | |
| Chor.: | You shall seem more fortunate than the pirouetting sons of Karkinos. | |
| Tryg.: | Haven't I earned it? I who mounted my riding-beetle
and saved the Greeks, so that all of them, in their fields
without danger, could bonk and sleep. | |

The description here of Trygaios at his anticipated wedding to OPORA resembles the description of DEMOS at his "epiphany" in *Knights*, produced three years earlier. Note the following three similarities. First, λαμπρόν (859), of Trygaios, corresponds to *Knights* 1330 λαμπρός, of DEMOS. Second, "being young once more" (860), of Trygaios, corresponds to *Knights* 1322 "I boiled down DEMOS for you and made him beautiful instead of ugly." And third, μύρω κατάλειπτος (862), of Trygaios, corresponds to *Knights* 1332 σμύρνη κατάλειπτος, of DEMOS. In this case, we would be justified in talking of an allusive intertextuality (reading, this, time, straightforwardly down the line of reception): the *sōtēr*-figure Trygaios in *Peace* of 421 BCE can plausibly be taken to be modelled on (the rejuvenated, apotheosized) DEMOS in *Knights* of 424 BCE.

The second time that Trygaios is hailed as *sōtēr* is *Peace* 915⁷⁰. Here are lines 909-921:

- | | | |
|-----|---|------------|
| Xo. | ἢ χρηστὸς ἀνὴρ πολί-
ταις ἔστιν ἅπασιν ὅσ-
τις ἔστι τοιοῦτος. | 909-910 |
| Τρ. | ὅταν τρυγᾶτ', εἴσεσθε πολλῶ μᾶλλον οἶός εἰμι. | |
| Xo. | καὶ νῦν σὺ γε δῆλος εἶ-
σωτήρ γὰρ ἅπασιν ἀν-
θρώποις γεγένησαι. | 915
915 |
| Τρ. | φήσεις <γ'>, ἐπειδάν ἐκτίης οἴνου νέου λεπαστήν. | |
| Xo. | καὶ πλὴν γε τῶν θεῶν ἀεὶ σ' ἠγησόμεσθα πρῶτον. | |
| Τρ. | πολλῶν γὰρ ὑμῖν ἄξιος ⁷¹ Τρυγαῖος Ἀθμονεὺς ἐγώ, | |

⁶⁸ CURRIE 2012, 336, 338.

⁶⁹ I dispense with discussion of the third passage (*Pax* 1033-1038).

⁷⁰ The third time is *Pax* 1033-1038.

⁷¹ For the term in the context of ruler-cult, compare HABICHT 2017, 150-151.

δεινῶν ἀπαλλάξας πόνων τὸν δημότην ὄμιλον 920
καὶ τὸν γεωργικὸν λεῶν, Ὑπέρβολόν τε παύσας.

- Chor.: In truth the man
who is of such a nature
does a service to all the citizens.
- Tryg.: When you reap the fruit you will know my nature much better.
- Chor.: Even now it is plain who you are:
you have proven yourself
a saviour to all men.
- Tryg.: You'll say that all right when you drain your goblet of new wine.
- Chor.: Indeed, we will forever consider you foremost, apart from the gods.
- Tryg.: Truly you have me, Trygaios of the deme Athmonon, to thank for many things;
I released from terrible troubles the people of the city
and the folk who work the land, and I put an end to Hyperbolos.

This is a crucial passage for assessing the implications (whether religious or secular) of the term σωτήρ as addressed to Trygaios⁷². According to Olson, καὶ πλὴν γε τῶν θεῶν ἀεὶ σ' ἠγησόμεσθα πρῶτον (917) conveys "conventional piety"⁷³. We should compare the language used in the opening scene of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* by the Priest, addressing Oidipous (lines 31-34):

θεοῖσι μὲν νυν οὐκ ἰσοῦμένον σ' ἐγὼ
οὐδ' οἶδε παῖδες ἐζόμεσθ' ἐφέστιοι,
ἀνδρῶν δὲ πρῶτον ἔν τε συμφοραῖς βίου
κρίνοντες ἔν τε δαιμόνων συναλλαγαῖς.
Neither I nor these children here have taken position at the altar
as suppliants of you as ranked on a par with the gods,
but judging you foremost among men in the travails of life
and in dealings with divine powers.

Earlier in the Priest's speech it emerged that Oidipous has his own altars (15 "your altars", with the scholiast's exegesis: "they have come to the altars established in front of the palace as to altars of a god")⁷⁴. A little later in the speech we learn from the Priest that "this land calls you [*sc.* Oidipous] *sōtēr* for your former zeal" (47-48). The scene as a whole shows Oidipous receiving the Thebans' supplication (15-16, 31-32, 41) and a cletic invocation (46-47)⁷⁵. In this, he resembles the gods of the city, Athena and Ismenian Apollo (19-21). Everything here points to Oidipous' being cast as the recipient of what we may see as a form of *sōtēr*- or ruler-cult. This would be mirrored by the posthumous hero cult that Oidipous receives at the end of the *Oedipus at Colonus* (as *sōtēr*: 459-460), a play clearly conceived as a sequel to the *Oedipus Tyrannus*. A non-Sophoclean reception of this opening of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* just over a century later is also highly relevant: the ithyphallic hymn to Demetrios Poliorketes alludes extensively at its end (20-34) to the opening scene of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*⁷⁶. In the ithyphallic

⁷² KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 307 n. 4 "[der Begriff *sōtēr* hat] bei Aristophanes im Bezug auf Götter und Menschen schon deutlich die soteriologische, religiös-politische Bedeutung." See in general DORNSEIFF 1927, 1212.4-9 "[*sōtēr* ist] für den Griechen älteren Zeit auf die hohe religiöse Sprache beschränkt. Man greift zu diesem Wort nur gegenüber Übermenschlichem", 1213.37-38 "Auf Menschen angewandt bedeutet die Bezeichnung [*sōtēr*] fast eine Heroisierung." Cf. HABICHT 2017, 113. Differently, NOCK 1951, 127 = 1972, ii.720 "when applied to [men], [*sōtēr*] did not necessarily suggest that they belonged or approximated to the category of the [gods]"; JONES 2010, 26 "[the term *sōtēr*] does not need to imply divinity, and is sometimes no more than a polite way of addressing a superior." See also JIM (forthcoming).

⁷³ OLSON 1998, 244. Cf. TAEGER 1957, 107.

⁷⁴ On this phrase, see FINGLASS 2018, 172 (rather than JEBB 1893, 13). For altars in ruler-cult, see HABICHT 2017, 101-102 (to Lysandros in Samos: Duris, in Plut. *Lys.* 18.5; to Demetrios in Athens: Plut. *Demetr.* 10.5, Clem. Al. *Protr.* 4.54.6).

⁷⁵ With OT 46-47 ἴθ'..., ἴθ'..., compare above on Ar. *Eq.* 149 δεῦρο δεῦρ'; on imperatives for "come" in prayers, see PULLEYN 1997, 136-144, 219. For OT 35-39 as evidencing the *da-quia-dedisti* form typical of prayers (PULLEYN 1997, 17), see FINGLASS 2018, 178.

⁷⁶ BARTOL 2016, 515, 516 n. 89.

hymn, the Athenians "pray" (20) to their *Gottmensch*-saviour, Demetrios, a latter-day "Oidipous" (31-32)⁷⁷, for him to protect them from a latter-day "Sphinx" (24), the Aetolians. The important point is that the author of the hymn is not merely styling Demetrios as a latter-day Oidipous, but also identifying Sophocles' Oidipous in Thebes as a forerunner of Demetrios in Athens: a *Gottmensch*-saviour, beneficiary of altars and prayers-cum-suppliations from the populace⁷⁸. (This argument relies, again, on the validity of reading back up the line of reception.)⁷⁹

Statements such as *Oedipus Tyrannus* 31-34 and *Peace* 917 do not straightforwardly express "conventional piety", if that is understood to rule out extending religious treatment to a human, to exclude the conception of the *Gottmensch*. We may think rather of what Levene, in the context of imperial Rome, has referred to as "the standard idea (important in maintaining the divine/human ambiguity in ruler cult) that one should not put oneself on a complete par with the gods", an idea which in no way entails "an objection to the idea of any sort of divine honour" being paid to the human ruler⁸⁰. Oidipous in the opening scene of *Oedipus Tyrannus* is explicitly conceived as less than divine, but nevertheless as the deserving recipient of religious treatment such as the gods receive⁸¹. The chorus' pronouncements about Trygaios at *Peace* 913-915 and 917 as a "saviour" and as being "foremost apart from the gods" can be understood in a similar way.

It is worth briefly considering another passage, in which Trygaios is feted by a grateful Sickle-Maker whose peacetime trade is blooming (*Peace* 1198-1199):

ὦ φίλτατ', ὦ Τρυγαῖ', ὅσ' ἡμᾶς τὰγαθὰ
δέδρακας εἰρήνην ποιήσας.
Dearest fellow, Trygaios, how many good turns
you have done us in making peace.

The first part of this sentence closely resembles the words of DEMOS to the Sausage-Seller towards the end of *Knights: Peace* 1198-1199 ὦ φίλτατ', ὦ Τρυγαῖ', ὅσ' ἡμᾶς τὰγαθὰ / δέδρακας εἰρήνην ποιήσας ~ *Knights* 1335-1336: ὦ φίλτατ' ἀνδρῶν, ἐλθὲ δεῦρ', Ἀγοράκριτε. / ὅσα με δέδρακας ἀγάθ' ἀφεψήσας. Here we have another plausible instance of allusive intertextuality between the two plays, with the important implication that Trygaios in *Peace* is constructed as a *sōtēr*- / benefactor-figure along the lines of the Sausage-Seller in *Knights*. The one phrase in these two lines of *Peace* that does not echo *Knights* 1335-1336, namely εἰρήνην ποιήσας (*Peace* 1199), itself finds an echo in the ithyphallic hymn to Demetrios Poliorketes, εἰρήνην ποιήσον (21), which in turn has been compared to the compound adjective εἰρηνοποιός, a standard epithet and concept in ruler- and imperial cult⁸². The parallels, both internal and external to Aristophanes, point consistently in the direction of ruler- or *sōtēr*-cult.

Trygaios also shows obvious traits of a *Gottmensch* in ascending to heaven, an exploit he has in common with Peisetairos in *Birds* (1686). The ascent to heaven violates another item of choral lyric wisdom⁸³. We may note Alcman, "let no-one of men fly to the heaven" (fr. 1.16 *PMGF*)⁸⁴. Or Pindar: "the brazen heaven is not mountable for him" (*sc.* the athletic victor) (*Pythian* X 27)⁸⁵. *Isthmian* VII 43-48 instances Bellerophon as a mythological negative example, the same hero who, in his Euripidean incarnation, serves as positive example for

⁷⁷ With the ithyphallic hymn 32 Οἰδίπουν τιν' εὐρέ, compare *OT* 42 ἀλκὴν τιν' εὐρεῖν ἡμῖν (BARTOL 2016, 517).

⁷⁸ For prayers to powerful individuals in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, see CURRIE 2005, 180.

⁷⁹ BARTOL 2016, 515-516 sees more of a contrast between the divinity of the Demetrios of the ithyphallic hymn and the humanity of the Oidipous of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*.

⁸⁰ LEVENE 1997, 89. See, similarly, HABICHT 2017, 142-145; PETROVIC 2015, 433.

⁸¹ See in general CURRIE 2005, 158-200, esp. 187.

⁸² See WINDISCH 1925, 251-257, esp. 253 (citing, *inter alia*, *Ev. Matt.* V 9; Dio XLIV 49.2, LXXII 15.5); CERFAUX, TENDRIAU 1957, 185; VERSNEL 2011, 450.

⁸³ See SATTTLER 1962, 56.

⁸⁴ [μή τις ἀνθ]ρώπων ἐς ὠρανὸν ποτήσθω.

⁸⁵ ὁ χάλκεος οὐρανὸς οὐ ποτ' ἀμβρατὸς αὐτῷ. Cf. *Od.* XI 316 ἴν' οὐρανὸς ἀμβρατὸς εἶη (of Otos and Ephialtes).

Trygaios (*Peace* 76, and often). The attempt to ascend to heaven appears to be a motif standardly attached to *Gottmenschen*. Note, again, Rhianus' puffed-up man: "or he contrives some path to Olympus" (I 15-16 ἢ ἐ τιν' ἀτραπιτὸν τεκμαίρεται Οὐλύμπόνδε)⁸⁶. Note also (again) Virgil's statement about Augustus at the end of the *Georgics*: "and he attempts a path to Olympus" (IV 562 *uiamque affectat Olympo*, sc. *Caesar*; compare I 24-42, especially 34-35)⁸⁷. Virgil's phrase here so exactly replicates Rhianus' that it could be considered a direct imitation, especially given the other Virgilian convergences with Rhianus we have already observed (*Eclogues* IV 63, *Georgics* IV 560-561), unless we are just seeing variations on the standard phrasing of a standard idea. The same language and idea do indeed recur in Hellenistic epigrams, by Alcaeus of Messene (*floruit* 200 BCE), on Philippos V of Macedon (*AP IX* 518.4 λοιπὰ δ' ἄ πρὸς Ὀλυμπόν οὐδὲς, "only the path to Olympus remains"); and by Alpheius of Mytilene (first century BCE or first century CE), on Rome (*AP IX* 526.4 οὐρανίη δ' οἴμος ἔτ' ἔστ' ἄβατος, "the path to heaven is still not travelling")⁸⁸.

It is far from clear that the expression "attempting / travelling a path to Olympus" is always literally meant. It can also be understood as a figurative expression for "aspiring to become (quasi-)immortal through one's greatness," without any suggestion that the person concerned ever thought of literally ascending towards Olympus⁸⁹. Something very like a literal ascent to heaven is found in connection with that *Gottmensch par excellence*, Alexander the Great, in recension L of the *Alexander Romance*, where Alexander contrives a way to fly to heaven by yoking together two outsize birds (Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Historia Alexandri Magni* II 41.9-13)⁹⁰. This is not explicitly described as an attempted ascent to Olympus, but is juxtaposed in the narrative with another immortalizing motif, the "water of life" (II 39-41)⁹¹. The motif of a literal ascent to heaven is found in Mesopotamia from an early date: a Sumerian king-list features the entry, "Etana, the shepherd, *the one who went to heaven*, who put all countries in order, was king; he reigned 1,500 years"; and Etana's flight to heaven on the back of an eagle was the subject of a major poem in Akkadian, *Etana*, whose tradition reaches back into the third millennium BCE⁹². This poem, like *Gilgamesh*, is concerned with a form of the quest for immortality⁹³. It may have been known to archaic Greeks: there are striking apparent reflections of it in Archilochus' "Lykambes epode" (fr. 172-181 West) and the Aesopic fable of "The Eagle and the Dung-beetle" (*Aesopica* 3 Perry: compare already Semonides fr. 13 West)⁹⁴. The Aesopic fable is explicitly a model for Trygaios' ascent on the dung-beetle (*Peace* 129-130). Greek myths famously feature (ill-fated) literal ascents to heaven: Bellerophon rides Pegasus to heaven (Pindar, *Isthmian* VII 43-48; Euripides, *Bellerophon*, etc.) and Otos and Ephialtes pile Mt Ossa on Mt Pelion in order to reach Olympus (*Odyssey* XI 313-316, etc.). Polyaeus preserves an intriguing story pertaining to the non-mythical domain, which can unfortunately be neither sourced nor dated: a Thracian general Kosingas played on his troops' naivety by having wooden ladders fitted together so that he could ascend to Olympus to inform Hera of his troops' disobedience (*Stratagems in War* VII 22). Trygaios attempts a similar expedient of climbing ladders to heaven, before hitting on the plan with the dung-beetle (*Peace*

⁸⁶ The sense of τεκμαίρεται ("plans", "designs": HOPKINSON 1988, 228) is hard to parallel. One might consider emending to τεκταίνετα ("contrives").

⁸⁷ Cf. Curt. IV 7 *immortalitatem adfectantem*, of Alexander the Great "aspiring to immortality."

⁸⁸ SATTLER 1962, 52-58 interprets the epigrams as ironic characterizations of Rome's arrogance.

⁸⁹ For the figurative sense, cf. also Hor. *Carm.* I 1.4-6; *Epist.* I 17.34; note also *Carm.* I 3.38-40.

⁹⁰ STONEMAN 2012, 444-447. On recension L, see STONEMAN 2007, lxxix-lxxx.

⁹¹ STONEMAN 2012, 440 "Il desiderio di immortalità di Alessandro è un *leitmotiv* del *Romanzo*"; STONEMAN 2007, lxiii-lxiv.

⁹² For Etana in the king-list, see GLASSNER 2004, 121. For the poem *Etana*, see HAUL 2000.

⁹³ RÖLLIG 1984, 497; HAUL 2000, 44-47; HENKELMAN 2006, 843.

⁹⁴ On receptions of *Etana* in Greece, see CURRIE (forthcoming).

69-71)⁹⁵. The association of a literal ascent to heaven with *Gottmenschentum* recurs in the first appearance of Sokrates in *Clouds*: Sokrates, while he "treads the air" (ἀεροβατῶ) in a suspended basket, addresses Strepsiades as if he himself were not mortal (223 τί με καλεῖς, ὃ 'φήμερε;)⁹⁶. That whole scene (especially lines 225-226) stages an early version of the motif of the philosopher's metaphorical conquest of the gods' heavenly realm (compare Lucretius I 62-79; Pseudo-Aristotle, *On the Cosmos* 391a8-12)⁹⁷. There is probably also a metatheatrical play here on the conventional use, in both tragedy and comedy, of the *mēchanē* for the gods, here appropriated for Sokrates⁹⁸. While absurd "literalizations" of figurative notions are the stock-in-trade of Old Comedy⁹⁹, the notion of "making one's way to heaven", like the notions of "thundering" and "marrying a goddess" that were considered above, was both standardly attached to *Gottmensch*-figures and was apparently capable of being literally meant.

Trygaios, like Peisetairos in *Birds*, at the end of the play marries a divine bride, OPORA (compare also DEMOS and the SPONDAI in *Knights*). *Peace* ends with a wedding-song with the refrain Ὑμῶν Ὑμέναι' ὦ, as *Birds* does with the refrain: Ὑμῶν ὦ Ὑμέναι' ὦ (the refrain is found only here in extant Aristophanes). Not only (as we have already seen) is *Birds* allusively intertextual with *Knights*, it should also be seen as intertextual with *Peace*, reprising and exaggerating themes of the earlier play.

In general, *Peace* appears to be thematically as well as chronologically intermediate between *Knights* and *Birds*, developing ideas and language of *Gottmenschentum* already found in *Knights*, which are taken to an even more extreme level in *Birds*.

4 Paratragedy and the sōtēr / Gottmensch

An important complication needs to be acknowledged. Motifs of immortalization or of *Gottmenschentum* in Aristophanes are typically interwoven with paratragic, metapoetical, and/or metatheatrical elements¹⁰⁰. On the one hand, the coarse-grained immortalizing themes in *Knights*, *Peace*, and *Birds* look also to tragic treatments of those themes: rejuvenation by boiling (compare Euripides, *Peliades*, testimonia iii a-c Kannicht); flying to the gods in Olympus (compare Euripides' *Bellerophon*, fr. 306-308 Kannicht); marriage to a goddess (compare Euripides, *Phaethon* lines 227-244, where we also find the refrain 227 Ὑμῶν Ὑμῶν). On the other hand, there is fine-grained tragic intertextuality, paratragedy, and metatheatricality in each of the Aristophanic passages discussed above.

First, *Birds* 1706-1720. It was argued above that the epiphanic re-entry of the apotheosized Peisetairos in the closing scene of *Birds* evoked the forms and language of the real, lived, experience of epiphany. However, the speech of the Messenger (1706-1719) not only evokes the speech of a *hierokēryx*, announcing the imminent arrival of a deity or *Gottmensch*; it also recalls equivalent scenes of tragedy, notably the speech of the Messenger in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (518-532), preparing the Argives for the triumphal return of Agamemnon¹⁰¹. Similarly, Peisetairos' entrance by chariot at *Birds* 1720(ff.) not only looks to real-life *Gottmensch*, as argued above, but also to chariot entrances in tragedy, such as, for instance, Agamemnon's triumphal entry at Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* 810(ff.)¹⁰². The evocation

⁹⁵ OLSON 1998, 81.

⁹⁶ DOVER 1968, 125-126 "Socrates is looking down on Strepsiades as a god might look down from Olympus on a mortal; Semon[ides] 1.3 [West] contrasts Zeus with ἐρήμεροι." REVERMANN 2006, 196-197; cf. TAEGER 1957, 106. See also WRIGHT 2012, 112, for a different dimension to the scene.

⁹⁷ HARDIE 1986, 194-195, 209-212, cf. 37-38.

⁹⁸ REVERMANN 2006, 197 n. 40.

⁹⁹ See HUNTER 2004, 65 on "the literalization of metaphorical language" in Old Comedy.

¹⁰⁰ See above on the metapoetic dimension to Perikles "thundering" and the metatheatrical dimension to Sokrates in the *mēchanē*.

¹⁰¹ Compare in general KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 295 n. 1.

¹⁰² On chariot entrances in tragedy, see TAPLIN 1977, 76-78.

of real practices jostles with paratragedy.

Second, *Knights* 147-150. The language used by "Demosthenes" / "Servant 1" at the first appearance of the Sausage-Seller as a "saviour" in *Knights* was argued above to evoke the themes of "advent" and "presence" of a deity or *Gottmensch* in epiphany. But the phrase ὁδὶ προσέρχεται (*Knights* 147; compare also *Birds* 1709 προσέρχεται, 1718 ὁδὶ δὲ καυτός ἐστιν, of Peisetairos) is also used metatheatrically to signal characters' entrances in comedy: καὶ μὴν ὁ Παφλαγῶν οὕτως προσέρχεται (*Knights* 691), ὁδὶ... προσέρχεται (*Wasps* 1324)¹⁰³. Moreover, κατὰ θεόν, "by the favour of a god" (148), suggests not just the theme of the "heaven-sent" saviour-figure, but also a tongue-in-cheek allusion to the convenient dramatic convention whereby a character enters the instant they are named¹⁰⁴. The anadiplosis 149-150 δεῦρο δεῦρ'... ἀνάβαινε suggests the "come hither, hither" formula found in clitic addresses to divinities (or human saviours: Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 46-47 ἴθ'..., ἴθ'...); but the use of an imperative of the verb ἀναβαίνειν (not the usual ἴθι, ἐλθέ, βαῖνε, ἰκοῦ, or μόλε)¹⁰⁵ draws attention metatheatrically to the fact that an actor here is being asked to "come onto" the stage, for which, as the scholiast points out, ἀναβαίνειν was the technical term¹⁰⁶.

Third, *Knights* 1326-1328. The re-entry of the rejuvenated, apparently apotheosized, DEMOS was argued to evoke a divine epiphany. The motif of the populace "seeing" the transformed DEMOS (*Knights* 1326 ὄψεσθε δέ· καὶ γὰρ ἀνοιγνυμένων ψόφος ἤδη τῶν προπυλαίων, "you shall see for yourselves: for there is already the noise of the Propylaea being opened") is appropriate to an epiphany¹⁰⁷. We may compare the ithyphallic hymn to Demetrios, 18 σὲ δὲ παρόνθ' ὀρῶμεν, "we see you present to us." But the same language was used in tragedy and comedy to signal that something was about to be shown to the audience, often by means of the *ekkyklēma*¹⁰⁸. A good tragic example is Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1294-1296 δείξει δὲ καὶ σοί. κληῖθρα γὰρ πυλῶν τάδε / διοίγεται· θέαμα δ' εἰσόψη τάχα, "he [Oidipous] will show it to you too, for the bars of the gates are being opened, and you shall soon see the sight yourself."

Fourth, *Peace* 913-921. This passage, in which Trygaios is declared a "saviour", is shot through with paratragedy and tragic intertextuality. Line 913, ὅταν τρυγαῖτ', εἴσεσθε πολλῶ μᾶλλον οἷός εἰμι puns on the protagonist's name, Τρυγαῖος¹⁰⁹. Such etymological play on protagonist's name, hinting at their essential characteristic, was a typical feature of tragedy: note Sophocles, *Ajax* 430-431 (Aias and αἰαῖ); *Oedipus Tyrannus* 924-926 (Oidipous and εἰδέναί ὄπου; similarly, 43); Euripides, *Bacchae* 508 (Pentheus and πενθεῖν)¹¹⁰. Line 917, καὶ πλὴν γε τῶν θεῶν ἀεὶ σ' ἠγησόμεσθα πρῶτον, may be allusively intertextual with Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 31-34 (discussed above), and 920 δεινῶν ἀπαλλάξας πόνων with Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (*Agamemnon* 1 τῶνδ' ἀπαλλάξαι πόνων; compare *ibid.* 20, *Eumenides* 84).

Throughout all these passages we should recognize the co-presence of elements of paratragedy or metatheatre with elements of parody of religious practices and of *Gottmenschentum*. The audience is pulled in two directions simultaneously: towards the real (practised) and the unreal (the theatrical, the world of poetic precedent)¹¹¹. The paratragedy

¹⁰³ Cf. *Pax* 1043-1044, 1208-1209; etc.

¹⁰⁴ Compare POHLENZ 1952, 109. See, in general, FINGLASS 2018, 191.

¹⁰⁵ See FEDELI 1983, 23.

¹⁰⁶ Schol. Ar. *Eq.* 149a: ἀναβαίνειν ἐλέγετο τὸ ἐπὶ τὸ λογεῖον εἰσιέναι. Cf. Plat. *Symp.* 194b2 (sc. Ἀγάθωνος) ἀναβαίνοντος ἐπὶ τὸν ὀκρίβαντα μετὰ τῶν ὑποκριτῶν, "as Agathon was mounting the stage/tribune with the actors." KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 308.

¹⁰⁷ KLEINKNECHT 1939, 62-63 "Das Sehen ist ja natürlich ein bei der Parusie ganz wichtiger Begriff."

¹⁰⁸ SOMMERSTEIN 1981, 215 "this is the first appearance of what became a cliché in later comedy, the creaking door as a sign that someone was about to emerge from the *skēnē*."

¹⁰⁹ KANAVOU 2011, 98-99.

¹¹⁰ RUTHERFORD 2013, 3-4, 100-101.

¹¹¹ Cf. KLEINKNECHT 1939, 58 n. 5, 61, 65; KLEINKNECHT 1937b, 309, 310; SLATER 1988, 128-129.

and metatheatrical effect a distancing from and a deflation of the real-life practices associated with *Gottmenschentum* at the same time as the language and conceits of the comedy "zoom" the audience to those real-life practices. This conflation of metapoetry and the real-life aggrandizement of the *Gottmensch* is itself a phenomenon of (literary) historical significance: it is transmitted to the poetry of both Alexandria (Callimachus, *Aetia* fr. 1.20 Harder: see above) and Rome (Virgil, *Georgics* III 1-48, IV 559-566). We should not assume a zero-sum relationship between paratragedy and metatheatricality, on the one hand, and parody of real religious practices, on the other. Recognition of the one does not come at the expense of the other; rather, in this poetic genre, both feed off each other. In any case, we should be wary of constructing a simple opposition between "references to cult" and "references to tragedy", for the twin reasons that tragedy may itself complexly reflect real religious practices and that real life was capable of imitating tragedy (see below, for both points).

5 Comic parody of the *sōtēr*- / *Gottmensch*-figure

The *sōtēr*- / *Gottmensch*-figure is important in three of Aristophanes' extant plays. In a recent discussion of religion in comedy, Revermann argued Old Comedy to be disinterested in hero cult, noting that:

Comedy is not eschatological: "last things" are not its concern. What matters is the "(right) here and (right) now" (and the fun!)¹¹².

Similarly, Sophoclean tragedy has been argued to be unconcerned with hero cult, on the grounds that intimations of hero cult for Aias in *Ajax*, Herakles in *Trachiniae*, or Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus* would be incompatible with the desired "tragic effect." But myriad perspectives are possible on hero cult. There is a tragic perspective that is fully compatible with the effect at which Sophocles was aiming¹¹³. So, too, there is a comic perspective. In Old Comedy, hero cult (in a broad sense: specifically, cult of the *sōtēr* or the *Gottmensch*) takes on a particular comic inflection, salient aspects of which may be adumbrated as follows.

First, it is the Sausage-Seller's superabundance of meanness (*kakia*) that makes him into a *sōtēr*-figure (*Knights* 128-144, 180-181, 185-193), perverting the popular belief, cited by Aristotle, according to which men became gods owing to a superabundance of *aretē* (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1145a22-24)¹¹⁴. This accords with comedy's generic concern to represent men as worse than they are (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448a17-18).

Second, the comic perspective on the cult of *sōtēr* is brazenly hedonistic. Trygaios conceives of himself, and the farmers acclaim him, as *sōtēr* for the sensual pleasures he confers on them (*Peace* 866-867, 913-921) – a characteristically comic distortion of what being "saved" entails. Likewise, Trygaios' status as *Gottmensch* is measured in the sensual pleasures that he will himself enjoy, and the same goes for the rejuvenated, apotheosized DEMOS in *Knights*¹¹⁵.

Third, the comic *sōtēr* may be cynical and self-interested. Anticipating Napoleon in Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Peisetairos obtains BASILEIA for himself by undertaking to secure it for the birds. The Sausage-Seller, by contrast, surprises us with his renunciation of self-interest.

Fourth, the routes towards *Gottmenschentum* in comedy are fantastic, ridiculous, and bathetic: Peisetairos is turned into a bird; Trygaios rides an outsize dung-beetle; DEMOS is "boiled down" by the Sausage-Seller, an achievement which makes us think not just of Medeia and Aëson in mythology, but also, with a miraculous transformation of the quotidian, of the Sausage-Seller's own particular expertise as a peddler of cooked meat¹¹⁶.

¹¹² REVERMANN 2014, 286.

¹¹³ See CURRIE 2012, 341-342.

¹¹⁴ Compare similarly Diod. XVI 11.1, on Dion at Syracuse.

¹¹⁵ RUFFELL 2011, 210-211.

¹¹⁶ Cf. schol. *Eq.* 1321a ἀφ' ἐψησῶς· καλῶς ὡς μάγειρος. See KLEINKNECHT 1939, on the Sausage-Seller and DEMOS; KAVOULAKI 1999, 317-318; RUFFELL 2011, 208.

Heroization was a fact of fifth-century Greek life with which the three major fifth-century poetic genres – epinician, tragedy, and comedy – engaged in distinctive ways. Pindaric epinician and Sophoclean tragedy are interested, although in different ways, in the status and the fortunes of, respectively, the athletic victor and the tragic hero, both in their lifetime and after their death¹¹⁷. The orientation of comedy is this-worldly; but comedy is still interested in *Gottmenschentum* as the expression κατ' ἐξοχήν of the comic hero's triumph¹¹⁸. This goes for the Sausage-Seller in *Knights*, Trygaios in *Peace*, and Peisetairos in *Birds*¹¹⁹. Comedy appears, moreover, to have a distinctive interest, not shared with epinician or tragedy, in satirizing the attitude of the populace (via choruses of knights, farmers, and gullible birds) towards *Gottmensch*-figures, and in satirizing the means by which an individual who stops at nothing could attain to the status of *Gottmenschentum*.

Heroization and *Gottmenschentum* were certainly ripe for comic treatment. They were inherently exposed to criticism or ridicule, of an *ad hominem* or a principled kind, aimed either at the person heroized or the people heroizing or both¹²⁰. This is obvious in Lucian's satirical treatment of Alexandros of Abonutichus and Peregrinos Proteus in the second century CE (*Alexander the False Prophet*, *On the Death of Peregrinus*)¹²¹. But it is apparent already in Herodotus' scandalized account of Peisistratos' hoodwinking of the Athenians with an absurd trick (I 60.3 πρῆγμα εὐηθέστατον... μακρῶ). Many scholars have seen the Peisistratos of the Phye-as-Athena episode as an ironic model for the nearly homonymous Peisetairos (if the name is thus correctly restored) of Aristophanes' *Birds*¹²². Further, Ktesippos in Plato's *Lysis* (205d1-2) ridicules Hippothales for peddling "old wives" tales' about Lysis' ancestor being a son of Zeus: Amphitheos in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* is ridiculous in a very similar way, when he argues himself to be a descendant of Demeter (47-51). Much fifth- and fourth-century *Gottmenschentum* appears to be comedy already made. The fourth-century BCE physician Menekrates, who impersonated Zeus, was unsurprisingly a butt of contemporary comedy (Ephippus, *The Peltast*, fr. 17 Kassel-Austin; Alexis, *Minos*, fr. 156 Kassel-Austin). He was viewed by sober writers in antiquity as a megalomaniac madman (Athenaeus VII 289a-f; Aelian, *Various History* XII 51)¹²³. But megalomaniacs are also the lifeblood of comedy, a genre where the crazy, zany, and hair-brained could triumph and be celebrated. The views of the social-intellectual elite and of the masses towards *Gottmenschentum* doubtless diverged throughout antiquity¹²⁴. Comedy was the perfect place to play the cynicism-scepticism of the one off the enthusiasm-gullibility of the other.

Another reason why *Gottmenschentum* naturally leant itself to representation on the comic stage is that there was often a pronounced theatrical or play-acting element to real-life treatments of the *Gottmensch*¹²⁵. The theatricality in the staging of the reception of the Hellenistic king and of royal appearances has been well studied¹²⁶. Klearchos is said to have

¹¹⁷ See, on Pindaric epinician, CURRIE 2005, *passim*; and on Sophoclean tragedy, CURRIE 2012, esp. 343.

¹¹⁸ On the term "comic hero", see WHITMAN 1964; ROSEN 2014.

¹¹⁹ See especially WHITMAN 1964, 103, 116, 196; compare TAEGER 1957, 107-108.

¹²⁰ SCOTT 1932.

¹²¹ See PAULSEN 2003.

¹²² On Peisetairos and Peisistratos, see BONNER 1943; BOWIE 1993, 165; KAVOULAKI 1999, 317; PETRIDOU 2015, 169-170; VERSNEL 2011, 448 n. 40, 483 n. 135; but see also, against, KANAVOU 2011, 108 n. 478. The form of Aristophanes' protagonist's name attested in the ancient transmission is Peisthetairos and (in a scholium) Pisthetairos; modern corrections are Peithetairos and (the preferable) Peisetairos: DUNBAR 1995, 128-129; KANAVOU 2011, 105-107.

¹²³ VERSNEL 2011, 441.

¹²⁴ Compare SCOTT 1932, 328; VERSNEL 2011, 467, 476.

¹²⁵ VERSNEL 2011, 442, 471-476. In general, on the "theatricality" of public life in ancient Greece, see CHANIOTIS 1997 (focussing on the Hellenistic period; on the pre-Hellenistic period, note esp. *ibid.* 220, 223, 249; OBER 1989, 154-155; SLATER 1988).

¹²⁶ CHANIOTIS 1997, 235-238, 238-242.

worn the tragic buskin, *kothornos*, "like the kings of tragedy" (Justin XVI 5.10)¹²⁷. Philippos II had a statue of himself as a thirteenth Olympian god paraded in the theatre of Aegae (Diod. XVI 92.5, XVI 95.1)¹²⁸. Demetrios appears to have staged his entrance into Athens as "Dionysos" in the theatre at the Dionysia of 295 BCE (Plutarch, *Demetrius* 34.4)¹²⁹. The ithyphallic hymn, through sustained intertextuality with Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* (see above), assimilated the Athenians' relationship with Demetrios to the Thebans' relationship to Oedipous on the tragic stage. Marcus Antonius, like Demetrios, imitated the dress of Dionysos (Seneca, *Suasoriae* I 6)¹³⁰. Lucian presents Alexandros of Abonutichus' entry into Abonutichus as a tragic drama (*Alexander* 12)¹³¹. Stunts like simulations of thunder (recorded for the mythical Salmoneus) or attempts to ascend to Olympus (attributed to the Thracian general Kosingas) are intrinsically stagey. All these postdate Old Comedy; but Peisistratos' return to Athens in the mid-sixth century, with Phye masquerading as Athena, comfortably precedes it; this has been attractively explained by Connor as a real-life "drama", in which the Athenians showed themselves complaisant¹³². Comedy, we may take it, was adroit at adopting such dramas of *Gottmenschentum*, owning them to be already the stuff of the theatre, but in a deflating, comic, rather than an elevating, tragic, kind of way.

6 Comedy and the early history of the saviour / Gottmensch

The Aristophanic picture needs to be integrated into the history of the *Gottmensch* and the cult of the saviour. It needs in particular to be related to Duris' statement, as relayed by Plutarch, that Lysandros "was the first of the Greeks... to whom the cities set up altars as a god and made sacrifices; and paeans were sung to him first" (Duris *BNJ* 76 F71, in Plutarch, *Lysander* 18.5)¹³³. This Samian cult of Lysandros dates to 404 BCE, ten years after *Birds* and twenty after *Knights*.

It might be supposed that Aristophanes' depiction of *Gottmenschentum* and saviour-cult does not take its cue from any real-life practices, but is just the stuff of mythology and comic fantasy¹³⁴. Or perhaps it was a vein of humour in Old Comedy to show characters on stage acting out ideas about *Gottmensch*- or saviour-figures that circulated only as ideas before 404 BCE, when for the first time the Samians put them into practice.

However, there are difficulties with such views. A first objection is that *Gottmenschentum* is a theme of so much fifth-century Athenian dramatic poetry. *Gottmenschentum* features in three extant Aristophanic plays (not, as sometimes supposed, in *Birds* alone)¹³⁵. Its representation in the lost plays of Old Comedy can only be guessed at¹³⁶. In tragedy, too, *Gottmenschentum* is often a significant theme: we have had occasion to refer repeatedly to certain passages of, in particular, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, and the Pseudo-Euripidean *Rhesus*. Secondly, there is depth, as well as breadth, to the exploration of *Gottmenschentum* in the three comedies of Aristophanes: Aristophanes is able to exploit an extensive and well-developed terminology, as well as very concrete forms of

¹²⁷ VERSNEL 2011, 442.

¹²⁸ For contrasting assessments of how shocking this performance was, see LANE FOX 1973, 20 and HORNBLOWER 2002, 281.

¹²⁹ CHANIOTIS 1997, 238-239, 2011, 163-164; THONEMANN 2005, esp. 73-74, 78-79, 82-84.

¹³⁰ CHANIOTIS 1997, 241-242, on Antonius' theatricality.

¹³¹ Note συντραγωδῆσων... πρωταγωνιστής. Cf. also chapter 60.

¹³² CONNOR 1987, 44 "The populace joins in a shared drama..."; CHANIOTIS 1997, 223. For another possible early-fifth-century heroizing "drama" (involving Euthymos of Locri and the Hero of Temesa), see CURRIE 2002, 39.

¹³³ πρῶτῳ μὲν γάρ, ὡς ἴστορεῖ Δουῆρις, Ἑλλήνων ἐκείνῳ βωμοὺς αἱ πόλεις ἀνέστησαν ὡς θεῶν καὶ θυσίας ἔθυσαν, εἰς πρῶτον δὲ παιᾶνες ἤσθησαν.

¹³⁴ Compare TAEGER 1957, 108.

¹³⁵ Pace e.g. KAVOULAKI 1999, 313-314; REVERMANN 2012, 285.

¹³⁶ See above. Intriguing is the statement made about the generals of the past in an unidentified play of Eupolis (*Demoi* or *Poleis* or *Maricas*?): οἷς ὡσπερ εἰ θεοῖσιν ἠὲ χόμμεσθα· καὶ γὰρ ἦσαν (fr. 384.6 Kassel-Austin).

treatment of the saviour- / *Gottmensch*-figure. It is hard to imagine that the elements of *Gottmenschentum* would have been available to be exploited in precisely this way (so frequently, so detailedly, and so presciently of subsequent cult practices) without their having any correlate in contemporary practice. Thirdly, it seems impossible to do justice to the comic texts' treatment of the theme without assuming some engagement with real practices: this kind of comic parody (not least, the tension between metatheatrical reference and cultic reference) requires a corresponding reality to bite on. Consequently, it is worth considering what scope Duris' statement about Lysandros' cult leaves us to postulate a correlate in contemporary reality for Aristophanes' depiction of civic saviours / *Gottmenschen*.

Duris does not actually say that Lysandros was the first of the Greeks to whom anyone made sacrifices, dedicated altars, and sang paeans, but the first to whom "the cities" did so¹³⁷. Duris' wording leaves open the possibility that individuals or even collectives may previously have done any of these things on their own initiative, without it having been voted through by the assembly or equivalent. If our poetic texts are anything to go by, then the performance of religious acts (the erection of altars, the making of sacrifices, etc.) was an appropriate or expected response by individuals in Greco-Roman antiquity when they took themselves to be face to face with a deity or *Gottmensch*. In the "Homeric" *Hymn to Aphrodite*, Anchises envisages doing this for the disguised Aphrodite (100-102: altar and sacrifices)¹³⁸. So does Danaos, along with his daughters, for the Argives, declared to be their "saviours", in Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women* (980-982: prayers, sacrifices, and libations). So too does Tityrus for the "young man", *sc.* Octavian, in Virgil's first *Eclogue* (7-8: altar and sacrifices)¹³⁹. Horace envisages a similar state of affairs for Augustus in his *Epistle to Augustus* (*Epistles* II 1.15-17: altars and sacrifices)¹⁴⁰. The fact that this theme recurs in poetic but not historiographical texts need not imply that the theme has no purchase in reality; poetic texts are more interested than historiographical ones in exploring the religious responses of individuals to events (historical or fictitious). Non-poetic texts offer confirmation of the general point, at least, that private individuals might institute cults on their own initiative, operating outside the auspices of the *polis* (Plato, *Laws* 909d7-910e3; Theophrastus, *Characters* XVI 4)¹⁴¹.

But did any perceived saviour- / *Gottmensch*-figure of the fifth century BCE actually receive sacrifices, altars, etc., from persons acting in a non-civic capacity? Plutarch attests this for Dion at Syracuse in 357/6 BCE, half a century after Lysandros' civic cult on Samos, reporting that "the Syracusans", evidently in a non-civic capacity, offered him animal sacrifices, first-fruits, and supplications-prayers (*Dio* 29.2). We are not obliged to accept this testimony; Plutarch is not a contemporary source and his account may be coloured by the way Hellenistic and Roman *Gottmenschen* were treated. But why suppose that this kind of non-civic treatment of a saviour / *Gottmensch* only became possible after the Samians had instituted a civic cult for Lysandros? Nothing suggests that a civic cult must pave the way for non-civic popular veneration of a *Gottmensch*. If anything, the converse progression is more logical.

Only one – discredited – text records a populace in a non-civic capacity making sacrifices, establishing altars, etc., to a perceived saviour- / *Gottmensch*-figure prior to Lysandros' cult on Samos in 404 BCE. Justin (Trogus) states that when Alkibiades entered the Piraeus in 408 BCE, the Athenians "heaped upon him not only all the honours for men, but also for gods" (V 4.6-18). Justin's (Trogus') expression *diuinis... honoribus* should imply,

¹³⁷ Contrast e.g. HABICHT 2017, 1 n. 1 "Duris explicitly calls Lysander the first Greek to receive divine honors"; similarly, CHANIOTIS 2003, 434.

¹³⁸ Cf. *Od.* XVI 386 (Telemachus for the transformed Odysseus).

¹³⁹ For *iuuenis* of Octavian, cf. *Geo.* I 500.

¹⁴⁰ For these as private, not civic, offerings to Augustus, compare BRINK 1982, 55.

¹⁴¹ On the state's tolerance of privately-initiated cults, see GARLAND 1992, 75; PARKER 2005, 65-68; ANDERSON 2015, 311. Cf. CURRIE 2005, 5-6.

among other things, altars and sacrifices¹⁴². Justin (Trogus) is, again, not a contemporary source. It is unclear how much of this may go back to earlier Greek sources, such as the fourth-century Ephorus, and how much may be Justin's (Trogus') own elaboration¹⁴³. Likewise unclear is whether Justin's (Trogus') Romanization of the account can be regarded as an essentially harmless linguistic veneer or as amounting to a more serious distortion of the facts themselves¹⁴⁴. Habicht considered Justin's (Trogus') report refuted by Demosthenes' statement that Conon in 394 BCE was the first Athenian since the tyrannicides to receive a civic statue (*Against Leptines* 68-71), implying that a statue, not "divine honours", was still the highest conceivable civic award at that time¹⁴⁵. The supposed refutation fails, however, because Demosthenes is speaking of civic awards, while Justin is describing (and we are interested in) non-civic responses from the Athenian multitude to Alkibiades¹⁴⁶. Habicht further objects that other sources describe Alkibiades' reception in Athens-Piraeus in 408 BCE without mentioning anything like "divine honours"¹⁴⁷. Nepos mentions Alkibiades receiving (on the most plausible reading of the text) "laurel crowns and *tainiai*", like an Olympic victor (*Alcibiades* 6.3)¹⁴⁸. Nepos is emphatic that Alkibiades' treatment was unprecedented in this respect, but this claim is exposed as erroneous by Thucydides' description of Brasidas at Scione in 423 BCE being showered with *tainiai* "like an athlete" (IV 121.1)¹⁴⁹. Nepos does not offer a dependable account to oppose to Justin's (Trogus'), and he cannot be regarded as knowledgeable of the non-civic honours that a fifth-century saviour / *Gottmensch* could receive. The other extant narratives have even less to say about how the Athenians received the returning Alkibiades¹⁵⁰. It must be recognized that historiographical texts are not uniformly interested in such questions¹⁵¹. Xenophon and Plutarch are more interested in the vicissitudes in Alkibiades' career and in his self-vindication before the Athenians.

The point at issue should not be whether we can rely on or can refute Justin (Trogus), but how fragile our information about early saviour- or ruler-cult is. Scholarship now mostly accepts Lysandros' cult at Samos as a watershed in the history of ruler-cult. Yet our knowledge of it depends on a single much later historian (Plutarch) quoting another non-contemporary historian (Duris). This notice might easily not have come down to us. Xenophon says nothing about the Samians' civic cult for Lysandros, although he narrates Lysandros' intervention in

¹⁴² TLL VI.3.2924.61-2925.22. Cf. Hor. *Epist.* II 1.15.

¹⁴³ For Ephorus as dealing with the episode, cf. Plut. *Alc.* 32.2. On Justin's (Trogus') relationship to Ephorus here, compare HABICHT 2017, 4-5.

¹⁴⁴ On the problem in general, see DEVELIN 1994, 9, on the harmless use of *senatus* for ἐκκλησία. TAEGER 1957, 159 n. 36 regards Justin's [sc. *Alcibidem*] *quasi de caelo missum* (V 4.10) as the kind of Romanization that makes Justin's (Trogus') report "utterly worthless" (for the saviour sent from heaven in Roman contexts, cf. Hor. *Carm.* I 2.45, with the parallels cited by NISBET, HUBBARD 1970, 37, including Plut. *fort. Alex.* 330d; note also Virg. *Geo.* I 503-504; etc.). But the essential idea in *quasi de caelo missum* is not so different from that implied at Hdt. VII 56.2 (Zeus on earth in the guise of Xerxes), and even if this is a Romanization, it does not entail the Justin (Trogus) also invented Alkibiades' receiving "divine honours."

¹⁴⁵ HABICHT 2017, 4.

¹⁴⁶ Justin's phrase *ciuitas uniuersa*, "the whole populace" (V 4.10; cf. Diod. XIII 68.2 ὁ δῆμος ἅπας; Nepos *Alc.* 6.1 *uniuersa ciuitas*), clearly intends the Athenians in a non-civic capacity.

¹⁴⁷ Compare FLOWER 1988, 126-127, challenging HABICHT's parallel argument about the significance of Xenophon's silence about the Thasians' offer of deification to Agesilaos.

¹⁴⁸ *Hic ut e nauī egressus est, quamquam Theramenes et Thrasybulus eisdem rebus praefuerant simulque uenerant in Piraeum, tamen unum omnes illum prosequantur, et, id quod numquam antea usu uenerat nisi Olympiae uictoribus, coronis laureis taeniisque* [transmitted: *aureis aeneisque*] *uulgo donabatur.*

¹⁴⁹ Plutarch also claims that Perikles was treated this way by Athenian women in 439 BCE (*Per.* 28.5).

¹⁵⁰ Xen. *HG* II 4.12-20; Diod. XIII 68-69; Plut. *Alex.* 32-33; Athen. XII 535c.

¹⁵¹ Thucydides' descriptions of Brasidas' treatment at Scione and posthumous hero cult at Amphipolis are exceptional in his *History* (HORNBLLOWER 1996, 449); Thucydides in general plays down popular religious elements (HORNBLLOWER 1992).

Samos (*Hellenica* II 3.6-8)¹⁵². Scholarship was long divided over whether to accept Duris' claims or not¹⁵³. What needs to be emphasized is that our understanding of the early history of ruler-cult is liable to fall out quite differently according to whether we happen to possess certain isolated notices – in our literary sources – and on whether we decide to accept their claims¹⁵⁴. Epigraphic confirmation, seen as clinching matters with Lysandros' Samian cult, is not to be looked for with the non-civic attentions received by fifth-century *Gottmenschen*.

Duris' statement about Lysandros still permits us to conceive of the early history of saviour-cult as a graduated process. Before Lysandros, it may have been possible for saviour- / *Gottmensch*-figures to receive divine honours from the people in an unofficial, non-civic, capacity. It may even have been possible before Lysandros for *Gottmensch*-figures to receive heroic (as opposed to divine) honours by civic decree¹⁵⁵. Lysandros will have been the first to have received divine, and not merely heroic, honours by civic decree (and, Duris implies, in more than one city-state). Duris therefore can have recognized Lysandros as a forerunner of the *Gottmenschen* of his own lifetime (Antigonos Monophthalmos, Demetrios Poliorketes). Of course, the step that was taken with Lysandros on Samos in 404 BCE was a transformational development; we may even take the view that saviour- / ruler-cult only really becomes a truly historically significant phenomenon from then on. But it will not be the case that particular political circumstances, born of the closing years of the Peloponnesian war and, especially, of the later fourth century BCE (viz., the city-state's dependence on a powerful outsider for its survival and its need to reciprocate with civic rewards proportionate to the service rendered by its "saviour") led to the creation *ex nihilo* of new religious categories and practices (the saviour- / *Gottmensch*-figure; saviour- / ruler-cult). Rather, we may see the changed political situation as leading to the politicization and the adoption in civic religion (and consequent transformation) of what had previously been a popular religious phenomenon of informal character. In this putative process, a popular phenomenon, at which the political elite may be assumed to have looked distinctly askance while it had the luxury of so doing, will have gradually entered the political mainstream of various *poleis*.

In the absence of (reliable) historiographical or epigraphic testimony, it is all the more pressing how we decide to appraise the fifth-century BCE poetic texts, as offering our only contemporary window onto fifth-century *Gottmenschentum*. Aristophanes' comedies are a still undervalued source here¹⁵⁶. They are not the only one, however: I should like to draw attention here (again) to Pindar's second *Pythian*, lines 18-20, as strongly suggesting that in the early 470s BCE Hieron was celebrated in religious choral songs as saviour of the Epizephyrian Locrians, anticipating Lysandros on Samos in at least that respect¹⁵⁷. The upshot of the present discussion is that there is a murky pre-history of saviour-cult before Lysandros that has a legitimate claim on our attention, and whose reconstruction requires us to take appropriate

¹⁵² Compare TAEGER 1957, 163; contrast HABICHT 2017, 2.

¹⁵³ e.g. TAEGER 1957, 162-163; see, for discussion, HABICHT 2017, 2 n. 5, 179, 209; and, in particular, VERSNEL 2011, 456-457. Confirmation of Duris' testimony of a Lysandreia festival on Samos, and its association with Hera, is provided by *IG* XII.6 1:334: see HABICHT 2017, 179; HALLOF 2000, 256-257.

¹⁵⁴ Another controversial and isolated claim is Plutarch's story that Agesilas declined the divine cult that the Thasians offered him in (probably) 394 BCE (*Sayings of Spartans* 210c-d). HABICHT 2017, 132 objected: "There is... no evidence whatsoever that a Greek ever refused divine honors offered to him.... It seems that only the Romans, not the Greeks, had such religious scruples." But for something like this religious scruple in the mid-fifth century BCE, compare Aesch. *Ag.* 925 λέγω κατ' ἄνδρα, μὴ θεόν, σέβειν ἐμέ. The historicity of Plutarch's anecdote about Agesilaos and the Thasians is defended by FLOWER 1988.

¹⁵⁵ See CURRIE 2005, 163-174 (on Hagnon at Amphipolis and Euthymos at Locri).

¹⁵⁶ The significance of Aristophanes is well recognized by KLEINKNECHT 1937*b* and 1939. It is undervalued by e.g. NOCK 1951, 130 n. 10 = 1972, ii.722 n. 10.

¹⁵⁷ See CURRIE 2005, 285-288, with 261-275. Differently, MORGAN 2015, 177, 179, who, however, refrains from making holistic sense of the evidently overlapping historical circumstances presupposed by all of Pindar, *Py.* II 18-20; the scholia to Pindar, *Py.* II 36c and 38; and Justin XXI 3.2.

account of poetic texts and to consider possible non-civic treatments, in addition to the civic cults, that were received by Classical and Archaic *sōtēr-* / *Gottmensch*-figures. The essential point is that living men may have become gods or heroes not merely in the popular imagination and in poetic fantasy, but also in popular religious practice, well before they did so in official civic religion.

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